Explaining Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Findings:
Moving from Politeness Maxims to Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles (SIPs)

Helen Spencer-Oatey and Wenying Jiang

Abstract

This paper focuses on how culture can be treated as an explanatory variable in cross-cultural pragmatic studies. It starts with a review of pragmatic maxims (Grice, 1989; Leech, 1983; Gu, 1990), discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the concept. It then presents the findings from a British–Chinese replication of Kim's (1994) cross-cultural study of conversational constraints, and argues that the notion of maxims should be reconceptualised as sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs). The notion of SIPs is defined and explained, referring to the sociopragmatic–pragmalinguistic distinction (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983) and other cross-cultural pragmatic approaches (House, 2000; Wierzbicka, 1985). SIPs are also discussed in relation to Brown and Levinson's (1987) perspectives on the impact of culture on language use. The paper ends with a call for more research to establish on an empirical basis the types of interactional principles that exist, and their interrelationships.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on how culture can be treated as an explanatory variable in cross-cultural pragmatic studies. All too frequently in pragmatics, no explanation of any cultural differences are given at all; similarities and differences are simply identified. Yet incorporating an explanatory element is essential if we are to deepen our understanding of language use across cultures. One of the frameworks used most frequently in pragmatics to explain cross-cultural differences is Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and accompanying Politeness Maxims. However, this paper argues that we need to move from the notion of politeness maxims to sociopragmatic interactional principles (henceforth SIPs), and that this will yield a more powerful and fruitful way of explaining cross-cultural pragmatic findings.

2. Pragmatic Maxims

Many pragmaticists (e.g. Grice, 1989; Leech, 1983; Gu, 1990) have argued that people's use of language is influenced by pragmatic maxims. Grice, for example, proposes the Co-operative Principle and argues that there are four conversational maxims for effecting it. Grice's fundamental point was not that people always observe these maxims, but rather that they are unstated assumptions that underlie communication. So if a speaker clearly flouts one of the maxims (e.g. by giving a very brief answer when a more informative one is expected), the speaker may be prompting the listener to look for a meaning that is different from (or additional to) the meaning that is verbally expressed; in other words, to work out the conversational implicature.

Leech (1983) argues that there is a Politeness Principle that works in conjunction with the Co-operative Principle, and identifies six associated politeness maxims. Gu (1990) also proposes a set of politeness maxims in order to account for 'polite' language use in Chinese.

According to Grice (1989), the Co-operative Principle and its associated maxims are universal principles of language use (although people such as Gazdar (1979) have challenged this claim and argued that they are subject to cultural variation). In contrast, Leech (1983) and Gu (1990) maintain that their politeness maxims have different weightings in different societies. So in cross-cultural pragmatic studies, the politeness maxims have been a rich explanatory source. For example, Chen (1993) found the politeness maxims very useful for explaining the compliment response patterns of Chinese and English speakers.

However, a number of authors have criticised Leech's (1983) politeness maxims for several reasons. Firstly, as Brown and Levinson (1987), Fraser (1990) and Thomas (1995) all point out, in the current formulation, there is no motivated way of restricting the number of maxims. Clearly, it is unacceptable for new maxims to be invented every time new regularities are noticed in 'polite' language use. Secondly, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the politeness maxims function at a more superficial, less fundamental level than the co-operative maxims, and are therefore more easily undermined than the co-operative maxims. Thirdly, as Spencer-Oatey (2000) argues, the politeness maxims all seem to have 'universal valences'; in other words, one pole of a given dimension is always taken as being more desirable than the other. For example, with regard to *modesty – pride*, Leech implies 'the more modest the better', and with regard to *agreement – disagreement*, he implies 'the more agreement the better'. Yet in different cultures, and in different speech contexts within the same culture, we contend that different options or points on the continuum could be favoured. Which point on the scale is 'optimum' depends partly on pragmatic contextual variables and partly on culturally-based sociopragmatic preferences.

We propose, therefore, that the notion of politeness maxims should be reconceptualised as SIPs.

3. Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles (SIPs)

Our proposed notion of SIPs is a development of Leech's (1983) notion of politeness maxims and Kim's (1994) work on conversational/interactive constraints. Kim, Sharkey and Singelis (1994: 119) define interactive constraints as follows: 'fundamental concerns regarding the manner in which a message is constructed. They tend to affect the general character of every conversation one engages in, and an individual's conversational style in general.'

We prefer the term 'principle' to 'constraint', as constraint implies a limiting or restricting function, while principle is more neutral, and implies simply guidance or influence. Moreover, principle is associated with values and/or beliefs. So we define and explain SIPs as: socioculturally-based principles, scalar in nature, that guide or influence people's productive and interpretive use of language. The principles are typically value-linked, so that in a given culture and/or situational context, there are norms or preferences regarding the implementation of the principles, and any failure to implement the principles as expected may result in mild to strong evaluative judgements. Preferences for different points on the scale will develop through the socialization process and through exposure to (and involvement in) natural interactions, and these preferences will frequently vary from context to context and from culture to culture. In other words, a key difference between maxims and SIPs is that for maxims, one end of a dimension is typically 'more desirable' (e.g. agreement is said to be more desirable than disagreement), whereas for interactional principles, different points on the scale may be preferred in different circumstances. This scalar feature of SIPs fits in with the notion of dimensions of cultural differences suggested by House (2000) and with the cultural values proposed by Wierzbicka (1985).

In line with Watts (1989) and Spencer-Oatey (2002), we maintain that SIPs help manage (and hence are not alternatives to) people's face/rapport management concerns.

People's face needs and interactional rights and obligations need to be appropriately balanced relative to their task needs, and so societies develop norms and preferences for achieving this. So we contend that the notion of SIPs can help integrate the three main politeness perspectives identified by Fraser (1990): the conversational-maxim view, the face-saving view, and the conversational-contract view. (See section 6 for a further discussion of this claim.)

It is important, however, not to confuse SIPs with pragmalinguistic conventions (see Leech, 1983 and Thomas, 1983 for a discussion of the concepts *sociopragmatic* and *pragmalinguistic*) or linguistic strategies (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1978/1987). It is perfectly possible for the same SIP to be implemented linguistically in various different ways, and so the two must not be conflated. For example, Spencer-Oatey and Ng (2001) found that both Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese respondents disliked people giving conceited responses to compliments (e.g. they could be said both to uphold the principle of using a modest style of speech), yet a particular ritualised response that was positively evaluated in Hong Kong was judged to be 'too modest and hence conceited' by the Mainland Chinese (i.e. their pragmalinguistic conventions were different).

What, then, are some possible examples of SIPs, and can they be identified empirically?

4. Kim's (1994) Research

Kim (1994) proposed five conversational constraints in relation to requesting behaviour. Drawing on theorising in pragmatics and communication studies, she suggested the following concerns:
1. concern to avoid hurting the hearer's feelings (cf. Brown and Levinson's, 1987, positive face of hearer)
2. concern to avoid imposition (cf. Brown and Levinson's, 1987, negative face of hearer)
3. concern to avoid negative evaluation by the hearer (cf. Brown and Levinson's, 1987, positive face of speaker)
4. concern for clarity (cf. Grice's, 1989, Maxim of Manner)
5. concern for effectiveness (cf. Canary and Spitzberg's, 1989, goal achievement/task accomplishment)

She investigated the importance to people, when making a request, of these five concerns, and compared the responses of three groups of people: Korean, Mainland US and Hawaii US respondents. She found that the most striking difference was for *concern for clarity* (with Mainland US respondents rating it to be significantly more important than the Hawaii US respondents, who in turn rated it more important than the Koreans did); that there were some relatively small differences in terms of *concern to avoid hurting the hearer's feelings* and *concern to avoid imposition,* and that there were no significant differences across groups in terms of *concern to avoid negative evaluation by the hearer* and *concern for effectiveness.*

However, Kim (1994) simply assumed that these five concerns were in operation; she reports no factor analyses to show whether this was the case or not. So we decided to replicate (to a large extent) her study, and thereby to carry out a preliminary study of the notion of interactional principles, which would help us to assess the feasibility and potential of this kind of approach for future research.

5. Research Procedure

5.1 The Questionnaire

Kim's questionnaire comprised six 'request' scenarios (see the Appendix for the actual scenarios), with items like the following to explore each of her conversational constraints:

1. concern to avoid hurting the hearer's feelings, e.g. *In this situation, I feel it is very important to avoid hurting the other's feelings.*
2. concern to avoid imposition, e.g. *In this situation, it is very important not to intrude on the other person.*
3. concern to avoid negative evaluation by the hearer, e.g. *In this situation, it is very important that my message does not cause the other person to dislike me.*
4. concern for clarity, e.g. *In this situation, I feel it is very important to make my point as clearly and directly as possible.*
5. concern for effectiveness, e.g. *In this situation, it is very important to get the other person to do what I want.*

Using 7-point Likert-type scales, respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed that each of these principles was very important to them in that situation. Kim designed the scenarios to cover a variety of request goals (e.g. obtain permission, borrow something, solicit agreement), to vary in terms of request topic (e.g. repayment of a loan, take a day off, delay a presentation), and to vary systematically in terms of the participants' relative power (H = S, H > S, H < S).

Unlike Kim's (1994) study, which asked each participant to respond to only one scenario, this study asked each participant to respond to all six scenarios. However, for each scenario, only one item was used to measure each interactional principle, whereas two were used in Kim's study.

The questionnaire was translated into Chinese by one of the authors, and equivalence between the Chinese and English versions was ensured through careful checking by two bilingual helpers.

5.2 Data Collection

The Chinese questionnaires were distributed at two universities in China. 65 copies were given to an undergraduate class at a university in Shandong Province; 65 (100%) were returned, and of these, 56 had been fully completed and were included in the study. 112 copies were distributed at a university in Guangdong Province; 112 (100%) were returned, and of these, 94 had been fully completed and were included in the study. Thus 150 completed Chinese questionnaires were obtained overall.

The English questionnaires were put on the intranet of a university in southern England, and students were sent an all-student email requesting their help in completing the questionnaire. 187 students responded, with 146 of them completing it fully. Of these, 94 identified themselves as British; the remaining 52 respondents came from 23 different countries, and for the purposes of this study, this data was discarded.

The demographic details of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

	Number	Mean Age	Sex	
			Male	Female
Chinese (Shandong)	56	19.98	33 (58.9%)	23 (41.1%)
Chinese (Guangdong)	94	19.21	44 (46.8%)	50 (53.2%)
British	94	20.93	34 (36.2%)	60 (63.8%)
Other Nationalities	52	21.25	21 (40.4%)	31 (59.6%)
Total	296	20.34	132 (44.6%)	164 (55.4%)

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

6. Results

6.1 Identification of Chinese and British SIPs

First of all, factor analyses were carried out on the data to check whether the questionnaire items were really probing the five different conversational constraints identified by Kim (1994). The Chinese and British data were treated separately, so that we could explore whether the pattern of factors emerging from each sample was the same. For each data set, factor analyses were carried out not only on the ratings of all the scenarios together, but also on scenarios 1–3 and scenarios 4–6 separately, to check whether the same factor pattern was valid for the different situations. For both the British and the Chinese data, the factors emerging from the split data sets were found to be identical to those emerging from the full data sets, and so only the latter results are presented here.

To isolate the factors, a minimum primary loading of .40 was used, with secondary loading being at least .20 less than the primary loading. The shape of the scree plots and the interpretability of the factors were used as criteria to determine the number of factors that should be extracted. Using varimax rotation, two, three and four factor solutions were considered for each of the factor analyses, and the optimal solution was found to be three for both the British and the Chinese data sets.

Three clear factors (accounting for 37.5% of the variance) emerged from the Chinese data, and were labelled as follows:
Factor 1: Concern for Face/Rapport
Factor 2: Concern for Task
Factor 3: Concern for Clarity
The factor loadings of the various items are shown in Table 2.

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
.629 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc2-1)	.778 get the other person to do what I want (Sc4-5)	.761 directly come to the point (Sc3-4)
.618 avoid hurting the other's feelings (Sc3-1)	.755 get the other person to do what I want (Sc6-5)	.681 directly come to the point (Sc6-4)
.595 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc4-1)	.731 get the other person to do what I want (Sc2-5)	.678 directly come to the point (Sc2-4)
.591 avoid inconveniencing the other (Sc4-2)	.729 get the other person to do what I want (Sc3-5)	.631 make my point as clearly and directly as possible (Sc1-4
.555 not to intrude on the other person (Sc1-2)	.698 get the other person to do what I want (Sc5-5)	.581 directly come to the point (Sc4-4)
.554 other person doesn't see me in a negative light (Sc4-3)	.524 get the other person to do what I want (Sc1-5)	.522 make my point as clearly and directly as possible (Sc5-4)
.550 doesn't cause other person to dislike me (Sc2-3)		
.531 avoid hurting the other's feelings (Sc1-1)		
.524 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc6-1)		
.520 avoid hurting the other's feelings (Sc5-1)		
.463 not to intrude on the other person (Sc3-2)		
.461 avoid inconveniencing the other (Sc2-2)		
.449 doesn't cause other person to dislike me (Sc3-3)		
.448 other person doesn't see me in a negative light (Sc6-3)		
.441 doesn't cause the other person to dislike me (Sc5-3)		
.422 doesn't cause the other person to dislike me (Sc1-3)		

Table 2: Factor Loadings of the Chinese Responses to the Questionnaire Items

Three clear factors (accounting for 44.3% of the variance) also emerged from the British data, but they were somewhat more difficult to interpret. The questionnaire items that were to do with face/rapport issues did not load onto a single factor. They also did not load as might have been expected from the literature or as Kim (1994) assumed, such as concern for own (self) face versus concern for other face, or concern for positive face versus concern for negative face. Rather, they loaded onto one factor for two of the scenarios (1 and 5), and onto another factor for the other scenarios. A detailed examination of the content of the scenarios showed that the key distinguishing feature was the right of the speaker to expect compliance with the request. In scenarios 1 and 5, the speaker was legitimately

entitled to make the request and to expect compliance from the hearer, while in the other scenarios, the hearer had no particular obligation to comply with the speaker's request and so the speaker was, in effect, asking for a favour. The questionnaire items that were to do with task achievement and clarity/directness all loaded onto a single factor, indicating that the two issues are closely related for the British respondents.

The British factors were thus labelled as follows:
Factor 1: Non-entitlement-based Concern for Rapport
Factor 2: Concern for Task & Clarity
Factor 3: Entitlement-based Concern for Rapport
(See Table 3 for the factor loadings.)

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
.779 avoid inconveniencing the other (Sc2-2)	.709 get the other person to do what I want (Sc6-5)	.768 avoid hurting the other's feelings (Sc1-1)
.755 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc6-1)	.658 get the other person to do what I want (Sc4-5)	.758 doesn't cause the other person to dislike me (Sc1-3)
.751 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc2-1)	.628 get the other person to do what I want (Sc3-5)	.722 not to intrude on the other person (Sc5-2)
.738 other person doesn't see me in a negative light (Sc6-3)	.619 make my point as clearly and directly as possible (Sc5-4)	.710 not to intrude on the other person (Sc1-2)
.698 being considerate towards the other's feelings (Sc4-1)	.608 get the other person to do what I want (Sc5-5)	.662 avoid hurting the other's feelings (Sc5-1)
.697 avoid inconveniencing the other (Sc6-2)	.590 directly come to the point (Sc3-4)	.569 doesn't cause the other person to dislike me (Sc5-3)
.629 doesn't cause other person to dislike me (Sc2-3)	.528 directly come to the point (Sc6-4)	
.531 not to intrude on the other person (Sc3-2)	.487 directly come to the point (Sc2-4)	
	.484 get the other person to do what I want (Sc1-5)	
	.468 get the other person to do what I want (Sc1-5)	

Table 3: Factor Loadings of the British Responses to the Questionnaire Items

6.2 Situational Variation

In order to determine whether situation had a significant effect on people's ratings of the SIPs, repeated measure ANOVA tests were carried out on each of the factors, using (for each situation) the mean ratings of the items that had acceptable loadings on the given factor for that situation. Once again British and Chinese data sets were analysed separately.

The mean ratings for the Chinese data are given in Table 4 and the ANOVA results are given in Table 8 in Appendix 2.

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6
Chinese Concern for Face/Rapport	5.21 (1.10)	5.58 (1.12)	5.43 (0.98)	5.18 (1.07)	5.36 (1.18)	5.57 (1.08)

Chinese Concern for Task	4.28 (1.93)	4.17 (1.88)	5.30 (1.62)	5.42 (1.68)	5.22 (1.77)	5.06 (1.68)
Chinese Concern for Clarity	5.19 (1.78)	5.79 (1.23)	5.85 (1.31)	4.21 (1.91)	4.44 (1.91)	5.37 (1.55)

Table 4: Mean Ratings (and Standard Deviations) of the Chinese SIP Factors, by Situation

The ANOVA results showed that situation had a statistically very significant impact on the Chinese respondents' ratings of the SIPs, and this was particularly true of the factors *Concern for Task* and *Concern for Clarity*, where situational variation accounted for 45% and 46% of the variance respectively.

Post hoc paired t-tests were then carried out to determine the significant mean differences among the six scenarios. (The results are shown in Tables 9, 10 and 11 in Appendix 2.) It was found that while many of the pairs of scenarios showed statistically significant differences, the most noticeable differences were as follows:

> In Scenarios 1 and 2, Chinese respondents' Concern for Task was noticeably lower than in the other scenarios.
> In Scenarios 4 and 5, Chinese respondents' Concern for Clarity/Directness was noticeably lower than in the other scenarios.

The mean ratings for the British data are given in Table 5 and the ANOVA results are given in Table 12 in Appendix 2.

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6
British Non-Entitlement-Based Concern for Face/Rapport		5.74 (1.36)	4.22 (1.61)	4.56 (1.62)		5.44 (1.33)
British Entitlement-Based Concern for Face/Rapport	4.04 (1.42)				3.54 (1.53)	
British Concern for Task (Clarity)	5.31 (1.36)	4.66 (1.19)	5.70 (1.22)	5.72 (1.51)	5.85 (1.38)	5.51 (1.18)

Table 5: Mean Ratings (and Standard Deviations) of the British SIP Factors, by Situation

The ANOVA results showed that situation also had a statistically very significant impact on the British respondents' ratings of the SIPs, and this was particularly true of the factors *Non-entitlement-based Concern for Rapport* and *Concern for Task*, where situational variation accounted for 52% and 41% of the variance respectively.

Post hoc paired t-tests were then carried out to determine the significant mean differences among the six scenarios. (The results are shown in Tables 13 and 14 in Appendix 2). It was

found that while many of the pairs of scenarios showed statistically significant differences, the most noticeable differences were as follows:

In Scenarios 3 and 4, Concern for Face/Rapport was noticeably lower than in Scenarios 2 and 5

In Scenario 2, Concern for Task/Clarity was noticeably lower than in the other scenarios

Entitlement-based Concern for Face/Rapport was noticeably lower than Non-Entitlement-based Concern for Face/Rapport

6.3 Cross-Cultural Variation in the Importance Ratings of SIPs

Strictly speaking, the Chinese and British data sets cannot be compared directly since the factors that emerged are somewhat different. Nevertheless, there are also certain similarities between the two sets of results: both show factors relating to *Concern for Task* and *Concern for Face/Rapport*. Tables 6 and 7 show the British and Chinese overall mean ratings for these factors.

	Overall Mean Rating (and Standard Deviation)
Chinese Concern for Task	4.87 (1.29)
Chinese Concern for Clarity	5.14 (1.06)
British Concern for Task (Clarity)	5.42 (0.90)

Table 6: Overall Mean Ratings of British and Chinese Factors relating to Task

	Overall Mean Rating (and Standard Deviation)
Chinese Concern for Face/Rapport	5.38 (0.76)
British Non-Entitlement-Based Concern for Face/Rapport	5.29 (1.15)
British Entitlement-Based Concern for Face/Rapport	3.79 (1.25)

Table 7: Overall Mean Ratings of British and Chinese Factors relating to Face/Rapport

As can be seen from Table 6, the Chinese respondents showed a somewhat lower degree of concern for task than the British did, although their concern for clarity was nearer to (but still slightly below) the level of importance attached to it by the British respondents. In terms of concern for face/rapport, the importance attached by the British respondents was virtually the same as that of the Chinese respondents in non-entitlement-based situations, but was very noticeably lower in situations in which the British felt they had the right to make the request.

7. Discussion

Despite the limitations of this study (e.g. it only explored requests and only sampled university students in two countries), we believe the results offer tentative support for the notion of SIPs. The factor analyses showed three clear factors in each of the data sets, suggesting that people hold a limited number of principles about language use. However, the results also indicate that the principles need to be identified empirically rather than simply assumed from the items listed in a questionnaire. In this study, the five items that Kim (1994) thought probed five different conversational constraints in fact loaded onto just three factors. Moreover, they loaded slightly differently in the British and Chinese data sets.

Kim (1994) assumed that three of the items probed different aspects of face: positive face of the hearer, negative face of the hearer, and positive face of the speaker. However, there was no evidence for this in our study. For the Chinese respondents, they all loaded onto a single factor, which we labelled *Concern for Face/Rapport.* For the British respondents, they loaded onto two factors, but the distinguishing feature seemed to be the notion of rights. It seems that in requesting situations, the importance that the British respondents attached to face/rapport matters depended on whether they thought they had the right to expect compliance or whether they were simply asking for a favour. This, then, offers support for Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002) claim that sociality rights are an important motivating factor underlying the management of relations, and it suggests that in future research, the notion of rights needs to be considered much more carefully and systematically.

It might have been noted that two of the scenario three items (Sc3-1 and Sc3-3) did not appear in the British factor loadings shown in Table 3. In fact, they had quite high secondary loadings on factor 3, entitlement-based concern for rapport, and so were

discarded from the analyses. Looking at the content of this scenario (asking for time off work to go to an interview), it seems plausible that the low dual factor loadings could have occurred either because the British respondents were unsure of the employee's rights in this situation, or else because different respondents held different views. This raises some interesting questions for future research: to what extent do people (within a given culture) agree on their rights in given situations, and to what extent may cultural factors affect their perception of rights?

Kim (1994) also assumed that the other two items in her questionnaire were probing two other factors: concern for clarity and concern for effectiveness. This was supported by the factor analyses of the Chinese data, but not for the British data where they loaded onto a single factor. The British respondents seemed to associate task achievement with speaking clearly and directly, while for the Chinese they were more independent of each other (i.e. speaking clearly and directly was not judged to be a necessary concomitant of effective task achievement).

The results also show clearly that the relative importance of the SIPs varies from situation to situation. Looking carefully at the scenarios, it seems that a variety of issues could be causing this, such as the nature of the request and the relationship between participants. For example, the Chinese respondents' concern for task was noticeably lower in Scenarios 1 and 2. Both of these scenarios involved borrowing money, so perhaps this is a sensitive type of request for the Chinese. For the British respondents, the concern for task was also noticeably lower in Scenario 2 than the others, suggesting that they too may find it a sensitive type of request. However, their ratings for Scenario 1 (also about money) were only somewhat lower than the other scenarios, perhaps because their strong sense of rights over getting their own money back were having a counter-balancing influence. Similarly, the Chinese respondents' concern for clarity/directness was noticeably lower in Scenarios 4 and 5 than in the other scenarios. Scenario 5 is the only situation in the questionnaire where the request implies criticism of the hearer, while Scenario 4 involves an unequal relationship, so maybe these issues played a role. However, the relative power (H = S, H > S, H < S) of the interlocutors in the scenarios did not systematically affect the respondents' ratings. It did not emerge in the factor loadings, and the mean figures in Tables 4 and 5 do not show any systematic effect for power: ratings for Scenarios 3 and 4 (H > S) are not systematically different from Scenarios 1 and 2 (H = S) or from Scenarios 5 and 6 (H < S). This suggests that the SIPs are operating at a more fundamental (or higher order) level than participant relations. One explanation could be that participant relations such as power and distance have a greater impact at the pragmalinguistic level (i.e. in terms of choice of wording) than at the sociopragmatic level.

The results also suggest that SIPs are subject to cross-cultural variation. While the similarities and differences discussed in section 6.3 should not be taken to be representative of British and Chinese people in general (the samples are too small in number and limited in scope to permit that), the results suggest that national culture can be a relevant influencing factor. Firstly, although there may be similarities across cultures in the SIPs that people hold, there may also be variation at a more detailed level. Moreover, there may be variation across cultures in the overall importance that people attach to a given SIP, and this may interact with situational factors. Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) seem to deny explicitly that cultural differences can exist at this level. For example, they state the following:

Since we have excluded extrinsic weighting of wants (...) we cannot account for cultural differences in terms, say, of greater desire for positive-face satisfaction than negative-face satisfaction in some society (in the U.S.A. compared with England, for example). Note that if we allowed extrinsic weighting of face wants, then cultural (emic) explanations of cross-cultural differences would supersede explanations in terms of universal (etic) social dimensions like D and P. Ours is the stronger

hypothesis (it may of course be wrong) requiring a correlation between D and P levels in a society and the kind and amount of face attention.

<div align="right">Brown & Levinson 1987: 244</div>

Yet later on, they admit that 'cultures may differ in the degree to which wants other than face wants (such as the want for efficiency, or for the expression of power) are allowed to supersede face wants' (p.249), and they refer to 'subjective ideals' being associated with people's values of D, R and relative P (p.246). The notion of 'subjective ideals' does not seem incompatible with that of interactional principles, and it seems inconsistent to argue that cultural differences can exist in certain aspects, such as want for efficiency (labelled *concern for task* in this study), but not in others, such as concern for face. We contend, therefore, that cultural similarities and differences do not simply reflect people's assessments of D, R and relative P, but rather reflect deeper and more general interactional concerns. In fact, a number of authors (e.g. Sifianou, 1992; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001) seem to have assumed this when drawing on the notion of positive and negative face to explain cultural differences.

We contend, therefore, that people's use of language is influenced not only by immediate contextual factors, such as D, relative P and R, but also by underlying sociocultural principles or concerns, i.e. SIPs. Some (types of) SIPs probably function at a higher order than others. We propose that there are fundamental (or higher order) SIPs that help manage people's basic interactional motivations: their concerns about face, rights and obligations (including cost–benefit considerations), and task achievement. And we propose that there are secondary (or lower order) SIPs that reflect people's stylistic concerns: their concerns about directness–indirectness, modesty–approbation, warmth/involvement–coolness/restraint, and so on. We believe the notion of SIPs can thus help to integrate the three perspectives on politeness that Fraser (1990) identifies.

We expect that the fundamental SIPs will be universal (although there will be cultural and situational variation in the extent to which they are upheld), and will be very limited in number, such as the following:
1. A face SIP (further research is needed to clarify whether face concerns are unitary or not; e.g. whether or not they divide into 'Concern for own face' and 'Concern for other's face'
2. A rights and obligations SIP
3. A task SIP

The secondary SIPs are more difficult to predict, but would probably include (but not be limited to) the following:
1. A directness–indirectness SIP and/or a clarity–vagueness SIP
2. A cordiality–restraint SIP (cf. positive–negative politeness)
3. A modesty–approbation SIP
4. A routinisation–novelty SIP

The secondary SIPs are particularly difficult to unravel because they are related to (and easily confused with) linguistic strategies. However, as argued in section 3 above, it is important not to confuse SIPs with pragmalinguistic conventions, because it is perfectly possible for the same SIP to be implemented linguistically in various different ways, as the following anecdote illustrates in relation to *concern for clarity*. One of the (British) authors would frequently say to her German colleague 'Maybe you could do this by next week'. The next week she would be surprised to find that her German colleague had not done the work and was unaware that she was expected to do it by then. To the (British) author, her 'request' had seemed very clear, because in (British) English the use of 'maybe' is conventionally interpreted as a politeness mitigator that is not to be taken literally. However, to the German colleague, 'maybe' had a much more literal meaning. When asked, both individuals claimed to attach great importance to clarity and directness in giving instructions, yet their ways of putting their principles into words were noticeably different. In other words, their

pragmalinguistic conventions for realising directive speech acts were different, even when their SIP was very similar.

What is now needed is a careful series of empirical studies to explore and check these claims. They need to include a variety of communicative situations (i.e. not just be limited to requests), a variety of types of respondents (i.e. not just be limited to university students), and to ensure that the communicative situations are not western-biased or less meaningful to part of the respondent sample. Moreover, it would be interesting to include measures of fundamental dimensions of cultural values, such as Schwartz *et al*'s (2001) Portrait Values Questionnaire, so that any correlations between SIPs and fundamental values can be explored, and ultimately to probe whether SIPs are significant mediating variables between cultural values and communication behaviour (cf. Gudykunst *et al.* 1996).

The task of unravelling these complicated issues is certainly huge, and not to be accomplished quickly and easily. Nevertheless, we contend that this is a fruitful line of development that could yield interesting and meaningful findings that will strengthen the explanatory power of cross-cultural pragmatic studies.

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Appendix 1

<div align="center">

Kim's (1994) Scenarios used in this Study

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Scenario 1: Repay Loan Situation (Social Status: Hearer = Speaker)

Imagine that one of your female friends, whom you have known for several years, has the habit of borrowing money and then not repaying it for long periods of time. In fact, it seems that she has been late not only in repaying money borrowed from you but also from other people. Two weeks ago, she borrowed 20 pounds from you and again did not repay it as promised. You waited a few days more, but found that you really need some money. Now you want to ask her to pay it back.

Scenario 2: Borrow Money Situation (Hearer = Speaker)

Imagine that you missed breakfast and are about to have lunch at a university cafeteria. When you search for money, you notice that you forgot to bring your wallet. Given your class schedule, you have just enough time to eat but not enough time to go back home and get money before your next class. Just then, you happen to notice one of your classmates (male), whom you have known for several years, sitting nearby. You decide to ask him to lend you some money.

Scenario 3: Take-a-Day-Off Situation (Hearer > Speaker)

Imagine that you are a graduating senior working on a research project for a male professor with whom you have taken several classes before. You are supposed to work in the professor's office every Tuesday and Thursday. Next Tuesday, however, you have an important interview with a prospective employer. The interview coincides with your working hours, so you need to take time off to attend it. You want to ask the male professor for permission to take the time off.

Scenario 4: Homework Extension Situation (Hearer > Speaker)

Imagine that you had a cold last week. It was severe enough to make you stay home and rest, but not severe enough for you to go and see a doctor. Although your cold is almost gone now, you will not be able to finish the assignment due tomorrow in one of your classes. Your professor (female) made it clear that no points would be given for late homework without a legitimate reason. Although you do not have an official medical excuse, you cannot afford to get a zero point on the homework. Suppose you do not know the professor very well except for the class. You want to ask the professor (female) to let you hand in the homework late.

Scenario 5: Being-on-Time Situation (Hearer < Speaker)

Imagine that you are a professor in a university. In your class, group activities and participation is [*sic*] weighted heavily. From the start of the semester, one particular student (male) is continually late. He seldom makes it to class on time. Other students in the class appear to be disturbed by the student coming in late. After the class, you want to ask him to come on time for future sessions.

Scenario 6: Delay-a-Presentation Situation (Hearer < Speaker)

Imagine that you are a professor in a university. For your class, you require individual presentations on class material. The presentation counts for 40% of the final grade and it involves demonstrating some experiments. Today is the first day of presentations, but due to a backlog of material, you find it necessary to lecture for part of the time to cover material for the upcoming exam. Therefore, the final presenter (female), who had to bring various devices and electronic equipment, will not be able to give her presentation today. As the professor, you want to ask her to postpone her presentation to the next class.

Appendix 2

Factor (SIP)	F	df	*p*	eta²
Face/Rapport	6.35	5	<.001	.181
Task	23.21	5	<.001	.446
Clarity	24.06	5	<.001	.455

Table 8: Repeated Measure ANOVA tests to explore the impact of Situation on People's Ratings of the Chinese SIP Factors

	Differences between the Means of these Scenarios and those in the Left-hand Column					
	Sc 1	Sc 2	Sc 3	Sc 4	Sc 5	Sc 6
Sc 1	--	.37***	.22*	-.03	.15	.36***
Sc 2		--	-.15	-.40***	-.22*	-.01
Sc 3			--	-.25**	-.07	.14
Sc 4				--	.18	.39***
Sc 5					--	.21*
Sc 6						--

*p <.05 **p <.01 ***p <.005

Table 9: Differences among the Means of the Six Scenarios
(Chinese Concern for Face/Rapport)

	Differences between the Means of these Scenarios and those in the Left-hand Column					
	Sc 1	Sc 2	Sc 3	Sc 4	Sc 5	Sc 6
Sc 1	--	.11	-1.02***	-1.14***	-.94***	-.55***
Sc 2		--	-1.13***	-1.25***	-1.05***	-.66***
Sc 3			--	-.12	.08	.47***
Sc 4				--	.20	.59***
Sc 5					--	.39**
Sc 6						--

** p <.01 ***p <.005

Table 10: Mean Differences among the Means of the Six Scenarios
(Chinese Concern for Task)

	Differences between the Means of these Scenarios and those in the Left-hand Column					
	Sc 1	Sc 2	Sc 3	Sc 4	Sc 5	Sc 6
Sc 1	--	-.60***	-.66***	.97***	.75***	-.18
Sc 2		--	-.06	1.57***	1.35***	.42***
Sc 3			--	1.63***	1.41***	.48***
Sc 4				--	-.23	-1.15***
Sc 5					--	-.93***
Sc 6						--

***p <.005

Table 11: Differences among the Means of the Six Scenarios
(Chinese Concern for Clarity)

Factor (SIP)	F	df	p	eta²
Non-entitlement-based Concern for Rapport	32.09	3	<.001	.517
Concern for Task	12.39	5	<.001	.413
Entitlement-based Concern for Rapport	8.40	1	.005	.084

Table 12: Repeated Measure ANOVA tests to explore the impact of Situation on People's Ratings of the British SIP Factors

	Differences between the Means of these Scenarios and those in the Left-hand Column			
	Sc 2	Sc 3	Sc 4	Sc 6
Sc 2	--	-1.35***	-1.18***	-.30**
Sc 3		--	.34	1.22***
Sc 4			--	-.88***
Sc 6				--

*p <.05 **p <.01   ***p <.005

Table 13: Differences among the Means of the Four Scenarios
(British Non-Entitlement based Concern for Face/Rapport)

	Differences between the Means of these Scenarios and those in the Left-hand Column					
	Sc 1	Sc 2	Sc 3	Sc 4	Sc 5	Sc 6
Sc 1	--	-.64***	.39*	.41*	.54**	.20
Sc 2		--	1.04***	1.06***	1.18***	.84***
Sc 3			--	.02	.14	-.20
Sc 4				--	.12	-.22
Sc 5					--	-.34*
Sc 6						--

*p <.05 **p <.01   ***p <.005

Table 14: Differences among the Means of the Six Scenarios
(British Concern for Task/Clarity)