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A Contrastive Study of Service Staff's Responses to Requests in Dunhuang and Lanzhou

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Abstract

Contrastive studies conducted from the perspective of variation pragmatics between two cities in northwestern China were rarely seen in studying requests and its responses. This study focuses on the politeness strategies employed in responses to the speech act of request in the service industry of Lanzhou and Dunhuang, aiming to provide useful indications from the perspective of speakers' politeness perception and practice. By a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, this study attempted to explore how the two influencing factors-age and gender-impact on the responses of Lanzhou and Dunhuang service staff to customers' requests. This study found significant differences between different gender and age groups. Both Dunhuang and Lanzhou service staff were politer to males than females; young customers tended to receive more politer responses than the elderly. Moreover, service staff of Dunhuang tended to be politer when responding to requests than those of Lanzhou.

Keywords: Requests, Responses, Service, Dunhuang, Lanzhou, Politeness

1. Introduction

Dunhuang (DH), a typical tourism city in Gansu Province and Lanzhou (LZ), the capital of Gansu Province, are the two significant cities along the Belt and Road (B & R) Zone. Both of them drew heater attention worldwide because of the implementation of B & R initiative. This study probes into the real current situation of service industry of two main cities on the Belt in northwest part of China. The authors attempt to investigate the natural conversations of service industry from the perspective of pragmatic usage and provide advice to the SS with politeness strategies in both DH and LZ, so as to better improve the tourism industry in the two cities as well as the other cities along the Belt.

The economic and language differences may contribute to pragmatic differences in people's daily conversations between DH and LZ. In particular, daily conversations between service staff (SS) and customers are the best indicators of a city's pragmatic politeness degree in that service industry requires both politeness and efficiency and efficiency may be against politeness under certain circumstances. Therefore, this study concentrates on conversations between SS and customers in DH and LZ.

DH is famous for her abundant cultural resources such as DH Grottoes which triggers the pillar industry-tourism. For better communication, Mandarin is used as the daily language especially among young people; whereas local elders speak DH dialect more often. By contrast, LZ is known as the transportation hub of the Northwest China and large amount of tourists choose LZ to be their transfer station on their way westward. Thus, LZ observes the gathering of thousands of tourists as well as businessmen all over. LZ dialect is a branch of Lan Yin Mandarin (Zhou, 2005), belonging to Sino- Tibetan languages. Dialects of DH and LZ share scarce common characteristics more beyond phonetic, syntactic, and history.

In conversations happening in service industry, requests may be the most frequently made and responded. Requests belong to directives by which speakers attempt to "get the hearers to do something" (Searle, 1975). It can be found that request possibly infringes a speaker's positive face and a hearer's negative face in that the speaker is at the risk of being refused and the hearer's will to be free is invaded. Thus, in essence, a request can be classified into face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Gborsong, 2016). Leech claimed that requests usually occurred with speakers' attempts to balance between intention to achieve purposes and efforts to maintain polite; therefore, politeness strategies are adopted to mitigate the impoliteness of requests (Ling, 2003).

By a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, this study is an attempt to find and analyze the effects of age and gender differences on responses to requests both in LZ and DH. Furthermore, the current study intends to do a comparison of politeness degree of SS between LZ and DH. In addition, with the pragmatic research on SS's responses, this study also tries to give reasons for the current situation and provide implications for the promotion of service quality in both cities.

2. Studies of DH and LZ Dialects

The ancient DH culture, especially language treasure in written form, has always been a core focus by many scholars (Sun, 1982; Wang, 1987; Wang, 2008; Xu & Tang, 2015; Hashimoto et al., 1982; Takada, 2005). Nowadays, the DH dialect also receives heated concern on phonetics (Zhou & Xie, 2006), phonology (Cao, 1998; Li, 2014; Wang & Min, 2011; Zhang, 1985), semantics (Zhang & Xu, 1996), and syntax (Lu, 2011; Zhai, 2006). However, few studies conducted in terms of its pragmatic uniqueness about DH dialect.

The previous linguistic research on Dunhuang language mainly confines into studies of ancient characters (Li, 2004) and written texts in literature (Fang, 2000). Most linguistic research on Lanzhou focuses on two aspects: syntactic analysis (Bao, 2016; Wang & Wang, 2003) and phonetic as well as phonological investigation (Liu, 2012; Wang, 2001; Yi, 2014). Few scholars have conducted contrastive research between these two cities with pragmatic theories, let alone with speech acts and politeness theories.

The studies of LZ dialect covers more on phonetics and phonology (Wang, 1983; Wang, 2001; Li, 2011; Liu, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Yi, 2014; Liang, 2014); syntactics (Wang & Wang, 2003; Jia, 2013; Bao, 2016). In 2009, Zhang & Mo published *The Dictionary of LZ Dialect*, providing the basic phonetic and semantic knowledge about LZ dialect. However, very few studies comparing different speech acts between LZ Dialect and other dialect from a perspective of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, except for Liu, Zhang, Li, and Duan (2015). They explored the pragmatics strategy choices in several speech acts including request, thanking, apology, compliment and asking with different investigating variables.

Customers' requests to service staff are commonly acknowledged as that customers hold higher position in power. Customers sometimes do not employ any politeness strategy when they make requests to service staff. Service stall, correspondingly, reply impolitely in various ways to customers. The staff's choices of ways are determined by such factors as age and gender differences, social-economic background and educational background (Gborsong, 2016). What strategies do the service staff in DH and LZ make to the customers? What are the effective factors? What are the results from a comparison between the two cities? There are no answers to these questions.

It is obviously significant to seek for the answers in the realm of variational pragmatics. The research field in service industry between DH and LZ Dialect is highly noted because of their importance in the economic development on China's "One Belt and One Road" (the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road). Thus, it is necessary to investigate the distinct pragmatic features in the service industries in DH and LZ dialects and to compare those features between the two cities that are geographically and economically varied from each other.

3. Method and Design

3.1 Research Questions

To reach our purpose of research, we raised the following questions we intend to explore:

(1) What are the overall patterns of SS's responses to requests in DH and LZ?

(2) Does gender difference affect SS's responses to requests in DH and LZ? If yes; how?

(3) Does age difference affect SS's responses to requests in DH and LZ? If yes; how?

(4) What are the differences between SS's responses to requests between DH and LZ?

3.2 Role Play

The current study employed semi-authentic role-play as its instrument according to the CCSARP coding manual (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). It set a system of sound and scientific methodologies for linguistic study to investigate the politeness and social variables affecting the use of speech act, including constructing DCT and coding of requests. We adopted its coding manual as its methodological basis and proposes its own method of data analysis after considering the research questions and real characteristics of collected data. Cohen and Olshtain (1993) indicated that data collected by role-play are more reliable than those collected in natural conversations, which has been approved by Kasper (1999) as well. Scarcella (1981) pointed out that role-play could not only guarantee the collection of unabridged conversations with opening and closing remarks but also enable researchers to control variables during the whole process. The role player was required to make a request to a subject in a given situation with given words and tape record the whole process of conversation from greetings to farewells. Conversations were tape recorded in order to acquire accurate knowledge of how customers talked politely and impolitely when requesting for service and what kind of requests would be more appropriate at different levels of ranking of impositions. Afterwards, all recordings were transcribed into texts.

3.3 Selection of Locations

Locations were randomly chosen at different levels in both DH and the Chengguan District of LZ in three steps:

(1) We calculated all streets in DH and the Chengguan District of LZ and randomly selected fifteen percent of all the streets with the help of random sampling table. Six streets in LZ and five streets in DH were chosen.

(2) We counted up all the restaurants, hotels, shops, train or bus stations and scenic spots in the eleven streets and classified them into two different levels respectively. Hotels were divided into ones above and below three stars level (authorized by provincial Tourist Administration); restaurants were classified into large ones (able to accommodating eighty people at the same time and containing more than two private rooms) and small ones; shops were sorted into large and small ones according to their land area and business scope; stations were composed of bus stations and train stations; and scenic spots were distributed into two groups: A-level ones and non A-level ones (authorized by the national Tourist Administration).

(3) Based on the counted data, target locations were selected out with a percentage of fifteen by random sampling table, containing both levels of five types of locations.

(4) A total of forty locations in DH and sixty-seven locations in Chengguan District of LZ were selected. All natural conversations were taped recorded from the above locations in five types: restaurants, shops, hotels, train stations and scenic spots.

3.4 Subjects

Thirty-two native SS were randomly chosen from five types of research locations, such as restaurants, hotels, shops, transportation stations and scenic spots (Yin, Y, 2017) which best presents the pragmatic practice of a city and frequency use the speech act of responses to requests. Each DH and LZ group employed 16 native speakers evenly distributed in gender and age: the elderly group (E, 55 to 65 year-old) and the young group (Y, 18 to 35 year-old). We require the role players communicate with others normally and they were well trained to master necessary communicative and technological skills. Considering that DH was much smaller both in population and land areas than Lanzhou, the current study took subjects from only one main district Chengguan District (six streets, sixty-seven locations) in LZ; while all districts (five streets, fourty locations) in DH were included. In addition, role players conversed only with those who directly communicated with customers like servers in restaurants or receptionists in hotels. Staff like cleaners in hotels or chefs in restaurants were excluded. There were totally 1712 valid tape recordings of role play conducted in 107 locations in DH and LZ.

3.5 Variable Control

This study identified customers' gender and age difference as independent variables and SS's responses as dependent variables. Except for gender and age, other factors such as ranking of imposition and situations where customers spoke politely or impolitely were all controlled.

(1) According to Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of FTAs, social distance, relative power and absolute ranking of imposition are the three factors affecting the performance of speech acts. The social distance and relative power between speakers (customers) and listeners (SS) remained the same; therefore, only the ranking of imposition (RI) needed controlling. Higher ranking of imposition (+RI) presented greater magnitude of the request, requiring comparatively more efforts to accomplish it. By contrast, lower ranking of imposition (-RI) indicated less effort to complete a request.

(2) To control the degree of politeness of customers' request (DP), when it was higher (+DP), a role player would perform a request in a relatively polite manner; while a lower degree of politeness (-DP) indicated that a customer was required to request impolitely. Every role player was required to speak both politely and impolitely about one topic, either representing higher or lower ranking of imposition.

The independent variables and disturbing variables formed 16 combinations in total as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Combination of variables

Ranking of imposition	Customers' gender	Customers' age	Degree of politeness of customers' requests
+ RI	F	E	+ DP
+ RI	F	E	- DP
+ RI	M	Y	+ DP
+ RI	M	Y	- DP
+ RI	F	E	+ DP
+ RI	F	E	- DP
+ RI	M	Y	+ DP
+ RI	M	Y	- DP
- RI	F	E	+ DP
- RI	F	E	- DP
- RI	M	Y	+ DP
- RI	M	Y	- DP
- RI	F	E	+ DP
- RI	F	E	- DP
- RI	M	Y	+ DP
- RI	M	Y	- DP

Notes: +RI / -RI = higher/lower ranking of imposition;

M/F = males/females; E/Y =elderly/young customers;

+ DP/- DP = polite/impolite requests.

3.6 Situation

In designing situations for role-play, two disturbing variables (the ranking of imposition and degree of politeness of customers' requests) required careful consideration. We designed eight situations for each type of location, which were equally divided into high and low ranking of imposition and further equally distributed into polite and impolite requests. To avoid occasionality, we designed two situations for the same level of ranking of imposition and degree of politeness but with different content of requests. Combining the syntactic and pragmatic data collected in the first stage and the designing of situations in the second step, forty situations in total were designed, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Design of situations

Location Types	Ranking of Imposition	Degree of Politeness	Settings of Request
Hotels	-RI	+ DP	SI Request for querying for available rooms
	+ RI	+ DP	S2 Request for booking phone number
	-RI	-DP	S3 Request for a discount
	+ RI	-DP	S4 Request for visiting rooms
	-RI	+ DP	S5 Request for querying for available rooms
	+ RI	+ DP	S6 Request for booking phone number
	-RI	-DP	S7 Request for a discount
	+ RI	-DP	S8 Request for visiting rooms
Restaurants	-RI	+ DP	S9 Request for looking at menu
	+ RI	+ DP	S10 Request for looking at take-outs
	-RI	-DP	S11 Request for reserving a private room
	+ RI	-DP	S12 Request for recommending specialties
	-RI	+ DP	S13 Request for looking at menu

	+ RI	+ DP	S14 Request for looking at take-outs
	-RI	-DP	S15 Request for reserving a private room
	+ RI	-DP	S16 Request for recommending specialties to checkroom
Stations	-RI	+ DP	S17 Request for directing way
	+ RI	+ DP	S18 Request for querying for ticket price
	-RI	-DP	S19 Request for buying tickets
	+ RI	-DP	S20 Request for ticket refund
	-RI	+ DP	S21 Request for directing way to checkroom
	+ RI	+ DP	S22 Request for querying for ticket price
	-RI	-DP	S23 Request for buying tickets
	+ RI	-DP	S24 Request for ticket refund
Shops	-RI	+ DP	S25 Request for directing way to food area
	+ RI	+ DP	S26 Request for looking for mineral water
	-RI	-DP	S27 Request for presenting particular goods
	+ RI	-DP	S28 Request for recommending goods
	-RI	+ DP	S29 Request for directing way to food area
	+ RI	+ DP	S30 Request for looking for mineral water
	-RI	-DP	S31 Request for presenting particular goods
	+ RI	-DP	S32 Request for recommending goods
Scenic Spots	-RI	+ DP	S33 Request for taking photos
	+ RI	+ DP	S34 Request for directing way to washroom

-RI	-DP	S35 Request for leading way to tourist center
+ RI	-DP	S36 Request for guides to particular spots
-RI	+ DP	S37 Request for taking photos
+ RI	+ DP	S38 Request for directing way to washroom
-RI	-DP	S39 Request for leading way to tourist center
+ RI	-DP	S40 Request for guides to particular spots

Note: The research design and data were from Yin, Y. (2017).

3.7 Procedures

To ensure all 32 subjects understand the purposes and key points of the role-play, they were required to master necessary communicative skills. They were free to speak either mandarin or local dialects and were trained to use phones to record the whole conversations clearly. Role players interact with the SS in each location evolved according to the designed situations. The role-play lasted from January to September in 2016, carried out in sixty-seven locations in Chengguan District of LZ and DH. The acting out, tape recording, recording checking and alternation strictly complied with research design. Failure recordings were abandoned. To avoid potential influences on the performance, role players re-performed the abandoned situations in alternative locations, which had been identified with certain levels on certain selected streets. In sum, 1712 valid recordings were collected and were transcribed into written texts based on the principle of authenticity and accuracy. Some DH and LZ dialects used by SS were transcribed with the help of local residents of the two cities.

3.8 Coding

Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989)'s CCSARP construct a systematic model for coding speech acts. The CCSARP coding manual divides a speech act into alerters, head acts and supportive moves; every segmentation was further classified into smaller categories and every category was classified into even more concrete items. Besides, Fukushima (2000) and some Chinese researchers also proposed speech acts coding models. Garcia (1996) and Ruegg (2014) analyzed responses to speech acts with their own coding schemes. Based on these models and schemes, combining with the particularity of collected data, we have segmented the request responses into six parts: alerters, greetings, head acts, syntax and vocabulary, perspectives and supportive moves (pre-/ post-posed) with important consideration (See Table 3).

Table 3. Coding framework of data

Segmentation	**Classifications**	**Example**
Alerters	feigned relative alerters	**uncle / Aunt**
	common alerters	**Sir / Madam**
	alerters of respect	**nin** (reference of "you" respectfully)
	no alerter	——
Greetings	using greeting	**Hello**
	no greeting	
Head acts	direct responses	*Give me a bottle of water. -**It is beside that cabinet.**
	indirect responses	*Can you lead me to the food area? -**I am very busy now.**
	backward requests	*Check if there is an available room. -**Do you bring ID card?**
	behavioral requests	*Bring me the menu. -**No speech. Giving the customer a menu.**
Syntax and vocabulary	downgraders	*Check if there is an available room. -Wait for **a second**.
	upgraders	*This's **absolutely** the tastiest in Dunhuang.
	no grader	*Tell me the price for double room. -**We charge for 360 RMB a night.**
Perspectives	no dominance	*Check if there is available single room. -**All single rooms are occupied now.**
	speaker dominance	*Recommend specialty for me. -**My** restaurant's specialty

		is roasted fish.
	listener dominance	*Lead me to the lake. -Turn right when out of gate and **you** will see it.
	speaker and listener dominance	*Give me a discount. -**We** are all locals of Dunhuang. This is the lowest price.
Supportive Moves	no move	*How much is it for a double room? -**(no move)** We charge for 360 RMB a night (no move).
	confirmation	*I want a ticket refund. **- Do you want to return this ticket?** I will handle it right now.
	explanation	*1 want a ticket refund. -**There is a charge if less than** **15 days are left before the departure time**. Give me your ticket.
	suggestion	*I want to book a room. -How about coming again after **2 p.m.**? All rooms are occupied right now.
	apology	*I want to book a room. -**Sorry,** Sir. All rooms are occupied.
	inquiry	*I want to book a room. -**Are you on our membership list?** All rooms are not available now. If you have membership card, we will contact you once a room becomes available.
	request	*Bring me the menu. - **Please have a seat here.** The menu is on that iPad.

	farewell	*Bring me the menu. - (when the customer was getting out) **Thanks for coming**.
	multiple moves	***Do you like spicy food? Why not try this one?** **This is our specialty. Most customers love it very much.**

Note: The sample sentences in each classification were from Yin, Y. (2017).

3.8.1 Alerters

Alerters were employed to attract listeners' attention, shorten social distance between speakers and listeners, continue a conversation and express politeness and respect for listeners, etc. The coding manual of CCSARP sorted alerters into many types, some of which such as nicknames and pronouns did not appear in our collected data and thus were not included in our coding framework. Based on some literature about Chinese alerters, as Zhu (1997) classified Chinese alerters into six types and Gu (1992) subdivide Chinese alerters into eight classifications, we divided alerters collected our database into four types: feigned relative alerters (eg. "*shushu*" [uncle] and "*ayi*" [aunt]), common alerters (eg. "*xiansheng*" [sir] or "*nvshi*", [madam]), alerters of respect (eg. "*nin*" [you-respect]) and no alerter.

3.8.2 Greetings

The employment of greeting indicated SS's politeness awareness and professional qualities. However, greetings collected in this study were two types: using greetings as "ni-hao *你好* (hello)" and no greeting. (See Table 3)

3.8.3 Head Acts

Head acts, as the minimum units to perform a speech act independently (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) . As regard with the directness of the responses to requests, this study concluded four types of head acts in responses to requests: direct responses, indirect responses, backward requests (making requests back to customers for more information) and behavioral responses. (See Table 3)

3.8.4 Syntax and Vocabulary

According to CCSARP's coding manual, syntax and vocabulary used in speech acts were a part of internal units when analyzing speech acts. The collected data presented three kinds of syntactic and lexical features: upgraders, downgraders and no graders. (See Table 3)

3.8.5 Perspectives

Combining former researchers' studies with all the collected data, this study sorted out four types of perspectives: no dominance, speaker dominance (SS's perspectives), listener dominance (customers' perspectives) and speaker and listener dominance. (See Table 3)

3.8.6 Supportive Moves

Supportive acts, either mitigating ones or aggravating ones, were defined as external units to modify speech acts (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The collected data exhibited a variety of supportive moves both before and after responses to requests and most of them were employed for the purpose of mitigating the responses. Specifically, the pre-posed and post-posed supportive moves in this study were distributed into nine kinds: confirmation, explanation, suggestion, apology, inquiry, request, farewell, no move and multiple moves.

To sum up, all 1712 recordings were analyzed according to the framework stated above (See Table 3). We employed both qualitative and quantitative methods analyzed the data at aforementioned seven levels.

4. Results and Analysis

In this study, a qualitative method was employed to analyze the general patterns of responses to requests by SS (SS) in Dunhuang (DH) and Lanzhou (LZ). The frequencies and percentages of every segmentation were counted up and analyzed. A quantitative method was carried out in order to investigate the effects of gender and age on SS responses to requests in DH and LZ. Specifically, the possible effects were examined by the Chi-square test of independence by Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 20.0).

4.1 Overall Patterns of SS Responses to Requests DH and LZ

A total of 640 recordings of DH and 640 recordings of LZ SS were analyzed. As indicated in Table 4, the overall pattern of DH and LZ in each segmentation was almost the same with only slight difference.

Table 4. The distribution of DH and LZ SS's responses to requests

Segmentation	Classification	Dunhuang		Lanzhou	
		Freq	P	Freq	P
Alerters	no alerter	515	80.5%	972	90.7%
	feigned relative alerters	2	0.3%	2	0.2%
	common alerters	14	2.2%	13	1.2%
	alerters of respect	109	17.0%	85	7.9%
Greetings	no greeting	582	90.9%	1025	95.5%
	using greeting	58	9.1%	48	4.5%

Head acts	behavioral responses	73	11.4%	89	8.3%
	direct responses	523	81.7%	914	85.3%
	indirect responses	21	3.3%	38	3.5%
	backward requests	23	3.6%	31	2.9%
Syntax and vocabulary	no grader	526	82.2%	869	81.1%
	downgraders	111	17.3%	203	18.9%
	upgraders	3	0.5%	0	0.0%
Perspectives	no dominance	469	73.2%	755	70.4%
	speaker dominance	95	14.9%	181	16.9%
	listener dominance	71	11.1%	135	12.6%
	speaker and listener dominance	5	0.8%	1	0.1%
Pre-posed supportive moves	no move	366	57.2%	687	64.1%
	confirmation	94	14.7%	162	15.1%
	explanation	5	0.8%	1	0.1%
	suggestion	2	0.3%	3	0.3%
	apology	6	0.9%	1	0.1%
	inquiry	112	17.5%	153	14.3%
	request	17	2.7%	40	3.7%
	multiple moves	38	5.9%	25	2.3%
Post-posed	no move	353	55.2%	763	71.2%

supportive moves	confirmation	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
	explanation	54	8.4%	97	9.0%
	suggestion	24	3.8%	35	3.3%
	apology	1	0.2%	1	0.1%
	inquiry	60	9.4%	52	4.9%
	request	6	0.9%	19	1.8%
	farewell	50	7.8%	63	5.9%
	multiple moves	91	14.2%	42	3.9%

Notes: Freq = frequency; P = percentage.

The research design and data were from Yin, Y. (2017).

In alerters, the overall pattern of DH and LZ frequency in four types were no alerter> feigned relative alerters> common alerters> alerters of respect, among which no alerter were most frequent and took the most part (DH Freq=515, P=80.5% and LZ Freq=972, P=90.7%); whereas feigned relative alerters were the least in frequency (DH Freq=2, P=0.3% and LZ Freq=2, P=0.2%). Other alerters including common alerters and alerters of respect in both DH and LZ took up small percentages with low frequencies.

In greetings, as vital indicators of politeness, most conversations did not observe the employment of greetings, with a frequency of 582 (P=90.9%) in DH and LZ almost in its double at a frequency of 1025 (P=95.5%) .The use of greetings were rare in both (DH Freq=58, P=9.1% and LZ Freq=48, P=4.5%).

In head acts, direct responses occupied the largest part with the percentage of 81.7% in DH (Freq=523) and 85.3% in LZ (Freq=914). Behavioral responses occupied about 11.4% in DH (Freq=73) and 8.3% in LZ (Freq=89). Indirect responses (DH Freq=21, P=3.3% and LZ Freq=38, P=3.5%) and backward requests (DH Freq=23, P=3.6% and LZ Freq=31, P=2.9%) were even less in both groups.

In syntax and vocabulary, the overall pattern of DH and LZ frequency in three types were the same: no grader> downgraders> upgraders. Recordings without any graders were most commonly observed, occupying 82.2% of the total in DH (Freq=526) and 81.1% in LZ (Freq=869). The employment of downgraders was observed with a percentage of 17.3% in DH (Freq=111) and 18.9% in LZ (Freq=203), such as "*一下*（a bit)" and "*如果可以的话*（if that is OK for you)", etc. Almost noun upgraders were observed in both groups (DH Freq=3, P=0.5% and LZ Freq=0, P=0.0%).

In perspectives, the overall pattern of DH and LZ frequency in four types were the same: no dominance> speaker dominance> listener dominance> speaker and listener dominance. In both groups, no dominance took up the greatest occupation (DH Freq=469, P=73.2% and LZ Freq=755, P=70.4%); speaker dominance ranked the second (DH Freq=95, P=14.9% and LZ Freq=181, P=16.9%); listener dominance ranked the third (DH Freq=71, P=11.1% and LZ Freq=135, P=12.6%). Rare data were found in speaker and listener dominance (DH Freq=5, P=0.8% and LZ Freq=1, P=0.1%) .

Supportive moves were units external to the response, which either mitigated or aggravated their forces (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The current study further divided the supportive moves into pre-posed supportive moves and post-posed supportive moves, which both included confirmation, explanation, suggestion, apology, inquiry, request and multiple moves. Farewell was an additional supportive move exclusive to post-posed moves.

In pre-posed supportive moves, no move in responding to requests in both DH and LZ took up more than half of the whole (DH Freq=366, P=57.2% and LZ Freq=687, P=64.1%). Explanation (DH Freq=5, P=0.8% and LZ Freq=1, P=0.1%), suggestion (DH Freq=2, P=0.3% and LZ Freq=3, P=0.3%), and apology (DH Freq=6, P=0.9% and LZ Freq=1, P=0.1%) in both group were rarely found. The second most frequent types of responses in DH is inquiry with a frequency of 112 taking up 17.5%; while that in LZ is confirmation with a frequency of 162 taking up 15.1%. The third most frequent types of responses in DH is confirmation with a frequency of 94 taking up 14.7%; while that in LZ is inquiry with a frequency of 153 taking up 14.3%. Request and multiple moves in DH were respectively counted as 17 (P=2.7%) and 38 (P=5.9%); while in LZ, request took up 3.7% (Freq=40) and multiple moves took up 2.3% (Freq=25).

In post-posed supportive moves, same as that in pre-posed supportive moves, no move was observed the most frequently in both DH (Freq=353, P=55.2%) and LZ (Freq=687, P=64.1%). Confirmation (DH Freq=1, P=0.2% and LZ Freq=0, P=0.0%), apology (DH Freq=1, P=0.2% and LZ Freq=1, P=0.1%), and request (DH Freq=6, P=0.9% and LZ Freq=19, P=1.8%) were the least found in both DH and LZ. The rest types in both DH and LZ took small portion and almost evenly distributed: explanation (DH Freq=54, P=8.4% and LZ Freq=97, P=9.0%), suggestion (DH Freq=24, P=3.8% and LZ Freq=35, P=3.3%), inquiry (DH Freq=60, P=9.4% and LZ Freq=52, P=4.9%), farewell (DH Freq=50, P=7.8% and LZ Freq=63, P=5.9%) and multiple moves (DH Freq=91, P=14.2% and LZ Freq=42, P=3.9%).

It is noticeable that in pre-posed and post-posed supportive moves, no move was observed most frequently in both groups based on percentage. However, the frequency of no moves in LZ is twice as much as that in DH.

4.2 Effects of Gender Difference on DH and LZ SS's Responses to Requests

The effects of gender difference on SS's responses in DH and LZ were examined by Chi-square test of independence by SPSS 20.0 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Chi-square test of independence for the contrast between males and females respectively in DH and LZ

Segmentation	Classification	Group	Dunhuang					Lanzhou				
			Freq	P	df	X^2	p	Freq	P	df	X^2	p
Alerters	no alerter	M	237	74.1%	3	22.21	0.00	482	89.9%	3	6.31	0.01
		F	278	86.9%				490	91.4%			
	feigned relative alerters	M	0	0.0%				1	0.2%			
		F	3	0.9%				1	0.2%			
	common alerters	M	10	3.1%				11	2.1%			
		F	4	1.2%				2	0..4%			
	alerters of respect	M	73	22.8%				42	7.8%			
		F	35	10.9%				43	8.0%			
Greetings	no greeting	M	284	88.8%	1	3.72	0.05	503	93.8%	1	7.07	0.01
		F	298	93.1%				521	97.2%			
	using greeting	M	36	11.2%				33	6.2%			
		F	22	6.9%				5	2.8%			
Head acts	behavioral responses	M	43	13.4%	3	10.36	0.02	30	5.6%	3	27.41	0.00
		F	30	9.4%				59	11.0%			
	direct responses	M	257	80.3s%				486	90.7%			
		F	266	83.1%				428	79.9%			

	indirect responses	M	5	1.6%				14	2.6%			
		F	16	5.0%				24	4.5%			
	backward requests	M	15	4.7%				6	1.1%			
		F	8	2.5%				25	4.7%			
Syntax and vocabulary	no grader	M	256	80.0%	2	2.23	0.33	431	80.4%	2	0.30	0.59
		F	270	84.4%				438	81.7%			
	down graders	M	62	19.4%				105	19.6%			
		F	49	15.3%				98	18.3%			
	upgraders	M	2	0.6%				0	0.0%			
		F	1	0.3%				0	0.0%			
Perspectives	no dominance	M	225	70.3%	3	3.38	0.34	375	70.0%	3	13.75	0.00
		F	244	76.2%				380	70.9%			
	speaker dominance	M	53	16.6%				76	14.2%			
		F	42	13.1%				105	19.6%			
	listener dominance	M	40	12.5%				84	15.7%			
		F	31	9.7%				51	9.5%			
	speaker and listener dominance	M	2	0.6%				1	0.2%			
		F	3	0.9%				0	0.0%			
Pre-	no	M	170	53.1%	7	11.27	0.13	354	66.0%	7	10.3	0.17

posed supportive moves	move	F	196	61.2%				333	62.1%		1	
	confirmation	M	51	15.9%				80	14.9%			
		F	43	13.4%				82	15.3%			
	explanation	M	1	0.3%				0	0.0%			
		F	4	1.2%				1	0.2%			
	suggestion	M	2	0.6%				2	0.4%			
		F	0	0.0%				1	0.2%			
	apology	M	2	0.6%				0	0.0%			
		F	4	1.2%				1	0.2%			
	inquiry	M	62	19.4%				63	11.8%			
		F	50	15.6%				90	16.8%			
	request	M	12	3.8%				25	4.7%			
		F	5	1.6%				15	2.8%			
	multiple moves	M	20	6.2%				12	2.2%			
		F	18	5.6%				13	2.4%			
Post-posed supportive moves	no move	M	166	51.9%	8	20.89	0.01	386	72.0%	8	11.26	0.13
		F	187	58.4%				377	70.3%			
	confirmation	M	0	0.0%				0	0.0%			
		F	1	0.3%				0	0.0%			
	explanation	M	26	8.1%				46	8.6%			
		F	28	8.8%				51	9.5%			
	sugge	M	6	1.9%				13	2.4%			

stion	F	18	5.6%	22	4.1%
apology	M	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
	F	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
inquiry	M	33	10.3%	23	4.3%
	F	27	8.4%	29	5.4%
request	M	1	0.3%	15	2.8%
	F	5	1.6%	4	0.7%
farewell	M	33	10.3%	30	5.6%
	F	17	5.3%	33	6.2%
multiple moves	M	54	16.9%	23	4.3%
	F	37	11.6%	19	3.5%

Notes: M = male, F = female; Freq = frequency; P = percentage.

The research design and data were from Yin, Y. (2017).

In alerters, significant gender difference was found in DH ($P=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=22.21$) that DH SS tended to use more feigned relative alerters and no alerters to females, compared to males. And when facing males, SS employed more common alerters and alerters of respect than to females. However, no significant gender difference was found in LZ group concerning alerters.

In greetings, no significant difference was found between DH males and females ($p=0.054>0.05$); whereas, significantly more no greetings as response to LZ females' requests than to LZ males ($p=0.01<0.05$, $X^2=7.07$). In responding to both genders, both DH and LZ SS preferred no greeting to greetings.

Regarding head acts, both DH and LZ groups observed gender difference at significant level (DH $p=0.02<0.05$, $X2=10.36$; LZ $p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=27.41$). DH SS employed more behavioral responses and backward requests to males and used more direct and indirect responses to females. In response to males, there were more indirect responses than backward requests; while females saw more backward requests than indirect responses. However, in LZ group, more females were responded with behavioral, indirect responses and backward requests; while more males were responded with direct responses. Especially in direct responses, about 90.7% (Freq=486) of males were responded directly and the percentage reduced to about 80% (Freq=257) to females.

Concerning syntax and vocabulary, no significant difference was found in responding to different gender in DH (p=0.33>0.05) and LZ (p=0.59>0.05) group. For both genders, no graders occupied the largest part and upgraders were rarely used and even noun in LZ group.

In perspectives, no gender difference was found in DH group (p=0.34>0.05); whereas significant difference was observed in LZ group (p=0.00<0.05, X^2=13.75). Relatively more no dominance perspective to males than to females was observed the most frequent in both DH and LZ. For speaker dominance and listener dominance perspectives, more DH males were responded than DH females. In LZ, females observed speaker dominance relatively more frequently; while males were responded with listener dominance more frequently. In addition, speaker and listener dominance were rarely observed on both groups.

In terms of pre-posed supportive moves, no significant gender difference was found in both DH (p=0.13>0.05) and LZ (p=0.17>0.05) group. Both genders saw no moves the most frequently, and confirmation and inquiry were employed still more than the other moves in both DH and LZ group. The rest moves, including explanation, suggestion, apology and request, were employed much less frequently.

By contrast, when it comes to pro-posed supportive moves, a statistically significant difference (p=0.01<0.05) between males and female was observed in DH. DH SS tended to use more inquiry and apology to males while more confirmation, explanation, suggestion and requests were used to females.

In conclusion, the effects of gender difference on SS's responses should be discussed at different levels. For one thing, a statistically significant difference between DH males and females was observed in alerters, head acts and post-posed supportive moves. In LZ group, excluding greetings, head acts, and perspectives, no statistically significant difference between males and females was observed.

4.3 Effects of Age Difference on DH and LZ SS's Responses to Requests

To examine the effects of age difference on SSs responses in Dunhuang and Lanzhou, a contrast between the young and the elderly was carried out at different levels by a Chi-square test of independence by SPSS 20.0. See Table 6.

Table 6. Chi-square test of independence for the contrast between elderly and young customers respectively in DH and LZ

Segmentation	Classification	Group	Dunhuang					Lanzhou				
			Freq	P	df	X^2	p	Freq	P	df	X^2	p
Alerters	no alerter	E	282	88.1%	3	30.14	0.00	472	88.1%	3	9.92	0.02
		Y	233	72.8%				500	93.3%			

	feigned relative alerters	E	3	0.9%				2	0.4%		
		Y	0	0.0%				0	0.0%		
	common alerters	E	5	1.6%				9	1.7%		
		Y	9	2.8%				4	0.7%		
	alerters of respect	E	30	9.4%				53	9.9%		
		Y	78	24.4%				32	6.0%		
Greetings	no greeting	E	296	92.5%	1	1.90	0.17	499	93.1%	1	14.74	0.00
		Y	286	89.4%				525	97.9%			
	using greeting	E	24	7.5%				37	6.9%			
		Y	34	10.6%				11	2.1%			
Head acts	behavioral responses	E	46	14.4%	3	19.18	0.00	49	9.1%	3	8.67	0.03
		Y	27	8.4%				40	7.5%			
	direct responses	E	241	75.3%				453	84.5%			
		Y	282	88.1%				461	86.0%			
	indirect responses	E	16	5.0%				13	2.4%			
		Y	5	1.6%				25	4.7%			
	backward requests	E	17	5.3%				21	3.9%			
		Y	6	1.9%				10	1.9%			
Syntax and vocabulary	no grader	E	264	82.5%	2	0.42	0.81	436	81.3%	2	0.06	0.82
		Y	262	81.9%				433	80.8%			
	downgra	E	54	16.9%				100	18.7%			

	ders	Y	57	17.8%				103	19.2%		
	upgraders	E	2	0.6%				0	0.0%		
		Y	1	0.3%				0	0.0%		
Perspectives	no dominance	E	254	79.4%	3	14.25	0.00	377	70.3%	3	1.01	0.80
		Y	215	67.2%				378	70.5%		
	speaker dominance	E	32	10.0%				90	16.8%		
		Y	63	19.7%				91	17.0%		
	listener dominance	E	32	10.0%				68	12.7%		
		Y	39	12.2%				67	12.5%		
	speaker and listener dominance	E	2	0.6%				1	0.2%		
		Y	3	0.9%				0	0.0%		
Pre-posed supportive moves	no move	E	182	56.9%	7	6.86	0.44	356	66.4%	7	14.49	0.04
		Y	184	57.5%				331	61.8%		
	confirmation	E	54	16.9%				72	13.4%		
		Y	40	12.5%				90	16.8%		
	explanation	E	3	0.9%				1	0.2%		
		Y	2	0.6%				0	0.0%		
	suggestion	E	1	0.3%				1	0.2%		
		Y	1	0.3%				2	0.4%		
	apology	E	1	0.3%				1	0.2%		

		Y	5	1.6%			0	0.0%		
	inquiry	E	53	16.6%			70	13.1%		
		Y	59	18.4%			83	15.5%		
	request	E	6	1.9%			27	5.0%		
		Y	11	3.4%			13	2.4%		
	multiple moves	E	20	6.2%			8	1.5%		
		Y	18	5.6%			17	3.2%		
Post-posed supportive moves	no move	E	175	54.7%	8	40.94	403	75.2%	8	32.37
		Y	178	55.6%			360	67.2%		
	confirmation	E	1	0.3%			0	0.0%		
		Y	0	0.0%			0	0.0%		
	explanation	E	41	12.8%			55	10.3%		
		Y	13	4.1%			42	7.8%		
	suggestion	E	11	3.4%			11	2.1%		
		Y	13	4.1%			24	4.5%		
	apology	E	1	0.3%			1	0.2%		
		Y	0	0.0%			0	0.0%		
	inquiry	E	41	12.8%			25	4.7%		
		Y	19	5.9%			27	5.0%		
	request	E	2	0.6%			8	1.5%		
		Y	4	1.2%			11	2.1%		

farewell	E	14	4.4%	13	2.4%
	Y	36	11.2%	50	9.3%
multiple moves	E	34	10.6%	20	3.7%
	Y	57	17.8%	22	4.1%

Notes: E = elderly customers, Y = young customers; Freq = frequency; P = percentage.

The research design and data were from Yin, Y. (2017).

In alerters, significant differences between the young and the elderly were all observed in both DH ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=30.14$) and LZ group ($p=0.02<0.05$, $X^2=9.92$). DH SS tended to use more no alerters and feigned relative alerters to the elderly while more common alerters and alerters of respect were employed to the young. In LZ group, SS preferred to use more no alerters to the young than to the elderly. The elderly were responded with more feigned relative, common and backward alerters compared to the young.

As for greetings, no significant age difference in DH ($p=0.17>0.05$); whereas, more elderly observed greetings in LZ ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=14.74$). In general, both age groups in DH and LZ saw more no greetings than greetings.

In head acts, significant age difference were salient in both DH ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=19.18$) and LZ ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=8.67$). Also, both groups observed direct responses most frequently and SS tended to employ slightly more direct responses to the young than to the elderly; whereas SS tended to adopt more behavioral responses and backward requests to the elderly than to the young in both DH and LZ. However, in LZ, the young observed more indirect responses to the elderly comparing to those in DH.

In syntax and vocabulary, no statistically significant difference between the elderly and the young was observed in DH ($p=0.81>0.05$) and LZ ($p=0.82>0.05$). Both groups saw more employment of no graders than downgraders and upgraders.

Concerning perspectives, a significant age difference was observed in DH ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=14.25$) and no difference in LZ ($p=0.80>0.05$). In DH, the elderly received relatively more frequent use of no dominance perspective while the young were responded more with speaker dominance, listener dominance and speaker and listener dominance. In LZ, the elderly received almost the same frequent use of no dominance, speaker dominance, and listener dominance perspective. And in both groups of DH and LZ, the speaker and listener dominance was rarely employed.

In terms of pre-posed supportive moves, no significant age difference was observed in DH ($p=0.44>0.05$) but significant differences was found in LZ ($p=0.04<0.05$, $X^2=14.49$). For both DH and LZ groups, the most responded were with no moves, confirmation and inquiry; whereas the frequencies in LZ were twice as much as those in LZ. Explanation, suggestion,

apology, request and multiple moves were used less frequently compared with the former three. In responding to the elderly, relatively more no moves found in LZ.

Concerning post-posed supportive, significant differences were found in both age groups of DH ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=40.94$) and LZ ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=32.37$), though the frequencies in LZ were more than twice as much as those in LZ. The most frequent used moves are no moves in both DH and LZ but LZ elderly were relatively responded with more.

To sum up, in both groups, statistically significant differences between the elderly and the young were found in alerters, head acts, and post-posed supportive moves. In comparison, no statistically significant age difference was observed in syntax and vocabulary.

4.4 Comparison of Responses to Requests Between DH and LZ

To investigate the similarities and difference of SS's responses to customers' requests in DH and LZ, a Chi-square test of independence was carried out (see Table 7).

Table 7. Chi-square test of independence for the contrast between DH and LZ

Segmentation	Classifications	Group	Freq	P	df	X^2	p
Alerters	no alerter	DH	515	80.5%	3	36.76	0.00
		LZ	972	90.7%			
	feigned relative alerters	DH	3	0.5%			
		LZ	2	0.2%			
	common alerters	DH	14	2.2%			
		LZ	13	1.2%			
	alerters of respect	DH	108	16.9%			
		LX	85	7.9%			
Greetings	no greeting	DH	582	90.9%	1	14.50	0.00
		LZ	1024	95.5%			
	using greeting	DH	58	9.1%			
		LZ	48	4.5%			

Head acts	behavioral responses	DH	73	11.4%	3	5.39	0.15
		LZ	89	8.3%			
	direct responses	DH	523	81.7%			
		LZ	914	85.3%			
	indirect responses	DH	21	3.3%			
		LZ	38	3.5%			
	backward requests	DH	23	3.6%			
		LX	31	2.9%			
Syntax and vocabulary	no grader	DH	526	82.2%	2	5.64	0.06
		LZ	869	81.1%			
	downgraders	DH	111	17.3%			
		LZ	203	18.9%			
	upgraders	DH	3	0.5%			
		LZ	0	0.0%			
Perspectives	no dominance	DH	469	73.3%	3	7.65	0.05
		LZ	755	70.4%			
	speaker dominance	DH	95	14.8%			
		LZ	181	16.9%			
	listener dominance	DH	71	11.1%			
		LZ	135	12.6%			
	speaker and	DH	5	0.8%			

	listener dominance	LX	1	0.1%			
Pre-posed supportive moves	no move	DH	366	57.2%	7	33.81	0.00
		LZ	687	64.1%			
	confirmation	DH	94	14.7%			
		LZ	162	15.1%			
	explanation	DH	5	0.8%			
		LZ	1	0.1%			
	suggestion	DH	2	0.3%			
		LZ	3	0.3%			
	apology	DH	6	0.9%			
		LZ	1	0.1%			
	inquiry	DH	112	17.5%			
		LZ	153	14.3%			
	request	DH	17	2.7%			
		LZ	40	3.7%			
	multiple moves	DH	38	5.9%			
		LZ	25	2.3%			
Post-posed supportive moves	no move	DH	353	55.2%	8	89.49	0.00
		LZ	763	71.2%			
	confirmation	DH	1	0.2%			
		LZ	0	0.0%			

explanation	DH	54	8.4%
	LZ	97	9.0%
suggestion	DH	24	3.8%
	LZ	35	3.3%
apology	DH	1	0.2%
	LZ	1	0.1%
inquiry	DH	60	9.4%
	LZ	52	4.9%
request	DH	6	0.9%
	LZ	19	1.8%
farewell	DH	50	7.8%
	LZ	63	5.9%
multiple moves	DH	91	14.2%
	LZ	42	3.9%

Notes: DH = Dunhuang, LZ = Lanzhou; Freq = frequency; P = percentage.

The research design and data were from Yin, Y. (2017).

According to Table 7, a statistical significant difference between DH and LZ could be found in alerters ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=36.76$), greetings ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=14.50$), pre-posed supportive moves ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=33.81$) and post-posed supportive moves ($p=0.00<0.05$, $X^2=89.49$).

In alerters, the main difference between DH and LZ was in no alerters employed by LZ SS with nearly twice frequencies (LZ Freq=972, P=90.7%; DH Freq=515, P=80.5%); while DH SS used more alerters of respect than LZ SS (DH Freq=108, P=16.9%; LZ Freq=85, P=7.9%).

In greetings, a greater percentage of having greetings was observed in DH than in LZ (DH Freq=58, P=9.1%; LZ Freq=48, P=4.5%). A total of 90.9% of requests responses had no

greeting in DH with a frequency of 582; whereas the number in LZ increased to 95.5% at a frequency of 1024.

In pre-posed supportive moves, 57.2% of the total in DH employed no moves while 64.1% of the total in LZ used no moves; whereas the frequencies in LZ (Freq=687) was almost twice as much as those in DH (Freq=366). Except for no moves, inquiry was the main move employed by DH SS; while confirmation took the first place in LZ. Moreover, greater percentage of explanation, apology and multiple moves were observed in DH than those in LZ.

In post-posed supportive moves, 71.2% of all the LZ SS (Freq=763) did not employ any move and only 55.2% of the total in DH (Freq=353) used no move in responses, more than twice as less as those in LZ. Furthermore, inquiry was the one used most frequently in DH and LZ SS preferred explanation in general. Such moves like confirmation, suggestion, apology, inquiry, farewell and multiple moves were all used with greater percentage in DH than in LZ.

5. **Conclusions**

According to the collected data, we may find answers and respective explanations to our four research questions:

(1) The DH and LZ SS obtained strong politeness awareness and related politeness strategies in responding to customers' requests during the work. In general, both group adopted a full spectrum of politeness strategies in their responses to requests, bearing the service doctrine of clarity and politeness in mind. Even though both SS cities might capture customers' impolite requests, they still tried to be polite to avoid potential offenses to customers. A request is a face threatening act that infringes both a speaker's positive face and a listener's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). A reply to a request could also be face threatening. In reality, speakers could employ polite responses to impolite requests for particular concerns. SS, in nature, are expected and required to be polite to customers, no matter the customers are polite or not.

(2) It was significantly indicated that different gender people in DH and LZ responded to requests quite differently in certain segmentations. In general, SS tended to respond to male customers in a more polite manner, which were proofed by finding more alerters of politeness and greetings were addressed to males than females. The male dominance theory (Lakoff, 1975) may provide a better explanation to our findings, since females are perceived as being comparatively less powerful and economic dependent, but more hesitant, ingratiating and weak in force (Freed, 1995; Gborsong, 2016). Moreover, considering the economic basis, on one hand, a typical Chinese family normally sees the pattern in which a male plays the role of bread owner and thus males are often the ones of financial decision power. In terms of culture, on the other hand, the traditional Confucian society embraced the leading role of males and compliance role of females both in private and public environments (Yin, 2017).

(3) It was also significant differences were found concerning the age factor. SS showed higher politeness to the young customers, as more supportive moves adopted. The reason

why SS tended to be politer to the young is that young customers, aged from 18 to 35, are the main target consumers of the service industry. As traveling industry is booming, more and more young people are involved in related industries such as hotel, catering and transportation industries. SS were politer when ushering young customers instead of elderly customers. It might because the elderly were no longer the major drive in the tourism industry and more obviously, they had difficulty in adapting themselves in the new fashion of none-cash paying and discount sharing via cellphone applications (Apps). The elderly gradually lost their involvement in the rapid developing and ever changing tourism industry.

(4) Significant differences between SS of LZ and DH were reported. DH SS responded to customers' requests in a politer manner. More alerters of respect and greetings were found in DH group. Such findings could be grounded from the angle of variational pragmatics in terms of dialectology and pragmatics (Schneider & Barron, 2008). Firstly, social-economic factors might cause differences between LZ and DH. DH, as a famous tourism city, has invested much in promoting its traveling industry. As one of its pillar industries, tourism attracts millions of tourists into DH every year and the SS, therefore, have been trained well to handle all kinds of customers appropriately and politely. Comparing to DH, Lanzhou does much less to build up a friendly image as a tourism city by training its SS. Secondly, the dialect and different featured history between two cities, as they are more than one thousand kilometers away from one another, would impact on the perception and use of politeness in SS's responses to requests.

Therefore, we may conclude:

(1) Due to the particularity of service industry and the sound development of tourism industry, when responding to customers, DH and LZ SS tended to employ a wide range of strategies in politeness, including the use of alerters and greetings to shorten distance, the flexible choice of direct and indirect responses, and the multinational use of pre-posed and post-posed supportive moves to mitigate tone, etc. It was worth noting that SS were aware of balancing politeness and communication efficiency.

(2) A significant difference was found in SS's responses between male and female customers. In both cities, the slightly politer responses to males were related to the traditional Confucian ideology in which men dominated in family and took more financial powers. Dominance Theory better explained this finding.

(3) Different ages were proved to have effects on SS's responses in DH and LZ at certain levels. Specifically, the young were responded more politely. The current economic situations where the young people took the main position could explain this phenomenon. The booming of tourism industry and optimization of transportation attracted the young customers to become the main force of tourism-related industries. Therefore, SS in these industries became more enthusiastic and politer when facing young customers.

(4) The more flexible and polite responses by DH SS were connected with the fully developed tourism and well trained SS in Dunhuang in which pillar industry was tourism.

There are obvious limitations in this study and we provide suggestions to improve in later studies. Firstly, later studies can collect natural materials for analysis and test this study's reliability instead of semi-authentic role-play. Secondly, the classifications can be promoted to greater levels, so that further studies can consider more cultural factors and social-linguistic variables when constructing coding frameworks. Lastly, future studies may enlarge the number of participants and increase the quantity of materials.

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