



A Methodological Synthesis of L2 Pragmatic Instruction Research for Korean EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

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This paper presents a methodological synthesis of L2 pragmatic instruction studies conducted with Korean EFL learners, focusing on studies that conceptualize pragmatic competence as the ability to understand and perform contextually appropriate utterances. Guided by three research questions, this study examines (1) the characteristics of research designs, (2) the instructional features adopted in pragmatic instruction, and (3) statistical analyses and their reporting in previous studies. Through a comprehensive literature search of articles published between 1998 and 2025 in KCI-, SSCI-, SCOPUS-, and ESCI-indexed journals, a total of 36 empirical studies were identified and analyzed. The findings revealed that (1) research designs were often experimental designs without control/comparison groups and delayed post-tests, (2) instructional features often involved teaching speech acts through explicit instruction for a short duration, and (3) there was limited reporting of reliability measurements, assumptions of statistical tests, and effect sizes. This review outlines the current L2 pragmatic instruction in Korean EFL context, presents several methodological gaps, and offers suggestions for improving research designs and reporting practices in future studies.

KEYWORDS

L2 pragmatic instruction, methodological synthesis, EFL context, Korean EFL learners

1. Introduction

Second language pragmatics (hereafter L2 pragmatics) examines L2 learners' ability and development in understanding and producing utterances within a communicative context (Taguchi and Roever 2017). Pragmatic competence is particularly important for L2 development, as pragmatic failure leads L2 learners to be perceived as being impolite or unfriendly rather than simply linguistically inaccurate (Thomas 1983). However, L2 pragmatic development is challenging due to: (1) transfer from L1 and other languages, (2) the low salience of pragmatic knowledge, and (3) interdependence of language and social norms (Taguchi 2019). In environments with limited input and opportunities for practice, such as EFL contexts (Jeon and Kaya 2006), L2 pragmatic development becomes especially challenging.

To address these challenges, a substantial body of research has examined the role of instruction in promoting L2 pragmatic development. Early studies found the teachability of L2 pragmatics (e.g., Jeon and Kaya 2006), prompting studies to examine "how to teach, what to teach, and when to teach" (Taguchi and Roever 2017). Since then, findings have been synthesized to evaluate the overall effectiveness and identify moderating variables of L2 pragmatic instruction, with some syntheses also highlighting methodological improvements for producing more robust findings (e.g., Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). More recently, developments in technology-enhanced instruction (González-Lloret 2022) opened unprecedented opportunities for input and practice, while emerging perspectives such as interactional competence (Waring 2018) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Taguchi 2021) are reconceptualizing the very idea of pragmatic competence.

While numerous syntheses on L2 pragmatic instruction have been published, these reviews have primarily focused on the effectiveness of instruction rather than methodological characteristics and study quality. Previous meta-analyses, while coding methodological features, have largely focused on quantitative studies and have often excluded qualitative research or studies with limited statistical reporting. In addition, they have not distinguished between second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) settings or examined how methodological characteristics evolved over time. Another issue concerns the underrepresentation of primary studies involving Korean EFL learners. Despite the large number of L2 pragmatic instruction studies conducted in Korea, likely driven by the emphasis on communicative competence in the national English curriculum, these studies have not been systematically synthesized in prior reviews. This specific context may shape methodological choices in L2 pragmatic instruction research, yet such contextual influences have received limited attention in prior syntheses.

These limitations point to the need for a context-sensitive methodological synthesis of L2 pragmatic instruction research on Korean EFL learners. The present study examines the methodological characteristics of L2 pragmatic instruction studies in Korea that conceptualize pragmatic competence as the ability to understand and perform contextually appropriate utterances. It examines research design, instructional features, and statistical reporting practices to provide a comprehensive understanding of current research practices and inform future studies in this domain. Its findings offer insights into methodological trends, strengths, and gaps in L2 pragmatic instruction research in Korea, while situating these findings in relation to international research and the Korean context. The following are the research questions addressed in the current study:

1. What are the characteristics of research designs in L2 pragmatic instruction studies on Korean EFL learners?
2. What are the characteristics of instructional features in L2 pragmatic instruction studies on Korean EFL learners?
3. Among studies using inferential statistics, how are statistical analyses conducted and their reporting addressed in L2 pragmatic instruction studies on Korean EFL learners?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Reviews of L2 Pragmatic Instruction Research

Pragmatic competence has been conceptualized as pragmalinguistic competence (i.e., the ability to use language for forming utterances) and sociopragmatic competence (i.e., the ability to understand communicative contexts and their social norms) (Leech 1983). These contexts have usually been operationalized by assigning high or low levels to the variables of power (P), distance (D), and rank of imposition (R) (Brown and Levinson 1987), with a higher PDR level associated with a greater need for politeness. To assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence, multiple data collection methods, such as discourse completion tests (DCTs) and role-plays, have been incorporated in the field. DCTs are often considered to be advantageous in collecting and comparing large amounts of utterances (Cyluk 2013), while role-plays are advantageous in more closely resembling actual communication (Bardovi-Harlig 2013). Multiple-choice tasks (MCTs) have also been used to examine metapragmatic awareness and pragmatic comprehension (Taguchi and Roever 2017).

Based on this background, numerous studies have been conducted and synthesized to examine how L2 pragmatic instruction facilitates L2 learners' development. Jeon and Kaya (2006) conducted one of the first meta-analyses, which demonstrated the effectiveness of L2 pragmatic instruction, the possible advantage of explicit over implicit instruction, and a positive relationship between instructional length and learning outcomes. Their findings also revealed that over half of included studies employed explicit instruction, focused on speech acts, were of long duration, targeted advanced learners, and used DCTs and production tasks for assessment. However, Jeon and Kaya (2006) cautioned that their findings could not represent the entirety of L2 pragmatic instruction research, as approximately 50% of the identified studies were excluded due to qualitative methodologies or insufficient statistical reporting. Furthermore, despite the near-even split between FL and SL settings, any potential methodological differences between the two settings were not examined. This study recommended multiple methodological improvements, most notably the inclusion of control groups and delayed post-tests along with a greater reporting of reliability of assessment methods.

Taguchi (2015) is a seminal narrative review that not only confirmed that explicit instruction tends to be more effective than implicit instruction but also examined the factors underlying the few studies that deviated from this trend. Based on this analysis, Taguchi (2015) suggested that implicit instruction could be as effective as explicit instruction when accompanied by sufficient guidance, noticing, attention, and cognitive processing through activities such as input enhancement and consciousness-raising. The review also identified several directions for future research, including (1) examining interactions between instruction methods, assessment methods, and target items, (2) investigating a wider range of languages and target items, (3) incorporating a broader range of theoretical frameworks, and (4) employing delayed post-tests and examining learners' actual communication beyond instruction. Despite these contributions, however, the review was limited to studies with pre-/post-tests and did not include a separate analysis focusing on methodological rigor.

Updating these two reviews, Plonsky and Zhuang (2019) conducted a meta-analysis that yielded a large effect size with long-term retention. Their findings also confirmed previous findings on the relatively larger effects of explicit than implicit instruction, a positive relationship between learning outcomes and instruction length, as well as the continued focus on speech acts, intermediate-level learners, university contexts, and productive and controlled assessments. It also included moderator analyses that provided pedagogical implications on which activities (e.g., feedback) increase learning outcomes and whether intermediate or higher learners are better suited for L2 pragmatic instruction than beginner learners. The most notable aspect of this study is its systematic

evaluation of methodological rigor and reporting practices, resulting in recommendations for (1) using delayed post-tests, (2) using various assessment methods, (3) measuring the reliability of outcomes, and (4) reporting teaching methods and descriptive statistics. While these recommendations help improve study quality, they were based on studies published only up to 2016.

The most up-to-date meta-analysis on L2 pragmatic instruction was conducted by Ren et al. (2023), which continued to demonstrate large effects of instruction across included studies, which mostly examined speech acts, intermediate learners, and university settings. Nevertheless, an increase in non-university contexts was also noted. Similar to earlier reviews, explicit instruction had larger effects than implicit instruction, but the difference between these two instruction types was not statistically significant. Ren et al. (2023) attributed this finding to recent increases in implicit instruction and innovative methods, such as task-based language teaching or technology-mediated instruction. In addition, FL had larger learning outcomes than SL settings, likely because FL learners receive less input and communication opportunities, making them more amenable to L2 pragmatic instruction. Despite this difference between the two settings, the calculation of effect sizes and reporting of methodological characteristics were not separated for these two settings. Furthermore, this study provides limited methodological implications, as it did not update Plonsky and Zhuang's (2019) analysis on study quality and reporting practices.

Recent reviews on L2 pragmatics have also begun to examine specific topics in greater depth. One notable study is Zhang and Aubrey (2024), which is a systematic review focusing on individual difference factors in L2 pragmatic instruction, competence, and development in study-abroad contexts. This has been one of the most comprehensive reviews by including both quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing an examination of not just cognitive but also affective and sociocultural factors, such as learner identity, L2 motivation, and intercultural competence. Findings related to L2 pragmatic instruction revealed a positive but mixed relationship with L2 proficiency, while working memory and L2 motivation had a positive relationship with learning outcomes. However, by only including primary studies involving adult learners, these findings might not be applicable to pre-tertiary learners in FL classrooms. It also offered limited methodological guidance by not including a comprehensive evaluation of methodological characteristics, such as assessment methods.

2.2 L2 Pragmatic Instruction Research in Korea: A Need for a Review

Previous reviews on L2 pragmatic instruction have included narrative reviews (Taguchi 2015), meta-analyses (Jeon and Kaya 2006, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019), and systematic reviews (Zhang and Aubrey 2024), but methodological syntheses have not been conducted to date. Methodological syntheses describe and evaluate the methodological aspects of a given research domain to examine trends and provide recommendations (Chong and Plonsky 2024, p. 1581). In L2 instruction research, methodological syntheses have examined (1) research design and context, (2) instructional features and assessment methods, and (3) statistical analyses and reporting practices (e.g., Elgort 2018, Kim and Namkung 2024, Liu and Brown 2015, Sok et al. 2019, Zhang and Plonsky 2020). This in-depth coding advances each field by identifying the current range of research and teaching methods, revealing underexplored contexts and teaching methods, examining validity issues with research designs, and suggesting robust statistical and reporting practices. As such, a methodological synthesis of L2 pragmatic instruction is valuable in advancing study quality and methodological considerations in the field.

While meta-analyses do code methodological characteristics, their scope and analysis have resulted in the following research gaps. First, these reviews focused on effect sizes and their between-study heterogeneity rather than methodological issues, with the main exception being Plonsky and Zhuang (2019). Second, the

methodological characteristics reported in meta-analyses were limited to quantitative studies reporting sufficient statistical details, thereby excluding qualitative studies and quantitative studies with limited statistical reporting. Third, most reviews have also combined SL and FL settings when reporting methodological characteristics. Given that differences between FL and SL settings influence L2 instruction, it is likely that FL settings have unique methodological characteristics that need to be further examined. Finally, previous reviews have not analyzed methodological characteristics over time, making temporal trends and recent changes less clear. These limitations call for an update and extension of Plonsky and Zhuang (2019) by evaluating the methodological characteristics of L2 pragmatic instruction in FL settings over time.

Methodological choices in L2 instructional research are often shaped by contextual factors such as curriculum goals, assessment practices, and classroom conditions. In the Korean EFL context, these factors may lead to an increasing interest in L2 pragmatic instruction while also presenting challenges. The national English curriculum in Korea has emphasized communicative competence (Moodie and Nam 2016) and English for global communication (Cho 2023), revealing the relevance of L2 pragmatic instruction research to Korean English education. Despite this curricular emphasis, classroom practices have often been influenced by native speaker norms due to issues with accuracy-based assessments and limited teacher preparation (Yeom and Lee 2013). The strong washback of the Korean Scholastic Ability Test (KSAT) has also shaped an emphasis on exam preparation and receptive skills (Chung and Choi 2016), especially after elementary education (Moodie and Nam 2016), potentially influencing both instructional design and assessment practices in research. In addition, English classrooms in Korea often have wide variation in L2 proficiency (Jin and Kwon 2020), higher levels of speaking anxiety (Jeong and Kim 2021), and operate under constraints such as limited instructional time and intact class groupings.

These distinctive characteristics suggest that L2 pragmatic instruction research conducted in Korea may reflect context-specific methodological patterns that warrant systematic examination and interpretation. A substantial body of research on L2 pragmatic instruction has accumulated in Korea, making it a particularly valuable site for examining methodological patterns with Korean EFL learners. A considerable portion of such work would have been published in domestic journals and in the local language by Korean scholars (Moodie and Nam 2016). However, prior reviews (e.g., Taguchi 2015, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Zhang and Aubrey 2024) have not incorporated Korean databases or journals, offering only a partial insight into L2 pragmatic instruction research in Korea. As a result, the methodological rigor, instructional designs, and reporting standards of this body of research remain insufficiently understood. A methodological review that incorporates Korean databases would offer insights into (1) the methodological characteristics of Korean research compared to international research, (2) interpretations of how the Korean context could have shaped these characteristics, (3) the strengths and limitations of the validity of current findings, and (4) considerations for Korean researchers and practitioners when designing L2 pragmatic instruction.

3. Methodology

3.1 Literature Search

The following methods were incorporated to conduct a comprehensive literature search: (1) searching in Korean databases using both Korean and English keywords, (2) searching in international databases using English keywords, (3) manually searching in relevant KCI journals, (4) examining empirical studies in previous secondary

research on L2 pragmatics, and (5) forward and backward searching on the identified primary studies. All searches were conducted from July to September of 2025, and the included studies were published between 1998 and 2025.

Databases were chosen for their broad coverage and frequent use in academic research. The Korean databases searched in this study were Research Information Sharing Service (RISS), Korean Studies Information Service System (KISS), DBpia, and Korea Citation Index (KCI), while the international databases searched in this study were Web of Science, Scopus, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Separate searches in Korean databases were conducted because Korean journals and Korean-written articles might not be indexed in international databases.

To conduct the most comprehensive search possible, only the most general terms were drawn from previous secondary research and grouped into four themes (Table 1). Search terms of each theme were combined using OR, then themes were combined using AND in the following pairs: L2 pragmatics and teaching, target items and teaching, and assessment methods and L2 pragmatics. As RISS, KISS, and DBpia allowed a maximum of five terms without nesting boolean searches, the search-within-results function was used to filter studies falling under both themes within each pair. The same search method was implemented using nested boolean searching in KCI. Searches were conducted twice, once in Korean and another in English¹.

For Web of Science and Scopus, nesting boolean searching and truncation with numerous search terms were used (Table 2). The same logic used in Korean databases was used to combine the same pair of themes using AND and their search terms with OR. In addition, the search term Korea* was added to narrow results to studies from Korea. However, because ERIC returned only a small number of results with this method, we searched ERIC using broader keywords such as *pragmatic* and *pragmatics* then filtered the results by location to identify Korean studies.

Table 1. Korean and English Search Terms for Korean Databases

Theme	Korean Search Terms	English Search Terms
L2 pragmatics	화용	Pragmatics
Teaching	지도, 교육, 교수, 학습	Instruction, teaching, pedagogy
Target items	화행, 함축	Speech act, implicature
Assessment	담화 완성 과제, 역할극, 메타 화용 판단 과제, 구두 보고	Metapragmatic judgement, discourse completion, role play, retrospective verbal report

Table 2. Search Terms for International Databases

Theme	Search Terms
L2 pragmatics	Interlanguage, pragmatics, pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic, pragmatic competence
Teaching	Instruction, teaching, pedagogy
Target items	Speech acts (request, refusal, apology, compliment), politeness, implicature, humor
Assessment	Metapragmatic judgement tasks, discourse completion tasks, role play, retrospective verbal report

Search fields and filters were adjusted to match the language and database of the search. For all searches in Korean databases, publication type was filtered to journal articles. Reflecting recent trends in systematic reviews that limit searches to peer-reviewed and well-indexed journals (Ren et al. 2023), this study restricted the search to articles indexed in KCI, SSCI, SCOPUS, and ESCI.

¹ Korean searches were not made in DBpia because search within results could not be restricted to certain database fields.

To find studies not indexed in databases, manual searches were conducted on KCI-indexed Korean journals related to English education. The three authors selected journals registered in KCI under Linguistics, English Language and Culture, and Education. The selected list of journals searched is listed in Appendix A. Journals were selected if their scope or recent publications included applied linguistics, English education, or pragmatics. Each journal was accessed through their website or DBpia and searched using the widest possible data field (e.g., total, abstract, keywords) and search terms (e.g., pragmatic) in both Korean and English.

All searches were conducted by the first author, then replicated by the third author to verify search results. Articles that were not included in the first author's results but were in the third author's results were added to the final pool of studies for inclusion and exclusion. This search resulted in approximately 3,500 studies.

An additional search was conducted in April of 2026 to locate papers related to interactional competence. We used the most helpful strategies from the search above. First, RISS and KCI were searched using Korean and English search terms, and WOS and Scopus were searched using English search terms (Table 3). Similar methods from previous searches were used to filter KCI, SSCI, SCOPUS, or ESCI-indexed journal articles on both interactional competence and teaching. Second, a manual search was conducted in the same KCI journals as the previous search. Third, reviews (Marian and Balaman 2018, Zhai and Wibowo 2023) and handbook chapters (Young 2019) on interactional competence were consulted for relevant studies. This search was conducted by the first author.

Table 3. Search Terms for Interactional Competence

Theme	Korean Search Terms	English Search Terms
Framework	상호작용 능력, 의사소통 능력	Interactional competence
Teaching	지도, 교육, 교수, 학습	Instruction, teaching

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion

The decision to include or exclude each study was made twice. The first decision was made based on the title and abstract, and the second decision was made based on the full text. This two-stage process allowed us to efficiently remove unrelated studies based on the title and abstract, then carefully study each full-text for a well-informed decision.

In the first decision, the first and third author began by coding 10% of the data to develop a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 4). These criteria have limited primary studies to those teaching English pragmatics to Korean learners in the Korean EFL context. Studies were not limited to a specific methodology, encompassing a wide range of both experimental/quantitative studies and non-experimental/qualitative studies.

Table 4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. The target language is English.	1. The target language is not English.
2. The study includes L2 pragmatic instruction.	2. The study does not include L2 pragmatic instruction.
3. The instruction was conducted in Korea with Korean participants.	3. The instruction does not target pragmatic competence.
4. The study is written in English or Korean.	4. The participants are not Korean learners in Korea.

Based on these criteria, all three authors independently determined the inclusion or exclusion of 50% of studies. Interrater agreement was computed using Fleiss' Kappa (Fleiss et al. 1969), resulting in $k = 0.68$, which indicates substantial agreement (Landis and Koch 1977). As interrater reliability was sufficiently high, the second author

determined the inclusion or exclusion of the remaining 50% of studies, whose results were further reviewed by the first and third author. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussions. This resulted in approximately 57 studies for full-text screening.

In the full-text screening, the three authors made an independent decision for each study, then settled on discrepancies through discussions. Studies were often excluded because (1) participants were not Korean learners, (2) DCTs were used to examine learners' interlanguage, and (3) textbook materials or tests were analyzed without pragmatic instruction. Three other noteworthy exclusion cases were studies that (1) tested the effectiveness of isolated tasks without embedding them into instruction, (2) taught general cultural knowledge or speaking skills less relevant to pragmatic competence, and (3) examined Korean learners in study-abroad rather than EFL contexts.

In addition, the second author also scanned the primary studies included in prior secondary research on L2 pragmatic instruction (e.g., Jeon and Kaya 2006, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023, Taguchi 2015) but did not find additional relevant studies. Based on the resulting studies, forward and backward searching was conducted using Google Scholar and KCI. This resulted in a final 36 studies for data analysis. A PRISMA flow chart summarizing the search and inclusion or exclusion process is provided in Figure 1².

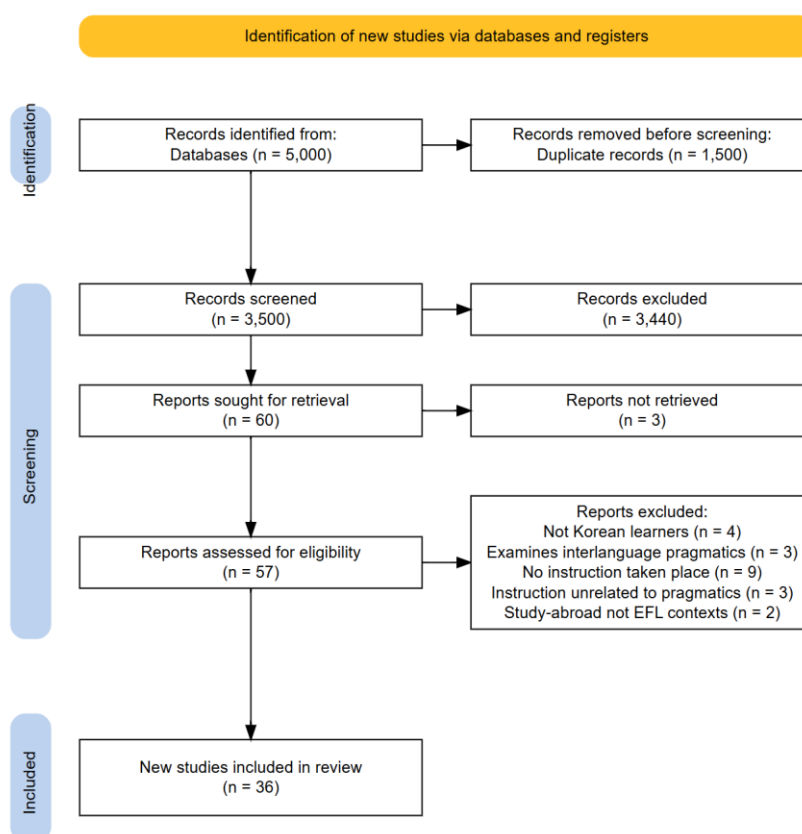


Figure 1. A PRISMA Flowchart (Created Using Haddaway et al. 2022)

2 The results from the additional search on interactional competence were all excluded as they (1) did not include interventions or (2) were not grounded in interactional competence frameworks. This additional search was, therefore, not included in the PRISMA flow chart (Figure 1).

3.3 Coding and Data Analysis

The authors began by referring to coding schemes used in previous secondary research in L2 pragmatic instruction (e.g., Taguchi 2015). The scheme used in Plonsky and Zhuang (2019) was carefully examined for codes on methodological characteristics and reporting practices. The resulting scheme included codes on (1) research design (e.g., group comparisons), (2) participants (e.g., L2 proficiency), (3) L2 pragmatic instruction (e.g., metapragmatic instruction), (4) findings (e.g., results), (5) reporting statistics (e.g., reliability measurements), and (6) reporting materials (e.g., teaching materials). Only codes relevant to each study design were recorded. For instance, codes on random group assignment or inferential statistics were often not recorded for non-experimental case studies.

Studies were classified into experimental and non-experimental studies, then coded and reviewed by all three authors. Repeated discussions were held to modify pre-existing annotation schemes for this study. It should be noted that, whenever possible, the authors coded based on the wording used in the primary studies. For instance, L2 proficiency descriptors such as intermediate or advanced were coded as reported, even though the studies used different measures to assess L2 proficiency. The resulting codes were analyzed using descriptive statistics of the frequency of each code and qualitatively examined for recurring themes across studies.

4. Results

4.1 Research Designs in L2 Pragmatic Instruction Studies on Korean Learners

4.1.1 Study types and group configuration

An analysis of study types showed that the majority of the reviewed studies adopted an experimental design (Table 5). Specifically, 12 of them (33%) employed experimental designs combining quantitative analyses with inferential statistics and qualitative data, while 12 (33%) used quantitative designs with inferential statistics only. In addition, four studies (11%) adopted quantitative designs without inferential statistics, another four studies (11%) used quantitative data without inferential statistics along with qualitative data, and a final four studies (11%) employed non-experimental designs. Overall, these findings indicate a strong preference for experimental approaches, although the use of inferential statistics and qualitative data varied across studies.

Table 5. Study Types

Study Types	Number of Studies
Experimental (Quantitative with inferential statistics + Qualitative)	12
Experimental (Quantitative with inferential statistics)	12
Experimental (Quantitative without inferential statistics)	4
Experimental (Quantitative without inferential statistics + Qualitative)	4
Non-experimental	4
Total	36

Building on this general preference for experimental approaches, a closer examination of the 32 experimental studies revealed considerable variation in terms of group configurations. 11 studies (34%) adopted a traditional experimental–control group comparison, 10 studies (32%) compared two or more experimental groups without a

control group, and 11 studies (34%) implemented a single experimental group without a control condition. These results indicate variation in group design, with a substantial number of studies relying on designs without an explicit control condition.

4.1.2 Testing procedures and assessment method

With respect to testing procedures, out of the 33 studies that reported assessments of pragmatic competence, we have found that 27 studies (82%) administered a pre-test, while 32 (97%) studies included a post-test, indicating that some studies implemented post-tests without a corresponding pre-test. In addition, only 11 studies (33%) employed a delayed post-test, suggesting that relatively few studies examined the durability of treatment effects over time.

When the implementation of delayed post-tests was examined over time (Table 6), no studies conducted delayed post-tests in the 1990s or 2000s. In contrast, the use of delayed post-tests emerged in the 2010s, with seven out of 18 studies (39%) incorporating these tests, and continued into the 2020s, where four out of nine studies (44%) reported the use of delayed post-tests. This pattern indicates a growing methodological attention to the durability of instructional effects in more recent research.

Table 6. Delayed Post-tests by Time Period

Delayed Post-tests	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Yes	0	0	7	4	11
Total*	2	4	18	9	33

* Total includes studies conducting L2 pragmatic assessment regardless of research design.

When studies were examined concerning assessment method and mode, written discourse completion tasks (DCTs) were the most commonly used instrument, appearing in 22 out of 33 studies (67%). In contrast, spoken assessments were relatively rare, including role-plays (3 out of 33; 9%) and spoken DCTs (2 out of 33; 6%). Other assessment formats included multiple-choice questions (2 out of 33; 6%) and various other methods (8 out of 33; 24%). These findings indicate a strong preference for written, elicited measures of pragmatic competence.

4.1.3 Instructional context and participants' proficiency level

Regarding instructional context, the majority of the studies (29 out of 36; 81%) implemented the treatment during regular class hours, whereas seven studies (19%) delivered the treatment outside regular class hours. These findings suggest that most interventions were conducted within regular classroom contexts.

In terms of institutional level, the largest proportion of studies targeted university-level learners (25 out of 36; 69%). This was followed by studies conducted in middle schools (6 out of 36; 17%), high schools (3 out of 36; 8%), and elementary schools (2 out of 36; 6%). These results indicate a strong research focus on higher education contexts. When the institutional level was examined by time period (Table 7), the dominance of university-level learners was observed across all time periods. Research conducted in elementary and secondary school settings was limited, especially in earlier decades. From the 2010s onward, however, studies including middle and high school learners began to appear more consistently, and elementary school-level research emerged in the 2010s and continued into the 2020s. Overall, although university-based research remains predominant, the distribution across institutional levels suggests a gradual broadening of research contexts in more recent decades.

Table 7. Institutional Level by Time Period

Institutional level	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
University	2	2	15	6	25
High school	0	1	0	2	3
Middle school	0	1	3	2	6
Elementary school	0	0	1	1	2
Total	2	4	19	11	36

When the studies were examined in terms of participants' language proficiency levels, a large variation was found across studies. Intermediate-level learners were the most commonly targeted group (9 out of 36; 25%), followed by beginner-level learners (6 out of 36; 17%) and advanced-level learners (2 out of 36; 6%). However, eight studies (22%) did not report participants' proficiency levels, and an additional 11 studies (31%) provided only written descriptions or categorized participants into multiple proficiency levels.

4.2 Instructional Features in L2 Pragmatic Instruction Studies on Korean Learners

4.2.1 Instructional focus

An analysis of instructional targets³ revealed that speech acts were the most commonly investigated target items. Among them, requests were addressed in 20 studies (56%), followed by refusals (9 out of 36; 25%), complaints (2 out of 36; 6%), and apologies and advice-giving (3 out of 36; 8% each). In addition, nine studies examined other types of speech acts (e.g., complaints, invitations, compliment responses, gratitude, and disagreement). Implicature was examined in two studies (6%). Other target items included email writing (5 out of 36; 14%) and formulaic sequences (2 out of 36; 6%).

4.2.2 Instruction type

When the instructional type adopted in the reviewed studies was examined in terms of explicit and implicit instruction⁴, explicit instruction was by far the most commonly reported instructional method, appearing in 31 studies (74%). Implicit instruction was reported in 11 studies (26%), while one study (3%) did not provide sufficient information.

When the instructional type was examined by time period (Table 8), there appeared to be an increase in the number of studies adopting implicit instructions, as seven of them were published after 2011. The trend, however, needs to be interpreted with caution, as the studies including implicit instruction only account for 21% (7 out of 34) of the total publications during the same period, compared to 44% (4 out of 9) before 2010. These four studies were conducted by the same author and followed a similar design that compared learning gains between explicitly instructed and implicitly instructed groups (H. Kim 2016 on comparison between types of instruction, 2017 on awareness, 2018 on long-term effects, 2019 on feedback).

³ It should be noted that these percentages do not add up to 100% because some studies taught more than one target item in the same study.

⁴ It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive, as some studies implemented more than one instructional method.

Table 8. Instruction Type by Time Period

Instruction Type	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Explicit Instruction	2	3	18	8	31
Implicit Instruction	1	3	5	2	11
Not reported	0	0	0	1	1
Total*	3	6	23	11	43

* The total number exceeds the number of primary studies because some studies have examined both instruction types.

4.2.3 Instructional activities

When the types of instructional activities used in instruction were analyzed, we found that input-based activities were the most frequently employed, appearing in 35 out of 36 studies (97%). Production practice was reported in 29 studies (81%), indicating a strong emphasis on learners' output. In addition, peer or teacher-led discussion was included in 26 studies (72%), while consciousness-raising activities were used in 22 studies (61%). Less frequently reported activities included feedback (10 out of 36; 28%) and input enhancement (4 out of 36; 11%). These results demonstrate that most studies combined multiple activity types, with a strong focus on input, production, and interaction.

4.2.4 Instruction duration

When examining the 30 studies where instruction duration could be computed in minutes, we followed Ren et al. (2023) in coding durations shorter than three hours as short, between three and 18 hours as medium, and those longer than 18 hours as long. Short-term instruction was the most common across the reviewed studies, accounting for 40% of studies (12 out of 30), followed by medium-length instruction (12 studies; 40%), while long-term instruction was the least frequently reported (6 studies; 20%). When examined by time period (Table 9), during the 2000s, instruction duration was more evenly distributed across short, medium, and long categories. From the 2010s onward, however, short-term and medium-length instruction became increasingly dominant. In particular, in the 2020s, the majority of studies employed short-term instruction (56%), whereas medium- and long-term instruction accounted for smaller proportions. These findings suggest a gradual shift toward shorter instructional interventions in more recent decades.

Table 9. Instruction Duration by Time Period

Duration	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Short (≤ 3 hours)	0	1	6	5	12
Medium (between 3 and 18 hours)	0	2	8	2	12
Long (≥ 18 hours)	1	1	2	2	6
Total*	1	4	16	9	30

* Total includes studies that reported instruction duration in minutes. Some studies have reported the number of classes (e.g., 2 sessions) or instruction length (e.g., 4 weeks). These were excluded because they could not be compared with the instruction duration in other studies.

4.2.5 Reporting materials

This review also examined the reporting of teaching and assessment materials. Teaching materials, such as worksheets, were provided in 53% (19 out of 36) of studies, while assessment materials, such as DCT questions, were reported in 64% (23 out of 36) of studies.

A clear temporal pattern was found for the reporting of teaching and assessment materials (Table 10 and Table 11). In the 1990s and 2000s, the reporting of both was relatively limited. From the 2010s onward, however, substantial increases were evident. In particular, the reporting of teaching materials rose markedly in the 2020s (9 out of 11; 82%), and assessment materials were also reported at relatively high rates in the 2010s (13 out of 18; 72%) and 2020s (8 out of 9; 89%). These findings suggest an improvement in the transparency of materials reporting over time, with more recent studies demonstrating greater attention to providing both teaching and assessment materials.

Table 10. Reporting Teaching Materials by Time Period

Materials	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Teaching Materials	0	1	9	9	19
Total*	2	4	19	11	36

* Total refers to the number of studies published during the given decade.

Table 11. Reporting Assessment Materials by Time Period

Materials	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Assessment Materials	1	1	13	8	23
Total*	2	4	18	9	33

* Total includes studies conducting L2 pragmatic assessment regardless of research design.

4.2.6 Additional dimensions examined beyond pragmatic performance

Beyond pragmatic performance, several studies (8 out of 36; 22%) examined additional dimensions of pragmatic competence⁵. Among them, (meta)pragmatic awareness was investigated in five studies (63%), while individual differences, such as L2 proficiency, were addressed in two studies (25%). Affective factors, including learner confidence, were also examined in two studies (25%). Overall, the results show that relatively few studies extended their analysis beyond pragmatic performance outcomes.

4.3 Statistical Analysis and Reporting Practices in L2 Pragmatic Instruction Studies on Korean Learners

4.3.1 Statistical reporting practices

This section examines the subset of 24 studies that involve experimental designs and inferential statistics. Among those where interrater reliability could have been reported (30 studies in total), 14 studies (47%) included reliability measurements, whereas 16 studies (53%) did not.

When examined by time period (Table 12), a clear increase over time was observed. No studies in the 1990s and 2000s reported reliability measurements. In contrast, more than half of the studies (9 out of 16) conducted in the 2010s reported reliability information (56%), and this proportion further increased in the 2020s (5 out of 8; 63%). These results indicate a gradual improvement in methodological reporting practices over time, with more recent studies demonstrating greater attention to reliability in pragmatic instruction research.

⁵ The percentages again do not add up to 100%, as some studies have examined more than one additional dimension.

Table 12. Reliability Measurements by Time Period

Reliability Measurements	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Yes	0	0	9	5	14
Total*	2	4	16	8	30

* Total includes studies where measurements of reliability could have been reported.

Among experimental studies using inferential statistics (24 studies), descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) were reported in 23 studies (96%). Test statistics were reported in all 24 studies, along with exact *p* values also being fully reported in 16 studies and partially reported in six studies. However, other aspects of statistical reporting were less common. The assumptions underlying statistical tests were only reported in nine studies (38%), effect sizes were reported in only four studies (17%), and confidence intervals were reported in only one study.

A growing yet still limited statistical reporting was found across time (Table 13). Means and standard deviations showed complete reporting in studies published from the 2010s and onward. Exact *p* values similarly showed a clear increase and reached full reporting in the 2020s. The percentage of studies reporting statistical tests and effect sizes also grew throughout the 2010s (2 out of 14; 14%) and 2020s (2 out of 7; 29%), although the total percentage of studies doing so remained small compared to descriptive statistics and *p* values. Reporting of confidence intervals first appeared in the most recent decade. Taken together, these results indicate that while the reporting of key statistical information has become well established over time, future L2 pragmatic instruction research should provide more comprehensive statistical reporting.

Table 13. Statistical Reporting by Time Period

Statistical Reporting	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s	Total
Means	0	2	14	7	23
Standard deviations	0	2	14	7	23
Assumptions for statistical tests	0	0	6	3	9
Test statistics	0	3	14	7	24
Confidence intervals	0	0	0	1	1
Exact <i>p</i> values	0	2	13	7	22
Effect sizes	0	0	2	2	4
Total*	0	3	14	7	24

* Total includes only experimental studies using inferential statistics.

** Some studies report multiple types of statistical information.

4.3.2 Statistical tests

Within the same group of experimental studies using inferential statistics (24 studies), a wide range of tests was employed. The most frequently used tests were paired-sample *t*-tests and independent-samples *t*-tests (20 out of 24 studies; 83%), with three other studies referring to *t*-tests without specifying a specific type. Non-parametric tests were also common, including the Mann–Whitney *U* test (5 out of 24; 21%) and the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test (4 out of 24; 17%). Other statistical procedures included chi-squared analyses and Kruskal–Wallis tests (2 out of 24; 8% each), the Friedman test, repeated-measures ANOVA, repeated-measures MANOVA, linear mixed-effects models, Poisson mixed-effects models, and Pearson correlation analysis (1 out of 24; 4% each).

5. Discussion

5.1 Research Design

This study found that 88% of the reviewed studies employed experimental designs, a finding consistent with previous research (e.g., Zhang and Aubrey 2024). This pattern suggests that both international and Korean research focused on the learning outcomes measured through tests, reflecting a broader tendency in L2 research to prioritize measurable outcomes. A closer examination of the studies, however, reveals that the eight studies relying on quantitative data without inferential statistics should be interpreted with caution, as their findings may not be generalizable to the broader population. In addition, 16 studies incorporated qualitative data to complement the quantitative findings, for instance, by illustrating learning outcomes with test answers or learner perceptions. Nevertheless, these studies would benefit from explicitly adopting mixed-methods designs that combine these data types in a more systematic way and heighten the synergy between them (Riazi and Farsani 2024). An increase in non-experimental research is further needed to reveal the context-specific nature of affective or sociocultural factors, widening the current range of approaches and topics in L2 pragmatic instruction research in Korea.

Among experimental studies, it was found that 66% of them did not include control or comparison groups. One possible explanation for this pattern is that 81% of the studies implemented treatments during regular class hours, where establishing these groups is difficult. Another contributing factor may be the difficulties of recruiting a sufficient number of participants to form multiple groups (Loewen and Plonsky 2017). While these constraints are understandable, the absence of control or comparison groups nonetheless limits the validity of outcomes. Control groups are needed for determining whether observed learning outcomes can be attributed to the instructional treatment rather than to external factors (Loewen and Plonsky 2017, Taguchi 2015), such as practice effects (Ren et al. 2023). This issue is particularly relevant in Korean research contexts, where participants are often unfamiliar with pragmatics and studies tend to be of short duration, thereby increasing the likelihood of practice effects. Similarly, comparison groups are necessary for evaluating the relative effectiveness of different instructional methods, an issue that has remained central to L2 pragmatic instruction research (Taguchi 2015, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). With carefully controlled designs, it further becomes possible to isolate the effects of specific variables (e.g., activities) on learning outcomes. We therefore follow previous recommendations that studies should incorporate control and comparison groups to enhance the validity of their findings (e.g., Jeon and Kaya 2006).

Even among studies that included control or comparison groups, we found that only six studies randomly assigned participants to each condition. It is likely that, as studies often used intact classes during regular class hours, reassigning students randomly to different conditions was not always possible. The lack of random assignment limits internal validity, as the possibility of pre-existing group differences makes it difficult to attribute findings to the treatment (Loewen and Plonsky 2017). On the other hand, the practical and ethical considerations of applied linguistics research have often made random assignments challenging (Rogers and Révész 2019). There are additional benefits of ecological validity for non-random assignments as well, which better reflect the conditions where instruction takes place (Rogers and Révész 2019), such as Korean classroom settings. When designing studies, these considerations should be balanced to decide whether to incorporate random assignment.

With regard to the measurement of L2 proficiency, studies most frequently used standardized tests, oral interviews, CEFR-based self-assessments, and researcher-developed instruments. This wide range of instruments mirrors what has been observed in L2 pragmatic instruction (Jeon and Kaya 2006) and SLA research more broadly (Park et al. 2025). However, such variation makes it difficult to compare findings across studies, as learners

classified as intermediate in one study may be considered advanced in another. Researchers should therefore adopt CEFR-aligned assessments or develop standardized tests tailored to Korean EFL learners' pragmatic abilities. A more Korea-specific concern is that a large portion of studies used L2 proficiency tests measuring only receptive skills (e.g., TOEIC test) and provided little description of learners' production skills. With the frequent inclusion of production activities and productive assessments, productive skills appear to play a key role in L2 pragmatic instruction and development. Given that Korean learners tend to have higher receptive than productive skills due to the limitations of FL settings (Jeon and Kaya 2006) and the pressures of KSAT (Chung and Choi 2016), however, it is difficult to understand how Korean learners' production skills may influence pragmatic instruction and assessment. This gap is especially concerning when examining individual differences across L2 proficiency, as learners with relatively higher receptive skills might have lower production skills than others. It is recommended, therefore, that studies include assessment of productive skills when measuring L2 proficiency.

Among studies with assessments, 33% of studies included delayed post-tests. This low percentage could be attributed to intact classroom settings, where delayed post-tests might create practical difficulties. The limited number of L2 pragmatic materials for teaching Korean learners (Jo 2016) would have also created difficulties with developing an additional test. Nevertheless, its increase over time is a promising finding, as it aligns with international calls for research on long-term learning and study quality (e.g., Plonsky and Gass 2011). Future studies should continue to consider incorporating delayed post-tests to examine long-term effects. For instance, some instructional methods need more time to yield observable effects (Loewen and Plonsky 2017), while others differ in the durability of learning outcomes (e.g., Kim and Taguchi 2015). In addition, similar to prior reviews (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019), there was considerable variation in the interval between post- and delayed post-tests across studies. While this does complicate long-term effects (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019), there also seems to be no clear standard for when delayed post-tests should be conducted (Loewen and Plonsky 2017).

Regarding assessment methods, written DCTs were used in 67%, whereas spoken assessment appeared in only 15% of studies. This tendency toward controlled written assessments has also been observed in previous reviews (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023). One possible explanation is that DCTs are suitable for quantitative methodologies with short durations (Alsuhaibani 2022) and have often been used to examine speech acts in a single turn (e.g., Kim and Taguchi 2015). The large size of Korean classrooms is also a probable reason, as the DCTs can be standardized and administered to multiple students at once (Culpeper et al. 2018). Despite these advantages, DCTs differ from real-life interactions in that they: (1) elicit pragmatic knowledge rather than actual performance and (2) have single instead of multiple turns (Taguchi and Roever 2017). These differences mean that, even if the DCTs of a study resulted in large effects, learners may still struggle to use the target items in actual interaction. To address this limitation, studies should consider employing L2 pragmatic assessment methods that elicit interactive data (e.g., role-plays) (Taguchi and Roever 2017). However, role-plays also present challenges, including interlocutor effects and concerns regarding scoring reliability (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). These issues may be particularly pronounced in Korean classrooms, where interlocutor effects are likely to be amplified due to the considerable variation in L2 proficiency among students (Jin and Kwon 2020). As such, alternative approaches may be considered, such as spoken DCTs, which can preserve some authenticity while maintaining practicality (Cohen 2020), or the emerging assessment methods involving AI chatbots (e.g., Youn 2025). In addition, as our included studies often used only one assessment method, we also support Plonsky and Zhuang's (2019) recommendation that future studies should incorporate multiple assessment methods. Most notably, a combination of productive assessments and receptive measures, such as metapragmatic judgment tasks or multiple-choice formats (Culpeper et al. 2018), would provide a more comprehensive evaluation of pragmatic competence.

Similar to Ren et al. (2023), our review found a strong focus on Korean university contexts and a growing

interest in pre-tertiary ones. Korean universities are unique in that they are among the earliest institutional levels to offer English conversation classes with highly motivated learners (Cho 2004). In other words, it is likely that the available conversation classes in Korean universities led to more L2 pragmatic instruction research with these students. Another possible reason is that the high pressures from KSAT (Chang 2009, Cho 2004, Chung and Choi 2016) led to pushback against conducting L2 pragmatic instruction in pre-tertiary classrooms. On the other hand, the emerging research in pre-tertiary contexts could reflect the recent emphasis on communicative competence in the national English curriculum (Cho 2023). This change is noteworthy because, from a methodological perspective, institutional levels could lead to innovations in teaching methods. Korean research in pre-tertiary contexts, for instance, appears to have focused on adopting L2 pragmatic instruction for younger learners, such as teaching specific expressions rather than general strategies (e.g., Kim and Taguchi 2015) or creating engaging tasks such as card games, AI voice recognition programming, and animations (e.g., Son and Youn 2023).

5.2 Instructional Features

When it came to the target items, this study found that most studies target speech acts, particularly requests. This finding aligns with the emphasis on communicative functions in the national English curriculum and with the predominance of speech acts as instructional targets in prior research (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023). Consequently, there have been calls for research to examine underexplored target items (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023, Taguchi 2015), such as implicatures and formulaic sequences (Taguchi and Roever 2017). Theoretically, these target items have distinct linguistic and contextual demands, which in turn shape how they can be taught and learned. For instance, simple items, such as chunks and formulaic sequences, could be taught through implicit methods, while more complicated items would require more explicit explanations (Taguchi 2015). Another example is that some formulaic implicatures (e.g., pope-Q question), unlike other items, often require culture-specific knowledge for learners to comprehend their intended meaning. Given these differences, future research should expand the range of target items and explore their suitable teaching methods to account for their distinct linguistic and contextual demands.

Moreover, this focus on speech acts reveals the need for a broader conceptualization of pragmatic competence in Korean research. Two recent developments in the field were notably underrepresented in the included studies. The first is interactional competence, which examines how interactions unfold across multiple turns in real-life (Waring 2018). The present review found that most studies taught target items within a single turn, and searches for studies on interactional competence did not return relevant results. The result shows that it is unclear how Korean students could be taught to perform in multi-turn, actual interactions rather than single-turn tasks such as DCTs. It is also unclear how students should be trained to manage multi-turn interactions, such as preference organization, topic management, and collaboration (Taguchi and Roever 2017). The second is the growing recognition of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which argues that pragmatic norms are co-created through interactions within specific contexts (Taguchi 2021). Although this perspective aligns with recent developments in the national English curriculum (Cho 2023), it has not been found among the studies included in this review. This is perhaps not surprising, given that L2 pragmatics and ELF itself have just begun to emerge in L2 pragmatic research (Taguchi 2021). Subsequent research in Korea would also benefit from incorporating this perspective by moving beyond a sole reliance on native speaker norms and preparing learners for effective communication in a globalized world.

With regard to instructional approaches, 26% of studies employed implicit instruction, along with minimal changes in percentage over the decades. This low percentage might warrant future research on effective implicit

instruction, given its distinctive focus on facilitating deep processing of the input and fluency through ample practice (Taguchi 2015). One possible explanation is that implicit instruction might take longer than explicit instruction because it involves analyzing large amounts of input, making the teaching method challenging with the limited classroom time in FL settings. Furthermore, implicit instruction often has the teacher acting as a facilitator and promotes learner autonomy, which may not align with the lecture-based instructional style commonly observed in Korean English classrooms (Lee and Kim 2013). This challenge might have led researchers to refrain from examining implicit instruction in Korean EFL contexts. However, the most recent studies with implicit instruction incorporating AI chatbots (e.g., Ahn and Min 2024, Sung and Kang 2024) suggest that technology-mediated instruction may be particularly well-suited to support implicit instruction in FL classrooms by facilitating sustained input exposure and interactive practice.

With respect to instructional activities, we found that 97% of the reviewed studies incorporated input and 81% included production practice. These high percentages may be explained by the fact that our review included studies conducted in FL settings, whereas Plonsky and Zhuang (2019) combined studies from both FL and SL settings. As FL settings provide much more limited opportunities for input and production practice outside the classroom (Jeon and Kaya 2006), this difference may have motivated teachers to incorporate more input and production practice within classroom instruction compared to SL settings. Meanwhile, a smaller 28% of studies used feedback, despite findings that feedback can foster learning outcomes (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). Future studies would benefit from incorporating feedback and examining how different types of feedback interact with learner characteristics, which could be enhanced by the recent advancement of AI for providing automated feedback (e.g., Sim et al. 2025, Sung and Kang 2024). Similarly, only 11% of included studies used input enhancement, suggesting that this approach remains underutilized, particularly in relation to implicit instruction.

The present review identified that 40% of studies had a short instruction duration of under 3 hours, similar to Ren et al. (2023), but also found a shift toward increasingly short-term instruction in more recent decades. This shift coincides with the increasing number of studies in English classrooms, particularly at pre-tertiary levels, which would have been affected by limited class time and the academic calendar in pre-tertiary settings. In contrast, studies with long durations were all conducted in university settings, most likely because there are English classes dedicated to conversation that allow semester-long pragmatic instruction. These findings suggest that institutional constraints also might have contributed to the lack of longitudinal research in Korea. Future longitudinal studies in pre-tertiary Korean classrooms could help identify developmental stages of Korean learners and inform how such instruction should be integrated into the national English curriculum.

The reporting practices of the included studies found limited yet promising results. Similar to Plonsky and Zhuang (2019), our review also found a lack of detail on the L2 pragmatic instruction that was conducted, as seen in the several studies that often referred to activities simply as “practice” or “practice activities,” with little details on duration, mode, or tasks. While this insufficient reporting is likely due to word limits, we would like to follow Plonsky and Zhuang’s (2019) recommendation for more transparent reporting of instructional designs. This would inform researchers and practitioners on how to design L2 pragmatic instruction within the specific context of Korean education (e.g., a wide variation in L2 proficiency). Unlike prior reviews, our review also found that, since the 2010s, there has been an increase in the number of studies reporting teaching and assessment materials. This is a positive finding because the shared materials could serve as valuable resources for Korean practitioners, who were found not to provide L2 pragmatic instruction due to a lack of available teaching materials (Jo 2016). It is also in line with the growing international attention to transparent reporting for future practice and research, especially for meta-analyses and replication research (e.g., Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). L2 pragmatic instruction in Korea should continue to make instructional materials available as appendices or to upload them to the IRIS

database to support future research and practice.

Finally, this review extends prior reviews by revealing that 22% of the included studies explored additional dimensions beyond pragmatic performance. Some studies examined metapragmatic awareness by examining whether learners could articulate their pragmatic knowledge during student interviews (e.g., Yin 2020). These studies created more robust designs, providing insights into learners' thought processes during L2 pragmatic assessment. It also allowed quantitative score increases to be attributed to pragmatic knowledge development, rather than simple rote memorization of the target expressions, for example. Other studies compared learning outcomes across L2 proficiency levels (e.g., Kim 2017, Kwak and Lee 2015). This dimension is especially relevant to the Korean classrooms, where wide variation in proficiency levels is common (Jin and Kwon 2020), and students might lack the baseline proficiency for L2 pragmatic instruction. Accordingly, future studies could explore how instruction can be adapted to better support learners at different proficiency levels. Further research is also needed to examine affective factors (e.g., Cho and Lee 2007, Lim and Han 2006), especially regarding the speaking anxiety reported among Korean learners (Jeong and Kim 2021). Moreover, exploring sociocultural factors, including identity-related variables, through qualitative methods would offer deeper insight, as demonstrated in Zhang and Aubrey (2024).

5.3 Statistical Analysis and Reporting Practices

A subset of 24 studies using inferential statistics has further revealed the robustness and transparency of statistical analysis and reporting. One encouraging finding was that most studies reported both means and standard deviations. This contrasts with previous L2 pragmatic instruction, where there has been a "lack of basic descriptive statistics, especially standard deviations" (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, p. 305). This reporting helps readers understand each study, while also suggesting the possibility of synthesizing effect sizes for L2 pragmatic instruction in Korea.

However, the findings revealed that only around half of the studies have reported reliability measurements, as also seen in previous meta-analyses (Plonsky and Zhuang 2019). This suggests that L2 pragmatic instruction research, both in Korea and more broadly, needs to report reliability estimates. These reliability estimates are especially needed for showing the quality of pragmatic assessment, as such assessments typically rely on rubrics to make context-sensitive judgments of appropriateness. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the percentage of studies reporting these reliability measurements is increasing by decade, possibly indicating a growing interest in robust methodologies. Following the suggestions of Plonsky and Zhuang (2019), subsequent research should continue reporting reliability measurements for both intra- and inter-rater reliability, using measures such as Cronbach's alpha or Cohen's kappa rather than simple percent agreement.

Similarly, about a third of the reviewed studies reported checking the assumptions underlying their statistical tests. Although this proportion is higher than the 28% reported by Plonsky and Zhuang (2019), this percentage remains relatively low. These findings are concerning because these assumptions were unlikely to be met. The most commonly used statistical tests in this review were the paired sample t-test and independent samples t-test, which both assume that (1) the dependent variable is a continuous variable and (2) has a (near-)normal distribution (Fein et al. 2022). However, treating Likert scales as continuous can distort statistical results (Sønning 2024), while normality is also often violated in applied linguistics research due to small sample sizes (Hu and Plonsky 2021). We thereby recommend explicit reporting of assumption checks and considering non-parametric tests or statistical tests for ordinal data.

One of the more concerning areas of statistical reporting was reporting effect sizes and confidence intervals.

Among our primary studies, only one study reported confidence intervals and four reported effect sizes, while most evaluated the effectiveness of instruction based on statistical significance. This proportion was much lower than approximately half of studies reporting effect sizes in Plonsky and Zhuang (2019). This focus on statistical significance has been criticized for depending on sample size and overshadowing practical significance (Plonsky and Oswald 2014). In other words, meaningful effects are overlooked when they fail to reach statistical significance, while negligible effects may be considered important when they reach statistical significance. Future research should therefore place greater emphasis on effect sizes and confidence intervals for practical significance and shift the focus from the existence of an effect to their magnitude and confidence and meta-analyzing them (Cumming 2012). This shift will inform practitioners on how to efficiently allocate their limited time toward effective L2 pragmatic instruction, while also providing actionable insights to policymakers in the development of national curricula and educational policies.

6. Conclusion

This study systematically examined L2 pragmatic instruction studies on Korean EFL learners by focusing on three dimensions: research design, instructional practices, and statistical analyses and reporting practices. With respect to the first dimension, this review has shown that research on L2 pragmatic instruction for Korean EFL learners reflects a strong orientation toward authentic classroom contexts and pedagogically meaningful instruction, alongside a gradual expansion of research populations to include younger learners and the adoption of innovative instructional approaches. Regarding the second dimension, the findings have confirmed the overall effectiveness of pragmatic instruction, while also revealing a strong concentration on speech acts as pragmatic targets and on explicit teaching methods. At the same time, there has been a growing tendency toward short-term instructional interventions, reflecting the realities of classroom-based research in regular school contexts. In terms of statistical analysis and reporting practices, we have found improvements in recent studies in areas such as reporting basic descriptive statistics and, to some extent, reliability.

This review suggests several directions for future research on L2 pragmatic instruction targeting Korean EFL learners. First, future studies would benefit from incorporating control groups and delayed post-tests, employing a wider range of assessment methods, and establishing greater consistency in how learner proficiency is operationalized and measured across studies. Second, greater effort is needed to diversify instructional targets beyond a narrow focus on speech acts (e.g., requests) and to adopt interactional competence frameworks and ELF perspectives. In addition, more detailed reporting and sharing of teaching and assessment materials are necessary to enhance pedagogical transparency and replicability. Third, future research would benefit from strengthening statistical analysis and reporting practices by reporting reliability estimates, conducting and reporting assumption checks, and placing greater emphasis on effect sizes and confidence intervals, thereby moving beyond a sole reliance on statistical significance and toward more meaningful interpretations of instructional effectiveness.

This study presents future directions for L2 pragmatic instruction reviews from Korea. First, we recommend a subsequent review of intercultural competence research in Korea. While L2 pragmatics and intercultural competence are related fields, there have been only a few studies that have explored this connection (Jackson 2019). In other words, intercultural competence research often involves constructs, target items, and assessment methods that share little overlap with those in L2 pragmatics, making it difficult to combine the methodological characteristics of both fields into a single, cohesive methodological review. Given the role of intercultural competence in global communication, a separate review focusing on related studies from Korea would also be

valuable.

There are also limitations of this study that such future reviews should consider. Most notably, the third research question focused on only experimental studies due to the large percentage of inferential statistics, but this has left the methodological issues of other research paradigms underexplored. These issues should be examined to make a more comprehensive review with higher validity. Another limitation is that this study has mainly synthesized the methodological characteristics of individual studies than their results. As effectiveness is a key focus of L2 pragmatic instruction research, future studies could therefore consider conducting systematic reviews or meta-analyses regarding the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction in Korean EFL contexts. One final limitation is that, as our literature search did not include unpublished sources, such as dissertations or conference papers, we suggest that subsequent reviews could conduct a more comprehensive search.

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- Zhang, M. and L. Plonsky. 2020. Collaborative writing in face-to-face settings: A substantive and methodological review. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 49, Article 100753.

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Level: All Levels

Appendix A

The Selected List of Journals Reviewed in the Present Study

Index	Journal Name	Number of journals
KCI	Discourse and Cognition	17
	English Language & Literature Teaching	
	English21	
	English Teaching	
	EONEOHAG	
	Journal of Language Sciences	
	Journal of the Applied Linguistics Association of Korea	
	Journal of the Korea English Education Society	
	Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics	
	Modern English Education	
	Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning	
	Primary English Education	
	Studies in British and American Language and Literature	
	Studies in Foreign Language Education	
	The Journal of Humanities Studies	
	The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal	
	The SNU Journal of Education Research	
SCOPUS	Applied Linguistics	7
	English Teaching	
	Foreign Language Annals	
	Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	
	Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics	
	Language Teaching Research	
SSCI	TESOL Quarterly	5
	Applied Linguistics	
	Foreign Language Annals	
	Language Teaching Research	
	Modern Language Journal	
Total	TESOL Quarterly	24

* Note. Some journals are indexed in multiple databases

Appendix B

List of Primary Studies in This Review

Experimental studies with 2+ groups

- Cho, Y. and S. G. Lee. 2007. Extending focus-on-form instruction to teaching pragmatics: An exploratory study. *Journal of Language Sciences* 14(2), 145-169.
- Kim, H. 2014. Effects of pragmatic instruction for Korean EFL college students in request acts. *Discourse and Cognition* 21(3), 25-50.
- Kim, H. 2016. An investigation into the teachability of pragmatic features to Korean young learners. *Primary English Education* 22(3), 35-56.
- Kim, H. 2017. The effects of pragmatic instruction on the pragmatic awareness and production of Korean university students. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 7(2), 371-380.
- Kim, H. 2018. Analysis of the effects and durability of implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction. *Studies in Foreign Language Education* 32(2), 55-85.
- Kim, H. 2019. An investigation into the effects of pragmatic instruction and feedback on the development of pragmatic competence of Korean university students. *Journal of the Korea English Education Society* 18(3), 47-66.
- Kim, H. J. 2018. A class model for learning formulaic sequences in an EFL classroom: Using *Beauty and the Beast*. *English21* 31(3), 161-182.
- Kim, H. J. 2018. Learning formulaic sequences using a sitcom in a second-language classroom. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal* 26(1), 119-143.
- Kim, Y. and N. Taguchi. 2015. Promoting task-based pragmatics instruction in EFL classroom contexts: The role of task complexity. *Modern Language Journal* 99(4), 656-677.
- Kim, Y. and N. Taguchi. 2016. Learner-learner interaction during collaborative pragmatic tasks: The role of cognitive and pragmatic task demands. *Foreign Language Annals* 49(1), 42-57.
- Kim, Y., S. Kang, M. D'Arienzo and N. Taguchi. 2023. Comparing traditional and task-based approaches to teaching pragmatics: Task design processes and learning outcomes. *Language Teaching Research*. Online first.
- Kwak, M. and S. Lee. 2015. Pragmatic features appearing in English emails. *The Journal of Humanities Studies* 51(1), 63-92.
- Lim, S. and J. Han. 2006. Effects of using movie clips on Korean high school students' English speech act learning and affective aspects. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning* 7(3), 187-216.
- Nam, H. J. 2022. The effect of multimedia on Korean EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge and awareness. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning* 25(4), 35-65.
- Paik, S. 2022. The effect of online English-medium instruction on performance of English face threatening speech acts. *English Teaching* 77(4), 103-128.
- Ryu, D. H. 2015. A study on memory effects of pragmatic features of dialogues in films. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal* 23(1), 161-181.
- Sim, S., Y. Kim and K. Ku. 2025. Exploring generative AI as a roleplay interlocutor in L2 Task-based pragmatics learning: Comparing ChatGPT-learner and technology-mediated peer interactions. *TESOL Quarterly* 59(S1), S86-S116.
- Taguchi, N. and Y. Kim. 2016. Collaborative dialogue in learning pragmatics: Pragmatic-related episodes as an opportunity for learning request-making. *Applied Linguistics* 37, 416-437.

- Yang, E. M. 2006. Effects of instructional intervention in low-level college students' learning of request acts. *English Language & Literature Teaching* 12(2), 215-235.
- Kim, D. J. 2006. Can the pragmatic awareness of native speakers of English be taught through intentional instructions? *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal* 14(1), 157-181.
- Kim, H. R. 1998. On the teachability of pragmatic competence to Korean college EFL learners. *Journal of the Applied Linguistics Association of Korea* 14(2), 127-145.

Experimental studies with one experimental group

- Chung, B., S. Min and J. B. Lee. 2014. The effects of utilizing language learning strategies in teaching the speech act of refusal. *English Language & Literature Teaching* 20(3), 51-70.
- Hahn, J. 2020. Pragmatic comprehension of conversational implicature in L2 English: Effect of instruction. *Journal of the Korea English Education Society* 19(3), 1-18.
- Kang, S. 2025. Effects of explicit pragmatic instruction on Korean middle school English learners' request email writing. *The SNU Journal of Education Research* 34(1), 117-143.
- Kim, J. and J. P. Lantolf. 2016. Developing conceptual understanding of sarcasm in L2 English through explicit instruction. *Language Teaching Research* 22(2), 208-229.
- Son, Y. and S. J. Youn. 2023. A task-based approach to teaching requests for EFL elementary school students. *Primary English Education* 29(4), 5-31.
- Yin, J. 2020. Process of Korean students' pragmatic development in English during explicit metapragmatic instruction: Focus on request emails. *Journal of the Korea English Education Society* 19(3), 131-153.
- Ko, S. 2023. The long-term effects of L2 pragmatic instruction on writing emails to faculty: Focusing on the forms of address. *Modern English Education* 24, 77-90.
- Moon, Y. I. 2018. Long-term effects of consciousness-raising task on the performance of English requests by Korean university students. *Discourse and Cognition* 25(1), 31-56.
- Hahn, J. W. 2013. The effect of instruction on pragmatic competence. *EONEOHAG* 67, 21-42.
- Han, J. I. 1999. Teaching speech act rules of request. *English Teaching* 54(4), 121-144.
- Kim, D. B. 2015. The perspectives and alerters on request for EFL learners of English. *Studies in British and American Language and Literature* 116, 209-232.

Non-experimental studies

- Ahn, T. Y. and H. Min. 2024. Facilitating metapragmatic awareness through collaborative learning with ChatGPT. *Journal of the Korea English Education Society* 23(4), 217-239.
- Kim, H. J. 2015. The refusal speech act in animation and its explicit learning: With reference to case study using Disney animation *Cars 2*. *English Language & Literature Teaching* 22(4), 201-224.
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- Sung, M. C. and S. Kang. 2024. Developing AI chatbots for pragmatic instruction of Korean secondary L2 English learners. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 24, 441-459.