Requests in Peninsular Spanish, British English and Japanese: A Focus on the Effect of Social Distance and the Rank of Imposition with Gender and Age Distinctions
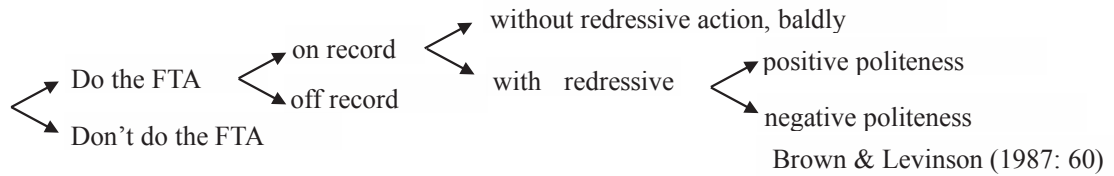
Etsuko MORIOKA

0. Introduction

The study of requests has attracted attention from many researchers over the past few decades. A number of empirical studies have been devoted to the investigation of the cross-cultural differences in requesting behaviours, such as Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989),[1] Haverkate (1984, 1994), Trosborg (1995), Fukushima (1996), Le Pair (1996), and Diaz Perez (2003) among others.

According to Brown & Levinson (1987),[2] a request is considered to be one of the face-threatening acts (henceforth FTA), the weight of which towards interlocutors determines the selection of politeness strategies. The notion of face, which is based on Goffman's (1967) face theory, plays a crucial role in their approach to politeness. The face is defined as "the public self-image that every [adult] member [of society] wants to claim for himself [sic]" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61). There are two important aspects of the public self-image that they claim: one is a negative face, which is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction — i.e. to freedom of action and to freedom from imposition" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61), and the other is a positive face, which is "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated or approved of)" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61). Both faces mentioned above can be damaged by some determined acts, which are called FTAs. These acts are opposed to the wants and desires of the addressee and/or the addresser, and divided into two types: one that threatens to damage the negative face of either/both of the interlocutors and the other that threatens the positive face. A request is regarded as an FTA that damages the hearer's negative face by imposing what the speaker wants on the hearer. The strategy model below proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987: 60) demonstrates the possible strategies that interlocutors can take in order to save face. According to them, the "bald on record" strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 74) is the most direct strategy, and the "Don't do the FTA" is the most indirect one.

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[1] In CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech-Act Realisation Project), they identified three levels of directness for request: direct requests, conventionally indirect request and non-conventionally indirect requests.
[2] They have examined various requesting behaviours in American English, Tamil (spoken in South India), and Tzeltal (spoken in a certain community in Mexico). The politeness theory proposed by them has been the most influential theory so far.

without redressive action, baldly

on record

with   redressive

positive politeness

Do the FTA

off record

negative politeness

Don't do the FTA

Brown & Levinson (1987: 60)

Brown & Levinson (1987: 76) suggests that the choice of strategy would depend on the weightiness of the FTA, which can be calculated by three social variables: power (P), distance (D) and a rank of imposition (R). This is described as follows: $Wx = D (S, H) + P (S, H) + Rx$.

Another important issue in requests is the request strategies proposed by Bulm-Kulka et al. (1989), which is modified by Trosborg (1995).[3] As pointed out by several authors,[4] a request consists of Head Act, which is the main part, optionally with Alerters and Supportive moves, which are peripheral elements. This study principally follows the classification which Diaz Perez (2003) employed based on Trosborg's classification. Alerter[5] functions to get attention from the hearers in order for them to get ready for an upcoming request. In terms of Supportive moves, they are placed before or after Head Act as mitigating or aggravating devices of the request. Therefore, they can be divided into two types: Mitigating Supportive Moves[6] and Aggravating Supportive Moves. In this study, Aggravating Supportive Moves are deleted due to no appearance of any instance. Finally, the essential part of the requesting behaviour, Head Act, will be analysed in terms of two aspects: perspectives[7] and strategies.[8] More specifically, the Internal Modifications, which are linked directly to Head Act in order to modify it internally and have the functions of softening and intensifying the force of the actual request, will also be examined. They consist of Downgraders and Upgraders. Since Upgraders are out of our focus because no instance was found, only Downgraders will be examined as the Internal Modifications in this study. Downgraders, which are used to

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[3] She suggests that request strategies can be categorized into four groups: Indirect Request, Conventionally Indirect Request (speaker-oriented condition), Conventionally Indirect Request (hearer-oriented condition) and Direct Request.

[4] See, for example, Trosborg (1995), Sifianou (1999), Marquez Reiter (2000) etc.

[5] It can be classified into three types with six subcategories: a term of address (Title/role, Surname, First name, Endearment term, Pronoun, and Combination), an attention getter, and a combination of several of them.

[6] They consist of six groups: Preparator, Disarmer, Grounder, Imposition Minimizer, Sweetener and a Combination.

[7] There are speaker-oriented, hearer-oriented, and impersonal perspectives.

[8] There are nine strategies which can be divided into four groups: Indirect strategies, Conventional Indirect strategies (hearer-oriented conditions), Conventional Indirect strategies (speaker-oriented conditions), and Direct strategies. Hints are categorized in the group of Indirect Request. The group of Conventional Indirect strategies (hearer-oriented conditions) includes Possibility, Permission, Ability, Willingness, and Suggestory Formulae. Conventional Indirect strategies (speaker-oriented) include Wishes and Desires/Needs. Finally, in the group of direct strategies, there are Mood Derivable (Imperatives) and Performatives.

moderate the force of the requests, are classified into two types: Syntactic Downgraders[9] and Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders.[10]

The present study will examine the cross-cultural differences in requesting behaviour with the classifications presented above. The social variables to be considered are the social distance and the rank of imposition. Another social variable, social power, will not be dealt with here so that the present study will focus on how the social distance and the degree of imposition affect the requesting attitudes. In addition to the social variables, the gender and age variables will be treated because of a definite tendency of many studies to date to concentrate on university students as informants without considering the gender or age distinction. The purpose of this study is thus to compare the effect of the social distance and the rank of imposition as well as the gender and age differences on the choice of requesting behaviour produced by three language groups (Peninsular Spanish, British English and Japanese).

1. Method

DCT (Discourse Completion Task) is used as a tool to collect the linguistic data. It consists of four request situations, in which the social distance between the interlocutors and the degree of imposition are varied. Another social variable, social power, is set as equal. Each situation is followed by a blank space. Every participant is asked to fill in the blanks with the words that they might use when making a request in each given situation. Besides, they are asked to write down their age, sex, nationality and profession, the last of which is used to control the requester's social level: university students, people in a middle social class or retired people. DCT is chosen as a data-collecting method because of its utility in obtaining abundant data within a short time in order to observe a general tendency.

The Questionnaire survey was conducted from September 2010 to August 2011. The participants are 60 native Peninsular Spanish speakers, 60 native British English speakers and 60 native Japanese speakers. Each language group is classified into two gender groups (a male group and a female group) and three language groups in terms of age (20 to 34 years old, 35 to 54 years old, and above 55 years old). Subsequently, every group is divided into six small groups of 10 subjects depending on the gender and age.

The situations which are given in the questionnaire are as follows:

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[9] They have eight sub-categories: Interrogative, Past Tense, Subjunctive, Negation of a Preparatory Condition, Conditional Clause, Conditional Interrogatives, Conditional and a Combination of the above.

[10] Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders have seven sub-categories: Politeness marker, Understater, Downtoner, Consultative devices, Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers, Subjectivizer, and a Combination of the above.

Situation I: You are going to fill out a form at school, but you don't have a pen, so you ask your friend to lend you a pen. You say the following:

Situation II: You are going to fill out a form at school, but you don't have a pen, so you ask a student of the other class whom you have never talked to to lend you a pen. You are a student as well. You say the following:

Situation III: Now you are in a restaurant. You have noticed that you don't have any money, so you ask your friend to lend you 40 pounds. You say the following:

Situation IV: Tomorrow, you cannot go to work to attend to urgent business. There is no one who can replace your position except a person whom you have never talked to. You say the following:

In Situations I and II, the degree of imposition is low. In contrast, it is high in Situations III and IV. The distinction between Situations I and II or Situations III and IV is determined by the social distance. Situations I and III includes a requestee who is close in relationship to the requester (D-), while the requester and requestee are socially distant (D+) in Situations II and IV. In the following discussion, I examine the results on each element type from three analytical points of view: Situation, Gender and Age.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Situation

Over all, the three language groups share the same results in the situation determiner of Alerters and Supportive Moves according to this study: the frequency of Alerters is generally determined by the social distance and that of most Supportive Moves depends on the rank of imposition. A clear division by the social distance between familiarity and formality among Alerters can be observed in the use of Attention Getters,[11] which are employed most frequently in all language groups. This tendency is also recognized in the use of Surnames among Japanese participants. They appear only in Situations II (11.7%) and IV (21.7%), where there is a distance between interlocutors. By means of this element, negative politeness can be conveyed due to keeping a distance from a requestee so as

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[11] The Attention Getters employed the most in the Spanish group are *Oye* "Listen" in Situations I and III (D-), and *Perdona* and *Perdone* "Excuse me" in Situations II and IV (D+). In the British group, *Hey* and *Sorry* are used the most in Situations I and III, and *Excuse me* in Situations II and IV. In the Japanese group, *Chotto*[11] and *Gomen* "Sorry" appear the most often in Situations I and III, and *Sumimasen* "Excuse me" in Situations II and IV.

not to disturb him or her and to show respect and formality. In the case of the other two language groups, the division by the social distance is obvious in the utilization of Endearment Terms[12] (*S*: (Sit.I[13]: 6%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 30%, Sit.IV: 0%), *B*: (Sit.I: 13.3%, Sit.II: 3.3%, Sit.III: 13.3%, Sit.IV: 0%)). A friendly attitude towards a requestee would be expressed through this element, which is considered to be positive politeness. As for Supportive Moves, the frequency of Grounders, which are employed most commonly among all the language groups, depends greatly on the rank of imposition (*S*: (Sit.I: 18.3%, Sit.II: 28.3%, Sit.III: 78.3%, Sit.IV: 100%), *B*: (Sit.I: 8.3%, Sit.II: 31.7%, Sit.III: 78.3%, Sit.IV: 100%), *J*: (Sit.I: 58.3%, Sit.II: 61.7%, Sit,III: 100%, Sit.IV: 88.3%)). The combinational use of Supportive Moves demonstrates the same tendency as well (*S*: (Sit.I: 7%, Sit.II: 7%, Sit.III: 66.7%, Sit.IV: 66.7%), *B*: (Sit.I: 0%, Sit.II: 11.7%, Sit.III: 40%, Sit.IV: 66.7%), *J*: (Sit.I: 11.7%, Sit.II: 11.7%, Sit.III: 61.7%, Sit.IV: 61.7%)). The distribution of other elements in this category such as Disarmer in the Japanese group (Sit.I: 8.3%, Sit.II: 7%, Sit.III: 33.3%, Sit.IV: 50%), and Imposition Minimizer in the Spanish (Sit.I: 7%, Sit.II: 7%, Sit.III: 88.3%, Sit.IV: 61.7%) and British groups (Sit.I: 0%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 55%, Sit.IV: 23.3%) is also determined by the rank of imposition.

The further analysis on the situation determiner in Head Acts reveals not only the similarities but also the differences which create a certain tendency. The cultural differences are exhibited as follows: a significant tendency of the social distance as a situation determiner in the group of Spanish and Japanese subjects, and of the rank of imposition in the British group. Regarding the strategies in Head Acts, the employment of Imperatives among Spanish (Sit.I: 40%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 55%, Sit.IV: 0%) and Japanese subjects (Sit.I: 33.3%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 16.7%, Sit.IV: 0%) relies on the social distance. It also determines the frequency of Ability in the Spanish group (Sit.I: 5%, Sit.II: 66.6%, Sit.III: 33.3%, Sit.IV: 66.6%), and that of Permission (Sit.I: 13.3%, Sit.II: 86.7%, Sit.III: 33.3%, Sit.IV: 63.3%), and of Willingness (Sit.I: 48.4%, Sit.II: 13.3%, Sit.III: 50%, Sit.IV: 16.7%) in the Japanese group. On the other hand, the distributions of Hints (Sit.I: 38.3%, Sit.II: 16.7%, Sit.III: 0%, Sit.IV: 10%), Ability (Sit.I: 0%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 56.7%, Sit.IV: 71.7%) and Permission (Sit.I: 56.7%, Sit.II: 83.3%, Sit.III: 23.3%, Sit.IV: 0%) depend on the rank of imposition in the British group. One interesting point to be noted here lies in the use of Imperatives among Japanese participants in Situations I and III, where the interlocutors are not distant. The employment of Direct Request such as Imperatives is considered to be a way to show the positive politeness owing to the fact that it can express the requester's familiarity or friendliness to the requestee. The most frequent

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[12] In terms of Endearment Terms, *Nene* (Darling, Honey etc.) and *Tio* (Guy, Brother, Uncle, etc.) are used commonly in the Spanish group and *Mate* in the British group.
[13] Sit.I, Sit.II, Sit.III, and Sit.IV henceforth stand for Situation I, Situation II, Situation III, Situation IV respectively.

use of Imperative is detected in the Spanish group, while very few instances are found in the British group. As to the Japanese group, a relatively high frequency of Imperatives is manifested. The results show a sort of contradiction with the remarks of some critics such as Blum-Kulka (1987: 40) that Japanese society is oriented to negative politeness. According to Fukushima (1996: 686), Japanese society values solidarity among in-group members. Positive politeness and going "bald on record" (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 74) are the preferable strategies in Japanese when there is no social distance between a requester and a requestee. This explanation is supported by my results that Japanese subjects prefer to employ Direct Request in Situations I and III (D-).

The tendency to the situation determiner mentioned above is also presented to some extent in the employment of Perceptions. Japanese subjects use the hearer-oriented perception in Situations I and III (D-) (Sit.I: 83.3%, Sit.II: 13.3%, Sit.III: 66.7%, Sit.IV: 26.7%), and the speaker-oriented perception in Situations II and IV (D+) (Sit.I: 13.3%, Sit.II: 86.7%, Sit.III: 33.3%, Sit.IV: 68.3%). That is, the frequency of Perception in the Japanese group is determined depending on the social distance as well as the other elements referred to above. In the case of British participants, the use of Perceptions depends on the rank of imposition: more speaker-oriented perception in Situations I and II (D±) of low imposition (Sit.I: 56.7%, Sit.II: 83.3%, Sit.III: 23.3%, Sit.IV: 0%), and more hearer-oriented perception in Situations III and IV (D±) of high imposition[14] (Sit.I: 43.3%, Sit.II: 16.7%, Sit.III: 76.7%, Sit.IV: 98.3%). When these results analysed from the viewpoint of the politeness method, based on Blum-Kulka and Levenston's (1987: 158)[15] statement that the speaker-oriented perception could function to minimize the imposition of the request, it is roughly assumed that Japanese subjects have a tendency to use the speaker-oriented perception to soften the imposition in Situations I and IV (D+), and British subjects employ it in Situations I and II (D±) of low imposition as a mitigation device. When it comes to the Spanish group, all the situations dealt with in this study demonstrate a considerably high frequency of the hearer-oriented perception.[16] Thereby, the social distance is perceived not to be a situation determiner in this case. Besides, the perception seem not to be employed to minimize the imposition among Spanish participants. However, when the subject form is taken into account, both some influence from the social distance and the employment of the mitigating device can be observed. The hearer-oriented perception is

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[14] This result supports the Fukushima's (1998) finding that the speaker-oriented perception is favoured in a situation of low imposition, and the hearer-oriented perception in a situation of high imposition in British English.

[15] They state that "*could you* emphasizes the role of the hearer, whereas *could I* shifts the emphasis to the role of the speaker. Because requests usually threaten the hearer's face, to avoid naming the hearer as the performer of the requested act is to minimize the imposition" (Blum-Kulka and Levenston, 1987: 158)

[16] Blum-Kulka (1989) indicated the preferable usage of the hearer-oriented perception in Spanish, and the use with more or less the same frequency of the hearer-oriented and the speaker-oriented perceptions in English. My study shows a similar tendency.

principally accompanied by the subject form of the second person singular/plural. There are two types of Spanish pronouns for the second person singular: *tu* and *usted*. The pronoun *tu* expresses the familiarity and solidarity, while *usted* expresses formality and respect. Putting it in another way, *tu* is assumed to express positive politeness and *usted* negative politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 292 (Note 51)). In this study, all Spanish informants who employ the hearer-oriented perception in Situations I and III make use of *tu* to address their friends. On the other hand, *usted* appears in the other two situations (Sit.II: (Tu: 53.3%, Usted: 46.7%), Sit.IV: (Tu: 63.3%, Usted: 36.7%)) although the number of uses of *tu* is still more increased. Thus, the analysis on the subject form in the Spanish group indicates the apparent utilization of the social distance as a situation determiner and of *usted* as a mitigating device.

The tendency towards the situation determiner shown above, however, is not prominent in the results of two types of Downgraders. Only the Spanish group maintains the tendency in the use of the following elements: Conditional Interrogatives of Syntactic Downgraders (Sit.I: 0%, Sit.II: 45%, Sit.III: 5%, Sit.IV: 61.7%), which can enhance the mitigating force and thus results in conveying negative politeness, and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers (Sit.I: 8.3%, Sit.II: 0%, Sit.III: 5%, Sit.IV: 1.7%), which can convey positive politeness. Considering one crucial issue related to Syntactic Downgrades in the Japanese group, which is the use of honorifics, the result also shows the tendency ascribed to the situation determiner among Japanese subjects. Japanese honorifics are employed as a politeness encoding system to demonstrate the social status difference between the participants in the conversation (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ide, 1989). The honorific forms which are principally observed in this study are one of the humble forms *itadaku* (its original verb form is *morau* (receive)) and one of the addressee honorifics *masu*. The specific analysis reveals that more verbs with honorifics can be observed in Situations II and IV (D+) (Sit.I: 98.2%, Sit.II: 71.7%, Sit.III: 10%, Sit. IV: 93.3%). Thus, the honorific use taken into account, this study demonstrates the repeated preference of social distance as a situation determiner among Japanese subjects.

2.2. Gender

On the whole, the preference of positive politeness by the male group and that of negative politeness by the female group are detected. A clear difference can be observed in the use of positive politeness among the British subjects through First Names (M[17]: 10.8%, F: 0%) and Endearment Terms (M: 15%, F: 0%) among Alerters, and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers (M: 4.2%, F: 0%) in the Lexical and Phrasal Donwngraders. It is also obvious in the employment of Imperatives (M: 20.9%, F: 4%) among Japanese male participants. In the Spanish group, the difference is not so noticeable:

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[17] M and F henceforth stand for Male and Female respectively.

Endearment Terms (M: 10%, F: 8.3%), Imperatives (M: 25%, F: 22.5%), and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers (M: 3.3%, F: 4.2%). This result suggests that the Spanish female group presents a sort of positive politeness orientation.

Despite the slight preference for positive politeness in the Spanish female group, the results of the total female subjects show more frequent use of elements which express negative politeness than the male subjects. It is represented by means of abundant mitigating devices involving Politeness Markers in the Spanish (M: 27.5%, F: 45%) and British groups (M: 29.2%, F: 47.5%), speaker-oriented perceptions in the British (M: 36.7%, F: 44.2%) and Japanese groups (M: 38.3%, F: 62.5%), the formal subject *usted* (M: 35.8%, F: 61%) in the Spanish group, and the use of Surname (M: 2.5%, F: 14.2%) and honorifics (M: 43.5%, F: 49.2%) in the Japanese group. A noteworthy point here is shown in the use of Hints in the British male group. It represents to some extent an orientation to negative politeness in the employment of Hints (M: 18.3%, F: 15%), which is the most indirect strategy.

2.3. Age

Overall, the youngest age group exhibits a marked preference for positive politeness in all the language groups. A quite prominent use is shown in the youngest Spanish age group through the employment of First name (AgeI[18]: 18.8%, AgeII: 10%, AgeIII: 7.5%) and Enderment Terms (AgeI: 20%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 0%) among Alerters, an Imperative as a strategy type (AgeI: 30%, AgeII: 18.8%, AgeIII: 22.5%) and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers in Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders (AgeI: 7.5%, AgeII: 3.8%, AgeIII: 0%). The lowest frequency of Syntactic Downgraders, which have mitigating effects, is also detected in this group. Furthermore, no clear orientation to negative politeness is observed among the participants. In the youngest British age group, the employment of positive politeness is presented by means of Endearment Terms (AgeI: 15%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 0%) and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers (AgeI: 7.5%, AgeII: 0%, AgeIII: 0%), though the use of negative politeness through the strategy Hints (AgeI: 25%, AgeII: 15%, AgeIII: 8.8%) is also shown. Among Japanese participants, a relatively high frequency of Imperatives (AgeI: 13.8%, AgeII: 4.2%, AgeIII: 17.5%) is demonstrated. However, negative politeness is expressed in the utilization of Surnames (AgeI: 16.3%, AgeII: 6.3%, AgeIII: 2.5%) as well.

As for the second age group, a general preference for both positive and negative politeness strategies is presented. Regarding positive politeness, the relatively high frequency is shown principally among the Spanish participants in the employment of both First Names and Endearment

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[18] AgeI, AgeII and AgeIII henceforth stand for the first age group (from 20 to 34), the second age group (from 35 to 54) and the third age group (above 55) respectively.

Terms. In addition, regarding the *tu/usted* distinction, *tu* (AgeI: 65%, AgeII: 67.5%, AgeIII: 52.5%) is used most commonly in this age group. The British subjects also show a comparatively high use of positive politeness through First Names (AgeI: 1.3%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 7.5%) and Endearment Terms (AgeI: 15%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 0%). In the case of the Japanese second age group, it is likely that they are not so much in favour of using positive politeness in comparison with the other two language groups, owing to the fact that no salient use of positive politeness is found. The employment of negative politeness, on the other hand, is demonstrated in every language group: the frequency of Hints in the Spanish group (AgeI: 4.2%, AgeII: 15%, AgeIII: 3.8%), that of the speaker-oriented perception in the British group (AgeI: 38.7%, AgeII: 46.3%, AgeIII: 37.5%), and that of Subjetivizer among Spanish (AgeI: 3.8%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 0%) and Japanese (AgeI: 0%, AgeII: 7.5%, AgeIII: 2.5%) subjects. This age group in the three languages even uses Supportive Moves as mitigating devices most frequently.

The final analysis on the eldest age group leads to somewhat similar results to those for the second age group, in which not only positive politeness but also negative politeness are often employed. However, a more precise analysis of Spanish and Japanese subjects has revealed clear differences from the second age group. In the Spanish group, less positive politeness and more negative politeness have been observed. Positive politeness is represented only in the use of Imperatives with relatively high frequency. It is worth noting that, unlike the other age groups, no instance of Endearment Terms and Interpersonal Pragmatic Markers is found, which conveys positive politeness. As a negative politeness method, the Spanish subjects employ Politeness Markers in Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders (AgeI: 35%, AgeII: 25%, AgeIII: 45%) and one of the subject forms *usted* with increased frequency (AgeI: 17.5%, AgeII: 16.3%, AgeIII: 23.8%). On the other hand, a greater frequency of positive politeness and the absence of any apparent use of negative politeness are presented in the Japanese group. Positive politeness is represented through the highly frequent use of Imperatives and the scarce use of Supportive Moves and Syntactic Downgraders which function to lessen the imposition.

3. Summary and Conclusion

So far, I have examined the requesting behaviours that the three language groups demonstrate from three points of view: the situational distributions, the gender distinctions and the age distinctions. The result of this study shows some similar characteristic uses in requesting behaviours among Spanish, British and Japanese subjects, as well as several different features among them.

Firstly, the examination on the situation determiner clarifies that the three language groups share the following results: the frequency of Alerters mostly relies on the social distance, and that of

Supportive Moves depends on the rank of imposition. Furthermore, differences are also observed in the Head Acts as follows: Spanish and Japanese subjects employ the social distance as a situation determiner more often than British subjects. On the other hand, British subjects seem to value more highly the degree of imposition than other language groups.

Secondly, the analysis of the gender distinction reveals a great preference for positive politeness in the male group and that for negative politeness in the female group. However, the further analysis indicates that the Spanish female group presents a sort of positive politeness orientation, and the British male group shows a slight orientation to negative politeness. As for the Japanese group, there is a clear gender distinction in the use of politeness method, although a lesser employment of positive politeness among male subjects is shown in comparison with the other two language groups.

Thirdly, the results of the requesting behaviours performed by three different age groups shall be provided. Broadly speaking, among Spanish participants, positive politeness is shown most frequently in the first age group, and negative politeness in the third age group. The second Spanish age group demonstrates more or less an equal preference for both politeness methods. Among British subjects, the first age group shows the greatest preference for the use of positive politeness as in the Spanish group, although some kinds of negative politeness orientation are also detected. The other two age groups, on the other hand, are in favour of less positive politeness and more negative politeness. Finally in the Japanese group, positive politeness is preferred among the first and third age groups, but negative politeness is also shown to some degree at the same time. In contrast, the second age group shows a greater orientation to negative politeness.

Overall, Spanish subjects tend to employ positive politeness more frequently than the other language groups do, which is conveyed through both the primary part and peripheral elements of a request. This tendency is naturally assumed from the result that positive politeness is preferred not only by the male group but also by the female group. The highest preference for the positive politeness is demonstrated by the youngest male age group, while that for the negative politeness is demonstrated by the eldest female age group. With regard to the situational distribution, it tends to rely on the social distance when a subject makes a request in the Spanish group.

British participants also demonstrate a high frequency of positive politeness especially in the youngest male age group as in the Spanish group, but to a lesser extent. A slight negative politeness orientation by the same group is observed as well. Additionally, no orientation to positive politeness is shown in the female group, unlike the Spanish female subjects. This demonstrates that politeness employed in the British group is relatively oriented to negative politeness. Regarding the situation determiner, the distribution depends mostly on the degree of imposition.

Finally, the results of the Japanese group show that the requesting behaviour produced in this

study is oriented to negative politeness. It is very common among female subjects, especially in the second age group. The use of positive politeness is limited to Imperatives mainly in the youngest male/female and eldest male age groups. However, when it comes to the requesting behaviour towards the in-group members, a high frequency of positive politeness is shown. Concerning the situation determiner, the frequency is mostly determined by the social distance as is shown in the Spanish case.

The present study cannot generalize the requesting behaviour in the three investigated languages due to the limited number of informants. Future research might need to examine a broader number of subjects so as to obtain more evidential results with higher credibility. Furthermore, this study focused on requesting behaviour under the limited situational conditions with the two variables of the social distance and the degree of imposition. Therefore, more variables of the situational condition will need to be analysed in the future study.

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Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate School of Letters, Hiroshima University