

# A Comparative Study on Eastern and Western Wedding Ceremonies in Korean Films and Hollywood Films

Timothy Yoonsuk Lee, Joonhyoup Lee, and Yoojin Chung

**Abstract**—As an adult man and woman love each other and come to have faith in each other as their spouse, they marry each other. Recently people's economic life has become individualized and women are enjoying a high education level and increased participation in social activities, and these changes are creating environment favorable for single life. Thus, an increasing number of people are choosing celibacy, and many people prefer cohabitation to marriage.

Nevertheless, marriage is still regarded as a must-to-do in our thought. Most of people throughout the world admit marriage as one of natural processes of life, and is an important passage rite in life that all people experience as we can see everywhere in the world despite the diversity of lifestyles. With regard to wedding ceremony, however, each country and culture has its own unique tradition and style of festival. It is not just a congratulatory ceremony but contains multiple concepts representing the age, country or culture. Moreover, the form and contents of wedding ceremony changes over time, and such features of wedding ceremony are well represented in films. This study took note of the fact that films reflect and reproduce each country's historicity, culturality and analyzed four films, which are believed to show differences between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies. The selected films are: *A Perfect Match* (2002), *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* (2001), *Bride Wars* (2009) and *27 Dresses* (2008). The author attempted to examine wedding ceremonies described in the four films, differences between the East and the West suggested by the films, and changes in their societies.

**Keywords**—Wedding ceremony, Korean films, Hollywood films, semiotics

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background and Objects

**M**ARRIAGE means the physical, spiritual and social unity of a man and a woman [1]. In addition, it is a universal custom that plays an important role for the expansion of society by forming families, which are the foundation of society.

Marriage, which is the oldest social custom since the beginning of human history, is a common congratulatory ceremony observed in any place throughout the world and is one of natural processes of people's life. In this way, marriage

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is a passage rite that most people experience despite their different lifestyles, and whether in the East or in the West, it is undeniable that the process and consequence of marriage has a huge impact on family and society.

As for wedding ceremony, however, each country and culture has different traditions and various forms of festivals. Such differences among the customs of wedding ceremony represent composite concepts of age, people and culture, and from the differences in wedding ceremony we get insight to the relations between country and history and between society and culture.

Society adjusts itself to the flow of economic structure and culture. The marriage system, which produces families the basic units of society, also changes along with such a flow. As an established culture receives another culture and its value systems, it evolves into a new compromised form. In case of the East, as the traditional Confucian value system adopted the rational value system of contemporary society, a transformed view of marriage has been produced. The change is not limited to idea. In fact, the wedding ceremony based on Confucian thought, which have ruled Oriental societies for a long period, is gradually losing its place in Eastern society as a result of changes in the process of preparing marriage, the procedure of wedding, the space of wedding ceremony, etc.

By analyzing each country's modern wedding ceremony, this study purposed to find the characteristics of past and contemporary wedding ceremonies as well as of Eastern, Western and mixed elements of wedding ceremony.

Such features of wedding ceremony are observed also in films. Thus, this study tried to identify differences and similarities between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies by analyzing the semiotic meanings of historicity and culturality implied in films.

The films selected for case analysis are *A Perfect Match* (2002), *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* (2001), *Bride Wars* (2009) and *27 Dresses* (2008). These films show well the process of wedding ceremony stage by stage. They are good examples that present the preparatory stage, the wedding ceremony, and events after the ceremony as well as differences between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies.

Research questions for this study are as follows.

First, what differences are there between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies?

Second, how are wedding ceremonies described in Korean and Hollywood films?

Third, what differences are there between wedding ceremonies described in Korean and Hollywood films?

### *B. Methods*

The author aimed to examine how Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies are expressed in films. In order to answer this question, we explore the characteristics and phenomena of Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies, and based on the findings we semiotically analyze differences between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies described in films. Through syntagmatic analysis, one of representative semiotic analysis methods, we understand the story lines and key themes of the films, and trace changes and turning points in the contents of the films. In addition to syntagmatic analysis, paradigmatic analysis is made to understand confrontation and conflict structures among the characters of the films and to study trends and changes in such relations [2].

For this study, we selected films that describe wedding ceremonies in detail, and analyzed Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies comparatively. Furthermore, we reviewed wedding ceremonies shown in the films in order to track changes resulting from the fusion Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies.

## II. EASTERN AND WESTERN WEDDING CEREMONIES

### *A. Wedding ceremonies in Korea*

In Eastern culture, Confucian thought exerts a great influence on people's life and value system. Because Confucian culture attached importance to social order and mutual respect among classes, it valued proprieties. Accordingly, the core of Eastern wedding ceremony was in observing proprieties, and laid stress more on solidarity than on individuality. Wedding was not just a matter between the two persons who marry but between the two families including the two, and even between the clans (blood groups) of the families, so it was unacceptable for either party to break the pledge one-sidedly [3].

In this way, Eastern wedding culture shows that the marriage between two persons is not by the individuals' choice and decision but by the choice and decision of the two families or clans. According to Korea 'Yegi' and 'Honeui' furthermore, the more important purposes of marriage are serving the ancestors, producing offspring for the continuity of generations, and contributing to the expansion of society rather than the marrying individuals' love and emotion.

" Through marriage, two clans combine their good things, and the married persons assume responsibilities to serve memorial services at the clan's shrine and to produce offspring for the continuity of generations. Thus, the relation is extremely precious and must be taken seriously [4]."

Eastern marriage based on Confucian thought, which attaches greater importance to groups than to individuals, began to be mixed with modern ideologies from the West and, as a result, it evolved into a new form. Western modern

ideologies, in which individuals' will and emotion are given priority over groups', disintegrated the long traditional Confucian thought in a short period, and created a new culture that merged Eastern and Western thoughts. In Korea that has imported modern cultures and the concept of nuclear family since the period under the rule of Japanese imperialism, a very contradictory and multi-tiered concept of family has been developed in which both Confucian patrilineal succession and Western couple-centeredness exist together [5]. The new concept and culture has reflected and transformed historicity and culturality continuously and also influenced the wedding ceremony.

Still the Eastern wedding ceremony maintains Confucian culture in many aspects, but today's wedding culture that gives a top priority to individuals' satisfaction shows a new custom that pursues the marrying individuals' emotional, spiritual, and physical satisfaction rather than the union of groups through strict proprieties. The most remarkable characteristic of today's new wedding trend is holding an individualized wedding ceremony as an event. In Korea, an increasing number of brides and bridegrooms are spending money lavishly in memorable events like taking unique wedding photographs and videos in addition to essential elements such as dowries, gifts and guest reception [6].

From the changing wedding culture the East, we learn that there is no single thought lasting forever and everything changes along with historicity, sociality and culturality.

### *B. Wedding ceremonies in the U.S.*

Traditional Western style of marriage, in which the spouse was chosen by a contract between families as in the Eastern marriage culture, was only limited to higher classes, and most young people relied relatively more on romantic love. One may decline a spouse chosen by the father, but the trend emphasizing family benefits was gradually changed to a new trend emphasizing individuals' affection [7]. In this way, Western marriage attaches greater importance to the union of individuals than to that of groups, and free dating based on love is the first step toward marriage.

In case of the U.S., the custom from the European Continent had to be changed in the special situation of pioneering the West, and marriage through free association has been dominant since the early period of colonialism. The Colonial Law ruled that one was allowed to associate with a girl only after getting her father's permission, but parents' influence has gradually weakened over time [8]. Like this, Western modern ideologies have also changed along with the development of society.

The U.S. traditionally prohibited interracial marriage, but from 1948 when the law prohibiting interracial marriage was judged to be unconstitutional, marriage license began to be issued regardless of race and many stages followed this new custom. Finally in 1967, the Supreme Court in the U.S. ruled that all laws prohibiting marriage between a white person and a non-white one was unconstitutional. As a result, along with religion and class, race became less important in choosing a

spouse and marrying [9].

One of the characteristics of Western wedding ceremony is having various events after the wedding ceremony. Among them is the toast during the wedding reception. At this time, the closest friends of the bride and the bridegrooms tell past stories about the couple, create a joyful mood through witty remarks, and propose toasts to the guests.

Then the bridegroom eulogizes the beauty of his bride in front of the guests. Such events in wedding show the Western wedding culture that is based more on the couple's love than on any other interests of the involved groups.

Such history and culture of marriage in the West show that Western wedding culture has not been influenced much by other cultures, but it has created new concepts and customs by reflecting changing historicity and sociality and that the main characters spotlighted in a wedding ceremony are the bride and the bridegroom.

III. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF WEDDING CEREMONIES IN KOREAN FILMS AND HOLLYWOOD FILMS

A. Semiotic analysis of a Perfect Match

A Perfect Match is a romantic comedy in which actress Shin Eun-gyeong appears as a couple manager of a marriage information agency. In this film, the heroine who works to arrange matches for others but cannot find her own love falls in love with a client in the course of arranging a meeting.

TABLE I  
SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF A PERFECT MATCH

| Act     | Syntagmatic context of Perfect Match   |
|---------|--|
| Act I   | Hyojin is working as a couple manager at a marriage information agency. She is a superior career woman who leads many couples to marriage, but herself is single. Then she meets Hyeonsoo, a client whom she took over from another couple manager.  |
| ACT II  | In order to achieve Hyeonsoo's marriage, Hyojin arranges meetings again and again, but Hyeonsoo is not active in the meetings and this irritates Hyojin. As she meets Hyeonsoo repeatedly, however, Hyojin begins to love Hyeonsoo but she denies her feeling and hides it.  |
| Act III | Having the last meeting ahead, Hyojin's mind gets complicated with her close friend Jeongmin's wedding ceremony and Kanghyeon's intentional approach to Hyeonsoo. The meeting goes on as planned, and Hyojin encounters Paksa, who was her boyfriend in the past, at the event place, and with this, Hyojin's anxiety and confusion reaches the peak. A short circuit caused by Hyojin's mistake drives the event hall into chaos. Hyojin runs away out of sorrow and guilty feeling, and Hyeonsoo goes out in search of Hyojin. |
| Act IV  | Finding Hyojin who was crying, Hyeonsoo comforts her by confessing that it is Hyojin that he likes. Hyojin is surprised at Hyeonsoo's confession, and the two persons walk the street hand in hand.  |

The conversation between Hyojin and a male client at the beginning of the film expresses a negative attitude toward the high divorce rate in the U.S. out of Eastern Confucian thought.

In addition, the client emphasizes his Confucian family tradition, and recites verses from Xiaojing and Lunyu, showing

typical Eastern culture.



Fig 1 A male client expressing a negative opinion on divorce (left) and reciting Xiaojing and Lunyu (right)

TABLE II  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF A CONFUCIAN MALE CLIENT

| Signifier          | Primary stage of signification                                      | Secondary stage of signification       |
|--------------------|---|--|
|                    | Denotation  | Connotation                            |
| Male client        | Express a negative opinion on the Western view of divorce           | Criticize the Western view of marriage |
| Xiaojing and Lunyu | Take out a note and read verses from Xiaojing and Lunyu on the note | Comfortable with Confucian lifestyle   |

The male client who read Lunyu succeeds in marriage soon

after the meeting. The client invites using an email (e-invitation card) instead of sending a traditional invitation card according to Eastern proprieties. The simple and convenient invitation may be considered an example of remediation resulting from the mixture of invitation card, a traditional medium, and the advance of sociality, culturality and technology.



Fig. 2 E-invitation card sent by a male client (left) and Hyojin happy with the client's wedding (right)

TABLE III  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF E-INVITATION CARD

| Signifier         | Primary stage of signification                          | Secondary stage of signification   |
|-------------------|---|--|
|                   | Denotation  | Connotation  |
| E-invitation card | An invitation message displayed on the computer monitor | Remediation of traditional invitation card<br>New invitation culture adopting technologies |

Hyojin's friend Jeongmin comes to Hyojin on the day before his wedding and complains that he cannot marry because of his mother-in-law who looks down him. In the wedding ceremony, however, Jeongmin changes his face, carrying his mother-in-law on his back and shouting "Long live my

mother-in-law!”

This suggest the Eastern wedding culture in which wedding is not just a matter between the two persons who marry but between the two families including the two, and even between the clans (blood groups) of the families, so it is unacceptable for either party to break the pledge one-sidedly.



Fig 3 Jeongmin complaining that he cannot marry because of the mother-in-law who looks down him (left) and Jeongmin carrying his mother-in-law on his back and shouting “Long live” (right)

TABLE IV  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF COMPLAINING JEONGMIN

| Primary stage of signification |   | Secondary stage of signification  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Signifier                      | Denotation  | Connotation   |
| Drunken Jeongmin               | Complain with crying under the influence of liquor        | Want to cancel the wedding ceremony   |
| Jeongmin in the wedding hall   | Carry the mother-in-law on his back and shout “Long live” | Cannot break the pledge one-sidedly<br>Follow the Confucian tradition of marriage unconsciously |

A wedding hall in Korea is a space specialized for wedding that is the arbitrary combination of all kinds of traditional and foreign cultures gathered in a place architecturally copying a Western castle or a luxury mansion. That is, the space of a wedding hall is an industrial and social consumption item that borrows seemingly traditional and noble things from Western aristocratic culture and Korean traditional culture, leaving their historical contexts behind, for emotional empathy, narcissism, and show-off to others [10]. Different from those in Western wedding ceremonies, moreover, guests in a Korean wedding ceremony go home after the ceremony without any special event. This may reflect the cultural characteristic of busy Korean society that achieved rapid industrialization and growth, showing that attending a wedding ceremony is merely a part of crammed daily schedules.



Fig 4 A scene of Jeongmin’s wedding ceremony (left) and guests leaving the wedding hall hurriedly after having a meal (right)

TABLE V  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF WEDDING HALL AND AFTER THE WEDDING CEREMONY

| Primary stage of signification     |                                    | Secondary stage of signification  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Signifier                          | Denotation                         | Connotation   |
| Wedding hall                       | Wedding hall looking like a palace | Mixture of valuable materials from Eastern wedding culture and Western foreign cultures |
| A scene after the wedding ceremony | Guests leaving the wedding hall    | Consumptive style of contemporary society   |

Jeongmin leaving for a honeymoon on a wedding car after the wedding ceremony also shows Western wedding culture. According to the Korean tradition of wedding ceremony, when the guests go home and the evening comes, the bride and the bridegroom get into the bridal room and go to bed instead of going on a trip. Thus, today’s custom of going a honeymoon is evidence that Western wedding culture has been introduced to the East and settled as a new tradition.

The friends decorate the bumper of the car for the honeymoon tour with tin cans connected by string or write messages on the car using a lipstick. These practices are also Western wedding culture announcing that they are newly married couple [11]. We can see such western traditions in Jeongmin’s wedding car.



Fig 5 Jeongmin leaving for a honeymoon (left) and the rear of Jeongmin’s wedding car (right)

TABLE VI  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF JEONGMIN GOING ON A HONEYMOON

| Primary stage of signification |   | Secondary stage of signification                               |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Signifier                      | Denotation  | Connotation  |
| Wedding car                    | The car decorated loudly with flowers, balloons, cans, etc. | Western wedding culture introduced to Eastern wedding ceremony |

*B. Semiotic analysis of Bride Wars*

Successful lawyer Liv and school teacher Emma have long been friends to each other, and they have imagined every detail for the best wedding ceremony since they were young. The two girls receive a proposal from their respective boyfriends, and by the wedding planner’s mistake, they have the wedding ceremony on the same day. As things go an unexpected way,

they come to rival each other.

TABLE VII  
SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF A BRIDE WARS

| Act     | SYNTAGMATIC CONTEXT OF BRIDE WARS  |
|---------|--|
| Act I   | Successful lawyer Liv and school teacher Emma, who have long been friends to each other, have imagined every detail for the best wedding ceremony since they were young. The two girls receive a proposal from their respective boyfriends, and visit a wedding planner in order to hold the wedding ceremony at the plaza that they have dreamed of since childhood.  |
| ACT II  | By the wedding planner's mistake, two persons' wedding ceremonies are planned on the same day and their preparations for wedding go in an unexpected direction. The fact that there is no choice in other days makes them more anxious. As they misunderstand each other in the course of preparation for wedding, they become rivals to each other and even interrupt each other's preparation.                       |
| Act III | Liv and Emma are depressed by the deepening conflict but have their wedding ceremonies. When their anger and misunderstanding to each other are about to scatter, Emma's wedding is ruined by Liv's mistake, and angered Liv jumps into Emma's wedding hall and they tussle with each other. After a while of fighting, both are exhausted and lie down on the floor, and express regret for their misguided relation. |
| Act IV  | Watching over Emma, her boyfriend says goodbye, and Liv feels guilty for Emma's breakup. However, Liv has the wedding ceremony as planned. After a year, Emma marries Liv's brother and starts a new family. Finding each other's pregnancy and that the expected due date is the same, they congratulate each other and burst into laughter.  |

Since they were young, Liv and Emma have imagined their desired wedding in detail. They calculate the age good for marriage and create the image of their future spouse in playing.

This shows Western wedding culture emphasizing individuals' emotion and choice. Plaza Hotel in the film is the object of desire wanted by both of the two, and functions as a medium telling that Western wedding respects individuality rather than collectivity and each individual has the freedom of choice.



Fig 6 Liv and Emma doing a wedding play (left) and Plaza Hotel admired by the two persons (right)

TABLE VIII  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF LIV AND EMMA'S WEDDING PLAY

| Signifier    | Secondary stage of signification                          |  |
|--------------|---|--|
|              | Primary stage of signification                            | Connotation  |
| Wedding play | Liv and Emma doing a wedding play seriously               | Imagine the desired image of wedding<br>Western wedding culture respecting individuals' choice |
| Plaza Hotel  | The hotel wedding hall decorated gorgeously like a palace | The object of desire of Liv and Emma   |

Emma and his boyfriend Fletcher visits a dance school at a spared time, and practice what they will dance in the wedding reception. Fletcher asks Emma whether it is necessary to learn dance, but she replies that dance displays the couple's style and shows enthusiasm for the dance lesson.

Dance in the wedding reception may be more an inessential element than an essential one from the viewpoint of Eastern wedding culture. From the eye of Eastern people attaching greater importance to dowries, gifts, wedding ceremony itself, and guest reception, Western wedding culture that spends time and money in such an inessential element may look irrational.

However, investment in time and money for satisfying a person dreaming of a romantic wedding ceremony shows a characteristic of Western wedding culture.



Fig 7 Emma and Fletcher in a dance lesson (left) and Emma and Fletcher practicing dance enthusiastically (right)

TABLE IX  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF DANCE PRACTICE

| Signifier         | Secondary stage of signification                      |   |
|-------------------|---|---|
|                   | Primary stage of signification                        | Connotation   |
| Emma              | Emma warming up the body and persuading the boyfriend | Be conscious of others' eyes<br>Prefer an elegant style |
| Emma and Fletcher | Two persons practicing dance intensely                | Romantic wedding ceremony<br>Individual's satisfaction  |

On the wedding day, the wedding ceremonies are ruined by the fight between Emma and Liv. Fletcher gets angry at Emma's behavior and their argument runs up to the extremity of conflict and they are on the verge of breaking up. Admitting that there is an insurmountable gap between them, Emma and

Fletcher cancel the wedding in front of the guests.

In contrast with Eastern wedding culture that values groups' opinion and decision than individuals', the case of Emma and Fletcher who revoke their pledge in front of people show Western wedding culture that puts individuals' decision before groups'.



Fig 8 Fletcher getting angry at Emma (left) and Emma telling about the difference between them (right)



Fig 9 Guests surprising at the unusual atmosphere (left) and Emma and Fletcher return after canceling their marriage (right)

TABLE X  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF CANCELLED MARRIAGE

| Signifier         | Primary stage of signification                     |             | Secondary stage of signification                              |
|-------------------|--|-------------|---|
|                   | Denotation   | Connotation | Connotation   |
| Guests            | Guests in a surprised look                         |             | Shocking situation  |
| Emma and Fletcher | Fletcher turning away and leaving the wedding hall |             | Cancel the marriage<br>Individuals' intentions are important. |

While the guests return home without any special event after the wedding in an Eastern wedding ceremony, guests in a Western wedding ceremony attends the wedding reception until late in evening and various events are continued. Participating in and enjoying such events together, the guests congratulate the bride and the bridegroom.

In the East as well, the acquaintances of the bride and the bridegroom often have a separate party after the wedding ceremony, but in the West, even those who do not know one another mingle together until midnight or even through the weekend. This is quite an exotic scene from the viewpoint of Eastern wedding culture.

In the West, parties are common and familiar events, but those who are busy in society and home gradually lose their passion for parties because most of such people are more faithful to their families. In this situation, a wedding ceremony provides time and space for men and women of all ages to enjoy a party as much as they like and to talk and associate with people.

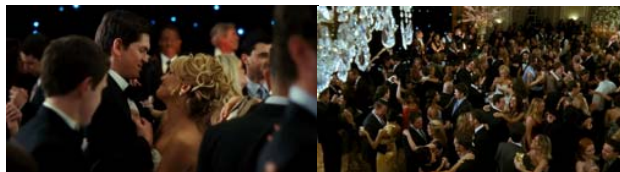


Fig 10 Liv and Daniel dancing in the wedding reception (left) and guests enjoying the wedding reception (right)

TABLE XI  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF WEDDING RECEPTION

| Signifier         | Primary stage of signification                        |             | Secondary stage of signification                                |
|-------------------|---|-------------|---|
|                   | Denotation  | Connotation | Connotation   |
| Wedding reception | Joyful atmosphere<br>Guests dancing with a smile face |             | Generalized parties<br>An occasion for exchange and association |

From the friends of Emma and Liv, we can read a face of Western wedding culture related to divorce. She appears as a married bride envied by Emma and Liv at the beginning of the film, but she appears again as a divorced woman at the later part and tells that she was divorced soon after her wedding. She does not take her friends' consolation for the divorce seriously, and talks about and imagines the place of the next wedding ceremony (remarriage) rather than recalling her sorrow or wound in the past.

This is a case of Western wedding culture contrary to Eastern wedding culture based on Confucian thought that taboos divorce.



Fig 11 A friend appearing as a bride (left) and the divorced friend attending the wedding reception (right)

TABLE XII  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF A DIVORCE FRIEND

| Signifier                      | Primary stage of signification              |             | Secondary stage of signification                       |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------|--|
|                                | Denotation                                  | Connotation | Connotation  |
| Bride in the wedding reception | Try to throw the bouquet in an excited look |             | Joy and happiness<br>An object of envy to single women |
| Drunken friend                 | Tell her friends about her divorce          |             | Divorce woman<br>Unconcerned                           |

*C. Semiotic analysis of Marriage Is a Crazy Thing*

Film *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* illuminates a man and a woman conflicting with each other over love and marriage from the viewpoint of changing Eastern wedding culture.

Yeonhee wants to marry a well-qualified man but to fall in love with a romantic man, but Joonyeong has a negative idea on

marriage and believes that love is the first and the last, and through the meeting of the two persons, the film describes the gap between individual choices and social customs.

TABLE XIII  
SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF MARRIAGE IS A CRAZY THING

| Act     | SYNTAGMATIC CONTEXT OF MARRIAGE IS A CRAZY THING   |
|---------|--|
| Act I   | Joonyeong, a lecturer in university, has a blind date on the condition that he would MC Gyujin's wedding ceremony. Yeonhee whom he met in the blind date is a sexy and rude lighting designer. The two persons exchange hypocritical and hackneyed conversations, asking about job and family, and then watch a movie, have dinner, and go to a tavern.  |
| ACT II  | Coming out of the tavern, Joonyeong and Yeonhee agree that it would be cheaper to stay at an motel than to go home by taxi, and immediately they go straight to an motel and have sex as frank as their conversation. From that time on, Joonyeong and Yeonhee enjoy date and sex and exchange their ideas on marriage. Joonyeong criticizes Yeonhee who wants to marry a well-qualified man but to love with a romantic man, and they separate after a quarrel. |
| Act III | At his friend Gyujin's wedding ceremony, Joonyeong encounters Yeonhee and finds that he has been missing her. One day, Yeonhee visits Joonyeong to his school and tell him that she has found a man who satisfies the qualifications. Yeonhee enjoys dating with Joonyeong again, but marries another man who is well-qualified. Even after her marriage, Yeonhee visits Joonyeong and continue her love with him at his house.                                  |
| Act IV  | Yeonhee continues her secret double life, and Joonyeong is arrested by the feeling of being alienated. He says goodbye to Yeonhee and asks her not to come again, but cannot shake off memories with her. Yeonhee, who seemed to give up Joonyeong, keeps visiting Joonyeong's house.  |

In the early part of the film, a wedding ceremony is held for Joonyeong's younger brother. Various guests come to the wedding hall to congratulate the wedding. Among them, a couple who look like acquaintances of Joonyeong's parents appear. Strictly speaking, they are not guests of the marrying couple but of the parents. The characteristic of Eastern wedding ceremonies that marriage is not the union of individuals but that of groups is evidenced by the fact that many of the guests come as the parents' acquaintances [12]. Wreaths displayed in front of the wedding hall show the parents' human network. People prepare plenty of wreaths in order to show off the parents' social networks.

Moreover, congratulatory money culture is another characteristic of Eastern wedding ceremonies. In the film as well, Joonyeong's friend Gyujin hands over congratulatory money contained in an envelope. While Western people buy a specific item as a gift, Eastern people usually prepare a sum of money and give it as a present.



Fig 12 Guests exchanging greetings (left) and Gyujin handing over

congratulatory money (right)

TABLE XIV  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF GUESTS

| Signifier            | Primary stage of signification                              | Secondary stage of signification               |
|----------------------|---|--|
|                      | Denotation  | Connotation                                    |
| Guests               | Say hello with a glad face                                  | Collective culture                             |
| Congratulatory money | Joonyeong's friend Gyujin handing over congratulatory money | A characteristic of Eastern wedding ceremonies |
| Wreath               | Flowers displayed at the entrance of the wedding hall       | Show off the parents' social standing          |

Joonyeong takes Yeonhee to the hospital where his mother is admitted. As Yeonhee appears, Joonyeong's mother is busy in preparing something to serve Yeonhee, forgetting the fact that she is a patient. Even she treats Yeonhee respectfully using honorific words. This may be because the core of Eastern wedding is observing proprieties.

In this way, the first meeting between the parents of the two families is done with the utmost courtesy in a serious mood rather than in a natural and comfortable mood.



Fig 13 Mother trying to serve Yeonhee (left) and mother behaving courteously (right)

TABLE XV  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF MOTHER

| Signifier          | Primary stage of signification                | Secondary stage of signification           |
|--------------------|---|--|
|                    | Denotation                                    | Connotation                                |
| Joonyeong's mother | Treat Yeonhee respectfully<br>Honorific words | Influence of Confucian thought on marriage |

*D.Semiotic analysis of 27 Dresses*

Jane is busy to serve as a bridesmaid in two or three weddings a day. Jane is living a life of bridesmaid in the middle of her friends' wedding ceremonies. One day, she loses her diary that recorded her friends' wedding schedule, and even her younger sister Tess who has return from Europe falls in love with her boss whom she has loved in secret. Jane, who has lived only for others, now searches for her own happiness and love.

TABLE XVI  
SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF 27 DRESSES

| Act     | SYNTAGMATIC CONTEXT OF 27 DRESSES  |
|---------|--|
| Act I   | Jane serves as a bridesmaid at her friends' wedding ceremonies even several times a day. She has grown with unusual interest in wedding ceremonies since she was young. In a friend's wedding ceremony, she falls down while trying to catch the bouquet and loses consciousness, and with Kevin's help Jane goes home by taxi. Kevin finds a diary that Jane left in the taxi, and takes interest in tens of wedding plans recorded compactly in the diary.   |
| ACT II  | Jane's younger sister Tess, who has returned from Europe, falls in love with her boss George whom Jane has loved in secret, and Jane feels difficult between the two. George proposes to Tess, and Jane is confused further, but out of her altruistic character, she serves as a bridesmaid at Tess' wedding ceremony and helps her preparation of the wedding.   |
| Act III | Kevin approaches Jane to collect new materials, and learning about Jane's bridesmaid life, he has a good feeling toward her. While riding the same car, the car breaks down and Jane and Kevin spend a night at an unknown place. Through a conversation, the two find that they have something in common and fall in love with each other. However, an article on the subject of Jane is carried in newspaper, and Jane leaves Kevin, believing that his approach to her had a hidden purpose. Tess tells a lie about her disposition and keeps preparing the wedding with George, but Jane advises her not to love based on falsehood. In a party before the wedding between Tess and George, Jane performs a slide show and discloses Tess' hidden nature covered under falsehood. Disappointed with Tess' real nature, George leaves the party and cancels the wedding ceremony. |
| Act IV  | While Jane is suffering from the guilty feeling that she ruined her sister's wedding, Kevin comes to Jane and asks her forgiveness. Jane visits Tess and makes peace with her, and throws away all dresses at home. Jane visits Kevin who is covering news, expresses her thanks to him for helping her find herself, and confesses her love to him. The two kiss each other and have a wedding ceremony after a year.   |

Jane is invited to a party held before her colleague's wedding ceremony. It is a unique conceptual party in a space looking like a club in the evening time.

Thus, those who are invited are all close acquaintances who are able to understand the concept and taste of the bride and the bridegroom. In the East, many of wedding guests are the patents' acquaintances, reflecting the collective culture of the Eastern countries, so most of events are designed not for individuals' tastes but the taste of the majority.

What is more, different from Eastern wedding where congratulatory money is collected on the wedding day, Western wedding receives gifts or congratulatory money necessary for 'Bridal Shower' around a month before the wedding ceremony.



Fig 14 A party on the eve of wedding (left) and the bride receiving gifts (right)

TABLE XVII  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF BRIDAL SHOWER

| Signifier           | Secondary stage of signification                        |   |
|---------------------|---|---|
|                     | Primary stage of signification                          | Denotation  |
| Bridal Shower party | Party held at a club<br>Clear individuality and concept | Respect individuals' tastes<br>Most of participants in the party are close acquaintances. |
| Gifts               | Pack gifts and present them to the bride                | Western wedding ceremony receiving gifts and congratulatory money before the wedding      |

Tess invites George home in order to introduce him to her father. A friendly mood is created as the father expresses his thanks to George and shakes hand with him for giving a job to Jane and marrying Tess. The two families meet each other on an equal position rather than on hierarchical human relation based on Western modern thoughts.



Fig 15 George meeting Tess' father (left) and George shaking hands with Tess' father (right)

TABLE XVIII  
THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED OF BRIDAL SHOWER

| Signifier                   | Secondary stage of signification                    |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
|                             | Primary stage of signification                      | Denotation  |
| The father of Jane and Tess | Ask a handshake to Tess<br>Friendly and kind father | The influence of Western modern thoughts on wedding Equal |

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the results of case study as above were drawn answers to the research questions presented in the introduction as follows.

First, what differences are there between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies?

Differences between Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies come from differences in their thoughts. Eastern wedding was influenced by Confucian thought, and Western wedding was established on Western modern ideologies. Eastern wedding originating from Confucian thought was not based on the marrying individuals' choice and love but on the choice of the individuals' groups, namely, their families, and the parents or family leaders exercised the right of choice.

The purposes of marriage were to serve ancestors and to produce offspring for the continuity of the family, and groups' opinions were given priority over individuals'. Thus, we can say that marriage was used as a functional instrument for the



continuity of family and the expansion of society. In addition, Eastern wedding regarded proprieties as crucial because Confucian culture valued social order and mutual respect among classes.

Western traditional wedding was also sometimes based on an agreement between groups, but such cases were limited to the upper classes, and most of weddings were based on individuals' emotion and choice. There were cases demanding individuals' sacrifice for family benefits, but the trend has been changed gradually in the direction of emphasizing individuals' love.

Western modern ideologies attached greater importance to individuals' intention than groups', and a person's choice could not be changed by force by other individuals or groups. Such ideologies brought free dating based on love, and religion, class and race became less important in choosing a spouse. Furthermore, modern ideologies that pursued equal relations rather than hierarchical confronting human relations undermined parents' influence on their children. Accordingly, much more freedom was given to individuals in deciding their own marriage.

Second, how are wedding ceremonies described in Korean and Hollywood films?

The wedding ceremonies expressed in *A Perfect Match* and *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* show that all the processes from the meeting between the man and the woman before wedding to the wedding ceremony are performed in observance of proprieties. Courtesy and prudence toward each other reaches an extreme particularly in the first meeting with the future spouse's parents. In such a situation, the marrying individuals assume a passive position to be instructed or advised by the parents rather than an equal position. Moreover, even if there is a very serious problem, the individuals proceed on the planned course patiently.

The wedding ceremonies described in *Bride Wars* (2009) and *27 Dresses* (2008) show marriages starting from free dating and attained or canceled by individuals' decision.

Marrying individuals meet the parents on an equal position, and parents play the role as assistants who respect their children's decision and help them.

A remarkable difference between the two pairs of films is in events after the wedding ceremony. In *A Perfect Match*, the guests are scattered around without any event after the wedding ceremony and having a simple meal, but in *Bride Wars* (2009) and *27 Dresses* (2008), the guests enjoy the wedding reception together until late in evening after the wedding ceremony.

The way of giving congratulatory money or gifts to the bride and the bridegroom is also expressed differently. That is, while in *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* congratulatory money is handed over to the bride's relatives on the wedding day, in *27 Dresses* gifts are delivered directly to the bride at a party before the wedding ceremony.

There are also common points among the films. The wedding halls shown in the Korean films and the Hollywood films are all luxurious and gorgeous places like a palace. Moreover, dresses for the bride and the bridegroom and the procedure of wedding

are similar.

Third, what differences are there between wedding ceremonies described in Korean and Hollywood films?

Differences among the wedding ceremonies presented in the four films can be derived largely in two aspects. One is the marrying individuals' right of choice and right of decision. In the East where groups' opinions are given priority over individuals', the marrying individuals consider and reflect others' opinions in every part from preparation to the wedding ceremony. In the West, on the contrary, individuals' decision is given a top priority, so they design their wedding free as they want and satisfy their desires by spending time and money.

The other is the nature and involvement of guests attending the wedding ceremony. In the weddings presented by the Korean films, many of the guests are the parents' acquaintances. That is, various types of guests form collective relations through the parents although they are not in any personal relation with the bride or the bridegroom.

Wedding reception served after a wedding ceremony is merely having a simple meal without few additional congratulatory events. In this procedure, guests' involvement is low and uniform, and they assume an inactive attitude as if they are merely consumers.

In the Hollywood films, most of the guests are friends or colleagues of the bride and the bridegroom. Such Western guests in a personal relation with the bride and the bridegroom rather than a collective relation are involved actively in the wedding ceremony. Until late after the wedding ceremony, they enjoy the wedding reception and exchange congratulation in striking contrast with guests at Eastern wedding reception.

As presented above, differences between the Eastern and Western wedding ceremonies shown in the Korean films and Hollywood films are divided into differences originating from Eastern and Western thoughts and phenomenal differences in the expression of wedding. These gaps are being reduced and new variations are emerging steadily through historical trends and cultural fusion.

Marriage is sacred union of a man and a woman, and wedding is a festival of joy to be congratulated. The wedding ceremony will change continuously and culture will also develop based on new thoughts. We wish that even if its expression may change over time the lofty value of marriage may not change.

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