

L1 influences on interlanguage requests by Japanese and Chinese EFL learners

— focus on supportive moves as request strategies —

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The present study attempts to explore how L1 sociopragmatic knowledge and pragmalinguistic selection influence the Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' interlanguage (IL) requests in terms of supportive moves in English. Forty-eight Japanese and fifty-four Chinese English-major university students participated in the experiments. Their use of supportive moves as external downgraders in their L1 and IL requests was analyzed and compared. The data were collected by means of an open Discourse Complete Test (DCT). A two factor ANOVA was employed to examine if Power factor and Language difference factor influenced their IL requests significantly.

Results showed that L1 sociopragmatic knowledge and Power factor have a strong influence on the use of supportive moves in IL requests in both Japanese and Chinese EFL groups. However, only Chinese EFL learners displayed a strong influence from L1 pragmalinguistic selections on the use of supportive moves.

Key words: Interlanguage requests, supportive moves, L1 influence, cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

According to Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper (1989), requests are often preceded by checks on availability ('Are you busy?') and attempts to get a precommitment ('Will you do me a favor?'). They may also be preceded, or followed by grounders, which provide the reason for the request ('I missed class yesterday, could I...') or by promises and threats, all of which serve to persuade the hearer to do x. These external request modifications are defined as supportive moves. It is believed that learners modify their requests internally and externally (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Fraster et al. (1980) noted that what the learner learns about the concept of requesting in his or her first language will carry over into the second. Although there has been lively controversy about the role of L1 transfer in the traditional core areas of second language research (syntax, morphology, semantics), there has been little research about the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic L1 influence on IL request among EFL learners.

Moreover, most studies have focused on internal modifications by what is referred to as 'head acts' during requests, but few studies on external modifications (Fukazawa & Sasaki, 2004). For this reason, this study aims to focus on this neglected aspect of request by examining the similarities and differences between Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' L1 and IL requests, taking into full consideration possible L1 influence from the viewpoint of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic areas. Over and above that, by

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comparing the Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' performances, it is expected that some significant findings could be generalized and therefore contribute to EFL teaching and cross-cultural communications in the Asian area.

2. Research background and research questions

2.1 Theoretical background

Throughout the short life of interlanguage (IL) pragmatics, it has been a virtually uncontested assumption that non-native speaker comprehension and production are considerably influenced by their L1 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992). Transfer is thought to link IL pragmatics to mainstream SL research.

As Kasper (1992) argued, there are two opinions about how to identify the pragmatic transfer. "A simpler and more adequate method is to determine whether the differences between IL and the learner's native language on a particular pragmatic feature are statistically significant, and how these differences relate to the target language. Thus, lack of statistically significant differences in the frequencies of a pragmatic feature in L1, L2, and IL can be operationally defined as positive transfer. Statistically significant differences in the frequencies of a pragmatic feature between IL-L2 and L1-L2 and lack of statistically significant differences between IL and L1 can be operationally defined as negative transfer."

Based on the above ideas, our concern here will not be 'L1 transfer' but will be limited to 'L1 influence'. That is to say, leaving L2 data for future discussion, the present study only focuses on comparing EFL learners' L1 and IL data (here, IL data refer to EFL learners' performance in L2 request) as a preparatory stage for future research on pragmatic transfer. The discussion of comparison with the L2 baseline data is only an optional part in this study. The focus of the study is on the L1 influence on EFL learners' IL requests, without assuming that identifying this L1 influence is a positive or negative transfer.

2.2 Literature review

Faerch and Kasper (1989) in CCSARP, as well as House and Kasper (1987), have compared the use of 'modification' in L2 learners, with that of native speakers. Their study reports that 'grounders' (reasons, explanations, or justifications) were most frequently selected of all the supportive moves. Tanaka (1988) compared the request performance of Japanese students at an Australian university, and that of Australian students as native speakers in role-play situations. It is found that learners did not vary their request to suit the social context.

Fukushima (1990) compared the request performance of Japanese students at a Japanese university with that of native speakers of English by DCT. It is reported that the learners' request performance was direct and did not vary to suit the social context. The studies we have reviewed here indicate that learners are unable to perform requests in effective ways as a consequence of their verbosity of supportive moves. Learners also seem to have difficulty in appropriately varying their requests according to social factors such as their relationship to the addressee. Other studies have concluded that L1 sociopragmatic knowledge has a significant influence on EFL learners' IL performance. (see Wang & Walker, 2006; Kim, 1995)

Fukazawa & Sasaki. (2004) also used DCT to examine L1 and L2 requests in 26 Japanese EFL learners. It was found that Grounders were the most used supportive moves in Japanese EFL learners' requests in both L1 and L2. They gave more grounding information in Japanese than they did in English.

Following the earlier studies, five research questions were organized to guide this research:

Q1: Whether the Language factor and Power factor have influenced Japanese EFL learners' (JEFL) use of supportive moves in their requests or not? If so, in what way? (Sociopragmatic feature/Quantitative Analysis)

- Q2: Whether the Language factor and Power factor have influenced Chinese EFL learners' (CEFL) use of supportive moves in their requests or not? If so, in what way? (Sociopragmatic feature/Quantitative Analysis)
- Q3: What kind of similarities and differences can be found in Japanese EFL learners' selection of supportive moves in their L1 and IL requests? (Pragmalinguistic feature/Qualitative Analysis)
- Q4: What kind of similarities and differences can be found in Chinese EFL learners' selection of supportive moves in their L1 and IL requests? (Pragmalinguistic feature/Qualitative Analysis)
- Q5: What kind of similarities and differences can be found in Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' IL data and native speakers' L2 baseline data regarding the supportive moves? (Reference /Description only)

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

The Japanese participants were 48 undergraduate university students (17 males and 31 females) in Hiroshima University in Japan. The Chinese participants were 54 university students (10 males and 44 females) in Xi'an Foreign Language University in China.

3.2 Materials

Prior to the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), the students were asked to take a grammar test (40 items) in order to ascertain their grammatical proficiency. The t test was used for the analysis and the result showed that there was no significant difference between Japanese and Chinese EFL learners. ($t=1.197$, $p>.05$). Next, the students were asked to complete a DCT containing four situations in English which were varied according to the P (Power) variable of Brown and Levinson (1987). (In order to strengthen the validity of the experiment, the situations were doubled. Two situations were in -P and two situations were in +P.) This included -P (making a request to a close friend) situations and +P (making a request to a familiar professor). The Distance (D) and Ranking of Imposition (R) variables were held steady at -D (between the people familiar with each other) and +R (high-imposition situations). Below are the examples of the English DCT situations used in this research.

(-P; -D; +R)

Situation 1 "*borrow money*"

One day you go shopping with a good friend X from the same class in the university. After you decide to buy an expensive electronic dictionary you suddenly notice that you forgot to bring any money with you. You ask your friend X to lend you some money until the following week. What do you say to your friend X?

(+P; -D; +R)

Situation 2 "*Change the appointment*"

You are taking a class with Professor X whom you know very well. You have an appointment with him at 10:30 a.m. the following day. In the appointment you are supposed to talk with him about a topic for the term paper for his seminar and you know he is very busy. However, you woke up with bad toothache and the only time the dentist can see you is the same time as your appointment with the professor. You have to ask Professor X to change the appointment. What do you say to Professor X?

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Data collection instruments

The participants both in Japan and China were asked to complete the English DCT (L2 DCT) first, and after two weeks they were asked to complete their mother language version of the DCT (L1 DCT). Then the DCT answers were typed and recorded. Only the data of participants who answered both the

L1 and L2 DCTs were calculated and analyzed.

3.3.2 Coding

Analysis of the DCT responses focused on supportive moves i.e. the number of supportive moves used in the requests.

As a tool for categorizing supportive moves, a coding manual for *supportive moves* offered by Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper (1989, pp.287-289) is as follows:

Preparator (P)

The speaker prepares the addressee for the ensuing request by announcing that he or she will make a request by asking about the potential availability of the receiver/addressee to carry out the request, or by asking for the receiver's permission to make the request. For example: *I'd like to ask you something...*

Don't you live on the same street as me...(preceding a request for a lift)

Getting a precommitment (GP)

In checking on a potential refusal before making their request, a speaker tries to commit the addressee before telling what he/she is letting him/herself in for. For example:

Could you do me a favor? (Would you lend me your notes from yesterday's class?)

Grounder (G)

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

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

Disarmer (D)

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

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

Promise of reward (PR)

To increase the likelihood of the addressee's compliance with the speakers' request, a reward to be given on fulfillment of the request is announced.

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

Imposition minimizer (IM)

The speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the receiver by his/her request.

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

L1 data were coded in the same way. For example: 'お願いがあるんだけど/onegaigaarundakedo' in Japanese and '有件事想求你帮忙/youjianshixiangqiunibangmang' in Chinese. Both mean 'I have something to ask of you,' or 'I wish to ask for your help,' in English were coded as Preparator.

The data for all three languages were coded in a binary way (0 or 1: non-use of supportive moves was coded as 0 while use of supportive moves was coded as 1) according to this coding list. First, the average score on the total use of supportive moves in each -Power and +Power situation was calculated and submitted to a two way ANOVA (Language (L1/L2) × Power(negative/positive)). Then, based on EFL learners' L1 and L2 DCT responses, the percentage of use for supportive moves, in terms of each specific item in each situation, was calculated and compared by Fisher's exact tests to see if EFL learners' IL requests were really different from their L1. Only those items with no significant statistical results (i.e. $p > .05$) in all four situations were registered as L1-influence, and those with significant statistical results (i.e. $p < .05$) in all four situations were identified as non-L1-influence. At last, the overall Japanese and Chinese data were compared by descriptive statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Analysis (sociopragmatic features)

4.1.1 Japanese group (RQ1)

Table 1 shows the differences in the mean score of 'use of supportive moves' in both L1 and L2 DCTs in terms of two different power situations. Table 2 presents the ANOVA results for Language and Power variance in Japanese EFL learners' use of supportive moves in their requests.

Table 1. Mean Scores on Variation of language and Power in the Japanese group

	Japanese (n=48)			
	L1 (Japanese)		L2 (English)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Negative Power	2.542	0.804	1.604	0.823
Positive Power	2.177	0.703	1.521	0.729

Table 2. Analysis of Variance for Language and Power in the Japanese group

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
Language	30.48	1	30.48	51.802	0.000	****
Power	2.408	1	2.408	4.092	0.045	*
Language × Power	0.949	1	0.949	1.613	0.206	
Error	110.620	188	0.588			
Total	882.750	192				

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .005$ **** $p < .001$

Findings: Firstly, the ANOVA result revealed that both a Language difference ($F_{(1,188)}=51.802, p < .05$) and a Power difference ($F_{(1,188)}=4.092, p < .05$) have significantly influenced Japanese EFL learners' supportive moves in requests. To put it simply, Japanese EFL learners used more supportive moves in their L1 (Japanese) but fewer in their L2 (English). One possible reason for this was that when Japanese EFL learners made a request in L2, they failed to present the same L1 supportive moves efficiently because of lack of confidence in L2 language as Kasper indicated in 1997. Additionally, the Japanese EFL learners used more supportive moves when they made a request to a student (-Power) but fewer when they made a request to a professor (+Power). It was consistent with Kim's study (1995) and Jing & Walker' study (2006). When we took a close look at the Japanese request data, we found that they were more talkative and relaxed when they faced a friend, and consequently their requests during -Power situations were more direct. Various supportive moves appeared in their -Power requests. Contrary to this, when they made a request to a professor, they were more cautious and their requests were not so direct. In this situation the grounder took most of the length of their requests. However, it needs to be taken into consideration that in the +Power situation, the Japanese EFL learners used more Apology in their L2 English, and used more Apology and "onegaisimasu" (which means 'please help me') in their L1 Japanese. This added politeness to their requests instead of using supportive moves.

Secondly, the ANOVA results showed that no significant result was found between Language and Power. Different from previous studies, this result proved that L1 sociopragmatic knowledge influenced Japanese EFL learners' IL performance.

4.1.2 Chinese group (RQ2)

Table 3 shows the differences in the mean score of 'use of supportive moves' in both L1 and L2 DCTs in terms of two different power situations.

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results for Language and Power variance in Chinese EFL learners' use of supportive moves in their requests.

Table 3. Mean Scores on Variation of language and Power in the Chinese group

	Chinese (n=54)			
	L1(Chinese)		L2 (English)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Negative Power	1.870	0.667	1.991	0.724
Positive Power	1.398	0.578	1.500	0.514

Table 4. Analysis of Variance for Language and Power in the Chinese group

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
Language	0.667	1	0.667	1.702	0.193	
Power	12.519	1	12.519	31.964	0.000	****
Language×Power	0.005	1	0.005	0.012	0.914	
Error	83.028	212	0.392			
Total	713.000	216				

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .005$ **** $p < .001$

Finding: The ANOVA result revealed that only Power has significant influence on Chinese EFL learners' use of supportive moves during their requests ($F_{(1,212)}=31.964, p < .05$). Like the Japanese EFL learners, they used more supportive moves when they made a request to a friend than to a professor. This can be explained with the same rationale as that for the Japanese group. As for the Language difference factor, there was no significant influence found regarding supportive moves for the Chinese group. The Chinese group used almost the same amount of supportive moves in their L1 and L2 responses. Here we can detect the possibility of the L1 influence. It seemed that L1 influence has played some role in Chinese EFL learners' use of supportive moves in IL performance.

4.1.3 Japanese group vs. Chinese group

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for the total use of supportive moves in L1 and L2 DCTs of Japanese and Chinese groups

	Japanese group (n=48)				Chinese group (n=54)			
	L1 (Japanese)		L2 (English)		L1 (Chinese)		L2 (English)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Negative Power	2.542	0.804	1.604	0.825	1.870	0.667	1.991	0.724
Positive Power	2.177	0.703	1.521	0.729	1.398	0.578	1.500	0.514

Comparing the Japanese group and the Chinese group we found that, as for requests in their mother language, Japanese EFL learners used more supportive moves than Chinese EFL learners did. Probable reasons for this will be discussed below, with examples from the data collected. In L1, supportive moves were more often used by Japanese in requests than with Chinese. But this was not true for EFL learners' requests in English. In -Power situations, Chinese EFL learners used more supportive moves than Japanese. In +Power situations, the mean scores for supportive moves were almost the same in the two groups. Basically there were not so many significant differences in their L2 English requests. So here one interesting finding is that no matter how different the EFL learners' L1 is, their mean scores for supportive-move use during requests are almost the same, and it seems that the Power factor has influenced their supportive moves in both L1 and IL consistently. In light of sociopragmatic factors, Japanese and Chinese EFL learners presented the same pattern in their requests. Different from the previous study, the present study proved that the EFL learners varied their supportive moves use depending upon their perception of the Power relation with the friend or professor. As Fairclough (1995) points out, "language use is always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relation and (iii)

systems of knowledge and belief” (p. 131). Following his theory, the possible explanations to account for why Japanese and Chinese performed differently according to different Power situation can be: First, both of the Japanese and Chinese EFL learners’ perception of the role of the friend as an equal-status while the role of professor as a higher-status (Social identities); Second, under the influence of Japanese or Chinese culture, their perception of social identities with the friend and the professor shaped a relaxed atmosphere with the friend and a respectful atmosphere with the professor. They showed that they were very talkative to the friend but very rigid selections of supportive moves to show their respectfulness to their professors (Social relations); Third, since both Japanese and Chinese participants performed the same pattern in their L1 requests and L2 requests according to different Power situation, it suggests a possibility of L1 influence from the pragmatic knowledge of their mother languages and on the other hand it also leads some support to Bialystok’s (1993) proposal that for adult second language learners, the task of acquiring pragmatic knowledge is already largely accomplished. More evidence is needed in future research in order to prove that the current findings on Power influence on Japanese and Chinese EFL learners were caused by L1 influence or by the “general pragmatic know-base” (Blum-Kulka, 1991) (Systems of knowledge and belief).

4.2 Qualitative analysis (Pragmalinguistic features)

Table 6. Frequencies for each of the supportive moves used by the Japanese group.

	L1(Japanese) n=48								L2(English) n=48							
	NP				PP				PP				NP			
	S1(L1)		S1(L2)		S2(L1)		S2(L2)		S3(L1)		S3(L2)		S4(L1)		S4(L2)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
P	16	33	1	2	27	56	2	4	25	52	4	8	18	38	2	4
GP	1	2	2	4	0	0	1	2	5	10	3	6	9	19	11	23
Grounder	48	100	36	75	47	98	41	85	47	98	39	81	43	90	31	65
Disarmer	1	2	0	0	13	27	8	17	13	27	8	17	19	40	24	50
PR	35	73	21	44	1	2	1	2	4	8	1	2	28	58	12	25
IM	15	31	11	23	10	21	0	0	17	35	6	13	11	23	6	13

Note: NP=Negative Power ; PP=Positive Power

4.2.1 Japanese Group (RQ3)

- 1) In all the situations, the Grounder was the most commonly used supportive move in both Japanese EFL learners’ L1 and L2 requests. This finding was in line with the previous studies. The possible explanation is that a Grounder is commonly used in L1 and therefore positive L1 influence could easily happen to the L2. For EFL learners, it is easy for them to master and use this strategy in their IL performance.
- 2) Japanese EFL learners displayed a similar pattern in terms of their use of GP and Disarmer in L1 and L2. The Fisher’s exact test result ($p>.05$) further supported that as far as this study is concerned, L1 influence happened on the supportive moves for GP and Disarmer. With a close look at the exact percentage in each situation, we can see Japanese EFL learners used these two strategies in L1 and L2 requests similarly, i.e. so few in the first 3 situations and a little more in situation 4. This result can be interpreted as that GP and Disarmer are very context-dependent and L1 influence happens easily.
- 3) As for the usage of PR and IM, the result was not so certain since Japanese EFL learners displayed a similar use between L1 and L2 for PR only in +P situations and for IM only in -P situations. Fisher’s exact test result also supported these two phenomena. By this stage, one suggested interpretation is that Japanese EFL learners were more conscious about avoiding a PR strategy when they made a request to a professor (+P) in both L1 and L2. Conversely, when they made a request to a friend (-P) they were more sensitive to IM usage in both L1 and L2.
- 4) The chi-square exact test revealed that the use of a Preparator in L1 and L2 in four of the situations for

the Japanese EFL group was statistically significant ($p < .01$ in all situations), which means that Japanese EFL learners performed differently in their choice of supportive moves here. The exact numbers clearly showed that Japanese EFL learners displayed more use of a Preparator in L1 and less in L2 requests. This sharp contrast gives some room for discussion about lack of influence from L1. One of the possible explanations was that the absence of language transfer led to this result. Another possible explanation was that they thought a Preparator was not so appropriate in L2 as it was in their L1, so they just simply ignored it.

These findings are exemplified by the following examples: [Student responses are quoted verbatim from the original, including all errors]

Example 1 [JEFL 2]:

S4 (-P): **Preparator**; Grounder; Disarmer; PR

L1: お願いがあるんだけど、**X**の自転車かしてもらえないかなあ？ちょっと緊急で、他に手段がないんよ。**X**がすごい大事にしていること知ってるんだけどお願いできないかなあ。大事に扱うから。

L2: X, do you think is it possible if I ask you to lend me your lovely bicycle? I have some urgent, I really need your help. I have no other options. I know it is important for you. Could you please lend me your bicycle? I promise you that I'll really take care of it.

4.2.2 The Chinese Group (RQ4)

1) Chinese EFL learners displayed a similar pattern in terms of their use on GP, Grounder and PR. The Fisher's exact test for their L1 and L2 DCT in 4 situations ($p > .05$) further supported, as far as this study is concerned, that L1 influence happened on the supportive moves for GP, Grounders and PR.

GP was not often used in both L1 and L2 requests for Chinese EFL learners', with no more than 11% in all four situations. On the other hand, like Japanese EFL learners, a Grounder was the most often used strategy in both L1 and L2 requests with almost the same percentages. As for PR, a similar pattern in L1 and L2 suggested a strong influence from L1. That is, more use in -P situations (about 60%) and less use in +P situations (no more than 20%). It seems L1 influence has some role in this phenomenon. The frequencies of the supportive moves used in L2 requests changed in accordance with the things in L1 request since a close relation between L1 and L2 responses can be observed in the Chinese group.

Table 7. Frequencies of each supportive move used by the Chinese group.

	L1(Chinese) n=54								L2(English) n=54							
	NP				PP				PP				NP			
	S1(L1)		S1(L2)		S2(L1)		S2(L2)		S3(L1)		S3(L2)		S4(L1)		S4(L2)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
P	7	13	16	30	4	7	12	22	0	0	18	33	1	2	6	11
GP	2	4	5	9	7	13	4	7	3	6	4	7	3	6	6	11
Grounder	45	83	43	80	51	94	47	87	44	81	42	78	38	70	44	81
Disarmer	0	0	3	6	10	19	14	26	8	15	10	19	13	24	25	46
PR	37	69	34	63	4	7	4	7	11	20	9	17	35	65	30	56
IM	18	33	2	4	5	9	1	2	4	7	0	0	3	6	12	12

Note: NP=Negative Power; PP=Positive Power

These findings are exemplified by the following examples:

Example 2 [CEFL 22]:

S4 (-P): G, PR

L1: 我有要紧事要做，但末班车也走了，你能不能借我一下自行车？我会很小心的，帮帮忙！

L2: you know I have some urgent to do, but the last bus has gone. And I'm going to be late. Would u please do me a favor that let me use your bicycle? I promise I'll take care of it.

Example 3 [CEFL 19]

S1 (-P): Grounder

L1: 拿多余的钱没? 我没带钱。(naduoyudeqianmei? womeidaqian.)

L2: do you carry some extra money with you? I have no one.

4.2.3 Japanese group vs. Chinese group

Comparing the Japanese group and Chinese group, some interesting findings are presented as follows:

- 1) In line with the previous studies, in both Japanese and Chinese groups, a Grounder was found to be most often used in both L1 and IL requests. This suggested that it is a universal rule that a Grounder is considered to be an effective supportive move in order to make a successful request, and thus EFL learners used it so widely and confidently in both L1 and their IL requests. It is free of cultural differences. As far as this study is concerned, any L1 influence was proved to be statistically significant in the Chinese group but not so in the Japanese group.
- 2) It is interesting to find that the GP often appears in EFL teaching contexts as a standard model of an L2 English request, but was less used in L1 and IL requests in Japanese and Chinese groups. This result was not expected and seems to suggest a strong influence from L1. .

4.2.4 Japanese and Chinese groups vs. L2 baseline data (RQ5)

According to the previous studies in CCSARP (1989), the native English speakers' use of supportive moves displayed the two distinct features as follows: The grounder stands out as the single most frequent supportive move and the English natives support only 13%-45% of their requests. Comparing Japanese and Chinese groups, we can see obviously that firstly, both native speakers and non-native speakers share the same idea that the grounder should be an efficient and popular supportive move in their requests. It seemed that using grounder to modify the request is a universal principle in both L1 and L2 requests. Secondly, native speakers only support 13%-45% of their request, whereas both Japanese and Chinese groups have a distinctly different modification pattern, using supportive moves in 65%-94% of their request realizations. This result suggests that the possibility of "overuse of the grounder as a supportive move among EFL learners" (Fukazawa & Sasaki, 2004). However, if we agree that language use is always socio-culturally determined and all tests are socio-cultural products (Fairclough, 1995), we cannot simply say whether EFL learners overused supportive moves in their requests or not. It is understandable that their IL request performances differ from the native speakers' request, but the point is to describe the difference instead of judging it. What the EFL learners have performed in their IL is not necessarily wrong, but it is different. Just as Faerch & Kasper (1989) indicated, the position for interlanguage research should be "describe and explain interlanguage communication, rather than evaluate" (p.246).

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the current study, the major findings were as follows: Firstly, regarding sociopragmatic aspects, it was found that Japanese EFL learners' use of supportive moves was significantly influenced by the Language difference factor and Power factor. To be specific, they used more supportive moves in their L1 requests while less in their IL requests, and more in -Power situations and less in +Power situations. With Chinese EFL learners we found that their use of supportive moves was influenced by the Power factor and in the same way as Japanese EFL learners, more use was found in -Power situations and less in +Power situations. Their performances in L1 and IL requests showed no significant difference. So it seems that L1 sociopragmatic knowledge has influenced both Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' use of supportive moves in L1 and IL requests. On the other hand, the L1 sociolinguistic factor only had an effect on the Chinese group.

Secondly, regarding the pragmalinguistic aspects, among the 6 supportive moves (P, GP, G, D, PR and IM), Grounders were found to be most used in L1 and IL requests in both two groups, suggesting a strong

L1-based pattern. Converse to L2 requests, GP was found to be less used in L1 and IL requests in the two groups due to the L1 influence.

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