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A Study on the Mandarin Chinese Request Strategies of Taiwanese College Students under the Influence of Gender, Social Distance, and Social Power

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of Mandarin Chinese request strategies by Taiwanese college students, the participants of this study were 52 males and 48 females, and the testing instruments include nine role-plays and Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The classification of request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) was used to analyze the collected data. The data indicate that the factor of gender and the gap in social power between requestors and requestees are not the main factors that affect college students' use of request strategies, by contrary, the social distance between the two parties sometimes plays a primary role in influencing the use of the requestor's request strategy.

Keywords

Request Strategy, Gender, Social Distance, Social Power

1. Introduction

The term "speech act" was first proposed by Austin (1962), he also claims that people are performing certain linguistic behaviors when communicating with other interlocutors, and these linguistic behaviors are also called "speech acts".

Sociolinguistics is a branch derived from linguistics, which studies the relationship between language and society (Holmes, 1997), and "speech act" has always been a profound topic in sociolinguistics, such as apology, refusal, request, complaint and other linguistic behaviors are frequently occurred in many places,

in other words, they are full of our daily life; moreover, society usually has a great impact on our words, vice versa (Jones, 2013), which is a concept that has been stereotyped by a majority of people.

Therefore, the study combined two social factors (social distance and social power) with the factor of gender to aim to investigate how Taiwanese college students utilize request strategies under the influence of these three factors and to focus on the research of the openers, head acts and supportive moves used by females and males.

Research Questions

1) What is the influence of gender on Taiwanese college students' use of request strategies?

2) What is the relationship between Taiwanese college students' use of request strategies and social distance?

3) What is the relationship between Taiwanese college students' use of request strategies and social power?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speech Acts

"Speech acts", this term was first proposed by John Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words.* A Speech act refers to an action that performed by the speaker producing an utterance (Yule, 2022), according to Austin, speech acts can be divided into three types: Locutionary act, illocutionary act, and per-locutionary act, the locutionary act refers to the literal description of the speaker's utterance; the illocutionary act refers to the intention of the speaker's utterance, namely, the real meaning that the speaker wants to express; the perlocutionary act is the intended effect of the speaker's utterance on the addressee. Afterward, Searle (1969) proposes five main categories of speech acts: Assertive, Commissive, Expressive Declarative, and Directive, the speech act of requesting was divided into the "Directive" category.

2.2. Politeness Theory

In 1970s, the topic of "Politeness" has attracted a number of researchers, one of the momentous theories was Brown and Levinsion's (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory, which was a combination of Goffman's (1967) "face" notion and Grice's (1975) conversational-maxims, through further improving on the previous literature, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) propose "Positive" and "Negative" faces and Face-Threatening Acts based on Goffman's theory.

2.3. The Notion of "Face" and Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

The notion of "face" was first proposed by Goffman in 1967s, he defines "face" as "the positive social value" (Goffman, 1967: p. 5) that everyone tries to claim effectively for himself, Brown and Levinson (1987: p. 61) define "face" as "the

public self-image" which every person is willing to claim. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) point out two phrases: "positive face" and "negative face", a person's "positive face" is like that person's desire to be liked or treated as a member by others; and a person's "negative face" is that person's desire to be treated independently. Based on the face theory, Brown and Levinson use "face-threatening acts" to refer to those acts that will offend people's faces.

2.4. The Speech Act of Requesting and Request Strategies

Strictly speaking, the act of making a request will threaten the hearer's face more or less (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as Ellis (1994: p. 167) define it as "an attempt on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to perform or to stop performing some kind of action"; Trosborg (1995) defines request is a kind of illocutionary act, the requester (the speaker) utilizes this speech act to ask the requestee (the hearer) to perform an action, which is beneficial to the requester; from this, we can see that requesting is a kind of unequal speech act because the requester imposes his or her intention on the requestee for benefits, thereby, requesting was considered impolite and was classified as a kind of face-threatening act by Brown and Levinson. Normally, we also can use the notion of directness to analyze a request, and this notion derives two terms: "directness" and "indirectness", Searle (1969) indicates that if a speaker uses a speech act to convey his or her intention and the intention is explicit, which is called directness; if the intention is implicit, which is called indirectness. Yule (1996) advises the requester should try to avoid using direct requests in most circumstances due to their essence.

Regarding request strategies, one of the influential and outstanding speech act projects is Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) conducted by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), which aimed to explore the differences between two speech acts (apologies and requests) in different cultures and they analyzed and compared the performance of requesting in six languages, eventually, they divided the performative system of requesting into three types of acts:

1) Opener: to attract the hearer's attention;

2) Head act: which is a necessary part in the performative system of requesting, it can convey the requester's intention independently, namely, the mean of making a requests;

3) Supportive move: it is used to adjust the intensity of requests and soften the intensity of the head act in order to persuade the hearer to agree to the speaker's request.

Since a "head act" is definitely needed when making a request, additionally, a head act can exert its function independently, therefore, it must appear in a request; by contrast, the "opener" and the "supportive move" are not as necessary as the former, these two sequences usually follow and/or precede the head act, the following is an example sentence adopted from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989b):

"Judith, I missed class yesterday, do you think I could borrow your notes? I

promise to return them by tomorrow".

In the example sentence, "Judith" is the name of the hearer which plays the role of the opener to attract the hearer's attention in this request, "I missed class yesterday" and "I promise to return them by tomorrow" are the supportive moves used to explain and promise, and "do you think I could borrow your notes?" is the head act used to request.

Furthermore, according to the degree of directness, the two researchers also classified request strategies into three categories and nine sub-strategies, six opener strategies, and ten supportive move strategies. Table 1 related to Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper's classification of request strategies that arranged by Chang (2013: pp. 33-34) was quoted here:

Table 1. The classification of request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

起始行爲 (opener)	1) 稱呼語 (title/role): e.g. Professor/sir/mother 2) 打招呼語 (greeting): e.g. How are you?/Hi 3) 道歉語 (apology): e.g. Excuse me, I'm sorry. 4) 人名 (name): e.g. Tom/Ella… 5) 提醒語 (vocative): e.g. Here/Hey! 6) 侮辱語 (aggravator): e.g. big mouth/you fool	
中心行爲 (head act)	直接行爲 (direct)	1) 祈使語態 (mood derivable) e.g. Open the window. 2) 明確陳述 (explicit performatives) e.g. I request you to open the window. 3) 模糊陳述 (hedged performatives) e.g. I'd like to ask you to open the window. 4) 義務陳述 (obligation statement) e.g. You should open the window. 5) 願望陳述 (want statement) e.g. I want you to open the window.
	規約性間接行爲 (conventionally indirect)	6) 建議性表現 (suggestory formula) e.g. How about open the window? 7) 準備性詢問 (query-preparatory) e.g. Could you open the window?
	非規約性間接行爲 (non-Conventionally indirect)	8) 較強暗示 (strong hints) e.g. Why is the window closed? 9) 較弱暗示 (mild hints) e.g. It is hot.
輔助行爲 (supportive moves)	1) 預備 (preparatory): e.g. I have a favor to ask of you. 2) 問前試探 (pre-commitment): e.g. Could you do me a favor? 3) 説明原因 (grounder): e.g. I intend to apply for a scholarship. 4) 鬆綁 (disarmer): e.g. I know that you are busy, but… 5) 補償 (reward): e.g. Dinner is on me. 6) 降低難度 (imposition minimize): e.g. It would not take long to… 7) 感謝 (gratitude): e.g. Thanks. 8) 無禮 (insults): e.g. You have a big mouth. 9) 威脅 (threat): e.g. …, or I'm telling mom. 10) 講道 (moralizing): e.g. It is not right to use violence in any case.	

2.5. Sociological Variables

Brown and Levinson (1987: p. 74) propose the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA which contains three sociological variables:

1) The "social distance" (D) of S and H (a symmetric relation);
2) The relative "power" (P) of S and H (an asymmetric relation);
3) The absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture.

Due to the importance, the first two variables have been discussed in a ton of literature, according to Holmes (1995), "social distance" (SD) is a significant variable used to determine appropriate levels of politeness behavior, it also refers to the familiarity between the speaker and the hearer (Boxer, 1993); "relative power" or we can call it "social power"(SP), which refers to the social power of the speaker and the hearer and in most communications, participants' social power will affect each other's situations (Holmes, 1995).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Design of Questionnaire

This study utilized Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to collect data, which was a tool used to study speech acts and was first proposed and adopted by Blum-Kulka (1982), by using DCT, researchers can effectively elicit and analyze a certain speech act via a series of designed scenarios.

The questionnaire consists of two main sections, the first section was set up for asking the participant's personal information (Gender and Department), the second section contains nine scenarios, each scenario includes three contextual factors (SD, SP, and Gender), in terms of the SD factor analysis, the scenarios 1, 4, and 7 belong to the first control group with −SP and the factor of SD is changed from −SD to +SD in turn; the second control group contains the scenarios 2, 5, and 8, including =SP and SD is also changed from −SD to +SD in turn; and the third control group consisted of the scenarios 3, 6, and 9, which contains +SP and the changes in SD are the same as those in the first two groups.

In terms of the analysis of the SP factor, the scenarios 1, 2, and 3 belong to the first control group, the scenarios 4, 5, and 6 belong to the second control group, and the third control group consisted of the rest of the scenarios, these three control ground all possess the only one variable (−SP, =SP, and +SP).

3.2. Participants

Whether comparing with foreign literature or the relevant literature in mainland China, the number of literature related to request strategy is still small in Taiwan; plus, Taiwan's context is more or less different from the Chinese context due to cultural differences, although both use the same language, as Ku (2012) claims that the mainland China and Taiwan have been separated for too long, which has led to significant differences in lifestyle, customs, and even language expression between the two sides due to certain historical and political factors, as a result, these two reasons cause that there is still room to explore and study re-

levant academic issues related to request strategy in Taiwan.

The participants of this study consisted of 100 college students who were all native speakers of Mandarin Chinese (including 52 males and 48 females) in Taichung, Taiwan, they were randomly recruited from four departments, more detailed information about the participants is shown in the following Table 2.

3.3. Research Procedures

The study included seven research steps as follows:

1) Identifying and proposing the research problems;

2) Reviewing the relevant literature;

3) Designing the questionnaire according to reference the previous literature;

4) Sampling; the researcher recruited randomly the participants from four departments in order to balance the randomness of data;

5) Analyzing data via SPSS system in order to analyze the significance values between groups;

6) Reporting findings.

3.4. Data Analysis

Since this study is a quantitative research, SPSS system was mainly used for data analysis after sampling, and the significant threshold was set at 0.05.

With regard to the taxonomies of the three acts, all the request openers, the head acts, and the supportive moves were divided into three types in this paper: polite, neutral, and impolite; regarding openers, "title/role", "greeting", "apology" were considered polite, "name" was neutral, and "vocative" and "aggravator" were considered impolite; in terms of head acts, the strategies of the categories of "conventionally indirect" and "non-Conventionally indirect" can be considered polite (including "hedged performatives", "query-preparatory", "suggestory formula", "strong hints" and "mild hints"), and the rest were considered impolite; most supportive moves can be considered polite (including "preparatory", "pre-commitment", "disarmer", "reward", "imposition minimize" and "gratitude"), "grounder" was neutral, and the rest were impolite.

Table 2. Detailed information about the participants.

Numbers / Departments	Genders	
	Males	Females
Department of English Language, Literature, and Linguistics	16	13
Department of Tourism	10	8
Department of Law	14	18
Department of Finance	12	9
Total	52	48

4. Findings

4.1. Summary of Male Interactions

The following Table 3 shows the total numbers and corresponding percentages of male speakers' use of all the openers, the head acts, and the supportive moves for both genders:

Table 3. Data on male speakers' use of the three acts for both genders.

	Male to male		Male to female	
Openers	N	%	N	%
Title/role	167	35.68	215	45.94
Greeting	25	5.34	23	4.91
Apology	142	30.34	156	33.33
Name	129	27.56	145	30.98
Vocative	54	11.54	39	8.33
Aggravator	37	7.91	18	3.85
Head Acts				
Mood derivable	49	10.47	36	7.69
Explicit performatives	0	0	0	0
Hedged performatives	82	17.52	84	17.95
Obligation statement	0	0	0	0
Want statement	85	18.16	64	13.68
Suggestory formula	9	1.92	29	6.2
Query-preparatory	236	50.43	248	52.99
Strong hints	6	1.28	7	1.5
Mild hints	0	0	0	0
Supportive Moves				
Preparatory	21	4.48	23	4.91
Pre-commitment	46	9.83	49	10.47
Disarmer	16	3.42	19	4.06
Reward	14	2.99	23	4.91
Imposition minimize	116	24.79	117	25
Gratitude	37	7.9	35	7.48
Grounder	279	59.62	284	60.68
Insults	0	0	0	0
Threat	0	0	0	0
Moralizing	0	0	0	0

Regarding males' request structures, most participants preferred to call the requestee's name, a vulgar word and "Wei" and "Ei" attracting the requestee when making a request to an intimate interlocutor with lower or equal social power, they also tended to use relative direct request strategies, for example:

1) XXX (the name of the requestee)，麻煩幫忙買一下東西，我現在剛好沒空。

"Name" "Mood derivable" "Grounder"

2) 欸欸，快點幫我復習下啦，不然我要被當了。

"Vocative" "Mood derivable" "Grounder"

When dealing with an intimate requestee with higher social power, they usually added a title of the interlocutor's role at the beginning of the request, and using "query-preparatory" often, for example:

3) 爸，我忘記帶錢了，能不能幫我先付一下？

"Title/role" "Grounder" "Query-preparatory"

In terms of supportive moves, only a few of male speakers used some supportive moves to soften their requests, on the contrary, they chose to use "grounder" to explain why they made the requests.

When making requests to a familiar requestee, no matter whether the addressee has a lower or equal social power, the frequency of using polite openers has slightly increased, but some males still used vulgar words to start the conversation:

4) 靠北！我沒帶錢，學長我先跟你借一下謝謝？

"Aggravator" "Grounder" "Mood derivable" "Gratitude"

Compared with scenarios 1 to 3, in scenarios 4 to 6, the frequency of male speakers using direct strategies has slightly reduced, instead, some participants used "query-preparatory" and "suggestory-formula":

5) 學弟，你現在有空嗎？幫我去超商買東西一下可嗎？我現在有點事。

"Title/role" "Pre-commitment" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder"

6) 欸欸，你能不能幫我復習一下期末考的內容，我不太會。

"Vocative" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder"

7) (叫外號)有空嗎？一起去圖書館復習？我有一些不會想問 你一下。。

"Name" "Pre-commitment" "Suggestory-formula" "Grounder"

But, few participants still used direct strategies to ask the addressees with lower or equal social power to help them:

8) 我現在有點事情，我想叫你幫我去買下東西，我請你喝飲料。

"Grounder" "Want statement" "Reward"

9) XXX，我想跟你問一下考試題目謝謝

"Name" "Want statement" "Gratitude"

However, "Grounder" was still the most used supportive move in scenarios 4 to 6, in addition, other polite supportive moves were also used more frequently than those in scenarios 1 to 3.

From the scenarios 7 to 9, a majority of male speakers perform politely, most participants used "Bu Hao Yi Si" (excuse me) to start requesting or calling the title of the addressee:

10) 你好同學，可不可以幫我帶個路？我對這邊不太熟悉了。

"Greeting" "Title/role" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder"

11) 不好意思，可以向你問一下期末考的事情嗎？感謝！

"Apology" "Query-preparatory" "Gratitude"

"Query-preparatory" was still the frequently used strategy:

12) 老師不好意思，我忘記帶錢了，可不可以先向你借 100？我晚點再拿錢給你。

"Title/role" "Apology" "Grounder" "Query-preparatory" "Imposition minimize"

4.2. Summary of Female Interactions

The following Table 4 shows the total numbers and corresponding percentages of female speakers' use of all the openers, the head acts, and the supportive moves for both genders:

When making requests to intimate addressees, female speakers also preferred to use "name" or some vocative words to attract the addressee's attention; however, regarding head acts and supportive moves, firstly, they did not tend to use direct strategies as much as male speakers did, instead, the conventionally indirect strategies were used pretty often; secondly, females also preferred to use "Grounder" as the main supportive move as males did, for example:

13) 弟弟你能不能幫我一下？我想去超商買東西但現在有點事，你能幫我一

"Title/role" "Pre-commitment" "Grounder" "Query-preparatory"

下嗎？

14) 欸欸，你有空嗎？想説你能不能抽考我一下期末考的？我怕我過

"Vocative" "Pre-commitment" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder"

不了。

When making requests to an intimate requestee with higher social power, female speakers also added the title of the addressee's role at the beginning of the utterance as males did:

14) 爸我忘記帶錢了。

"Title/role" "Strong hints"

15) 媽媽我忘記帶錢出門了，我先跟你借一下，回家還你。

"Title/role" "Grounder" "Hedge-performatives" "Imposition minimize"

When making requests to an acquaintance, most females used "Bu Hao Yi Si" (excuse me) as an openers in situation 4 and 6, but for the familiar addressees with equal social power, the frequency of female speakers using polite openers has decreased, but in situation 4 to 6, "Apology" was the most used openers.

Females used "query-preparatory" more frequently than males did in these three situations, and they also used more supportive moves for both genders than males did:

16) Hello 學弟，你現在有空嗎？能不能幫我一下？如果不方便也沒關係。

"Greeting" "Title/role" "Pre-commitment" "Query-preparatory" "Disarmer"

17) 不好意思，可以幫我買東西嗎？我等等拿錢給你。

"Apology" "Query-preparatory" "Imposition minimize"

18) 學姐，<u>你可以先借我 100 嗎</u>？<u>我忘記帶錢了耶</u>，<u>下次還你可以嗎</u>？
"Title/role" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder" "Imposition minimize"

Table 4. Data on female speakers' use of the three acts for both genders.

	Female to male		Female to female	
Openers	N	%	N	%
Title/role	203	46.99	199	46.06
Greeting	32	7.41	29	6.71
Apology	187	43.29	189	38.8
Name	118	30.73	118	27.78
Vocative	24	5.56	20	4.63
Aggravator	5	1.16	6	2.32
Head Acts				
Mood derivable	21	4.86	22	5.09
Explicit performatives	0	0	0	0
Hedged performatives	71	16.44	67	15.51
Obligation statement	0	0	0	0
Want statement	17	3.94	16	3.7
Suggestory formula	19	3.7	26	6.02
Query-preparatory	290	67.13	295	65.29
Strong hints	14	3.24	10	3.47
Mild hints	0	0	0	0
Supportive Moves				
Preparatory	84	19.44	91	21.06
Pre-commitment	142	32.87	150	34.72
Disarmer	51	11.81	54	12.5
Reward	33	7.63	31	7.18
Imposition minimize	134	31.02	138	31.94
Gratitude	94	21.76	101	23.38
Grounder	275	63.71	281	65.09
Insults	0	0	0	0
Threat	0	0	0	0
Moralizing	0	0	0	0

In situation 7 to 9, most females preferred to utilize polite openers and request strategies to strangers, for openers, "apology" and "title/role" were the two popular openers which were used most frequently, in contrast, females did not use any impolite openers in these three situations at all; for the head acts, the frequency of using "query-preparatory" has markedly increased, in contrast, the frequency of using impolite strategies has notably declined:

19) 同學<u>不好意思</u>，<u>我還是有點不太清楚耶</u>，<u>還是可以請你幫我帶路一下</u>
<u>呢</u>? 如 "Title/role" "Apology" "Grounder" "Query-preparatory"
<u>果你沒時間也沒關係</u>。
"Disarmer"

20) 老師，<u>您可以先借我 100 嗎</u>? <u>我剛剛發現自己沒帶錢</u>，<u>我等等就去</u>
"Title/role" "Query-preparatory" "Grounder" "Imposition minimize"
<u>取錢給您</u>，<u>實在不好意思</u>。
"Gratitude"

4.3. Gender

In fact, the addressee's gender is not a particularly influential factor affecting students' use of openers, head acts, and supportive moves.

Firstly, in terms of openers, no matter male or female speakers, there were no significant differences in the polite openers that adopted by them to both genders (male: $p = 0.921 > 0.05$; female: $p = 0.913 > 0.05$); for impolite openers, the data show that the percentages of "vocative" and "aggravator" used by male speakers for male addressees were 11.54% and 7.91%, and for females were 8.33% and 3.85% respectively ($p = 0.335 > 0.05$); and these two openers used by female speakers for male addressees were 7.64% and 1.16%, for males were 4.63% and 2.32% ($p = 0.967 > 0.05$). In addition, there were also no significant differences between males and females in the use of polite and impolite openers for both genders, regarding polite openers (to male: $p = 0.606 > 0.05$; to female: $p = 0.893 > 0.05$); in terms of impolite openers (for male: $p = 0.155 > 0.05$; for female: $p = 0.408 > 0.05$).

Secondly, for the polite head acts, the percentages of "query-preparatory", "suggestory formula", and "strong hints" used by male speakers for male addressees were 50.43%, 1.92%, and 1.28%, and for females were 52.99%, 6.2%, and 1.5% respectively ($p = 0.924 > 0.05$); the polite head acts used by females for males were 5.67.13%, 3.7%, and 3.24%; for females were 65.29%, 6.02%, and 3.47% ($p = 0.994 > 0.05$); on the other hand, the three impolite head acts ("Mood derivable", "hedged performatives", and "want statement") used by male for male requestees were 10.47%, 17.52%, and 18.16%, and for females were 7.68%, 17.95%, and 13.68% respectively ($p = 0.587 > 0.05$); the three head acts used by females for males were 4.86%, 16.44%, and 3.94%, and for females were 5.09%, 15.51%, and 3.70% ($p = 0.967 > 0.05$).

Through the analysis of the data, this study found that there were no significant differences between the two sexes in the use of polite head acts for both

genders (to male: $p = 0.857 > 0.05$; to female: $p = 0.901 > 0.05$); additionally, there were also no significant differences between the two sexes in the use of impolite head acts for male and female speakers (to male: $p = 0.214 > 0.05$; to female: $p = 0.353 > 0.05$).

With regard to supportive moves, male and female speakers all used six polite types of polite supportive moves, for males, the p-value is 0.905 (> 0.05), and for females, the p-value is 0.866 (> 0.05). However, there was a marked difference in the use of polite supportive moves between the two genders, women use supportive moves more often than men, regardless of whether they are male or female (to male: $p = 0.050 = 0.05$; to female: $p = 0.047 < 0.05$), the relevant Table 5 and Table 6 are shown as follows.

Therefore, compared with male speakers, the data indicate that females preferred to use more supportive moves to soften the intensity of their requests for both genders.

4.4. Social Distance

In this study, social distance played an extremely notable role in determining the participants' use of openers and supportive moves. The openers used by males and females for interlocutors with different genders and social distances were obviously different, and the use times of various supportive moves were also affected.

Table 5. The comparative data in the use of polite supportive moves by both genders to males.

ANOVA					
VAR00002					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	421.505	1	421.505	4.982	0.050
Within Groups	846.013	10	84.601		
Total	1267.518	11			

Table 6. The comparative data in the use of polite supportive moves by both genders to females.

ANOVA					
VAR00002					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	455.717	1	455.717	5.120	0.047
Within Groups	890.021	10	89.002		
Total	1345.737	11			

According to Table 7, we can see that in Situations 1 (−SD and −SP), 4 (=SD and −SP), and 7 (+SD and −SP), when male participants making requests to male interlocutors with different social distances, there are significant differences between the polite openers they used in the three situations ($p = 0.033 < 0.05$), the more unfamiliar the relationship between the interlocutor and the participant is, the more frequently male participants used polite openers; furthermore, the frequency of men's use of the polite supportive moves for male strangers has increased significantly, therefore, this set of comparative data was considered highly statistically significant ($p = 0.004 < 0.05$).

Based on the data shown in Table 8, when making requests to female interlocutors, the frequency of the polite openers used by male speakers also changes with the factor of social distance ($p = 0.040 < 0.05$); however, when making requests to female strangers, the frequency of polite supportive moves used by

Table 7. The comparative data on males' use of the three acts to male addressees in S1, S4, and S7.

	Sub-strategies	N	%	F	Sig.
Polite openers	Title/role	58	37.18		
	Greeting	16	10.26	6.315	0.033
	Apology	46	29.49		
Impolite openers	Vocative	23	14.74	0.303	0.759
	Aggravator	0			
Polite head acts	Query-preparatory	58	37.18		
	Suggestory-formula	0	0	0.322	0.737
	Strong hints	0	0		
	Mild hints	0	0		
Impolite head acts	Mood derivable	16	10.26		
	Want statement	48	30.77	0.500	0.630
	Hedged performatives	28	17.95		
Polite supportive moves	Preparatory	9	5.77		
	Pre-commitment	18	11.54		
	Imposition minimize	19	12.18	8.379	0.004
	Gratitude	13	8.33		
	Reward	15	9.62		
	Disarmer	7	4.49		

Table 8. The comparative data on males' use of the three acts to female addressees in S1, S4, and S7.

	Sub-strategies	N	%	F	Sig.
	Title/role	62	43.06		
Polite openers	Greeting	17	11.81	5.779	0.040
	Apology	45	31.25		
Impolite openers	Vocative	16	11.11	0.512	0.623
	Aggravator	0	0		
	Query-preparatory	74	51.39		
Polite head acts	Suggestory-formula	0	0	0.283	0.763
	Strong hints	0	0		
	Mild hints	0	0		
	Mood derivable	12	8.33		
Impolite head acts	Want statement	31	21.53	0.418	0.676
	Hedged performatives	29	20.14		
	Preparatory	15	10.42		
	Pre-commitment	19	13.19		
Polite supportive moves	Imposition minimize	20	13.89	6.371	0.010
	Gratitude	11	7.64		
	Reward	16	11.11		
	Disarmer	10	6.94		

men has increased significantly, therefore, this study found that there was a notable difference between the polite supportive moves used by males in the three situations ($p = 0.010 < 0.05$).

Table 9 indicates that in situations 2 (−SD and =SP), 5 (=SD and =SP), and 8 (+SD and =SP), only the difference between the polite openers used by men to the interlocutors with different familiarity was significant ($p = 0.044 < 0.05$), and for female requestees, there were no significant differences in men's use of the three acts have been found.

For males' data in situations 3 (−SD and +SP), 6 (=SD and +SP), and 9 (+SD and +SP), no matter whether the requestee is female or male, the data show that there were no significant differences in the males' uses of openers, head acts and supportive moves to them.

Table 9. The comparative data on males' use of the three acts to male addressees in S2, S5, and S8.

	Sub-strategies	N	%	F	Sig.
Polite openers	Title/role	12	7.69		
	Greeting	9	5.77	5.509	0.044
	Apology	36	23.08		
Impolite openers	Vocative	26	16.67	2.474	0.165
	Aggravator	23	14.74		
Polite head acts	Query-preparatory	62	39.74		
	Suggestory-formula	9	5.77	0.418	0.676
	Strong hints	0	0		
	Mild hints	0	0		
Impolite head acts	Mood derivable	29	18.59		
	Want statement	26	16.67	1.608	0.276
	Hedged performatives	30	19.23		
Polite supportive moves	Preparatory	9	5.77		
	Pre-commitment	16	10.26		
	Imposition minimize	11	7.05	1.764	0.205
	Gratitude	9	5.77		
	Reward	23	14.74		
	Disarmer	7	4.49		

With regard to females' data in situations 1 (−SD and −SP), 4 (=SD and −SP), and 7 (+SD and −SP) shown in Table 10, by comparing the data in the three scenarios, this study found that females had different choices in using polite openers, head acts and supportive moves when making requests to the interlocutors with different familiarities (polite operners: $p = 0.022 < 0.05$; polite head acts $p = 0.040 < 0.05$; polite supportive moves: $p = 0.017 < 0.05$), thereby, these three sets of data were considered statistically significant.

Table 11 shows that female speakers utilized a brunch of polite openers and supportive moves for unfamiliar female interlocutors (polite openers: $p = 0.021 < 0.05$; polite supportive moves: $p = 0.011 < 0.05$).

In the other two comparative groups (S2, S5, and S8 and S3, S6, and S9), this study did not find any significant statistical difference in female speakers' use of these three behaviors for female addressees.

Table 10. The comparative data on females' use of the three acts to male addressees in S1, S4, and S7.

	Sub-strategies	N	%	F	Sig.
Polite openers	Title/role	51	35.42		
	Greeting	22	15.28	7.729	0.022
	Apology	55	38.19		
Impolite openers	Vocative	9	6.25	0.600	0.579
	Aggravator	0	0		
Polite head acts	Query-preparatory	106	73.61		
	Suggestory-formula	0	0	5.741	0.040
	Strong hints	0	0		
	Mild hints	0	0		
Impolite head acts	Mood derivable	11	7.64		
	Want statement	8	5.56	0.063	0.939
	Hedged performatives	19	13.19		
Polite supportive moves	Preparatory	33	22.92		
	Pre-commitment	28	19.44		
	Imposition minimize	36	25	5.429	0.017
	Gratitude	23	15.97		
	Reward	17	11.81		
	Disarmer	23	15.97		

To sum up, regardless of the gender of the interlocutor, both male and female speakers increased their frequency of using polite openers and polite supportive moves when proposing requests to a stranger, but facing intimate and familiar interlocutos they still but there is no significant difference in the use of head acts.

4.5. Social Power

According to the analyzed data, we can see that the frequency of male and female speakers' use of polite openers, head acts, and supportive moves has increased more or less when making requests to the addressee with higher social power, but the data did not prove that the social power has a notable impact on students' use of openers, head acts, and supportive moves.

Therefore, the social status gap between the requestees and the requesters may affect the speaker's choice of openers, head acts and supportive moves, however, social power cannot be considered as the influential factor dominating requestors' use of these three behaviors.

Table 11. The comparative data on females' use of the three acts to female addressees in S1, S4, and S7.

	Sub-strategies	N	%	F	Sig.
	Title/role	52	36.11		
Polite openers	Greeting	22	15.28	7.794	0.021
	Apology	55	38.19		
Impolite openers	Vocative	5	3.47	0.538	0.631
	Aggravator	0	0		
	Query-preparatory	109	75.69		
Polite head acts	Suggestory-formula	0	0	0.044	0.957
	Strong hints	0	0		
	Mild hints	0	0		
	Mood derivable	8	5.56		
Impolite head acts	Want statement	7	4.86	1.914	0.228
	Hedged performatives	20	13.89		
	Preparatory	37	25.69		
	Pre-commitment	43	29.86		
Polite supportive moves	Imposition minimize	38	26.39	6.162	0.011
	Gratitude	26	18.06		
	Reward	17	11.81		
	Disarmer	26	18.06		

5. Conclusion

In terms of the three research questions, the findings of this study are as follows:

Firstly, the gender of the addressee is not the main factor affecting the college students' use of openers, head acts, and supportive moves, the impact of gender is negligible in this study.

Social distance is an influential factor for college students in the use of the three acts, the more unfamiliar the addressee is, the more frequently most of the participants use polite openers, head acts, and supportive moves.

Social power may affect their use of the three acts more or less, but according to the analyzed data, there were no significant differences found in this study.

Moreover, according to data, this study additionally found that compared with male speakers, regardless of the requestee's gender, female students used supportive moves much more frequently than male students did, therefore, fe-

male students preferred to use polite supportive moves to soften the intensity of their requests.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

This is a research questionnaire. Please help to fill the part 1 and 2 out in detail and please ensure that all the information and questions are filled out in detail. Please do not have to think carefully for a long time when filling in the form, just answer with your most authentic response. Thanks for your cooperation!

Part 1

Gender: _____

Department: _____

Part 2

Situation 1: How would you tell your younger brother/sister if you want to ask him/her to help you go to the convenience store near your home to buy things for you?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 2: The final exam is coming, but you think the subject is too difficult, so you want to ask a classmate in your class who is close to you for advice and want to ask him or her to help you review, how would you ask him or her for help?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 3: You had dinner with your father/mother today, but suddenly you found that you forgot to bring money, and the meal cost was 100 NT dollars. How would you ask the other party to borrow money?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 4: How would you tell a junior who has a good relationship with you to help you go to a convenience store on the campus to buy things for you?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 5: The final exam is coming, but you think this subject is too difficult, so you want to ask your classmates who have a good relationship with you to help you review, how would you ask him or her for help?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 6: Today, you had dinner with a senior who has a good relationship with you, but you found that you forgot to bring money when you checked out, and how would you borrow money from him or her if the meal cost was 100 NT dollars?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 7: You went to a certain place to travel, but you were not familiar with the local area, so you got lost. At this time, a junior high school student in school uniform passed by. You asked him/her for directions, but still felt unclear, therefore, you wanted to ask the addressee to help you lead the way, so how would you ask him/her

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 8: The final exam is coming, but you think this subject is too difficult, so you want to ask a classmate in your class who is unfamiliar with you but who is good at learning, therefore, you want to ask him or her to help you review, so how would you ask him or her for help?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____

Situation 9: You had dinner with your professor today, but when you checked out, you found that you forgot to bring money, and the meal cost was 100 NT dollars, how would you ask him/her to borrow money?

The object is female: _____

The object is male: _____