

Crosslinguistic Studies and Cultural Understanding: What Linguistics Can Do in a Multicultural World

1. Introduction

- With the world's fast globalization, the need for communication across linguistic and cultural borders is also rapidly increasing.
- Language is influenced by culture and thus language provides a key for understanding culture.
- Crosslinguistic studies involve comparing and contrasting specific linguistic features to identify differences as well as commonalities.
- Becoming proficient in a foreign language requires mastery of features at diverse linguistic levels, such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, and discourse levels.
- Of all these linguistic levels discourse is the domain in which the role of culture is particularly prominent and thus the need of cultural awareness becomes evident.
- This presentation addresses to what extent such cultural differences can effect different linguistic manifestations in language use, highlighting the differences in speech acts and rhetorical structures between English and Korean.

2. Preliminaries

2.1 Speech Acts & Rhetorical Structures

- Language as an act: requesting, ordering, promising, warning, inviting, greeting, congratulating, declining, etc.
- Having means of expressing politeness is widely regarded as a language universal. (cf. Face wants are universal; Goffman 1967, Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987, Janney & Arndt 1992, Holtgraves & Yang 1990).
- Actual strategies involved in expressing politeness are not uniform.
- Politeness is a particularly important component in request speech acts because the accomplishment of the speaker's intended goal depends on the addressee's compliance.
- Rhetoric is concerned with the skills of effectively informing, persuading and motivating the audience. (cf. Wales 2001)
- Rhetoric is based on logic, and logic has evolved from culture, and thus, logic and rhetoric are not universal.

2.2 Culturally & Linguistically Contrastive Features of English and Korean

- High- vs. Low-context cultures (Hall 1976, 1990)
- Cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1984)

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) a. Korean: attention to the powerful (cf. I: <i>ce</i> 'that', <i>soin</i> 'small person') development of politeness/honorification systems "Don't stand out!" reliance and favoritism sought (cf. recommendation) pessimistic routines (cf. <i>Swukohaseyyo!</i> 'Receive pain.')group-oriented language (cf. <i>wuli manwula</i> 'our wife') non-assertive, down-toning expressions | b. English attention to self (cf. capitalized 'I') egalitarian language (cf. <i>you</i> for everyone) "Sell yourself!" attention to accomplishment/result (cf. <i>resumé</i>) pleasure-oriented (cf. <i>Have fun!</i>) individual-oriented language (cf. <i>my country</i>) assertive expressions |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

3. Two Illustrative Cases of Cultural Differences

3.1 Politeness Formulae in Request Speech Acts

- Rhee (2009): linguistic analysis of politeness formulae (High- vs. Low-context languages)
- Situation types: Money lending; Putting out cigarette; Window closing; Directions to the subway; Stepping aside

(2) English speakers

- Could you please lend me some money?
- I wonder if you could lend me some money.
- Would you tell me the way to the subway?
- I'll appreciate it very much if you could lend me some money.
- Would you stop smoking, please?

(3) Korean speakers

- coysongha-ciman ton com pily-ecwu-si-lswuiss-us-eyyo?*
be.sorry-but money a.little lend-BEN-HON-can-HON-POL.END
'I'm sorry, but is it possible to lend me some money?'
(Lit. (I'm) sorry, but would there exist a way to lend a little money for me?)

- mianha-ciman ton com pikhy-ecwu-si-lswuiss-us-eyyo?*
be.sorry-but money a.little step.aside-BEN-HON-can-HON-POL.END
'I'm sorry but, is it possible to step aside for me?'
(Lit. (I'm) sorry, but would there exist a way to step aside for me?)

(4) Linguistic devices in politeness formulae (source constructions and lexical items used)

| | | |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English | <i>Would you...?</i> <i>Could you...?</i> <i>I wonder if...</i> | <i>would</i> <i>could</i> <i>please</i> <i>mind</i> <i>excuse</i> |
| Korean | <i>-e-cwu-si-lswuiss-us-eyyo?</i> 'would there exist a way...?' <i>-e cwu-si-keys-eyo?</i> 'will do X for me?' <i>-ecwu-seyo</i> 'do X for me' <i>coysonghaciman</i> 'I'm sorry, but...' <i>kwaynchan-usi-nyen</i> 'if you are okay' <i>mianha-ciman</i> 'I'm sorry, but ...' | <i>com</i> 'a little' <i>cwu-</i> 'give' <i>coysongha-</i> 'be guilty, feel deep regret' <i>kwaynchan-</i> 'not be bothersome' <i>mianha-</i> 'be sorry' |

- Observations:

(5) [Commonality]

- E & K tend to express gratitude and tentativeness.
 - Requester's advance gratitude (e.g. *I will appreciate it very much if...*, '(I) will be thankful if you...')
 - Requester's tentativeness of the requesting action (e.g. *I wonder if*, 'Would there exist a way to...')

(6) [Differences]

- E & K utilize significantly different persuasion strategies.
 - Intrapersonal (power & volition; e.g. *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*) vs. Interpersonal (interaction & benefaction; e.g. *cwu-* 'give (K)')
 - Appreciation (*appreciate*) vs. Apology (*coysongha-/mianha-* 'sorry')
 - Personal feelings (*please*) vs. Quantity (*com* 'a little (K)')
 - Speaker-internal enabling forces (*can you...?*) vs. Speaker-external enabling forces (*-lswuiss-?* 'would there exist a way for x to come about?')

3.2 Rhetorical Structures

- Observations on speaking/writing styles
- Approaches to pending issues: blunt, businesslike, highly-purposive vs. round-about, personal, non-purposive

[Everyday verbal interaction]

- (7) a. American Style
 A: Hello, may I talk to John?
 B: Yes, wait. (John!)
- b. Korean Style (translated)
 A: Hello, how are you? This is Bob, John's friend, and...
 B: OK, wait. (John!)

[Letter-writing]

- (8) a. American's letter of complaint

Dear manager,
 I am writing this letter to file an official complaint regarding the service I received from your store at Lamar Blvd., on Nov. 27, 2016. ...

- b. American Professor in Seoul on pleasantries in Korean letters

"...There is a Korean habit of starting off letters or formal speeches with a rather flowery greeting about the "good/bright/sunny/etc. weather" ... This comment seems to have nothing at all to do with the contents which are to follow and they strike us as "irrelevant" and even deceptive when the following news is bad or unpleasant..." (MP)

[E-mail messages]

- (9)
 a. From an English-speaking colleague

Dear Seongha,
 Our *even* paper has just appeared and I take this opportunity to thank you once more for your help but also to wish you the very best for the current crisis!
 Johan

- b. From a Korean colleague

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>(Original)</p> <p>선생님 잘 지내시지요?</p> <p>일전에 예쁜 따님이랑 점심 잘 먹었습니다. 자녀분들 둘 다 이렇게 다 키워 놓으셔서 마음이 편안하시겠어요.</p> <p>다름이 아니라 여름에 한국에서 하는 학회가 있으면 abstract을 내고 신청해 볼까 하는데 어디서 그 정보를 얻어야 할지 모르겠습니다.</p> <p>너무 늦지 않았는지 걱정이네요.</p> <p>혹시 정보가 있으시면 좀 알려 주시겠어요?</p> <p>바쁘실 텐데 귀찮은 부탁 드려 죄송합니다.</p> <p>감사합니다.</p> <p>김xx 올림</p> | <p>(Translated, SR)</p> <p>How are you, Professor?</p> <p>A while ago, I had a good time enjoying lunch together with your beautiful daughter. I'm sure you are happy with the thought that you have made both of your children grown so well.</p> <p>Putting aside other matters, the reason I am writing you is that I am considering submitting an abstract for a conference this summer in Korea, if there is any, but I don't know where I can get information about that. I'm fearing that it might be already too late to do that. Could you kindly let me know if you have such information?</p> <p>I'm sorry to bother you, since I know you are busy. Thank you.</p> <p>Respectfully, xxx Kim</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

[Poetic styles]

(10) a. English poem

| (Original) | (Translated, SR) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Who has seen the wind? Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1894)</p> <p>Who has seen the wind? Neither I nor you. But when the leaves hang trembling, The wind is passing through.</p> <p>Who has seen the wind? Neither you nor I. But when the trees bow down their heads, The wind is passing by.</p> | <p>누가 바람을 보았는가? 크리스티나 로세티</p> <p>누가 바람을 보았는가? 나도 당신도 보지 못했지. 하지만 매달린 나뭇잎들이 떨고 있을 때 바람은 그 사이를 지나가고 있지.</p> <p>누가 바람을 보았는가? 나도 당신도 보지 못했지. 하지만 나무들이 깊이 고개를 숙일 때 바람은 그들 옆을 지나가고 있지.</p> |

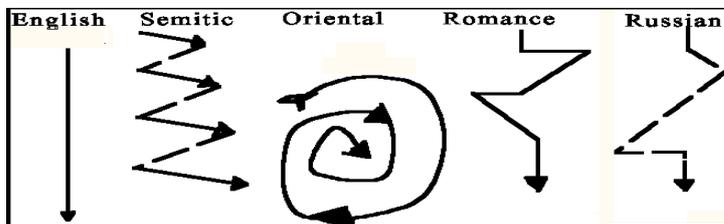
b. Korean poem

| (Original) | (Translated, SR) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>진달래꽃 김소월 (1902-1934)</p> <p>나 보기가 역겨워 가실 때에는 말없이 고이 보내 드리오리다.</p> <p>영변에 약산 진달래꽃, 아름 따다 가실 길에 뿌리오리다.</p> <p>가시는 걸음 걸음 놓인 그 꽃을 사뿐히 즈려밟고 가시옵소서.</p> <p>나 보기가 역겨워 가실 때에는 죽어도 아니 눈물 흘리오리다.</p> | <p>Azaleas Kim, So-Wol</p> <p>When you go, Weary of me, I'll quietly see you go.</p> <p>I'll pluck an armful of azaleas In Yaksan hills at Yungbyun To adorn your path.</p> <p>Step after step, as you go, Trample, softly, on the flowers, Lying under your feet.</p> <p>When you go, Weary of me, Never will I weep though I perish.</p> |

4. Discussion and Educational Implications

4.1 Contrastive Rhetoric

(12) Cross-Cultural Differences in Paragraphing Strategies (Kaplan 1966)



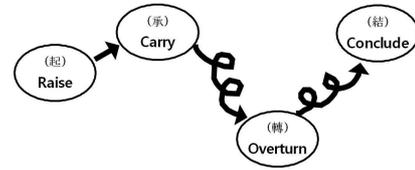
- English rhetorical structure:

Connor (1987): Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation

Choi (1988): Claim-Justification-Conclusion



- Korean rhetorical structure:
Rhee (2006): Raise-Carry-Overturn-Conclude (起承轉結)
Eggington (1987): indirectness and non-linear development
Hinds (1990): language with delayed introduction of purpose



4.2 “Thinkers vs. Feelers”

- All audience-directed utterances/writings comprise information components and affect components (thought & feeling). (cf. “ideational” & “interpersonal” Halliday & Hasan 1976; “propositional” & “expressive” Traugott 1989)
- Communication style: Transactional vs. Interactional views of Language (Rhee 2006, 2009)

(13)

| | English speakers | Korean speakers |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication style | Transactional | Interactional |
| Language Focus | Information-oriented; “thinkers” | Affect-oriented; “feelers” |
| Paraphrasing | Message tolerant with paraphrasing | Message resistant to paraphrasing |
| Preferred expressions | Direct expressions Information-oriented expressions Short, clear, straightforward expressions | Indirect expressions Affect-oriented expressions Long, round-about, even redundant expressions |
| Impression of the other | “They look incomprehensible; unintelligent, mysterious, otherworldly, even deceptive.” | “They look impolite; too assertive, unmannerly, mundane, and shallow.” |
| Puzzle to the other | “Where’s your message?” | “Where are your manners?” |

5. Summary & Conclusion

- All linguistic representation is shaped by the rhetoric, in broad terms.
- Language use illustrated in speech acts and rhetorical structuring well reflect the culture of the language user’s speech community.
- Mastery of culture is difficult since it is deeply permeated in almost every aspect of language, and thus requires crosslinguistic/crosscultural instruction.

(14)

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koreans tend to draw on interpersonal strategies, emphasizing affect. • Koreans tend to use non-linear, roundabout, circular rhetorical structure. • Koreans tend to perceive verbosity as polite. • Koreans tend to be feelers, prizing interpersonal relationship. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English-speakers tend to draw on transactional strategies, emphasizing information. • English-speakers tend to use linear, straightforward, blunt rhetorical structure. • English-speakers tend to appreciate simplicity and belittle complexity and verbosity. • English-speakers tend to be thinkers, prizing transactional relationship. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- Comparative/contrastive linguistic analyses can reveal cultural differences the awareness of which is vital in successful cross-cultural communication.
- Korean learners of English (likewise, English-speaking Korean learners) need to be aware of cultural differences that shape the languages and language use.

Abbreviations: BEN: benefactive; END: sentential-ending; HON: honorific; POL: polite

References

- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen Levinson. 1978. Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In: Esther N. Goody (ed.), *Questions and Politeness*, 56-289. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Choi, Yeon-Hee. 1988. Text structure of Korean speakers' argumentative essays in English. *World Englishes* 7.2: 129-142.
- Connor, Ulla. 1987. Argumentative patterns in student essays: Cross-cultural differences. In: Ulla Connor and Robert B. Kaplan (eds.), *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*, 57-71. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Connor, Ulla. 1996. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspect of Second-Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eggington, William G. 1987. Written academic discourse in Korean: Implications for effective communication. In: Ulla Connor and Robert B. Kaplan (eds.), *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*, 153-168. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interactional Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Hall, Edward T. 1976. *Beyond Culture*. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Hall, Edward T. 1990. *Understanding Cultural Differences*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., and Ruqaiya Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Hinds, John. 1990. Inductive, deductive, quasi-inductive: Expository writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai. In Ulla Connor and Anne M. Johns (eds.), *Coherence in Writing: Research and Pedagogical Perspectives*, 87-110. Alexandria: TESOL.
- Hofstede, Geert H. 1984. Cultural dimensions in management and planning. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 1.2: 81-99.
- Hofstede, Geert H. 1991. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Holtgraves, Thomas & Joong-nam Yang. 1990. Politeness as universal: Cross-cultural perceptions of request strategies and inferences based on their use. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59: 719-729.
- Janney, Richard W. & Horst Arndt. 1992. Intracultural tact versus intercultural tact. In: Richard J. Watts, Sachiko Ide, & Konrad Ehlich (eds.), *Politeness in Language*, 21-41. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kaplan, Robert B. 1966. Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning* 16: 1-20.
- Martin, James R. & Joan Rothery. 1986. What a functional approach can show teachers, In: Barbara Couture (ed.), *Functional Approaches to Writing: Research Perspectives*, 241-265. Norwood: Ablex.
- Rhee, Seongha. 2006. Saying too little and saying too much: A clash between information-oriented and affect-oriented languages in SLA. Paper presented at the LangScape Conference, Singapore National Institute of Education & Singapore Teachers' Union, April 27-28, 2006.
- Rhee, Seongha. 2009. Interpersonal vs. intrapersonal orientation in request speech acts: A cross-cultural exploration. *The Journal of Linguistic Science* 49: 227-248.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C. 1989. On the rise of epistemic meanings in English: An example of subjectification in semantic change. *Language* 57: 33-65.
- Wales, Kate. 2001. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. New York: Longman.