

Requesting strategies ----- a comparative study in Mandarin Chinese and Korean

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While existing studies, in particular those carried out as a part of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989) have identified universal norms and strategies in the realization of requests, there has been little comparative research conducted on East Asian languages. It has been shown that the Chinese speakers tend to be more direct in their request behavior than German or English speakers (Wei 1998, Lee-Wong 2000) and that Koreans tend to be less direct than the English speakers (Byon 2001, Kim 1994). However, it is still unclear whether or not the Chinese would be more direct than the Korean in making requests, and if so how and why. An investigation on this question would be unprecedented, and make an invaluable contribution to the study of speech acts and the development of sociolinguistics in general.

This paper intends to answer the above question based on data from Mandarin Chinese and Korean. The data collection adopts the principles used by the CCSARP, but a modified version of its coding manual system has to be developed in order to suit the different linguistic characteristics of the two East Asian languages. Data has been collected in a workplace setting, because requests appear in high frequency in the workplace, where people often have to give directions to each other. There are two types of data, role-play and naturally occurring data, applied in this study, collected in Korea and China at medium-sized companies with a white-collar environment. The former is collected through video taping role-plays and the latter by audio taping natural interactions among participants.

It is shown that in making a request the Chinese tend to employ more supportive moves than the Korean, and they tend to use more query strategies in head acts than the Korean. The Korean on the other hand opt for honorific expressions in making request. In general, the two groups have demonstrated similarities and differences in their request patterns, which will be discussed in the context of their diverse yet somewhat related cultures and societies.

Keywords: Requesting strategies, Chinese, Korean, conversation analysis.

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