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Cross-cultural Comparison of Strategic Realization of Pragmatic Competence: Implications for Learning World Englishes

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Cross-cultural Comparison of Strategic Realization of Pragmatic Competence: Implications for Learning World Englishes¹⁾

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The communicative role of the English language has been diversifying on a global scale due to accelerated worldwide exchanges in many spheres. Facing the advent of the new century, global citizens may wish to share one communicative tool; however, the reality is that the most widely spoken language is by no means monolithic and different regional varieties have been emerging.

In such a current state of flux, we often encounter communicative misunderstandings which derive from the lack of appropriate pragmatic competence in the English language. To investigate what strategies are involved in meeting pragmatic needs, the questionnaire survey in this study targeted four different English speaking regions: Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the U.S. Two speech acts investigated in the survey, apology and request, were selected to draw cross-regional comparisons of the responses. The findings reveal some clear patterns of variation in strategy use among the four groups. The ultimate goal of this study is to show how different strategies underlie the surface linguistic forms of pragmatic competence and to discuss pedagogical implications, especially from the perspective of teaching English as a foreign language.

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I. Introduction

Despite ideological controversies on the status of the English language (e.g., Ohishi, 1990; Phillipson, 1992; Tsuda, 1990, 1996, 1997), no one would doubt that it dominates global communication in political, economic, and cultural activities. Over one billion people in the world are now estimated to have adequate ability to communicate in English as native (NS) or non-native (NNS) speakers (Honna, 1990; McArthur, 1998) and this number is foreseen to grow exponentially at least until the year 2020 (Graddol, 1997).

As a result of this unprecedented dissemination of a single language, English is no longer monolithic and numerous sociolinguistic variants have been emerging from different cultural identities which do not necessarily correspond to those in an NS context. Such new variants are often referred to as 'New Englishes' (e.g., Kachru, 1997; McArthur, 1998; Smith & Forman, 1997). One useful categorization of such varieties of English is based on Kachru's model of inner, outer, and expanding circles of English (McArthur, 1998). In this model, the inner circle represents the countries where English is the primary language and is predominantly spoken as a

native language (NL). The outer circle refers to those countries where English plays an important 'second language' role in multilingual settings and where most speakers employ English as a second language (ESL). Finally, the expanding circle represents those areas of the world where English is recognized as an important international language, has no special administrative status, and is taught and used mainly as a foreign language (EFL).

Regardless of how the varieties are classified, the spread and diversification of English have provoked a wide variety of reactions, both positive and negative. These reactions have been categorized on the basis of metaphors representing three contrasting perspectives: Cinderella, a kidnapped or adopted child, and Godzilla (Horibe, 2000, based on metaphors originally introduced by Graddol and modified by Cates). As suggested by these metaphors, English is perceived by some in all three of Kachru's circles as the ultimate success story of a single world language emerging from an obscure British dialect (Cinderella). Alternatively the diversification of English as it becomes the property of non-native speakers may be seen as a "kidnapped child" from the perspective of native speakers in the inner circle who resent the loss of their "parental authority" or as an "adopted child" from the perspective of non-native speakers in the outer or expanding circle who take control as proud parents of a new language variety. Finally, the notion of the colonial, hegemonic, imperialistic or oppressive nature of the spread of English language and culture (Godzilla) is resented by those in the outer or expanding circles who point out the consequent threat to other languages and cultures around the world.

Along with the ideological arguments, from a pedagogical perspective, the emergence of different types of Englishes has raised a contentious issue regarding the most preferable norm that should be introduced in ESL and EFL teaching contexts. Two different approaches for addressing this issue have been proposed: a monomodel and a polymodel (Horibe, 2000). The monomodel approach (corresponding to the Cinderella metaphor above) aims to establish an ideal model of World English, Global English, or International English. Some linguists

consider that a 'Global Standard of English' could be formed by extracting commonly shared features in different Englishes (e.g., Crystal, 1997). In a realistic sense, however, drawing a concrete picture of such a global norm is a painstaking job and no one has yet developed a practical model. The polymodel solution (corresponding most closely to the "adopted child" metaphor above), on the other hand, proposes separating English instruction from Anglo-American culture and people and linking it to global issues affecting all people, to speakers of new Englishes and their cultures, and/or to the function of explaining the EFL students' culture and values to the rest of the world (Horibe, 2000).

On a practical level, ways of helping EFL/ESL students cope with the diversity of Englishes have been proposed in studies of communication strategies (CS). Kasper (1997), for example, emphasized the necessity to extend CS studies beyond referential communication to understand how meaning is socially constructed through interaction among the participants, including NS-NNS and NNS-NNS in various contexts. She advocated the investigation of, among other issues, "the role of culture in creating and solving pragmatic problems" and "the role of transfer in pragmatic problems and strategies" (p. 359). From a similar perspective, Iwai (1998, 2000) discussed the necessity of expanding theoretical frameworks of CS to encompass communicative competence, including sociolinguistic competence.

To realize these proposals, it is first necessary to understand how verbal behaviors are affected by cultural norms of the English speaking community and how they are realized strategically. For this purpose, we collected speech act data by means of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT)² from four different English speaking communities. These included an NL (inner circle) context: the United States; an ESL (outer circle) context: Singapore; and an EFL (expanding circle) context: Japan. It also included a fourth community, Hong Kong, which we considered less clear-cut in terms of its status as an ESL or EFL (outer or expanding circle) context. Prior to the reversion of Hong Kong to China, it was generally considered an ESL or outer circle context because of the official status of English in a British colony, but

even right before the reversion, when this study took place, it was arguably closer to an EFL context because of the very limited exposure among the students to English outside the classroom (K. Rose, personal communication, April 2, 1997). Thus, we hoped, as a part of this study, to determine whether the Hong Kong student responses would be closer to those of the ESL (Singaporean) or the EFL (Japanese) responses.

Six speech acts (apology, request, refusal, suggestion, complaint, and invitation) were investigated in this survey, and the general findings were reported in Iwai and Rinnert (1999). For this study, the relevant data was reanalyzed, with special focus on strategic realization of pragmatic competence, in two of the six speech acts: apology and request.

These two speech acts were chosen because they are arguably the most widely studied "face-threatening" acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in the pragmatic and sociolinguistic literature. Mainly questionnaire-based studies have yielded a large body of information about "prototypical" apologies and requests in specific situations across languages and cultures (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1989; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Olshtain, 1983; Weizman, 1985, 1989). In addition, comparisons across cultures have revealed some specific differences in cultural preferences for ways of realizing these speech acts. For example, English apologies reportedly tend to include an explanation of why the offense happened more frequently than Japanese apologies (Barnland & Yoshioka, 1990), and in a university office setting, more requests were found to be expressed directly (rather than indirectly) in Japanese than in English (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 1999). In addition, studies comparing NS and NNS responses have yielded a number of observations about the development of English pragmatic competence among EFL/ESL learners (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Narita & Young, 1994; Kitao, 1989, 1990). Apologies and requests were also chosen because they are known to be implicated in serious misunderstandings across cultures (Rinnert, 1995) and thus amenable to analysis that could produce positive pedagogical applications to avoid cross-cultural miscommunication.

The main research questions investigated in this study were the following:

- (1) Are speech acts of apology and request realized in different ways by NNS and NS English speakers who represent four different regions (Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and the U.S.)?
- (2) If so, how do they differ in terms of the particular strategies used?

In addition, the following two pedagogical research questions, whose answers could be indirectly derived from the main research questions, were addressed:

- (3) Is it adequate for NS and NNS English speakers to possess pragmatic competence that is appropriate for one particular region?
- (4) If it is not adequate, what are the implications for various groups of speakers and for EFL/ESL students and teachers?

The following sections will address these questions. First, the methodology for the study will be explained in Section II. The main findings of this reanalysis of the apology and request data will then be shown in Section III. On the basis of these findings, the research questions will then be answered in the discussion in Section IV. Finally, the conclusion will be presented in Section V.

II. Data Collection Method and Analysis

1. Method

In order to collect data on speech acts from different English speaking communities, a questionnaire survey was conducted. We chose this research method since it was judged to be the most effective way to gather a large amount of data within a short time and, practically speaking, the most realistic way to collect data without actually visiting the targeted communities. (See Note 2.)

The original questionnaire, which consisted of 18 speech acts situations in the format of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), was created by the two researchers of this study, referring to sociolinguistic

studies in the past (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Following a pilot study given to Japanese college EFL learners, the wording was modified slightly and the total number of situations was reduced to 13 (including one distractor) in order to raise the validity of the questions and to shorten the amount of time the respondents needed to fill in the questionnaire.

The final questionnaire (Appendix 1) contained two sections: the first section elicited background information about the respondents, including age, gender, college major, and reported language use; and the second section contained the 13 randomly ordered DCT items mentioned above. Among these 13 items, the following two items of apology and two items of request are investigated in this study:

(1) Apology

You're at your friends' house. While you're taking off your jacket, it catches on a vase and the vase falls and breaks into pieces.

F: Oh, no!
You:

You agreed to help Professor Donald Johnson with his research project at 9:00 a.m. However, you overslept because you came home late last night and forgot to set the alarm.

J: Hello, this is Donald Johnson.
You:

(2) Request

You attend classes regularly and take notes. Last week, however, you were sick and missed a class. You would like to ask your classmate to borrow the notes from the class.

C: Hi, how are you doing?
You:

You missed professor Mary Chen's class last week because you went to see a hospitalized friend. You would like to ask what she did in class and if there was any homework. You visit her office.

C: I didn't see you last week. Is everything all right?
You:

Two different situations were prepared for each speech act to examine register effects (i.e., the effects of interlocutors to whom an apology or a request is addressed). To this end, the interlocutors' identities, namely a friend and a college professor, were explicitly defined in the directions of the questionnaire. In the situation with a friend, the respondents were requested to address a person of the same sex, who presumably has a close relation with the respondent. In the corresponding situation, the respondents were asked to address a college professor (45-50 years old), whose social status can be regarded as being higher than that of the students.

2. Survey

The questionnaire was administered in 1996 in one NL or inner circle English region (the U.S.), one ESL or outer circle region (Singapore), one mixed ESL/EFL or outer/expanding circle region (Hong Kong), and one EFL region (Japan). To balance the social status of the participants, the respondents were chosen from relatively prestigious public universities in these four regions: The University of Texas at Austin, The National University of Singapore, Hong Kong City University, and Hiroshima City University. Since the researchers of this study were unable to visit these overseas regions at the same time, the actual survey was conducted by a teacher working at the university in each region, who was recruited through the researchers' acquaintances. The survey for Japanese college EFL learners was administered in classes the researchers were teaching.

For the survey in the overseas regions, a package of questionnaires was shipped to each research associate with international postage stamps to have them returned later. It took between one and four months to complete the entire survey.

The total number of respondents in each region came to 71 from Singapore, 44 from Hong Kong, 117 from the U.S., and 100 from Japan. Once their responses were examined carefully, it became obvious from the background information section that 17 respondents of the U.S. group had studied English as a second or foreign language. They were excluded from the U.S. group in the present study because they were considered non-representative of

the NL speech community. Thus, the final number of respondents in this group was 100.

3. Analysis Method

The collected data was analyzed mainly in terms of syntactic formulas and morphological features in Iwai and Rinnert (1999). This method was effective to grasp the preferred patterns of expression in each region; however, it was inadequate to reveal strategic realization of pragmatic competence which could be affected by the preferred cultural norms of the regions where the respondents lived. Thus, the collected data was reanalyzed for the present study in terms of the "semantic formulas" or functional strategies contained in the responses, along with several other kinds of strategies (for example, repetition of particular strategies, and elicitation of sympathy) that emerged from the data.

Referring to the conventional encoding procedures in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) Manual (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 273–294), analysis codes were determined for the apology situation and for the request situation (see Appendix 2 for a complete list of the codes, with examples of each). After drawing up a tentative list of the codes, the two researchers encoded the responses separately first, choosing the first 10 responses from each group. When the interrater reliability did not reach 80%, discussions were repeated, the lists were modified, and 10 more responses from each group were encoded separately again until the two encoders reached a reasonable level of agreement (above 80%) in terms of their encoding criteria. Once acceptably high interrater reliabilities were confirmed (87% for apology and 88% for requests), the remaining data was split in half and each half was encoded separately by one of the researchers.

Once the encoded data was combined, descriptive statistics were performed and patterns of occurrence were examined to discover salient differences among the groups. Chi-square tests were applied to determine the statistical significance of the results.

In order to investigate possible use of the strategy of "verbosity," that is, longer, more elaborated responses observed in the speech of EFL/ESL learners (Kasper, 1997: 349–350), a word count was deter-

mined for each response, and then the average number of words per response in each situation was calculated for the four groups separately. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were applied to determine the significance of the effects of status and region on length of responses, and post hoc Scheffé tests were performed in order to determine exactly where the significant differences occurred.

III. Results

1. Apology

The most common response patterns for the two apology situations across the four groups was a combination of an expression of apology (usually in the form of regret, e.g., "I'm sorry"), an acknowledgment of responsibility (e.g., "I didn't mean to" or "I overslept"), and/or an offer of repair (e.g., "I'll replace it" or "I'll come as soon as I can"). Past studies of the apology speech act (e.g., Cohen & Olshtain, 1981) have reported that these three segments ("semantic formulas," or what we will refer to in this study as "functional strategies") tend to appear together in many apology situations to constitute an "archetypal apology" semantic formula. In this study, however, it was not uncommon, especially among the Asian groups in the apology situation with a friend (A-F), for an apology to be expressed without the other segments, i.e., "I'm very sorry" or "Oh, I'm sorry." For this reason, we started the analysis by first focusing on the responses of only expressions of apology, with or without an emotional expression (generally an expression of surprise, such as 'oh' or 'oh no').

1) Apology alone

The results of the first analysis is summarized in Table 1, in which the '+' and 'Emo' codes represent the use of an intensifier, e.g., 'very' or 'so', and that of an emotional expression, e.g., 'Oh' or 'Oops', respectively.³⁾ At first glance, it is obvious that a simple expression of apology is not an acceptable strategy in the situation with a college professor (A-P) in any of the four cultural domains represented by the respondents. Thus, none of them, except for two Japanese students, used this formula in the A-P situation.

Table 1: Summary of Apology Alone

	To a friend (A-F situation)				To a professor (A-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100	44	100	71	100
A only	11	15	3	0	0	2	0	0
A+ only	1	7	2	2	0	0	0	0
Emo-A	3	4	2	5	0	0	0	0
Emo-A+	1	4	6	7	0	0	0	0
Total	16	30	13	14	0	2	0	0
%	36.4	30.0	18.3	14.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0

N.B.: A = apology, '+' = intensifier, Emo = emotion

In the A-F situation, on the other hand, a substantial number of respondents in all the groups produced only an apology with or without an emotional expression, and the difference among the four groups almost reached a statistically significant level (tested by a chi-square test, chi-square=7.767, df=3, $p=0.052$). More than 30% of the respondents in the Hong Kong group and the Japanese group used this formula, while it was far less common among the Singapore and American respondents. It is also noteworthy that the respondents of the latter two groups, especially the American respondents, tended to express an emotional reaction prior to the apology when they realized the apology only with a single apologetic expression.

2) Apology with other segments

Even though an apology alone appeared in the A-F situation, the most common combination of strategies for the majority of respondents in all the groups was to express their responsibility and their will to compensate for their mistakes in either situation. The following are typical examples in the two situations:

Example 1 (A-F situation)

Oh, I am very sorry. I have no intention to do so. I will buy a new one to you later. (Hong Kong, #30)

Example 2 (A-P situation)

Good morning, sir. I'm (Name) here. I'll be at least an hour late because I overslept. Sorry about that. I'll try to hurry. (Singapore, #54)

In both examples, the respondent tries to admit honestly that the undesirable occurrence of the event for the interlocutor is caused by the speaker's unintentional action. This clear statement of responsibility may function along with an apology expression to moderate the interlocutor's irritation. Then, an offer of compensation or repair immediately follows to attempt to maintain a good relation with the friend or professor.

The occurrences of such semantic segments that appeared along with apologetic expressions were counted in each group, and the results are shown in Table 2 (the A-F situation) and Table 3 (the A-P situation).⁴⁾

Table 2: Apology and Other Segments in the A-F Situation

		N	A	A+	Res	RP	RPQ	IQ	AD
To a friend	HK	25	18	14	12	13	4	7	0
		%	72.0	56.0	48.0	52.0	16.0	28.0	0.0
	JP	61	47	26	17	37	4	7	8
		%	77.0	42.6	27.9	60.7	6.6	11.5	13.1
	SG	50	20	44	24	23	9	15	3
	%	40.0	88.0	48.0	46.0	18.0	30.0	6.0	
	US	74	26	55	27	43	15	9	1
	%	35.1	74.3	36.5	58.1	20.3	12.2	1.4	

N.B.: A = apology, '+' = intensifier, Res = responsibility, RP = repair, RPQ = repair in a question form, IQ = information question, AD = asking for directions

Table 3: Apology and Other Segments in the A-P Situation

		N	A	A+	Res	RP	RPQ	IQ	Mit
To a professor	HK	43	35	15	42	16	11	1	16
		%	81.4	34.9	97.7	37.2	25.6	2.3	37.2
	JP	82	70	16	81	35	4	1	4
		%	85.4	19.5	98.8	42.7	4.9	1.2	4.9
	SG	58	42	21	58	27	15	6	17
	%	72.4	36.2	100.0	46.6	25.9	10.3	29.3	
	US	81	27	58	78	45	5	4	12
	%	33.3	71.6	96.3	55.6	6.2	4.9	14.8	

N.B.: A = apology, '+' = intensifier, Res = responsibility, RP = repair, RPQ = repair in a question form, IQ = information question, Mit = mitigation

To examine group differences, a chi-square test was administered for each semantic category in these two tables. The results revealed no significant group difference in any categories of the A-F situation, except for the category of apology expressions, as explained below. Regarding this situation, therefore, it seems safe to conclude that no specific pragmatic strategy is required in cross-cultural communication at least among the four regions in this study, as far as such an abrupt occurrence of unexpected happenings among friends is concerned.

Despite the overall similarities across the groups, one noticeable difference was observed in relation to the use of intensifiers for apologetic expressions. First, similar to the results of the apology alone analysis, over 70% of the Hong Kong and Japanese respondents preferred an apologetic expression with no intensifier, as opposed to only 40% or less of the Singapore and US groups, and a significant difference was found among the four groups in the use of unintensified apology (chi-square=9.193, df=3, $p=0.027$). In contrast, Singapore and American respondents tended to intensify their apologies more than the other two groups, although the results of the statistical test on the frequencies of intensified apologies did not show a significant group difference overall (chi-square=6.176, df=3, $p=0.104$).

Another interesting difference in this situation, which cannot be proven statistically due to the small number of occurrences, is the use of AD (asking for directions), an example of which is a question like "What should I do?" A discernible number of Japanese respondents (13.1%) used such an expression, whereas it was rare in the responses of the other groups. This may be derived from a direct translation of Japanese "*Doo shiyoo*," but no adequate account can be made from the data obtained.

Despite the relatively few differences among the responses in the A-F situation, many outstanding differences were observed in the A-P situation, which could, in fact, be expected due to the more complicated nature and less intimate interpersonal relation in this situation. First, intensification of apologetic expressions in this situation was comparable to that in the A-F situation, that is, both Hong Kong respondents and Japanese respondents tended not to inten-

sify their apology in this situation, either. In fact, more remarkable group differences than those in the A-F situation were observed in both unintensified apology (chi-square=13.401, df=3, $p=0.004$) and in intensified apology (chi-square=18.893, df=3, $p=0.000$). Furthermore, among the four groups, the stylistic shift of the Singapore group is noticeable. A cross-situational comparison (a 2 x 2 table) of the Singapore respondents' use of intensifiers turned out to be significant (chi-square=7.487, df=1, $p=0.006$). For the American respondents, however, the situational differences did not trigger such a difference (chi-square=0.023, df=1, n.s.). In sum, most of the Hong Kong and Japanese groups did not use intensifiers in either situation, the Singapore group used them in the A-F situation but not in the A-P situation, and the American group produced intensified apologies very frequently in both situations.

Next, it can be noticed in the responses of the A-P situation that the most common segment adjacent to the apology expressions was a statement of responsibility, e.g., "My alarm did not go off this morning and I overslept," which could almost be considered obligatory in all the groups. This finding is not very surprising because in this situation the respondents were aware of their own guilt in breaking their promise to meet the professor, and they might not have been able to make themselves understood unless the reason for the apologizing act was clearly stated.

Contrary to the similarity in the statement of responsibility across the four groups, the offer of repair was realized with remarkably different pragmatic strategies. The most common statement of repair across the four groups was to show the speaker's volition to compensate for his/her delayed arrival to the professor's place, e.g., "I'll be there as soon as possible," and no statistical significance was found for this type of repair offer (chi-square=1.679, df=3, n.s.). However, an outstanding group difference was obtained in another type of repair offer. It was a way to elicit the professor's judgement by way of a question form, e.g., "Would it be alright with you if I came over later?", for which the intergroup difference was highly significant (chi-square=16.474, df=3, $p=0.001$). It should be noticed that this questioning

strategy was preferred by a larger number of the Hong Kong and Singapore respondents (more than 25% of each group) than the other two groups. Thus, this strategy seems to reflect the cultural norms of these two Asian groups, in which a direct proposal to a person in a higher social status could be regarded as being impolite. The same tendency could be expected in the Japanese group because the cultural distance between this group and the two other Asian groups is closer than with the American group, but very few Japanese participants (less than 5%) used this strategy. No direct account for the lack of correspondence between the Japanese participants and the other two Asian groups can be made from the data in this study, but we assume that this was due mainly to their linguistic limitations.

Weak evidence for this assumption can be found in the use of mitigation expressions, which function to reduce a speaker's strong claim or proposal. Some of them are verbalized in such additional clauses as "I'll be there *if you don't mind*" or "*I'm afraid* I'll be an hour late", and others by adding such modal verbs as 'would', 'could', or 'might' or adding such lexical items as 'probably'. A cross-regional comparison shows that the use of mitigation expressions significantly differed among the four groups (chi-square=17.084, df=3, $p=0.000$). An interesting finding from this comparison is that the tendency to mitigate an utterance was much stronger in the two other Asian groups (37% for Hong Kong, 29% for Singapore) than in the American group (15%) and that very few Japanese respondents (5%) used this mitigating strategy. It is highly possible that these Japanese EFL respondents do not know how to use this strategy appropriately and effectively in an actual communicative events, even if they have acquired the linguistic knowledge to produce such expressions as those given above in an isolated context, such as a grammar test item.

3) Repetition of apologies

The strategy of repeating apologetic expressions seems to carry an important implication to understand pragmatic differences among the four groups. As reported in Iwai and Rinnert (1999), two kinds of apology repetition were identified in this data. A

typical example containing both kinds was the following:

Example 4 (A-F situation)

Sorry, sorry! I don't mean to break it. It is expensive or is it an antique? Oh, dear! I'm very sorry. (Singapore, #44)

The first kind is an immediate repetition of 'sorry'. According to Iwai and Rinnert (1999), this type of apology repetition was extremely unusual among the American respondents (only 4% of all the respondents), compared with the other three groups (SG 23.9%, HK 16.4%, and JP 9.5%). The other repetition strategy is to repeat an apology at or toward the end of the response after producing a responsibility and/or a repair statement. In the present study, these two kinds of repetition strategy were combined, and they were compared among the four groups and between the two situations.

Table 4: Summary of Apology Repetition

	To a friend (A-F situation)				To a professor (A-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100	44	100	71	100
Repetition %	15	24	22	15	11	7	12	7
	34.1	24.0	31.0	15.0	25.0	7.0	16.9	7.0

The results of these comparisons, displayed in Table 4, indicate that the repetition strategy is more common in the Asian groups than the American group, even though a significant overall group difference was obtained only in the A-P situation (chi-square=10.223, df=3, $p=0.017$), but not in the A-F situation (chi-square=5.410, df=3, n.s.). In addition, the repetition strategy is used more frequently in the A-F situation than the A-P situation for all the groups (chi-square=13.942, df=6, $p=0.031$).

The most plausible interpretation of this cross-cultural difference is that the Asian respondents try to intensify the degree of apologetic feelings by repeating apology expressions, which may derive from their first languages. The American respondents, in contrast, tend to vary the degree of apologetic feelings by using various emotional expressions such as

“oh my god” and expletives (e.g., damn, shit) and frequent use of intensifiers added to apologetic expressions.⁵⁾

The cross-situational difference in the repetition strategy, on the other hand, seems to reflect the seriousness and urgency of the undesirable event leading to the apology. In the A-F situation, breaking the vase is obviously the speaker’s unintentional but careless mistake, and the intimate relation between the speaker and the interlocutor is threatened due to the serious incident that happened unexpectedly right in front of them. The safest strategy for the speaker not to damage the relation with the interlocutor is to make his/her regret understood by the interlocutor and to express the will to compensate the friend for the inadvertent misdeed. For this reason, the respondents’ attention is paid more to the utterance of apology and repair than that of responsibility. Compared with this situation, the A-P situation is neither serious nor urgent so that the speaker’s attention is placed more on the explanation of his/her responsibility. The speaker also needs not to jeopardize the power relation between him/her and the professor, and thus tries to show a humble attitude by the use of mitigating expressions or intensifiers rather than by the use of the apology repetition strategy.

4) Other features

In addition to the cross-regional and cross-situational features discussed so far, there are some other unique response patterns observed in the data obtained, even though it is not clear whether or not they have any pragmatic significance. One of them is based on the respondents’ interpretation of the given situations. Table 5 summarizes the number of cases (and their overall percentages) in which the

Table 5: Summary of No Apology

	To a friend (A-F situation)				To a professor (A-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100	44	100	71	100
No A	0	3	4	9	1	7	11	18
%	0.0	3.0	5.6	9.0	2.3	7.0	15.5	18.0

respondents did not ‘opt out’ (explicitly choose not to respond)⁶⁾ but did not express an apology, either.

About 10% of the American respondents did not express an explicit apology in the A-F situation, and almost 20% did not do so in the A-P situation. Instead, they tended to use expletives or tried to make an excuse or joke (e.g. “Oh, shit. I can’t believe I did that.” or “I’m retarded”) in the former situation, and they attempted to state their responsibility and/or offer to make up for their misdeed in the latter situation. A sizable number of the Singapore respondents (15.5%) showed a similar tendency in the A-P situation, but very few of them used a no-apology response in the A-F situation.

Another cross-regional difference was found in the overall use of emotional expressions in the A-F situation. As shown in Section 1), the American and Singapore respondents tended to express their emotions even if they realized their apology speech act only by way of an apologetic expression. This tendency was further strengthened, especially in the American group, in the overall comparison of emotional responses in this situation, as shown in Table 6. Although no statistically significant difference was obtained among the four groups (chi-square=5.219, df=3, p=0.157), the American respondents seemed to prefer to express their emotions explicitly.

Table 6: Summary of Emotions

	To a friend (A-F situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
Emo	17	33	29	58
%	38.6	33.0	40.8	58.0

Finally, the total numbers of words which were used to realize the apologies in the two situations were compared among the four groups, and the result of this analysis is shown in Table 7.

Obviously, the Singapore group used more words than the other three groups, and the Japanese group used the lowest number, in both situations. (See Figure 1 in Appendix 3 for a graphic representation of the group differences in word counts across the two situations.)

Table 7: Average Word Counts - Apology

	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
To a friend	10.54 (15.20)	9.58 (12.04)	14.33 (16.52)	12.94 (14.86)
To a professor	23.20	17.67	29.52	25.13

N.B.: 1) Figures in parentheses show average word counts of responses which do not include apology alone with or without emotional expressions.

2) To calculate average word counts, opted-out responses and irrelevant responses were excluded.

A two-way ANOVA (4 regions x 2 situations) indicated that both factors were significant [region: ($F(3, 599)=31.560, p<0.01$); and situation ($F(1, 599)=311.449, p<0.01$)], and that the interaction between the two factors was also significant ($F(3, 599)=5.599, p<0.01$). That is, the respondents in the four groups used different numbers of words overall, and the number of words also differed according to the interlocutor (fewer words to a friend and more words to a professor), but the group differences were not parallel in the two situations (as indicated by the significant interaction between the factors).

To examine the group differences in more detail, a one-way ANOVA was conducted for each situation. The results show that the group difference was significant in both situations [the A-F situation: $F(3, 299)=7.829, p<0.01$; the A-P situation: $F(3, 300)=24.761, p<0.01$]. Furthermore, the result of multiple comparison (tested by a Scheffé test) in the A-F situation indicates that the Japanese group (average word count 9.58) was similar to the Hong Kong group (10.54), and that the American group (12.94) and the Singapore group (14.33) were similar to each other and both used significantly more words than the Japanese group.

A somewhat different pattern was observed in the results of multiple comparison in the A-P situation. First, the Japanese group used significantly fewer words (17.67) than the other three groups. Second, contrary to the A-F situation, the Hong Kong group (23.20) and the American group (25.13) were close to each other in this situation. Finally, the Singapore group (29.52) used significantly more words than the other three groups.

In sum, in the apology situations, only the Singapore group appeared to use a strategy of verbosity. If the NS group is taken as the basis for comparison, it was only in the A-P situation that the verbosity strategy could be considered significant.

2. Requests

The data for each of the two request situations was analyzed in terms of the following three types of strategies: 1) Supporting acts accompanying the head request act, 2) categories of head request acts, and 3) internal modification or structure of the head request act. The findings for each of the two situations are discussed separately, with comparisons being drawn in the discussion of the second situation.

1) To a Friend (R-F situation)

Table 8 shows the most frequent supporting acts accompanying the request to borrow a friend's class notes. As the table shows, the most common strategy (over 70%) across the four groups was the statement of a grounder, that is, a reason for making the request. In this situation, the grounder was mainly that the requester had missed class. The second most common strategy (54% to 66%), which was closely related to the first one, involved eliciting sympathy from the hearer, either as part of the greeting (e.g., "I'm feeling better now, thanks") or part of the grounder (e.g., "I was sick last week and missed class"). There were no significant differences among the groups in the frequencies of these two strategies. By using these strategies, the speaker can be seen to be reinforcing the credibility or legitimacy of the request. As a result, the hearer would presumably find it more difficult to refuse the request, as compared to a similar one from a friend who had purposely skipped class for no particular reason.

The only other supporting strategies that were used by more than 10 percent of any one group were (a) asking an information question, most commonly whether the hearer had attended the class (these are included under "preparators" by Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 287⁷); (b) performing a direct preparatory act, such as "Excuse me"; "Can I ask you something?"; or "I have a favor to ask you"⁸); and (c) adding explanation, usually more details about why the speaker

Table 8: Frequency of Supporting Acts by Group

	To a friend (R-F situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
Grounder	33	76	55	71
%	75.0	76.0	77.5	71.0
Sympathy	27	59	47	54
%	61.4	59.0	66.2	54.0
Information question	5	0	14	13
%	11.4	0.0	19.7	13.0
Preparation act	2	11	4	3
%	4.5	11.0	5.6	3.0
Explanation	0	0	8	6
%	0.0	0.0	11.3	6.0

missed class. Although there are some minor differences in the frequencies for these strategies (shown in Table 8), overall, the groups are fairly similar in their use, with no statistically significant differences among them.

Turning now to the strategies used to express the head request acts, Table 9 shows all the strategies that were identified in the data. These ranged from the explicitly direct "Please lend me your notes" to non-conventionally indirect hints (e.g., "Any important things I missed in class?"), and included a variety of conventionally indirect formulas. Six categories of conventionally indirect requests were identified in the responses: (1) questioning ability ("Can/could you lend me...?"), (2) asking permission ("May/can/could I borrow...?"), (3) questioning willingness ("Will/would you lend me...?"), (4) stating desire ("I want/would like you to..."), (5) asking about possibility ("Is it possible to borrow...?"), and (6) asking about preference ("Do you mind...?"). In addition, a few participants explicitly "opted out" of the request act in this situation, as shown under "no request" in Table 9.

In contrast to the supporting moves, the head act categorization presented in Table 9 reveals some clear group differences in strategy use. Chi-square tests of significance among the four groups showed statistically significant differences for the first five head request act strategies: Direct (chi-square=

Table 9: Frequency of Head Act Categories by Group

	To a friend (R-F situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
Direct	1	32	0	0
%	2.3	32.0	0.0	0.0
Ability	15	10	25	2
%	34.1	10.0	35.2	2.0
Permission	13	18	23	73
%	29.5	18.0	32.4	73.0
Willingness	14	12	4	4
%	31.8	12.0	5.6	4.0
Desire	0	24	3	1
%	0.0	24.0	4.2	1.0
Possibility	0	0	5	5
%	0.0	0.0	7.0	5.0
Preference	0	1	9	4
%	0.0	1.0	12.7	4.0
Hints	0	3	2	10
%	0.0	3.0	2.8	10.0
No request	1	0	0	1
%	2.3	0.0	0.0	1.0

54.179, $df=3$, $p=0.000$), questioning ability (chi-square=32.105, $df=3$, $p=0.000$), asking permission (chi-square=27.596, $df=3$, $p=0.000$), questioning willingness (chi-square=19.560, $df=3$, $p=0.000$), and stating desire (chi-square=33.227, $df=3$, $p=0.000$).⁹ (The case numbers were too small to perform reliable chi-square tests on the remaining categories.)

Specifically, the Hong Kong and Singapore participants' responses tended to be spread among various conventionally indirect strategies, including questioning ability, asking permission, questioning willingness, and asking about preference. Unlike the other groups, the US group relied rather heavily (73%) on only one strategy (asking permission) and also used a higher proportion (10%) of hints than any of the other groups. Compared with these three groups, the Japanese respondents were the only ones who tended to chose either a direct strategy (32%) or a conventionally indirect expression of desire (24%), the two most popular responses for this group. This

prevalence of direct strategies in the Japanese request responses accords well with other studies reporting a preference in Japanese for directness in requests to close interlocutors, even superiors if they are member of the same working group (Miller, 1994) and a tendency for Japanese EFL learners to judge direct requests to friends as more appropriate and polite than English NS groups judge them to be (Kitao, 1990; Rinnert, 1999).

Next, the analysis of structure and modifications of the head act is shown in Table 10. First, the request acts were categorized in terms of the "request perspective" or "viewpoint" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 278) of the act as representing (a) speaker dominance (e.g., "Can *I* borrow...?"); (b) hearer dominance (e.g., "Would *you* lend me...?"); both speaker and hearer dominance (e.g., "Did *we* have any...?"); and no reference to agent (e.g., "Was there any...?"). Then the head acts were analyzed in terms of how their force was modified or mitigated by the use of lexical and/or syntactic downgraders (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 281-285). For this analysis, two

categories were identified: (a) the use of 'please', and (b) the use of all other softeners, such as past tense, modals (e.g., 'would', 'could'), hedges (e.g., 'possibly'), or other politeness or deference markers (e.g., "I wonder if...", or "I'm afraid...").

As Table 10 shows, clear differences were found among the groups in the use of a speaker dominance versus hearer dominance strategy for the request head act. According to chi-square tests, both were significant (chi-square=17.010, df=3, $p=0.001$ for speaker; chi-square=31.703, df=3, $p=0.000$ for hearer). Whereas the American students (89%) clearly preferred a speaker dominance strategy, the other three groups (51% to 68%) tended to depend somewhat more frequently on a hearer dominance strategy, and few of the members of any group chose any other dominance strategy (both or no agent).

Similarly, the groups showed significant differences in their use of 'please' and other kinds of softeners or politeness markers (chi-square=27.950, df=3, $p=0.000$ for 'please'; chi-square=15.144, df=3, $p=0.002$ for softeners). In particular, as compared to the other three groups, the Japanese group used the conventional politeness marker 'please' much more frequently (34%) than the other groups (2%, 7%, 17%). Conversely, the Japanese group used other softeners much less frequently (28%) than the other three (52%, 63%, 75%). If we add the frequencies for 'please' to those for the other softeners, we find that at least 60% of each of the groups used at least one politeness or softening marker.

Looking at the individual frequencies, we found that multiple softeners were particularly characteristic of the American group: Those Americans who used a softener actually averaged almost 2 softeners per head request act, with a few people using as many as 4 or 5 softeners as part of the same request (e.g., "I was wondering if I could get a look at the notes from class to see what I missed"). In comparison, the comparable averages of softeners per request for the other groups were 1.6 for Hong Kong; 1.4 for Singapore; and 1.2 for Japan, with only two cases of as many as 3 softeners (in the Singapore group) and no cases of more than 2 softeners by any other members of the three groups.

Table 10: Frequency of Head Act Dominance and Modification by Group

	To a friend (R-F situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
Speaker dominance	13	44	33	89
%	29.5	44.0	46.5	89.0
Hearer dominance	30	55	36	9
%	68.2	55.0	50.7	9.0
Both	0	0	0	0
%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No agent	0	4	1	0
%	0.0	4.0	1.4	0.0
Please	3	34	12	2
%	6.8	34.0	16.9	2.0
Softener	23	28	45	75
%	52.3	28.0	63.4	75.0
Total softeners	36	34	62	148
Softener per person	1.6	1.2	1.4	2.0

N.B.: Some respondents used softeners more than one time in a response. The category of "Total" shows all occurrences of softeners.

2) To a Professor (R-P situation)

Table 11 shows the most frequent supporting acts accompanying the request to a professor to find out what happened in the class that was missed and whether there was a homework assignment. Both grounders (having missed class) and elicitations of sympathy (the sick friend in the hospital) were among the most common supporting acts for all four groups (43% to 89%). This was particularly true for the U.S. group, whose percentage in the sympathy category was much higher (89%) than for the friend situation (54%). However, no significant differences among the four groups were found in the frequencies of either grounders or sympathy.

In contrast, the groups were found to differ in terms of frequency of explanation (chi-square=18.144, df=3, $p=0.000$). Most notably, a high percentage (57%) of the Hong Kong group offered explanation, mainly in terms of more details about why they had missed class. This high frequency could be considered an instance of verbosity, in that they “justified their requests more than NS” (Kasper, 1997: 349).

The only other supporting act that occurred with more than 10% frequency in any group was an apology to the professor for having missed the class. This strategy was most common among the Hong Kong (34%) and Singapore groups (32%), but the group differences did not reach the Bonferonni adjusted level of significance for multiple tests (in this case, 0.0125; chi-square=9.627, df=3, $p=0.022$, and thus non-significant).

Table 11: Frequency of Supporting Acts by Group

	To a professor (R-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
	N	44	100	71
Grounder	19	49	50	83
%	43.2	49.0	70.4	83.0
Sympathy	28	55	47	89
%	63.6	55.0	66.2	89.0
Explanation	25	19	12	15
%	56.8	19.0	16.9	15.0
Apology	15	16	23	13
%	34.1	16.0	32.4	13.0

In summary, it would appear that members of all four groups felt they needed to offer legitimate reasons for having missed class and to show the professor that they had intended no disrespect to her.

Table 12 shows all the strategies used to express the head request acts. As in the friend situation, they spanned a wide range, including direct (e.g., “Please tell me what you did in class”) and conventionally indirect forms (e.g., “I was wondering if you could tell me what we did in class that day”), as well as hints (e.g., “Did I miss an assignment?”).

Table 12: Frequency of Head Act Categories by Group

	To a professor (R-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
	N	44	100	71
Direct	0	31	0	0
%	0.0	31.0	0.0	0.0
Ability	7	2	14	22
%	15.9	2.0	19.7	22.0
Permission	2	0	17	9
%	4.5	0.0	23.9	9.0
Willingness	9	4	0	1
%	20.5	4.0	0.0	1.0
Desire	13	30	19	8
%	29.5	30.0	26.8	8.0
Possibility	0	0	3	4
%	0.0	0.0	4.2	4.0
Preference	1	0	1	2
%	2.3	0.0	1.4	2.0
Hints	9	10	9	44
%	20.5	10.0	12.7	44.0
No request	3	23	8	10
%	6.8	23.0	11.3	10.0

As shown in Table 12, the four groups demonstrated striking differences in frequencies of head request act strategies. Nevertheless, because many of them contained low values that yielded one or more cells with expected values less than 5, significant differences among the groups were found only for ability (chi-square=15.068, df=3, $p=0.002$), desire (chi-square=11.861 df=3, $p=0.008$), and hints (chi-

square=23.106, $df=3$, $p=0.000$). Once again, the direct request strategy was popular among the Japanese students, but was not chosen by members of any other group, and the Japanese students used the ability strategy much less frequently (2%) than the other three groups (16% to 22%). The most frequent head act category for the Hong Kong, Japanese, and Singapore groups (27% to 30%) was conventionally indirect statement of desire (e.g., "I would like..."). In contrast, the American group tended not to use a desire strategy (8%) and instead chose hints as their preferred response category in this situation (44%), and the other three groups also depended more on this most indirect (hint) strategy (10% to 21%) than they did in the student situation (0 to 3%).

As compared to the friend situation, a rather large number of participants, particularly in the Japanese group, produced no request act in the professor situation, as detailed in Table 12. These frequencies include those who clearly chose to opt out of making a request to the teacher (13 Japanese and 3 Singapore participants), 3 cases which were eliminated because they contained a description of what they would do instead of a direct response (1 Singapore and 2 American participants), and the remainder whose responses were so general or vague that we could not be sure they were hints (e.g., "I went to visit a friend in hospital. Thanks for your concern.") Without being able to ask in follow-up interviews about the intention of such responses, we could not determine whether they should be considered opting out or "mild hints" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 280–281). If they were coded as hints, it would increase the proportions of hints in all four groups to 27% for HK, 20% for JP, 18% for SG, and 52% for US. Whichever way these responses are categorized, it is apparent that a substantial number of students hesitate to impose on their professors by making explicit requests of them.

Finally, in comparison with the friend situation, the groups appear to be much more similar to each other in terms of request perspective (dominance) and internal modification of the head request act. In fact, as shown in Table 13, the only striking difference among the groups is once again the relatively large number of Japanese students who used 'please' (29%, as compared to between 1% and 6% for the other

Table 13: Frequency of Head Act Dominance and Modification by Group

	To a professor (R-P situation)			
	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
Speaker dominance %	16 36.4	34 34.0	38 53.5	52 52.0
Hearer dominance %	18 40.9	40 40.0	21 29.6	24 24.0
Both %	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	10 10.0
No agent %	7 15.9	4 4.0	5 7.0	3 3.0
Please %	2 4.5	29 29.0	4 5.6	1 1.0
Softener %	24 54.5	23 23.0	37 52.1	49 49.0
Total softeners	26	26	45	84
Softener per person	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.7

N.B.: Some respondents used softeners more than one time in a response. The category of "Total" shows all occurrences of softeners.

groups), although the very low frequencies among the other 3 groups precluded use of a chi-square test of significance.

With respect to dominance of the request act in the R-P situation, there appeared to be a more equal balance among speaker and hearer dominance than in the R-F situation in all the groups except the Singapore group. In addition, a portion of all four groups used both speaker and hearer dominance ('we') and/or no agent (which was always associated with hint formulations), as opposed to almost no use of the latter two perspectives in the friend situation. There were no significant differences among the groups in terms of dominance.

Regarding the use of 'please' and other softeners, once again there was a statistically significant difference among the four groups (chi-square=34.984, $df=3$, $p=0.000$ for 'please'; chi-square=9.950, $df=3$, $p=0.019$ for softeners). As in the friend situation, 'please' was used most frequently by the Japanese group (29%), and fewer members of the Japanese group used softeners (23%) as compared to the

other three groups (49% to 55%).

Finally, there was generally less frequent use of 'please' and other softeners in the professor situation than in the friend situation, especially among the American group members (softeners: 49% for the professor situation, 75% for the friend situation). This might seem counter-intuitive, considering that the professor is in a higher status position and would appear to merit the kind of deference signaled by softeners. However, this difference likely reflects the difference in the kinds of requests in the two situations. In the friend situation, the request is a personal favor that the friend is under no obligation to fulfill, and thus the speaker may perceive a need to persuade the hearer to comply. In contrast, the rights and obligations inherent in the student-teacher relationship could be seen as including the expectation that a teacher should provide the information needed by an absent student, especially if the absence could not be helped.¹⁰⁾

3) Word Counts

Table 14 shows the average numbers of words per group in each of the two situations. Figure 2 (in Appendix 3) presents the group and situational differences graphically. Again, the Singapore group used the most words, and the Japanese group, the least.

Table 14: Average Word Counts - Request

	HK	JP	SG	US
N	44	100	71	100
To a friend	20.19	18.77	24.39	20.15
To a professor	24.84	21.16	31.40	25.13

N.B.: To calculate average word counts, opted-out responses and irrelevant responses were excluded.

The two-way ANOVA (4 regions x 2 situations) indicated that both factors were significant [region: ($F(3, 604)=21.401, p<0.01$); and situation ($F(1, 604)=39.381, p<0.01$)], but that the interaction between the two factors was not significant ($F(3, 604)=1.850, p=0.14$). That is, the numbers of words differed significantly overall by group and by situation (with significantly more words to a professor than to a friend), and the group differences in the two situa-

tions were basically parallel.

The results of one-way ANOVAs show that group was again significant in both situations [the R-F situation: $F(3, 308)=7.703, p<0.01$; the R-P situation: $F(3, 296)=13.550, p<0.01$]. The Scheffé test results for the R-F situation showed that the Japanese group (average word count 18.77) used fewer words than the Hong Kong group (20.19) and the American group (20.15), and that the Singapore group (24.39) used significantly more words than the other three groups.

A similar pattern was revealed for the A-P situation. Although the Japanese group used fewer words (21.16) than the other three groups, the difference did not reach a significant level with any group but the Singapore group. The Singapore group (31.40) again used significantly more words than the other three, and these three (Japan, Hong Kong, and the U.S.) did not differ significantly among themselves.

Thus, similar to the R-F situation, the request situations elicited a verbosity strategy from the Singapore group for the R-P situation. However, none of the other groups exhibited this kind of wordiness.

IV. Discussion

1. Inter-group differences

In response to the first research question, speech acts of apology and request do appear to be realized in some different ways by representatives of the four different regions in this study (Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the U.S.). That is, in spite of substantial agreement among the four groups with regard to some of the most basic strategies (e.g., expression of responsibility for the apology situations and statement of grounders for the request situations), there were many significant differences among the groups in relation to particular strategies.

In response to the second question, variation across the groups in terms of strategy use fell into three major patterns. The most salient features are summarized below across the groups to illustrate the major subdivisions among the groups.

First, use of several strategies revealed a division between the Japanese, Hong Kong, Singapore groups and the American group, suggesting a distinction

Situation	JP	HK	SG	US
(A-F/P)	+Repet	+Repet	+Repet	-Repet
(A-F)	Only A	Only A	Not only A	Not only A
(A-F/P)	-Intensifier	-Intensifier	+Intensifier	+Intensifier
(A-P)	-RepairQ	+RepairQ	+RepairQ	-RepairQ
(A-P)	-Mit	+Mit	+Mit	-Mit
(R-F)	Hr dom	Hr dom	Hr dom	Sp dom
(R-P)	Des	Des	Des	Hint
(R-P)	(+A)	(+A)	(-A)	(-A)
(R-F/P)	+Please	-Please	-Please	-Please
(R-F/P)	-Soft	+Soft	+Soft	+Soft
(R-F)	Dir/Des	Ab/Prm/Wil	Ab/Prm	Prm

N.B.: Repet=apology repetition, A=apology, RepairQ=Repair in question forms, Mit=mitigation, Hr dom=hearer dominance, Sp dom=speaker dominance, Des=desire, Dir=direct, Ab=ability, Wil=willingness, Prm=permission

between "Asian English" and "American English". Specifically, the strategies of repetition of apology expressions, greater use of hearer dominance in requests, and expression of desire (e.g., "I would like...") in requests may be characteristic of these varieties of English. Another possibly relevant strategy is the use of a repair question in apologies, although the Japanese group did not demonstrate frequent usage of this strategy the way the Hong Kong and Singapore participants did.

Second, several patterns of strategy use distinguished between the EFL-related groups (Japan and Hong Kong) and the non-EFL groups (Singapore and the U.S.). The EFL groups, most notably, were more likely to use apology expressions only and no intensifiers, as opposed to the use of more supporting moves and more intensifiers among the non-EFL groups, especially the NL group. Additionally, the former groups tended to express apologies to their professors in the request situation more frequently than the latter groups, although the difference was not significant. The word-counts for the A-F situation, where the Singapore and American groups were similarly higher than the Japanese and Hong Kong groups, also fit into this pattern.

Third, a clear difference between the JP group and the other three groups was seen in several patterns. Most notably, the Japanese group frequently used 'please' while the other groups more often used a variety of other softeners in requests. Related to this difference, the Japanese group was the

only one who showed a preference for direct requests, whereas the other three groups preferred the use of various conventionally indirect requests and hints. The significantly lower word counts for Japanese responses as compared to the other three groups (in both R-F and R-P situations) also correspond to this pattern.

In summary, the patterns of variation across the four groups indicate a certain amount of overlap among them. This overlap in turn provides evidence for a continuum of sorts going from JP to HK to SG to US. That is, certain aspects of strategy use appear to move between one extreme (the Japanese EFL group) and the other extreme (the American NL group), with the other two groups falling in between (Hong Kong being closer to the Japanese group and Singapore, closer to the American one).

2. Pedagogical implications

On the basis of the findings regarding the rather large differences in strategy use among the groups in this study, we can infer that such differences could easily lead to misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Thus, in such communication it may not be adequate for either NS or NNS English speakers to possess pragmatic competence that is appropriate for only one particular region.

If this is the case, one possible implication from this study would be that every speaker of English may eventually have to be "bilingual." Such bilingualism (or multilingualism) would be necessary in order to

communicate in a "World English" with people from diverse regions around the world and at the same time to "express human experience in all its complexity" in their own particular language (whether it is a variety of English or some other language) to affirm their own identities, as suggested by Chevillet (cited in McArthur, 1998: 31).

Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, the establishment of one global standard of English seems far from becoming a reality. Thus, in the absence of such a unified or unifying variety of English, it would appear advisable to aim at developing more effective strategic competence among various groups of English speakers to compensate for conflicting pragmatic norms of appropriateness. To this end, teachers can attempt to help EFL students in a number of ways.

First, teaching one particular cultural norm (monomodel) for achievement of pragmatic realization of speech acts would appear to be of little practical use. At the very least, speakers of every variety of English need to become more aware of the diversity in norms of pragmatic appropriateness. From this perspective, Kachru (1997) points out the inadequacies of English linguistic and literature programs in Japanese universities, which are overwhelmed by American and British studies of English linguistics and literature, and the insufficiencies of English teacher training programs in American universities, which focus mostly on teaching methodologies. It is important that pragmatic awareness be developed in the context of respect for the legitimacy of every other dialect or variety (polymodel). A good example of this is a study by Brown and Peterson (1997), who showed that sociopragmatic awareness of graduate students in teacher training courses in an American university were changed remarkably by providing them just a few classes focusing on World Englishes. Such awareness will help speakers and teachers recognize that they may have to work at establishing understanding, rather than assuming that everyone shares the same norms.

Second, when encountering unfamiliar situations, participants can be encouraged to approach them flexibly. What is required is a multi-dimensional perspective and strategic adaptability. The

ability to test different hypotheses, for example by trying them out with members of a target culture or by asking such members about their cultural practices, can make it possible to achieve some degree of success in communicating with members of other cultural groups. For example, recent research has demonstrated that participants in interaction co-construct meaning, and that pragmatic understanding can be enhanced by rapport-building strategies, which may include a participants's exploiting his or her NNS status to elicit cooperation from an NS interlocutor (Kasper, 1997).

Taking for granted that pragmatic awareness and linguistic flexibility are requisites for the users of a "World English", it seems evident that this purpose cannot be achieved by the monomodel approach. Some readers may object to this claim since, in reality, the primary concern for teaching English in either an ESL or an EFL context is to advance English learners' linguistic competence; however, we believe that a polymodel approach provides English learners with abundant opportunities to practice saying the same thing in different ways, which will eventually foster both their pragmatic awareness and their linguistic flexibility. Needless to say, it has to be carefully examined when and how such instruction should be incorporated into classrooms, but these issues are beyond the scope of this study and, thus, additional studies are necessary.

Next, for EFL learners who have very limited exposure to any target speech community, semantic values and accompanying social meanings of linguistic items need to be explicitly taught. Moreover, it should be emphasized in EFL classes that direct translation from the L1 can result in pragmatic failure (e.g., overuse of the direct request strategy). Nevertheless, in many cases of actual social interaction, it may be better to say something rather than nothing, even if it is a direct translation of the L1 into the L2. It may fit the norm of the target community, as our data on the repetition strategy for apology suggests. What is important is to see the interlocutor's reaction, try to modify the utterance if the actual intention does not seem to be accepted, and thus strategically solve unfamiliar pragmatic problems.

Finally, it is often said that English is merely a

tool for transmission of information. However, we should be cautious of such a perception because language often works as more than a tool. It delivers not only propositional meanings but also affective and social meanings. Cross-cultural communication is difficult because the latter meanings can cause breakdowns in communication.

V. Conclusion

This study of questionnaire responses investigated the use of pragmatic strategies in apologies and requests by representatives of four regions. The results showed some clear patterns of variation among the four groups, ranging from the Japanese (EFL) and Hong Kong (EFL/ESL) groups to the Singapore (ESL) and American (NL) groups. The findings strongly imply the necessity for raising awareness, on the part of speakers, learners, and teachers, of the diversity in pragmatic strategy use across regions. With such awareness, English speakers from various regions can learn to communicate more effectively and avoid serious cross-cultural misunderstandings stemming from conflicting norms of strategy use.

Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the use of only one source of data (the DCT). These limitations could be overcome by supplementing the findings with other kinds of data (such as role plays and naturally occurring data) from a larger population. In the process, the study should be expanded to include members of the society at large, such as workers in the public and private sector, who may be more representative of societal norms of appropriateness than university students are. Furthermore, the possible effect of gender on strategy use should be examined in this and any future data that is collected.

In addition, a weakness in the research design should be addressed in future study. That is, the factor of register (equal versus unequal status) was not adequately isolated because the situations with the friend and the professor were not the same. For the apologies, the friend situation involved a much more serious offense than the professor situation did. Similarly, although the contents of the two

requests were very similar, the friend situation was a non-standard one (a favor), whereas that with the professor was much more of a standard situation (House, 1989), with rights and expectations based on the role relationship between student and teacher. To address this disparity, it may be useful to analyze the complaint data from our original questionnaire; many of the complaints contain requests, and the two objects of complaint are similar in terms of their seriousness (a noisy roommate and a disappointing grade).

The conclusions have to be considered tentative at this point. Further study is required to determine whether the findings result from cultural, linguistic, or instructional effects, or a combination of these. One way to discover the differential effects of these factors would be to probe participants' perspectives through in-depth, open-ended interviews. For example, they could be interviewed while viewing videotaped interaction in various social situations, including their own role-play or naturalistic behavior. By focusing on negotiation between two interlocutors, it would be possible to see how they jointly construct the interaction and how the strategies actually work in conjunction with other strategies.

Ultimately, the effects of the proposed kinds of instruction need to be tested. For example, it would be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction in awareness of cross-cultural variation in speech act realization. Similarly, specific strategies for dealing with unknown situations could be taught and their influence on the degree of success or failure of the participant's performance in actual or role play situations could be assessed.

Notes

1. This study was supported by a 1996 Hiroshima City University Grant for Special Academic Research; Research Code A441. We are very grateful to all the participants, without whose cooperation the study would not have been possible. We also want to thank Ken Rose of Hong Kong City University, Ou Yang Yi Yun at the National University of Singapore, and Steve Kosteché at University of Texas at Austin for their kind help in collecting the questionnaire data.
2. Despite the obvious limitations of using written DCT data to study pragmatic competence that is naturally

realized through spoken interaction, it was seen as a practical way to collect preliminary data that represent the prototypical or ideal norms for each of the four cultural groups. (See Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Kasper, 2000 for discussions of the similarities and differences between questionnaire and naturally occurring speech act data.)

3. The frequencies in all the tables represent the number of respondents in each group who used the particular strategy, regardless of whether it was used once or more than once as part of the same apology or request.
4. In these two tables, the total numbers of 'A' and 'A+' exceed the total number of respondents. This is because some respondents used both an unintensified apology and an intensified apology in one response.
5. In fact, it was found in Iwai and Rinnert (1999) that intensifier use differed among the four groups not only in their frequency but also in the choice of forms for their realization. 'Very' was overtly preferred by the Japanese respondents in both the A-F situation (47.1% of total intensifiers of this group) and the A-P situation (66.7%). In contrast, two of the most preferred intensifiers in the Singapore group were 'so' (42.3%) and 'very' (30.8%) in the A-F situation and 'so' (47.1%) and 'really' (23.5%) in the A-P situation. The American respondents were also in favor of 'so' (77.1%) in the A-F situation, but they used 'so' and 'really' evenly in the A-P situation (39.7% for both situations). The Hong Kong respondents used 'very', 'so', and 'really' almost equally in both situations, but they preferred more formal intensifiers such as 'terribly' and 'awfully' more than the other three groups in both situations (35.7% in the A-F situation and 28.6% in the A-P situation).
6. Unlike many previous studies, the option to 'opt out' was explicitly given to the respondents in the questionnaire directions in order to make the responses as realistic as possible.
7. It should be noted that when no other head request act appeared, this form became "raised to the status of [a] requestive" head act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 276) and was classified as a hint strategy. Thus, this form is the same as that of a requestive hint based on "questioning feasibility" (Weizman, 1993).
8. The former two are categorized as "preparators" and the latter, as "getting a commitment" by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 287).
9. It should be noted that the first and last categories (direct and desire) contained 1 cell each with expected frequencies less than 5, which makes the results somewhat suspect.
10. In a sense, the professor situation can be seen as approaching a "standard situation" in which partici-

pants have "rather fixed expectations and perceptions" and "the requester has a right" and "the requestee an obligation" with regard to the content of the request, and which requires less "face work" in the form of softeners than a non-standard situation does (House, 1989: 115-116).

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Appendix 1: A complete form of the questionnaire. (In the actual survey, the following questionnaire was printed on both sides of a B4 size paper and more space was given for responses. The printout format is changed here for convenience.)

Sociolinguistic Survey on Speech Acts

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Dear Respondent:

The main objective of this questionnaire is to collect a large number of English speakers' responses based on daily conversational language. The same questionnaire is being sent to different English speaking countries where English is spoken as a first or second language or as an official language. Cross-cultural comparisons will be made upon the completion of this survey. Please read the directions and answer the questions below. We would like to express our gratitude in advance for your kind cooperation. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please feel free to write to us or send us e-mail.

Background Information

Nationality: _____

Age: _____ Sex: (Male Female)

Your college major(s): _____

The language you use most often in your daily life: _____

English is:

- 1) your native language.
- 2) the language you acquired through school education.
- 3) the language you acquired from your peers or friends.
- 4) the language you acquired from your stay overseas.

(Where?: _____)

5) other: (_____)

The main language you use at school is: _____

The main language you use at home is: _____

The main language you use with your friends is: _____

If you are a non-native speaker of English, how long have you been studying English?:

About _____ years

Directions: (Please read the directions carefully.)

- 1) Please read each of the following situations. After each situation you will be asked to respond in the blank after "You."
- 2) If you think you wouldn't say anything, please mark with ×.
- 3) In the situations where you are talking with your friend or classmate, please assume that your friend is the same sex as yours, i.e., if you are a male, your friend is also a male; and if you are a female, your friend is also a female.
- 4) In the situations where you are talking with college professors, they are all about 45-50 years old.
- 5) We are not testing the uniqueness of your responses, so please respond as you most probably would say in actual conversation.
- 6) There is no limitation on the length of your responses, so please write as much as or as little as you want.

===== Questions from here =====

- 1) You're at your friend's house. While you're taking off your jacket, it catches on a vase and the vase falls and breaks into pieces.

F: Oh, no!

You:

- 2) You are in Professor Jim William's seminar. At the end of the semester, your family is going to hold a party at your house, and you would like to invite him to the party.

W: Well, we have one more class next week, and that's all.

You:

- 3) You received your final grades. You were shocked that Professor Naomi Suzuki gave you a C. Her class was one of your favorites, and you studied very hard. You got an A on your report, so you don't understand why your final grade was so low. You knock on the door of her office.

S: Come in.

You:

- 4) You are planning a house warming party on Saturday. You would like to invite your friend to the party.

F: Hi, (your name). How are you doing?

You:

- 5) You attend classes regularly and take notes. Last week, however, you were sick and missed a class. You would like to ask your classmate to borrow the notes from the class:

C: Hi, how are you doing?

You:

- 6) Professor Maria Sanchez is going to show a video in her seminar. She tries to start the VCR, but nothing comes on. You notice that it doesn't seem to be completely plugged into the outlet.

S: Gee, this is a complicated machine.

You:

- 7) You have a visitor (young scholar) from an English speaking country in your class. He says he would like to visit one of the students' homes because he is interested in the lifestyle of your country. After the class, you talk with him to invite him to your home.

V: (Seeing you.)

You:

- 8) You are at Professor Rod Lopez's office, helping him with his research. It is getting close to 4:00 p.m. and you want to leave soon.

L: If you don't mind, I'd like you to stay an extra hour or two so that I can finish up with my research today.

You:

- 9) You are at a friend's house for lunch. Your friend offers another piece of cake, but you do not like the taste very much.

F: This cake is really good, isn't it? How about another piece?

You:

- 10) Your friend failed in his/her psychology class and has been complaining a lot. (S)he thinks that (s)he did well on the final exam and that the teacher might have made a mistake.

F: I don't understand why I failed in this class. I could answer all the final exam questions.

You:

- 11) You missed Professor May Chen's class last week because you went to see a hospitalized friend. You would like to ask what she did in class and if there was any homework. You visit her office.

C: I didn't see you last week. Is everything all right?

You:

- 12) You agreed to help Professor Donald Johnson with his research project at 9:00 a.m. However, you overslept because you came home late last night and forgot to set the alarm clock. You will be at least an hour late. Now you have to call him:

J: Hello, this is Donald Johnson.

You:

- 13) You are sharing an apartment with your friend. Recently, (s)he comes home very late almost every night and makes a lot of noise. You and your friend agreed to be quiet after 11:30 p.m. when you first decided to live together. You've put up with the noise for several days, but tonight you feel you should say something.

R:(watching TV).....

You:

(This is the end.)

Again, we would like to thank you for taking your time and offering us valuable information.

Appendix 2: Analysis codes**1) Codes for the apology situations****Codes**

A:	Apology
+	Intensifier (used with A)
RS:	Responsibility
E:	Explanation of an unexpected event (Not speaker's responsibility)
RP:	Offer of Repair
RPQ:	Offer of Repair in a question form
IQ:	Information question
EMO:	Showing an emotion
REP:	Repetition of apology
AD:	Asking for directions
Gre:	Greetings
Mit:	Mitigation
O:	Any others

Example (A-F: to a friend, A-P: to a professor)

I'm sorry/Sorry/Forgive me/I apologize.
I'm /so/really/very/terribly/sorry.
I didn't mean to break it. (A-F)
I'll be late for an hour because I overslept this morning. (A-P)
My car is not working this morning. (A-P)
I'll buy you another one. (A-F) I'll be there as soon as I can. (A-P)
May I buy a new one for you? (A-F)
Is it OK if I'm an hour late? (A-P)
Was it expensive? (A-F)
Do you still need me? (A-P)
Oh/Oops/Oh my gosh!/etc.
I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.
What should I do? (A-F, A-P)
Hi Professor Johnson (A-P)
<i>I'm afraid</i> my alarm clock didn't go off. (A-P)
<i>Could it be alright</i> if I reach at about 10 a.m.? (A-P)

2) Codes for the request situations**Codes**

GR:	Grounder
R:	Request
DS:	Disarmer
RP:	Preparator
RW:	Promise of reward
IM:	Imposition minimizer
RS:	Promise of responsibility
E:	Explanation of an event
IQ:	Information question
A:	Apology
+	Intensifier (used with A)
GRA:	Expressing Gratitude

Example

I was sick last week and I missed a class. (A-F)
I had to miss a class to visit a hospitalized friend. (A-P)
(See the detailed examples under semantic formulas below.)
I know it's a bit late to ask for it now. (A-P)
Can I ask you a favor? (A-F)
I have all the other days if you need them. (A-P)
<i>If you don't mind</i> , can I borrow your notes from the class? (A-F)
I'll return it to you tomorrow. (A-F)
I have a friend in the hospital. (A-P)
Did you attend the class last week? (A-F)
<i>I'm sorry</i> that I didn't attend your class. (A-P)
very/so/really
Thanks, I really appreciate it. (A-F)

Semantic Formula of Request Forms

D:	Direct request	Please <i>lend me your notes</i> . (A-F)
CA:	Conventional request - Ability	Can/Could you lend me your notes?
CW:	Conventional request - Willingness	Will/Would you lend me your notes?
CP:	Conventional request - Permission	Can/Could I borrow your notes?
CD:	Conventional request - Desire	I'd like/want to borrow your notes.
CPs:	Conventional request - Possibility	Is it possible to borrow your notes?
CM:	Conventional request - Preference	Do you mind if I borrow your notes?
HQ:	Hint in a question form	What did you do in class? Did I miss anything?
H:	Hint	I was wondering what I missed.
Request Perspective		
D1:	Speaker Dominance ('I')	Could <i>I</i> borrow your notes?
D2:	Hearer Dominance ('You')	Could <i>you</i> lend me your notes?
D3:	Both ('We')	Did <i>we</i> have any homework?

D4: No Agent
 P: Please
 S: Softeners

Was there any homework?
 Please lend me your notes.
 I was *wondering* if you *could briefly* tell me what you covered.

Appendix 3: Graphic representations of mean word count frequencies.

Figure 1: Mean Word Count Frequencies for Group by Status - Apology Situations

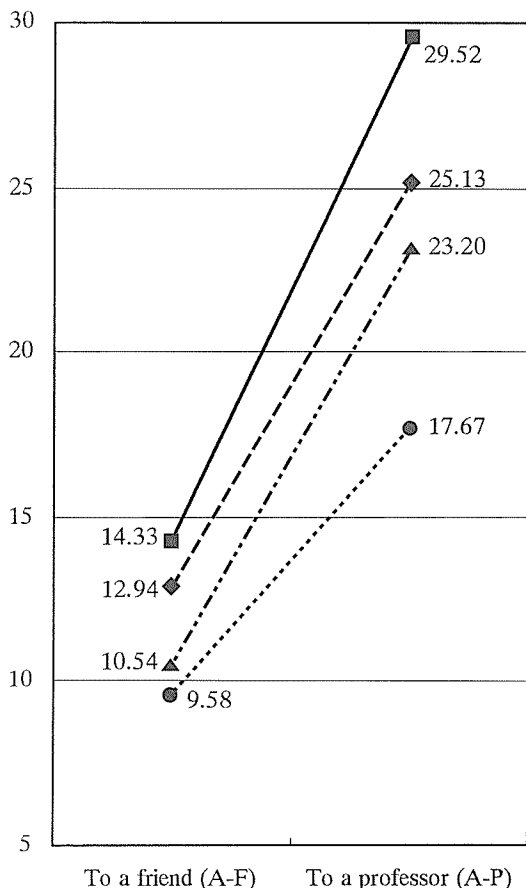
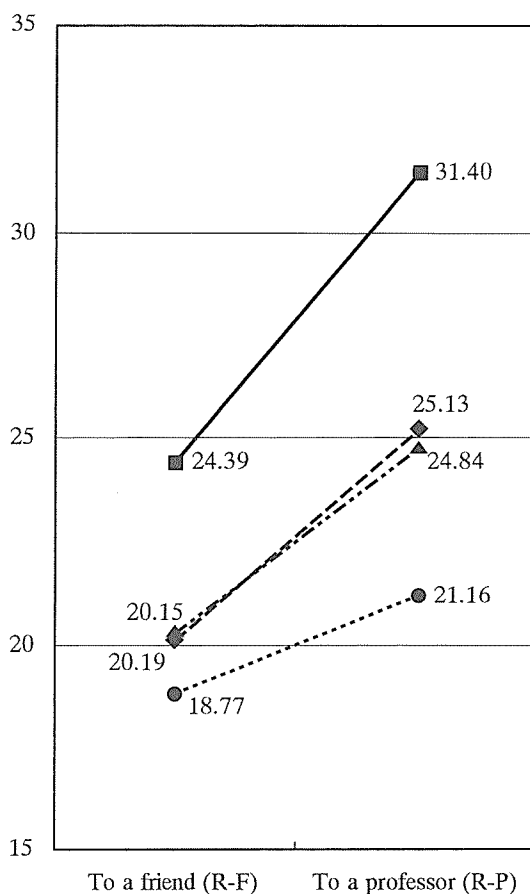


Figure 2: Mean Word Count Frequencies for Group by Status - Request Situations



---▲--- HK
●..... JP
 ———■——— SG
 - - - ◆ - - - US

---▲--- HK
●..... JP
 ———■——— SG
 - - - ◆ - - - US