

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**Why Koreans Are More Likely to Favor
“Apology,” While Americans Are More Likely
to Favor “Thank You”**Hye Eun Lee¹ & Hee Sun Park²

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Two studies investigated whether apologies or thanks are preferred in asking favors in the United States and Korea, and how this relates to perceptions of reduction in positive and negative face threats. In the first study (n = 224), participants composed an e-mail message where a favor was asked. In the second (n = 807), participants completed questionnaires including a prototypical e-mail for the situation described in Study 1, as well as measures of negative and positive face threats. Findings showed that (a) Koreans more frequently included apologies in favor-asking messages, while Americans more frequently included thanks; and (b) Americans considered repeated thanks to reduce the threat to hearers' negative and positive face, but Koreans considered repeated apologies to reduce the threat to speakers' positive face.

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A Korean proverb says, “Even one word makes you free of debt,” and a Western proverb says, “Mind your Ps and Qs.” Both proverbs stress the importance of appropriate speech acts in our lives. A *speech act* is defined as a minimal unit of discourse that is transferable from language to language (Coulmas, 1981). Thanks and apologies are two kinds of extremely frequent and routine speech acts (Coulmas, 1981; Ide, 1998). Although these speech acts are universal across cultures, the kinds of behaviors and absences of behaviors requiring them, and how their obligations in communication patterns can be met verbally, are determined by the cultures of the respective communities (e.g., Coulmas, 1981; Ide, 1998). Even when one knows how to say “I am sorry” and “thank you” in another language, if one does not know when or to whom they should be said, the speaker (S) may seem impolite or bizarre.

Apologies and thanks generally have distinct objectives, which are to express regret and gratitude, respectively. However, there is a common domain where both are appropriate: favor asking. In asking a favor, if S focuses on the subsequent benefit to himself/herself, thanks will be a possible expression, but if indebtedness or imposition is salient, apologies will more likely be used. Because culture determines

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which speech act is more common and favorable, different cultures might be expected to differentially prefer apologies or thanks in favor-asking situations. The first goal of the study is to identify which speech act, apology or thanks, is more preferred in asking a favor in the United States and Korea.

Favor asking is one example of a face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Adding apologies or thanks when asking a favor is explained as an attempt to restore face. Positive and negative face concerns are particularly useful in explaining why certain cultures prefer apologies over thanks or vice versa. The second goal of the study is to explore how well face concepts relate to preferences for apologies or thanks. For these goals, apologies and thanks as speech acts are defined and discussed in terms of their similarities and differences.

Apologies and thanks in favor asking

An apology is a speech act that aims to provide support for a hearer (H) who was actually or potentially offended by a violation (Olshtain, 1989), and to restore equilibrium between H and S (Leech, 1983). An apology provides a benefit to H and imposes costs upon S (Leech, 1983). In this way, an apology is used as a social lubricant (Wagatsuma & Rosett, 1986).

There are four main functions of an apology (Kotani, 2002). First, people can apologize to acknowledge the regretful offense and (partially) accept responsibility for it (Kramer-Moore & Moore, 2003). Second, people can say “I am sorry” to express sympathy upon hearing of the other person’s misfortune without taking any responsibility (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978). Third, apologies can be used to remedy minor interaction offenses such as rejecting answers, or announcing interruptions. Fourth, people also say “I am sorry” as a ritualistic remedy to simply fulfill expectations of others and maintain the expressive order.

Expressions of gratitude such as “thank you” are directed to some action(s) of a benefactor as a result of the action, or because of the belief that the beneficiary will receive a benefit himself/herself (Coulmas, 1981; Searle, 1969). Expressing gratitude at appropriate times and in appropriate ways can engender feelings of warmth and solidarity, but failure to do so can cause negative social consequences. Therefore, the expression of gratitude has high social value.

There are also four functions of thanks. First, people say “thank you” to express their appreciation of a past act performed by H that benefits S or S believes to have benefited him/her (Searle, 1969). Second, thanks are used to signal the conclusion of a conversation such as “that’s all, thank you” (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, p. 168). Thanks can also be used to decline or accept an offer made by H. Finally, people say “thank you” for the expected benefits S will receive when S makes requests or asks favors. S may imply not only his/her appreciation for the future benefit but also pressure for H to comply with the request or to grant the favor.

As expressive illocutionary acts, thanks and apologies express S’s psychological state toward the actions performed by S or H (Searle, 1976). Generally, thanks and apologies require responses under this classification, but they are sometimes

self-contained discourse units that do not require any response from H (Coulmas, 1981). This kind of single-unit pattern is frequently used in routine speech acts in various daily interactions where no actual major favor or offense calling for gratitude or apology is involved. Hence, apologies and thanks are used not only as expressions of S's psychological state for regret or gratitude but also as customary speech acts, devoid of any genuine feelings of regret or gratitude.

When they are used to express genuine states, objects of gratitude and regret are two key components of thanks and apologies, respectively (Coulmas, 1981). Because it is sometimes difficult to keep gratitude and regret distinct from each other, a common domain is defined where thanks and apologies are both appropriate (Coulmas, 1981; Kumatoridani, 1999). A favor calling for verbal gratitude could be turned into an offense calling for verbal apology or vice versa by a slight shift in the interpretation of the situation (Coulmas, 1981). The objectives of gratitude and the objectives of regret are very similar to each other in the sense that indebtedness is involved. Thanks imply the indebtedness of S for his/her own benefit, and apologies indicate S's actual recognition of his/her indebtedness to H. Because favor asking causes perceptions of gratitude and indebtedness if S assumes H will bring about the asked for state or event, favor asking is a common situation where either thanks or apologies can be used.

Favor asking is defined as a directive type of speech act that indicates S's wish or need for H to bring about some desired state or event that would not be provided without being asked for (cf. Goldschmidt, 1998). In this view, asking a favor is one type of request. Goldschmidt identified four features that differentiate favor asking from other types of requests. First, favor asking assumes S is in need of something outside of S's daily routine. Second, favor asking requires H to be willing and/or able to perform some activities that require H's time, effort, or other resources. Third, the favor asker does not assume that H is strictly obligated to provide the desired event. Fourth, favor asking presumes reciprocity. That is, there is an expectation of some sort of return favor from S.

There are three major ways to ask favors: hinting, questioning, and making direct statements (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995). Hinting is a strategy in which S mentions the primary goal unconventionally or indirectly. Questioning is a strategy in which S conventionally asks about the willingness or ability of H to perform an act. Direct statements are impositives in which S directly requests H to perform an act. There are two critical and often conflicting dimensions that determine how to ask favors: Speakers must balance being polite and being clear (Lakoff, 1977; Wilson, Kim, & Meischke, 1991). If clarity is the only objective, direct statements would be the only necessary strategy. However, people often use hints and questions instead of direct statements in order to be polite. Because the favor benefits primarily S rather than H, favor asking is often made with low levels of directness (Cody, Canary, & Smith, 1994; Dillard, 1989).

In general, expressions of apology and gratitude exist across cultures; however, their uses vary from culture to culture. Therefore, the issue of cultural differences in favor asking is discussed next.

Cultural differences in usage of apologies and thanks

Research suggests that Koreans and Americans may prefer different speech acts between apology and thanks given the same communication situation. Park, Lee, and Song (2005) investigated cultural differences in apology usage in unsolicited e-mail advertising messages (i.e., spam) in a series of studies. It was found that, although advertising messages with apologies were not necessarily more effective than those without apologies, Koreans perceived advertising messages with apologies as more credible and normal than Americans. Furthermore, when asked to create their own advertising messages, Koreans were more likely than Americans to imitate the apology usage modeled by the example. Park, Lee, and Shin (2007) replicated the studies of Park et al. using a gratitude statement instead of an apology statement. They found that Korean and American participants did not differ in their tendencies to include a gratitude statement in their own advertising message when a gratitude statement was given in an example message. Compared to the data of Park et al., which used an apology statement, however, the gratitude statement was more frequently imitated by American participants, whereas the apology statement was more frequently imitated by Korean participants.

Different needs for positive self-regard may explain why Korean and other Asian people use apologies more frequently than North Americans. North Americans are highly involved in self-enhancement orientation, which boosts the salience of a positive self-view (Heine & Lehman, 1999; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). For North Americans, presenting low self-esteem or admitting negative aspects of self could indicate inadequacy. Therefore, publicly admitting individual faults through apologies tends to be uncommon.

In contrast, East Asian people are motivated to maintain self-critical and self-improving orientations (cf. Heine et al., 1999; Kim, 2003). Apologies can reflect the critical self-evaluative nature of East Asian people. Sugimoto (1997) speculated that for Americans, saying, "I am sorry" is an admission of responsibility and subsequently a sign of low self-esteem, but for Japanese, it may be a sign of care and concern on behalf of H. Koreans also value the self-critical attitudes that result from Confucianism. Confucianism assumes the self is fundamentally flawed and so emphasizes modesty, which is needed to balance self-improvement, good behavior toward oneself, and good behavior toward others (Kim, 2003). Modesty is characterized by the Korean-specific cultural code "Respect others and humble the self" (*Gongson* in Korean), which leads to the use of blank statements such as "I am sorry" and "It is okay."

Americans may use gratitude statements more frequently than Koreans. Kwon (2000) showed that Americans tend to verbalize their gratitude more than Koreans do, and Koreans prefer implicit and nonverbal expressions of gratitude. Koreans and Japanese sometimes use apologies to express their gratitude (Jung, 2002; Keum, 2003; Kumatoridani, 1999). Because Koreans prefer apologies more than Americans, and Americans verbalize their gratitude more than Koreans, it is expected that, for

Koreans, favor asking will elicit apologies, but for Americans, it will elicit thanks. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Koreans will be more likely to use an apology than Americans in favor asking, while Americans will be more likely to use a gratitude statement than Koreans.

Apology and gratitude as facework strategies

Considering that favor asking is one type of FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987), expressing apologies or thanks along with favor asking may be explained as an attempt to reduce the face threats made by favor asking. Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face concerns are particularly useful in explaining why Koreans prefer to use apologies while Americans prefer to use thanks in favor asking.

Face is defined as the public self-image that everyone wants to claim for himself/herself (Goffman, 1967). It consists of two related aspects: negative and positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Negative face consists of people's desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition, whereas positive face is the desire for appreciation and approval. When two people interact with each other, four faces are potentially concerned: S's positive and negative face and H's positive and negative face.

FTAs are acts that violate, or fail to satisfy, positive and negative face concerns. Particularly, favor asking imposes on the freedom of H's action. Because it obligates H to grant the favor, it threatens H's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998). Additionally, S may threaten his/her own positive face by asking a favor because doing so may imply that he/she is not capable of handling his/her problem alone (Goldsmith, 1992), or that he/she is lazy rather than independent (Craig, Tracy, & Spisak, 1986). S may also hesitate to ask a favor out of fear of being indebted to H and thus further constraining S's future autonomy (Roloff, Janiszewski, McGrath, Burns, & Manrai, 1988). This would be a potential threat to S's negative face. S's decision to ask a favor may indicate that the benefit from the favor outweighs the threats to S's negative and positive faces. Otherwise, S will avoid asking the favor in order to protect his/her face. Finally, S would not perceive any threat to H's positive face when S is asking a favor because asking a favor of S indicates H has needed abilities and/or resources. In sum, of the four face needs, favor asking should threaten H's negative face the most.

When asking a favor, expressing apologies and thanks are two types of facework strategies that can lessen or rectify the damage done by favor asking (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The effects of thanks and apologies on the face needs of S and H in terms of face threat are different. Apologies can help to decrease the damage done by favor asking and lessen the threat to H's negative face. But for the positive face of S, two possibilities can exist. First, apologies threaten the positive face of S by denigrating oneself through H (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holtgraves, 2002). Second, apologies can also reduce the threat to S's positive face by fulfilling H's expectation to receive the apology and thus restore S's positive impression. It is unclear, however,

which of these possibilities are more likely for Americans' and/or Koreans' favor asking.

In contrast to apologies, thanks threaten S's negative face by indicating S's acknowledgment of a debt and restricting his/her future autonomy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thanks may imply S's admission of the debt, so S may be indicating that he/she is a person who appreciates any favor that he/she receives. In this way, thanks may reduce the threat to S's positive face by signaling that S is an appreciative person. Thanks also help to decrease the damage done by favor asking. The threat to H's negative face in a favor-asking message might be less salient if S's negative face is threatened or if the threat to S's positive face is reduced by adding thanks.

In sum, favor asking is an FTA, so apologies or thanks along with favor asking may be explained as an attempt to reduce the face threats made by favor asking. Specifically, favor asking with apologies and thanks may threaten S's positive and negative faces more than favor asking without apology or thanks. Another possibility is that these speech acts function to reduce the threat to S's positive face done by favor asking. As a result, favor-asking messages with apologies, thanks, or both will threaten H's negative face less than favor-asking messages without these expressions. Therefore, the following hypothesis and research questions are proposed.

H2: Favor-asking messages with an apology, a gratitude statement, or an apology and a gratitude statement will threaten H's negative face less than a favor-asking message with no apology or gratitude statement.

RQ1: Which threatens S's positive face more, a favor-asking message with an apology or a favor-asking message without an apology?

RQ2: Which threatens S's positive face (RQ2a) and negative face (RQ2b) more, a favor-asking message with a gratitude statement or a favor-asking message without a gratitude statement?

If Koreans and Americans prefer different speech acts in favor asking (H1), they will do so for the same reason or for different reasons. If they favor different speech acts for the same reason (e.g., reduction of threat to S's positive face), this can be seen in the same way that Americans use thanks to reduce the threat to S's positive face while Koreans use apology to reduce the threat to S's positive face. If Koreans and Americans favor different speech acts for different reasons (e.g., thanks threaten S's negative face and apology threatens S's positive face, and accordingly Americans prefer thanks and Koreans prefer apologies), it indicates that they tend to focus on different things during favor asking (e.g., the American focus seems to be more on S's negative face, while the Korean focus is more on S's positive face). Thus, the following research question is suggested.

RQ3: Do Koreans and Americans differ in the extent to which apology and gratitude statements reduce the magnitude of face threats perceived in favor-asking messages?

Study 1

Study 1 was conducted to test H1, which predicted that Koreans would use apologies more frequently than Americans in favor asking while Americans would use thanks more than Koreans. Participants were asked to compose a favor-asking e-mail message for a given situation. Next, the presence of apology statements, gratitude statements, both types of statements, or neither of these in each message was coded for further analyses.

Method

Participants

Of 224 undergraduate participants, 97 Americans (age $M = 23.59$, $SD = 5.23$, 41.1% male, and 68% Caucasian) were recruited from large universities in the Midwestern United States and 127 Koreans (age $M = 21.96$, $SD = 2.10$, and 64.6% male) were recruited from large universities in South Korea. Korean participants were all ethnically Korean.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of the open-ended direction: "Please imagine that you find yourself in the following situation and write your own message for that situation." Then, a vignette was given depicting a situation where one asks a favor and participants were instructed to compose a message in the given blank space for the situation that followed:

In a large lecture class you are taking this semester, the professor randomly assigned students into groups for a project, so you have not met your group members in person at all, but have only communicated by e-mail. You are supposed to have the first meeting with your three group members for the project tomorrow. You have been sick since last week, and it has only gotten worse today, so you would like to stay home tomorrow, if possible. Right now, you are e-mailing your group members to let them know that you are very sick and to ask if the meeting can be rescheduled.

Because the primary goal of the study is to examine cultural differences in uses of apology and thanks, the favor-asking situation plays the role of a provoking cue to participants. Different favor-asking situations cause different outcomes with various interpretations depending on the types of favor (e.g., acceptable favor vs. unacceptable favor, routine favor vs. rare favor, favor to be granted easily vs. a more imposing favor), types of relationships between Ss and Hs (e.g., friends vs. acquaintances vs. strangers, superior vs. subordinate, parents vs. children), and various contexts (e.g., urgent vs. optional, long-term vs. short-term, reciprocal vs. unknown). Therefore, a favor-asking situation would be a good start to examine cultural differences in uses of apology and thanks. In the current study, only one favor-asking situation was used to control for situation-specific influences on the dependent variables.

The questionnaire was produced in both English and Korean. The English version of the questionnaire was compared with the Korean version using various methods of back-translation and inspection by speakers fluent in both languages to ensure equivalence in meaning. Participants in the study completed the questionnaire in their native languages.

Coding

Two bilingual coders fluent in Korean and English independently coded the messages as a unit of analysis. The coders were blind to all research propositions. First, coders identified whether or not each message included any form of apology or gratitude phrases.¹ Apology examples are “I am (really, very, so) sorry,” “Sorry,” and “I apologize” in English and in Korean. Gratitude examples are “Thanks,” “I would (really) appreciate,” “It would be appreciated,” and “Thank you (very much)” in English and in Korean. After identifying the presence or absence of apology and/or thanks, coders classified each message into one of the four categories, which were “None,” “Apology,” “Thank you,” and “Both.” If a message did not include any form of apology or thanks, it was coded “None,” while a message that included both apology and thanks was coded “Both.” If a message pertained only to an apology or thank you, it was coded “Apology” or “Thank you,” respectively.

Intercoder reliabilities (Krippendorff's α) were calculated, and they were .96 for Korean data and .97 for the U.S. data. Fifty-seven out of 97 (58.8%) messages for the U.S. data and 74 out of 127 messages (58.3%) for the Korean data were used to calculate the reliabilities. After the desirable reliabilities were obtained, the remaining data were coded independently.

Results

It was expected that more Koreans would write apologies in favor-asking messages than Americans, while more Americans would write thanks than Koreans. It was found that 105 out of 127 Koreans (82.7%) used apologies in their favor-asking messages, whereas 51 out of 97 Americans (52.6%) used them in their messages. In contrast, only 12 Koreans (9.4%) included thanks in their messages, while 72 Americans (74.2%) used them in their messages (see Table 1 for details).

A chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between culture and the use of speech acts. It showed a significant association between culture and the use of speech acts, $\chi^2(3) = 105.12, p < .001, V_c$ (Cramer's V) = .685.² Particularly, the adjusted standardized residuals (cf. Haberman, 1973) in Table 1 showed that the obtained frequencies in $cell_{KA}$, $cell_{KT}$, $cell_{KB}$, $cell_{UA}$, $cell_{UT}$, and $cell_{UB}$ exceeded the absolute value 2.74 for significance at the .05 level. The obtained frequencies in $cell_{KA}$, $cell_{UT}$, and $cell_{UB}$ were significantly above the expected frequencies under the hypothesis of independence, but the obtained frequencies in $cell_{KT}$, $cell_{KB}$, and $cell_{UA}$ were significantly below the expected frequencies under the hypothesis of independence. Therefore, the data were consistent with H1. That is, Koreans included apologies in their messages, while Americans used thanks or both.

Table 1 Inclusion and Frequencies of an Apology or Thank You in Favor-Asking Messages in Korea and the United States (Study 1)

Inclusion of an Apology or Thank You		Message Types				Total
		None	Apology	Thanks	Both	
Korea	<i>N</i>	19	96	3	9	127
	Percent	15.10	75.60	.02	.07	100
	Adjusted residual	.8	9.1	-6.7	-5.7	
The United States	<i>N</i>	11	14	35	37	97
	Percent	11.3	14.43	36.08	38.14	100
	Adjusted residual	-.8	-9.1	6.7	5.7	

Frequencies of an Apology or Thank You		Korea		The United States	
		Apology	Thanks	Apology	Thanks
Frequency (Percent)					
0	22 (17.3)	115 (90.6)	47 (48.5)	25 (25.8)	
1	71 (55.9)	12 (12)	40 (41.2)	54 (55.7)	
2	31 (24.4)	0 (0)	9 (9.3)	15 (15.5)	
3	3 (2.4)	0 (0)	1 (1.0)	3 (3.1)	
Total	127 (100)	127 (100)	97 (100)	97 (100)	
Mean	1.12	.09	.63	.96	
Median	1	0	1	1	
Mode	1	0	0	1	
<i>SD</i>	.71	3.60	2.80	3.30	

Note: Cell_{KN}, cell for Korea and None; Cell_{KA}, cell for Korea and Apology; Cell_{KT}, cell for Korea and Thanks; Cell_{KB}, cell for Korea and Both; Cell_{UN}, cell for the United States and None; Cell_{UA}, cell for the United States and Apology; Cell_{UT}, cell for the United States and Thanks; Cell_{UB}, cell for the United States and Both.

Additionally, apology and gratitude statements were counted in each message. The descriptive statistics of the frequencies were also consistent with the results of the chi-square test (see Table 1). Thirty-four Koreans (26.8%) used an apology statement more than once in their messages, while only 10 Americans (10.3%) did. In contrast, 18 Americans (18.6%) wrote a gratitude statement more than once, whereas none of the Koreans did. The modes of usage of an apology for Korea and for the United States were 1 and 0, respectively; however, the modes of usage of a gratitude statement for the Korean data and for the U.S. data were 0 and 1, respectively. Therefore, Koreans tended to repeat their apologies in their messages, but Americans tended to repeat their thanks.

Study 2

Study 2 was conducted to further examine whether or not apologies or thanks along with favor asking is an attempt to reduce the face threats made by favor asking. Accordingly, it was hypothesized that favor-asking messages with apology, thanks, or both would threaten H's negative face less than favor-asking messages with neither an apology nor thanks (H2). Also, it was asked whether a favor-asking message with an apology threatened S's positive face more or less than a favor-asking message without an apology (RQ1). Next, it was asked whether a favor-asking message with thanks threatened S's positive face (RQ2a) and S's negative face (RQ2b) more or less than a favor-asking message without thanks. Finally, it was questioned whether there were any cultural differences between Koreans and Americans in the extent to which apology and thanks reduced the amount of face threat perceived in favor-asking messages (RQ3).

Study 2 used the same vignette, asking to reschedule a group meeting, which was used in Study 1. After the vignette, one of the seven favor-asking messages was provided. The seven favor-asking messages were only different in whether they added an apology statement, two apology statements, a gratitude statement, two gratitude statements, both an apology and a gratitude statement, two apology and two gratitude statements, or none of them. It was found in Study 1 that Koreans had a tendency to repeat their apologies in their messages, while Americans had a tendency to repeat their thanks. Thus, repetitions of apologies and/or thanks were included to examine the effects on reducing or increasing face threats. Participants were asked to imagine themselves having just sent a favor-asking e-mail message for the given situation and then to answer the questions assessing their perceptions of face threats as the S.

Method

Participants

Of 807 undergraduate participants, 403 Americans (age $M = 20.72$, $SD = 2.21$, 56.9% female, and 74.3% Caucasian) were recruited from large universities in the Midwestern United States and 404 Koreans (age $M = 20.60$, $SD = 2.57$, and 58.3% female) were recruited from large universities in South Korea. Korean participants were all ethnically Korean.

Design

Study 2 was an online survey that used a 2 (national culture: the US and Korea) \times 7 (speech act: neither apology nor gratitude, an apology statement, two apology statements, a gratitude statement, two gratitude statements, both an apology and a gratitude statement, and both two apology and two gratitude statements) between-subject design. Participants were asked to fill out one of the seven versions of the questionnaire. Version A included a prototype of an e-mail message³ as well as the description of the situation described in Study 1, which was:

Subject: Could we reschedule our meeting?

Hello all,

This is () from COM***. I know we're supposed to have our first meeting for the group assignment tomorrow, but I've been sick since last week, and it's gotten worse today, so I'd really like to stay home tomorrow, if possible.

Could we reschedule our meeting for later this week?

Sincerely,

()

Instead of "Could we reschedule our meeting for later this week?" at the end of the e-mail message in Version A, Versions B, C, D, E, F, and G added an apology statement (i.e., "I am terribly sorry for asking this, but could we reschedule our meeting for later this week?"), two apology statements (i.e., "I am terribly sorry for asking this, but could we reschedule our meeting for later this week? Once again, I deeply apologize for this."), a gratitude statement (i.e., "Could we reschedule our meeting for later this week? I really appreciate this."), two gratitude statements (i.e., "Could we reschedule our meeting for later this week? I would really appreciate it. Thank you so much."), both an apology and a gratitude statements (i.e., "I am terribly sorry for asking this, but could we reschedule our meeting for later this week? I really appreciate this."), and both two apology and two gratitude statements (i.e., "I am sorry for asking this, but could we reschedule our meeting for later this week? I would really appreciate it. Once again, I deeply apologize for this and thank you in advance."), respectively.

Measurement

The English and Korean messages and measures were checked carefully for language equivalency in the same manner as in Study 1. Participants completed the questionnaire in their native languages. All of the measures used a 5-point Likert scale response format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (see Appendix 1 for items). After reading one of the seven favor-asking e-mail messages for the given situation, participants indicated their perceptions of H's negative face need violation with five items (e.g., "Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way is likely to bother my group members."), H's positive face need violation with five items (e.g., "Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could make my group members look bad."), S's negative face need violation with four items (e.g., "If I ask a favor in this way, I will have to do what my group members ask in the future."), and S's positive face need violation with five items (e.g., "Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could make me look bad to my group members.")⁴

The reliabilities (Cronbach's α) ranged from .73 to .81 for Americans and .76 to .80 for Koreans. The correlations among four types of face threats ranged from .37 to .60 in the United States and .27 to .61 in Korea. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) showed that items measuring negative and positive face threats of H and S were consistent with

a four-factor structure for both cultures. The four-factor model showed acceptable fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.82$, $p < .01$, goodness-of-fit index [GFI] = .90, comparative fit index [CFI] = .89, root-mean-square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .07 for Americans; $\chi^2/df = 2.73$, $p < .01$, GFI = .91, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .07 for Koreans), which is significantly better than the baseline (one-factor) model ($\chi^2/df = 5.27$, $p < .01$, GFI = .81, CFI = .74, RMSEA = .10 for Americans; $\chi^2/df = 7.36$, $p < .01$, GFI = .64, CFI = .75, RMSEA = .13 for Koreans), $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}(6) = 388.24$, $p < .001$ for Americans and $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}(6) = 720.22$, $p < .001$ for Koreans.

Results

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of culture and speech acts on the four dependent variables. MANOVA yielded a significant effect for culture, $F(4, 790) = 41.04$, $p < .001$, Wilks's $\Lambda = .83$, and a significant effect for different speech acts, $F(24, 3172) = 3.97$, $p < .001$, Wilks's $\Lambda = .89$. The interaction effect between culture and speech act was significant, $F(24, 3172) = 3.26$, $p < .001$, Wilks's $\Lambda = .91$. To probe which of the dependent variables were responsible for the significant effects, separate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted as shown below. For the means, see Table 2.

H's negative face threat

A 2 (culture) \times 7 (speech act) ANOVA showed a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 793) = 75.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Koreans ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .74$) perceived the threat to H's negative face to be less than did Americans ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .66$). The main effect for speech act was significant, $F(6, 793) = 4.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The interaction between culture and speech act was significant, $F(6, 793) = 4.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The data were partly consistent with H2, which predicted that favor-asking messages with apology, thanks, or both would threaten H's negative face less than a favor-asking message with neither an apology nor thanks. Posthoc comparisons using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test at $p < .05$ showed that for Americans, favor-asking messages with repeated thanks ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .79$) threatened H's negative face significantly less than a favor-asking message without any speech acts ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .60$), whereas there was no difference for Koreans.

S's positive face threat

RQ1 asked whether a favor-asking message with an apology threatened S's positive face more or less than a favor-asking message without an apology. Also, RQ2a asked whether a favor-asking message with thanks threatened S's positive face less than a favor-asking message without thanks. A 2 (culture) \times 7 (speech act) ANOVA showed a significant main effect for speech act, $F(6, 793) = 2.86$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$. The main effect for culture was also significant, $F(1, 793) = 4.09$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$. The interaction of culture by speech act was significant, $F(6, 793) = 2.57$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Posthoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test at $p < .05$ showed that for Koreans, favor-asking messages with apologies ($M = 2.61$, $SD = .57$ for

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Face Threats (Study 2)

Speech Act	None	Apology 1	Apology 2	Thanks 1	Thanks 2	Both 1	Both 2	Culture Mean
<i>Hearer's negative face threat</i>								
Culture	3.34 _x (.60)	3.11 (.57)	3.53 _x (.62)	3.43 _x (.72)	2.87 _y (.79)	3.16 (.43)	3.46 _x (.58)	3.27 _a (.66)
The United States	3.08 (.80)	2.76 (.73)	2.71 (.66)	2.88 (.69)	2.81 (.78)	2.86 (.64)	2.77 (.74)	2.86 _b (.74)
Korea	3.22 _x (.71)	2.94 _y (.67)	3.08 (.76)	3.16 _x (.75)	2.85 _y (.78)	3.01 (.56)	3.03 (.76)	3.06 (.73)
Speech act mean								
<i>Hearer's positive face threat</i>								
Culture	2.88 _x (.64)	2.96 _x (.81)	3.17 _x (.72)	3.02 _x (.73)	2.45 _y (.77)	2.96 _x (.60)	3.07 _x (.52)	2.90 _a (.71)
The United States	2.64 (.78)	2.24 (.68)	2.35 (.55)	2.57 (.65)	2.40 (.76)	2.44 (.66)	2.32 (.67)	2.45 _b (.70)
Korea	2.77 _x (.71)	2.60 (.83)	2.72 _x (.75)	2.80 _x (.72)	2.43 _y (.76)	2.71 (.68)	2.61 (.72)	2.68 (.74)
Speech act mean								
<i>Speaker's negative face threat</i>								
Culture	3.10 (.75)	2.98 (.78)	3.16 (.73)	3.08 (.76)	2.96 (.86)	2.94 (.72)	3.28 (.57)	3.06 (.75)
The United States	3.13 _x (.83)	2.96 _x (.78)	2.80 _x (.74)	3.18 _x (.68)	2.98 _x (.89)	2.95 _x (.75)	3.80 _y (.69)	3.12 (.82)
Korea	3.11 _x (.79)	2.97 _x (.77)	2.96 _x (.75)	3.13 _x (.72)	2.97 _x (.87)	2.94 _x (.73)	3.60 _y (.69)	3.09 (.79)
Speech act mean								
<i>Speaker's positive face threat</i>								
Culture	2.89 (.62)	2.86 (.78)	2.88 (.50)	2.98 (.77)	2.69 (.61)	2.93 (.68)	3.06 (.36)	2.89 _a (.64)
The United States	3.01 _x (.76)	2.87 (.81)	2.61 _y (.57)	2.95 (.73)	2.69 (.65)	2.89 (.80)	2.57 _y (.57)	2.82 _b (.72)
Korea	2.94 _x (.69)	2.86 (.79)	2.73 (.55)	2.97 _x (.75)	2.69 _y (.63)	2.91 (.74)	2.76 (.55)	2.85 (.68)
Speech act mean								

Note: Different subscripts (a and b in a column for culture, x and y in a row for speech act mean) indicate significant difference based on posthoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test at $p < .05$. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses. Apology 1: an apology statement; Apology 2: two apology statements; Thanks 1: a gratitude statement; Thanks 2: two gratitude statements; Both 1: both an apology and a gratitude statements; and Both 2: both two apology and two gratitude statements.

two apologies; $M = 2.57$, $SD = .57$ for both two apologies and two thanks) were perceived by speakers to threaten H's positive face significantly less than a favor-asking message with neither an apology nor thanks ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .76$), whereas there was no difference for Americans.

S's negative face threat

RQ2b asked whether a favor-asking message with thanks threatened S's negative face more than a favor-asking message without thanks. A 2 (culture) \times 7 (speech act) ANOVA showed a significant main effect for speech act, $F(6, 793) = 6.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. However, the main effect for culture was not significant, $F(1, 793) = .55$, $p = .46$, $\eta^2 = .00$. The interaction of culture by speech act was significant, $F(6, 793) = 2.51$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Posthoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test at $p < .05$ showed that for Koreans, a favor-asking message with repeated apologies and thanks ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .69$) threatened S's negative face significantly more than a favor-asking message with neither an apology nor thanks ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .83$), whereas there was no difference for Americans.

H's positive face threat

A 2 (culture) \times 7 (speech act) ANOVA showed a significant main effect for speech act, $F(6, 793) = 3.84$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The main effect for culture was significant, $F(1, 793) = 100.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$. The interaction between culture and speech act was significant, $F(6, 793) = 4.77$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Posthoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test at $p < .05$ showed that for Americans, a favor-asking message with repeated thanks ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .77$) threatened H's positive face significantly less than a favor-asking message with neither an apology nor thanks and with apologies ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .64$ for no apology and thanks; $M = 2.96$, $SD = .81$ for an apology; $M = 3.17$, $SD = .72$ for two apologies; $M = 3.02$, $SD = .73$ for a gratitude statement; $M = 2.96$, $SD = .60$ for both an apology and a gratitude statement; $M = 3.07$, $SD = .52$ for both two apologies and two thanks), whereas there was no difference for Koreans.

Cultural differences in terms of face threat

RQ3 questioned whether there were any cultural differences between Koreans and Americans in the extent to which apology and gratitude statements reduce the amount of each type of face threat perceived in favor-asking messages. Repeated thanks in a favor-asking message reduced threats to H's negative and positive face in the United States. In Korea, repeated apologies and thanks threatened S's negative face more, but S's positive face less. Also, repeated apologies provided less protection to S's positive face.

General discussion

The main objectives of the current studies were to test if Koreans were more likely to favor apologies while Americans were more likely to favor thanks when they wrote

favor-asking messages, and to attempt to explain why this would be so using the four face threats. The results of Study 1 showed that, when they were asked to compose favor-asking messages for a given situation, Koreans included apologies only, whereas Americans included thanks or both apologies and thanks. This is consistent with Park et al. (2005, 2007) in demonstrating cultural differences in apologies, thanks, or the use of both.

Apologies and thanks along with favor asking were an attempt to reduce the face threats associated with favor asking. Overall, Americans and Koreans perceived threats similarly for all four face threats in the control condition (i.e., favor-asking message without any apology or thanks). This is consistent with Wilson et al. (1998), who claimed that potential face threats related to favor asking do not vary across cultures. Further, Study 2 found that repeated thanks in a favor message reduced H's negative and positive face threats in the United States, whereas repeated thanks had no impact on ratings of threat to H's face in Korea. In Korea, repeated apologies with or without repeated thanks reduced S's positive face threat, whereas repeated apologies with or without repeated thanks did not affect S's face threat in the United States. Because repeated apologies with repeated thanks also increased S's negative face threat, repeated apologies without repeated thanks would be appropriate to reduce the face threat made by favor asking in Korea. This indicates that Americans and Koreans tend to focus on different faces during favor asking. American focus is on H's autonomy and H's desire for appreciation, while Korean focus is on S's desire for approval. It may be interpreted that Koreans and Americans favor different speech acts for different reasons.

One noticeable finding is that because a certain face-saving strategy used in one culture may not be common in another culture, that strategy does not function as facework at all in the culture in which it is not common. Apology statement(s) either with thanks or without thanks did not reduce any face threats in the United States, and gratitude statement(s) with no apology did not reduce any face threats in Korea. This is interesting because apology and thanks are typically assumed to possess inherent face-repairing qualities (e.g., Turnbull & Saxton, 1997). However, these data show that the extent to which this is true depends largely on culture. Therefore, people should follow the implicit rules of facework etiquette generally used in each culture.

These findings have several implications. First, the present results enhance empirical support for Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory and challenge its explanations and application to the U.S. and Korean cultures, especially with regard to strategies for doing FTAs. Once S decides to do the FTA on record, people across cultures act to mitigate that threat by doing facework. However, culture plays a role in what facework people use. Brown and Levinson suggest that such redressive actions are either positive politeness or negative politeness. Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of H. Some example strategies are seeking agreements, exaggerating to get sympathy from H, giving reasons, assuming reciprocity, etc. Negative politeness is primarily focused on satisfying H's negative face. Apologizing, hedging,

and being pessimistic are some common strategies Brown and Levinson suggest. Although apologizing is introduced as a negative politeness strategy theorized to reduce H's negative face threat, it did not function that way for either culture in this investigation.

Further, thanks is not introduced in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, but thanks serves as either a positive or negative strategy in favor-asking situations and is more popularly used than apology at least in the United States. The current results revealed that favor asking with thanks makes an FTA less imposing on H and hence less impolite to H, and accordingly reduces H's negative and positive face threats in the United States. Brown and Levinson's model assumes that strategies are mutually exclusive and function to serve one goal and only one goal: either positive or negative politeness. However, as shown here, S can redress face threats with combinations of positive and negative politeness simultaneously using the same speech act (Carson & Cupach, 2000; Dillard, Wilson, Tusing, & Kenny, 1997). Thanks statements in a favor-asking message exemplify how one speech act can serve both positive and negative politeness goals.

Second, a single apology or a gratitude statement in favor-asking messages did not reduce any face threats, but repeated apologies or thanks reduced certain face threats significantly. It is possible that an apology and thanks are habitual speech acts without any real meaning. In contrast, repeated apologies and thanks might be perceived as genuine expressions of regret and gratitude, so they lessen the damage done by favor asking. Another possibility might involve participants being unaware of the presence of a single apology and/or thanks in the messages when they responded to the items related to face concerns. When apologies and/or thanks were repeated, participants were more likely to catch them in the message.

Third, Koreans clearly preferred apology over thanks in favor asking and Americans preferred thanks. When they practice English as a second language, Koreans transfer the tendency to apologize (Yang, 2002). When asking a favor of Americans in the United States, Koreans may need to use thanks or both an apology and thanks rather than an apology alone. Including only an apology without thanks is not normal in America as it is in Korea, and overapologizing makes American Hs uncomfortable (e.g., Olshtain, 1989). This finding is also useful for Americans who interact with Koreans. Koreans may criticize Americans in that, because they express their gratitude too often, they cannot see Americans' genuine feelings of appreciation (Kwon, 2000). Accordingly, it would be better for Americans to include an apology instead of just thanks when they ask a favor of Koreans.

Finally, this research provided measures of four face threats with acceptable reliabilities and a four-factor structure. Since Goffman (1967) first introduced the concept of face, it has been theoretically and/or empirically used to explain different politeness strategies for interpersonal interactions (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987), different negotiation strategies for intercultural conflicts (e.g., Oetzel et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), different influence goals (e.g., Cai & Wilson, 2000; Wilson et al., 1998), goals concerning managerial reproaches in the workplace

(e.g., Carson & Cupach, 2000), conversational refusals (e.g., Johnson, 2007), and differences in apology intentions when an actual offense has occurred (e.g., Park & Guan, 2006, 2009). Compared to other face-related studies, the current study theoretically differentiated four unique face threats and successfully measured them with four to five items each. It is hoped that more valid face research can be conducted with these measurements in the future.

Limitations and future directions

The major limitation of the current study was that the given situation did not cause any serious face threat. The face threats in the control group (i.e., favor-asking message without any apology or thanks) ranged from 2.64 and 3.34 on a 5-point scale. Because participants think that the favor-asking situation was understandable, it may not have created a serious face threat. Thus, adding an apology or/and thanks might not have dramatically changed the already somewhat minor face threat made by favor asking. Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the seriousness of an FTA involves the social distance (D) of S and H, the relative power (P) of S and H, and the culturally defined ranking (R) of the degree of impositions (p. 74). Because the current study focused on a favor asking between unknown classmates, D , P , and R are fixed.

Wilson et al. (1998) found that different R s such as asking favors, giving advice, and enforcing obligations create distinct combinations of face threats. The tendency to apologize in Korea and to thank in the United States in unsolicited e-mail advertising messages (Park et al., 2005, 2007) was found in a favor-asking message in the current study. Tests of this tendency could be replicated in advice-giving and unfulfilled obligations-enforcing situations. Also, different P and R would change facework norms. Asking a favor of a close friend versus a stranger and of a supervisor versus a subordinate would cause different amounts of face threats; thus, they might involve different politeness strategies and speech acts. Roloff et al. (1988) found that American college students offered fewer apologies when asking a favor of a friend than an acquaintance or stranger, but Park and Guan (2009) found people had stronger intentions to apologize for an offending act to a stranger than to a friend in the United States and China. In order to strengthen the external validity of the findings, various D , P , and R should be examined in the future.

Although Study 1 tried to measure actual behaviors, they were for a hypothetical situation. Participants wrote an e-mail message while imagining themselves in the situation of having to ask a favor. Although there is a strong relationship between behavioral intention and actual behavior (cf. Webb & Sheeran, 2006), caution should be exercised when interpreting hypothetical situation findings. Study 2 used only prototypical statements of apology and gratitude. How apologizing or thanking is done leads to different effects on face. For example, "Sorry" is less polite than "I'm really terribly sorry" (Turnbull & Saxton, 1997). It is important to delicately balance the costs to S and the benefits to H in making an apology or offering thanks. Different expressions beyond the prototypical statements will further understanding

of the roles of apology and thanks. Therefore, various designs should be employed in future studies to determine the extent to which the current findings replicate and the predictions are upheld.

Conclusion

This research systematically examined cross-cultural differences in the use of apology and thanks in favor-asking messages and used face threats as a way to explain cross-cultural differences. As far as we know, this is the first study to validate face threat as a multidimensional concept composed of four factors: negative and positive face threats of a hearer and a speaker. Further, these data showed that apologies and/or thanks reduced different face threats in favor-asking messages differently between the United States and Korea. This research will help stimulate further empirical inquiry to determine the extent to which the contexts and forms of communication affect the face threats associated with favor-asking situations.

Notes

- 1 It was also coded whether each message has a direct request or not. All participants in the United States and Korea made a request and the most frequent request format in both cultures was a question (e.g., Could we reschedule our meeting?), which was accordingly used in the prototype e-mail message in Study 2.
- 2 In Study 1, 59% of the U.S. participants were female, whereas only 35% of Korean participants were female. To check whether the results of Study 1 are influenced by this difference, two separate chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationship between gender and the use of speech acts within each culture. They showed nonsignificant associations between gender and the use of speech acts ($\chi^2(3) = 2.47$, $p = .480$, V_c (Cramer's V) = .140 for Koreans; $\chi^2(3) = 4.78$, $p = .189$, V_c (Cramer's V) = .223 for Americans). That is, females and males are not different in terms of the use of speech acts in both Korea and the United States.
- 3 The prototype e-mail message as well as apology and gratitude statements used in Study 2 were developed based on the messages participants wrote in the given situation in Study 1. The realism of the vignette used in Study 2 was measured with four items (e.g., I might receive this type of e-mail message) and the reliabilities (Cronbach's α) were .84 for Americans and .90 for Koreans. It was tested with one-sample t -tests. The comparison value was 3, the midpoint of the scale. With the Korean data set, the test of the realism for the vignette ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .72$) was significant, $t(401) = 36.32$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .77$. With the U.S. data set, the test ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .73$) was significant, $t(403) = 24.10$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .59$. Although the initial t -tests showed that participants from Korea and from the United States believed the vignette to be quite realistic, Korean participants reported the vignette to be significantly more realistic ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .72$) than American participants ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .73$), $t(804) = 8.17$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .08$.
- 4 The scales were developed based on the literature and any relevant previous research. In particular, some items from Ting-Toomey and Oetzel's (2001) face scale and Park and Guan's (2006) scale were modified for this study.

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Appendix 1 Questions asked in Study 2

Hearer’s negative face need violation

1. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way is likely to bother my group members.
2. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could make my group members uncomfortable.
3. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way seems pushy.
4. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way is imposing on my group members.
5. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way will restrict what my group members do.

Hearer’s positive face need violation

1. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could make my group members look bad.
2. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could hurt the feelings of my group members.

3. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could seem inconsiderate to my group members.
4. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way is being impolite to my group members.
5. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could be behaving carelessly toward my group members' feelings.

Speaker's negative face need violation

1. If I ask a favor in this way, I will have to do what my group members ask in the future.
2. If I ask a favor in this way, I will be obligated to do something for my group members in the future.
3. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way would restrict the choices I have for my actions in the future.
4. If I ask a favor in this way, I will feel indebted to my group members.

Speaker's positive face need violation

1. Asking to reschedule the meeting in this way could make me look bad to my group members.
2. If I ask a favor in this way, it will be difficult to maintain my positive self-image in front of my group members.
3. If I ask my group members to reschedule the meeting in this way, it may cause my group members to dislike me.
4. If I ask my group members to reschedule the meeting in this way, it may cause my group members to reject me.
5. If I ask my group members to reschedule the meeting in this way, it may cause my group members to think badly of me.