Chapter 26
Using Social Network–Mediated Bridging Activities to Develop Socio–Pragmatic Awareness in Elementary Korean

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ABSTRACT

Informed by a bridging activities model (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008), the authors designed and implemented a series of activities using Facebook to develop elementary level Korean learners' socio-pragmatic awareness of the use of Korean honorifics. Nine students took part in the activities, which involved student collaboration to create five invented profiles and shared resources, guided analysis of expert/native use, role play activities to practice new socio-grammatical understandings, and analysis of peer production. Based on analysis of student work and post-instructional surveys, the authors found evidence for the development of socio-pragmatic awareness, as demonstrated by the practice of pragmatic flouting, the understanding of contextual constraints on use, and the creative use of Facebook affordances.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook, used by over 800 million individuals around the world in 70 different languages (Facebook, 2012), have in recent years become a ubiquitous and familiar means for technology-mediated social interaction. Recognizing this, applied linguists and language educators have started exploring the potentials SNSs hold for second and foreign (L2) language teaching and learning (Blattner & Fiori, 2009; 2011; Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; McBride, 2009; Mills, 2011; Mitchell, 2012; Reinhardt & Zander, 2011; Stevenson & Liu, 2010; Sykes & Holden, 2011), using both descriptive and theoretical frameworks (Blyth, 2008; Reinhardt, 2012). For example, from a post-structural view, SNSs can be seen as Web 2.0 artifacts (Warschauer &

Grimes, 2007) that embody socio-literacy practices, in which identities and communities are performed and negotiated in socially recognized ways, by means of shared repertoires (Street, 1995; Gee, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Chen, 2012; Reinhardt & Chen, in press). SNS pages and profiles are both arenas for authentic interaction and, at the same time, socio-pragmatically genuine "encoded texts" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008) instantiated by these practices. Unique socio-pragmatic conventions and cultures-of-use (Thorne, 2003) emerge in these textualized practices, afforded by various features of SNS technology.

Coherent with the perspective that SNSs are textualized socio-literacy practice, Thorne and Reinhardt's *bridging activities* model (2008; Thorne, 2009) offers principled instructional framework for the development of digital L2 literacies (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011). Bridging activities seek to develop learner awareness of Internet use as socio-literacy practice by focusing on "vernacular digital language conventions and analyzing these conventions to bridge in-class activity with the wider world of mediated language use" (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 563). Activities focus on both experiential and analytic learning, since technology-mediated language use is "both the means and the object of awareness" (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011, p. 15). From this approach, SNS use, being a familiar, vernacular experience for learners, is potentially accessible as an entry point into situated learning, focused on "the whole person rather than 'receiving' a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). In bridging activities, instructor-guided exploration and analysis of student-selected or student-created situated texts seek "to raise learner awareness of the grammatical and lexical choices that comprise

(the) text and to have the learner critically consider how these linguistic choices combine to realize… meaning" (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 563).

With the model we designed and implemented a set of bridging activities using Facebook (FB) to develop pragmatic awareness in elementary level Korean learners. While Korean pragmatics are typified by the frequent use of honorific pronouns and verb inflections, opportunities for experiential learning of these features in the classroom are limited, since students and instructors can genuinely[1] use only those features bound to their actual social roles. Moreover, traditional Korean textbooks tend to emphasize the role of hierarchy and formality, with examples based on invented scenarios. In response, the bridging activities we developed comprised observation and guided analysis of genuine native speaker interactions on FB threads and role play participation using simulated FB profiles of a suite of invented Korean-using characters spanning a range of ages, genders, and social roles. Based on their responses to the activities and a post-instructional survey, the students showed evidence for the development of socio-pragmatic awareness, as demonstrated by the practice of pragmatic flouting, the understanding of contextual constraints on use, and the creative use of FB affordances.

In this article, we will first review research on social networking in second and foreign language teaching and learning and on the theoretical frameworks we use: bridging activities and language awareness. After a brief primer on Korean honorifics, we present the context and participants of the implementation, and then the design of the learning activities, focusing on objectives and procedures. We follow with the results of the implementation, illustrated by excerpts from student work, including a post-instructional survey. We conclude with general discussion of limitations and implications for social network-mediated L2 teaching.

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