English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 17, No. 1 Spring 2011

An Analysis on Politeness in Koreans' Request Realization

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Kang, Hyeon-Sook. (2011). An analysis on politeness in Koreans' request realization. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 17*(1), 53-80.

The study examines how Koreans' politeness is realized in a speech act, request. The main focus is to explore underlying rationale and influence involved in their performance, not just the comparison of difference in politeness realization between native and nonnative speakers of English, as previous studies did. The study employs the DCT, an attached politeness scale questionnaire, and interviews. Twenty nine university students participated in the study. Interchangeable reading of the three data yields some interesting and valuable insights. The participants heavily rely on a few formulaic expressions to express politeness, such as interrogatives with modal verbs, *please* and *excuse me* as a politeness marker. They want to use honorific address terms that is literally translated into English, and have a belief that there are honorific words in English as in Korean. The study refers to the participants' voice on indirectness, nonverbal messages, and expressions with different connotations between English and Korean.

[politeness/request/the DCT]

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been many attempts to define politeness linguistically in many ways (Lakoff, 1972; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). The proposals were once accepted as universal, but they are being challenged by many researchers (Fukada & Asato, 2004; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988; Janney & Arndt, 1993; Pfister, 2010; Yu, 2003), since it failed to show universality among languages and theoretical clarity. Politeness is now viewed in the framework of individual culture. In other words, although there is some universality among the cultures, there is considerable amount of variety among the cultures.

Politeness is one important pragmatic force that speakers can not ignore when they perform any kind of speech events, and it is one of the key concepts in Korean culture.

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Request, one of the speech acts, has been the most frequently investigated (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Fukushima, 1990; Gagné, 2010; Kasanga, 2006; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Takahashi & DuFon, 1989; Weizman, 1989). It is face threatening in nature, so the speaker may be willing to save the hearer's face through polite and tactful behavior (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1980). Thus, studies on requests will be useful to detect linguistic politeness behavior. The themes I will explore are what type of linguistic devices Koreans use to express politeness and the underlying rationale for their politeness and word or expression choice when making a request.

II. Literature Review & Rationale

There have been attempts to define politeness by many researchers. Among them, Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Leech (1983), are the most frequently mentioned ones. Noh (2000) analyzed the theories and concluded two concepts. Lakoff (1973) and Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that politeness is to please others and save their rights. Leech (1983) asserted that politeness is used to provide as many benefits, complements, sympathy to please others, or to acknowledge others' rights. All in one, she concluded that politeness is to acknowledge others without intruding their territories and to approach others with friendliness. But, their theories have been rebutted because it partially explains politeness universality (Blum-Kulka, Danet & Gherson, 1985; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988; Tamada, 1997).

The incompleteness of universal theoretical basis of politeness led to another explanation on politeness: discernment and volition. Discernment is a concept that social factors, such as age, status, convention, affect the linguistic form and behavior, and it explains the linguistic realization of Asian countries. On the other hand, volition is one that individual intention affects the linguistic form and behavior, and it is applied to Western countries. More researchers have studied politeness from the discernment and volition framework (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki & Ogino, 1986; Tamada, 1997; Yu, 2003).

Many studies examined politeness (Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Gagné, 2010; Scarcella, 1979). Most of the studies compared the performance between native speakers and nonnative speakers of English and found differences in many aspects. Carrell and Konneker (1981) found out the difference in perceptions of politeness level, between native and non-native speakers of English. Felix-Brasdefer (2006) examined realization of politeness through formulaic/semi formulaic expressions, indirect attempts at negotiating resolution situations, and emphasizing group involvement. Mboudjeke (2010) found out that explicit face threatening acts are resulted from the participants' culture, but implicit ones are ascribable to the applicants' poor mastery of the target language.

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Some studies researched Koreans' politeness. Hijirida and Sohn (1986) studied cross-cultural patterns of honorifics and sociolinguistic sensitivity to honorific variables among English, Japanese, and Korean. Differently from American English, Japanese and Koreans are highly susceptible to power variables and group solidarity. Suh (1999) compared Korean and native speakers of English, and found that when a requester-requestee relationship is both socially and psychologically close, Koreans did not use politeness strategies in a way similar to the native speakers of English. Yu (2004) explored Korean's indirectness in regard to politeness and concluded that indirect statements do not necessarily guarantee politeness.

There are some studies that attempt to compare honorific system between Korean and English. Lee (2008) categorized two concepts to explain Korean politeness; deference and honorific forms. The term 'deference' denotes the attitude of courteous respect or regard for others, while the term 'honorific form' denotes a grammatical form used to show respect or honor. Hur (2009) examined the concept of politeness in Korean, and claimed that politeness is one similar, but different concept from honorification.

Other studies addressed polite expressions in English. Because English does not have many aspects that are related to politeness, it is not easy to clearly classify what types of linguistic devices or expressions are used to express politeness. Lee (2008) categorized honorific expressions in English as such; past tense or past progressive (e.g., *I was thinking of taking my wife out*.), modal verbs (e.g., *Would you close the door?*), adverbs such as please, humbly, graciously, cordially (e.g., *We cordially invite you to the party*.), indirect expression (*I wonder if you have read the book*.). Kim (1999) adds a few more on Lee's; progressive (*I'm hoping you will give us some advice*.), impersonalization (*It broke*.), use of hedge (*I think it's time we stopped*.), use of subjectivizer (*I'm sorry to bother you but....*), asking for agreement (*Don't you think we'd better wait and see?*).

Studies on politeness posited in two ways, either from the view of Westernized concept, comparing native speakers to non-native speakers of English, or from the view of Korean language system purely. Studies on how the Korean language system influences Korean speakers' performance in the process of politeness realization has been scarce. For example, even though the most indirect expression can be used to make a request, but you would not know if the speaker has any intention of accomplishing the most polite illocutionary act by performing the most indirect form of request. There might be some other force or reason for the speakers to choose the most indirect form. The following questions will be researched in the present study.

1. How do Koreans express politeness in the realization of request?
2. What is the underlying reason for the linguistic behavior?

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The present study does not compare Korean speakers' request realization with English native speakers' one. There are two reasons for this. One is that this study does not examine the result, or the performed speech act. Rather it focuses on what is happening in the process of their request realization. In addition, there have been numerous studies that already compared different performance between native speakers and nonnative speakers. The other reason is that English is now being recognized as a lingua franca, rather than a language that is owned by a certain group of people. Thus, any data from a certain group cannot be a standard to be compared and it can not be said what's deviant or idealistic from a group's data.

III. Method

1. The DCT

The study employs three types of data gathering instruments. First, the DCT (Discourse Completion Test) with 10 situations is used to examine the participants' request speech act performance. The DCT was developed by Levenston and Blum-Kulka (1978) and first adapted by Blum-Kulka (1982). It is a written questionnaire including situational descriptions and followed by a dialogue with an empty slot. It has been widely used (Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gherson, 1989; Shim, 2009; Sifianou, 1993; Moon, 2006; Park, 2006, Suh, 2006) in that it controls the contextual variables and makes it possible to gather data in an effective way. Yet, it is not free from criticism (Hinkel, 1997; Kim, 2007; Woodfield, 2008), because the produced data may be deviant from natural setting. To complement such limitation of the DCT, both the attached survey and interviews, on the following page, are used.

The DCT for the study contains 10 situations as follows:

Situation 1. To young children, asking to stop playing for a moment
Situation 2. To students, asking to hand in a paper earlier than scheduled
Situation 3. To an older person, asking to exchange seats with you
Situation 4. To a professor, asking to give an extension for a paper
Situation 5. To a waiter/waitress, asking to change the dish
Situation 6. To a doctor, asking to get re-examination
Situation 7. To a boss, asking to choose someone else for a trip
Situation 8. To an older classmate, asking to return a book for you
Situation 9. To a close friend, asking to teach you driving

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Situation 10. To an older neighbor, asking to park the car somewhere else

2. An Attached Survey

An attached survey to each DCT situation is used to investigate the participants' rationale for completing DCT slots. The attached survey was designed by the researcher and pilot tested with a few of the participants. Figure 1 is an example attached to situation 10.

FIGURE 1

Politeness Scale Questionnaire

10-a. I try to express my polite attitude in this situation.
(Not at all) 1 ← 2 — 3 — 4 → 5 (Very much)

10-b. Why or why not?

10-c. The hearer will notice my attitude from
_____ (word or expression)

10-d. What is difficult when doing this?

The survey has four sections. A is to find out the degree of politeness of the participants intend. It is measured by marking one of the 5-point Likert scale. B is to know their reason of choosing the scale in section A. C is to learn what type of words or expressions are used to express politeness. D is to hear about difficulty the participants had when completing the DCT slot. The survey is briefly translated in Korean in parenthesis to prevent any mistakes from misunderstanding.

3. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are also conducted to gain qualitative insights into the participants' views and opinions regarding their request realization. Questions for the interviews are guided by the result of the DCT and the attached questionnaire. For example, if the participant responded to the 4-c, *please*, the researcher asked *"Why did you choose the word to express your politeness?", "Where did you learn that?", "Can you possibly think of other word/expressions to show your politeness in this situation?*" The participants answer the questions and are also encouraged to add whatever they want to say freely, as

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long as it is related to their request performance. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The interviews were scheduled in May and June, 2010. Three individual interviews and three group interviews were performed. The interview time varied, from 20 to 80 minutes. Individual interviews took relatively shorter, and the bigger the group is, the longer, it took.

4. Participants

Participants were randomly selected from the students who were taking the researcher's course, college English for freshmen. Twenty out of 29 participants were in their first semester in college, and 2 in the 3rd semester, the rest in the 5th semester. Nineteen of them are females and 10, males. Their ages ranged from 20 to 26. Any respondents who had experience in English countries and who lacked the ability to complete the DCT slots were excluded to increase homogeneity of the participants. Anyone whose TOEIC score was higher than 500 was also omitted.

5. Procedure and Data analysis

The DCT was first distributed to the participants. Since each situation in the DCT is followed by the attached survey, the participants were asked to respond to the situation and the attached questionnaire simultaneously. The interviews were scheduled conveniently afterwards.

Data analysis was done in the following steps. Firstly, the results of the DCT and the attached survey were analyzed to provide the foundation of the interview. The results and interview transcripts were repeatedly and carefully examined to elicit general patterns of the participants' politeness strategy. Two more outside auditors examined the DCT results and interview transcripts interchangeably. They are specialists in English education and faculty in a university.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Situational Intended Politeness Scale

The results will be discussed in the following order. First, the degree of participants' intended politeness for each situation will be examined. Second, the degree of participants' individual intended politeness will follow. Third, the realization of the request itself and the rationale for their linguistic behavior will be addressed.

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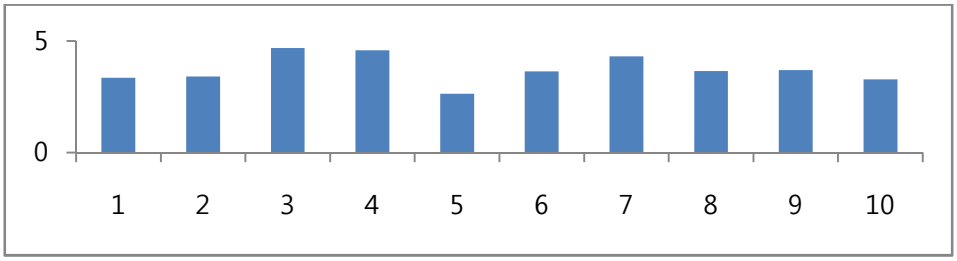
The degree of participants' intended politeness varied according to the situation. The result for each situation is shown in Figure 2. As seen, Situation 3, a request to exchange seats to an older person, showed the highest degree of politeness, 4.68 on a 5 point scale. Situation 4, a request for an extension to a professor, marked the second highest, 4.58. The third highest one is situation 7, asking a boss to choose someone else for a business trip. Situation 5, a request to exchange the food to a waiter/waitress marked the lowest, 2.64.

FIGURE 2

Situational Politeness Scale



In Korean culture, the participants' responses on these three situations are quite probable. Old people are highly respected in Asian countries, and professors are also looked up to. Bosses also render a great deal of respect and politeness.

However, it seems that age and status are not the only factors that influence on the participants' intention of politeness. Situations 3 and 10 have the same requestee: an older person, but the participants responded differently in situation 3 from 10. Situation 3 is a request to exchange seats to an older person, and situation 10, a request to park the car somewhere else to an old neighbor. Is situation 3, the requestee has no obligation to exchange seats for the requester, but in situation 10, the requestee, an old neighbor has to move the car, since the car is parked in front of the requester's house. The participants marked much lower degree of politeness on a scale in situation 10.

The participants who did interview endorsed it.

> "I know I have to be polite to an older person, because everybody expects that. But if s/he does something harmful/bad to us, I don't think I need to be polite."
> "It's a definitely bad manner to park his/her car in front of someone else's house. You have to speak in a tough manner, so s/he will not park the car again."

Thus, it can be inferred that various factors such as age, status, imposition work simultaneously in deciding degree of politeness intention. This is why Jeon (2004) and Lee (2008) said that politeness is intrinsically dynamic and related to situations. They added

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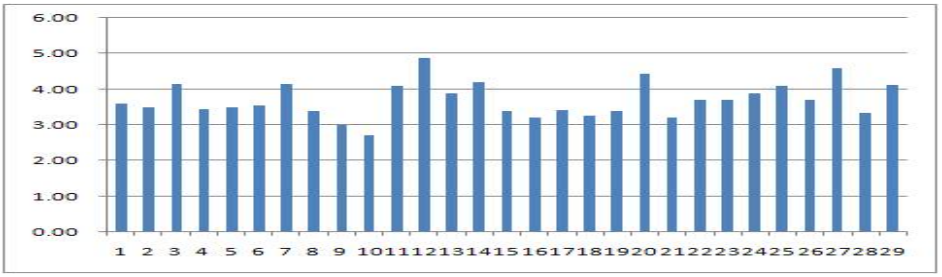
that politeness is not intrinsically set in languages and it is ruled by several elements of the setting.

2. Individual Intended Politeness Scale

The intended politeness scale varied according to the participants, as seen in Figure 3. The highest average is 4.88, and lowest, 2.7.

FIGURE 3

Individual Politeness Scale



The participant with the highest average said that she tries to be as polite as possible in almost all situations. She marked 5 for all the situations, except situation 2, to children.

> "I try to be as polite as possible, except the children situation (marked 4). Because I always think that I need to be polite. Even in the restaurant situation, I wanted to be polite, as I think I am a polite person."

Another, however, marked the average of 2.7 on a politeness scale. He does not have the intention of being polite in most situations. He marked lower than 3 for 9 out of 10 situations. He added this explanation.

> "Why do I need to be polite always? If I don't make any mistakes or any trouble, I don't need to be polite."

Thus, it is conceivable that intention of being polite may fairly differ among people, and hence the result of any research. When the participants have the intention of being polite, they will try to express it in whatever way. Any blindly pursuing comparison between native and non-native speakers' performance, as most of the previous studies did, may not be enough to find out whether, and consequently how, the participants try to express

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politeness. Even in the same situation, the participants intention to be polite will bring different result; polite or impolite.

From the interviews, one interesting issue emerged. When the participants are asked if they would request with the same degree of politeness in English as in Korean, they rejected. They said that they would use different degree of politeness in English from Korean, and indeed did so for the DCT. They would employ lower degrees of politeness in English, not as high as in Korean. Several of them cited:

> "In English, I was told that I don't need to express politeness just because the person is older than you, as we do in Korean."
> "When I speak in English, I won't try to be as polite. I was taught that we don't need to express politeness in English as much as we do in Korean. Because people in other countries don't have the same custom."

Some studies assert that Asian cultures have a tendency to follow the concept of discernment, while Western cultures, volition (Hill, et. al. 1986; Tamada, 1997; Yu, 2003). If degree of politeness is determined by the stable factors such as age, status, convention, it is discerning. On the other hand, if it is decided by the speaker's intention, volition affects the speaker's performance. The remarks by the interviewees confirm that politeness in English is not determined by the same factors as in Korean. Therefore, it has revealed that the participants know that English is not governed by the same convention as Korean, and thus they respond differently in English from Korean. This proves that the participants follow the concept of discernment and volition. Some previous studies have began to refer the concept, but the convincible result has not been produced enough yet (Yu, 2003).

3. The DCT Result

1) Situation 1

The result of each situation will be discussed in the following order. First, the intended politeness scale, section A in each situation, will be explained. Second, the reason for their politeness will be examined. Third, words or expressions they use to express politeness, as they wrote in the questionnaire, will be discussed. Lastly, any difficulties aroused when answering the DCT will be added. On a 5 point Likert Scale, point 3 can be interpreted as neutral, so it can signify either polite or impolite. Because the present study aims at finding out how politeness is realized, responses which are marked 4 or 5 will be mostly analyzed. Yet, if any response with lower scale is noticeable, it will be briefly mentioned.

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In situation 1 of the DCT, the participants ask children to stop playing, while you are carrying away heavy and expensive dishes. The average politeness scale is 3.35 and 17 participants out of 28[1](60%) tries to be polite.

TABLE 1

Politeness Scale of Situation 1

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	2	5	2	14	3	1

The reason they are going to be polite is not very outstanding.

> "because I am asking a favor."
> "The place (children are playing) is not my own property."

However, the reason for not being polite (5 participants marked 2) is interesting.

> "just because they are young (4 out of 5)"

Thus, it can be easily inferred that age works as a factor to decide politeness scale. They used imperative sentences, such as "Stop playing here," which is the strongest form of request according to CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project: Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989).

The participants used the following words or expressions to express politeness. Most of them used interrogatives with modal verbs (*could, would*; 3 out of 17, 17%), a politeness marker, *please* (4 out of 17, 23%). Some of them used both. Using interrogatives, starting *could* or *would*, and a politeness marker, *please* are the most common form of request. The above types of expressions are prevalent for most of the DCT situations.

There are some phrases the participants claim that they used to express politeness here: *could you mind, please + watch out, stop + get away, if I break the dishes, you will get hurt*. The participant who used *could you mind* said that he remembered to use the word, *mind*, to express politeness, but forgot to add *do* instead of *could*. However, *could/would you mind* is one grammatically and pragmatically appropriate sentence to use, when making a request. Thus, the participant not only lacks linguistic and grammatical knowledge, but also he is confused when using it. The second and third one, *please, watch*

[1] The number of respondents varied according to situations.

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out and *stop, get away* are the expressions the respondents claim that they try to show care about children playing there. Imperative sentences are strong as a request. Even though the participants assert that they use them to express politeness, as they wrote in the attached survey slot, it is hard to classify them into a polite expression section. The last one, *if I break the dishes, you will get hurt* has the same intention as above, to warn danger, since she cares the children. Even so, the sentence may sound threatening, depending on the tone of voice or facial expression accompanied.

The most common difficulty the participants appeal is their lack of linguistic knowledge; making a grammatically correct sentence. It is followed by shortage of lexical knowledge; appropriate word to use. Their lack of confidence to express their intended meaning in making a request is also included very often; more polite expressions (Situation 3), expressing uncomfortable feeling (Situation 6), expressing sorry (Situation 8). The difficulties they mention here is similar to all the other situations. Grammatical knowledge is the most frequently referred, and followed by lexical and pragmatic knowledge.

2) Situation 2

In Situation 2, the participants, as a professor, ask students to hand in a paper earlier than scheduled. The average politeness scale is 3.40.

TABLE 2

Politeness Scale of Situation 2

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	1	3	10	10	2	3

Twelve out of 26(46%) wants to make a polite request. The reason for being polite is that they, the requester, changed the schedule (5 out of 12, 41%). Some intriguing reasons are discovered here. Two participants answered this.

> "when I am polite, the students won't refuse."
> "I need to be polite, since they may hate the schedule change."

The first one signifies that the participant is using politeness to prevent possible refusal. The second one is using it as a reimbursement for the requester's action. This must be one of the many roles politeness has, which has never researched before.

Expressions the participants used to express politeness are *sorry, please,* and *could/would*. *Sorry* is the most frequently used one (6 out of 12, 50%), and *please* (5 out of 12, 41%). Some of them used both. Because the participants are asking earlier submission,

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which can be burden to the requestee, they used *sorry* here frequently. Two out of 12(16%), who tried to be polite explained why s/he is asking earlier submission, but the rest do not add explanation why they do so. Before I add any other interpretation on this, I must add the influence of situational description of the DCT. The description of situation 2 does not contain why the professor ask an earlier submission to students. Yet, in other situations, the descriptions contain reasons and so do the responses from the participants. Another plausible explanation for this is the influence of Korean pragmatic rule. In Korea, a professor is respected and considered to have some authority. Six participants out of 26(23%) answered that they do not need to show politeness in the situation, just because they are professors. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' perception on the image of a professor affects the absence of grounders.

Unlike the other situational survey result, more difficulty on pragmatic knowledge is included in the difficulty section of the survey. They answered that "how to express sorry" or "how to carefully ask" is hard in the situation. The requests and survey results show that the participants are worrying about expressing enough sorry here.

3) Situation 3

In situation 3, the participants ask an old man, sitting next to them, to exchange seats with a friend sitting apart. The average politeness scale is 4.68, the highest, and 28 out of 29(96%) tries to be polite.

TABLE 3

Politeness Scale of Situation 3

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	0	1	4	21	0

One participant marked 3 on the politeness scale, but she does not seem to stay neutral. The reason for marking 3 is that "I don't know the person, and since I am asking a favor." She also added that she used *sir* to express politeness. As mentioned earlier, point 3 on a 5 point Likert Scale can be interpreted either polite or impolite. Her marking, 3, did not confirm her intention to be polite, but the reason for rating the politeness scale reveals that she has an intention to be polite. Thus, firstly, it can be said that all the participants try to be polite in the situation. Secondly, 5 point Likert Scale may have limitation on finding out what the researcher aim at in this type of research.

The most frequently used expressions are *excuse me* (13 out of 28, 46%), *please* (9 out of 28, 32%), and interrogatives with modal verbs (8 out of 28, 28%). Some of them

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combined two of those, or all together. The repetitive use of words is also seen in other situations, for example, 4, 6, and 8. The reason for it is confirmed from the interviews.

> "I used *please* three times to be very very polite (Situation 6)."
> "I used *sorry* three times and *please* together. So I believe it will be a very polite expression (Situation 8)."

Situation 3 has the highest average in politeness scale and it seems that the participants try to express the utmost degree of politeness by repeating a few formulaic expressions. The difficulty in the attached survey supports it. Six out of 29(20%) have a hard time expressing highly polite attitude, and among them, one worry about word choice, and two, polite expression.

Another intriguing topic aroused, when discussing ways to express utmost degree of politeness. The participants said that they would be very careful about nonverbal messages, such as vocal tones, sentence contour, and body gesture.

> "This type of short sentences (I'm not ready. Please more time: Situation 4) would be enough to show my polite attitude. Because when I make this request in real situation, I will maintain polite attitude, using facial expressions or body gesture, for example, not staring at the listener, staying a certain type of posture while talking."
> "And it would be easier to communicate my politeness, if those things are visible to the listener. I wouldn't need to bother to make complete sentences."
> "If the listener sees my face and posture, it wouldn't be hard to figure out that I am not going to be rude to him/her."
> "I would be very careful in my voice tone, when I say this. If you use soft tone, it sounds polite."

Paralinguistic elements, such as using an appropriate voice tone and sentence contour are important in speech. Thus, it is recommendable to use proper tones and contours when communicating orally. What is worth paying attention here is the participants' dependence on nonverbal messages, since dependence on nonverbal messages is a characteristic of Asian culture as in studies (Bello, Brandau-Brwon, Zhang, & Ragsdale, 2010; Hall, 1997). Bello, et al. (2010) compared Chinese and North Americans' appreciation strategy. Chinese's more use of nonverbal one may bring surprise to typical North Americans, since direct verbal expressions of appreciation are a staple of everyday life to them. Hall (1977) confirms that people from low context culture (such as North Americans) need to pay attention to non articulated meanings, or hidden meanings of high context culture communication, such as indirect speech or body movements. Thus, it seems that the participants support the tendency of Asian culture peoples. Those remarks also contribute

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to overcoming the limitation of the DCT, since this explains the participants would do something else to communicate, rather than depending on the response on the DCT.

The participants' high reliance on nonverbal expressions may be caused by their lack of knowledge of the English language.

> "Writing what I want to say was a hard job. It would be much easier to say, instead of writing. Because when I speak, I don't need to make a full sentence. I just need to arrange the necessary words and I can use my gestures."
> "When I didn't know much English, I once said like this. 'My parents, to Philippines, fung (pointing a finger to one direction)!', when I wanted to say that my parents flew to the Philippines. And the teacher, listening to this, had no trouble understanding it."

Use of nonverbal messages as a compensation strategy for communication is not new. Many studies confirmed that to fulfill the deficiency of their linguistic knowledge, low level proficiency speakers would use the strategy often. The participants are university students who finished high school and received English education for about 10 years. However, they did not have many chances to "speak," or "write." This would probably be the reason for depending more on nonverbal messages than clearly articulated verbal messages.

One more noticeable result for the DCT here is that 5 out of 29(17%) used *sir*, or *ma'am* to express politeness. Using *sir* is also appeared in situation 10, twice, to an old neighbor and in situation 7, once, to a boss. The requestee of the three situations is older than the requester. Thus, it seems that age can be a factor to influence their choice, as seen in many previous studies (Bell, 1998; Hijirada & Sohn, 1986).

However, there can be another factor to yield the result. Situation 4, to a professor, and 7, to a boss, are similar to the situations, in that professor and boss is usually older than the participants, students. The participants did not use *sir* in situation 4, and just once in situation 7. The difference between the situation 3, 4, 7, and 10 is that situation 4 and 7 have the title to use; professor and boss, but not situation 3 and 10. Therefore, it is quite plausible that the participants use *sir* when the there is no title to use, and the hearer is older than them.

One external modifier, *excuse me*, which can be used to start a request, as seen in some of the participants' responses. According to CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989), it is classified as a type of an alerter, along with title, surname, and/or nickname.

> "Excuse me, professor. I'm really sorry but my paper will be late. Could you give me more time please?"
> "Excuse me, I ordered a fried chicken but you brought a beef steak."

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However, the participants used it as a politeness marker (13 out of 28, 46%). They added explanation, while interviewing:

> "I used *excuse me* to start a conversation, and the reason for using the expression was to express my polite attitude to the speaker."
> "Does it have the same meaning as in Korean, *Sil-lye-hab-ni-da*? The word has the intention of expressing politeness in Korean. So I thought *excuse me* would work as a way to express politeness"

Even though *Sil-lye-hab-ni-da* has some of the meanings that *excuse me* has, it cannot be said that they have exactly the same meanings or pragmatic functions. Borkin and Reinhart (1978) claimed that *excuse me* and *sorry* are usually used to ask the hearer to repeat what s/he said, get the hearer's attention, obtain the hearer's consent when the speaker leaves a conversation before it is finished, ask the hearer to move over when the speakers has to pass the hearer in English. It is not surprising to find people with different linguistic background drawing different interpretation from the same utterances. Yet, since the literal translation would not accompany the pragmatic meaning automatically, it should be taken into account to encompass the pragmatic meaning of a word or expression to use. This will be further discussed in situation 8.

4) Situation 4

In situation 4, the participants ask a professor to give extension for a paper. The average politeness scale is 4. 58, the second highest, and 23 out of 24(95%) tries to be polite. As mentioned before, professors are respected in Korea, and the participants are making a request, caused by their lack of preparation, it is understandable that the participants try to be polite.

TABLE 4

Politeness Scale of Situation 4

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	0	1	8	15	5

The most frequently used expressions are *please* (7 out of 23, 30%), and *sorry* (7 out of 23, 30%). The reason for using *sorry* more than other situations seems that their extension request is caused by them, not being ready for submission. Interrogatives with modal verbs are used by four (out of 23, 17%). Some rarely used expressions are included: *Oh my god, sir+sorry+would, if you assent, I'll do my best*. The one who gives *Oh, my god*, adds that

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"I wish the professor to know my feeling of sorry, when I am saying that."

She said that if she is surprised at what she has not done, the professor would sympathize on her. Yet, her purpose might not be achieved. Another participant used *sir+sorry+would* together. The repetitive use of a limited number of expressions has been discussed. Another one, *If you assent, I'll do my best*, may work as a type of reward promise, following the main request move. This type of external modifier is shown in a few situations.

One participant marked 5 on the politeness scale, but wrote "*Please put off hand in a paper*." in the DCT slot. The participant's strong will to show politeness may not be fully expressed in the sentence, but he does not recognize it. In many responses of the DCT, *please* is very frequently used. The frequency can not be problematic when it is used in making a request. The close connection between *please* as a politeness marker to requests has been confirmed by many researchers (Sadock, 1974; Searle, 1975; Stubbs, 1983; White, 1993).

However, when *please* is used with an imperative sentence, the function as a politeness marker is raising a question. Many responses have a form of imperative sentence with it at the same time.

Wait a minute, *please* (Situation 1).
Sorry, man. *Please* you hand in a paper a week earlier than scheduled (Situation 2).
Re-examine *please*. Because I still feel backache (Situation 6).
Boss, *please* exchange me for another people (Situation 7).

The participants said that they have learned to use it to express politeness.

"I used *please* in my request to express politeness."
"I wanted to add *please* to be more polite, but I didn't know where to put it."
"I was taught that I can use *please* to be polite in classroom."

The participants are using it as a politeness marker. Frequent use of it in requests appeared in Moon (2006)'s study. Although she failed to explain whether it is used as a requestive marker or a politeness marker, the present study confirms that it is used as a politeness marker from the interviews.

Even so, it should be noted that *please* has directive force when used in an imperative form of sentences such as "Give me an extension, please." or "Move your car, please. (Sato, 2008)" Wichmann (2004) pointed out that the meaning of *please* has changed from its literal meaning of if *it please/pleases you* and it serves as "a courtesy formula" to signify some sense of obligation. Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1987) found out that

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Hebrew's usage of *please* is deviant from English. Fukushima (1990) even warned that adding *please* to a request may imply sarcasm in English.

5) Situation 5

In situation 5, the participants ask a waiter/waitress to change the food, which is not the one they ordered. The average politeness scale is 2.64, the lowest. Seven participants out of 27(25%) wants to show politeness.

TABLE 5

Politeness Scale of Situation 5

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	5	0	9	6	1	2

The reason for the politeness is that they want to be good mannered (3 out of 7, 42%). Fourteen out of 29(48%) says that they do not need to be polite, since this is the waiter/waitress' mistake to bring the wrong food. This explains the lowest average in politeness scale. *Excuse me* is used by 3 participants out of 7(42%), interrogatives by 3 out of 7(42%).

One interesting result is that indirect request is shown often here and in some other situation.

> "I don't order a beef steak." (Situation 5)
> "Waiter! Which country on the world calls a fried chicken for beef steak?" (Situation 5)
> "Sir, please stop park front of my house. I'm very sorry but I'm not comfortable seeing your car at my house."(Situation 10)

Their reason for indirectness in situation 5 and in other situations is asked.

> "This (the first remark) would be enough. The waiter/waitress can read what I want instantly."
> "If I say this (the second remark), the waiter will understand quickly what I want to ask; to change the food."
> "I wouldn't say indirectly as I do in situation 5, because I have to clearly say that I want the boss to choose someone else."
> "Sometimes, when I need to express politeness, I may use some indirect expression, such as not saying, "Please do this for me."

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Thus, it is identified that when there is a need to clarify the message the speaker/requester sends, indirectness will not be hired. In other words, they would use the direct form of sentence, if the hearer cannot derive the conveyed meaning from the literal meaning without much cost. Earlier studies claimed that politeness is strongly linked to indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1980, 1983), but later studies (Marti, 2006; Montserrat, 1993) rebuke the notion, saying that indirectness may not signify politeness. Here it is confirmed by the participants that indirectness is used with assured clarity of the message.

6) Situation 6

In situation 6, the participants ask a doctor to re-examine themselves. The average politeness scale is 3.64. Fifteen participants out of 28(53%) tries to be polite. More participants marked 3 on the politeness scale here than in other situations. The participants who marked 2 or 1 on the scale answered that any problems related to their health should be strictly treated.

TABLE 6

Politeness Scale of Situation 6

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	1	1	11	9	6	1

Please is used by 7 respondents out of 15(46%), and interrogatives, 3 participants out of 15 (20%). One used *please* three times in the response and answered that she intended to show the highest degree of politeness, as already discussed. Another response to comment is *if you OK*. The respondent said that he tried to ask "if the doctor doesn't mind," or "if the doctor thinks it is okay." *Mind* is included in 4 participants' response in the present study, but no participant is sure about how to form a correct sentence with it.

Five out of 29 participants (17%) felt that it is difficult to explain the current condition in English. One adds that his unfamiliarity with the setting, hospital, makes it hard to make a request. Thus, it may be said that lack of situational familiarity may cause difficulty in request realization, along with lack of grammatical or lexical knowledge.

7) Situation 7

In situation 7, the participants ask a boss to choose someone else for a business trip. The average politeness scale is 4.30, the third highest. Twenty one participants out of 29(68%)

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marked 4 or 5 on the politeness scale. The rationale for their polite attitude is that the requestee is a boss, and the requester can not go on a business trip for a private reason.

TABLE 7

Politeness Scale of Situation 7

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	0	4	10	11	4

Sorry is the most frequent expression to show politeness (11 out of 21, 52%), including one *afraid*. In other situations, no participants used *I'm afraid*. Because the requester can not go on the trip, as the boss ordered, it seems that the participants used *sorry* often here. *Sorry* is shown very often especially in 3 situations 2, 4, and here. *Please* is used 4 times (out of 21, 19%).

Eighteen participants (out of 21, 85%) gave reasons why they can not go on a trip, which were similar to the situation description. Most of the responses in the DCT slot were about the same length, but one participant who marked 3 on the politeness scale made it longer. It can be called 'Waffle phenomenon.' It is the tendency to produce longer linguistic performance and one of the communication strategies to compensate the lack of linguistic ability. It has already explained in many speech act studies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986).

The difficulty they have, when completing this DCT situation, is that their lack of linguistic knowledge to make sentences (7 out of 15, 46%). Four out of 15(26%) worried about appropriate expressions not to annoy the boss.

8) Situation 8

In situation 8, the participants ask an older classmate, going to the library, to return their book. The average politeness scale is 3.65. Thirteen participants out of 23(56%) want to show polite attitude. The reason is that they are asking a favor (7 out of 13, 53%) and they are asking to an older classmate (4 out of 13, 30%). Thus, age factor seems to affect the level of politeness scale here, as in other situations.

TABLE 8

Politeness Scale of Situation 8

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	2	8	9	4	6

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An interrogative with modal verbs is the most frequent (5 out of 13, 38%). When making an interrogative, *would* and *could* are the frequently used ones, but *can* is used more often than them (3 out of 5, 60%) in the situation. The reason for using more *can*s is that they feel more closely to the requestee in the situation than in other situations. Five out of 29(17%) mentioned that the requestee is an older classmate. One answered as such.

> "In other cases, I used *could*, but here I don't strongly feel to express politeness, so I used *can*, instead of *could*."

Thus, it seems that the participants have the internalized rules to differentiate *can* from *could*.

One more remarkable linguistic device the participants use is an address term. Four out of 25 respondents (16%) used *brother* and one, *senior*. From the interviews, it is further discovered that another term, such as "old man" can be used as an address term besides them.

> "We have *Hyung* in Korean, which means old brother. I used the word in my response."
> "We call an old man, *U-reu-sin*. Old man is a direct translation of *U-reu-sin*. *U-reu-sin* is a polite expression."(situation 10)

These two words, *brother* and *old man*, may have the same meaning as *Hyung* and *U-reu-sin*, when you translate the words literally. Yet, the pragmatic function may be totally different between English and Korean. *Old man* can not be used as an address term to express politeness in English, rather, it may cause trouble. *Brother* is not an usual term to call any classmate who is slightly older than you in English. Thus, the participants' intention to be polite when using *old man* and *brother* will not be achieved as they desired.

One participant explained why she would use such address terms.

> "In Korean, we have different (honorific) address terms. Once we use the term to start a conversation, it is one definite expression to show politeness and it signifies that I am going to speak politely for the rest of what I say. But in English, there are no equivalent address terms. So I feel it is difficult to express my politeness that way."

In addition to the address term, the participants had a belief that English has a set of words to express politeness in the interviews.

> "Instead of using *'put off*,' I can use '*postpone*,' which can express politeness."

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"In high school, we were taught that there is a set of words with the same meaning. One can be used in normal conversation and the other in formal conversation."
"We learned different set of sentences, too. Instead of saying '*Go out*,' if you use '*Could/can you go out?*', it is more polite. So you have to use '*Could/can you go out?*' to make a request."

The third remark, a different style to make a request, is talking about an appropriate way to make a request, but the former two remarks are problematic. The example of *put off/postpone* can not be an instance to show a normal/deferential term. *Postpone* can be used in writing, but it may be odd to use it in a colloquial form to express politeness. If this wrong belief is caused from high school English classes as the interviewee said, it can signify that the instructors in schools may have misled their students.

It seems that the participants apply the same rule of Korean to English. Korean is different from other languages in that it has different honorific system (Lee, 2008, Hur, 2009). Korean has a set of different words for one concept; a normal word with no deference and an honorific term expressing deference. For example, there are two words for a meal; *Bab*, and *Jinji*. *Bab* is a normal term and *Jinji* contains deferential meaning, usually used in reference to older people's meal. The participants fall into the fallacy that English has words with equivalent deferential meaning as in Korean.

9) Situation 9

In situation 9, the participants ask a friend to give a driving lesson. The average politeness scale is 3.69. Thirteen participants out of 23(56%) tries to be polite and the reason is that they are taking away friend's time and that they are asking a favor.

TABLE 9
Politeness Scale of Situation 9

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	2	7	8	5	6

Please is used by 4 participants out of 13(30%) and interrogatives, 3 out of 13(23%). Other expressions include *If you..., if you have a time, because...* The third one *because* is used to give explanation on the request. The sentences starting *if you...* have an intention to give choice to the requestee, as the respondent said.

"I wanted to know the friend's opinion and availability."
"I wanted to find out if he can find the time."

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The participants patronized a few expressions to be polite. Namely, interrogatives with modal verbs, a politeness marker, *please*, are the examples. External modifiers as the above are quite recommendable as a device to show politeness, because they are to give choice to the requestee.

The participants are using address terms here. *Hey* is used five times (out of 23, 21%) and *friend*, twice as an addressing term. This may be explained from the situation itself. The participants are making a request to a close friend here. Eight (out of 23, 34%) mentioned that they requestee is close to them in the politeness reason section. Their use of the address terms supports this.

10) Situation 10

In situation 10, the participants ask an old neighbor to park the car somewhere else, not in front of their houses. The average politeness scale is 3.28. Nine participants out of 21(42%) want to show politeness.

TABLE 10

Politeness Scale of Situation 10

Politeness Scale	1	2	3	4	5	unidentified
Number of Participants	0	7	5	5	4	8

That the requestee is older than them influenced on deciding level of politeness to some participants. Yet, the seven participants out of 21(33%) marked 2 on the politeness scale. They answered that because the neighbor parked in the wrong place, they do not want to show politeness. *Please* and *excuse me* are used the most frequently: three out of 9(33%) each. One of them used both. *Sorry* is used three times. One of them wrote that he used *sorry* to express politeness, and two did not mention that.

I'm sorry or *I'm afraid* can be used to express politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), which is classified as a negative politeness strategy. *I'm sorry* is used quite often in the present study, as in Table 11.

TABLE 11

Number of Expressing Sorry

Situation	description	number of "I'm sorry"
2	to students, earlier paper submission	3
3	to an older person, seat exchange	1
4	to a professor, paper extension	7

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7	to a boss, someone else for a trip	11(1 afraid)
8	to an older classmate, book return	2
10	to an old neighbor, car parking	3

Negative politeness is a contrary concept to positive politeness and functions to avoid or minimize the imposition of a face-threatening act on a hearer. It is more prevalent in Asian culture than in Western culture (Hur, 2009; Yum, 1997). Yum (1997) explained this as the influence of Confucianism. Expressions such as *It seems to be...*, and *I'm sorry* in Korea have been widely used since then. It is understandable that the participants use *I'm sorry* or *I'm afraid* in other situations, because they are at fault or they are using it to start a request. Yet, using it in situation 8 and 10 needs to be re-examined. Situation 8 is a request to an older classmate on the way to the library to return the requester's book, and situation 10 is a request to move a car to an old neighbor who parked in the wrong place. The need to express sorry or regret is not detected from the situation itself. Thus, it seems that the participants' use of *sorry* comes from the tendency to be negatively polite, as some studies assert.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study employs three data gathering instruments; the DCT, an attached survey to the DCT, and interview. Interchangeable reading of the three results enabled to locate some valuable insights on Koreans' politeness realization. The attached survey and interviews induced the participants' intention to express politeness in certain situations and underlying reason for their intention and choosing words or expressions to show politeness. They were also useful to find out what the participants would say or do to express politeness in real settings, other than the DCT result.

The participants heavily depend on a few formulaic expressions to express politeness. Interrogative with modal verbs, such as *could, would,* is the most frequent. A politeness marker, *please*, with either interrogatives or imperatives is the second most frequent. Expressing *sorry* or *excuse me* comes next. An interesting device the participant use to be polite is using an address term and vocabulary. They believe that English has an address term and vocabulary that have similar deferential quality as in Korean. The participants' excessive reliance on a limited number of expressions ensures the need to educate various ways to express politeness. More external modifiers to mitigate the force of a request, or other syntactic devices to be polite should be informed.

Wierzbicka (1991)'s statement endorses the findings of this study.

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> "Every language is a self-contained system, and, in a sense, no words or construction of one language can have absolute equivalents in another. The idea that there might be some linguistic elements that are universal in the sense of having absolute equivalents in all the languages of the world is, of course, all the more fanciful." (p.336)

The study has limitations. The results of the present study cannot be generalized to all Korean speakers' performance, since the limited number of participants can not fully represent all Koreans. Further researches will focus on these topics. Politeness in other speech act performances that match the findings of this study will be one topic. Forms of address, such as forms of first names, titles with full names, will be an interesting topic also. In depth, difficulties aroused from the systematic differences between Korean and English will be another topic of interest.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary education

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Received in January, 2011
Reviewed in February, 2011
Revised version received in March, 2011

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