External mitigation:
Supportive moves in Japanese requests

Saeko FUKUSHIMA

Abstract

This article investigated supportive moves in Japanese requests, exploring the frequency and the kinds of supportive moves in relation to power difference between a speaker (S) and a hearer (H), distance between S and H, degree of imposition of the requested act, and (in)directness of head acts. The data were 969 e-mail requests by Japanese university students. The results showed that supportive moves were frequently used (1) when there was a power difference between S and H, (2) when there was a distance between S and H, and (3) when degree of imposition was high, and that grounders were frequently used overall. The results also showed that supportive moves were less frequently used when direct requests were used than when indirect requests were employed.

Keyword s: external mitigation, supportive moves, requests, Japanese, (in)directness

1. Introduction

This study investigates the requests in Japanese, focusing on external mitigation, i.e., supportive moves. Although supportive moves have been previously researched in some studies, there are not many studies which focused on supportive moves. And some of the studies which examined supportive moves investigated interlanguage. For example, Faerch and Kasper (1989) dealt with interlanguage request realization, and Trosborg (1995) investigated learners' performance compared with native speakers of English and Danish. Schauer (2007) examined German university students' ability to soften the illocutionary force of request utterances by employing a range of external modifiers, i.e., supportive moves. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) investigated how Greek non-native speakers of English deviated from British English native speakers in lexical and phrasal downgraders and external supportive moves in order to soften the force of English requests in power-asymmetrical situations. To my knowledge, research on supportive moves has concentrated on interlanguage, except for Fukushima (1996), which compared British requests and Japanese requests, Fukushima and Uematsu (2005), which investigated requests from the viewpoint of closed role-plays and open role-plays, and Ogiermann (2009), which compared English, German, Polish and Russian requests. Although the supportive moves were investigated in those studies, they were not the central point. In this study, therefore, the

supportive moves in Japanese as a mother tongue were focused, although there are cases in which there are only head acts in requests or there are also cases in which requests consist of head acts and other parts such as alerters and supportive moves[1].

The purposes of the present study are to investigate the frequency and the kinds of supportive moves in relation to the followings: the power difference and the distance between a speaker (or a requester) (S) and a hearer (or a requestee) (H), the degree of imposition, the (in)directness of the head acts, and the gender of the sender and the receiver of requests, and to investigate the function of supportive moves based on the results of the above.

There are the following six hypotheses in the present study. If supportive moves are used in order to mitigate the request force, it is hypothesized that they are used to compensate for the power difference and the distance between S and H, the degree of imposition of the requested act, and the following hypotheses arise:

1. More supportive moves are used when there is a power difference between S and H (H has more power than S) (P+: S<H) than when there is no power difference.
2. More supportive moves are used when there is a distance between S and H than when there is no distance.
3. More supportive moves are used when the degree of imposition of the requested act is high than when the degree of imposition is low.

   If supportive moves are used to mitigate the brusqueness of the direct requests, it is hypothesized as follows:

4. More supportive moves are used when direct head acts are used than when indirect head acts are used.

In previous studies (e.g., Fearch and Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Fukushima, 1996; Fukushima and Uematsu, 2005), grounders were most frequently used among the supportive moves. People tend to state the reasons and give explanations for the request when making a request. Therefore, it is hypothesized as follows:

5. Grounders are most frequently used among the six supportive moves.

To my knowledge, there have been no studies investigating the gender difference of the supportive moves. It is hypothesized as follows:

6.   There are no major gender differences in the use of the supportive moves.

According to Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989: 276), a supportive move is a unit external to the request, which modifies its impact by either aggravating or mitigating force. They cite the following examples:

> Aggravating: Stop bothering me *or I'll call the police.*
> Mitigating: Could you clean up this mess? *I'm having some friends over for dinner tonight.*

In the present paper, aggravating supportive moves are not investigated, as they were not found in the data. Blum-Kulka, et al.'s (1989: 287-288) following six mitigating supportive moves are used in this study.

1. Preparator

The speaker prepares his or her hearer for the ensuing request by announcing that he or she will make a request by asking about the potential availability of the hearer for carrying out the request, or by asking for the hearer's permission to make the request --- without however giving away the nature or indeed the content of the request.

e.g., I'd like to ask you something. . .

2. Getting a precommitment

In checking on a potential refusal before making his or her request, a speaker tries to commit his or her hearer before telling him or her what he is letting himself or herself in for.

e.g., *Could you do me a favor?* (Would you lend me your notes from yesterday's class?)

3. Grounder

The speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request, which may either precede or follow it.

e.g., Judith, *I missed class yesterday.* Could I borrow your notes?

4. Disarmer

The speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request.

e.g., *I know you don't like lending out your notes*, but could you make an exception this time?

5. Promise of reward

To increase the likelihood of the hearer's compliance with the speaker's request, a reward due on fulfillment of the request, is announced.

e.g., Could you give me a lift home? *I'll pitch in on some gas.*

6. Imposition minimizer

The speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by his request.

e.g., Would you give me a lift, *but only if you're going my way.*

Since the data were in Japanese, the examples of each supportive move in the data and English gloss are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Supportive moves

Supportive move	Feature	Example	English gloss
SM1 Preparator	Preparing the hearer for the ensuing request	*Chotto iikana?* *Kougi deta?*	Got a minute? Did you attend the lecture?
SM2 Getting a precommitment	Checking on a potential refusal before making a request	*Onegai kiitekurerukana?*	Can you do me a favor?
SM3 Grounder	Giving reasons, explanations or justifications for a request	*Netsuga atte kinou kougi ikenakattanda.*	I couldn't attend the lecture yesterday, because I had a fever.
SM4 Disarmer	Trying to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request	*Noto kashitakunaino shitterundakedo. . .* *Waruindakedo. . .* *Gomenne.*	I know you don't like lending out your notes, but. . . I hate bothering you, but. . . Sorry.
SM5 Promise of reward	Announcing a reward due on fulfillment of the request, to increase the likelihood of the hearer's compliance with the request	*Gasorindai harauyo.* *Kondo ogoruyo.*	I'll pitch in on some gas. I'll treat you next time.
SM6 Imposition minimizer	Trying to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by a request	*Moshi ima tsukatte nakattara.* *Moshi yokattara.*	If you are not using it now If it is all right

2. The studies

Two separate studies make up this research, the results of the first study being used in the analysis of the second study. The first study investigates whether there is any difference among the supportive moves in the acceptability of requests. The idea behind the first study was that there might be differences in the degree of mitigating force among different supportive moves. If a certain supportive move has more mitigating force than others, a request with that supportive move is more acceptable than others. The second study, the main part of this research, analyzed requests collected through e-mail.

2.1. The first study

2.1.1. Participants

Forty-five Japanese university students (fourteen males and thirty-one females; age range: 19-24; mean age: 20.3) served as the participants.

2.1.2. Research instrument

The participants were given two situations: situation 1 being with a high degree of imposition (A close friend of yours, A, and you attend English Linguistics class. You have a final exam tomorrow. A asks you to make a photocopy of your notebook for the days A was absent); situation 2 being with a low degree of imposition (A close friend of yours, B, and you work part-time at the same place. B asks you to substitute for him/her on the 20th, because s/he'd like to attend a job fair that day), and in each situation six supportive moves (preparator, getting a precommitment, grounder, disarmer, promise of reward and imposition minimizer) were given (see appendix 1). These two situations were chosen from the request situations which university students had reported that they had actually occurred in their lives. Situations with different degrees of imposition were selected, because most of the requests were made among equals and among those who were not very distant from each other in the students' real lives so that only the degree of imposition was different among the situations.

2.1.3. Procedure

The participants were asked whether the request was more acceptable or not, when the requests were accompanied by one of the six supportive moves (preparator, getting a precommitment, grounder, disarmer, promise of reward and imposition minimizer) (see table 1). They were asked to rate the acceptability of the requests and to tick on a five-point-scale, 1 being very unacceptable, 5 being very acceptable (see appendix 1).

2.1.4. Data analysis and results

The mean scores of acceptability for each supportive move in situations 1 and 2 are calculated. The mean score of acceptability for each supportive move in situation 1 (to make a photocopy of your notebook) is presented in table 2. The mean score of acceptability for each supportive move in situation 2 (to substitute a part-time job) is presented in table 3.

Table 2. Mean score of acceptability of supportive moves in situation 1

Supportive move	Mean score
Preparator	2.84 (1.13)
Getting a precommitment	3.29 (1.11)
Grounder	3.16 (1.11)
Disarmer	4.16 (1.05)
Promise of reward	3.78 (1.15)
Imposition minimizer	3.58 (1.24)

Numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviation.

Table 3. Mean score of acceptability of supportive moves in situation 2

Supportive move	Mean score
Preparator	2.93 (1.25)
Getting a precommitment	3.07 (1.2)
Grounder	4.07 (.95)
Disarmer	4.09 (1.05)
Promise of reward	3.84 (1.09)
Imposition minimizer	3.84 (1.19)

Numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviation.

These results show that the requests with the disarmers are the most acceptable both in situations 1 (4.16) and 2 (4.09). By use of disarmers, S tries not only to remove any potential objections H might raise upon being confronted with the request, but S also shows consideration for H. This may be why the requests with the disarmers were the most acceptable. The requests with the preparators were the least acceptable (situation 1: 2.84; situation 2: 2.93). Preparators just indicate that a request will follow; therefore, they only slightly mitigate the request force, although they function to establish rapport before presenting a request (see Trosborg, 1995: 269).

In situation 1, grounders were most frequently used in the actual situation which occurred in students' lives, but the average score for the grounders in the present study was lower than that for the disarmers. This may be because the reason stated here was not justified (Just a day before the exam A asks to make a photocopy of your notebook for the days A was absent) (see situation 1 in appendix 1).

The results in situation 2 are similar to those in situation 1, the requests with the disarmers being the most acceptable and those with the preparators the least. The major difference between the results in situation 1 and those in situation 2 was that the mean score for the

grounders was higher in situation 2 than in situation 1. Actually, in situation 2, the mean score for the grounders (4.07) was not very different from that for the disarmers (4.09). This may be because the reason in situation 2 is justified, i.e., it was not S's fault as in situation 1, but the job fair happens to fall on the day of the part-time job (see situation 2 in appendix 1 and table 3). This suggests that requests with grounders are also very acceptable.

2.2. The second study

2.2.1. Participants

Sixty-nine Japanese university students (thirteen males and fifty-six females; mean age: 20.59; age range: 19-23) served as the participants in this study.

2.2.2. Data collection

The participants collected e-mail messages, which are authentic naturally occurring written data, containing requests. From those they chose requests which they thought they could make public. In order to have conformity among the e-mail requests, the messages were confined to those which were sent from one person to a single other person which were made initially, i.e., excluding requests which were made after compliances or refusals. As a result, 969 requests were collected.

When the data were collected, the participants were asked to describe the request situations, which included the power relationship between S and H, the distance between S and H, and the degree of imposition of the requested act. Therefore, the researcher did not decide or imagine the power difference, the relationship between S and H or the degree of imposition. I think it is very important that a researcher does not decide or imagine the relationship between S and H or the degree of imposition, as the relationship between S and H (e.g., whether S and H are close or not) may differ in each situation although they are employed with the same company or are family members (see Berscheid, et al., 1989). For example, all parents and children are not necessarily close, although they are sometimes taken as close, or there are colleagues who are close/distant. The degree of imposition of the requested act may be also different from person to person, even if the requested act is the same. For one person, it may be with a low degree of imposition, for another it may be with a high degree of imposition, depending on the time, money, energy or ability, etc. H has, or also on how important these are to H.

2.2.3. Data analysis

The data were analyzed as follows.

1. The data were first classified into those with supportive moves and those without supportive moves, and the frequency of the use of supportive moves was calculated.

2. The kinds of supportive moves were investigated.

3. The data were analyzed according to the power difference and the distance between S and H, and the degree of imposition, and a combination of these three factors, i.e., according to the twelve conditions (e.g., condition 1: There is a power difference between S and H, and S has more power than H (P+: S>H). There is a distance between S and H (D+). Degree of imposition is high (IH)) (see appendix 2).

4. The data were analyzed in relation to the head acts. The number of the supportive moves in each head act, i.e., per a request, was counted. The kinds of the supportive moves were investigated in each head act. The data were analyzed in relation to the most frequently used head acts[2] under the twelve conditions.

5. The data were analyzed with a combination of the supportive moves and the gender of the sender and the receiver of the e-mail messages: (1) from female to female, (2) from female to male, (3) from male to male and (4) from male to female.

2.2.4. Results

The results of the first analysis (the use of supportive moves) show that 66.0% of the requests collected in this study were with supportive moves.

The results of the second analysis (the kinds of supportive moves) show that grounders (44.2%) were most frequently used among all the supportive moves, followed by preparators (22.4%) and disarmers (19.0%). From these results, hypothesis 5 (Grounders are most frequently used among the six supportive moves) was supported.

The results of the third analysis (the data analysis according to power difference, distance between S and H and the degree of imposition, and the twelve conditions) show that there was no major difference in the most frequently used supportive moves between a condition with a power difference and one without a power difference between S and H, the grounders being most frequently used (P+: S>H: 48.0%; P+: S<H: 50.9%; P-: 41.6%). However, there was a difference in the use of the second and third most frequently used supportive moves. When there was a power difference between S and H, the disarmers were the second most frequently used (P+: S>H: 19.1%; P+: S<H: 20.0%) after the grounders, and the preparators were the third most frequently used supportive moves (P+: S>H: 17.8%; P+: S<H: 13.9%). When there was no power difference between S and H, the preparators (25.7%) were the second most frequently used supportive moves after the grounders, and the disarmers (18.7%) were the third most frequently used supportive moves.

Regarding the distance between S and H, there was no major difference in the use of the

most frequently used supportive moves when there was a distance and when there was no distance between S and H, the grounders being most frequently used (D+: 42.1%; D-: 44.8%), according to the results of the third analysis. The only difference was that the second most frequently used supportive moves were the disarmers (26.4%) when there was a distance between S and H, whereas preparators (23.2%) were second most frequently used when there was no distance between S and H. The third most frequently used supportive moves were the preparators (19.3%) when there was a distance, and they were the disarmers (17.1%) when there was no distance between S and H.

Regarding the degree of imposition, the most frequently used supportive moves were the grounders both with the high degree of imposition (40.8%) and with the low degree of imposition (46.6%), according to the results of the third analysis. The second most frequently used supportive moves were the disarmers (22.3%) with the high degree of imposition, and the preparators (24.6%) were used when the degree of imposition was low. The third most frequently used supportive moves were the preparators (19.2%) with the high degree of imposition, and the disarmers (16.7%) with the low degree of imposition.

In short, when there was a power difference and a distance between S and H and when the degree of imposition was high, supportive moves were used in the order of grounders (G), disarmers (D) and preparators (P) (G>D>P). And when there was no power difference and no distance between S and H and when the degree of imposition was low, supportive moves were used in the order of grounders, preparators and disarmers (G>P>D), the second and the third most frequently used supportive moves being reversed.

An analysis with a combination of the power difference and the distance between S and H, and the degree of imposition of the requested act (i.e., twelve conditions (see appendix 2)) tells us that the supportive moves were used most frequently (90.0%) under condition 5 (P+: S<H; D+; IH). From these findings, the hypotheses 1 (More supportive moves are used when there is a power difference between S and H than when there is no power difference), 2 (More supportive moves are used when there is a distance between S and H than when there is no distance) and 3 (More supportive moves are used when the degree of imposition of the requested act is high than when the degree of imposition is low) were supported. The supportive moves were, however, also used relatively frequently (66.0%) under condition 12 (P-; D-; IL).

According to the results of the fourth analysis (the data analysis in relation to head acts), the number of supportive moves used along with head acts did not exceed four in all the head acts. Overall, one supportive move was used most frequently (44.7%) along with most of the head acts, followed by no supportive moves (31.6%) and two supportive moves (19.2%). As for the kinds of the supportive moves, the grounders were most frequently used along with

all the head acts.

When we look at the results in relation to the most frequently used head acts (see appendix 2), the supportive moves were frequently used when such an indirect and formal head act as negative politeness 2 (N2) (see notes to appendix 2) was frequently used, according to the results of the fourth analysis. Especially under condition 5 (P+: S<H; D+; IH), supportive moves were most frequently used (90.0%). Under condition 8 (P+: S<H; D-; IL), such direct and informal head acts as bald-on-record 1 (B1) (see notes to appendix 2) were most frequently used. Under this condition, supportive moves were not very frequently used (52.2%). This means that supportive moves were more frequently used when head acts were indirect and formal than when head acts were direct and informal. From these findings, hypothesis 4 (More supportive moves are used when direct head acts are used than when indirect head acts are used) was rejected.

The results of the fifth analysis (the data analysis with gender combination) show that there were no major differences in the use of supportive moves in the gender combinations of the sender and the receiver of e-mail messages. The grounders were most frequently used in all the gender combinations (from female to female: 42.6%; from female to male: 48.9%; from male to male: 55.0%; from male to female: 48.9%). From these findings, hypothesis 6 (There are no major gender differences in the use of the supportive moves) was supported.

3. Discussion

The results of the present study show that 66.0% of the requests in the data were made with supportive moves and that the grounders were most frequently used among all the supportive moves with no gender differences. The participants tried to mitigate a request force by using grounders in most cases. The most frequent use of grounders among the supportive moves coincides with the results of the previous studies (e.g., Fearch and Kasper (1989), Trosborg (1995), Fukushima (1996) and Fukushima and Uematsu (2005)). This suggests that grounders are efficient mitigating strategies. Although the requests with the grounders were not rated as the most acceptable according to the results of the first study, the mean score of acceptability for the grounders (4.07) in situation 2 did not differ very much from that for the disarmer (4.09), which scored the highest. According to Fearch and Kasper (1989: 239), giving reasons, justifications, and explanations for an action opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s). Trosborg (1995: 218) states that it is important that the requester gives his/her specific reason(s) for making the request. If he/she presents an explanation, a justification, etc., the hearer may be more willing to comply with the request. These indicate that with the use of grounders it is easy for S to obtain compliance of the requests from H.

The preparators were the second most frequently used and the disarmers were the third most frequently used overall. However, a closer analysis showed that ranking of the use of supportive moves sometimes switches, depending on the condition of the situations. Such a switch occurred with the second and third most frequently used supportive moves. When a factor exists which needs compensation, i.e., a power difference, a distance between S and H, or a high degree of imposition, the disarmers were the second most frequently used, and the preparators were the third most frequently used. However, when there was no power difference and no distance between S and H, and when the degree of imposition was low, the preparators were the second and the disarmers were the third most frequently used supportive moves. Among all the supportive moves, the disarmers were rated most highly (4.16 out of 5 in situation 1, and 4.09 in situation 2) (see tables 2 and 3), according to the results of the first study. This means that with the disarmers, the requests are the most acceptable, and that the disarmers mitigate the request force most among the six supportive moves. The preparators, on the contrary, were rated least highly according to the results of the first study (mean score: 2.9 in both situations 1 and 2) (see tables 2 and 3). Therefore, the participants used the disarmers more frequently than the preparators when there was a power difference and a distance between S and H, and when the degree of the imposition was high. This suggests that the participants tried to mitigate the request force, which arose from a power difference, a distance between S and H or a high degree of imposition, or they tried to show self-restraint in their requests with a power difference and a distance by the use of the disarmers with the strongest force of mitigation.

Although the supportive moves were most frequently used with a power difference and a distance between S and H and a high degree of imposition (e.g., condition 5: 90.0%), the supportive moves were also found when the degree of imposition was low, and when there was no power difference or distance between S and H (e.g., condition 12: 66.0%). From these findings, it can be said that supportive moves are used not only to mitigate the request force, i.e., to compensate for the power difference, the distant relationship between S and H, or a high degree of imposition, but also to show concern for H and to maintain a good relationship with H, by showing solidarity, for instance. Since the requests cost H some energy, time or money, etc., showing concern for H and maintaining a good relationship with H are important in obtaining the compliance of the requests from H.

It was hypothesized that supportive moves would be used more frequently when the head acts were direct than when they were indirect in order to reduce the brusqueness of the direct requests. However, the results of the present study showed that this was not necessarily the case. Supportive moves were more frequently used when head acts were indirect and formal than when they were direct and informal[3]. This may be because indirect and formal requests were used frequently under a condition with a power difference and a distance between S

and H and a high degree of imposition. While supportive moves were used in order to mitigate a power difference, a distance between S and H and a high degree of imposition, they were not used to reduce the brusqueness of direct requests. As the data of the present study were from e-mail, many of the requests were accompanied by pictographs. By use of pictographs, the brusqueness of direct requests may be reduced instead of using supportive moves, as both direct requests and pictographs were frequently used among close friends (see Fukushima, 2008). Or it may be also the case that the brusqueness of direct requests needs not be reduced, as direct requests were used among close friends.

4. Conclusion

According to Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), supportive moves are used to mitigate or aggravate the request force. There were no aggravating supportive moves in the data of the present study. The function of mitigating the request force by supportive moves was confirmed from the findings of this study. The supportive moves, however, were also used when there were not many factors to mitigate, i.e., power difference and distance between S and H, and a high degree of imposition. This suggests that there is another function of the supportive moves, i.e., to show concern for H or to maintain a good relationship with H by showing solidarity. If H feels good when S shows concern or solidarity to H, H is willing to fulfill a request. Therefore, it can be said that supportive moves are used in order to receive compliance of the requests from H.

The strength of this paper lies in its focus on the supportive moves and in the analysis of the supportive moves along with the head acts, as to my knowledge no previous research has focused on the supportive moves and has analyzed the data in relation to head acts. However, the requests consist not only of the head acts and the supportive moves, but also of alerters and pictographs especially when the requests are made through e-mail. Further research on these will be needed in order to investigate the requests in more detail.

Notes

1. Requests consist of a head act, an alerter and a supportive move. Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989: 275-276) explain them as follows:

   A head act is the minimal unit which can realize a request; it is the core of the request sequence. An alerter is an opening element preceding the actual request, such as a term of address or an attention getter. A supportive move is a unit external to the request, which modifies its impact by either aggravating or mitigating its force.

2. The frequency of head acts was calculated in Fukushima (unpublished manuscript).

3. For example, under condition 5 (P+: S<H; D+; IH), such indirect and formal requests as negative politeness 2 (N2) (see notes to appendix 2) were used most frequently (65.0%) according to the

results in Fukushima (unpublished manuscript), and the frequency of use of supportive moves was 90.0%. The frequency of use of supportive moves under condition 4 (P+: S>H; D-; IL) was 63.3%, which was less frequent than that under condition 5, and such direct and informal requests as bald-on-record 1 (B1) (see notes to appendix 2) were used most frequently (27.8%), according to the results in Fukushima (unpublished manuscript). Also under condition 12 (P-; D-; IL), the frequency of use of supportive moves was 66.0%, which was less frequent than that under condition 5, and such direct and informal requests as bald-on-record 1 (B1) (23.7%) and such indirect and informal requests as positive politeness 2 (P2) (see notes to appendix 2) (43.8%) were used according to the results in Fukushima (unpublished manuscript).

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Appendix 1: Research instrument in the first study

The original version was in Japanese, as the situations were chosen from those which had actually occurred in Japan and all the participants were Japanese. Alphabetical letters, A and B, were used to name the people in the situations to avoid the influence of gender.

Situation 1

Tomorrow morning (the first class) you will have a final exam in English Linguistics, which is a compulsory subject. Since you have many things to remember, you stay up late preparing for the exam. A close friend of yours, A, who is also taking English Linguistics, phones you. A asks you if s/he can make a photocopy of your notebook for the days A was absent.

If the following words are added to the request, how acceptable are the requests? Tick the one from one to five, one being very unacceptable and five being very acceptable.

(1) Did you attend the English Linguistic lecture on the 1st of June?

(2) I have a favor to ask of you.

(3) While I was preparing for the exam, I realized that I didn't have the notes for the 1st of June.

(4) I'm sorry to bother you the day before the exam.

(5) I'll pay you back next time.

(6) I will give the notes back to you soon.

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(unacceptable)                                              (acceptable)
1              2              3              4              5
|_____|_____|_____|_____|
|              |              |              |              |
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(The scale was given after each supportive move.)

Situation 2

While you were watching TV at home, a close friend of yours, B, phoned you. B works part-time at the same place as you. B asked you to substitute for him/her on the 20th of next month. You are not scheduled to work on that day and you are not busy. You go to work by train.

If the following words are added to the request, how acceptable are the requests? Tick the one from one to five, one being very unacceptable and five being very acceptable.

(1) Are you free on the 20th of next month?

(2) I have a favor to ask of you.

(3) I'd like to attend a job fair.

(4) I'm sorry to bother you.

(5) I'll treat you to dinner soon.

(6) I'll pay the train fare.

```
       (unacceptable)                                    (acceptable)
   1                  2              3              4              5
   |_____|_____|_____|_____|
```

(The scale was given after each supportive move.)

Appendix 2: Twelve conditions, the use of head acts & supportive moves

Condition	Power difference between S and H	Distance between S and H	Degree of imposition	Most frequently used head acts[*]	Frequency of use of supportive moves
1	+ (S>H)	+	High	P2 (38.5%)	80.8%
2	+ (S>H)	+	Low	P2 (30.4%)	65.2%
3	+ (S>H)	−	High	P2 (60.6%)	72.7%
4	+ (S>H)	−	Low	B1 (27.8%)	63.3%
5	+ (S<H)	+	High	N2 (65.0%)	90.0%
6	+ (S<H)	+	Low	N2 (42.1%)	73.7%
7	+ (S<H)	−	High	N2 (52.0%)	76.0%
8	+ (S<H)	−	Low	B1 (25.6%)	52.2%
9	−	+	High	P2 (29.2%)	70.8%
10	−	+	Low	P2 (27.7%)	83.0%
11	−	−	High	P2 (61.2%)	72.9%
12	−	−	Low	P2 (43.8%)	66.0%

Power +: There is a power difference between S and H. S>H: S has more power than H. S<H: H has more power than H. Power-: There is no power difference between S and H. Distance+: S and H are not close. Distance-: S and H are close.

[*]Head acts were classified according to the classification in Fukushima (2004), which was based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) following strategies: bald-on-record, positive, negative and off-record strategies. The basic feature of bald-on-record strategies is to state the request directly, while that of positive politeness strategies is to state the request informally. The main feature of negative politeness strategies is to state the request formally, and that of off-record strategies is to state the request indirectly. With off-record strategies it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the speaker. It is up to the requestee to decide how to interpret the utterance. In Fukushima (2004) each head act was classified into two, depending on the (in)directness and the (in)formality. As a result, there were the following eight head acts: bald-on-record strategy 1 (B1), bald-on-record strategy 2 (B2), positive politeness strategy 1 (P1), positive politeness strategy 2 (P2), negative politeness strategy 1 (N1), negative politeness strategy 2 (N2), off-record strategy 1 (O1) and off-record strategy 2 (O2). While B1, B2, P1 and N1 were considered to be direct, P2, N2, O1 and O2 were considered to be indirect. B1, P1, P2 and O1 were in the domain of informal requests, whereas B2, N1, N2 and O2 were in the domain of formal requests. The frequency of the head acts indicated here is from the results of Fukushima (unpublished manuscript), which analyzed the data according to the classification in Fukushima (2004).