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Effects of Length of Stay on L2 Chinese Learners' Request Performance in a Study Abroad Context

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Abstract

Making requests is a face-threatening speech act that has been frequently investigated. In recent years, though studies have shifted towards L2 learners' speech acts, only a handful of studies have examined request production in L2 Chinese, conclusions of which have been mixed. Previous studies have indicated that L2 learners' length of stay and L2 proficiency can significantly influence their request performance, including request strategies and supportive moves. Learners also perform differently in situations of different levels of imposition and relative power. In addition, learners' request performance in role plays may be more natural than that in DCTs. Therefore, this study focuses on L2 Chinese learners' request production in role plays, exploring the effects of length of stay on their request performance in high-imposition situations of different relative power in a study abroad context.

This study attempts to address the following questions:

(1) Does length of stay influence L2 Chinese learners' use of request strategies in a study abroad context?

(2) Does length of stay influence L2 Chinese learners' use of supportive moves when requesting in a study abroad context?

Thirteen L2 Chinese learners of different L2 proficiency and length of stay in China participated in the study. Nine native speakers (NSs) were recruited to provide baseline data for comparison. Participants was required to make requests in two scenarios of different relative power in open role plays. Altogether, recordings of 43 conversations were collected, transcribed and coded, and strategies and frequency of different types of supportive moves employed were calculated for analysis.

The results indicated that all three groups of learners favored conventionally indirect strategies, but they used them less frequently than NSs. Participants of the longest length of stay were the only group to use non-conventionally indirect strategies.

Learners increasingly used more mitigating and aggravating supportive moves and more types of supportive moves as they studied longer in China, indicating target-like development. All three groups of learners of different length of stay, as well as native Chinese speakers, tended to produce more supportive moves when requesting from an interlocutor of higher power relative power.

Keywords: request, length of stay, study abroad, request strategies, supportive moves

1. Introduction

Making requests, which is a directive that entails efforts of the speaker to get assistance from the hearer, is regarded as one of the most arduous speech acts for learners, particularly second language (L2) learners, in that it requires massive cultural and linguistic knowledge (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Of the existing pragmatics studies of learners' requests during their study abroad (SA), the main focus has been on English as the target

language. There also exists research representing various first languages and second languages including Spanish, Greek, French, etc. (e.g., AlGahtani & Roever, 2012, 2015; Barron, 2003; Bataller, 2010; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Woodfield, 2012). However, limited research has investigated requesting in L2 Chinese as the target language. In recent years, several scholars have turned their eyes to second language learners of Chinese, investigating learner variables that requests are sensitive to, such as L2 proficiency and length of stay (LoS). Among these studies focusing on Chinese, Su and Ren (2017) explored the effect of L2 proficiency on second language learners' use of request strategies and internal modification. However, scenarios adopted in their role plays were limited to those of low imposition only. Ren (2019)'s research on pragmatic development of Chinese during study abroad has opened a number of avenues for further exploration. However, at the time of Ren's data collection, overseas students were not required to take the official HSK test. Participants' Chinese proficiency was judged merely by their teachers, which would not be very objective. Pragmatic studies, however, should be conducted "empirically instead of relying on researchers' or others' institutions or recalled experiences" (Lin et al., 2012: 1489).

Several studies have investigated L2 Chinese learners' requests in situations of different level of imposition and relative power relation. Nevertheless, learners' request performance in high-imposition situations of different relative power remains to be discussed. To widen the scope of development of learners' request in Chinese during their study abroad, this study intends to employ open role plays, scenarios of which are kept high in imposition, forcing participants to produce as much supportive moves as possible. Learners' request performance including request strategies and supportive moves will be compared and contrasted among groups of different LoS and L2 proficiency, and between two situations of different relative power within each group. A general contrast between request performance produced by native Chinese speakers and L2 learners will also be discussed. By doing so, patterns of L2 learners' development of request performance as they study abroad longer can be revealed, shedding light on acquisition of speech acts in L2 Chinese.

Though scholars have turned their eyes to L2 requests in Chinese, longitudinal studies have mostly focused on short-term learners or those studying abroad for only few weeks. The nature of cross-sectional studies in this field enables them to focus on longer duration of study abroad, but they have arrived at different conclusions, and the effect of LoS is inadequate. Based on this, theoretically, this study can further expand the scope of learners' request strategies in high-imposition situations in Chinese during study abroad in a more natural environment, exploring the influence of LoS and L2 Proficiency. Practically, this study will address the important issue of pragmatic development of L2 Chinese learners' request strategies during their study abroad, contributing to our understanding of L2 Chinese requests and shedding some light on L2 Chinese teaching and intercultural communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speech Act of Request

Requesting is a common activity in our daily lives. Since the 1970s, research concerning the notion of requests has been conducted from the perspective of speech act theory, politeness theory, and conversation analysis. Searle saw requests as illocutionary acts in terms of their 'felicity conditions', classifying them as members of directives, the definition of which was 'attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (Searle, 1976). The Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), who has developed a set of categories, has guided research of acquisition of L2 requests. Within this framework, acquisitional research of this field (e.g., Barron, 2003; FélixBrasdefer, 2007; Woodfield, 2012) have paid most attention to the head act (the core and minimal part of a request sequence that can realize a speech act independently), and to supportive moves.

Various research has probed into requests of second language learners. Schauer (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008), in a series of studies, investigated requests produced by German learners of English in an academic year studying in the UK. A Multimedia Elicitation Task containing 16 scenarios was employed to generate data. The results showed that participants continued to favor one type of direct strategy, but the indirect strategies they produced had been more and more varied over time. In low-imposition scenarios, learners of English language produced request strategies resembling those of NSs, whereas in high-imposition scenarios, learners showed some native-like patterns as well as some non-native-like ones, which remained unchanged during their whole sojourn. Also, their choice of external modification showed a native-like pattern of development. The range of modifiers they adopted was expanded. According to Schauer, such development could be explained by the joint influence of L1 influence, motivation, exposure and cultural knowledge of L2 learners. Similarly, Bataller (2010), focusing on 31 American learners during their 4-month stay in Spain, reported a discrepancy in L2 learners' and NSs' choice of request strategies. Data were generated from a role play consisting of 2 scenarios. In the first scenario, L2 learners produced more indirect strategies, showing a native-like change. However, their choice of direct strategies differed from those of NSs in that they favored want/need statement whereas NSs relied more on simple interrogative. This pattern remained unchanged throughout the experiment. In terms of indirect strategies,

L2 learners produced more query permission while NSs preferred query ability. L2 learners, however, decreased their use of query permission strategies over time, showing a native-like pattern of development.

2.2 Previous Studies on Requests in L1 Chinese

Research on requests in L1 Chinese, conclusions of which have been mixed, has been limited in amount. Lee-Wong (1994)'s research of Chinese requests using Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) marks the beginning in this field. She has found that native Chinese speakers tend to employ direct request strategies, especially imperatives, in line of which Gao (1999) have also concluded a preference for direct request strategies employed by native Chinese speakers. Contradictorily, Zhang (1995), employing DCTs as well, have found indirect strategies most frequently used in requests produced by native Chinese speakers, among which 'query preparatory', 'imperatives' and 'want/need statements' rank top three.

Existing studies in recent years documented that speakers' choice of request strategies in Chinese was highly contextual. Chen et al. (2013) also found a preference for indirect request strategies among mainland Chinese NSs, with 'may' or 'can/could' questions most frequently used. Also, when negotiating with interlocutors of equal relative power relation and close relationship, native Chinese speakers favored direct request strategies (Chen et al., 2013). This finding is in accordance with that of Li (2012). Lee (2005), investigating Chinese native speakers in Hong Kong, observed a tendency of employing interrogatives when requesting, except when requesting from a lower status interlocutor. Ren (2018) observed that native Chinese speakers of both Mainland and Taiwan preferred 'query preparatory' strategies when interacting with an interlocutor of a higher status. However, when interacting with an interlocutor from an equal status or a lower one, Taiwan Chinese preferred 'query preparatory' request strategies, while Mainland Chinese favored 'imperatives'. Findings of these preceding studies of requests in Chinese was mostly based on data generated by DCTs. Therefore, speakers' real preference in oral communication cannot be revealed (Ren, 2019). Apart from the core part of requests i.e., the head act, how external and internal modifications are employed to mitigate influence caused by the face-threatening nature in requests in Chinese have also been discussed (e.g., Gao, 1999; Hong, 1997; LeeWong, 1994). As Lee-Wong (1994) documented, native Chinese speakers relied less on strategy-internal indirectness than on mitigation devices to encode politeness when making requests.

2.3 Previous Studies on Requests in L2 Chinese

To date, studies examining the production of requests by L2 Chinese learners have been limited in number, two of which probed into the effect of learners' L2 Chinese proficiency. Wen (2014), using written DCTs, concluded that Chinese learners of higher L2 proficiency produced more indirect strategies and fewer direct ones. Wen (2014) also noted that in two of the four scenarios, the advanced group produced more supportive moves, suggesting a higher degree of flexibility when requesting in different social situations. Su and Ren (2017), on the other hand, found that L2 Chinese learners of different proficiency levels could all use the same sorts of request strategies as NSs. Scenarios of role play in their research were kept low in imposition, which may be able to explain differences of their findings from others. In Li (2014)'s longitudinal research employing computerized oral DCTs, 31 participants, who were American learners of Chinese in a 15-week program in Beijing, were divided into two groups, namely, Intermediate group and Advanced group. Both groups of participants showed similar pattern of pragmatic development in their production of alerters, head act forms, etc. Taguchi et al. (2016) arrived at a conclusion that social contact and intercultural adaptability together explained 26% of L2 Chinese learners' request development. Participants of all the studies above were American, and some of them were even Chines as a Foreign Language (CFL) learners who have never been living in China.

Exploring L2 Chinese learners of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, especially those who have been studying in China for a long duration, could be insightful and comprehensive (Ren, 2019). Ren (2019) employed open role plays instead of DCTs to elicit data, exploring L2 Chinese requests by participants from diverse L1 backgrounds (14 Arabic, 10 English, 2 Hindi, 1 Indonesian, 1 Korean, etc.), concluding that learners produced more indirect request strategies and fewer direct ones than NSs, and that L2 Chinese learners preferred conventionally indirect request strategies as their span of study in China became longer.

2.4 Effects of Length of Stay and L2 Proficiency on the Development of Pragmatic Competence

Recent studies have often examined various multiple independent variables together due to the complexity of SA. Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) reported an influence of proficiency on the production of conventional expressions, while LoS did not have a significant impact on the production. Bella (2011) found that LoS was an insufficient measure. Taguchi (2011) also suggested that proficiency can influence learners' speech acts. Xu et al. (2009) observed that LoS and proficiency both can impact learners' pragmatic awareness, but proficiency was relatively more influential. Roever et al. (2014) found that proficiency significantly impacted the speech act production of learners. Matsumura (2003) observed that these influential factors were often interrelated.

The present study attempts to address the following questions:

(1) Does length of stay influence L2 Chinese learners' use of request strategies in a study abroad context?

(2) Does length of stay influence L2 Chinese learners' use of supportive moves when requesting in a study abroad context?

To better address the above questions, two other variables have been chosen. One is the relative power between the interlocutor and the participant in the role play design, and the other is L2 proficiency of participants of L2 Chinese learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

This study recruited on a voluntary basis 22 equally-gendered participants who are mainly from Ocean University of China (OUC, hereafter). 9 of them are native Chinese undergraduates from OUC recruited for the purpose of providing data for baseline comparison, and 13 are international students. Before the experiment, questionnaires were distributed to international participants in order to know their age, L2 proficiency (measured by HSK as well as Likert scales), LoS, program of study, contact with NSs (in the form of Likert scale), gender and cultural background. One of the purposes of the questionnaire is to exclude international students from the study who have learned Chinese from their family members, or use variation of Mandarin Chinese (Malaysian Chinese, for example) as their L1. Ultimately 13 (6 male, 7 female) of them are nonheritage Chinese language learners of various cultural and L1 backgrounds (6 Zimbabwean, 1 French, 1 Vietnamese, 1 Korean, 1 Polack, 1 Turkish, 1 American, 1 Kazakhstan). They are studying various majors, including engineering, international trade, etc. 11 of them are from Ocean University of China. Due to the COVID-19 epidemics and all the relevant quarantine policies, many international students were unable to return to China to further their study, and were forced to stay at home for online courses, thus adding difficulty of recruitment of this study. Therefore, three of them took the role play at OUC face to face, and the remaining 8 of them took the role play online via Tencent Meeting app, Zhumu app and WeChat group video call, mocking a face-to-face situation. Due to the limited amount of international Chinese L2 learners at OUC, this study also recruited two participants from other universities. Altogether, these 13 international participants were classified into three groups according to their length of stay in China. Group 1 includes 4 learners, the average LoS of whom is six years. Group 2 includes six learners, the average LoS being 2.92 years. As for Group 3, it consists of three learners with a seven-month length of stay on average. Table 1 presents detailed information of participants group by group. All the names used to distinguish different participants are nicknames.

Table 1. Background Information of Participants

	Name	Gender	Age	Country	LoS	HSK
Group 1	H	F	35	USA	11y	4
	V	M	23	Kazakhstan	5y	6
	A	M	23	Zimbabwe	4y	No
	N	F	24	Zimbabwe	4y	5
Group 2	E	M	25	France	3y	5
	Cui(“崔”)	F	22	Korea	3y	6
	L	F	23	Zimbabwe	3y	No
	T	M	23	Zimbabwe	3y	No
	Zhou(“周”)	M	22	Zimbabwe	3y	No
	S	F	22	Zimbabwe	2.5y	No
Group 3	Feng(“冯”)	M	26	Turkey	8m	4
	Shuang(“双”)	F	24	Poland	5m	4
	Fang(“芳”)	F	19	Vietnam	0	No

3.2 Instruments

A questionnaire is devised to collect background information of international participants. Bilingually presented, the questionnaire is more readable and understandable, especially for participants of low L2 proficiency. What's more, to ensure the accuracy of the information collected, participants are encouraged to discuss with the

researcher if they still feel some expressions in the questionnaire ambiguous, and they could fill out the questionnaire after the researcher's thorough explanation and clarification. The first part of the questionnaire contains basic information of the participants, including age, gender, and L1 background. The second part collects information of their L2 Chinese learning, questions of which includes a self-assessment of their Chinese proficiency employing Likert scale, a self-assessment of their frequency of contacts with Chinese native speakers employing Likert scale, their length of stay in China, and their L2 Chinese proficiency (measured by HSK). After answer collection, the researcher double-checked with participants about some unclearly-stated answers (e.g., "How long have you been staying in China?" "4").

Due to the difficulty of collecting enough real and natural data from L2 Chinese learners in various contexts, this study employed open role plays to elicit data. In role plays participants are not able to plan their turns in advance, and their implicit knowledge can therefore be activated (Su & Ren, 2017). Before the experiment, the researcher designed a questionnaire (see Appendix B) containing scenarios of various levels of imposition and of two levels of relative power (+P, =P) based on previous studies (Li, 2014; Wen, 2014; Taguchi et al., 2016). 9 Chinese university students filled out a Chinese version of the questionnaire, and 5 international students, who are not participants of the role plays, filled out an English one. Altogether 10 scenarios (6 scenarios requesting from a friend, 4 scenarios requesting from a professor) were presented in the questionnaire, and these 14 students were required to score for every scenario from 1-5. 1 stands for 'very small favor' which equals very low imposition, and 5 stands for 'very big favor' which equals very high imposition. The weighted average of each scenario was calculated to select two scenarios (one scenario requesting from a friend, and one scenario requesting from a professor) of the highest imposition. Finally, two scenarios (see Table 2) were selected and employed for the following role plays. A pilot study was conducted before the real test, according to which scenario settings were adjusted to suit specific participants at OUC.

Table 2. Summary of Experiment Scenarios

Scenario	Interlocutor Role	Setting	Power Relation	Imposition
Notes	classmate	to get lecture notes	P=	high
Exam	professor	to ask for a make-up exam	P+	high

Previous studies have found that contextual clues such as image of the context will increase the degree of naturalness (Ren, 2013). Therefore, to elicit data more similar to those in real daily interaction, the face-to-face test took place in a room at College of Foreign Languages that best suited the two scenarios. Each scenario was introduced on several pieces of A4 paper (see Appendix C), with one or two pages containing appropriate number of colorful pictures of the context, and one page describing the scenario both in Chinese and English in contrast. The online experiment took place via Tencent Meeting app, Zhumu app and WeChat video call, during which interlocutors stayed in rooms that suited the two scenarios. Each scenario was introduced on several power point slides, with one or two slides containing appropriate number of colorful pictures of the context, and one slide describing the scenario both in Chinese and English. Table cards with nicknames of interlocutors in Chinese characters and pinyin were put next to them in case participants were interrupted during the conversations when forgetting interlocutors' names.

After the role plays, the researcher interviewed some of the participants, looking back on their request performance and trying to provide possible explanation for the data analysis. Participant No.8, whose nickname was Lei, was interviewed. She was asked questions about different feelings and choice of request strategies and supportive moves when requesting from interlocutors of different relative power, i.e., from the professor and from the classmate. Interlocutor 1 who played the role Xiao Lin, was also interviewed. The researcher and her reviewed the video of her conversations with participant No.22, Cui, and with participant No.14, Feng. They are representatives of L2 Chinese learners of different L2 proficiency. Then, the researcher asked the interlocutor about her feeling when being requested by Cui and by Feng, to see if there exists any difference in the effect of requests made by L2 learners of different L2 proficiency. She was also interviewed about her feelings when a speaker overuses aggravating supportive moves in his or her request. Information collected from retrospective interview is mentioned in discussion (see chapter 4).

3.3 Data Collection

To improve the authenticity of these role plays, two (one male and one female) native Chinese were recruited as interlocutors for these role plays. The male interlocutor, in his middle twenties, looks bookish and serious, and therefore played the role "Professor Wang". The female undergraduate, in her early twenties, looks young and friendly, and therefore played the role *Classmate Xiao Lin*. Instructions for each scenario were reviewed with

these interlocutors by the researcher prior to the data collection. They were told to respond as naturally as possible, and to try to ignore minor grammatical errors and incorrect pronunciation which may otherwise block the communication flow.

The role plays, conducted in individual sessions in a room or online, spanned from May 4th to May 11th in 2021. All participants volunteered to participate in role plays. They were given descriptions of scenarios right before the experiment, and sufficient time to carefully read and fully understand the instructions, and were required to initiate the conversation once they were ready. Before the experiment, the researcher asked for participants' permission to record their conversations. For online participants, the researcher used a laptop to record the screen, so that participants would not feel being interrupted. And for face-to-face participants, camera was kept far from participants and without notice. Before the experiment, a few participants declared uncomfortable facing a camera or being recorded their video, so a voice-recorder was used for them instead.

3.4 Data Analysis

A total of 42 role-plays were transcribed and analyzed. Transcription of each roleplay conversation in Chinese was coded for request strategies and supportive moves. Coding frameworks were developed and adapted with reference to preceding literature (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Gao, 1999; Lee-Wong, 1994; Wen, 2014; Su & Ren, 2017).

Request strategies (see Table 3) were classified into direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, as well as non-conventionally indirect strategies. Supportive moves (see Table 4) includes mitigating strategies, adjuncts, as well as aggravating strategies.

Table 3. Coding Framework for Request Strategies

Strategies	Examples
Direct strategies	
Imperatives	Bang wo mai dian mianbao ba. [Help me buy some bread.]
Want/need statement	Wo xuyao mianbao. [I need bread.]
Conventionally indirect strategies	
Query preparatory	Neng . . . ma?/Neng bu neng . . .? [Can . . .?/Can or cannot . . .?]
	Neng bang wo mai dian mainbao ma? [Can you help me get some bread?]
	Keyi . . . ma?/Ke(yi) bu keyi . . .? [Would . . .?/Would or would not ...?]
	Nin ke bu keyi ba shang xingqi de biji gei wo? [Would or would not you give me the lecture notes from last week's class?]
Nonconventionally indirect strategies	
Mild hint	Wo meiyou biji. [I don't have the lecture notes.]
Strong hint	Nin you meiyou shang xingqi de ketang biji? [Do you
	or do you not have the notes of last class?]

Table 4. Coding Framework for Supportive Moves

Semantic Formulas	Examples
Mitigating supportive moves	
1. Preparator	Ni mang ma? [Are you busy?]
	Youjianshi xiang mafan ni. [I have a favor to ask you.]
2. Grounder	Wo tai mang le. [I'm so busy.]
3. Sweetener	Hao gemen-er! [Nice buddy!]
4. Getting a precommitment	Neng bang wo ge mang ma? [Can you do me a
	favor?]
5. Disarmer	Wo zhidao ni xiang kan dianshi, danshi . . . [I know you want to watch

	TV, but ...]
6. Imposition minimizer	Ruguo ni zhenghao yao qu de hua . . . [If you plan to go . . .] Ni keyi kai wo de che qu. [You can drive my car there.]
7. Promise of reward	Kuai qu, gei ni ye mai shang yi fen. [Go fast, and grab one for yourself as well (and I'll pay for it).]
8. Promise	Wo houtian jiu huangeini. [(I promise) I will give it back to you the day after tomorrow.]
9. Apology	Shizai duibuqi, ni gen tongxue shuo yixia, xiawu de ke quxiao le. [I'm really sorry. Please tell your classmates that I'll have to cancel the class this afternoon.]
10. Concern for addressee	Ni fangbian ma? [Is it convenient for you to do so?] Zheyang danwu ni ma? [Would this be a distraction for you?]
Aggravating supportive moves	
11. Repetition of head act	Jiu bang wo yixia ba. [Please help me.] (as a literal repetition or paraphrase of the head act)
12. Exaggeration	Liang xiaoshi wo dou e si le. [Two hours later I'll be starved to death.]
13. Grouching	Ni zhe ren zenme zheyang a. [How could you be such a friend?]
14. Urging	Gankuai qu, kuai. [Go fast, fast.]
Adjuncts	
15. Thanking	Xiexie. [Thank you.] Mafan ni le. [I brought you trouble (and I'm grateful).]
16. Confirmation	a. Active confirmation Hao, na women mingtian jian. [Okay, so let's meet tomorrow.]
a. Active confirmation	b. Passive Hao. [OK.]
b. Passive confirmation	Na jiu zheyang. [So be it.]
17. Request for information	Ni shenme shihou keyi? [When can you (do that)?]
18. Greeting	Li laoshi hao. [Hello, Professor Li.] Nihao. [Hello]

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Request Strategies

Table 5 shows the number of role plays completed among each group. When comparing the frequency of strategies, it is necessary that how many participants are there and how many role plays are finished by each group.

Table 5. Completed Role Plays Across Each Group

		Notes & Exam
L2 Learners	Group 1	4
	Group 2	5
	Group 3	3
NS		9

The overall distribution of request strategies used by L2 Chinese learners and Chinese native speakers is summarized and presented under 3 general categories in Figure 1 and is described in details in Table 6.

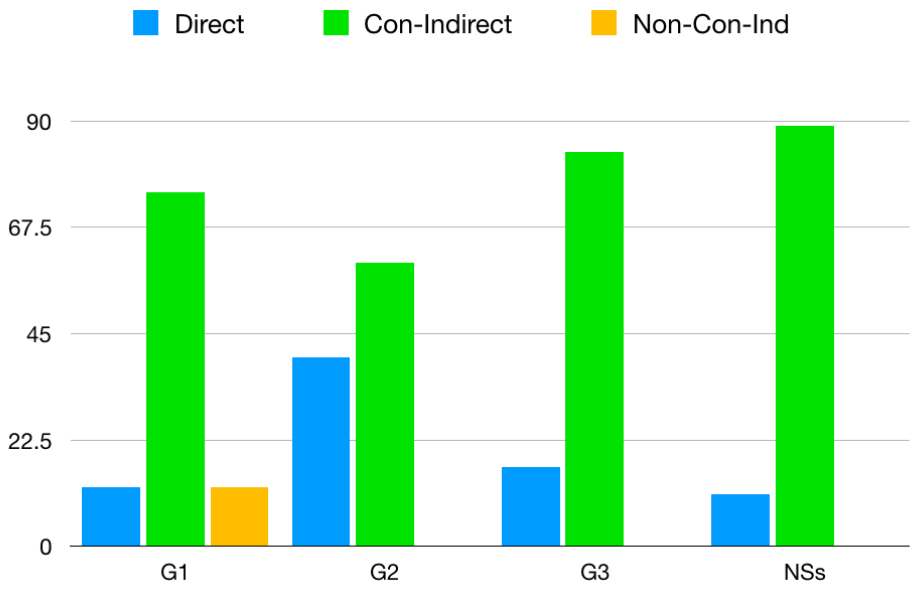

Figure 1. Overall Distribution of Request Strategies by Type and Group

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies by Type and Group

Request strategy	Group1 (n=8)		Group2(n=10)		Group3 (n=6)		NSs (n=18)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Direct strategies								
Imperatives	1	12.5	1	10	1	16.67	1	5.56
Want/need statement	0	0.00	3	30	0	0.00	1	5.56
Conventionally indirect strategies								
Query preparatory	6	75	6	60	5	83.33	16	88.89
Non-conventionally indirect strategies								
Mild hint	1	12.5	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Strong hint	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	8	100	10	100	6	100	18	100

For the Chinese NSs, they used direct strategies very infrequently, with 5.56% of their requests realized by direct strategy ‘imperatives’. In contrast, Group 1 learners produced 12.5% ‘imperatives’ in their requests. This percentage decreased to 10% in Group 2 but increased to 16.67% in Group 3. In terms of ‘want/need statements’, NSs produced it in 5.56% of their requests, whereas Group 2 produced it in 30% of their requests. The other 2 groups, Group1 and Group 3, did not employ any direct strategy ‘want/need statements’ at all. As for conventionally indirect strategies, NSs used them in 88.89% of their requests, Group 1 75%, Group 2 60%, and Group 3 83.33%. Only Group 1 adopted non-conventionally indirect strategies, in 12.5% of their requests. Also, viewing L2 Chinese learners as a whole, it can be seen from Figure 2 that both NSs and L2 Chinese learners favored Conventionally indirect strategies most when requesting in a high-imposition situation. However, NSs used conventionally indirect strategies more frequently than L2 learners, and direct strategies less frequently than L2 learners.

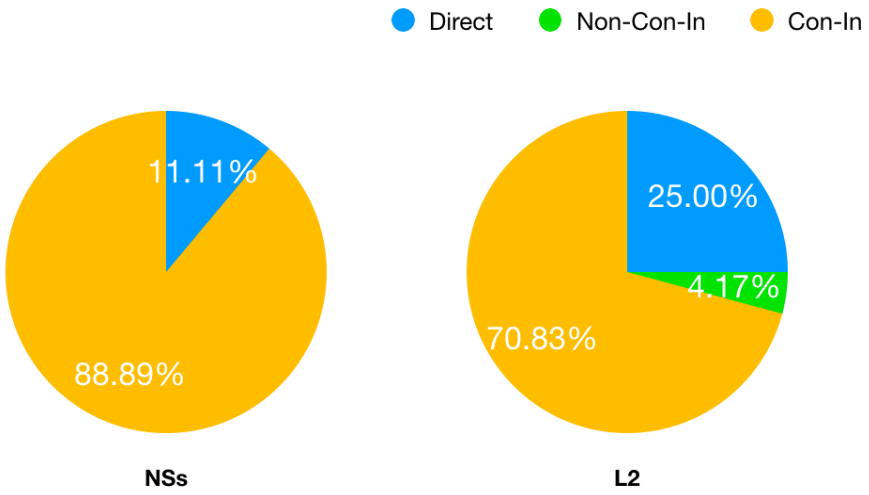

Figure 2. Contrast of Request Strategies Between NSs and L2 Learners

Types of request strategies employed by every participant from three groups of different LoS in the two scenarios are presented by group and scenario in Table 7 and percentage of different strategies used by different groups in Table 8.

Table 7. Types of Head Acts Employed by Group and Scenario

	Participant	S1	S2
Group 1	19	Query	Query
	1	Query	Query
	15	Imperative	Mild Hint
	18	Query	Query
Group 2	16	Imperative	Query
	17	Query	Query
	5	Query	Query
	21	Want	Query
	22	Want	Want
Group 3	14	Query	Query
	13	Query	Imperative
	4	Query	Query

Table 8. Percentage of Request Strategies by Type, Group and Scenario

	Group 1			**Group 2**			**Group 3**		
	S1	S2	S	S1	S2	S	S1	S2	S
Direct	**25%**	**0**	**12.5%**	**60%**	**20%**	**40%**	**0**	**33.33%**	**16.67%**
Imp	25%	0	12.5%	20%	0	10%	0	33.33%	16.67%
W/N	0	0	0	40%	20%	30%	0	0	0
CI	**75%**	**75%**	**75%**	**40%**	**80%**	**60%**	**100%**	**66.67%**	**83.33%**
Qr	75%	75%	75%	40%	80%	60%	100%	66.67%	83.33%
NI	**0**	**25%**	**12.5%**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
MH	0	25%	12.5%	0	0	0	0	0	0

SH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: S1: frequency of request strategies in scenario 1; S2: frequency of request strategies in scenario 2; S: frequency of request strategies in the two scenarios as a whole; Imp: imperatives; W/N: want/need statements; CI: conventionally indirect strategies; Qr: query preparatory; NI: non-conventionally indirect strategies; MH: mild hint; SH: strong hint.

As is shown in Table 8, conventionally indirect strategies were the most favorable type of request strategies by all the 3 groups of L2 learners, with 75% in group 1, 60% in group 2 and 83.33% in group 3. However, group 2 used direct strategies more frequently in scenario 1, which is different from the other groups in both scenarios, and from group 2 in scenario 2. Only group 1 adopted non-conventionally indirect strategies, and they were used only in scenario 2 when requesting from the professor.

Not until April 2017 was the official HSK test (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi, 'Chinese Proficiency Test') made compulsory for international students to study in China. Therefore, many international students, who had come to China before 2017, did not take HSK test. Only 7 out of 13 international participants of the study claimed to have an HSK score varying from level 4 to level 6. Also, their self-assessment was subjective and cannot reflect their real language proficiency. What's more, the researcher has consulted students at the College of International Education, which is the institute that manages international students, who have claimed that there were no compulsory Chinese courses for them. Therefore, it is also impossible to purposely choose students from courses of different language levels to participate in this study. In view of these conditions, participants cannot be categorized into groups representing different L2 proficiency. Therefore, this study chose several participants as representatives of different levels of language proficiency. Participant No.14, whose nickname was Feng, represents a lower level L2 Chinese learner. His HSK was at level 4, a relatively lower level than other participants, and he has been in China for only several months. One of the interlocutors was asked to score for all the participants after their conversations to assess their language proficiency in interaction (see Appendix D), and the score of Feng was 4. In contrast, participant No.22, whose nickname was Cui, represents an advanced level L2 learner. Her HSK was at level 6 (the highest level), she claimed that her contact with native Chinese speakers was 'very frequent', and the score of her by interlocutor was 8. Information of these two representatives is clearly represented in Table 9. The head acts of their requests are presented in Table 10.

Table 9. Representatives of Lower and Advanced Level L2 Learner

	Name	Gender	Age	HSK	LoS	Score
Lower Level	Feng	M	26	4	8m	4
Advanced level	Cui	F	22	6	3y	8

Table 10. Head Acts of Representatives' Requests

Name	Scenario	Head Act		Strategy
Cui	S1	Xiang cankao yixia nide biji.	[(I) want to refer to your notes.]	Want/Need Statements
	S2	Suoyi keyi dehua wo xiang canjia xiaci de bukao.	[So, if it is possible, I want to take the make-up exam the next time.]	Want/Need Statements
Feng	S1	Ni ke bu keyi gei wo nide wenjian gei wo, ba nide wenjian gei wo.	[Could you give me your notes to me?]	Query preparatory
	S2	Wo buhui canjia nage kasohi, women hui buhui tuichi le nage kaoshi?	[I cannot attend the exam. Will we delay the exam?]	Query preparatory

As we can see, representative of the advanced learner used direct strategy 'want/need statements' in both scenarios, while representative of the lower level learner, Feng, adopted conventionally indirect strategy 'query preparatory' in both scenarios. Though baseline data provided by native speakers show a preference of conventionally indirect strategy 'query preparatory', due to a lack of enough participant, we cannot therefore say in view of only two representatives that the advanced level L2 Chinese learner shows a non-native like development. However, it can be observed that the language used by representative of the advanced learner is

more native-like in grammar and choice of words. For example, she omitted the subject 'I' by starting with "Xiang… (wish I could…)". Also, she used the word "cankao (refer to)" which is more frequently used by native Chinese speakers and could encode more politeness instead of "kan (look at)". This may deserve a follow-up study probing into the internal modification and perspective used in L2 Chinese learners' requests in high-composition situations when requesting from interlocutors of different relative power.

4.2 Supportive Moves

Table 11 manifests the mean number of supportive moves by each group when requesting from interlocutors of different relative power.

Table 11. Mean Number of Supportive Moves by Type and Group in Different Power Situations

Supportive moves	=P				+P			
	G1	G2	G3	NS	G1	G2	G3	NS
1.Preparator	0.25	0.2	0.33	0.33	0.25	0.4	0.33	0.11
2. Grounder	1.5	1.2	1	0.78	2	2	1	2.22
3. Sweetener	0.25	0	0	0.11	0	0	0	0
5. Disarmer	0	0	0	0.11	0.75	0.4	0	0.33
6. Minimizer	1.25	0.2	1.33	1.22	0	0	0	0.67
7. Reward	0.25	0.2	0	0.22	0	0	0	0
8. Promise	0.25	0.4	0	0.89	0	0	0	0
9. Apology	0	0	0	0	0.25	0.4	0.67	0.22
10. CFA	0	0	0	0.33	0	0	0	0
Mitigating	***3.75***	***2.2***	***2.67***	***4***	***3.25***	***3.2***	***2***	***3.56***
11. Repetition	0.25	0	0	0.11	0.25	0.2	0.33	0.33
12. Exaggeration	0.25	0.2	0	0	0.25	0.2	0	0.11
Aggravating	***0.5***	***0.2***	***0***	***0.11***	***0.5***	***0.4***	***0.33***	***0.45***
15. Thanking	0.5	0.6	0.33	1	0.75	1	0.33	1.33
16.a. PC	0	0	0	0.67	0.5	0.6	0.67	1.11
16.b. AC	0.25	0.4	0.33	0.56	0.25	0.6	0.67	0.67
17. RFI	0	0	0	0.44	0	0	0	0
18.Greeting	0.25	1	0.33	0.78	0.5	0.8	0.67	1.11
Adjuncts	***1***	***2***	***1***	***3.45***	***2***	***3***	***2.33***	***4.22***
Total	***5.25***	***4.4***	***3.67***	***7.56***	***5.75***	***6.6***	***4.67***	***8.22***

Note: Minimizer: imposition minimizer; Reward: promise of reward; CFA: concern for addressee; PC: passive confirmation; AC: active confirmation; RFI: request for information.

As can be seen in the table, the mean frequency of using supportive moves for every group increased as the relative power of the interlocutor becomes higher. This may suggest that requesting from a higher power interlocutor may be more difficult to achieve, and speakers therefore consciously or subconsciously use supportive moves more frequently to try to realize their goal in interaction. All the four groups employed more adjuncts when requesting from the professor than from their classmate. Adjunct 'thanking', in particular, is very frequently used to show politeness to the professor. However, all four groups tend to adopt more mitigating devices when making requests from their classmates. According to one native Chinese speaker in the retrospective interview, a professor generally is very serious, and may not accept mitigating devices such as sweetener and disarmer in their interaction. Instead, intimate classmates are more likely to be sympathetic and understanding, and therefore mitigating devices would be more effective when requesting from them. For example, participant No. 3, a native Chinese speaker, said "Wo shunbian qingni chigefan. (I will treat you a meal)" when borrowing notes from her classmate, and similarly, participant No. 1, an L2 Chinese learner, used

mitigating device ‘promise of reward’ as well when he attempted to promise to give his classmate some money in return for her notes. Also, both native speakers and L2 learners used mitigating device ‘sweetener’, trying to praise the interlocutor for her neatly-written notes (see Example 4-1, Example 4-2), so that the interlocutor may be more willing to agree to lend her notes to the participant. All these similar situations happened in Scenario 1, i.e., requesting from an equal-power classmate.

Example 4-1 (participant No.19 from Group 1)

Wo yeyou wozijide biji, danshi woxiede hao luanqibazao de, wo youdianer kunnan ziji xuexi de, wo zhidao, nide nage biji henzhegnqi de. [I do have my own notes, but they are totally a mess and I have difficulty learning my own notes. And I know that your notes are neatly-written.]

Example 4-2 (pariticipant No.2 from NSs)

Wokan ni shangke feichangde renzhen, biji ye zuode feichangde quanmian. [I noticed that you always listened carefully during the class, and your notes are also very comprehensive.]

The mean frequency of supportive moves by L2 Chinese learners and Chinese NSs when requesting from interlocutors of different relative power is presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Mean Frequency of Supportive Moves by Type in Different Power Situations

Supportive moves	=P		+P		M	
	L2	NSs	L2	NSs	L2	NSs
1.Preparator	0.25	0.38	0.33	0.11	0.29	0.22
2. Grounder	1.25	0.78	1.75	2.22	1.5	1.5
3. Sweetener	0.08	0.11	0	0	0.04	0.06
5. Disarmer	0	0.11	0.42	0.33	0.21	0.22
6. Minimizer	0.83	1.22	0	0.67	0.42	0.94
7. Reward	0.17	0.22	0	0	0.08	0.11
8. Promise	0.25	0.89	0	0	0.13	0.44
9. Apology	0	0	0.42	0.22	0.21	0.11
10. CFA	0	0.33	0	0	0	0.17
Mitigating	***2.83***	***4***	***2.92***	***3.56***	***2.88***	***3.78***
11. Repetition	0.83	0.11	0.25	0.33	0.17	0.22
12. Exaggeration	0.17	0	0.17	0.11	0.17	0.06
Aggravating	***0.25***	***0.11***	***0.42***	***0.45***	***0.33***	***0.28***
15. Thanking	0.42	1	0.58	1.33	0.5	1.17
16.a. PC	0	0.67	0.58	1.11	0.29	0.89
16.b. AC	0.33	0.56	0.5	0.67	0.42	0.61
17. RFI	0	0.44	0	0	0	0.22
18.Greeting	0.58	0.78	0.67	1.11	0.63	0.94
Adjuncts	***1.5***	***3.45***	***2.5***	***4.22***	***2***	***3.83***
Total	***4.58***	***7.56***	***5.83***	***8.22***	***5.21***	***7.89***

Note: Minimizer: imposition minimizer; Reward: promise of reward; CFA: concern for addressee; PC: passive confirmation; AC: active confirmation; RFI: request for information; M represents the mean frequency of both scenarios.

As we can see, the mean frequency of supportive moves employed by NSs is 7.89, while that of L2 learners is only 5.21. NSs used supportive moves more frequently than L2 Chinese learners, especially mitigating strategies and adjuncts. Also, they used a wider range of supportive moves than L2 learners. Mitigating supportive move ‘concern for addressee’ and adjunct ‘request for information’ were used by NSs, but not by L2 learners.

Mean number of supportive moves by type and group in different power situations is shown in Table 4-7 (see above), and that of supportive moves by type and group in the two situations as a whole is presented below in Table 13. Overall, the average frequency of employing supportive moves per person of group 1 and group 2 is the same (mean=5.5), and that of group 3 is 4.17 which is lower than group 1 and group 2. However, mean number of all the supportive moves used by each of the three groups of L2 learners is lower than that of NSs (mean=7.89). Of the different 3 major types of supportive moves, both L2 learners' use of mitigating supportive moves (G3: mean= 2.33; G2: mean=2.7; G1: mean=3.5; NSs: mean=3.78) and their use of aggravating supportive moves (G3: mean= 0.17; G2: mean=0.3; G1: mean=0.5; NSs: mean=0.28) show a native-like trend of development. However, as the length of stay becomes longer and longer, L2 learners seem to tend to overuse aggravating supportive moves. According to what one of the interlocutors mentioned in the retrospective interview, however, the overuse of aggravating supportive moves such as repetition and exaggeration in particular, may make the addressee feel that the speaker is not very sincere, thus making the addressee not so willing to agree to help the speaker.

It can also be noticed that, as the length of stay becomes longer, the range of supportive moves employed by L2 Chinese learners becomes wider. Mitigating supportive moves 'sweetener', 'disarmer', 'promise of reward', and 'concern for addressee' were never used by group 3. Among these supportive moves, 'disarmer' was used by group 3. The only (compared to the range of supportive moves used by native speakers in this research) mitigating supportive move that was not employed by group 1 was 'concern for addressee'. As for aggravating supportive moves, group 3 never employed 'exaggeration', but group 1 and group 2 did. In terms of adjuncts, none of the 3 groups of L2 learners used 'request for information'. These changes indicate that as L2 Chinese learners stay longer in a study abroad context in China, they acquire more types of supportive moves when requesting from others in Chinese.

Table 13. Mean Number of Supportive Moves by Type and Group

Supportive moves	M			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
1.Preparator	0.25	0.30	0.33	0.22
2. Grounder	1.75	1.60	1.	1.5
3. Sweetener	0.13	0	0	0.06
5. Disarmer	0.38	0.2	0	0.22
6. Minimizer	0.63	0.1	0.67	1.56
7. Reward	0.13	0.1	0	0.11
8. Promise	0.13	0	0.2	0.45
9. Apology	0.13	0.2	0.34	0.11
10. CFA	0	0	0	0.17
Mitigating	***3.5***	***2.7***	***2.33***	***3.78***
11. Repetition	0.25	0.1	0.17	0.22
12. Exaggeration	0.25	0.2	0	0.06
Aggravating	***0.5***	***0.3***	***0.17***	***0.28***
15. Thanking	0.63	0.8	0.33	1.17
16.a. PC	0.25	0.3	0.33	0.89
16.b. AC	0.25	0.5	0.5	0.62
17. RFI	0	0	0	0.22
18.Greeting	0.38	0.9	0.5	0.95
Adjuncts	***1.5***	***2.5***	***1.67***	***3.84***
Total	5.5	5.5	4.17	7.89

Note: Minimizer: imposition minimizer; Reward: promise of reward; CFA: concern for addressee; PC: passive confirmation; AC: active confirmation; RFI: request for information.

Example 4-3 is a transcription of conversations by Cui who represents an advanced L2 Chinese learner. She employed ‘greeting’ when initiating both conversations, and thanking when ending the conversation, such encoding politeness and making the interlocutors feel that they are respected. Then she used ‘grounder’ to show her weakness in preparing for the exam. Then, she moved a step forward to make the head act of the request, after which she employed mitigating supportive move ‘promise’, promising to return notes to her friend very soon. After the promise, she came up with the suggestion that the interlocutor could study together with Cui, so that they can both refer to Xiaolin’s notes, and that they can help each other. By offering this choice, Cui successfully turned the situation from a dilemma to a win-win situation, thus minimizing the originally high imposition. Then she added a ‘promise of reward’, offering to buy Xiaolin, the interlocutor, a cup of coffee if she agreed to study with Cui together in a café. The interlocutor who played the role Xiaolin mentioned in the retrospective interview that she felt ‘comfortable and being respected’ when receiving Cui’s request.

Example 4-3 Notes & Exam

(Cui: learner, female; I1: NS interlocutor, female; I2: NS interlocutor, male)

Coding	Transcription	Translation
Greeting Grounder Head Act (want/need statements) Promise Minimizer	Cui: Nihao, Xiaolin. Jiushi wo zai xuexizhong you budongde defang, xiang cankao yixia nide biji, danshi women houtian jiushi youkaoshi ba? suoyi wo daomingtian yidingyao zaihuangeini nidebiji. Yaobu wojuede nikeyidehua, womenlia yiqi quxuexi keyi, zheyang dehua womenlia douneng kanbiji, erqie you budongde defang keyi huxiang bangzhu. Hao buhao?	[Hello, Xiaolin. I have some bewilderments during my study, and I want to refer to your notes. But we have an exam the day after tomorrow, right? So, I have to return your notes to you. Or maybe I think, if it is convenient for you, we two can study together, so that both of us can read your notes, and we can help each other if we have some problems. Is that okay?]
	I1: Hao ya.	[Okay]
Promise of reward	Cui: Ranhou, womenlia yiqi qu dehua wo juede, qu kafeiting xuexi shi bijiaohaode ne, zheyang dehua wolai qingni yibei kafei.	[Then, if we go studying together, I think it is a good choice to study in the café. In this way, I will buy you a cup of coffee.]
	I1: A, haode, hahaha, xiexie ni.	[Ahh, okay, haha, thank you.]
	Cui: Hao, xiexie ni!	[Okay, thank you!]
AC Thanking	I1: En, bu keqi.	[Okay, you are welcome.]
Greeting Preparator Grounder Disarmer Grounder Head Act (want) Apology Thanking	Cui: Laoshi hao, wo you yijianshi, jiushi woyaoqu ban qianzheng, suoyi wo haoxiang buneng canjia mingtiande kaoshi, wo ye xiang canjia mingtian de kaoshi, danshi zhe zhenshi buneng tuidao xiaci, erqie wo mingtian buqu dehua, wo zai wode qianzheng shang hui fasheng wenti le, suoyi keyi dehua, wo xiang canjia xiaci de bukao, hen baoqian, wo gengzao jiu mei lai gaosu ni, qing liangjie yixia ba, laoshi, xiexie!	[Hello, professor, I have something to tell you. It’s the visa that I am going to apply, so it seems that I cannot attend the exam tomorrow. I do want to take the exam tomorrow, but the visa application is something that cannot be rescheduled, and if I do not go for the visa application tomorrow, there would be something wrong with my visa. So, if possible, I want to take a make-up exam the next time. I’m very sorry that I couldn’t have told you earlier, please understand my situation, professor, thank you!]
		[Couldn’t the visa officer rearrange the time for you? In other words, can’t your visa application be dealt with another time?]
	I2: Ni de qianzhengguan bunneg geini gai shijian ma? Jiushi, bunneng gei ni gai yici zai zuo qianzheng ma?	[Oh, it seems that the visa application cannot be rescheduled, I made an appointment several months in advance, it seems that it cannot be rearranged.]
	Cui: O, haoxiang buxing de ba, yinwei	[Okay then, I will arrange a make-up exam for you. Please make sure you can attend the

Grounder	zhejianshi jigeyue qian yijing yuding hao de, haoxiang buneng gai.	make-up exam.] [Ah, okay, professor, thank you.] [Okay]
	I2: Na hao ba, wo gei ni anpai yixia bukao, ni xiaci yiding, ni de bukao yiding yao canjia.	
PC Thanking	Cui: A haode laoshi, xiexie.	
	I2: Hao de.	

Example 4-4, in contrast, is the transcription of conversations by Feng, representative of the lower level Chinese learner. Unlike Cui, Feng did not employ 'greeting' in neither scenario. Instead, he started straightforwardly with only a grounder followed by the head act in both scenarios. He did not use adjunct 'thanking', the commonly used supportive move by native speakers to encode politeness when making a request, in neither of the conversations, such making the interlocutors feel being offended.

Example 4-4 Notes & Exam

(Feng: learner, male; I1: NS interlocutor, female; I2: NS interlocutor, male)

Coding	Transcription	Translation
Grounder Head Act (query)	Feng: Wo meiyou xuexi de wenjian, suoyi ni ke bu keyi ba nide wenjian gei wo, suoyi, haishi women keyi yiqi xuexi zhunbei kaoshi, keyi ma?	[I don't have papers for studying, so can you give me your papers, so, or maybe we can study together to prepare for the exam. Is that okay?]
Minimizer	I1: En, n ani na zou wo de biji dehua shenme shihou huan gei wo ya?	[Okay, then if you take my notes when will you give them back to me?]
	Feng: A, mingtian jiu keyi le.	[Ahh, tomorrow is okay.]
	I1: Danshi zhege kaoshi hen zhongyao, wo ye xuyao fuxi.	[But this exam is very important, and I also need to prepare for it.]
	Feng: A, na ni ke bu keyi fuzhi yixia?	[Ahh, then can you copy it?]
	I1: A, na ni na qu paizhao, ranhou huan gei wo keyi ma?	[Ahh, so you can take my notes and take pictures of them, then you can give them back to me, okay?]
Minimizer	Feng: Hao de.	[Okay.]
Grounder Head Act (query)	Feng: Wo mingtian youshi suoyi wo buhui canjia kaoshi, women hui buhui tuichi le nage kaoshi?	[I have something else to do tomorrow so I will not attend the exam. Will we delay the exam?]
	I2: Mingtian shenme shi rang ni meifa canjia zhege kaoshi? Zanmen zhege kaoshi hai ting zhongyao de.	[What is it that stops you from taking the exam? Our exam is quite important.]
Grounder	Feng: Wo de mama you touteng, yinwei ta buhui ziji qu yisheng, yinwei ta de touteng tai yanzhong le, suoyi wo yiding gen ta yiqi qu yisheng.	[My mom has headaches, since she cannot go to see the doctor herself, and since that her headaches are so bad, I must go to the doctor with her.]
	I2: Danshi dangshi women shenqing zhege kaoshi de shihou meiyou shezhi bukao de, dan ni zhege wenti ye shi ting yanzhong, suoyi wo ye shi xiwang ni duo he ni mama pei yixia, name xuyao ni zuo de jiushi ni qu gen jiaowuchu de laoshi lianxi, kan neng buneng gei ni anpai yici bukao, ruguo tamen tongyi de hua, wo shi keyi	[But there is no make-up exam when I apply for holding this exam. However, your situation is also very urgent, so I also hope that you can keep your mom company. So, what you need to do is to contact teachers

	geini anpai de.	from the Academic Affaires' Office to see if they agree that we do so. If they agree, I can arrange a make-up exam for you.]
	Feng: A, na keyi, na ni wen tamen, ranhou women zaishuo, duima?	[That's okay, so you ask them, and then we'll see, right?]
	I2: shi ni xianqu wen yixia zhege zenmeyang anpai xietiao, ranhou wo caineng qu shenqing anpai bukao.	[It is you that need to ask them, and then I can apply for a make-up exam.]
	Feng: E, wo bu mingbai shenme yisi.	
	I2: Yinwei wo dangshi meiyou shezhi zhege bukao ma, jiushishuo xuexiao buyiding neng tongyi ni canjia bukao huozhe shuo wo zhankai yige bukao de kaoshi. Name ruguo zhege bukao shenqing buchenggong dehua ni shifou leyi jieshou birushuo zuo yixie jiatingzuoye a, huozhe shuo nib a zhege kaoshi dai huijia quzuo, zheyang lai wancheng zhege kaoshi?	[Well, I do not understand.]
AC	Feng: En, wo meiyou biede xiangfa shuo.	[Since I didn't apply for a make-up exam, the school may not agree that we do so. Therefore, if they do not agree to hold a make-up exam, is it okay for you to do some homework or take the exam at home instead?]
		[Okay, I don't have anything else to say.]
PC		

5. Conclusion

The author should clearly explain the important conclusions of the research highlighting its significance and relevance.

5.1 Major Findings

The present study investigated L2 Chinese learners' request production in a study abroad context, and the effect of length of stay on their production. The research demonstrates their request production, i.e., their request strategies and supportive moves used when requesting in high-imposition situations, differences and similarities between their request production and that of native Chinese speakers, and the pattern of development as their length of stay becomes longer.

Regarding request strategies, overall, both native Chinese speakers and L2 Chinese learners favored conventionally indirect strategies, but native speakers used them more frequently than L2 learners. As for different length of stay, all 3 groups of different length of stay preferred conventionally indirect strategies when making requests, which is similar to choices by native speakers. But group 1, participants of the longest length of stay, was the only group to use non-conventionally indirect strategies, showing a non-native-like trend.

In terms of supportive moves, overall, native Chinese speakers used a wider range of supportive moves, and they used them more frequently than L2 learners. As for different length of stay, learners produced more mitigating supportive moves and aggravating supportive moves, showing a native-like trend of development. As they stayed longer in a study abroad context in China, they also acquired more types of supportive moves. Also, representative of advanced level Chinese learner was able to use more kinds of supportive moves more properly, making the addressee more willing to agree to help compared to the lower level learner. As for relative power as a variable, all 3 groups of learners, as well as native Chinese speakers, tended to produce more supportive moves when requesting from an interlocutor of higher power relative power.

5.2 Implications of the Study

This study also has implication for the acquisition of acquiring request-making in L2 Chinese. Overall, the length of stay in the target country has a positive effect on L2 Chinese learners' acquisition of requesting in Chinese. Therefore, L2 Chinese learners should try to study abroad for a longer duration, so that they can better acquire speech acts in Chinese. Second, though learners prefer conventionally indirect strategies to make requests, they do not use them as frequently as native Chinese speakers. Therefore, L2 Chinese teachers can encourage learners to use conventionally indirect strategies more often. Third, only learners from the group representing the longest length of stay used non-conventionally indirect strategies. So, teachers can try to make learners more familiar with this sort of request strategies, and textbooks for L2 Chinese learners should consciously include non-conventionally indirect request strategies.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Though having achieved such fruitful results, this study was not without limitations. First, due to the difficulty of participant recruitment, participants of this study were limited in amount with only 13 foreign participants, which may influence the results and the significance of this study. Second, due to the Covid-19 epidemic, some of the participants did the experiment online while others did it fact-to-face. This may cause slight differences in their production of requests, influencing the controlled variable. Third, transcriptions were coded and participants' frequency of employing various strategies and supportive moves was counted and presented in tables for further analysis, but there lacks a Chi square test to see if there is any significant difference between different groups or of the same group in different scenarios. Last, though some participants have taken the HSK test, they took it years ago and their HSK level cannot therefore best represent their L2 proficiency at the time of the experiment.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Study

As mentioned above, a follow-up study can be conducted, recruiting more L2 Chinese learners as participants. The future study can design a Chinese proficiency test before the role play, thus knowing participants' language proficiency at the time of the experiment. The role play can be conducted whether all face-to-face or all online, avoiding the appearance of a second variable besides the one that needs to be discussed. Then, as for the data analysis, applications like SPSS can be used to further prove the findings and conclusions.

Fund Project

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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