Korea Journal, vol. 54, no. 1 (spring 2014): 60-84.

Politeness in Korea and America:
A Comparative Analysis of Request Strategy in English Communication

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Abstract

Due to the importance of politeness in intercultural communication, the subject of politeness has received a lot of scholarly attention. Despite a vast volume of studies on this subject, few studies have investigated the nexus between politeness and cultural background in the context of comparing expressions of politeness made by native speakers with those made by second language learners. To fill this gap in the literature, I analyze how cultural differences affect native speakers' and second language learners' choice of request strategy in the context of politeness. By employing a survey method, using two subject groups—English native speakers and Korean ESL learners—I compare politeness behavior in request speech acts between Korean and American subjects. The results of this analysis reveal that cultural differences do matter, and expressing politeness in a second language also affects one's politeness expressions.

Keywords: politeness, culture, Korea, America, crosscultural communication, request strategy

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Introduction

Communication is one of the most important parts of human life. It allows people to exchange thoughts and information, using a common method, such as language. In communication, politeness plays a crucial role because it facilitates smooth conversation. Politeness also relates language to aspects of social structure and behavioral ethics. Regardless of the culture, politeness has a number of universally common goals: (1) to save face, (2) to avoid conflict, (3) to ensure cooperative interaction, and (4) to show deference (Brown and Levinson 1987; Holtgraves and Yang 1990). However, politeness expectations and behavior differ from one culture to another. Thus, scholars argue that the concept of politeness needs to be refined based on culture (Hasegawa 2008; Song 2012; Watts 2003).

Like most East Asian cultures, Korean culture is highly collectivist. Koreans tend to be communal, hierarchical, formal, and emotional, while Americans tend to be individualistic, equality-oriented, pragmatic, and rational. In Korea, people's relative power is important in interpersonal relationships because of the hierarchical nature of the society and culture (Hwang 1990; Song 2012). Thus, sociocultural factors—such as social power, kinship, gender, status, occupation, and age—play a significant role in communication. Accordingly, the realization of politeness depends on the nature of the relationship (Arundale 2006; Haugh 2007). According to Kim (2011, 176), Koreans comprehend politeness as a "concept that is intricately associated with a linguistic entity known as honorifics—a system that encodes one's deference towards speaking partners who are viewed as superior in age or in social standing." In other words, in Korea politeness is employed to be deferential or reverent.

In American culture, on the other hand, politeness relates to social etiquette or manners and is used to avoid any possible conflicts. Unlike Korean culture, social power or status in American culture plays a less important role in communication. Instead, smooth conversation, while delivering a message without conflict, is the primary goal of politeness in American culture. These differences are well reflected in language usage. For example, Koreans use a different choice of words and/or conjugate the

verb according to the social status of the conversation partner, whereas Americans do not employ these methods in their speech acts.

According to Kasper (1990), there are two types of politeness: strategic politeness and discernment politeness. Strategic politeness refers to when proper expressions of politeness change depending on the given situation. By contrast, discernment politeness refers to a fixed way of expressing politeness that is embedded in the language system. These two types of politeness are used respectively in different regions and cultures. For instance, the delivery of a message is prioritized in American culture. Thus, strategic politeness is employed in English communication. In Korea, however, the focus of communication shifts in relation to the status of the addressee. Thus, discernment politeness is employed in Korean culture (Yum 1988).[1]

Because of the importance of politeness in intercultural communication, politeness has received a lot of scholarly attention. However, few studies have investigated the nexus between politeness and cultural background in the context of comparing expressions of politeness by native speakers with second language learners. To fill this gap in the literature, I study how cultural differences affect native speakers' and second language learners' choices of request strategy in the context of politeness.

I analyze request strategies because a request is a speech act that demands the listener to do certain things for the speaker. All cultures have different perceptions of the relationship between communicators. Accordingly, expressions used to make a request will vary according to the culture. As a result, request acts are commonly used to empirically study the culture-politeness nexus in linguistics research (Ogiermann 2009). To compare two different cultures and their relative effects on request acts, I employ a survey method using two subject groups—English native speakers and Korean ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. The findings of this study will help to understand the relationship between language usage (native and second) and cultural background in the context of politeness expressions.

1. For a detailed literature review of politeness and culture, see Song (2012).

Theoretical Background

Korean Politeness System

The Korean politeness system is considered a form of discernment politeness because of its focus on formality and honorifics in verbal communication (Nakamura 1996; Song 2012). Formality concerns the psychological or social distance between the interlocutors, and honorifics are expressions used to pay respect. In the Korean politeness system, highly elaborated honorifics are widely used. According to Kim (2011, 178), "honorifics are expressed through several different forms and in different parts of sentences—they are distributed in a dispersed manner over a sentence in different locales and at different levels." The Korean honorific system utilizes honorific suffixes and syntactic forms, such as negation, questions, and conditionals, to express deference. Consequently, the linguistic forms or conventions that Korean speakers employ are based on: (1) social factors such as age, kinship, gender, social status, and occupational rank, (2) distance, and (3) situation (Sohn 1999; see also Brown 2010).

Korean honorifics have two distinct features. The first is that they appear in the predicate of a sentence. Without the usage of honorifics in the predicate, no amount of sentence variation can deliver the speaker's deferential intention. The social status of the subject or the addressee is a major factor in deciding how to express politeness. In declarative sentences, the relative status, age, and familiarity of the addressee to the speaker determines the presence or absence of an honorific morpheme in the predicate ending. The second distinct feature is that there are three components to the Korean honorific system—honorific nouns, honorific verbs, and honorific suffixes. To show politeness, all three components must be employed together. If these three components are not employed together in a suitable manner, then misunderstandings may ensue as the addressee may think of the speaker's speech act as being either impolite or sarcastic towards the addressee. Regarding this point, Sohn (1999, 268) states, "the speaker-addressee perspective and the speaker referent perspective are systematically manifested in the sentence structure."

In terms of rhetorical strategy, Korean politeness culture is generally known for valuing courtesy, harmony, indirectness, and modesty. According to Kim (2011), indirectness and implicitness are the two main characteristics of Korean rhetorical style. The Korean language allows for indirectness to show politeness in request statements. Koreans clearly favor minimizing the imposition of the task to avoid hurting the addressee's feelings (Kim and Bresnahan 1994). To this end, Koreans prefer an indirect rather than direct statement when making requests in their own language, especially when directed toward someone who is older and has a higher social status, or with whom the speaker is not well acquainted. For example, Koreans tend to choose query-preparatory sentences such as, "this room is a little hot" or "would you mind if I ask you to open the window?" when making a request with respect. They rarely use a direct command such as, "hey, open the window," unless the speaker knows the addressee well enough. A direct request (e.g., imperative) is to be used when the speech act is performed either for the benefit of the addressee or directed at a younger or lower-status addressee. An indirect request is employed when the speech act is performed for the benefit of the speaker or addressed to an older or higher-status addressee.

Kim (2011) notes that politeness is expressed rhetorically through the use of hedges, and syntactically through negation and the strategic use of interrogative and conditional sentences. Sohn (1999) argues that the longer the request sentence is, the more indirect and polite the request becomes because more hedges are included in the statement. In addition, Sohn also states that the use of interrogative sentences for requests is getting more popular in Korea, and the omission of the main clause is a productive mechanism for performing indirect speech acts. Sohn's logic is that because the main clause usually contains the speaker's assertion, its omission gives the addressee the option of making the final decision.

Korean (Discernment) Politeness versus American (Strategic) Politeness

As stated, Korean politeness is considered discernment politeness because of its dependence on settled honorific forms or linguistic norms (Kasper

1990). Hill et al. (1986, 348) define discernment as "the almost automatic socially-agreed-upon rules," which operate irrespective of the specific communicative goal of the speaker. In general, discernment politeness is defined by the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Politeness is socially prescribed, meaning that the speaker, as a member of society, does not make his/her own choices. The speaker's options regarding the level of politeness are restricted and should be in accordance with social expectations.

Linguistic encoding of discernment politeness focuses on macrosocial properties composed of both ascribed characteristics—such as age, sex, and family position—and achieved social properties—such as rank, title, and social position (Hill et al. 1986). In other words, the choice of linguistic form carries social information. Therefore, linguistic encoding, such as the use of honorifics, acts as a set of socially agreed rules. The appropriate linguistic form and politeness behavior can be selected by the speaker, and are based on an evaluation of social factors, such as the status and power of the addressee and the situation (see Jandt 2010; Sadri and Flammia 2011).

Among the factors affecting politeness, the social characteristics of the addressee are the main variables to consider when using linguistic encoding in discernment politeness. As Kim and Bresnahan (1994) note, a preference towards minimizing imposition in order to avoid hurting the addressee's feelings and to avoid a negative evaluation by the addressee is a primary concern in linguistic realization. Thus, in discernment politeness, the social power of the addressee in relation to the speaker is the main factor in determining the level of politeness used in expressions. The degree of social distance between the speaker and the addressee may be influential, but when ranked next to other factors, appears to have a marginal impact when selecting an expression to convey proper politeness. Consequently, based on the traits of discernment politeness, a person from a discernment politeness background is expected to show the following forms of strategic politeness culture in their speech acts: absolute care of the addressee's status and a formal type of speech strategy due to the habit of using honorifics (i.e., negative politeness or a conventional-

ly indirect form of speech). The Korean politeness system retains all the aforementioned characteristics of discernment politeness.

By contrast, in American culture, speakers focus on the delivery of a message and the choice of expression strategies in their speech. Verbal abilities, logic, and reasoning are emphasized in American discourse. The same values apply to politeness expressions as well. According to Watts (2003), American speakers can choose from a number of different conventional polite remarks when expressing politeness. Thus, with its individualism-centered culture, American politeness heavily relies on the personal autonomy and general friendliness of people in maintaining conversation etiquette.

American culture also puts value on respecting an individual's right to not be imposed upon or interfered with. Speakers tend to express what they want others to do clearly and unequivocally, while also carefully considering that their request does not conflict with the addressee's personal autonomy. As a result, individuals are endowed with more right to decide when and which politeness strategy needs to be adopted in order to maintain each other's autonomy in the conversation. For this reason, the use of interrogative sentences is utilized as a politeness strategy to avoid imposition (Wierzbecka 2003).

In general, verbal politeness in American culture is motivated more by volition than by discernment. Thus, politeness in America is considered strategic politeness, which refers to a repairing action taken to minimize social conflict caused by speech acts. Strategic politeness utilizes various strategies with a specific communicative goal in the speaker's mind. Strategic politeness is based on the speaker's volition, meaning that the speaker decides whether he/she shall be polite to the addressee. The speaker also determines the degree of politeness, which is based on their perception of the addressee and situation (Song 2012).

Watts (1989) argues that strategic politeness, or the strategy of volition, implies that an individual has a conscious choice to make when speaking; speakers select the speech form—such as verbal etiquette or indirect speech—in accordance with the type of speech event in which they are engaged. As a result, volitional politeness speakers are mainly

constrained by the costs (see Leech 1983) and benefits (see Brown and Levinson 1978) of their speech acts, which are perceived and determined by the speaker's rationality (Hill et al. 1986).

Indirectness

Another difference between Korean and American communication is directness in speech acts. Indirect speech acts are universal because they serve the purpose of maintaining the intention of politeness in a conversation (Brown and Levinson 1987; Scollon and Scollon 1983). According to Katriel (1986), indirect speech acts come from concern for the addressee's face whereas a direct speech style reflects concern for the speaker's own face. Olstain (1993) agrees that indirectness is a measure that a speaker uses to leave some freedom of action for the addressee.

Turning to indirectness, Fraser (1990, 226) asserts, "As the hearer's authority relative to the speaker lowers, and the social distance increases, the greater will be the need for providing the hearer with options and the greater the need for indirectness in the formulation of the expression conveying the message." This means that relative power status and social distance between the speaker and hearer is important in determining the level of an indirect speech act. Scollon and Scollon (1983) posit that indirectness level goes up as social distance increases, yet decreases the higher the social power of the addressee. They assert that indirectness becomes greater in speech acts between strangers and in deferential speech used by people in relatively lower positions when they talk to their superiors.

There are many indirect scales developed in the literature. Among them, the most commonly used division is by using the categories "direct," "conventionally indirect," and "non-conventional indirect (hints)" (Blum-Kulka and House 1989). Blum-Kulka (1987) defines "direct" speech acts as those acts with syntactic imperatives, "conventionally indirect" speech acts as the containment of a contextual precondition with syntactic interrogative style, and "non-conventional indirect" speech acts as opaque strategies which realize the request by partial reference to the

object of the requesting act.[2]

In terms of the nexus between culture and politeness expressions, indirectness level employed in communication varies over different cultures. Rosaldo (1973) argues Europeans and Americans are direct in their speech because of democratic and scientific attitudes. On the other hand, Asians tend to be oriented toward indirect speech. The reason is that in Asian culture, direct speech is considered to be authoritarian while indirect speech is thought of as sensitive to an individual's wishes. Okabe (1987) also contends that there is a significant difference in the level of indirectness used by North Americans compared to the level used by East Asians. According to Okabe, when the speaker asks another person to close a door, North Americans may say, "the door is open," while Japanese may state, "it is cold today." Since Japanese does not mention a door, Japanese' expression is more indirect. Yum (1988) joins Okabe (1987) and argues that indirect communication is more widely used in East Asian than North America.

Native Language versus Second Language

The type of politeness embedded in one's culture dominates a native speaker's speech acts with respect to politeness usage. However, scholars of ESL pragmatics note that the social variables associated with the addressee play a very important role in the choice of speech strategies by ESL learners. For instance, Scarcella and Brunak (1981) investigated the politeness strategies produced by male adult Arabic speakers in their first and second languages, and found that the social status of the addressee has significantly more effect on their choice of politeness speech acts when they use a second language than when they use their native Arabic. Takahasi and Beebe (1993) also report that the social status of the listener

2. Some scholars (Blum-Kulka 1987, 1989; Held 1989; Wierzbicka 1985) reject a linear association of indirectness with politeness. According to Meier (1995), the formula that the more direct a speech act is, the less polite it becomes, and vice versa, is dangerous. Becker, Kimmel, and Bevill (1989) contend that addressees can regard indirect requests as more impolite and sarcastic.

affects the style of language that Japanese use when they communicate in English. In other words, the effects of culture on politeness behavior change when the speaker communicates in a second language.

For this reason, Clyne (1979) asserts that communication conflicts arise not so much from local difference in linguistic action patterns, but rather from features that impinge on interlocutors' perceptions of power, trust, and solidarity. Thus, I analyze how Korean speakers who have discernment politeness backgrounds express their politeness in English (their second language), and compare this with American English native speakers whose cultural background is in strategic politeness.

Research Design

Data

There were two steps to the data collection process. Firstly, I generated a discourse-completion CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) questionnaire with 15 situations, each of which led to a possible answer to a request (see Appendix). The scripted dialogues in the questionnaire represent several differentiated situations. Based on my research questions and theoretical orientation, I attempted to put the following aspects into the questionnaire: (1) a situation where one must choose whether to ask a favor or make a request that requires an obligated response, (2) an addressee's specific situation, such as a clerk versus a professor, and (3) a situation where the request expression is well known versus an unexpected or sudden situation.

Next, I asked subjects to imagine themselves in the situation and asked how they would express their request in English. They were asked to complete the dialogue, thereby providing the speech act aimed at. According to Hill et al. (1986), this kind of data is good for a crosscultural comparative study because it reflects the speaker's sociolinguistic adaptations to specific situations. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) agree that this type of data has an advantage of crosscultural comparability reflecting linguistic

and cultural norms.

Subjects

Two groups of subjects participated in the survey: 20 native English speakers and 40 Korean English language learners. The English native speaker subjects are students at comprehensive universities in the Midwest areas of the United States. The Korean subjects are students at a comprehensive university in Seoul, South Korea. For both groups, the survey was conducted during the class period and guided by the instructor of the class. Since gender is not an important factor in this study, there is no special consideration for gender.

Methods

In order to analyze the collected data, I employ a combination of House and Kasper's (1981) and Carrell and Konnecker's (1981) typology of request patterns. House and Kasper (1981) considered the level of directness to be a politeness indicator. The authors analyzed and compared the apology and request strategies of English and German subjects. House and Kasper (1981, 159) define a request as the act of a "pre-event" with "anti-addressee Y." In other words, a request is when the utterance of the speech act takes place before the event—the action the speaker wants addressee Y to perform. The event comes at Y's cost. House and Kasper (1981) included the locution of the acts of ordering, commanding, asking, and begging in the request act categories. This scale is based on postulating degrees of illocutionary transparency, which refers to how transparently the intention for a request comes through the speaker's speech act. The scale changes as the speaker's intention or illocution of what he/she is requesting is revealed more clearly, either in the sentence construction or in the words in the sentence. The nine levels range from the most direct to the least direct, as follows:

1. Mood derivable: Utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb delivers illocutionary force as a request (e.g., "Close the door.")

2. Explicit performative: Utterances in which the illocutionary intent is explicitly expressed (e.g., "I ask you to close the door.")
3. Hedged performative: Utterances in which the expression of the illocutionary intent is hedged by using a modal auxiliary (e.g., "I would like to ask you to close the door.")
4. Obligation statement: Utterances which state the obligation of the addressee to perform the illocutionary act (e.g., "You should close the door.")
5. Want statement: Utterances which state the speaker's desire that the addressee perform the illocutionary act (e.g., "I would prefer if you closed the door.")
6. State preparatory or suggestory formula: Utterances which contain an assertion of a preparatory condition or a suggestion for the execution of the act (e.g., "You can close the door.")
7. Query preparatory: Utterances that are conditioned by the addressee's ability or willingness to accept the request, using conventionalized speech patterns (e.g., "Can (Could) you close the door?")
8. Strong hint: Utterances which do not state the illocutionary point but contain a partial reference to the element needed for the implementation of the act (e.g., "Why is the door open?")
9. Mild hint: Utterances that have no reference to the illocutionary point but are interpretable as requests by context (e.g., "It's very cold here.")

Alternatively, in a study to investigate the judgment of politeness acts made by both English native speakers and non-native ESL learners, Carrell and Konneker (1981) also developed a hierarchy of request acts. Carrell and Konneker's (1981) hierarchy of request acts are:

0. Imperative-elliptical
1. Imperative
2. Declarative with no modal
3. Declarative with a present tense modal
4. Declarative with a past tense modal
5. Interrogative with no modal
6. Interrogative with a present tense modal

7. Interrogative with a past tense modal

The judgments were made using a rank ordering method. The results of the native and non-native groups showed a lot of similarities.

House and Kasper's (1981) typology is useful to analyze the data collected for this study. However, level 7—query preparatory—is considered to contain several levels of politeness. For instance, according to the hierarchy of request acts by Carrell and Konneker (1981), level 7 can contain three more patterns in terms of politeness: past tense modal, present tense modal, and no modal. The specification of these three patterns in level 7 is appropriate for the purpose of my study for two reasons. Firstly, the specification allows a more detailed analysis of the subject groups' answers. Secondly, the categorization of three modal patterns results in the combination of the indirectness scale with the politeness domain. Therefore, a combination of the two typologies reflects my research concerns better than the original scale of either House and Kasper (1981) or Carrell and Konneker (1981). Combining the two typologies gives us the following scale:

1. Mood derivable
2. Explicit performative
3. Hedged performative
4. Obligation statement
5. Want statement
6. State preparatory
7. Query preparatory with no modal (e.g., "Are you willing to open the door?")
8. Query preparatory with a present tense modal (e.g., "Can you close the door?")
9. Query preparatory with a past tense modal (e.g., "Could you close the door?")
10. Strong hint
11. Mild hint

In a later study, Blum-Kulka and House (1989) grouped House and

Kasper's (1981) nine categories into three groups for the generalization of request strategies. This new grouping is based on directness on the grounds that indirectness is important when expressing politeness. Another benefit of this classification is that it will provide a bigger picture of request acts. The three generalized groups defined by Blum-Kulka and House (1989) are:

1. Direct strategy (levels 1, 2, and 3).
2. Conventionally indirect strategy (levels 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).
3. Non-conventional indirect strategy (levels 10 and 11).

All the coding schemes discussed thus far depend on the directness level of the syntactic strategy of the speech act. These three coding scheme types provide proper methods to analyze the data for the purpose of this study.

Findings

By utilizing the coding schemes discussed above, I have analyzed the data collected from the survey conducted with two subject groups—Korean and American subjects. In terms of crosscultural variability, the findings show that cultural differences have an impact on the type of request strategy employed, in terms of directness level. Overall, the Korean subject group was more direct than the American subject group.

The American subject group used conventionally indirect strategies more than Korean subjects regardless of the situation, while the Korean subject group employed direct strategies a lot more than American subjects. This pattern of difference can be interpreted as reflecting cultural differences and their first language orientation. The reason is that, as Blum-Kulka (1989, 76) notes, a conventionally indirect strategy is tactful because it gives more options to the addressee and makes it easier for the addressee to refuse a request, particularly in American culture. However, a conventionally indirect strategy may also be employed (in Korean culture, for example) to display a formal, deferential politeness by changing politeness markers, such as honorific suffixes in modals. As a result, in a

situation where deferential politeness is less required because of the lower social status of the addressee, a change of directness level may occur more frequently. The high percentage of usage of a direct strategy by the Korean subject group could also be interpreted as an impact of their cultural and linguistic background, on the grounds that the direct strategy employed by the Korean subject group was often supported by "please." Koreans' preference for "please" or "excuse me" can be interpreted as a reflection of their honorific system to a certain degree.

The frequency distribution of request strategy types of directness by different language groups is reported in Table 1. The row in Table 1 denotes the level of directness; level 1 is the most direct and level 11 is the least direct. The column indicates the question/situation number of the survey questionnaire. K refers to the Korean subject group, and A refers to the American subject group. Both Korean and American groups showed a high frequency of using levels 1, 5, 7, 8, and 9, and a lower frequency of employing levels 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, and 11. Even among the most frequently used levels, both groups seemed to most prefer the query-preparatory strategy type, which is levels 7, 8, and 9.[3] Among the three levels of the query-preparatory strategy type (levels 7, 8, and 9), both subject groups preferred an interrogative style with modals (levels 8 and 9) to show their politeness in the request. For level 8, "can" was the most often used modal. For level 9, both "could" and "would" were almost evenly used.

However, in terms of the degree that these levels were used in various situations, the results show that the Korean subject group used a different pattern of employing request strategy types than the American subjects. For example, when looking at the individual level of request strategies, the Korean subject group often used level 1 (36.7 percent) in their answers, while the American subject group rarely used level 1 (12.7 percent). The American subject group used a higher percentage of query-preparatory strategy type of speech acts than the Korean subject group. For example, the Korean subject group used the query-preparatory strategy type (levels

3. The subjects assumed a preparatory condition of ability or willingness of the addressee to respond to the given situation.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Request by Strategy Types of Directness

Situation		Level of Directness (from most direct to least direct)											Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	K	18		3		12			1	6			40
	(%)	(45)		(7.5)		(30)			(2.5)	(15)			(100)
	A	3		9					7	1			20
	(%)	(15)		(45)					(35)	(5)			(100)
2	K	22						1	3	14			40
	(%)	(55)						(2.5)	(7.5)	(35)			(100)
	A	5				1			3	10		1	20
	(%)	(25)				(5)			(15)	(50)		(5)	(100)
3	K	11		2		14		2	7	4			40
	(%)	(27.5)		(5)		(35)		(5)	(17.5)	(10)			(100)
	A			8		5			4	3			20
	(%)			(40)		(25)			(20)	(15)			(100)
4	K	24						9	3	4			40
	(%)	(60)						(22.5)	(7.5)	(10)			(100)
	A					5		11	1	3			20
	(%)					(25)		(55)	(5)	(15)			(100)
5	K	5				2		1	15	17			40
	(%)	(12.5)				(5)		(2.5)	(37.5)	(42.5)			(100)
	A	1	1	1		1		3	3	10			20
	(%)	(5)	(5)	(5)		(5)		(15)	(15)	(50)			(100)
6	K	5				2		1	15	17			40
	(%)	(12.5)				(5)		(2.5)	(37.5)	(42.5)			(100)
	A			2		1		3	3	10			20
	(%)			(10)		(5)		(15)	(15)	(50)			(100)
7	K	9				6		1	18	6			40
	(%)	(22.5)				(15)		(2.5)	(45)	(15)			(100)
	A					1		3	6	10			20
	(%)					(5)		(15)	(30)	(50)			(100)
8	K	23				2		5	5	5			40
	(%)	(57.5)				(5)		(12.5)	(12.5)	(12.5)			(100)
	A					2			2	11			20
	(%)					(10)			(10)	(55)			(100)
9	K	13	1			12			6	8			40
	(%)	(32.5)	(2.5)			(30)			(15)	(20)			(100)
	A	6				10			2	2			20
	(%)	(30)				(50)			(10)	(10)			(100)

10	K	19						8	13			40
	(%)	(47.5)						(20)	(32.5)			(100)
	A	4				1	2	1	12			20
	(%)	(20)				(5)	(10)	(5)	(60)			(100)
11	K	9				21	2	4	4			40
	(%)	(22.5)				(52.5)	(5)	(10)	(10)			(100)
	A					2	3	11	11			20
	(%)					(10)	(15)	(55)	(55)			(100)
12	K	20			3	2	1	4	10			40
	(%)	(50)			(7.5)	(5)	(2.5)	(10)	(25)			(100)
	A	4				3	1	2	10			20
	(%)	(20)				(15)	(5)	(10)	(50)			(100)
13	K	9				7	2	8	8			40
	(%)	(22.5)				(17.5)	(5)	(20)	(20)			(100)
	A	1				3		9	9	2		20
	(%)	(5)				(15)		(45)	(45)	(10)		(100)
14	K	17			5	8	2	1	1	6		40
	(%)	(42.5)			(12.5)	(20)	(5)	(2.5)	(2.5)	(15)		(100)
	A	7			2	5	2	1		3		20
	(%)	(35)			(10)	(25)	(10)	(5)		(15)		(100)
15	K	16				1	2	8	12	1		40
	(%)	(40)				(2.5)	(5)	(20)	(30)	(2.5)		(100)
	A	5			2		2	3	4	4		20
	(%)	(25)			(10)		(10)	(15)	(20)	(20)		(100)
Total	K	220	1	5	8	89	29	112	129	7		600
	(%)	(36.7)	(0.1)	(0.8)	(1.3)	(14.8)	(4.8)	(18.7)	(21.5)	(1.2)		(100)
	A	41	1	20	4	40	30	47	107	10		300
	(%)	(13.7)	(0.3)	(6.7)	(1.3)	(13.3)	(10)	(15.7)	(35.7)	(3.3)		(100)

7, 8, and 9) in 45 percent of their answers, while the American subject group used this strategy in 63.4 percent of their answers. In other words, there is a pattern that the Korean subjects are different from American subjects in terms of employing request strategy types with respect to directness.

Now I discuss individual situations to show this pattern of similarity and difference. In situation 1 (ordering coffee), the Korean subject group frequently used the level 1 strategy (mood derivable and want statement) while the American subject group most often used level 3 (hedged perfor-

mative and query-preparatory with a present tense modal). Situation 3 (buying post stamps from a post office clerk) also showed a similar pattern. Cultural differences with respect to the social status of the waitress, secretary, or clerk may have been reflected in the subject's answers.

In situation 2 (a teacher asking a student to close a door), the Korean subject group used level 1 most frequently, while the American subject group used level 9 most frequently. This difference may also be due to different teacher-student relationships in various cultures. In other words, Korean culture may consider this relationship in more hierarchical terms than American culture.

In situation 4 (asking the time), both subject groups used only five levels (levels 1, 5, 7, 8, and 9). This is assumed to be because all the subjects were familiar with the situation and had learned common expressions for it, such as "What time is it now?" or "Do you have the time?" This situation showed the most similar pattern between the two subject groups.

In situation 5 (borrowing a music disk from a friend) and in situation 6 (borrowing a book from a professor), both groups most frequently employed a query-preparatory strategy (levels 7, 8, and 9). However, in situation 7, which is also a borrowing situation (borrowing a notebook from a friend), 22.5 percent of the Korean subject groups utilized level 1 (mood-derivable strategy), while the American group did not. This difference can also be attributed to cultural differences, in that Korean students often borrow and lend notebooks from each other.

In situation 11 (asking a doctor to give a prescription), the Korean subject group most frequently used a want statement (52.5 percent), while only ten percent of the American subject group used this kind of statement in their answers. This difference is also likely due to cultural differences.

In situation 14 (asking a roommate to clean the room), the subject groups employed the most diverse levels of strategy. Moreover, a hint strategy was used more than in any of the other situations. The reason may come from the complexity of the situation to the interlocutors. In addition, there is no common expression for this situation.

The observed pattern that the American subject group is different from the Korean subject group in terms of employing request strategy

types with respect to directness is even clearer when the levels are grouped into the three categories generated by Searle (1975) and recommended by Blum-Kulka (1987). They grouped levels 1, 2, and 3 as "direct," levels 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 as "conventionally indirect," and levels 10 and 11 as "unconventionally indirect." The findings using this new category system are reported in Table 2 below.

According to Table 2, a direct strategy was much more often used by the Korean subject group than by the American subject group, except in situations (questions) 1 and 4. In fact, the Korean subject group used a direct strategy even in situations 3, 5, 7 and 11, while the American subject group did barely use it in these situations. Overall, the American subject group most often used a conventionally indirect strategy. This finding is counterintuitive, considering that indirect speech is common in Asian culture. There might be two causes for this result. First, the Korean subjects are English learners, meaning that their request was made using a second language. Due to language barriers, the Korean subjects might have employed more direct strategies than American subjects, who used their native language. Another cause is theorized to arise from differences in cultural background, in that the Korean subject group has a discernment politeness background, while the American subject group has a strategic politeness background.

The main findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. Both subject groups selected a conventionally indirect strategy most frequently. However, the Korean subject group employed direct level of strategies more than the American subject group. Overall, the American subject group was different from the Korean subject group.
2. Because of different cultural values and social perceptions, the subject groups employed various directness levels in some situations.
3. The American subject group was more sensitive than the Korean subject group to situational differences, such as when asking a favor or making a request that requires an obligated response. In contrast, the Korean subject group was sensitive to the social power status of the addressee.
4. The Korean subject group was more affected by social distance than the

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Request by Three Directness Categories

Situation		Type of Directness			
		Direct (strategies 1, 2, 3)	Conventionally indirect (strategies 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)	Unconventionally indirect (strategies 10, 11)	Total
1	K (%)	21 (52.5)	19 (47.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	12 (60)	8 (40)		20 (100)
2	K (%)	22 (55)	18 (45)		40 (100)
	A (%)	5(25)	14 (70)	1 (5)	20 (100)
3	K (%)	13 (32.5)	27 (67.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	8 (40)	12 (60)		20 (100)
4	K (%)	24 (60)	16 (40)		40 (100)
	A (%)		20 (100)		20 (100)
5	K (%)	5 (12.5)	35 (87.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	3 (15)	17 (85)		20 (100)
6	K (%)	5 (12.5)	35 (87.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	2 (10)	18 (90)		20 (100)
7	K (%)	9 (22.5)	31 (77.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)		20 (100)		20 (100)
8	K (%)	23 (57.5)	17 (42.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	5 (25)	15 (75)		20 (100)
9	K (%)	14 (35)	26 (65)		40 (100)
	A (%)	6 (30)	14 (70)		20 (100)
10	K (%)	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	4 (20)	16 (80)		20 (100)
11	K (%)	9 (22.5)	31 (77.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	1 (5)	17 (85)		20 (100)
12	K (%)	20 (50)	20 (50)		40 (100)
	A (%)	4 (20)	16 (80)		20 (100)
13	K (%)	9 (22.5)	31 (77.5)		40 (100)
	A (%)	1 (5)	17 (85)	2 (10)	20 (100)
14	K (%)	17 (42.5)	17 (42.5)	6 (15)	40 (100)
	A (%)	7 (35)	10 (50)	3 (15)	20 (100)
15	K (%)	16 (40)	23 (57.5)	1 (2.5)	40 (100)
	A (%)	5 (25)	11 (55)	4 (20)	20 (100)
Total	K (%)	226 (37.7)	367 (61.2)	7 (1.1)	600 (100)
	A (%)	62 (20.7)	228 (76)	10 (3.3)	300 (100)

American subject group.
5. The Korean subject group used modality markers, such as "please" or "excuse me," more frequently than the American subject group.

Conclusion

Today's life is very different from the life of a few decades ago because we are living in an era of globalization. A lot of goods produced in the world cross national borders, and interpersonal communication is not limited to conversation between two persons with the same cultural background using the same language. It goes beyond that and intercultural communication using a foreign language is common today. As a result, the perception and expression of politeness has become highly significant on the grounds that cultural misunderstanding can lead to significant miscommunication.

Because of the importance of politeness in communication, there is a vast volume of studies concerning politeness. Despite the high level of scholarly interest, there is a void in studying the relationship between politeness and cultural backgrounds in the context of comparing native speakers' and second language learners' expressions of politeness. Thus, in this study, I investigated how the difference in the type of politeness embedded in one's culture respectively affects native and ESL English speakers' intercultural communication by conducting a survey on two subject groups —Korean ESL learners and American English native speakers.

The results of my analysis reveal that differences in American and Korean cultures with respect to politeness, such as strategic and discernment politeness, lead to different patterns of politeness behavior regarding the choice of request strategy. Expressing politeness in a second language also affected the ESL learners' (Korean subjects') politeness behavior. The implications of these findings are that learning appropriate social usages of a foreign language (English in this study), as well as pragmatic principles, patterns, and strategies concerning politeness and social values are just as important as learning linguistic forms and grammar.

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Appendix 1. CCSARP (Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project) Questionnaire

Filling out this questionnaire indicates that I am at least eighteen years of age and I am giving my informed consent to be a subject in this study. Please read the following situations. What would you say if you were in the described situation? Please answer with a request sentence.

1. After a hard day of studying, you decide to go out and have a cup of coffee. You sit down at a table and a waitress comes up and you say to her . . .
2. You are teaching an English class. It's very cold outside and the door is open. So you say to one of your students sitting by the door . . .
3. You are at the post office to buy some stamps. So you say to the clerk . . .
4. You are in a hurry to be on time for a business meeting. You want to know what time it is now but you do not have a watch. So you say to a passerby . . .
5. You want to borrow some records from a friend but she is so particular about them. So you say to her . . .
6. You want to borrow a book from your professor. So you say to him/her . . .
7. You have an exam next week but was absent yesterday. You would like to borrow notes from your classmates. So you say to her . . .
8. In a department store, you are looking for infant wear. So you go to the information booth and say to the receptionist . . .
9. An alarm clock purchased failed to function when brought home. So you say to to a salesperson . . .
10. You are playing tennis with a friend. During the game, you accidentally hit the ball into the next court. You want the ball back. So you say to the people in the next court . . .
11. A Doctor prescribed some medicine for your cold. You want extra pills for headache. So you say to the doctor . . .
12. Just recently your office hired a new secretary. You want her to bring some letters in a hurry. So you say to her . . .
13. You want to buy a car for your new job and need 800 dollars for that. You want to ask your father to lend you 800 dollars. So you say to him . . .
14. Your roommate does not clean the apartment although he often makes mess. So you say to him . . .
15. Someone double parked and you cannot leave. The owner of the car came back. You want him to move his car. So you say to him . . .