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An Examination of L1 and L2 Request E-mails By Korean High School Students

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The purpose of this study was to investigate how Korean high school students perform request speech acts in English and Korean e-mails in two different situations. The data were gathered through writing tasks in which twenty-two Korean high school students were asked to write Korean and English request e-mails in two different situations. The findings of the study are as follows: (1) overall Korean high school students preferred direct strategies in English and Korean e-mails while they employed indirect strategies more when they asked a friend, who is equal in social power, in English, (2) their internal modifications were quite limited in both languages, particularly *please* in English e-mails, (3) various types of external modifications appeared in their e-mails and they made use of more external modifications in English e-mails than in Korean e-mails, and (4) the organization of English and Korean e-mails was not direct and the students avoided facework. However, the frequency and types of strategies, modifications, and organization patterns were different depending on the situations requiring different degrees of politeness. The results were discussed in terms of L1 effect and pragmatic competence. Based on the results of the study, teaching implications and suggestions for future studies are presented.

[request speech act/pragmatic transfer/e-mail writing]

I. INTRODUCTION

Making requests is one of the most frequently used speech acts in everyday life. A request speech act is difficult for a speaker to conduct because it delivers the speaker's intention that a hearer performs an action and the action is usually to be performed for the benefit of the speaker. Therefore, requests are face-threatening in nature (Brown & Levinson, 1987). To modify the threatening impact and accomplish the speaker's intention,

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request speech acts require the speaker to be aware of and use politeness strategies. It is not easy for language learners to use politeness strategies appropriately in their second language since the politeness strategies vary from culture to culture and language to language. Inappropriate use of politeness strategies can lead to pragmatic failure.

The request speech act has been widely studied; of particular note is the cross-cultural analysis of requests carried on by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) that has contributed significantly to this field. Research on the request speech act has focused on differences between native speakers (NSs) and nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English in performing request speech acts. The interest of the major request speech act studies has been spoken discourse rather than written one and language data have been obtained mainly through elicitation in discourse completion tasks (DCTs) (Biesenbach-Luacas, 2007). Meanwhile, the request speech act in writing has been seldom investigated.

These days e-mail has become the most common means of communication. As a result, more and more request speech acts are being performed through e-mails. Considering this trend, it is reasonable that some researchers have paid attention to the realization of request speech acts in e-mails (Biesenbach-Luacs, 2004, 2005, 2007; Chang & Hsu, 1998; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Ryoo, 2009; Yang, 2001a, 2001b, 2002). The majority of the source for data in the research of request e-mails has been the e-mails from students to faculty in school settings. In this case, the data cannot show the differences caused by a difference in social relationships, although they are realistic and authentic. In the studies where the data were collected in the tasks imposing several imaginary situations, the subjects were limited to college students. In addition, they compared English e-mails written by NNSs and the ones by NSs. Therefore, they could not examine directly the differences and similarities between the e-mails of two different languages and the transfer effect of the first language (L1) into the e-mails of the second language (L2).

In order to complement the previous studies, the present study examined how Korean high school students perform request speech acts in English and Korean e-mails. By comparing the students' English and Korean request e-mails, the pragmatic transfer from their native language was studied. Further, the influence of different request situations on politeness strategies in each language was investigated as well.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Studies on Request Speech Acts

Much research has been conducted to investigate pragmatic competence of L2 learners. The request speech act has been the key issue of the research. In the Cross-Cultural Speech

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Act Realization Project (CCSARP), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) divided the request sequence into alerters (e.g., address terms), internal modifications (e.g., downgraders and upgraders), external modifications and head acts. They indexed the degree of politeness in requests with the level of directness of head acts and mitigations which can be divided into internal and external modifications. According to their research, indirect strategies, syntactic and lexical modifiers, and non-hearer oriented request perspective contribute to politeness. On the other hand, direct strategies like imperatives, the presence of intensifiers and aggravating moves, and lack of mitigating features attribute to lack of politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1987). However, cross-cultural studies suggest the politeness strategies are not universal across different languages. Thus, many researchers (Fukushima, 1990; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Takahashi & Dufon, 1989) have focused on cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparisons of request realization patterns and identified similarities and differences in different languages. They have discovered that NSs of a language and NNSs differ in their use of politeness strategies.

In Korea, there has been consistent research on the request speech act and Korean learners' requests in English have been compared with NSs' requests. At the same time, the request speech acts in English and Korean languages have been studied. Park (1990) compared and examined Korean English learners' and English NSs' realization patterns of requests in English. She found that Koreans used rather direct strategies such as imperatives. In contrast, English NSs used more indirect strategies and adjuncts. The use of direct request strategies in English by Korean learners agrees with the one in their L1. Koh (1995) investigated the realization patterns of requests in English and Korean and discovered that Korean requests were realized with more direct strategies than English requests. He argued that this is because Koreans employ an honorific system in their language rather than pragmatic means in their requests. Park also reported that English NSs used more syntactic downgraders such as negation, past tense, embedded structure and interrogatives. Suh (2011) compared Korean ESL and EFL learners' and English NSs' requests in English. In his study, Korean ESL learners used more external modifications than Korean EFL learners and NSs. Korean EFL learners' requests were simple and brief due to their limited proficiency while NSs produced more words inside request strategy by using internal modifications actively.

2. Request in E-mails

Since the late 1990s, studies about request speech acts realized in e-mails have been increasing although most studies about request speech acts are still focused on spoken mode. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) analyzed e-mail requests sent by NSs and NNSs to faculty and assessed their effect. They examined the e-mails in terms of linguistic

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forms, degree of imposition, and content. In the study, it was found that NNSs used less downgraders and acknowledged the imposition of the request on the faculty less often than NSs, which led to negative effect on requests. Biesenbach-Lucas (2004, 2005, 2007) applied the CCSARP framework to NSs' and NNSs' e-mail requests of faculty and found NNSs tended to use more direct requests than NSs. In her research, NNSs overused *please* and added more supportive moves (e.g., reasons, apologies) to their e-mail requests than NSs. She maintained that it is possibly due to a lack of linguistic flexibility or due to a transfer of speech act norms governing their L1 use. Chang and Hsu (1998) investigated differences in request e-mails written in English by NNSs, here Chinese English learners, and NSs. Their study revealed that NSs organized their e-mail request messages in a rather direct sequence while employing indirect linguistic forms. In contrast, the NNSs' request messages were in an indirect sequence with direct linguistic forms.

As for Korean learners, Yang (2001a, 2001b, 2002) analyzed their request behaviors realized in e-mails from various perspectives. According to her research, Korean learners showed the tendency to choose indirect organizational patterns to express their politeness intention in their e-mails, which is similar to Chinese English learners in Chang and Hsu's (1998) study. She argued this is due to the transfer effect of their L1, in which Koreans write topic-unrelated contents before the head act. Ryoo (2009) gathered and analyzed request e-mails written in English from Korean college students. She discovered the students' tendency to use simple sentence structures, lack of control in using modal auxiliaries, and failure in adopting appropriate degree of formality.

3. Pragmatic Transfer

According to Kasper (1992), pragmatic transfer is "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (p. 207). Language learners often transfer their native social and cultural norms when they communicate with native speakers of the target language. This is referred to as L1 pragmatic transfer.

The L1 pragmatic transfer may bring about different manifestations, which are negative transfer, positive transfer, avoidance, and overuse (Ellis, 1994). Many studies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Takahashi & Dufon, 1989; Thomas, 1983) have been focused on negative pragmatic transfer because it causes the learners to use non-native-like L2 and might lead to negative image or miscommunication. However, transfer of L1 pragmatic information in L2 use can be positive. Learners' successful transfer of specific forms for requesting, which are conventionally indirect forms and past tense modal form, has been reported by many researchers (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987). L1 influence may also result in avoidance and overuse of certain L1 forms and functions. In

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Kasper's (1992) study, German learners of English never used the mitigating routine *I mean* although they frequently used a German equivalent. It was because they considered the routine as language-specific. On the other hand, Richards and Sukwiwat (1983) claimed that Asian learners overuse honorifics or titles such as *sir* and apologies compared to English native speakers due to their different perceptions of formality.

L1 pragmatic transfer can be promoted or inhibited by many factors including the gap between the norms of L1 and L2, L2 proficiency, and length of stay in the L2 community. In Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) study, Israeli learners of English relied far less on apology strategies than did the NSs of English, transferring their L1 values to English. That is, the gap between the norms of the two languages caused negative transfer. Regarding L2 proficiency as a source of pragmatic transfer, many studies have reported that negative pragmatic transfer diminishes with increasing L2 proficiency (Hassall, 2003; Kasper & Roever, 2005). Kasper (1992) and Ellis (1994), however, maintained that L2 learners may transfer their L1 pragmatic aspects only if their L2 proficiency is high enough to take advantage of sufficient L2 resources. Concerning the influence of length of stay in the L2 community on pragmatic transfer, Kasper argued that "extended residence in the target community does not in and of itself make 'negative' pragmatic transfer go away" (p. 220). However, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) found that learners of Hebrew who stayed in Israel longer acknowledged L2 pragmatic norms more.

III. METHODS

1. Participants

In the present study, the data were collected from twenty-two students who were the second graders in a high school located in Yongin, Gyeonggi-do, in 2011. They consist of two males and twenty females. Their English proficiency varied from the first grade to the fourth in English section of trial college scholastic aptitude tests (TCSAT). Three students were placed in the first, six in the second, nine in the third and four in the fourth grade. According to a survey given to acquire general information about the participants, seven students had stayed in English speaking countries for more than six months, four had stayed for less than three months, and the other eleven students had no experience of staying in any English speaking countries. As for the experience of having taken classes about writing request letters in English, only one student answered "yes". She explained that she had taken that kind of course while staying in New Zealand.

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2. Data Collection

In the present study, the participants were invited to write Korean and English e-mails on worksheets which were produced to mimic the e-mail format. Two different situations were provided for Korean and English e-mails respectively, and so each student wrote four e-mails, two in Korean and two in English. As a result, eighty-eight e-mails in total – forty-four English and forty-four Korean e-mails – were gathered. The ideal data for the analysis of request speech acts in e-mails would be the e-mails that occur naturally in daily life. In this case, however, it is impossible to control request type and social relationship between a sender and a receiver. Thus, the study provided prompts for the writing tasks.

The students were asked to write two e-mail messages replying to the two requesting situations in English. After one week from the first task, they were asked to write two Korean e-mail messages replying to similar situations. The term of one week between the two tasks and the order of Korean writing task after English writing were arranged to prevent the effect of interpretation from Korean to English. Although there was no time limit in each task, all the participants finished their writing task within 40 minutes. The descriptions of the situations were provided in Korean for the participants' clear understanding.

Situation 1

You are going to participate in an English camp sponsored by a university during the summer vacation. You can take part in the camp for free if you apply for a scholarship and are selected. To apply for the scholarship, you need a recommendation letter from an English native speaking teacher. Now your native English teacher is in the U.S.A.. Write an e-mail to ask your teacher for a recommendation letter.

Situation 2

You are studying about the topic of 'Life of American high school students' in English Culture class. Related to the topic, you are given the project to gather information of their school life and do a presentation about that. You are going to ask Jennifer, your American pen-pal, of pictures related to her school life. Write an e-mail to ask Jennifer to send the pictures about high school life.

In the task of Korean e-mail writing, the English camp and native speaking teacher in Situation 1 have been replaced by debate contest and Korean teacher, and the American pen-pal in Situation 2 by a Korean friend from middle school days who moved to America.

Situation 1 is an occurrence where the receiver of the e-mail is higher than the sender in social rank and so social power is unequal. Compared to that, Situation 2 is the one where the sender and the receiver are equal in social power. By providing the two different

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situations, the study intended to investigate how the participants control the degree of politeness in different situations.

3. Data Analysis

The present study analyzed the head acts and internal and external modifications in the e-mails. The head act is "the core of the request sequence" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 275) which can realize a request. The CCSARP coding scheme classifies strategy types of requests with directness level of a head act. Internal modifications are the elements within the head act. They include syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders. Downgraders mitigate the imposition of the request while upgraders increase the force of the request. External modifications which function as supportive moves to the head act are external to the head act and occur before or after the head act. They also mitigate or aggravate the addresser's request.

The present study adopted the coding categories by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) who modified Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP framework to analyze request speech acts in e-mails. As for Korean e-mails, the researcher referred to the analysis formats adopted by Chung (2003) and Oh (2010) in their studies. Table 1 presents the request strategies and examples in the present study.[1]

TABLE 1

Request Strategies in Present Study

Strategy types	Request strategies	Examples (English / Korean)
Direct	Imperatives	Please send me your recommendation letter. 추천서 좀 써주세요. (*chwuchense com ssecwuseyyo.*) / 사진 좀 보내줘. (*sacin com ponaycwe.*)
	Explicit Performatives	I'm asking you to write a recommendation letter for me. 추천서 작성을 부탁드립니다. (*chwuchense caksengul pwuthaktulipnita.*) / 사진을 부탁해. (*sacinul pwuthakhay.*)
	Hedged Performatives	I'd like to ask you to write a recommendation letter for me. 추천서를 써주시기를 부탁드렸으면 합니다. (*chwuchenselul ssecwusikilul pwuthaktulyess.umyen hapnita.*) / 사진을 부탁했으면 해. (*sacin-ul pwuthakhayss.umyen hay.*)
	Want statements	I want to get a recommendation letter. 추천서를 받고 싶습니다. (*chwuchense-lul patko siphsupnita.*) / 사진을 받고 싶어. (*sacin-ul patko siph.e.*)

[1] For transcribing the Korean data, the Yale Romanization is used.

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	Need statements	I need a recommendation letter from you. 추천서가 필요합니다. (*chwuchense-ka phil.yohapnita.*) / 사진이 필요해. (*sacin-i phil.yohay.*)
Conventio-nally indiret	Query preparatory (ability, willingness, permission)	If you can, would you send me a recommendation for me? 추천서를 써주실 수 있으세요? (*chwuchenselul ssecwusil swu iss.useyyo*?) / 사진을 보내줄 수 있니? (*sacin-ul ponaycwul swu issni*?)
Hints (Nonconven-tionally indirect)	Strong hints	They require a recommendation letter. 대회참가를 위해서 추천서가 필요하다고 합니다. (*tayhoychamka-lul wihayse chwuchenseka phil.yohatako hapnita.*) / 발표자료에 사진을 넣어야 해. (*palphyocalyoey sacin-ul neh.e.ya hay.*)
	Mild hints	I hope you're not busy. (asking for a recommendation letter) 바쁘신가요? (*pappusinka.yo?*) / 바쁘니? (*pappuni*?)

In the research of request speech acts, the analysis is usually based on the coding schemes of the CCSARP while the terms and examples for request strategies are a little different from study to study. However, there is no difference in categorizing request speech acts into the three levels – the most direct and explicit level, the conventionally indirect level, and the non-conventionally indirect level.

As for internal modifications in the present study, the types of modifiers were quite limited in the data. Among the modifiers illustrated in the CCSARP coding scheme, only a few appeared. For the analysis of Korean internal modifications, the classification and the examples from Koh's (1995) study were referred to. The modifiers in the present study are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Internal Modifications in Present Study

Types of internal modifications		Examples	
		English	Korean
Syntactic modifiers	Negation	-	*antoylkka.yo*
	Conditional	I am wondering if -	*-myenhapnita*
	Past tense	Would/could	-
	Progressive aspect	I'm wondering	-
	Auxiliary	-	*cwu* (to give)
Lexical/phrasal modifiers	Politeness marker	please	*com*
	Downtoners	-	*hoksi*
	Subjectivisers	I'm wondering	-

The analysis of external modifications was based on Lee's (2010) classification because it was most comprehensive. She combined new types of external modifications identified in other studies (Chang, 2008; Lee, 2007) into the CCSARP coding scheme to examine

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Korean requests. Hence, her classification was suitable in analyzing both English and Korean external modifications simultaneously. For the description of each external modification, Hwang's (2010) study was referred to. Table 3 shows the external modifications in the present study and the descriptions and examples.

TABLE 3

External Modifications in Preset Study

External modifications	Description and examples
Grounder	The speaker gives reasons and explanations for the request. (*I can't move.* Please bring me a cup of water.)
Gratitude	The speaker expresses gratitude to the hearer for the expected compliance with the request. (Please push the button. *Thank you.*)
Apology	The speaker apologizes for the trouble that the potential request may cause. (Would you please help me move this box? *I'm sorry to bother you about this.*)
Reward	The speaker promises a reward. (Can you lend me your book? *I'll buy you lunch.*)
Joke	The speaker tries to mitigate the imposition of his/her request by making a joke. (Please send me pictures of your friends. *Not the ones of you. I'm just kidding, you know!*)
Preparator	Prior to making a request, the speaker prepares the hearer by asking his/her potential availability or permission for carrying out the request. (*Are you busy these days?* I hope you can write a recommendation letter for me.)
Precommitment	The speaker attempts to get the commitment from the hearer before making the request. (*Could you do me a favor?* I need a ride home.)
Disarmer	The speaker attempts to eliminate any possible refusal to the potential request from the hearer. (*I hope you wouldn't mind.* Please help me with my homework.)
Imposition minimizer	The speaker attempts to reduce the burden of the request on the hearer. (Can you send me some pictures for me? *It doesn't have to be perfect pictures. Any pictures!*)
Imposition intensifier	The speaker attempts to increase the burden of the request on the hearer and force him/her to carry out the request. (I ask you to send me some photos of your school. *This is pretty important to me.*)
Begging for help	The speaker expresses obvious appeal. (Could you lend me some money? I'm sorry but *I beg you.*)
Potential result	The speaker presents the potential result, which is expected when the hearer complies with or refuses the request, and justifies his/her request. (I need your recommendation letter. *It would be great if I can get a scholarship.*)

In addition to strategy types and internal and external modifications, organizational patterns of e-mails were also examined. Since the CCSARP coding scheme, which is originally intended to examine oral communication, does not include the analysis of organization, Yang's (2001a) categorization was adopted. She investigated the organizational patterns of request e-mails and identified twelve types of organizational

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patterns by relative locations of head acts, grounders, and facework (small talk). In the present study, the classification was simplified into four types considering only the locations of the main head act, the first grounder, and facework. Table 4 shows the types of organizational patterns in the present study.

TABLE 4

Organizational Patterns in Present Study[2]

Directness level	Types of organizational patterns
Most Direct	…head act – grounder …
Less Direct	…grounder – head act …
Indirect	…facework – head act – grounder…
	…facework – grounder – head act …

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Request Strategies

Table 5 shows request strategies in Korean and English e-mails in different situations.

TABLE 5

Percentage of Request Strategies (frequency)

Directness levels	English		Korean	
	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 1	Situation 2
Direct	68.18(15)	40.91(9)	72.73(16)	54.55(12)
Indirect	31.82(7)	59.09(13)	18.18(4)	45.45(10)
Hints	0(0)	0(0)	9.09(2)	0(0)
Total	100(22)	100(22)	100(22)	100(22)

In Situation 1 where students ask a teacher of a recommendation letter, they used direct strategies more than indirect strategies both in English and Korean e-mails. In both languages, direct strategies were used more than twice as much as indirect strategies. However, in Situation 2 to ask friends of pictures for homework, the students resorted to

[2] Example e-mails are provided in Appendix.

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indirect strategies more than direct strategies in English e-mails. In Korean e-mails, their indirect strategy use increased in Situation 2 compared to that in Situation 1 although still more students employed direct strategies. The following table shows request strategies in e-mail messages in detail in each language.

TABLE 6

Percentage of Request Strategies in Detail (frequency)

Direct-ness levels	Strategy type	English		Korean	
		Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation1	Situation 2
Direct	Imperatives	31.82(7)	22.72(5)	18.18(4)	31.82(7)
	Explicit performatives	18.18(4)	9.09(2)	4.55(1)	13.63(3)
	Hedged performatives	0(0)	0(0)	13.63(3)	0(0)
	Need statements	13.63(3)	4.55(1)	18.18(4)	4.55(1)
	Want statements	4.55(1)	4.55(1)	18.18(4)	4.55(1)
Indirect	Query preparatory	31.82(7)	59.09(13)	18.18(4)	45.45(10)
Hints	Strong hints	0(0)	0(0)	9.09(2)	0(0)
	Total	100(22)	100(22)	100(22)	100(22)

In English e-mails under Situation 1, imperatives and query preparatory were most preferred. Most students who used imperatives started the sentences with *Please*. All the students who employed query preparatory strategy relied on the sentence form of '*Could (Would, Can) you -?*'. In Korean e-mails, imperatives, need statements, want statements, and query preparatory were used evenly in Situation 1.

In Situation 2, query preparatory, which is an indirect strategy, was mostly used in both English and Korean e-mails. Among the thirteen students who used query preparatory in English e-mails, ten used a sentence starting with '*Can you -?*' and the other three used the question format starting with '*Could (Would) you -?*'. In Korean e-mails, most students used the question format of '*-haycwul swu issni*?', which is the counterpart of '*Can you -?*'. The finding implies the influence of the students' L1.

The head acts in the students' e-mails indicate their limited language competence. According to Takahashi (1996) and Ryoo (2009), NNSs chose rather simple mono-clause request forms instead of bi-clausal request sentence (e.g., *I was wondering if you could VP*), which is more common in NSs' request strategies. Likewise, the request forms preferred by the students in the present study are simple imperatives or questions. Further, the lack of

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language competence interrupts positive transfer from L1 to L2 (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). For example, in Korean e-mails of Situation 1, the sentences like '*chwuchense-lul ssecwusimyen kamsahakeysssupnita*' often appeared. It can be interpreted as *'It would be appreciated if you could write a recommendation letter'* in English and it is often used and evaluated quite polite by native speakers (Ryoo, 2009). If the students' language competence were high enough to compose that sentence, they would have written it in their e-mails under their L1 influence. Unfortunately, they could not because of their limited language competence.

The findings about English request strategies from this study correspond with the findings by Koh (1995) that requesting behaviors of Koreans are realized through more direct strategies than Americans. In addition, the findings also agree with Oh's (2010) report that Korean high school students used query preparatory and '*Please* + imperatives' most as request strategies. That is, the request strategies realized in e-mails are not much different from the ones realized in DCTs in terms of directness level.

2. Internal Modifications

The students used several modifications within the request head acts to make their e-mail requests more effective. Table 7 displays syntactic and lexical modifiers used in English and Korean e-mails under Situation 1 and 2.

TABLE 7

Frequencies of Internal Modifications (S1/S2 = Situation 1/Situation 2)

Ranking	English	Frequency (S1/S2)	Ranking	Korean	Frequency (S1/S2)
1	*Please*	23(16/7)	1	*Cwu*	30(15/15)
2	Past tense	7(4/3)	2	*Com*	14(2/12)
3	Progressive aspect	1(1/0)	3	Conditional	7(6/1)
4	Conditional	1(1/0)	4	*hoksi*	6(2/4)
5	Subjectivizer	1(1/0)	5	Negation	1(1/0)
	Total	31(21/10)		Total	32(15/17)

The results show that there are only limited modification devices that the students can use in writing request e-mails in English. They resorted largely to the modifier *please* in English e-mails in both situations. The higher number of *please* in Situation 1 compared to Situation 2 is predictable considering that the students used imperatives most in Situation 1

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while they employed query preparatory most in Situation 2. Progressive aspect, conditional structure, and subjectivizer were employed by one student with the sentence, '***I am wondering if*** *you can write a recommendation letter.*' Past tense, one of the syntactic modifiers, was realized with '*Could/would you -?*' in questions. It is notable that all the students who used internal modifications other than *please* were the ones who have the experience of staying in English speaking countries for more than a year.

According to Ahn (2008), query preparatory is the most frequently used strategy in requestive conversations presented in high school English textbooks. Also '*Could/would you-?*' is the most frequently appearing head act. However, the students in the present study could not use the past tense to express politeness despite the input from the textbook. The results of internal modifications in the present study and the findings from Ahn's study indicate that English education in Korea does not provide enough opportunities for output.

In Korean e-mails, the students used less modifiers in Situation 1 than in Situation 2. This is because Koreans depend on honorific system to express their politeness in Korean. The use of the auxiliary *cwu* was common like '*sse**cwu**seyyo*' and '*ponay**cwe***'. Six students used conditional structures in Situation 1 like the following.

추천서 하나 써주시면 감사하겠습니다.
Chwuchense hana ssecwusimyen kamsahakeysssupnita.
(It would be appreciated if you wrote a recommendation letter.)

선생님께서 추천서를 써주셨으면 좋겠습니다.
Sensayngnimkkeyse chwuchense-lul ssecwusyess. Umyen cohkeysssupnita.
(It would be nice if you could write a recommendation letter.)

Comparing Situation 1 and 2, *com* was used six times more in Situation 2. The less frequency of adverb *com* in Korean e-mails in Situation 1 indicates the usage of *com* itself. *Com* in Korean is the adverb which is often used in oral communication and so it sounds rather informal. Therefore, the students avoided using the adverb in Situation 1 where they had to ask a higher-up and express politeness. In this sense, it is not appropriate to regard *com* in Korean as the counterpart of *please* in English and use it in the same way in writing. In addition to *com*, *hoksi*, which is a downtoner similar to *perhaps* in English, was also used as a lexical modifier in Korean e-mails.

Overall, almost all the students relied only on the politeness marker *please* in their requests in English e-mails. They might overestimate the power of *please* as a politeness marker. Even though they used conditional structures and a downtoner in their Korean e-mails, they did not in English e-mails. It is because they do not know how they can use them to express politeness in English. The overuse of *please* and the dearth of internal

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modifications in English request speech act performance by Koreans have been reported in the previous studies (Kang, 2011; Park, 1990; Suh, 2011; Yang, 2001b). Not only Korean learners but also other NNSs have the same tendency (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Compared to the active use of internal modifications by NSs, the limited use of internal modifications by NNSs can result in negative assessments of their requests.

3. External Modifications

Twelve different types of external modifications appeared in the present study. Seventy-eight out of eighty-eight e-mails included two or more external modifications. Grounder was the most in frequency for both English and Korean e-mails. All the participants employed grounder in their e-mails. This indicates that explaining the reason of requests is a fundamental strategy to express politeness.

TABLE 8

Ranking and Percentage of External Modifications (frequency)

Ranking	English	%	Ranking	Korean	%
1	Grounder	100(44)	1	Grounder	100(44)
2	Gratitude	63.64(28)	2	Begging for help	36.36(16)
3	Preparator	31.82(14)	3	Gratitude	25(11)
4	Begging for help	22.73(10)	3	Apology	25(11)
5	Reward	11.36(5)	5	Preparator	15.91(7)
5	Disarmer	11.36(5)	6	Reward	13.64(6)
5	Potential result	11.36(5)	7	Potential result	6.82(3)
8	Imposition minimizer	0.09(4)	8	Disarmer	4.54(2)
8	Imposition intensifier	0.09(4)	8	Imposition minimizer	4.54(2)
10	Precommitment	6.82(3)	8	Imposition intensifier	4.54(2)
11	Apology	4.54(2)	11	Joke	2.27(1)
12	Joke	2.27(1)	12	Precommitment	0(0)

(% indicates the percentage of e-mails within each language that contained the type of external modification indicated; percentages add up to more than 100% since external modification can occur together.)

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TABLE 9

Total Number of External Modifications

External modifications	English			Korean		
	Situation1	Situation 2	Total	Situation 1	Situation 2	Total
Grounder	22	22	44	22	22	44
Gratitude	17	11	28	6	5	11
Apology	2	0	2	6	5	11
Reward	1	4	5	0	6	6
Joke	0	1	1	0	1	1
Preparator	5	9	14	2	5	7
Precommitment	0	3	3	0	0	0
Disarmer	3	2	5	2	0	2
Imposition minimizer	1	3	4	0	2	2
Imposition intensifier	2	2	4	0	2	2
Begging for help	8	2	10	8	8	16
Potential result	1	4	5	2	1	3
Total	62	63	125	48	57	105

Gratitude was the second most used external modification in English e-mails. It was mostly realized with '*Thank you*' and many participants used it at the end of their e-mails as a closing sentence. In Korean e-mails, begging for help was the second most used external modification. It was often realized with '*pwuthaktulipnita*' or '*pwuthakhay*'. Similarly to '*Thank you*' in English e-mails, '*pwuthaktulipnita*' and '*pwuthakhay*' also appeared at the end of the e-mails as a closing sentence. This finding indicates that Korean students used an external modification to close their e-mails because it can emphasize the importance of their request.

In English e-mails of Situation 1, begging for help was the third most used external modification. It was employed four times more in Situation 1 than in Situation 2. It was realized with an independent use of the word '*Please'* or the sentence such as '*Please help me*'. It is surmised that the students translated '*pwuthaktulipnita*', which is the expression to beg for help in Korean, into '*Please'* or '*Please help me*'. High frequency of this modification in Situation 1 implies that the students tried to express politeness by appealing sincerely because they could not depend on honorific system as they did in Korean e-mails. The frequent use of begging for help in the present study is in accord with

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Hwang's (2010) finding. In her study, this type of modification was often used by Koreans while it occurred rarely among English NSs.

One fourth of the students employed apology in their Korean e-mails. However, it seldom appeared in English e-mails. According to Yang (2002), Korean English learners showed the tendency of using fewer moves of thanking and more moves of apologizing in their English e-mails. It contradicts with the result of the present study. The tendency might have been changed over time and over different generations.

Although the frequency is low, the use of imposition intensifiers and potential results is remarkable. Those two strategies were realized with the sentences like the following;

Imposition intensifier
It would be impossible without your recommendation letter. (S9, Situation 1)
I'm sure you'll help me. (S2, Situation 2)

Potential result
It would be great if I can get scholarship. (S19, Situation 1)
It would be great if you send me the photos and it would help me a lot. (S4, Situation 2)

The use of these two types of external modifications seems to be possible in written discourse. Imposition intensifier alone can bring about a minus effect and so it must be used with other mitigating supportive moves. In the e-mails, the students used it with gratitude and grounder. Potential result was not found in other studies based on the data from DCTs (Shim & Kim, 2008; Suh, 2011). It might be because presenting potential results is usually realized with conditional structure and a rather long sentence, which language learners might feel burdensome or awkward to verbalize in spoken discourse.

Compared to the results from other studies of external modifications (Shim & Kim, 2008; Suh, 2011), the number of types and frequency of external modifications in English e-mails in the present study is higher. This is because e-mail is written communication. In e-mail communication, senders have to rely only on their writing while the speakers in oral communication can use facial expressions, body languages, or tones to make their requesting behaviors more polite (Kang, 2011). Therefore, the senders elaborate their requests by employing more external modifications in their e-mails. However, excessive use of external modifications makes a request lengthy and can weaken the illocutionary force of a request (Suh, 2011).

The students used more external modifications in English e-mails than in Korean e-mails. In Korean, the students can depend on honorific system, whereas in English e-mails they cannot. This seems to lead to more use of external modifications in English e-mails.

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4. Organizational Patterns

Table 10 shows organizational patterns of the students' English and Korean e-mails.

TABLE 10

Percentage of Organizational Patterns (frequency)

Directness	Type	English		Korean	
		S1	S2	S1	S2
Direct	… head act – grounder …	13.63 (3)	13.63 (3)	4.55 (1)	0 (0)
Less direct	… grounder – head act …	59.09 (13)	54.55 (12)	77.27 (17)	40.91 (9)
Indirect	… facework – grounder – head act … (- head act – grounder …)	27.27 (6)	31.82 (7)	18.18 (4)	59.09 (13)
	Total	100 (22)	100 (22)	100 (22)	100 (22)

The students chose a less direct way most in organizing their English e-mails in both situations. That is, they first explained the reason why or what they request and then arranged the request head act. The second preferred organizational pattern was indirect organization strategy in which the students started their e-mails with facework like small talk rather than directly with the request head act. In Korean e-mails, the participants employed less direct organization most in Situation 1 and indirect organization in Situation 2. This is because asking friends for something in their mother tongue is easier and less burdensome than asking higher-ups or asking in English. Writing polite and formal small talk is not easy even in Korean. In English, which is their second language, it is more difficult and risky. Hence, the students rather avoided employing facework in their e-mails although it might be able to mitigate the degree of imposition in their requests. As a result, it is speculated that avoidance of facework is a strategy of Korean learners in writing English e-mails. Compared to the results from Yang's (2001a) study in which the participants were Korean college students, the participants in the present study, who are high school students, used indirect organizational strategy much less than the college students. Regarding that college students' English proficiency is higher than high school students' and so they are more capable of using small talk appropriately, the difference is predictable. This suggests that organizational pattern in English e-mails is strongly related to language proficiency. In the present study, the six students who employed facework in English e-mails of Situation 1 had high language proficiency with scores that placed them in either the first or second grade in the TCSAT.

One more interesting finding related to the organization is that five out of the six

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students who used indirect organizational strategy in English e-mails employed direct request strategies and three out of the four who used an indirect way in organization in Korean e-mails depended on direct request strategies. This indicates that the students used indirect organizational strategies to reduce the degree of imposition caused by direct request strategies and made their requests more polite. The interesting balancing act between the indirect organization pattern and direct request strategies has been reported by Chang and Hsu (1998) as well.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study examined request speech acts realized in English and Korean e-mails written by Korean high school students. Overall the Korean students used direct strategies of the head act more than indirect strategies. Their internal modifications were quite limited while they used multiple external modifications. The organization of their e-mails was less direct or indirect. However, depending on different languages and different situations, the strategies, modifications, and organization patterns differed.

The results of the present study demonstrate the influence of the participants' first language, Korean, on their English request speech acts. The head acts in e-mails for Situation 2 ('*Can you* -?' in English and '*- swu issni*?' in Korean) prove the strong effects of Korean on English. Begging for help, which is one of the external modifications and realized with '*pwuthaktulipnita*' in Korean and '*Please*' in English, also demonstrates L1 transfer. With regard to internal modifications, Koreans' dependence on honorific system in expressing their politeness contributed to limited number of internal modifications in Korean e-mails. This affected English e-mails and so just a few internal modifications appeared in English e-mails as well. Underuse of external modifications in Korean e-mails and overuse in English e-mails can be interpreted in the same context.

The present study also shows the students' lack of pragmatic competence in expressing and controlling politeness in English e-mails. In English e-mails in Situation 1, requests were mostly realized with '*Please* + imperatives.' The use of internal modifications was limited to *please*. The students seldom used conditional structures and downtoners like *perhaps* (*hoksi* in Korean) while they used them in Korean e-mails. In addition, there was not a significant difference in the use of external modifications between Situation 1 and 2, although English does not have an honorific system to express politeness. That is, the students do not know how to control the degree of politeness in English e-mails.

Many researchers have argued that explicit instruction and activities are helpful for

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second language learners' appropriate speech act performance (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Biesenbach-Luacs, 2007; Kasper, 2001). The students in the present study have never been given adequate instructions related to the speech act performance and this has resulted in their insufficient knowledge in performing appropriate requests. In CCSARP, perspective of the head act is another source of variation in requests. However, in the present study, all the students chose 'hearer-oriented' perspective (e.g., Can you send it to me?). Analysis was unnecessary because nobody chose 'speaker-oriented' or 'impersonal' perspectives in their English e-mails. This is because they do not know how perspectives act on their requests. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) mentioned that "students can plan, compose, revise, and edit toward an appropriate and polite e-mail message only if they have flexible linguistic means at their disposal and know which linguistic structures and politeness devices to use" (p.74). If a teacher can help them understand that they can control politeness of their requests with various elements like perspectives, tense, and internal modifications, their requests would become quite different from the findings of the present study.

As for teaching the request speech act in classrooms, active use of positive L1 pragmatic transfer is recommendable. Many of the findings of the present study support the effect of L1 on English e-mails. Thus, it is effective to teach which parts of L1 transfer would be appropriate in English e-mails and which would not be. For example, a teacher can teach students that they can use downtoners like *perhaps* in English as they use *hoksi* in their Korean request. To make their head act polite, the students can be guided to think about their use of conditional structures in Korean e-mails and then taught to use them in English e-mails. Acknowledging the learners' L1 pragmatic transfer and including that in instruction can enhance students' understanding.

The present study attempted to analyze and describe the characteristics of Korean high school students' English and Korean e-mails and to discover the influence of different languages and different situations. However, the study has limitations. First, due to the small number and gender imbalance of participants, the results cannot be generalized. Future studies with more participants are necessary. Second, the study analyzed the e-mails concerning several separate aspects. This can describe the request speech act performance in e-mails. However, requests should be studied within the overall discourse in which they occur (Chang & Hsu, 1998). In an e-mail request, which is different from oral mode, discourse is more important. Therefore, future studies are expected to examine the organization of the request e-mail data more carefully and systematically. The information structures, interaction of external and internal modifications, and combination of different types of external modifications need to be investigated. Finally, more suitable framework to analyze e-mails and compare English and Korean requests should be developed. The

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frameworks from the previous studies were not satisfactory, especially in analyzing various modifications in the e-mails of two different languages. Therefore, comprehensive framework for the comparative study of English and Korean e-mails is required.

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APPENDIX

E-mail Sample of the Participants

1. Student 22

(Situation 1)

Subject: I have a favor.

*Content: Dear, ** teacher*

Hello :) I'm (name). Nowadays many flowers are blooming and the weather is warm. Actually I'm writing this letter because I want to attend an English camp. I really want to attend that but if I have your recommendation letter, I can apply to English camp for free. All students are not selected by this recommendation letter. But only few students will be

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selected. I don't want to miss this opportunity. So, please write me a recommendation letter.[3] *I hope your life will be happy.*
Thank you :)

From (name)
2011.05.23.

Note. Direct strategy: Imperatives / Internal modification: *please* / External modification: Grounder + Gratitude / Indirect organization: facework – grounder – head act

2. Student 10

(Situation 2)
Subject: Can I ask you a favor?
Content: Hi, Jennifer. I wonder if you do me favor. In my English culture class, we are learning about "High School students' school life in America." I have to make a presentation and I need pictures about it. Can you send me some pictures for me? I would really appreciate it if you do it. XD It doesn't have to be perfect pictures and just show me you and your friends' school life.
Bye!
(name)

Note. Indirect strategy: Query preparatory / Internal modification: none / External modification: Preparator + Grounder + Gratitude + Imposition minimizer / Less direct organization: grounder – head act

3. Student 5

(Situation1)
제목: 국어 선생님께
내용: 선생님, 안녕하세요. 저는 (이름)이예요. 다름이 아니라 제가 **대학교에서 주최하는 토론대회에 참여하려고 하는데 국어 선생님의 추천서가 필요해서 이메일을 보냅니다. 국어선생님께서 학교에 안 계셔서 이메일로 추천서를 받아야 될 것 같아요. 죄송한데 내일 추천서를 써 줄 수 있으세요? 부탁 드립니다.

(이름) 올림

Note. Indirect strategy: Query preparatory / Internal modification: *cwu* / External modification: Grounder + Apology + Begging for help / Less direct organization: grounder – head act

[3] The head act in each e-mail sample is underlined.

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4. Student 11

(Situation2)
제목: **에게~
내용: **아 하이~ 잘 지내? 지금은 겨울인가? 여긴 엄청 더워 ㅋㅋ 너 내년에 오지? 아무튼 건강하고 내년에 오면 놀자 ㅋㅋ 근데 내가 이번에 영문시간에 미국의 고등학교 생활에 대한 자료가 필요해서 그런데 너네 학교 사진 좀 보내줄 수 있어? 보내주면 한국 오면 맛있는 거 살게. ㅋㅋ 다음주까지 보내주면 고마울 거 같애. 부탁할게~!! 생활 잘하고 내년에 보자. 또 메일 할게. 빠잉~ㅋㅋ^^

2011.5.30.
(이름)

Note. Indirect strategy: Query preparatory / Internal modification: *com*, *cwu* / External modification: Grounder + Reward + Thank + Begging for help / Indirect organization: facework–grounder - head act

Examples in: English and Korean
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

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