

# **Interactional Features of Chinese EFL Learners' Discourse**

## **In a Paired Speaking Test:**

### **Implications for L2 Teaching and Testing**

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**(Part A)**



# **Thesis Structure**

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## Abstract

Interactional competence is an important component of language ability yet its acquisition constitutes one of the greatest challenges to many Chinese learners of English, who are typically regarded as having rules of speaking and social norms at variance with those of western native English speakers. This thesis examines the interactional competence displayed by Chinese EFL learners in the paired task of the Public English Test System Level 5 Spoken English Test (PETS-5-SET) in China, where approximately 1.2 million Chinese take this English proficiency test annually. The primary aim of the thesis is to identify the interactional features of Chinese EFL learners' discourse in dyadic conversation by using conversational analytic techniques (CA). It also compares the traits of Chinese students' interactions in the paired task with those of Australian students to discern similarities and differences between the two groups.

Data were collected from 60 Chinese and 30 Australian university students by conducting a mock oral test in the form of paired discussion. The discourse performances were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, focusing on three key dimensions: generic structure, interactional patterns, and turn-taking behaviour.

The findings indicate both clear similarities and striking differences in the interactional behaviour of the two groups. Similarities were found in four areas, i.e., global sequential organisation, topic development moves, floor-taking strategies, and topic change mechanisms. However, differences were also identified in five major aspects: rhetorical style, interactional patterns, turn-taking behaviour, conversational devices, and listener responses. The similarities are largely due to the institutionalised, goal-oriented nature of the task and the differences result mainly from four major factors: the adoption of different interactional patterns, the application of culturally-preferred conversational styles, differences in underlying interactional competence in English, and diverging perceptions of the oral task. The study has significant implications for such areas as research on EFL spoken interaction, interactional competence theory, L2 teaching and testing, and world Englishes.

## Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Interactional Features of Chinese EFL Learners’ Discourse in a Paired Speaking Test: Implications for L2 Teaching and Testing” has not previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: HE28NOV2008-D06183L&P on 12th March, 2009.

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## List of Abbreviations

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|            |  |
|------------|--|
| C1         | Native culture   |
| CA         | Conversational analysis                                  |
| CC         | Communicative competence                                 |
| CET        | College English Test                                     |
| CLA        | Communicative Language Ability                           |
| EAP        | English academic purposes                                |
| ECCE       | Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English |
| EFL        | English as a foreign language                            |
| EIL        | English as international language                        |
| ELF        | English as a lingua franca                               |
| EMET       | National Matriculation English Test                      |
| ESL        | English as a second language                             |
| FCE        | First Certificate of English Test                        |
| GSEEE      | Graduate School Entrance English Examination             |
| HCD        | High conversational dominance                            |
| IC         | Interactional competence                                 |
| IRF        | Initiation- Response-Feedback                            |
| L1         | First language   |
| L2         | Second language  |
| LCD        | Low conversational dominance                             |
| NEEA       | National Education Examination Authority (China)         |
| NNS        | Non-native speakers                                      |
| NS         | Native speakers  |
| OPI        | Oral proficiency interview                               |
| PETS       | Public English Test System                               |
| PETS-SET   | Public English Test System Spoken English Test           |
| PETS-5-SET | Public English Test System Level 5 Spoken English Test   |
| SLA        | Second language acquisition                              |
| TAC        | Turn allocation component                                |
| TCU        | Turn-constructional unit                                 |
| TEM        | Test for English Majors                                  |
| TRP        | Turn transitional place component                        |
| UCLES      | University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate     |



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