THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN
THE SPEECH ACT OF COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLIMENT-
RESPONSES BY CHINESE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH DURING
THE FIRST SEMESTER OF STUDYING ABROAD

By

Kuo-Yu Kuan (Grace)

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Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California

Master’s Project Advisor: Dr. Julietta Shakhbagova

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# Table of Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................................4  

Chapter 1 Introduction..................................................................................................5  
- Statement of the problem  
- Purpose of the Study  
- Significance of the Study  
- Specific Research Questions  
- Brief Overview of Proposed Method  
- Limitation  
- Delimitation  
- Definitions  

Chapter 2 Literature Review.......................................................................................11  
- 2.1 Background knowledge  
  - 2.1.1 Pragmatics  
  - 2.1.2 Inter-language pragmatics (ILP)  
  - 2.1.3 Pragmatic competence  
  - 2.1.4 Speech acts  
  - 2.1.5 The relationship between speech acts and pragmatics  
- 2.2 Pragmatics across languages  
  - 2.2.1 Pragmatic approaches  
  - 2.2.2 Universality vs. cultural specific views  
  - 2.2.3 Contrastive, cross-cultural, and ILP studies  
- 2.3 Inter-language pragmatics (ILP)  
  - 2.3.1 Research methods in ILP  
  - 2.3.2 ILP development  
- 2.4 Research on the speech act of compliments and compliment-response  
  - Studies on compliments  
  - Compliment-responses in English  
- 2.5 Conclusion  

Chapter 3 Methodology..............................................................................................28  
- 3.1 Introduction  
- 3.2 Research Questions  
- 3.3 Nature of the Study  
- 3.4 Participants  
  - 3.4.1 Chinese learners of English in America (CLEA)  
  - 3.4.2 Native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT)  
  - 3.4.3 Native speakers of English in America (NSEA)  
- 3.5 Instruments  
  - 3.5.1 The Design of DCT  
  - 3.5.2 Pilot study and final DCT  
- 3.6 Data Collection Procedures  
- 3.7 Time Line
Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Expression of compliments and compliment-responses among NSC, G1, G2, G3, and NSE by situations
4.3 Changes of Expression of compliments and compliment-responses among G1 subjects over one semester by situations

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction
5.1.1 What changes of lexical choice and modality markers are made by individual subjects of the study over a period of time?
5.1.2 What is the relationship between the use of lexical choice and modality markers used among different levels of proficiency?
5.1.3 Based on questions 1 and 2, does a natural route exist for the development of L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, specifically in compliment and compliment behaviors?
5.1.4 As a follow-up to question 3, how does L1 influence learners’ pragmatic development? In other words, does L1 impede or facilitate the pragmatic growth and in what ways does L1 affect developmental stages?

5.2 The implications of the present study
5.3 Suggestions for further research

References

Appendix

Appendix A: Letter to students
Appendix B: Participate Consent Form for Longitudinal Participates
Appendix C: Participate Consent Form for Cross-sectional Participates
Appendix D: Discourse Completion Pretest
Appendix E: Formal Discourse Completion Test
Appendix F: Interview Questions
Abstract

The present study is intended to explore pragmatic development through the speech acts of compliments and compliment-responses. The study addresses the issue of whether there is a developmental path in pragmatics using a combination of a cross-sectional and longitudinal method. The cross-sectional method has compared the influences of students with different proficiency levels on their pragmatic development, while the longitudinal method has kept tracking the same subjects over an academic semester to see whether there are any changes in terms of the strategies implemented and the appropriateness of the language use in a particular context. The results strongly indicate that there may be a route for pragmatic development. In addition, the results cast some doubt on the justification of the role of modality markers as a predictor of pragmatic competence, and question the relationship between the proficiency level and the pragmatic competence.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1-1 Statement of the problem

In the past several decades, attention has been focused on pragmatic competence and Inter-Language Pragmatics (ILP) (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p.20); however, "the bulk of ILP research has focuses on non-native speakers’ use of pragmatic knowledge in comprehension and production, rather than on development” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.10). Studies on pragmatic development have reported mixed results. Some data support a developmental path for ILP, while other studies report no route of progress among language learners. The question of pragmatic developmental in ILP remains open as Barron (2007) pointed out, “much remains unknown about the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, with many research questions still remaining open” (p.114).

In addition to lacking attention in the area of pragmatic development, research also faces several methodology challenges. Some ILP studies misuse cross-cultural comparison methods when dealing with developmental issues. While other studies have successfully used cross-sectional methods for studying developmental issues, the result is that longitudinal studies are lacking. Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) have called for “more longitudinal studies in naturalist settings, observing learners from the very beginning of their language acquisition process” (p.10). Recently after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of both longitudinal and cross-sectional methods, Kasper and Rose (2002) have even recommended that research combine the two.
To sum up, the issue of pragmatic development has largely been ignored in past research. In addition, the research that has been done rarely uses effective methodology to explore pragmatic development.

1-2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate unresolved issues and apply recommended methodologies to investigate the development of ILP. Due to lack of focus on pragmatic development and unanswered questions in the field of ILP, the current study will investigate these developmental issues. Also, to address the issue of effective methodology, the current study will explore pragmatic development using a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal methods.

This study will track selected individual subjects over one semester to examine changes or perhaps detect a path for the development of pragmatics. This longitudinal method is aimed to identify changes and growth in pragmatic competence during one semester while studying abroad. This study will also compare the performance of the subjects of three different proficiency levels (low, intermediate, and advanced). This cross-sectional portion of the study will explore potential developmental stages by analyzing the performance of different proficiency levels. The two research methodologies may contribute to the literature of pragmatic development and address prior methodological concerns.

1-3 Significance of the Study

This study is important in its chosen topic and the utilization of a recommended combination methodology. Little research has focused on the developmental issues of ILP even though quite a lot of research has focused on production and comprehension of ILP. Among the existing research related to developmental issues, few have used a combination of longitudinal
and cross-sectional methodology. In view of this, the current study intends to contribute additional results to the area of ILP.

**1-4 Specific Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are:

1. What changes of lexical choice and modality markers are made by individual subjects of the study over a period of time?

2. What is the relationship between the use of lexical choice and modality markers used among different levels of proficiency?

3. Based on questions 1 and 2, does a natural route exist for the development of L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, specifically in compliment and compliment behaviors?

4. As a follow-up to question 3, how does L1 influence learners’ pragmatic development? In other words, does L1 impede or facilitate the pragmatic growth and in what ways does L1 affect developmental stages?

**1-5 Brief Overview of Proposed Method**

As mentioned earlier, single synchronic research methods have been overused in ILP research along with a misuse of cultural comparison methods to explore the development of pragmatics. Therefore, the present study follows recommendations of using a combination of both longitudinal and cross-sectional research methods. Details are discussed in Chapter 3.

**1-6 Limitation**

The limitations of the study include practical and logistical restrictions encountered during the study. The biggest restriction experienced by the researcher was the time constraint. Research for the project was started two months prior to data collection; however, the period of
the longitudinal study was still confined to one semester due to the time required for writing chapters and difficulties in finding subjects. The next limitation was an unavoidable bias towards native speakers. Although this was not a cultural comparison study, the interpretation of growth and appropriateness of non-native English learner responses are still based on native speaker answers as a “gold-standard”.

Additional limitations included a small sample size in the cross-sectional study and high attrition rate among subjects in the longitudinal study.

1-7 Delimitation

In addition to the limitations of the study, the generalizability of the results of the study may be compromised due to several factors. For example, not all the subjects were selected randomly. All of the subjects in the category of English learners were chosen randomly from three different level proficiency classes. However, the majority of subjects in the native Chinese speaking group were friends of the researcher and those in the native English speaking group were volunteers or acquaintances.

In addition to subject selection, the language chosen for tracking pragmatic development was English. In other words, the results of pragmatic competence development from this study may not be generalizable to other languages. If other researchers repeat the study, improvements on these limitations are recommended. Similarly, when referring to or generalizing the results of this study, these factors need to first be considered.

1-8 Definitions

Pragmatics: “the study of relationships holding between linguistic forms and the human beings who use these forms” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p.19). It includes pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.
**Pragmalinguistics:** the resources that speakers can choose from when using a language, such as pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, and modification devices (Barron 2003, pp. 7-8).

**Sociopragmatics:** constrains of societal rules on the speakers’ choice of linguistic forms within certain contexts, such as social status, relationships, and the degree of imposition between the interlocutors.

**Inter-language pragmatics (ILP):** a subcategory of pragmatics. It focuses on second language learner production, comprehension, and acquisition of L2 pragmatics. The acquisitional aspect of L2 pragmatic knowledge is the focus of the present study.

**Pragmatic competence:** the “knowledge of the linguistic resources available in given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally the knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages’ linguistic resources” (Barron 2003, p. 10).

**Speech acts:** utterances conveying a speaker’s intent and performing various social functions, such as requesting, refusing, apologizing, complimenting, complaining, and expressing gratitude.

**Pragmatic routines:** expressions, chunk utterances, or speech that is pre-patterned, formulaic, and predictable in conversation.

**Modality markers:** additional words that can aggravate or mitigate the force of the statement in order to maintain appropriate social relations and politeness, such as “very”, “just”, and “really.” For example, “very” aggravates the degree of guilt in the statement, “I am very sorry.” Another example from the study is that when replying to compliments, some
speakers will downplay the compliments by saying “Oh, I just bought it today” instead of expressing their joy by saying “Right! It is really pretty, isn’t it?”
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review is divided into four sections: pragmatics background knowledge, pragmatics across languages, inter-language pragmatics (ILP) and its research methods, review of research on the speech act of compliments and compliment-responses. First, in the background knowledge section, the definition of pragmatics, ILP, pragmatic competence, and speech acts, as well as the relationships between pragmatic competence and speech acts will be discussed. Next, in the pragmatics across language section, universal and cultural specific views will be explored along with cross-cultural pragmatics research. The next section comprises a review of ILP research methods and its acquisition. The following section presents prior research on the speech act of compliments and compliment-responses. Finally, the role of the present study in filling out the research gap both in topic and research methods is addressed.

2.1 Background knowledge

Generally speaking, pragmatics “deal[s] very explicitly with the study of relationships holding between linguistic forms and the human beings who use these forms” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p.19). Depending on the discipline which is used, pragmatics can contain subtle meanings. From a social-anthropological perspective, pragmatics is defined as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1997, p. 301). From a cognitive perspective, pragmatics is a branch of second language acquisition (SLA). In Kasper and Rose’s
Pragmatic Development

(2002) recent work, both a social-anthropological view and cognitive-psychological approach was adapted to explain the developmental aspects of pragmatics (p. ix).

Inter-language pragmatics (ILP) has long been viewed as a subcategory of pragmatics. As with pragmatics, ILP can also be viewed from various domains. In earlier research, ILP was narrowly defined as the study of “people’s comprehension and production of linguistic action in context” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.3). Recently, ILP has become more widely accepted as an academic area investigating speakers’ production, comprehension, and acquisition of L2 linguistic actions. The acquisitional aspect of L2 pragmatic knowledge is the focus of the present study.

In general, pragmatics comprises two parts: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics refers to the use of language in context, whereas sociopragmatics is related to the societal rules of behavior. Recalling Crystal’s “choices” and “constraints,” pragmalinguistics refers to the resources that speakers can choose from when using a language, including pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, and modification devices (Barron 2003, pp.7-8). In contrast, sociopragmatics addresses constraints on pragmatics such as social status, relationships, and the concerns of the degree of imposition that affect speaker choices on a particular illocution due to societal rules (Barron 2003, pp.7-8). Development of both pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics will be investigated in the present study.

Pragmatic competence is referred to as “knowledge of the linguistic resources available in given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally the knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages’ linguistic resources” (Barron 2003, p. 10). From this perspective, pragmatic competence and speech acts are closely related. The concept of speech as an act or speech acts
was initially proposed by Austin (1962) who stated that “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action” (p.5). This means that utterances convey a speaker’s intent and can cause the impact on the interlocutors. In Austin’s term, utterances are locutionary acts, intents are illocutionary acts, and the effects of the utterances are prelocutionary acts. Based on Austin’s illocutionary acts, Searle (1969) refined and further developed the speech act theory (pp.12-20). According to Searle’s speech act theory, speakers give utterances to convey their intents including request, refusal, apology, compliments, complaints, gratitude, and others.

Based on the connection between linguistic form and communicative intent mentioned in speech acts, pragmatic competence can be explored through the study of speech acts. As Achiba (2003) pointed out, the speech act approach provides a tool to investigate pragmatics and this approach has been used effectively in both first and second language pragmatic acquisition (p.2). The present study will therefore use speech act realization, specifically compliments and compliment-responses, to explore pragmatic development.

2.2 Pragmatics across languages

While the present study focuses mainly on the developmental issue of pragmatics, in order to answer the research question four regarding L1 influence on pragmatic development, the influence of culture on pragmatics will be discussed here. The research selected here is targeted at Chinese and American cultures. The influence of culture on pragmatics across languages has been hotly debated. Speech acts have been particularly used to investigate universal and culture-specific views of pragmatics across languages.

The universal view of pragmatics across language proposes the universality of theoretical frameworks, speech acts and the strategies and linguistic means available for realizing speech acts across languages. The universality of theoretical frameworks are based on Brown and
Levinson’s (1987) concepts of face and the correlation between faces and politeness (pp.12-66). According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987), face is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” and it includes a positive and a negative face (p. 61). A “negative face want” refers to “the desire to act unimpeded by other people” while a “positive face want” refers to “the desire to be liked by others” (p.61). According to him, the desire to belong, be valued and liked by others and the need for independence and autonomy are universal across languages. In addition, Searle (1969, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.25) claimed that rules regulating speech act realization are universal. Studies have showed some evidence of universality, for example, most languages contain basic speech act categories (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.25) and pragmatic routines (Coulmas, 1981, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.25) and the use of external and internal modifications (Blum-Kulka, 1996, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.25). Furthermore, people speaking different languages have the same “ability to vary linguistic realizations based on the contextual constellation of a given situation” and “sensitivity for the importance of contextual variables” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.25).

On the other hand, research on cross-cultural variations of pragmatics has showed contradicting evidence challenging the universal view. As mentioned earlier, due to the nationality of the subjects in the present study, Chinese are widely used as an example to support the cultural specific view on pragmatics across languages. First, regarding Brown & Levinson’s concept of face, Yu’s (2003) study on the Chinese face concepts have disputed the universality of negative face wants. According to Yu (2003), Chinese speakers do not show the desire of independence and autonomy when they communicate. He further explained the reasons lie in the Chinese intellectual tradition, Confucianism, which “embraces the idea that members of a given community should try their best to subordinate themselves to the group or the society at large in
order to cultivate a sense of homogeneity” (p.20). In order words, the individualism valued by westerners is conventionally overlooked in Chinese society.

Second, Brown/Levinson’s politeness formulation is also problematic when implemented in Chinese culture. Although Brown/Levinson’s politeness formulation and Chinese politeness have the same goals, the process is quiet different. By cultivating social status, power relationships, and impositions, westerners are able to generate relative politeness formulation among speakers. Conversely, Chinese politeness is not relative among speakers. Instead, politeness is a norm set by society.

Third, a bulk of research has questioned the universality of the speech act realization. Different pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics have been found across languages. Take compliments for instance. Compliments in most European countries actually function as conventional request strategies in Samoan culture (Holmes & Brown, 1987, as cited in Barron, 2003, p.26).

Furthermore, the range of strategies used varies across languages. Yu’s (2003) study of compliment-response discovered three strategies used by Chinese learners not usually used by Americans. They included: (1) face relationship related response strategy, (2) no response strategy, and (3) combination strategies. The face relationship related response strategy doesn’t respond to the compliments directly rather, speakers talk around or deal with the speech situation indirectly (e.g. “I’m embarrassed”) (p. 29). The no acknowledgment response is when the speaker ignores the compliment. Combination strategies combine two or more compliment-response strategies, such as acceptance and amendment, “Thank you! Do you really think it’s good?” (p. 30), but these strategies don’t need to match each other. Farghal’s (2001) research with Jordanian college students categorized combination strategies as either “intrinsically-
complex responses” or “extrinsically-complex responses”. For example, an intrinsically-complex response would be “thanking + offering” while extrinsically-complex response would be “thanking + questioning” (p. 13). The strategies will be addressed more in chapter 4.

The cross-cultural studies mentioned above emphasize possible cultural differences in strategies used by language learners. Although the comparison of language uses across cultures reveals little about developmental in ILP, these cross-cultural studies provide insight to the potential role that culture may play in the acquisition of pragmatics. For example, the answers to research question 4 may support one the other or both, and the researcher should remain open-minded. Also, these cross-cultural studies reveal differences in the use of pragmalinguistics across languages. Therefore, when exploring compliment and compliment-response strategies, the research design should use an open-ended format to elicit data and avoid potential drawbacks of using a multi-choice format, which fails to reflect potential strategy differences between Western and Asian learners.

2.3.1 Research methods in ILP

According to Kasper and Rose (2002), there are two research designs commonly used to explore ILP development: (1) longitudinal (2) cross-sectional research (p.75). Longitudinal research design keeps track of the development of the same subjects over a period of time, while cross-sectional research design explores development by comparing differences across various subject groups at a specific time. Usually, these various subject groups are learners in different levels of proficiency, but they can be learners of different length of stay in a target community if the study is intended to explore the influences of residence on pragmatic development. By comparing the pragmatic production of beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners at one
time, researchers can shed light on a series of pragmatic developmental stages (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p.76-78).

One problem with the cross-sectional approach mentioned by Cook (1993) is that some studies claim to use cross-sectional research design, yet are actually “single-moment” studies in nature. They did not collect data from learners of different proficiency levels, but only compared the difference between learners and native speakers of the target language (p.34). This “single-moment” method may suit the cross-cultural pragmatics research mentioned in the previous section, which aims at exploring pragmatics across languages and how speech acts are realized across cultures. However, it is definitely not suited for ILP research. The single-moment method not only fails to track development but also enhances the deficit view of learners by highlighting pragmatic failures. In other words, this single-moment method only compares the synchronic aspects of language use between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs). Cook’s (1993) warning clearly distinguished the single-moment studies from the real cross-sectional studies, which should be born in mind when implementing the cross-sectional research design.

As noted by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), cross-sectional research design can show what learners of different proficiency levels may know, but only longitudinal studies can show changes within individuals (p. 280). However, it is uncertain how far longitudinal studies with small sample sizes can be generalized. Kasper and Rose (2002) noticed the potential usefulness of combing both approaches. The following is his remarks:

While there is clearly much room for both longitudinal and cross-sectional designs in the study of developmental inter-language pragmatics, a sequential or parallel research program, capitalizing on the strengths and compensating for the weaknesses of each format, remain on the wish list for future investigations at this time (p.78).
In light of this, the present study combines longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs in response to his call for the mixed approach.

As for the method of collection, Kasper and Rose (2002) categorized many methods used in ILP including spoken interactions (e.g., authentic discourses, elicited conversations, role-plays), and questionnaires (e.g. discourse completion tests, multiple-choice questions, scaled-response questionnaires), and oral and written self-reports (e.g., interviews, think-aloud protocols and diaries) (pp.79-115). The present study uses the recommended discourse completion tests and interview methods due to their suitability to the research questions.

2.3.2 Review of ILP

Before investigating the developmental path of ILP, one must understand the components of ILP assessment. As mentioned by Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993), “the developmental efforts [of pragmatic competence] were observable in learners’ repertoires of pragmatic routines and modality markers” (p.10). In other words, one can observe learners’ pragmatic routines and modality markers to understand learners’ development of ILP. Pragmatic routines are defined as “explorations in standardized communication situations and pre-patterned speech” (Coulmas, 1981, pp. xii, 331). It characterizes pre-patterned, formulaic, and predictable patterns in conversation. These formulaic expressions or chunk utterances are considered beneficial for learners since they are easily retrieved and demand less cognitive effort (Barron, 2003, p. 193).

Modality markers provide functions to aggravate or mitigate the force of the statement in order to maintain appropriate social relations and politeness. These modality makers include downgraders, upgraders, and external modifications. Downgraders can be used to show respect during a request, whereas upgraders can be employed to provide emphasis in an expression of
gratitude. External modifications are additional phrases that support, expand, or explain the speech act. Take the speech act of request for example, speakers may use downgraders such as “Could you *please...*,” “*Come on*, turn the volume down”, and “*just wait a little bit*” (Achiba, 2003, pp 133-134). Speakers may also add external modifications to support the action of request such as “*Sorry to interrupt you but...*,” “*Could you do me a favor? I need to...*”, and “*Could you ...because ...*” (Achiba, 2003, p 139). The examples of upgraders employed on the speech act of refusal include “*No seriously, we’re okay*”, “*No really. If I fail, I will do it in my own style*”, “*No honestly, I’ll get my brother to help me*”, and “*No, No, I’ll call back another day ...*” (Barron, 2007, pp 129-130). Both pragmatic routines and modality markers can help trace the development of pragmatic competence.

Next, the issue of whether one can speak of the pragmatic developmental path according to the above predictors will be discussed. Several studies have touched upon the topic of whether there is a developmental path for pragmatics; however, the question has not been answered conclusively. Some researchers support a pragmatic developmental path. For example, Kasper and Rose (2002) proposed a developmental path for the speech act of requests based on longitudinal studies performed by Achiba (2002), Ellis (1992), and Schmidt (1983). Although the developmental path consists of five stages (1) pre-basic, (2) formulaic, (3) unpacking, (4) pragmatic expansion, and (5) find-tuning, it is only based on four individual learners for which longitudinal data was collected (Kasper & Rose, 2002, pp. 135-147). The developmental stages show that learners initially rely heavily on formulaic speeches. As they develop, learners gradually use more request strategies and discourse markers. Advanced learners are able to adjust speech acts according to social factors, demonstrating development of their sociopragmatic competence.
Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford’s (1993) study on the pragmatic development of the speech acts of suggestions and rejections by advanced learners of English indicated that after one semester, learners acquired different pragmatic routines and tended to use more suggestions and fewer rejections to negotiate with professors during academic advisory sessions. In addition to using lexical choices that were closer to those of native speakers of English, the use of modality markers was noted to increase after one semester. However, the data showed that the advanced learners used aggravators (upgraders) in suggestions, which was not found among NSs during academic advisory sessions (e.g. “In the summer I will take language testing for the first summer session”, “I’m going to take, ah…applied…transformational syntax”, and “So, I just decided on taking the language structure…field method in linguistics”).

According to Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993), the use of future modals will and be going to and the intensifier just are inappropriate because it leaves no room for discussion (p.288). The data also showed that the advanced learners even combined the aggravators (upgraders) and mitigators (downgraders) together when making suggestions (e.g. “Um, there are two required courses. So, I think I need to take for this semester…”). In this example, “there” was used as an impersonal construction of a mitigator and “I think I need to” was used as an aggravator to contradict the advisor’s suggestions (p.289). Consequently, the use of upgraders in combination with downgraders when making suggestions showed a lack of sensitivity in using the modalities, as well as the difficulty of sociopragmatic development. In other words, they learned to use modality markers as native speakers of English did but they did not understand how to use them in a socially congruent and polite way. The results indicated that sociopragmatic competence does not occur in the early stages of pragmatic development.
Additionally, Dalmau and Gotor (2007) conducted a cross sectional study of 78 Catalan learners of English at three different proficiency levels (intermediate, advanced and proficient) to explore the development of their apology behaviors. The findings showed that proficiency in L2 correlates with increased use of L2-like intensification of apologies. Specifically, intermediate-level learners tended to overuse routinized apologies that are cognitively easier to retrieve, or pre-patterned chunks (e.g. I’m sorry and excuse me); Advanced learners began using newly pragmatic routines (e.g. forgive me); and proficient speakers go as far as to overuse these newly pragmatic routines.

The study also compared the lexical choices between learners and native speakers, and found that L2 learners preferred to use lexically transparent illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) (e.g. I’m sorry and excuse me) to avoid more complicated phrases such as “I can only apologize”. As for modality markers of apology, learners tended to rely on four common intensifiers to “play it safe” (e.g. very, really, so and terribly) and would not use less common intensifiers (e.g. profusely, genuinely, awfully or incredibly).

Regarding sociopragmatic development, although proficient level learners encountered less pragmalinguistic problems, they exhibited more sociopragmatic non-native-like performances than advanced learners. It appeared that native-like command of the English language triggered an increase in L1 transfer in these students indicating that pragmalinguistic competence is acquired before sociopragmatic competence. Overall, the differences among intermediate, advanced, and proficient learners seemed to suggest, “It would then seem possible to find a natural route of development for pragmatic competence” (Dalmau & Gotor, 2007, p.309).
In the same vein, Rose (2000) explored the developmental patterns and sociopragmatic aspects of requests, apologies, and compliment-responses among three groups of Cantonese learners of English, ages 7, 9, and 11. This cross-sectional study reported some evidence for the existence of a route for the development of pragmatic competence. For the speech act of requests, they noted that younger students tended to make direct request whereas older students used more indirect strategies for making requests. Among the least proficient group, there was an overwhelming reliance on IFIDs as the main apology strategy and on “thank you” as virtually the only compliment-response strategy. This indicated a reliance on unanalyzed routines in beginning stages of pragmatic development. The same developmental trend was observed with modality markers. The results show that the use of modality markers was more frequent among higher-level learners than lower-level learners. On the other hand, there was little difference in sociopragmatic competence among the three groups and the authors hypothesized that sociopragmatic competence develops much later than pragmalinguistic competence.

In contrast, some have postulated that a fixed route of development for language pragmatics may not exist. Warga and Scholmberger (2007) studied seven Australian learners of French and found that learners displayed at least three different patterns in the development of apologies. The three patterns were identified: development close to L2 norms, development away from L2 norms, and no development. Development toward L2 norms were demonstrated by decrease of justifications and excuses containing “unfortunately” (Warga & Scholmberger, 2007). Development away from L2 norms were demonstrated by increased use of two upgraders in one IFID, increased use of “very” and a parallel decreased use of “really” (Warga & Scholmberger, 2007). No development was demonstrated by lack of change in the frequencies of IFIDs. During this ten month period, learners displayed a complex interplay of different types of
development suggesting a non-linear pattern of pragmatic development—a finding, which requires further investigation within the field of ILP development.

Barron’s (2003) study of 33 Irish learners of German over a 10-month period abroad also showed no detailed order to the development of L2 pragmatic competence. However, the study also showed that the development of L2 pragmalinguistic competence appears, in many instances, to be hindered by the development of sociopragmatic competence. The study also showed that learners over-generalized some pramalinguistic features.

Barron (2003) surmised that over-generalization may be a stage which learners show off their newly learned features of the L2. Barron (2007) also explored the use and types of upgraders in initial refusals and refusals following a reoffer in a follow up study and surprisingly found that the types and frequencies of upgraders were the same regardless of the length of study abroad. Barron attributed the high frequency of upgraders to L1 influence of Irish English on beginning learners. After a period of study abroad, Irish learners actually modified their behavior to match those of German native speakers by intensifying initial refusals and not expecting a reoffer as they did initially. These findings demonstrate that the use of upgraders is possible at an early stage.

This sequence of pragmatic competence development was supported in Matsumura’s (2007) study of Japanese students studying English abroad in Canada. His findings showed that learners’ understanding of social status in the study abroad context increased over time and that changes in the learners’ perception of social status generally occurred in the first three months. In contrast to this, Felix-Brasdefer’s (2004, as cited in Matsumura, 2007, p. 167) study on the speech act of refusals suggested that learners’ sociopragmatic competence developed during the later stages of a nine-month period while studying abroad.
The question of whether there is a linear path of pragmatic competence development is still uncertain. However, the literature above provides some idea of how to track learner development and what aspects further research should focus on. The present study is designed to answer the question of whether there is a natural path for the development of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competences through tracking the change in student lexical choices and the use of modality markers over time.

2.4 Compliments and compliment-responses

Simply defined, complimenting is "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1988, p. 446). The main studies related to this speech act generally fall into four categories: the effects of culture, gender, instruction, and test methodology. Each of the categories will be addressed.

Ye (1995) further conducted a study investigating the strategies, frequencies of compliments, topic, and compliment-response used by native Mandarin speakers using a cross-cultural approach. The results showed that conventional pragmatic routines with a sentence structure of subject-linking verb-adjective were most frequently used. The results also showed that native Chinese speakers complimented less frequently compared to native English speakers. Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese speakers tended to compliment on skills rather than appearance.

Also, compliments seldom occurred across genders, because it is viewed as a social violation in Chinese culture. The results also showed that for Westerners, compliments occurred more often between interlocutors with equal status whereas for the Chinese, compliments occurred more often between less familiar acquaintances of different social status. Ye (1995)
explained that these phenomena occurred because of the different functions that compliments served in American and Chinese societies. That is, Westerners appeared to use compliments to maintain social harmony, whereas the Chinese used compliments to show respect.

While compliment strategies were found to differ between these two groups, compliment response strategies were found to be similar. Over 70% of participants used an acceptance strategy, whereas fewer than 15% used a rejection strategy. Ye’s (1995) study discounted the stereotype that Chinese compliment-responses predominantly used rejection strategies to demonstrate humbleness. These studies investigated the cultural differences in the realization of compliments and compliment-response, and all of those studies approach the issue from a cross-cultural perspective.

The effect of gender on compliment topics and compliment-response strategies has been reported on by Farghal (2001). He found that compliment topics varied between female and male college students. Male college students tended to compliment aspects of appearance whereas females tended to compliment more on skills and knowledge. Moreover, when responding to compliments, these female college students usually response with “thank you” while male college students tended to respond with agreement or offering.

Regarding the effects of instruction on development, compliment and compliment-response, Billmeyer’s (1990) study on compliments and compliment-response instruction showed a positive effect of instruction on speech act development.

Research investigating the effect of data gathering methods on speech act performance include Galoto’s (2003) study of conversational analytic methodology and DCT on compliment-responses and Yuan’s (2001) inquiry of four different methods for studying the speech acts of compliment and compliment-response. Goloto (2003) found that conversational analytic
methodology and DCTs each has its own strengths. Conversational analytic methodology has a better understanding of the interaction and organization of conversation in a natural setting while DCTs better reflect responder experience and knowledge of the language.

Similar to Galoto, Yuan (2001) further added that oral DCTs elicited more responses from subjects, but was constrained by the oral abilities of subjects. He also found that field notes have realistic features similar to naturally occurring conversation, yet may not be accurate since it is influenced by with researcher subjectivity. He concluded that researchers need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each method in eliciting data to answer research questions.

Also, the literature on the accuracy of test methodology on gauging development of speech acts varied in its results. Some researchers found that just as just as different speech acts each have unique realization strategies, the impact of data gathering methods vary from speech act to speech act (Johnston, Kasper, and Rose 1998). The issues of accuracy and the research methods used in the present study will be further discussed in Chapter 3 of methodology.

Rose’s (2000) study is the only study exploring the speech act of compliment-response and focusing specifically on developmental issues. In her cross-sectional study, she compared the use of modality markers in pragmatic routines among different levels of students.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review has shown a need for research on the topic of ILP development and a gap between the research topic and methods used. As mentioned earlier, compared with SLA, this area of pragmatics has a relatively short history. Of the research done on pragmatics, the majority of studies deal with cultural comparisons. Also the literature review on compliments and compliment-responses are rarely found dealing with ILP development. Therefore the acquisition and development of ILP is still a barren field. In addition to the call for research on
the developmental aspect of ILP, research design is another issue to be considered in studying
the acquisition of developmental path of ILP. Earlier research dealing with ILP used either cross-
sectional or longitudinal methods despite recommendations for using a combination of both. It is
therefore the aim of the present study to respond not only to the need for research on ILP
development but also to use both cross-sectional and longitudinal methods.

In summary, Chapter 2 is organized into five sections. The first section provides
background knowledge of pragmatics in terms of pragmatic terminologies and its relatively brief
history compared to second language acquisition. The next section clarifies these concepts and
the relationship between cross-cultural pragmatics and inter-language pragmatics (ILP).
Although ILP is the main focus of the present study, the review of cross-cultural pragmatics
research provides insight into the potential effects of cultures on the development of ILP and lays
a foundation for answering Research Question Four regarding the influence of L1 on ILP.

The third section justifies the use of compliment and compliment-response speech acts to
explore the development of ILP. Accordingly, the various research methods used to study ILP
are discussed. The following section then reviews studies related to compliments and
compliment-responses. The final section discusses the lack of research on ILP development as
well as the advantages of using a combination of research methods (i.e., cross-sectional and
longitudinal methods). The goal of the present study is to analyze ILP development using a
research method that has been recommended yet has rarely been implemented. To conclude,
chapter 2 has not only provided a foundation for answering research questions but has also
highlighted and justified the need for the present study.
Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter states the research questions and explains why a combining approach of a cross-sectional and longitudinal research design fits the present study. Next, the selection of the subjects and the rationale for using discourse completion tasks (DCT) as an instrument are justified. Subsequently, the process is detailed of how the questions on the DCT were constructed and revised based on feedback gathered in the pilot study. Finally, the data collection procedure and verification of the data are addressed.

3.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

5. What changes of lexical choice and modality markers are made by individual subjects of the study over a period of time?

6. What is the relationship between the use of lexical choice and modality markers used among different levels of proficiency?

7. Based on questions 1 and 2, does a natural route exist for the development of L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, specifically in compliment and compliment behaviors?

8. As a follow-up to question 3, how does L1 influence learners’ pragmatic development? In other words, does L1 impede or facilitate the pragmatic growth and in what ways does L1 affect developmental stages?
3.3 Nature of the Study

Overall, the research design of this study is qualitative in nature due to its suitability for answering the research questions listed above. To better understand and justify this approach, three questions in Creswell’s (2003) framework for research design were answered respectively: (1) what knowledge claims are made? (2) What strategies of inquiry are informed?, and (3) what methods of data collection are used (p.4-5)?

The knowledge claims made in the study mainly comprise those of constructivism. Constructivism emphasizes individuality, the process of constructing meaning, and exploring the complexity of answers, which is a type of qualitative research according to Creswell’s (2003) categories (p.9). Next, according to Creswell (2003), the strategies of inquiry deal with the procedure of operationalizing research design. Operationalization can be categorized as qualitative research design in the forms of narratives, ethnographies, and case studies (p.183). The present study has chosen to report data in narrative form and to analyze pragmatic differences between the ethnic groups of Americans and Chinese while studying individual growth in pragmatics over time. As for data collection, the present study uses documents and interviews qualitatively. Overall, the features of constructivism, narrative reporting, and documents and interviews make the research design qualitative in nature.

The instrument of DCT was chosen to answer the questions 1 and 2, and meanwhile the in-depth interview with individual subjects is conducted to elicit the answers for question 4. When administering the DCT, both cross-sectional and longitudinal methods are used. The cross-sectional research method explores development by comparing differences across various subject groups while the longitudinal research method keeps track of the development of the same subjects over a period of time (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p.75). The cross-sectional method
clearly holds an advantage in large sample size although it fails to track individual growth. On the other hand, the longitudinal method can track change in an individual but is weak due to generally small sample sizes. Considering these strengths and weaknesses, a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal methods were used in the present study.

In summary, based on Creswell’s (2003) framework of research design for knowledge assumptions, strategies of inquiry, and data collection methods, the present study design is categorized as qualitative research. This qualitative research design uses methods of DCT and follow-up interviews to explore pragmatic development and investigate specific issues posed by research questions. Additionally, the research design uses a mixed approach combining both cross-sectional and longitudinal data collection after weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each.

3.4 Participants

The participants were divided into three groups: Chinese learners of English in America (CLEA), native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT), and native speakers of English in America (NSEA).

3.4.1 Chinese learners of English in America (CLEA)

This group comprises 25 native Chinese speakers learning English as a second language. 16 of them are USC Language Academy students not enrolled in graduate or undergraduate programs. The other 9 are USC graduate students majoring in Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). They are divided into three subgroups according to their English proficiency level. The first group (G1) comprises Language Academy students, who are in the ESL levels three and four. The second group (G2) also comprises Language Academy students, who are in the ESL levels five and six. The third group (G3) comprises TESOL program students.
whose TOEFL iBT score range from 75 to 100. These three groups (G1, G2, and G3) represent beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English proficiency respectively.

3.4.2 Native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT)

This group comprises eight native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan who will answer a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) in Mandarin Chinese. All are vocational school students in Taiwan, ranging in age from 18 to 23. Most have studied English as a normal part of public education in Taiwan but English is not their major focus of study. Most of them have never been in an English speaking country nor have had any contact with native speakers of English.

3.4.3 Native speakers of English in America (NSEA)

This group comprises seven native speakers of English, all of whom are USC undergraduate and graduate students, age ranging from 18 to 23. They will complete an English version of the DCT.

3.5 Instruments

The rationale for using DCT is convenience and reliability. First, the social variables are easier to control with DCTs than with natural conversation situations. It is also an efficient tool given the fact that the researchers can discover how participants react to various situations in a short amount of time. Moreover, data are replicable for future examination and the results are readily generalized (Beebe & Cummings, 1996). Next, the results of DCTs accurately reflect English learners’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Although a naturally occurring dialogue can reflect the participants’ ability to use language in real conversation, it demands a high command of English proficiency and involves unavoidable variables from interlocutors. Conversely, DCTs can avoid interlocutor variables and give English learners
plenty of time to employ meta-cognition, which renders the elicitation of pragmatic knowledge more reliable (Kasper & Rose, 2002, pp97-98).

The format of DCT used in the present study is slightly altered from that of traditional DCTs. Traditional DCTs include a descriptive situation followed by a conversational dialogue including one blank line for the participant to fill in between a prompt and a rejoinder. The DCT used in the present study omits both the prompt and rejoinder, instead asking the subjects to answer open-ended questions to provide both the compliments and compliment-responses for each situation. The DCT in the study omits the prompt and rejoinder included in traditional DCTs; however, the DCT in the study should not affect the results as demonstrated by a study investigating the effects of DCTs with and without rejoinders. The findings show that “none of the differences were statistically significant” (Rose, 1992, as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2000, pp 94-95). The present DCT also includes more descriptions for each situation because of a study showing that content-rich descriptions in DCT situations can elicit more external modifications use from responders than short descriptions (Billmeyer & Varghese, 2000, as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2000, p 94). In other words, with more background descriptions in the DCT, more external modifications can be elicited. Finally, the DCT used in this study adds an opt-out strategy where subjects can choose not to give compliments in certain situations. This is important because choosing not to compliment can also be considered a compliment-strategy. Moreover, it can reveal the learner understanding of socio-pragmatic differences across languages (Bonikowska, 1988, as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2000, p 91).

3.5.1 The Design of DCT

The topics chosen in the DCT include appearance, performance, possessions, and characteristics, skills/work, and personality. Each scenario considers social variables to gather
data regarding cross-cultural pragmatics and L1 influences on pragmatic development.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), three social variables affecting interlocutor use of strategy include social distance (D), relative power (P) and imposition (R). Social distance (D) refers to the degree of familiarity between interlocutors. Relative Power (P) refers to the social status and power of the speaker in relation to the listener. Imposition (R) refers to the relative degree of offense associated with different speech acts in a particular culture. In most cultures for example, the speech act of complaints has higher imposition than that of requests. Because the speech act of compliments and compliment-responses are not associated with imposition, only social distance (D) and power (P) social variables are considered in designing the DCT for the present study. The relationship of social variables and questions are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Description of DCT Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+P</th>
<th>=P</th>
<th>-P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UF</td>
<td>Questions 3,9,15,21</td>
<td>Questions 2, 8, 14,20</td>
<td>Questions 1, 7, 13,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Questions 6, 12,18,24</td>
<td>Questions 5,11,17,23</td>
<td>Questions 4,10,16,22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: = P indicates that Speaker (S) and Hearer (H) are equal in power; –P indicates S has lower power than H; +P indicates S has higher power than H; (F) indicates that S is familiar with H; (UF) indicates that S is not familiar with H.

3.5.2 Pilot study and final DCT

Before distributing the DCT, a pilot study was conducted to increase the validity and reliability of the test questions. Twenty-four scenarios on the DCT (Appendix D) were completed by two language academy students in level 3 and 4 respectively, who shared many characteristics with group 1. Feedback was gathered through a think-aloud method. Despite Billmeyer and Varghese’s (2000) research showing that content-rich descriptions in DCT
situations can elicit more external modification use from responders than short descriptions, the pilot study found that subjects with the lowest proficiency level had a hard time understanding question descriptions (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2000, p 94). Also, subjects felt exhausted after completing twenty-four questions in a row.

Because the detailed question descriptions were confusing, the DCT questions were simplified based on a comprehensive discussion with subjects. Also, with the intent of assessing the students’ true abilities without exhausting them, the complaints of repetition and similarity were taken into consideration. The test was therefore reduced to twelve questions. The selection of questions to be eliminated was based on the feedback: lack of group presentation and working experiences (questions 9, 14, 15, 17), negative feelings toward politic and gender-oriented questions (questions 6, 19), complex or difficult phrases used in the scenarios (questions 2), and repetitive questions (questions 5, 7, 10, 22, 24). Accordingly, the final DCT comprised only twelve questions, of which students demonstrated adequate background knowledge to answer and had no problems comprehending (Appendix E).

The final DCT questions can be divided into six subcategories based on the different combination that can occur among the three relative power relationships (P) and two degrees of familiarity (F) between interlocutors:

Category 1: the speaker has a lower status than the listener and the conversationalists are not familiar: questions 1 and 7

Item # 1 You have an appointment with Dr. G to discuss the application procedures. When you enter her office, you feel it is so neat, cozy, and modern. Will you compliment her? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
Item #7 You attend an academic conference where a famous speaker presents a lecture. You feel the presenter delivered the content clearly, addressed several important issues, and offered some very useful ideas. Will you compliment him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Category 2: the speaker has an equal status with the listener and the conversationalists are not familiar: questions 2 and 8.

Item #2 Imagine that you are taking a bus to school. You see a beautiful girl or a charming boy who is in your class but that you have never talked to. Will you compliment her/him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her/his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Item #8 You encounter a schoolmate at the library. When this person sees that you have a math problem, he offers to help. He patiently explains the details. You feel he is very friendly. Will you compliment him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Category 3: the speaker has a higher status than the listener and the conversationalists are not familiar: questions 3 and 9.

Item #3 Your neighbor’s child just got a new puppy. It is furry, cute, and funny. You really like it. Will you compliment her? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Item #9 You lost your cell phone and contact with your friends in the mall. A clerk at the information desk sees your distress and tries to help you out. She is patient, kind, and humorous, which helps to calm you down. Ultimately, you find your cell phone and your friends. Will you
compliment her? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Category 4: the speaker has a lower status with the listener and the conversationalists are familiar: questions 4 and 10

Item #4 Your father bought a new hat online. You like it and you think it fits your father’s face very well. Will you compliment him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Item #10 Your father’s real estate business is growing with each passing year. He has successfully sold several houses this past week. Will you compliment him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Category 5: the speaker has an equal status than the listener and the conversationalists are familiar: questions 5 and 11

Item #5 Your friend recently got a new haircut and you think it looks great. Will you compliment her? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Item #11 Your close friend always stands by you no matter what happens. When you are sick, he or she takes care of you. When you are happy, he or she shares your joy. Will you compliment her/him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in her/his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Category 6: the speaker has a higher status than the listener and the conversationalists are familiar: questions 6 and 12

Item #6 Your younger sister has started to care about her looks, clothes, and makeup. You think she does look more attractive than she was last year. Will you compliment her? If yes, what
would you say? Now suppose you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

Item #12 Your younger brother has just won a tennis tournament. Will you compliment him? If yes, what would you say? Now suppose you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

After revising the original DCT (Appendix D) based on a pilot study and feedback, the researcher started to enroll potential subjects. When the subject students agreed to participate, they were asked to decide whether to be short-term or long-term subjects. The students who would cooperate with the research for over a semester signed one consent form (Appendix B) while the students who would only participate once signed another consent form (Appendix C). Those signing the former are subjects of the longitudinal study whereas those signing the latter are subjects of the cross-sectional study.

After obtaining permission, the researcher gave the DCT (Appendix E) to the subjects. Some students took the DCT home to complete while others completed the test immediately. The DCTs were completed either in written formats or electronically.

In addition to being cross-sectional, the present study also used a longitudinal method as mentioned. Longitudinal data collection comprised two DCTs and one interview. The same DCT (Appendix E) was given to all the subjects at the beginning of the semester and then again DCT (Appendix E) at the end of the semester but only to the longitudinal subjects. These longitudinal subjects were also interviewed after completing the DCT a second time. The questions in the interview are attached (Appendix F).
### 3.7 Time Line

The following is a diagram illustrating the different stages of the research design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 2008</th>
<th>Writing literature on the pragmatics (Chapter 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Consulting the instructor regarding DCT construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-testing the DCT (Appendix D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>Revising the DCT (Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the letter to subjects (Appendix A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2008</td>
<td>Writing the longitudinal consent form (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the cross-sectional consent form (Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the interview questions (Appendix G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>Administering the first DCT (Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the methodology (Chapter 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>Revising Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>Revising Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalizing the interview questions (Appendix G)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 \textit{Data Reduction}

All data collected were useful judging by the quality and quantity of answers given. One concern is that 5 subjects appear to have been confused and skipped the compliment response question after deciding to answer “No” to the preceding compliment question. Because the research design views “opting-out” (not to give compliments) as a valid compliment strategies in certain situations, the subjects are informed that they are welcome to do. However, these 5
subjects seemed to perceive the two questions as a whole regardless the fact that the first question is about giving compliments while the second question is about responding to compliments. Therefore, despite the 5 answers missing on response to compliments, the data collected were useful.

3.9 Issue of Validity and Reliability

The methodology of this study is considered valid based on the literature review. The mixed method combining longitudinal and cross-sectional approaches was chosen due to recommendations by Kasper and Rose (2002) as mentioned in Chapter 2. In addition, in the earlier section, the use of a DCT as the study instrument is justified after comparing it with other methods and considering the advantages of the DCT. Moreover, the pretest questionnaire pretest (Appendix D) and in-depth conversations with the subjects helps to increase the validity of the final DCT (Appendix E). Therefore, the validity of the research design and instrument in the study is high.

Considering the reliability of the study, its consistency may be not as high as its validity due to limited time and resources. The subjects in G1, G2, and NSEA groups were chosen at random without prejudice according to class enrollment. The researcher had not met any of these subjects. However, some of the subjects in the G3 and NSCT groups were chosen because the researcher had prior relationship with these subjects. Therefore, the objectivity in subject selection is only fair. The data and results of the research will be presented and discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4
Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the data collected and reviews the results. The data is presented in two sections: cross-sectional data analysis and longitudinal data analysis. The cross-sectional data analysis presents the data collected from the cross-sectional subjects, containing 5 groups: 8 Native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT), 25 Chinese learners of English with low, intermediate, and high proficiency levels, respectively (G1), (G2), (G3), and 7 Native speakers of English in America (NSEA). The longitudinal data analysis deals with data collected from longitudinal subjects. Three of the subjects in G1 have been tracked for over one semester. The data analyzed in this chapter will provide the foundation for answering the four research questions, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2 Expression of the lexical choices and modality markers in compliments and compliment-responses among NSC, G1, G2, G3, and NSE

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, “the developmental efforts [of pragmatic competence] were observable in learners’ repertoires of pragmatic routines and modality markers” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.10). This section will therefore focus on the pragmatic routines and modality markers used among the five groups of subjects. Pragmatic routines, also called lexical choices or strategies are pre-formed speech patterns, whereas modality markers (e.g. upgraders, downgraders, and external modification) accompanying the lexical choices are used to express sensitivity to socio-pragmatic relationships. Based on the literature review, common lexical choices for compliments and compliment-responses are used as a baseline for analyzing the data and are listed in Table 1. Similarly, modality markers, mainly upgraders with a few external
modifications on compliments and compliment-responses are also listed in Table 2. Additional compliment and compliment-responses strategies found in the data presentation are also included.

Table 1. Common lexical choices for compliments and compliment-responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliments strategies</th>
<th>Compliment-responses strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A noun phrase + is/looks + adjective</td>
<td>Acceptance (e.g., Thank you.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I + like/love + a noun phrase</td>
<td>Agreement (e.g., I like it too. Yes. Yeah. Okay.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun + is + a/an + adjective + noun phrase.</td>
<td>Returning the compliment (e.g., You look good, too.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of the strategies</td>
<td>Rejection (e.g., I do not look pretty.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not to give compliments</td>
<td>Deflection or evasion (e.g., Well, my mother gave it to me.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for more details showing admiration</td>
<td>Making an offer (e.g., I can buy one for you if you like.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquial use of compliments</td>
<td>Face relationship related response strategy (e.g., I am embarrassed. Don’t be strange. Don’t say it. Are you kidding me?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing gratitude</td>
<td>Combining strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing admiration</td>
<td>No response strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifiers</td>
<td>Using adverbs or adjectives to increase the degree of the expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time intensifiers</td>
<td>Using time to emphasize the credibility of their statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical intensifiers</td>
<td>Using adjective words originally containing some degree of compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphatic addition</td>
<td>Using some collocations to add emphasis to the statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected across the five groups is tabulated according to the 12 different scenarios and subsequently grouped into three categories according to different social and power relationships as well as familiarity between the interlocutors. In the interest of space and presentation, 7 letters are used to symbolize the findings. (A standers for percentage of
respondents not giving compliments; B for average of the number of complimenting strategies used; C - average number of appropriate complimenting strategies used; D - average of number of modality markers; E - percentage respondents not responding to compliments; F - average of number of total strategies in responding to compliments; G - average number of appropriate strategies in responding to compliments; H - average of number of modality markers).

The first category includes scenarios 1, 7, 4, and 10. Responses to scenarios 1 and 7, summarized in Tables 3 and 4, represent similar situations where the speaker is not familiar with the listener and has a lower social status than the listener. Scenarios 4 and 10, summarized in Tables 5 and 6, also represent similar situations where the speaker has a lower social status than the listener, but this time he/she is familiar with the listener.

Table 3. Scenario # 1 (A professor’s neat office)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Scenario # 7 (A lecturer’s wonderful presentation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate that the lowest proficiency English learners (G1) and native Chinese speakers in Taiwan (NSCT) tend to avoid giving or responding to compliments when interacting with a professor. The highest number of proper strategies used occurred among native speakers of Chinese for both compliments and compliment-responses. The second highest number of proper strategies used occurred in the highest proficiency English learner group (G3). No particular patterns between the number of proper strategies used and the proficiency level of the group were revealed. The number of modality markers used by native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan was found to be closest to that used by native speakers of English (NSEA). However, no patterns for the use of modality markers were found among the different proficiency groups for these two scenarios.

Table 5. Item # 4 (Dad’s beautiful hat)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Item # 10 (Dad’s successful business)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate that all subjects were sensitive to social relationships when giving or responding to compliments. The rate of not giving or replying to compliments dropped significantly compared with the responses summarized in Tables 3 and 4. Again, the native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT) provided the highest number of proper strategies for both compliments and compliment-responses, and the second highest number of proper strategies was given by the highest proficiency English learner group (G3). Although there was no clear pattern between the number of proper strategies used and the proficiency level of the group, the number of proper strategies used was closest to the number of strategies attempted for the highest English proficiency learner group. This meant that the highest proficiency English learner group had fewer problems using the strategies they attempted in these particular situations. The number of modality markers used did not demonstrate any particular patterns among the different proficiency groups.

The second category included scenarios 2, 8, 5, and 11. Scenarios 2 and 8, summarized in Tables 7 and 8, represent similar situations where the speaker is not familiar with but has an equal social status compared to the listener. Scenarios 5 and 11, summarized in Tables 9 and 10,
represent similar situations where the speaker is both familiar with and has an equal social status compared to the listener.

Table 7. Item # 2 (Unfamiliar attractive schoolmate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Item # 8 (Unfamiliar helpful schoolmate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that different situations could evoke very different compliments and compliment-responses among different groups of subjects. These scenarios revealed that complimenting an unfamiliar schoolmate regarding their appearance was less likely to occur among all subject groups, whereas complimenting an unfamiliar schoolmate on helping
with the homework was more likely to happen among all subject groups. This time, the lowest proficiency learner group (G1) provided the highest number of proper strategies. They (g1) complimented the schoolmate who helped them with homework about their personal characteristics, including intelligence and kindness. They (G1) attempted to express gratitude more than any other group, which may suggest their desire to be helped by more capable peers in their language learning process. In terms of responding to compliments, all English learners were inclined to downplay compliments instead of accepting compliments as occurred among native speakers of English. Also, the responses revealed a commonly misused strategy among the highest level proficiency English learners (G3) when responding to compliments. This group tried to downplay compliments by inappropriately using the phrase “never mind”, which when translated into Chinese would be an appropriate response. As for modality markers, no specific patterns were found among the different groups of subjects.

Table 9. Item # 5(A close friend’s new haircut)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Item # 11(The best friend)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>Compliment-Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that all the groups of subjects complimented close friends on a new haircut, while table 10 suggests that native speakers of English are more comfortable to actively compliment their best friend’s kindness. The highest number of proper strategies were seen among native speakers of Chinese (NSCT) for both compliments and compliment-responses. The second highest number of proper strategies were seen among English learners of the highest proficiency (G3). These results indicate that when responding to compliments about a friend’s new haircut, the lowest proficiency English learning group (G1) tended to downplay compliments by deflection (e.g., “I just had my hair cut.” or “It cost me a lot.”) while the highest proficiency English learning group tended to use the same strategy of acceptance as that of native speakers of English when responding to the compliments. A similar response pattern was seen among subjects responding to a compliment from a best friend. All proficiency level English learners (G1, G2, and G3) downplayed compliments by saying “Don’t be strange.” or “Don’t say that.” None of them used the lexical item, “That’s what friends are for.”, which was commonly used by native speakers of English.

Regarding modality markers, no particular patterns among different proficiency groups were detected; however, when all subjects downplayed compliments, certain modality markers, such as “just” was more likely to occur.
The third category included scenarios 3, 9, 6, and 12. Scenarios 3 and 9, summarized in Tables 11 and 12, represent similar situations where the speaker is not familiar with but has a higher social status compared to the listener. Scenarios 6 and 12, summarized in Tables 13 and 14, represent similar situations where the speaker is familiar with the listener and has a higher status than him or her.

Table 11. Item # 3 (A neighbor’s cut dog)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12. Item # 9 (A helpful seller in the mall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 and table 12 demonstrated that all subjects were comfortable giving compliments to unfamiliar people about their dog or for help received excepting subjects who personally disliked dogs. Native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan (NSCT) provided the highest number of proper strategies for both compliments and compliment-responses, and the highest proficiency English learner group (G3) provided the second highest number of proper strategies. These tables suggest that the number of proper strategies used in compliments increases with the ascending English proficiency level, although there is not the case in compliment-responses. The results for scenario 9 revealed that the highest proficiency level subjects (G3) tended to be bolder in responding compliments. They (G3) attempted to use slang, proverbs (e.g., “It is a piece of cake.”), and direct translations from Chinese proverb (e.g., “There is no doomstay.”). In contrast, the lowest proficiency group (G1) tended to use the simplest strategies when responding (e.g., “No problem. It is my job.”) As for modality markers, no patterns between the number of proper modality markers and proficiency levels were noted.

Table 13. Item # 6 (A sister’s new look after make-up)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSEA(7)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3(9)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2(6)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1(10)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCT(8)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 13 and table 14 reveal that when talking to a family member, personal preference affected whether subjects chose to compliment or not. For example, many subjects refused to compliment a younger sister for the reason that they did not like the use of makeup. However, these same subjects enthusiastically complimented their younger brother’s performance in a tennis tournament. The highest number of proper strategies used occurred among native speakers of Chinese (NSCT) for both compliments and compliment-responses. The second highest number of proper strategies used occurred in the highest proficiency English learner group (G3). No particular patterns between the number of proper compliment or compliment-response strategies used and the proficiency level of the group were revealed. The same was true for the use of modality markers.

Additionally, the results of scenario 9 (Table 13) revealed that the highest proficiency level subjects (G3) attempted to use slang, proverbs, or direct translation from Chinese proverb when responding to the compliments. For example, they used back-handed compliments (e.g., “The ugly duckling turned out to be a beautiful swan.”) or chided their younger sister by saying (e.g., “You will become more beautiful by cleaning your room.”) or joked (e.g., “Which part of...
putting on make-up are you copying from me?”). On the other hand, the lowest proficiency level group (G1) tended to use simpler strategies of expressing gratitude, such as “thanks,” and “I am glad to hear it.”

4.3 Changes of Expression of compliments and compliment-responses among four of G1 subjects over one semester

In the longitudinal part of the study, three subjects of the lowest proficiency level were tracked over one semester. The following are comparisons of the changes in the number of attempted strategies, the number of proper strategies used, lexical choices, and the use of modality markers. These raw data are also presented by situations.

Please remember that the data are all original versions, which may contain some grammatical errors. Meanwhile, the bold phrases highlight improved (more native-like) proper compliment and compliment-response strategies in the responses given by the subjects. The underlined phrases highlight inappropriate expression containing either grammatical errors or confusing lexical terms.)

Category 1. The speaker has a lower power relationship and social status than the listener both in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 1</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): No, I will not compliment her because I think I do not need to do things like that. A (2): Thank you.</td>
<td>A (1): No, because I think I don’t need to. A (2): <strong>Thank you. You are so kind.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): Your office is <strong>modern</strong>. A (2): Thank you. <strong>I like my office too.</strong></td>
<td>A (1): <strong>Your office looks so nice.</strong> A (2): <strong>Oh~thanks.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 10</td>
<td>A (1): No, I will not compliment her because I am not used to talking to professors.</td>
<td>A (1): No, because she is a professor A (2): (skipped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>At the beginning of the semester</td>
<td>At the end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): No, I think other people will do it. A (2): If you want to talk more, I am glad to talk with you.</td>
<td>A (1): I do not know what should I say. A (2): I am glad that you like it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): No, I do not know him well. A (2): (skip)</td>
<td>A (1): No, because I don’t know him A (2): (skipped)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 4</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 10</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Category 2. The speaker has an equal power relationship and social status than the listener both in familiar and unfamiliar situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 2</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): No, I’m shy. A (2): Thanks, you are. beautiful/handsome too.</td>
<td>A (1): <strong>You are so friendly and kind.</strong> A (2): You are the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): No, he/she might feel strange. A (2): (skip)</td>
<td>A (1): No, because I don’t know her A (2): (skipped)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 5</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 8</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): Thank you for your help. You are a really nice person. A (2): No problem, I’d like to help people.</td>
<td>A (1): Thank you for your help. A (2): <strong>It’s my pleasure.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): Thank you. You are so kind. A (2): OK. Don’t mation it.</td>
<td>A (1): You are so kind. A (2): It’s not a good deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 10</td>
<td>A (1): I’m so appreciate. You are my hero. A (2): It’s piece of cake. No problem</td>
<td>A (1): <strong>Thank you! Im so lucky to have you.</strong> A (2): No problem it’s my pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Category 3. The speaker has an equal power relationship and social status than the listener both in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>At the beginning of the semester</th>
<th>At the end of the semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>At the beginning of the semester</td>
<td>At the end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): I can help you anything and anytime when you need help. A (2): You are my friends, so I want to help you.</td>
<td>A (1): Thank you, it’s very happy to become your friend. A (2): No problem, I am happy to help you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): How nice you are. A (2): We are best friends.</td>
<td>A (1): I’m glad having a friend likes you. A (2): You are so nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 10</td>
<td>A (1): I’m so lucky have you. Thank you to be my best friend. A (2): I’m also happy have you.</td>
<td>A (1): I’m so greatful for to have you. A (2): me too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>At the beginning of the semester</td>
<td>At the end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 6</td>
<td>A (1): Your dog is cute. A (2): Yes, it is my baby dog.</td>
<td>A (1): It is so cute. A (2): Thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>At the beginning of the semester</td>
<td>At the end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 10</td>
<td>A (1): You did a good job. A (2): I still keep learning how to make everything better.</td>
<td>A (1): You are really pretty. A (2): I’ll need your help! Thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>At the beginning of the semester</td>
<td>At the end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 Subject 4</td>
<td>A (1): Hope you can meet good people next time when you</td>
<td>A (1): I will shop here next time. A (2): This is my pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show that all the three subjects have improved over one semester. The subjects used more appropriate lexical choices and fewer direct translations in both compliments and compliment responses. It was also noted that more pragmatic routines and pre-patterned speech were used. Although the number of the attempted strategies was essentially unchanged, the nearly all attempted strategies were proper. Some lexical choices revealed socio-pragmatic competences. For example, in scenario 1, the compliment-response changed from “Thank you. I like my office too.” to “Oh, thanks.” demonstrating the subject’s awareness of the social and power relationship between the two speakers. Another example is the compliment to the seller in scenario 9, changing from “Hope you can meet good people next time when you needed.” to “I will shop here next time.” revealing that the subject is being appropriately manipulative and relying less on Chinese expression. These examples show that English learners have developed a
better control of lexical choices when they want to express themselves. As for modality markers, no improvement was detected. The results even demonstrated fewer uses of modality markers after one semester. The results summarized in Chapter 4 will be used to answer the research questions in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to answering the research questions based on the findings presented in Chapter 4. The discussion is organized according to the four research questions. The implications of the present study and recommendations for further research are discussed.

5.1 The four research questions

5.1.1 What changes of lexical choice and modality markers are made by individual subjects of the study over a period of time?

The frequency and use of modality markers have shown no change over the semester studying abroad. However, the lexical choices made by the three longitudinal subjects are more targeted and more appropriate for each situation than four months earlier. In other words, the study reveals that pre-patterned phrases were more frequently used, especially when responding to the compliments (i.e., “My pleasure.”, “Well done.”, and “Good job.”). Furthermore, fewer direct translations from Chinese to English were observed among compliments and compliment-responses. Certain examples of direct Chinese to English translation were found only at the beginning of the semester. (e.g., “Your office is modern.” and “Never mind.”). As for modality markers, a slight decline in the use of modality markers was found after one semester studying abroad. This decline in using modality markers may be attributed to a wider use of pragmatic routines and increasing competence in choosing and using the appropriate pragmatic routine to express themselves. Modality markers were no longer the only option for these students to emphasize their degree of approval and gratitude in giving and replying to compliments.
In regards to the tendency and frequency of giving and responding to compliments, these longitudinal subjects did not show any significant changes over one semester, except for one subject who after one semester seemed more willing to compliment to an attractive stranger.

5.1.2 What is the relationship between the use of lexical choice and modality markers used among different levels of proficiency?

The cross-sectional portion of this study has revealed that the use of lexical choices and modality markers appeared to be influenced by English proficiency levels to a certain degree. However, no definitive relationship was determined between the two. Specifically, the results showed that the highest proficiency level subjects were able to use the most correct lexical choices than any of the lower proficiency groups. However, the intermediate proficiency group of subjects did not necessarily use more correct lexical choices compared to the lowest proficiency counterparts.

As for modality markers, no clear pattern was found among the three different proficiency level groups. The use of modality markers appeared to be determined by the subjects’ awareness of the social and power relationship between two speakers. The general use of modality markers in the study indicated that all the subjects were socio-pragmatically competent; however, no clear pattern was differentiated among the three proficiency level groups. Additionally, the findings indicated that the lowest level proficiency groups of subjects tended to use modality markers more often when giving and replying to compliments, especially when acknowledging help or expressing gratitude.

With regard to the tendency and frequency of giving and responding to compliments, the highest proficiency group responses were most similar to those of native speakers. The lowest
proficiency level responses were the next most similar to native speakers and the intermediate proficiency level responses were the least similar to native speakers of English.

5.1.3 Based on questions 1 and 2, does a natural route exist for the development of L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, specifically in compliment and compliment behaviors?

The combination of the longitudinal and cross-sectional methods used in the study has yielded contradictory results. On the one hand, the longitudinal study indicated progress in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence of individual subjects over a semester studying abroad. On the other hand, the cross-sectional study demonstrated that there is no clear developmental route existing for the development of L2 pragmatic competence and socio-pragmatic competence.

In the longitudinal study, the subjects relied less on modality markers to express their feelings. Instead, they became capable of using a wide range of correct pragmatic routines and responded properly in the context of American culture, which demonstrated growth in pragmatic competence. Their responses also demonstrated a considerable growth in socio-pragmatic competence. At the beginning of the semester, their responses demonstrated awareness of the different social contexts and power relationships. Their lexical choices were formal when interacting with unfamiliar interlocutors or those belonging to a higher social status, while playful when interacting with family members. However, after studying abroad over one semester, some subjects exhibited signs of adapting to common complimenting behavior in American culture. For example, one subject recognized that complimenting a stranger is acceptable and common in American culture and decided to compliment an attractive though unfamiliar student. Another subject changed his compliment to a helpful salesman from, “Hope
you can meet good people next time when you needed.” to “I will shop here next time.”
revealing that the subject is more comfortable with the good service received rather than the
typical Chinese response of over-exaggerating one’s gratitude.

The cross-sectional study has demonstrated that there is no clear developmental route
existing for the development of L2 pragmatic competence and socio-pragmatic competence. The
highest proficiency level group (G3) was able to use lexical choices and responded in ways that
were comparatively closer to native speakers of English. However, the intermediate proficiency
group (G2) was neither pragmalinguistically nor sociopragmatically more competent than the
lowest proficiency group (G1). The intermediate level group did not necessarily use more correct
lexical choices or modality markers than the lowest proficiency group. Moreover, there was
nothing to indicate significant differences in their socio-pragmatic competence. Almost all of the
groups successfully illustrated their sensitivity to socio-cultural variables in situations when
giving and replying to compliments. Therefore, no definitive relationship between proficiency
levels and pragmatic competence was identified.

The findings of the cross-sectional study may suggest a negative answer to the question
“Is there a developmental route for pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence?”
However, this interpretation is based on the assumption that the proficiency level is the primary
variable in the development of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. The negative
findings of this study therefore cannot fully answer the question whether there is a
developmental route in pragmatic competence. It can only suggest that proficiency levels may
not be critical or related to the development of pragmatic competence.

The findings of this study contradict Rose’s (2000) findings on the development of
requests, apologies, and compliment-responses among different proficiency level groups. No
differences were found regarding the use of modality markers among the subjects of different proficiency levels. Also, there was no clear pattern regarding the use of pragmatic routine among different proficiency level groups; however, the highest proficiency level group did have a wider range of pragmatic routines at their disposal depending on the situation. The different results of this study and Rose’s (2000) may be attributed to the differences in subject selection. The subjects in this study are not from the same school as Rose’s (2000) study. The differentiation between proficiency levels of the subjects in this study may not be as clear-cut as those in Rose’s (2000) study which considered formal test scores and daily-based performances.

The composite results of this study have suggested that there may be a developmental path for pragmatic competence. The pragmalinguistic developmental path indicated by the longitudinal study supports earlier studies that learners rely heavily on formulaic speech at earlier stages. Earlier research suggests that pragmalinguistic development precedes the socio-pragmatic competence. This study also shows that as the subjects progress over time, a wider range of pragmatic routines allows them to analyze situations more clearly and make a proper lexical choices to express themselves without being rushed to use unanalyzed pragmatic routines. As for socio-pragmatic competence, the timing of this longitudinal study, 4 months, also supports Matsumura’s (2007) findings to the effect that in the study abroad context, learners’ perception of social status is generally liable to change within the first three months.

Although the developmental path in this study is similar to prior research, the use of modality markers was very different. Prior research claimed that the use of modality markers increased with the proficiency levels. However, this study found that the lowest proficiency level subjects were actually using more modality markers at the beginning of their study abroad semester compared to the end.
This finding was similar to Barron’s (2003) study in which Irish learners of German used more modality markers at the initial stages due to first language influences. This explanation may apply to Chinese learners of English considering that native speakers of Chinese in this study used a lot of modality markers to downplay compliments or emphasize the sincerity of their compliments. Another reason for the decreased use of modality markers was the increase in competence with using pragmatic routines to express the feelings. For example, instead of using a modality marker in the phrase “Thank you very much.” the speaker would simply reply, “I appreciate it.” Again, this study offers a partial answer to the question and more research is needed to fully answer it.

5.1.4 As a follow-up to question 3, how does L1 influence learners’ pragmatic development? In other words, does L1 impede or facilitate the pragmatic growth and in what ways does L1 affect developmental stages?

The findings of the study have suggested that L1 both impeded and facilitated the L2 language learners’ pragmatic development. During an interview with the longitudinal subjects, two subjects reported that cultural differences strongly affected their complimenting behaviors. They also noted that language obstacles reduced their propensity to give compliments. In their responses, L1 obviously affected the lexical choices made at the beginning of the semester, which accounted for some inappropriate and directly translated responses. Regardless of these L1 impediments on compliment behaviors, all of the three longitudinal subjects agreed that their L1 did help them recognize compliments and prepare the answers in their minds.

In addition to the influence of L1 on learners’ pragmatic development, the comparison group of native speakers of Chinese in the study revealed that factors other than the influence of
L1 may play a more important role on learner’s pragmatic development. The native speakers of Chinese in this study performed surprisingly well compared to all of the studying aboard subjects. Their reaction to situations was very close to those of native speakers of English, and they enjoyed higher success rates in utilizing pragmatic routines and modality markers than all the study abroad subjects. Their pragmatic competence was obviously high although they have never studied in English-speaking countries previously. These findings suggest that other factors, such as learning experiences, proficiency levels, exposure to English, or even personalities may also play an important role in pragmatic development.

5.2 The implications of the present study

This study has answered Kasper and Rose’s (2002) call for a study combining both longitudinal and cross-sectional research methods. This study mainly supports earlier research on the pragmatic developmental stages. The results of this study echo the findings that pragmalinguistic development precedes socio-pragmatic development. The timing also is congruent with earlier studies to the effect that learners develop socio-pragmatic competence within the first three month of studying abroad period. As for pragmalinguistic development, this study has yielded similar findings regarding pragmalinguistic developmental stages. Pragmatic routines are critical in the development of pragmatics, which were acquired with used over time. However, it also added some insight regarding the development of modality markers. Differing from other studies reporting an increase in the use of modality markers with time and proficiency level, this study suggested that a subject’s L1 and original culture may actually influence use of modality markers non-linearly, which increases the complexity of its development. More research is needed to justify the role of modality markers as a predictor of pragmatic competence and to delineate other potential factors influencing the use of modality markers.
5.3 *Suggestions for further research*

Further research should focus on using a longitudinal method to explore developmental paths of pragmatic competence. This study was unfortunately restricted in both time and the number of available subjects. To explore pragmatic development more completely, future research should extend observation periods and analyze the development of the individual subjects in a more detail. Using a large number sample size is also strongly recommended to increase credibility of the findings.

Further researchers who desire to use cross-sectional methods should also explore the potential factors that affect pragmatic development. It has been questioned whether proficiency levels are an accurate primary predictor for the developmental path of pragmatic competence. Researchers could repeat this study using a larger number of subjects with more definitive proficiency divisions. Further studies should also explore what other primary factors can predict pragmatic development in the speech act of compliments and compliment-responses.
References


Appendix A

Letter to the student

Dear USC Language Academy Students:

I am Kuo-Yu Kuan (Grace), a M.S. TESOL graduate student. I am doing a seminar project on the development of pragmatic competence in compliments and compliment responses by Chinese learners of English during the first semester of studying abroad. I am looking for Chinese students such as you, who just arrived to USC to start their first semester.

The procedure of being a subject is very simple. You will first be asked to sign a consent form. If you are willing to participate in the study over a semester, you will be asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B). If you only want to be a short term subject, you can sign the consent form (Appendix C).

After signing the consent form, you will be given the discourse completion task (DCT), which consists of 12 daily life situations. You will be answering these questions. For long term subjects, you will be contacted through the semester and be interviewed at the end of the semester. All the consent forms and the DCT use a pencil and paper format.

The name of participants will be confidential. The results will only be used for the purpose of academic research. The findings of the study will be forwarded to participants who are interested.

I am happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Feel free to contact me through email or phone. I am a native Chinese speaker. Thank you very much for your participation in advance. I appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Kuo-Yu Kuan (Grace)
M.S. TESOL Candidate
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California
Tel: 443-791-5230
E-Mail: kkuan@usc.edu
Appendix B

Participate Consent Form

I am voluntarily participating in the study conducted by Kuo-Yu Kuan, who is a M.S. TESOL candidate at the University of Southern California.

I understand the purpose of the study and that the results will be used for research purposes only. I also understand that my name and other personal information will be kept confidential.

My participation in the study will include accomplishing two discourse completion tasks at the beginning and end of the 2008 fall semester and a follow-up interview.

Each of the discourse completion tasks consists of 12 daily situations where I will first give compliments in a situation and later role-switch responding to the compliments. The content of interview consists of 11 basic questions about compliments and compliment-response. I have the right not to answer the questions considered sensitive to me.

I have been informed that I will be answering the questionnaire and discourse completion tasks at the beginning and end of the semester. I understand that it may take half an hour to complete the questionnaire and discourse completion task each time.

______________________                       _________________________
(Your name)                                                           (Date)
Appendix C

Participate Consent Form

I am voluntarily participating in the study conducted by Kuo-Yu Kuan, who is a M.S. TESOL candidate at the University of Southern California.

I understand the purpose of the study and that the results will be used for research purposes only. I also understand that my name and other personal information will be kept confidential.

My participation in the study will include a discourse completion task. The discourse completion tasks consist of 12 daily situations where I will be giving and responding to compliments. I have the right not to answer the questions considered sensitive to me.

I understand that it may take half an hour to complete the questionnaire and discourse completion task each time.

______________________                       _________________________
(Your name)                                                           (Date)
Appendix D

Discourse Completion Pretest

Dear participant:

The following 24 situations are designed to see how you give and respond to compliments. Compliments are often used to express a feeling of pleasure, love, or respect. These 24 situations are each slightly different in terms of the relationship between you and the other conversationalist. You will first be asked to compliment someone in a situation. You can also choose not to give a compliment for a certain scenario but please state your reasons for choosing not to compliment. Next, you will be asked to switch your role to the listener and respond to your own compliments.

The following is an example.

The school principal wears a new pair of glasses walking down the hallway. You have never talked to him before, but you feel the new pair of glasses really look good on him.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him? (choose yes or no)

No, because I have never talked to him before or
Yes, I would say, “You look great with your new glasses”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “Thanks! I love them too. (happily)”
1. You have an appointment with Dr. G to discuss the application procedures. When you enter her office, you feel it is so neat, cozy, and modern.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because ____________________________

Yes, I would say, “_________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “_________________________”

2. You run into an elementary school playmate, who you have not spoken to in several years. You see that she has a new bag. It is shiny, beautiful, and matches her outfit well.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because ____________________________

Yes, I would say, “_________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “_________________________”
3. Your neighbor’s child just got a new puppy. It is furry, cute, and funny. You really like it.

Q: 1) Will you compliment the child on her new dog?

No, because ___________________________

Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “__________________________”

4. Your father bought a new hat online. You like it and you think it fits your father’s face very well.

Q: 1) Will you compliment your dad?

No, because ___________________________

Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “__________________________”
5. Your classmate just bought a new laptop computer. You think it is light, sleek, and fashionable.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?

No, because _________________________________

Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “________________________”

6. Your younger sister bought a doll from the store. You think it is so cute that you might even want to play with it.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because _________________________________

Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “________________________”
7. Imagine the day you meet a star who you have admired for a long time. When you see her or him, you discover that she or he looks much better in real life than in the movies.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because _______________________________
Yes, I would say, “_________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”

8. Imagine that you are taking a bus to school. You see a beautiful girl or a charming boy who is in your class but that you have never talked to.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because _______________________________
Yes, I would say, “_________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”
9. Imagine you are working in the bookstore and that there is a new student asking for a direction. You think that the new student looks very charming.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because __________________________
Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “________________________”

10. Your mother just lost twenty pounds and she looks younger and fitter. You like her new look.

Q: 1) Will you compliment the child on him?
No, because __________________________
Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “________________________”
11. Your friend recently got a new haircut and you think it looks great.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ____________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”

12. Your younger sister has started to care about her looks, clothes, and makeup. You think she does look more attractive than she was last year.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ____________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”
13. You attend an academic conference where a famous speaker presents a lecture. You feel the presenter delivered the content clearly, addressed several important issues, and offered some very useful ideas.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”

14. During a classroom group exercise, a classmate that you are not familiar with does an excellent job leading your group. He is organized, easy to work with, and helps your group a grade of A+.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”
15. You are the supervisor of a group of student workers at the bookstore. One of the new hires does a good job organizing the merchandise and cleaning the stock room.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because __________________________________________
Yes, I would say, “________________________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “________________________________________”

16. Your father’s real estate business is growing with each passing year. He has successfully sold several houses this past week.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because __________________________________________
Yes, I would say, “_______________________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “_______________________________________”
17. One of your close friends has just summarized a homework reading in front of the class. You feel that he or she has highlighted the important points, summarized the key ideas, and critically analyzed the author’s views.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him or her?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________

Q: 2) If you were in his or her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________

18. Your younger brother has just won a tennis tournament.

1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”
19. You run into a politician, who is famous for his ambition and decisiveness. You get a chance to talk to him, and after the conversation, you feel he is not only passionate about his work but also very caring.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “______________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”

20. You encounter a schoolmate at the library. When this person sees that you have a math problem, he offers to help. He patiently explains the details. You feel he is very friendly.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “______________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”
21. You lost your cell phone and contact with your friends in the mall. A clerk at the information desk sees your distress and tries to help you out. She is patient, kind, and humorous, which helps to calm you down. Ultimately, you find your cell phone and your friends.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”

22. Your father is very caring and loving. When you leave home for college, he continues to play his role as a good father supporting you and helping you make the transition.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”
23. Your close friend always stands by you no matter what happens. When you are sick, he or she takes care of you. When you are happy, he or she shares your joy.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him or her?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his or her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”

24. Your younger sister has grown up and become more mature and considerate. She does her school work independently, is helpful to others, and tries to be a good person.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his or her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “______________________________”
Appendix E

Discourse Completion Test

Dear participant:

The following 12 situations are designed to see how you give and respond to compliments. Compliments are often used to express a feeling of pleasure, love, or respect. These 12 situations are each slightly different in terms of the relationship between you and the other conversationalist. You will first be asked to compliment someone in a situation. You can also choose not to give a compliment for a certain scenario but please state your reasons for choosing not to compliment. Next, you will be asked to switch your role to the listener and respond to your own compliments.

The following is an example.
The school principal wears a new pair of glasses walking down the hallway. You have never talked to him before, but you feel the new pair of glasses really look good on him.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him? (choose yes or no)
   No, because I have never talked to him before or
   Yes, I would say, “You look great with your new glasses”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
   I would say, “Thanks! I love them too. (happily)”
1. You have an appointment with Dr. G to discuss the application procedures. When you enter her office, you feel it is so neat, cozy, and modern.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ____________________________
Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”

2. Imagine that you are taking a bus to school. You see a beautiful girl or a charming boy who is in your class but that you have never talked to.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?
No, because ____________________________
Yes, I would say, “________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”
3. Your neighbor’s child just got a new puppy. It is furry, cute, and funny. You really like it.

Q: 1) Will you compliment the child on her new dog?
   No, because ________________________________
   Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
   I would say, “______________________________”

4. Your father bought a new hat online. You like it and you think it fits your father’s face very well.

Q: 1) Will you compliment your dad?
   No, because ________________________________
   Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
   I would say, “______________________________”
5. Your friend recently got a new haircut and you think it looks great.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because ________________________________

Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “_______________________________”

6. Your younger sister has started to care about her looks, clothes, and makeup. You think she does look more attractive than she was last year.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because ________________________________

Yes, I would say, “____________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “_______________________________”
7. You attend an academic conference where a famous speaker presents a lecture. You feel the presenter delivered the content clearly, addressed several important issues, and offered some very useful ideas.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because __________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”

8. You encounter a schoolmate at the library. When this person sees that you have a math problem, he offers to help. He patiently explains the details. You feel he is very friendly.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?
No, because __________________________
Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “__________________________”
9. You lost your cell phone and contact with your friends in the mall. A clerk at the information desk sees your distress and tries to help you out. She is patient, kind, and humorous, which helps to calm you down. Ultimately, you find your cell phone and your friends.

Q: 1) Will you compliment her?

No, because _____________________________

Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in her position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “___________________________”

10. Your father’s real estate business is growing with each passing year. He has successfully sold several houses this past week.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him?

No, because _____________________________

Yes, I would say, “__________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?

I would say, “___________________________”
11. Your close friend always stands by you no matter what happens. When you are sick, he or she takes care of you. When you are happy, he or she shares your joy.

Q: 1) Will you compliment him or her?
No, because ______________________________________
Yes, I would say, “_____________________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his or her position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “_____________________________________”

12. Your younger brother has just won a tennis tournament.

1) Will you compliment him?
No, because ______________________________________
Yes, I would say, “____________________________________”

Q: 2) If you were in his position, how would you react to such a compliment?
I would say, “____________________________________”
Appendix G

Interview Questions

1. How often do you compliment others?
2. How comfortable do you feel when complimenting others?
3. Do you feel the same level of comfort when complimenting people of higher or lower status and power than you?
4. Do you feel the same level of comfort when complimenting people you are familiar with and people you are unfamiliar with?
5. How often do others compliment you?
6. To what degree do you feel comfortable responding to others’ compliments?
7. What factors affect your response to their compliments?
8. What kind of function do you think compliments serve?
9. Do you speak your heart when complimenting others?
10. Do you speak your heart when responding to others’ compliments?
11. What differences are there when you compliment in English compared to in your native language?
12. What differences are there when you respond to compliments in English compared to in your native language?