
Individual and Social-Contextual Factors Affecting the Learning and Use of ESL: A Case Study of a Visiting Korean Physician

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This case study examined factors that affected a Korean physician's learning and use of ESL in an English-speaking country, using data from interviews, observations, notebook memos and e-mails. The findings indicated that individual factors—personality (perfectionism and extroversion), occupation, beliefs, and motivation—and social-contextual factors—lack of contact with native speakers and insecurity about speaking English in the presence of other Koreans—influenced the participant's learning and use of ESL. The findings also revealed that the participant's motivation and extroversion played a role in overcoming the social-contextual obstacles limiting learning opportunities, which illustrates interactions between individual and social-contextual factors.

S'appuyant sur des données provenant d'entrevues, d'observations, de notes de service et de courriels, l'auteure étudie les facteurs qui ont influencé l'apprentissage, par un médecin coréen, de l'anglais langue seconde, et l'emploi qu'il faisait de cette langue dans un pays d'expression anglaise. Les résultats indiquent que des critères individuels (caractère perfectionniste ou extraverti; profession; croyances; et motivation) et des facteurs socio-contextuels (manque de contact avec des locuteurs natifs et sentiment d'insécurité devant le fait de parler anglais en présence de Coréens) ont influencé l'apprentissage de l'anglais par le participant et l'emploi qu'il faisait de cette langue. De plus, ils dénotent que la motivation et le caractère extraverti du participant l'ont aidé à surmonter les obstacles socio-contextuels qui limitaient les occasions d'apprentissage, ce qui illustre l'interaction entre les facteurs individuels et socio-contextuels.

Introduction

Second-language acquisition (SLA) researchers have tried to identify the factors influencing language-learning that may lead to either success or failure in language-learning. Some SLA researchers have investigated the relationship between language-learning and individual learner characteristics. According to Skehan (1989), who comprehensively examined individual differences in second-language learning, learning can vary depending on an individual's characteristics such as aptitude, motivation, learning strategies, extroversion-introversion, risk-taking, intelligence, field

independence, and anxiety. Oxford (1992) synthesized research on individual differences in language-learning, addressing a wide range of factors that research has indicated to be important: age, sex, motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking, cooperation, competition, and language-learning strategies and styles, and also provided pedagogical implications (for an additional overview, see Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Skehan, 1991). Many SLA researchers have examined the relationship between learning strategies and other individual characteristics, especially with regard to the rate of acquisition and the ultimate level of achievement (Ellis, 1994; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; LoCastro, 2001; Yang, 1999).

Studies investigating individual variables have tried to show, mainly through correlation studies, whether learner characteristics are related to language-learning and if so, how. Findings from correlation studies have been controversial in terms of the existence, direction, and scope of the relationship between these individual factors and learning. For example, a conflict can be found regarding the existence of the link between aptitude and acquisition. Whereas Krashen (1981) stated that aptitude relates only to learning, not to acquisition, Skehan (1989) argued that aptitude plays a role both in formal and informal acquisition environments. A possible explanation for the conflicting finding can be found in Oxford's (1992) statement that certain individual factors (e.g., tolerance of ambiguity and risk-taking) do not always create consistent results for all language learners because the factors interact with other factors (e.g., anxiety, self-esteem, motivation, and learning styles) in a complex way to produce certain effects in language-learning.

Other researchers have investigated the role of contextual factors in language-learning. Politzer's (1983) study, which documented the relationships between learning behavior and achievement, revealed that these may depend heavily on contextual factors such as the type of evaluation (linguistic or communicative tests), course level, and teaching methods. Harklau (1994) found that the interaction routines of spoken and written language use, along with the structure and goal of instruction, were different in two learning environments: ESL versus mainstream classes. Lafford (2004) indicated that learning context—at-home classroom versus study abroad—had a significant effect on the categories of communication strategies and language use of learners of Spanish as a second language. A study by Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004), which compared regular classroom, study abroad, and intensive domestic immersion programs, also showed that the learning context affected various dimensions of second-language fluency in French. Jacob, Rottenberg, Patrick, and Wheeler (1996) suggested that local contextual features (e.g., students' definition of the task, features of the task, and participant structures) influenced L2 learners' opportunities to acquire academic English in cooperative learning. Sharkey and Layzer (2000)

showed how teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices facilitate or hinder English learners' access to academic success and resources. Most of these studies investigating the influence of contextual factors compared predetermined factors, mainly regarding academic settings such as learning context, teachers' beliefs and practice, task, evaluation, and teaching materials and methods.

Unlike SLA researchers focusing on only one type of factors, either individual factors or contextual factors, others have proposed that language-learning is related to both types of factors. In Abraham and Vann's (1987) model of second-language-learning, background factors (e.g., age, intelligence, personality, education, and cognitive style) affect the philosophy, approach, and strategies learners use in learning and communication, which directly influence the degree of success or failure. In this model, environmental factors surrounding the second-language-learning experience (e.g., formal/informal instruction and practice) were suggested affective factors having an indirect effect on the degree of learning success. In a similar vein, Ellis's (1994) model of L2 acquisition proposed that learners' choice of learning strategies is determined by individual differences (e.g., beliefs, affective states, learner factors, and learning experiences) and various situational factors (e.g., target language, (in)formal setting, instruction, and task), and social factors (e.g., socioeconomic status and sex). MacIntyre (1994) also argued that "a model of strategy use should include individual and situational variables" (p. 188). The influence of both individual and contextual factors was revealed in El-Dib's (2004) study, which found a relationship between sex and language level and proposed that learning context in a cultural milieu is perhaps the strongest variable affecting the choice of strategy.

Drawing on the views suggested by Abraham and Vann (1987), Ellis (1994), and MacIntyre (1994), my assumption throughout the current study has been that an individual's language-learning and use can be influenced by both individual and contextual factors, especially social-contextual factors. The individual factors in this study are similar to the background factors in Abraham and Vann's model in that both refer to characteristics pertaining to an individual. Because the participant Sungwoo's strongest desire was to learn spoken English through social interactions with native speakers, this study focused on social-contextual factors. However, unlike the environmental and situational factors in these other models, which appeared to focus on the variations in educational setting and instruction, I use the term *social-contextual factors* to refer to environmental factors pertaining to the social context of learning. In accordance with MacIntyre's (1994) statement that "the use of strategies ... seems to depend on the interaction of learner characteristics and the demands of the situation" (p. 187), I have also assumed that there may be an interaction between individual and social-contextual factors.

Although SLA researchers have suggested the possible influence of both individual and environmental (Abraham & Vann, 1987) or situational factors (Ellis, 1994), and the interaction among them (MacIntyre, 1994), no studies have actually examined the two types of factors together, including the interaction between these two types. Because the prior research was mainly conducted using quantitative methods, we also lack qualitative descriptive data.

Finally, many studies have focused on ESL (English as a second language) students and adult immigrants. To date, however, no studies have examined Korean physicians who stay in an English-speaking country as visiting scholars. As pointed out by LoCastro (1994), it is doubtful whether the list of learning strategies based on immigrants and ESL students can apply to L2 learners with different educational and social backgrounds. Findings from many studies examining ESL students and adult immigrants may not apply to a visiting Korean physician. This is because the language-learning of physicians who come to an English-speaking country to conduct research and are later expected to return to their jobs in their home countries would be different from that of immigrants who are planning to make their homes in English-speaking countries, or from that of ESL students who come to English-speaking countries to take ESL classes in intensive language programs. The above-mentioned gaps in the literature have provided the rationale for conducting this study.

This study explored individual and social-contextual factors that influenced a visiting Korean physician's learning and use of ESL in an English-speaking country, addressing the following research questions.

1. In what ways, if any, do individual factors affect the learning and use of ESL?
2. In what ways, if any, do social-contextual factors affect the learning and use of ESL?
3. In what ways, if any, do individual and social-contextual factors interact with each other?

Method

The Participant

The participant, Sungwoo, is a Korean gynecologist in his 40s and a professor in a medical school in Korea. He came to an English-speaking country, the United States, with his wife and two daughters as a visiting scholar. Although Sungwoo came here to conduct research, the most important goal he wished to achieve during his stay was to improve his spoken English skills by communicating with native speakers. Because of the strong desire to achieve his goal, he was highly motivated to learn English, especially spoken English. To improve his spoken English, he made an effort to learn English

outside his workplace by attending ESL classes provided in the community and meeting with a literacy volunteer.

For the first six months of his stay, Sungwoo conducted research in a laboratory where all his colleagues were non-native speakers, including the director. As a result of his effort to find a new workplace where he could work with native speakers, he began working in a hospital from the seventh month of his stay. In the hospital, he mainly observed consulting rooms and operating rooms without practicing. He also conducted some research in the hospital laboratory. While he was working in the hospital, he had more opportunities to communicate in English with native speakers than in his previous workplace.

In Korea, Sungwoo took English classes in school starting in grade 7, the first year of middle school. Under the old traditional English education system before the recent introduction of the innovative communicative approach, he mainly learned written English in school, focusing on grammar and reading skills. He always received good grades on written English tests at school, which gave him confidence in written English. Sungwoo's English learning experience at school in Korea, however, was missing one important part of English proficiency, spoken English skills. Through the experience of meeting English-speaking patients and attending international conferences, he realized the importance of spoken English. Before coming to an English-speaking country, he had made efforts to improve his spoken English skills by attending private language institutes in order to learn spoken English from native speakers, getting some private tutoring from native speakers, and watching videotapes made for English-language-learning.

The Role of the Researcher

As Butterworth and Hatch (1978) did in their study, I tried to build a close friendship with Sungwoo and his family. I invited them to my home or to restaurants to build rapport. My family also had several chances to make one-day trips and spend the entire day with his family. In so doing, I could observe him in a variety of situations and was able to conduct informal interviews about his everyday experiences. My family also helped him whenever he needed help. We corrected his e-mails written in English and helped with phone calls to native speakers of English. In several cases, we had to accompany him as interpreters, especially when he was involved in some important matters such as working on contracts. Through this close relationship between his family and mine, I was able to collect data in a wide variety of contexts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection began when Sungwoo had been in the US for about four months and continued through 13 months of his stay. Although data were

collected only during this period, this study investigated Sungwoo's experiences regarding the first four months of his 17-month stay. Data about his experiences during his first four months were collected during interviews in which Sungwoo often mentioned his first four months' experiences. He kept dated records in his memo notebook, which was another source of data for his experiences during the first four months of his sojourn.

For triangulation, various types of data were gathered and used in the research analysis. I conducted formal interviews; I also collected data in informal interviews during daily interactions with him on a personal level. Some of the data were collected during phone calls when he also reflected on his experiences. I made observations in various contexts such as ESL classes, a literacy volunteer's place, and on other social occasions during which he used English. Another source of data was his memo notebook in which he wrote English vocabulary and expressions.

All the formal and informal interviews were conducted in Korean to avoid losing data because of the participant's inability to express himself in English. All the formal interviews were audiotaped. I tried to write down informal interviews that were not audiotaped as soon as possible after they occurred. Interviews were first transcribed in Korean and then translated into English. The informal interview data transcribed in Korean were taken to the participant for member checks. During this process, he made corrections and added more information to the transcript.

Data analysis was an ongoing process conducted throughout the study, as recommended by Merriam (1998). Data were initially coded to identify emerging themes about the participant's language use, learning experiences, and affective factors. I first identified recurrent characteristics of his language use and learning. After that, I identified individual and social-contextual factors that were emerging in relation to those recurrent characteristics, establishing connections between them on the basis of a logical chain of evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To develop the trustworthiness of the study, some of Merriam's (1998) basic strategies were used. For purposes of triangulation, the data were collected from multiple sources. A member check was also conducted by taking tentative findings and interpretations to the participant and asking him if they were plausible. As a means of peer evaluation, I frequently asked colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged. In order to identify the researcher's biases, the researcher's assumptions were clarified at the outset of the study.

Findings

Sungwoo's learning and use of ESL were influenced both by individual factors such as his perfectionist and extroverted personality, occupation, learning beliefs, and motivation, and by two social-contextual factors: lack of

contact with native speakers and insecurity about speaking English in the presence of Koreans. Moreover, there were interactions between his individual factors—motivation and extroversion—and the social-contextual factors. Due to these interactions, through the role of extroversion and motivation, he was able to overcome to some degree the social-contextual obstacles limiting his opportunities to speak and learn English.

Individual Factors

Influence of perfectionism on the desire to speak correct English

Sungwoo's perfectionist personality affected his language use, more specifically his desire to speak correct English. Sungwoo's perfectionist personality was revealed in his statement, "I think I try to be perfect in everything I do." The following excerpt shows his desire to speak correct English, which also contributed to his fear of speaking incorrectly.

I only want to say perfect sentences. I believe that we should say correct sentences like those in textbooks. I know it hinders my English learning. Due to my desire to speak in correct expressions, I speak less often than do others. I often miss opportunities to speak, figuring out the correct word order of the sentence.... When I come up with the correct words to say, it is too late to say them because they are already talking about something else.

Sungwoo's desire to speak correct sentences can be understood in relation to Jordan's (1977) statement that error avoidance might to some extent be psychologically determined; some language users feel bad about communicating in a foreign language unless they can do so without exhibiting linguistic handicaps. As expressed in this excerpt, Sungwoo's desire to speak correct English contributed to his reluctance to take risks, which in turn limited his opportunities to speak English. Drawing on the fact that Sungwoo is an extrovert, which is discussed below, this finding is unexpected and cannot be explained by the findings of earlier studies that extroverts are less likely to be reluctant to take risks. This mismatch illustrates that predicting language learners' behaviors and learning outcomes based on one characteristic (extroversion in this study), without consideration of other related characteristic(s) (perfectionism in this study) can be inaccurate.

Sungwoo's desire to speak correct English was also rooted in his belief that English should be spoken correctly. This belief was reflected when he talked about another visiting scholar in the hospital from Greece.

My friend from Greece, he speaks a lot although his English is terrible. I often don't understand what he is saying and native speakers of English don't seem to understand him either. Nonetheless, he keeps talking. I feel bad for him. He doesn't seem to care about how he looks or realize

how often he looks bad. But I am different from him. I learned good English and it annoys me to speak incorrect English.

Sungwoo's desire to speak correct English appeared to come from his perfectionism, as expressed in the following excerpt.

Usually, I tried to be faultless. For example, I tend to wait 30 minutes even after I confirmed somebody died. Even though I am pretty sure he or she died, I tell the family after 30 minutes.... I want to be perfect in speaking English too. I feel bad about speaking incorrect English sentences.... When speaking English, I feel like a different person, I mean, no longer a perfect person as I am in other matters.

As Sungwoo wished to be faultless or perfect in everything, he also developed a desire to speak perfect English. The fact that he wished to have his e-mail messages written in English proofread also reflects his desire to use correct English.

The finding that Sungwoo's perfectionist characteristic affected his desire to speak correct English is consistent with Brophy's (1996) argument that "perfectionists ... are more concerned about avoiding mistakes than about learning" (p. 112), and Gregersen and Horwitz's (2002) observation that "perfectionist students ... would want to speak flawlessly, with no grammatical or pronunciation errors" (p. 563).

Influence of Occupation on the Fear of Speaking Incorrectly

As Sungwoo's perfectionism influenced his desire to speak correct English, his occupation as a physician played a role in his fear of speaking incorrectly. Sungwoo related how and why mistakes are not allowed in medical science.

We medical doctors deal with human lives. A small mistake can cause serious damage to a human's life. That's why we medical doctors must be faultless. Any fault is not allowed in my field. As I have lived this way, I am not accustomed to doing or saying something incorrect. So I am afraid to speak incorrect English sentences. It's very uncomfortable when I realize that I produce incorrect English sentences when I am speaking English.

This excerpt shows that Sungwoo's fear of speaking English incorrectly was related to his occupation. It needs to be emphasized, however, that his field of study did not seem to be the only reason why he developed this fear. Some physicians do not seem to fear speaking incorrect English. According to Sungwoo, for example, although the visiting scholar from Greece spoke careless English, he did not seem to be bothered by it. Based on this, I argue that Sungwoo's fear of speaking incorrectly was shaped not only by the role of his profession as a physician, but also by his desire to speak correct English, which was attributable to his perfectionist personality.

Influence of Occupation on the Desire to Speak Formally and Politely

Sungwoo's occupation also deeply influenced his language use and desire to learn and speak formal and polite English. Sungwoo strongly believed that as a doctor, he should learn formal and polite English, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

I want to learn formal and polite English. I mean, I want to learn decent English that is not rude. So I told the literacy volunteer that I want to learn decent English. I don't want to speak English casually and carelessly. Because I want to learn good English, I told the literacy volunteer that I wanted to learn good English rather than just communicating with words.... she has tried to teach me formal expressions. For example, she told me that I should say "May I use it?" rather than "Can I use it?" I very often ask her whether or not some expression can be considered rude and what is a polite expression that can be used instead of the rude expression if it is a rude expression.

Sungwoo explained why he needed to use formal expressions as a doctor:

I am a doctor, specifically a gynecologist. All my patients are women. Unlike American women, many Korean women are very shy. Many patients come to me with agony. They come to me because they are sick. Very often, they also have to say something that is difficult for them to talk about. I think I should be very gentle to them.... I believe that one of a doctor's jobs is to make patients feel respected so that they are comfortable speaking about their problems and concerns. In order to do that, I should not speak informally and impolitely. In addition, I need to explain to them about their symptoms, which should be delivered clearly without any misunderstanding. In order to do that, I think when I see an English speaking patient in Korea, I should use easy, appropriate, and polite expressions in English as well as in Korean.

The excerpt shows that Sungwoo's desire to learn formal and polite English was rooted in his profession, in which doctors are expected to use formal and polite expressions while conversing with their patients.

Influence of Beliefs About Language-Learning on the Use of Language-Learning Strategies

Sungwoo's beliefs about language-learning, developed in Korea, influenced his use of language-learning strategies in an English-speaking country. At the outset, Sungwoo developed these beliefs through his initial training in study habits from his father and from his English teachers during his school years. In a personal conversation, Sungwoo described his father.

I learned from my father that every field of study should be studied by memorization.... When reading newspapers, he always looked up words in the Chinese dictionary. I still remember it clearly.... He was interested in English, too. He always asked my brothers and me about pronunciation and meaning of words.... If something came up in his mind or he came across some expressions, he wrote it down in his notebook. If he couldn't understand something in the newspaper, he looked it up in the dictionary. If he couldn't understand economics, for example, he looked it up in the dictionary and he called his friend's house whose son was majoring in economics to find out the meaning of the term. That's my father. All of these are still vivid to me.... My father influenced my beliefs about effective ways of studying English.

This excerpt shows that Sungwoo's father strongly influenced his learning beliefs about note-taking, looking up words in the dictionary, memorization, confirmation, and asking for help. When I asked Sungwoo whether his English teachers at school encouraged him to use the same strategies as his father did, Sungwoo answered that his English teachers encouraged similarly. Although he admitted that he was influenced both by his father and his teachers, he seemed to believe that his father's influence was the stronger. His successful experiences of receiving high scores on written English tests using these strategies must have contributed to solidifying his beliefs about the usefulness of these strategies.

Sungwoo's field of study also reinforced his beliefs about language-learning. When asked why he believed memorization was the best way to learn English, he replied,

I have memorized for the last 40 years. In my field, we need to memorize everything. In order to memorize later, everything should be written down. Through this experience, probably, that's why I believe memorization is the best way to learn English.

It appears that Sungwoo solidified learning beliefs developed during his school years while studying medical science in college. Because studying in his field required the same strategies he used for language-learning, such as note-taking and memorization, Sungwoo's beliefs about language-learning seemed to be reinforced. This finding that Sungwoo's field of study contributed to his beliefs about language-learning, which in turn affected his use of language-learning strategies, lends support to the influence of university major on the selection of language-learning strategies (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989).

While learning spoken English in an English-speaking country, he activated his language-learning beliefs and used strategies that he had believed to be the best ways to study written English, although how much he relied on

these strategies fluctuated over time. Sungwoo used a note-taking strategy, as stated in the following comment.

I write down some expressions that are used between doctors and patients while I am observing them. Today I wrote down "sit up." ... I tried to write down the expressions immediately after I got out of the examining room. Sometimes, I could make it, but sometimes I didn't because I forgot and other times I had to do something right after that.

Figure 1 shows parts from Sungwoo's memo notebook that vividly show his note-taking strategies.

As shown in example (1), Sungwoo wrote down expressions that he heard other doctors using when they examined a patient. He also copied some sentences from the newspapers as in example (2). As shown in examples (3) and (4), when he ran across unknown words, he wrote down the words with their phonetic descriptions and meanings, which he looked up in the dictionary. In example (3), he wrote down the phonetic descriptions and meanings of unknown words on the menu in a restaurant. In example (4), he copied a sentence from a news caption on television and wrote down the phonetic descriptions and meanings of the unknown words. These examples show not only his note-taking strategies, but also dictionary consulting strategies.

Sungwoo also related why he used the note-taking strategy.

I wrote down some expressions in order to memorize and use them in later conversations ... I write down expressions that I hear or see somewhere, but I do not know their meanings in order to check in the dictionary or ask about them later.

In this excerpt, his memorization and confirmation learning strategies were expressed. His confirmation strategy was also revealed when he explained why he chose to meet the literacy volunteer instead of going to ESL classes on the day the two schedules overlapped. Sungwoo said, "I go to see the volunteer because I can ask specific questions, for example, whether some expressions are correct and formal expressions, which I cannot ask easily in ESL classes." His use of confirmation strategy was frequently observed in his meeting with the literacy volunteer.

This finding about the relationship between Sungwoo's beliefs and language-learning strategies is consistent with Yang (1999). Yang found that language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about learning English were strongly related to their use of all types of learning strategies, especially functional practice strategies, and that their beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English were closely linked to their use of formal oral-practice strategies.

Social-Contextual Factors

Influence of lack of contact with native speakers on limiting learning opportunities
 Sungwoo's language-learning was influenced by one social-contextual factor, lack of contact with native speakers, which limited his opportunities to speak and learn English through interactions with them. With a strong desire to improve his spoken English skills, Sungwoo wished to interact with native speakers as much as possible. Unfortunately, he did not have much contact with native speakers, especially during the first six months when he worked in the laboratory where there were no native speakers. Although Sungwoo tried to find opportunities to speak English with native speakers outside his workplace, it was hard for him to have contact with native speakers other than salespersons in stores and servers in restaurants.

It was really hard to find native speakers.... I went out without any special reason to find native-English-speaking conversation partners. I

<p>Example (1)</p> <p>Here you go (이제 आप़ावा)</p> <p>You have a gentle hand.</p> <p>I hate this exam. That's worst one. I'm going to listen your lips.</p> <p>- Sound Good</p>	<p>Example (2)</p> <p>The longest-lasting make of a U.S. automobile, around since the 1930s, will be phased out by its manufacturer, Identify the auto.</p>
<p>* You can push back v. sit up!</p> <p>* You can get dressed. X I'll talk to you x your niece I'll tell you about your sister!</p>	<p>Example (3)</p> <p>* perch fillets [pɜ:rdʒ] [fɪlɪt, fɪleɪt] "fillet" (fillet) 등어두리 안고기</p> <p>① [fɪleɪt] (가슴은 발라낸 생선도)</p>
<p>* She declined to elaborate.</p> <p>Example (4) [ɪlɪ'beɪrət]</p> <p>v.i (형용사) 기원하다. 상회하다. 기른다. 상회하다</p> <p>[ɪlɪ'beɪrət]</p> <p>a. 고심하여 만들어낸 공들인.</p> <p>[ɪlɪ'beɪrət]</p> <p>v.i. 애써 만든다. 고심하여 만든다. v.i 부연하다. 상회해안하다. <u>회고하다</u></p>	

Figure 1.

don't know where I can find native speakers who I can talk to ... other than at stores and restaurants.

Sungwoo realized that it was not easy to find opportunities to have conversations with native speakers of English beyond exchanging greetings. He tried to ask many questions in stores and restaurants in order to increase his opportunities to practice English. Soon after, however, he found that spoken skills could not be enhanced much through short conversations with salespersons or waiters in restaurants with whom he exchanged only the same few functional words necessary or only relevant to that situation. As Sungwoo expressed, this lack of contact with native speakers was a big obstacle to learning spoken English through interaction.

In order to get over this social-contextual obstacle to language-learning, Sungwoo tried to find a new workplace where he could work with native speakers of English. After six months of his stay, he was finally able to work in a hospital, observing consulting rooms and operating rooms and working in the hospital research laboratory. In this new workplace, he did have more opportunities to interact with native speakers. However, Sungwoo believed that this increased contact with native speakers was still not enough to improve his spoken English skills.

Influence of insecurity about speaking English in the presence of Koreans on limiting learning opportunities

Sungwoo's insecurity about speaking English in the presence of Koreans was another social-contextual factor that played a role in limiting his opportunity to speak and learn English. He said that he was afraid to make a mistake and tended not to speak English in the presence of other Koreans either in ESL classes that he attended some evenings after work or on other social occasions. This was observed in two sections of the ESL classes he attended. He frequently asked questions in the class where there were no Koreans, whereas he did not ask any questions or speak unless he was called on in a class with other Koreans. When asked why he asked more questions in one class than in the other, he replied,

It is America, but there are many Koreans around me, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and at church. And we know each other, especially through Korean church.... For example, after I made a mistake in a class where there were other Koreans, I heard from other Koreans that I had made the mistake. I was shocked to hear that.... I felt really insecure about speaking English, especially making mistakes. So I am a little afraid to make mistakes in the class where other Koreans are.... In the presence of other Koreans, I would rather not speak English unless I am sure that I can say it correctly.

This excerpt reveals Sungwoo's insecurity about speaking English in the presence of other Koreans and how it limited his opportunities to speak English. This finding is consistent with Kang's (2005) finding that Koreans tend to feel less secure about making mistakes and more reluctant to speak English in the presence of Koreans than of other international students. These findings can be better understood in relation to other research. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1989), errors can be a source of anxiety for some individuals because they draw attention to the difficulty of making positive social impressions when speaking a new language. Sungwoo, who perceived himself as a non-fluent English speaker, was very much aware of his difficulty in making a positive social impression when he spoke English. Sungwoo's awareness of this difficulty was an important source of his insecurity about speaking English. Taking into account the Korean concept of face-saving, called *Che-myon* in Korean, Sungwoo's insecurity about speaking English in the presence of other Koreans can be better understood. Because *Che-myon* plays an important role in Koreans' social behavior, Koreans wish to keep *Che-myon*, especially in the presence of other Koreans. Due to *Che-myon*, Koreans are sensitive to other Koreans' negative evaluation of them. For Koreans, especially those living in an English-speaking country, spoken English proficiency can be a principal way of evaluating other Koreans, attributable to their tendency to place a high value on education and intelligence shown in the ability to speak English. When speaking English, as a result, Koreans tend to be seriously concerned about losing their *Che-myon* because other Koreans evaluate them negatively on the basis of their English errors. The role of *Che-myon* in Koreans' English-related social behavior has also been revealed in earlier studies (Park, 1998), which stated that Koreans do not wish their level of English to be judged by their fellow Koreans due to *Che-myon*. This insecurity, which made Sungwoo hesitant to speak English in the presence of other Koreans, along with the lack of contact with native speakers, played a role as social-contextual obstacles limiting his opportunities to speak and to learn English.

Interactions Between Individual and Social-Contextual Factors

Role of extroversion in overcoming insecurity in the presence of Koreans

Sungwoo's extroversion appeared to contribute to overcoming to some degree his insecurity about speaking English in the presence of Koreans, which illustrates the interaction between an individual factor and a social-contextual factor. Sungwoo seemed to overcome the insecurity about speaking English in the presence of Koreans more quickly than other Koreans. After seven months of his stay, Sungwoo said, "I have tried to ignore other Koreans in ESL classes, and I don't care what they think and say about me."

Sungwoo is definitely an extroverted person. His sociability, which has been suggested as an essential feature of extroversion (Eysenck, 1965;

Eysenck & Chan, 1982), was observed and also expressed by him, along with other characteristics of extroversion such as outgoingness, talkativeness, excitement, and activeness. His extroverted personality, along with his awareness of the negative effect of insecurity on his language-learning, seemed to help him overcome it to some degree. Sungwoo said,

I thought I could not improve my English during my stay in the United States unless I ignored other Koreans. So I decided to ignore them.

Another Korean physician who was in my ESL classes scorned my strong desire to learn English by asking me if I think I can learn English perfectly. Instead of answering, I said to him, "Would you do me a favor by not concerning yourself about my English even though my English is poor?" I also told him I didn't think he had anything to lose when I made a mistake in English speaking.... However, I cannot say I do not experience insecurity in the presence of other Koreans at all, although I have gotten better.

Sungwoo was extroverted enough to ask other Koreans not to care about his mistakes in English. In the member check, Sungwoo also admitted that he was an extroverted person and believed his extroversion helped him get over the insecurity in the presence of other Koreans. Although his extroversion played a principal role in overcoming the insecurity, his strong motivation to improve his spoken English also appeared to contribute. It should be noted that he could not completely overcome his insecurity in the presence of Koreans, but that it was reduced by his extroversion and motivation. By overcoming his insecurity to a certain degree, he was able to increase his opportunities to speak English, possibly facilitating language-learning. This finding that extroversion contributed to increasing opportunities to speak lends support to other research (Krashen, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Skehan, 1989).

Role of motivation in overcoming the lack of contact with native speakers

Sungwoo's motivation helped him overcome lack of contact with native speakers, which also demonstrates an interaction between an individual factor and a social-contextual factor. When contact with native speakers was unavailable in his first workplace, he made an effort to find another workplace to gain more opportunities to interact with native speakers. His strong motivation to improve his spoken English during his stay in an English-speaking country was the primary reason why he changed his workplace. Sungwoo said,

What I really want to do here is improve my spoken English. That's my primary goal.... I will do everything I can do here to improve my English.... While I was working at the lab, I was surrounded by nonnative speakers ... many of them were Chinese. When we did not

communicate well in English, we wrote Chinese letters to communicate our intended message. I was really disappointed with the situation.... no native speakers in America ... I felt panic because of my feeling that I would not be able to improve my English at all in this situation.... So I was really desperate to find another workplace where I can interact with native speakers. Here [hospital], I am surrounded by native speakers ... The doctor whose practice I mainly observed is an Indian, but all the other nurses and other doctors are native speakers ... although I don't think it's enough to improve my English.

As expressed in this excerpt, Sunwoo's comments support the relationship between motivation and learners' efforts, which typically results in success in language proficiency and achievement (Gardner, 1985).

Role of extroversion in overcoming the lack of contact with native speakers

Sunwoo's extroversion also appeared to play a role in his attempts to overcome the lack of contact with native speakers. When we visited a winery, I observed Sungwoo asking about wines, demonstrating his effort to practice English. He confessed that the goal of his conversations in the winery was to increase his opportunities to practice English through interactions with native speakers, not to learn more about the wines. According to Sungwoo, he just wished to practice his English speaking skills by asking questions and testing if his English was understood by the interlocutor, even though he did not fully understand the interlocutor's answers.

Sungwoo also attempted to initiate communication with children in his apartment building and asked many questions in stores and restaurants.

Since I cannot find native speakers, I tried to communicate with children in my apartment building, saying "hi" to them.... But after a couple of times, they didn't like to communicate with me anymore.... At stores, I try to ask as many questions as possible, even if I know the answers, just to practice English. At restaurants, I ask waiters about the food on the menu for the same reason.

Adult Koreans often find it difficult to make the efforts that Sungwoo made to practice English. It appears to be even harder to find physicians, who have a high social status in Korea, making such efforts as initiating conversation with children to practice English. Considering this, as Sungwoo admitted, he was able to make these efforts because of his extroverted personality. In so doing, he increased his opportunities to interact with native speakers, which might not be possible for some introverted persons.

This finding is consistent with Krashen's (1985) observation that extroverts would be likely to maximize the contact and quantity of input received, both of which are generally believed to contribute to language development and learning. This finding also in part supports earlier studies

(Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Wakamoto, 2000) showing the correlation between extroversion and functional practice strategies such as seeking practice opportunities outside class.

In Sungwoo's case, the social-contextual obstacles to language-learning—his insecurity in the presence of other Koreans and the lack of contact with native speakers—could be overcome to some extent by the role of his individual characteristics of extroversion and high motivation. As a result, Sungwoo was able to increase his opportunities to speak and learn English. This finding illustrates interactions between individual factors and social-contextual factors involving his use and learning of ESL.

Conclusion and Implications

This single-case study has demonstrated that a visiting Korean physician's, Sungwoo's, learning and use of ESL were affected by both his individual factors and social-contextual factors, which interacted with each other. Sungwoo's individual characteristics affected his learning and use of ESL:

- Perfectionist personality influenced his desire to speak correct English;
- Occupation influenced his fear of speaking incorrectly;
- Occupation influenced his desire to speak formally and politely;
- Beliefs about language-learning influenced his use of language-learning strategies.

Social-contextual factors also influenced his learning and use of ESL:

- Lack of contact with native speakers influenced his language-learning, limiting opportunities to speak and learn English;
- Insecurity about speaking English in the presence of other Koreans influenced his language-learning, limiting opportunities to speak and learn English.

Moreover, there were interactions between individual and social-contextual factors.

- Extroversion and motivation played a role in overcoming the insecurity in the presence of Koreans;
- Motivation and extroversion played a role in overcoming the lack of contact with native speakers.

Due to these interactions, he was able to overcome to some degree the social-contextual obstacles limiting his opportunities to speak and learn English.

These findings suggest that an individual's language-learning and use should be understood in relation to both individual and social-contextual factors, and the interaction between these two types of factors should be also considered. These findings also support Abraham and Vann's (1987) and Ellis's (1994) models that suggest that language-learning is affected by both individual and contextual factors, which were addressed by different terms by these researchers and myself: environmental (Abraham & Vann, 1987),

situational (Ellis, 1994), and social-contextual factors (this study). The findings of this study differ from the other models, however, in that this study revealed the interaction between the two types of factors.

The findings have useful implications for ESL professionals. The influences of individual factors on language-learning suggest that there should be individualized instruction to increase the effectiveness of instruction and learning (Kang, 2005; Skehan, 1989). ESL professionals should accommodate individual differences in curriculum and teaching practices. Based on the influence of occupation on the fear of speaking incorrectly, for example, ESL professionals teaching physicians should focus more on fluency rather than accuracy in teaching and curriculum and encourage them to take risks in their English speaking. ESL professionals or native-English-speaking interlocutors should avoid frequently correcting errors made by ESL speakers who fear speaking incorrectly like the Korean physician in this study. This is because error corrections may increase their fear of speaking incorrectly and reduce their willingness to communicate (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003; Macintyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). Drawing on findings about the influence of social-contextual factors, ESL professionals should inform physicians and other Korean ESL speakers of the existence of the social-contextual obstacles that can be encountered in an English-speaking country and offer recommendations for how to deal with them. As stated by Kang (2003), one of the best ways to overcome lack of contact with native speakers is to develop intercultural friendships. Based on this, ESL professionals may need to include issues regarding L2 speakers' social relationships with native speakers (e.g., how can foreigners develop and maintain intercultural friendships with native speakers?) in their curriculum. ESL professionals' positive social relationships with L2 speakers can contribute to facilitating L2 speakers' positive social relationships with other native speakers, which would increase their opportunities to interact with native speakers.

The fact that the findings of this study were based on a single case should be considered in understanding them. With the findings as a starting point, future studies should investigate more individuals with various characteristics and in various social contexts to support or disconfirm the findings. Future studies may need to examine environmental factors other than social-contextual factors and their influences on language-learning and use. Another direction for future studies is to investigate whether social-contextual environmental factors can facilitate or hamper language-learning beyond the opportunity to speak. Drawing on an understanding of the interactive role of individual and social-contextual factors, future studies should investigate how these two types of factors interact and influence language-learning and use. It is also reasonable to suggest that in the ecological perspective positing the interaction between individual and environmental characteristics (Bar-

ton, 1994; Bateson, 1955; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993), future studies examine this interaction more comprehensively.

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