The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English

By Xiutao Li

M. A. The University of Sydney, Australia

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Department of International Studies

Faculty of Arts

Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ..... **vii**

Declaration ..... **viii**

Acknowledgements ..... **ix**

List of tables ..... **xi**

List of figures ..... **xii**

List of abbreviations ..... **xiii**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Why intercultural/cross-cultural communication? 4

1.2 Why compliment response? 6

1.3 How to monitor the "change" 6

1.4 Definition of terms 10

1.5 The structure of this thesis 10

CHAPTER 2: RELEVANT THEORIES AND CONCEPTS **12**

2.1 Intercultural, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics 12

2.2 General theories in pragmatics: speech act theory and politeness 14

2.2.1 Speech act theory 15

2.2.2 Politeness 16

2.3 Change in language use in an intercultural context 22

2.3.1 Pragmatic transfer 22

2.3.2 Accommodation 24

2.3.3 Acculturation 26

2.3.4 Insufficiencies of existing conceptual frameworks 27

2.4 A resynthesised approach to change in language use in an intercultural context: approximation 28

2.5 Summary 31

CHAPTER 3: RESPONDING TO COMPLIMENTS **32**

3.1 Understanding compliments and compliment responses 33

3.1.1 The significance of compliments 33

3.1.2 The adjacency of compliments and compliment responses 35
3.1.3 The categorisation of compliment topics 36
3.1.4 Categorisation of compliment responses 37

3.2 Responding to compliments in the target environment 48
3.2.1 Lai's (2009) study on the target environment 48
3.2.2 Region of the complimenter and complimentee 50
3.2.3 Gender of the complimenter and complimentee 51

3.3 Measuring the effect of the target environment 52
3.3.1 Length of stay and intensity of interaction 52
3.3.2 The role of instruction 54
3.3.3 Other personal factors 55

3.4 Evolving research questions 56

3.5 Summary 60

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY 62

4.1 The categorisation of research methods 62

4.2 The concept of mixing in mixed methods research 65

4.3 The role of research questions 68

4.4 The research instruments 69
4.4.1 The role of the researcher 70
4.4.2 Discourse Completion Task 71
4.4.3 Structured interview 77
4.4.4 Role play 82

4.5 The participants 84

4.6 Data, and principles for analysis 87
4.6.1 Pre-merging analysis 89
4.6.2 Post-merging interpretation 90
4.6.3 Validity and triangulation 90

4.7 Ethical safeguarding 91

4.8 SUMMARY 92

CHAPTER 5: DCT DATA ANALYSIS 93

5.1 Overall tendency of compliment response strategies across groups 95
5.1.1 ACCEPTANCE strategies 99
5.1.2 NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies 107
5.1.3 OTHER INTERPRETATIONS 114

5.2 Differences in compliment responses regarding the gender of the complimenter 128
5.2.1 Responding to compliments from male complimenters 128
5.2.2 Responding to compliments from female complimenters 131

5.3 Differences in compliment responses regarding compliment topics 133
5.3.1 Responding to appearance-related compliments 133
5.3.2 Responding to performance-related compliments 135
5.3.3 Responding to possession-related compliments 136
5.3.4 Responding to personality-related compliments 138
5.4 Summary 139
CHAPTER 6: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS 142
6.1 Reflections on linguistic repertoire 144
6.2 Reflections on gender variations 150
6.3 Reflections on personal assumptions 156
6.4 Reflections on possible overgeneralisations 160
6.5 Reflections on acceptance and non-acceptance 164
6.6 Reflections on sincerity 171
6.7 Reflections on directness 175
6.8 Reflections on modesty 181
6.9 Reflections on phaticity 189
6.10 Reflections on approximation 197
6.11 Summary 204
CHAPTER 7: ROLE PLAY DATA ANALYSIS 207
7.1 Overall tendency of compliment response strategies across groups 208
7.1.1 ACCEPTANCE strategies 211
7.1.2 NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies 215
7.1.3 OTHER INTERPRETATIONs 219
7.2 Differences in compliment responses regarding the gender of the complimenter 224
7.2.1 Responding to compliments from male complimenters 225
7.2.2 Responding to compliments from female complimenters 228
7.3 Differences in compliment responses regarding compliment topics 231
7.3.1 Responding to appearance-related compliments 232
7.3.2 Responding to performance-related compliments 234
7.3.3 Responding to possession-related compliments 235
7.3.4 Responding to personality-related compliments 237
7.4 Body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, laughter 238
7.5 Summary 242

CHAPTER 8: RESULTS – DISCOVERING AND DESCRIBING CHANGES IN LANGUAGE USE 243

8.1 Approximation toward the target environment 244

8.1.1 Approximation at a formal level 247

8.1.2 Approximation at a functional level 249

8.1.3 Approximation synthesised 253

8.2 Gender and compliment topic 255

8.2.1 Gender of the complimenter and complimentee 256

8.2.2 Compliment topic 257

8.3 Summary 257

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION 259

9.1 Relevance of the findings 259

9.2 Beyond this study 263

9.3 Final remarks 264

LIST OF REFERENCES 266

APPENDICES 281

Appendix A – Summary of Empirical Studies on Complimenting Behaviour 282

Appendix B – Approval of Human Research Ethics Committee 298

Appendix C – DCT Questionnaire 300

Appendix D – Interview 305

Appendix E – Role Play 308

Appendix F – Advertisements 310

Appendix G – Consent Forms 312

Abstract

Chinese learners of English encounter great difficulty in obtaining pragmatic knowledge of the language. Cross-cultural miscommunication may arise when Chinese speakers of English transfer their pragmatic knowledge and sociocultural norms from L1 to L2. This study fits into the field of intercultural and interlanguage pragmatics, and fills research gaps by investigating how Chinese speakers of English approximate to language use in the Australian target environment in their compliment responses (CRs). Gender and compliment topic are the main variables considered.

Compliment responses offer a useful channel for exploring sociocultural norms attached to them. Though many empirical studies on complimenting behaviours have been conducted, over-simplicity of questionnaires, translation issues, complimenter gender issues, and spontaneous aspects of speech behaviours, have not been duly addressed. This study explores approximation toward the target culture by Chinese learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Australia in their compliment responses in English. Mixed methods were employed to collect data from three groups of participants (Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia, and monolingual Australians).

Major results of this research include a description of approximation phenomena among Chinese ESL learners in an intercultural context. The results add new insights to intercultural pragmatic research by updating existing theoretical frameworks in intercultural communication, revealing challenges in categorising speech acts in an intercultural context, raising questions with respect to describing change in language use by ESL learners caused by direct contact with the target environment, and discarding misassumptions and stereotypes held by ESL learners. The findings from this study may serve as facilitating materials for ESL teachers and learners in achieving a more comprehensive understanding of what is happening in their L2 use in light of the effect of an intercultural environment. Finally, cross-cultural communicators may find the results useful in accounting for similarities and differences in diverse communication styles.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the research described in this dissertation has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. To the best of my knowledge all sources of information used, and any help received in the preparation of this dissertation, have been acknowledged. Ethics Committee approval has been obtained for this research project.

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List of tables

Table 1 A summary of Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-threatening act (FTA) 17
Table 2 Positive and negative politeness strategies 18
Table 3 Herbert's (1986, p. 79) categorisation of compliment responses 39
Table 4 Holmes' (1988, p. 460) categorisation of compliment responses 40
Table 5 Yu's (1999, pp. 61 – 70) categorisation of compliment responses 41
Table 6 Yuan's (1998, pp. 101-106) categorisation of compliment responses for Kunming Chinese 42
Table 7 CR strategies for data analysis for the present study 47
Table 8 Main research methods used in previous studies on complimenting behaviour 64
Table 9 The structure of the questionnaire situations by compliment topic 76
Table 10 Participants description 85
Table 11 Number of participants for different groups regarding different research methods 86
Table 12 The utilisation of multiple strategies and single strategies in six micro groups 94
Table 13 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three macro groups 96
Table 14 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups 98
Table 15 The distribution of informal and formal appreciation tokens 99
Table 16 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male ... 130
Table 17 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female 132
Table 18 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments 134
Table 19 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments 135
Table 20 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments 137
Table 21 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments 138
Table 22 The number of compliment responses in different groups in video-recorded role play .. 208
Table 23 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups 209
Table 24 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups 210
Table 25 The distribution of informal and formal appreciation tokens 211
Table 26 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male ... 226
Table 27 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female 229
Table 28 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments 233
Table 29 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments 234
Table 30 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments 236
Table 31 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments 237

List of figures

Figure 1 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups 96
Figure 2 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups 98
Figure 3 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male 130
Figure 4 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female 132
Figure 5 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments 134
Figure 6 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments 136
Figure 7 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments 137
Figure 8 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments 139
Figure 9 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups 209
Figure 10 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups 210
Figure 11 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male 226
Figure 12 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female ... 229
Figure 13 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments 233
Figure 14 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments 235
Figure 15 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments 236
Figure 16 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments 238
Figure 17 A resynthesised framework to describe changes in language use in an intercultural context 246
Figure 18 Formal aspects of compliment responses 248
Figure 19 Functional aspects of compliment responses 251

List of abbreviations

Am: American
Br: British
Au: Australian
C: Compliment
Ca: Canadian
Ch: Chinese
Ch in Ch: Chinese in China
Ch in Au: Chinese in Australia
CR(s): Compliment response(s)
CP: Cooperative principle
DCT(s): Discourse completion task(s)
E-DCT: Electronic discourse completion task
ESL: English as a second language
EFL: English as a foreign language
F: Female
FTA: Face-threatening act
F#S#: Female participant number and compliment situation number
HK: Hong Kong
ILP: Interlanguage pragmatics
IFID: Illocutionary force indicating device
L1: First Language
L2: Second language
M: Male
ML: Mainland
Mo Au: monolingual Australians
M#S#: Male participant number and compliment situation number
NS: Native speaker
NSs: Native speakers
NNS(s): Non-native speaker(s)
N/A: Not applicable
N: Negative
P: Positive
SA: South Africa
SLA: Second language acquisition
Sts: Students
Tr: Translation involved
TW: Taiwan

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> *Communication is becoming more and more intercultural because it involves interactants who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and represent different cultures. (Kecskes, 2004, p. 2)*

As the above quote suggests, communication between different cultures is becoming much more common in this globalised world. English is so far the most globalised international language. Smooth communication in English is a desirable outcome both for monolingual English speakers and for speakers of English as a second language (ESL). Australia harbours significant proportions of both these categories of speakers, which makes it a destination suitable for investigating communication between monolingual English speakers and ESL speakers. In Australia, international students are particularly worthy of researchers' attention because of their significant role in forming a community of diverse cultures. In this community, Chinese international students account for a substantial part. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

> Recent years have seen China continue as the largest single nation contributor to the international student population in Australia. In 2010–11, one fifth of all student visa applications lodged and granted were from China (18% and 20% respectively), followed by India (14% and 12% respectively) and South Korea (both 5%).[1]

The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection reports:

> At 31 March 2014, almost one quarter (24.5 per cent) of the student visa holders were Chinese nationals … For offshore visa applications, China remains the top source country in the 2013-14 programme year to 31 March 2014 (25 472 lodgements). In this period, offshore visa applications increased for nationals from China (20.1 per cent) … compared with the same period in 2012-13 …Of the total student visas granted in the 2013-14 programme year to 31 March 2014, 21 per cent were to Chinese nationals followed by 11.1 per cent to Indian nationals.[2]

Even for those Chinese international students who have completed their study, China is the top (31.5 per cent) source country from which recent graduates are granted Temporary Graduate Visas (Subclass 485), who then continue to work in Australia or immigrate to Australia in future (ibid.).

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, (n.d.). *Where are student visa applications coming from?* Retrieved on 1 August 2014.

[2] Department of Immigration and Border Protection (n.d.). *Student visa programme quarterly report* (quarter ending 31 March 2014). Retrieved on 1 August 2014.

The increasing number of Chinese international tertiary students and immigrants in Australia highlights the issue of communication between China and Australia, more specifically, how Chinese speakers of English handle communication in English in a new environment. In his thesis "Pragmatics, Perceptions and Strategies in Chinese College English Learning", Yuan (2012) discovers that even grammatically advanced Chinese learners of English have limited pragmatic knowledge. Major obstacles in achieving effective communication include a highly restricted repertoire of language learning strategies, insufficient English proficiency, limited knowledge of pragmatics, and inadequate language materials and tasks (Yuan, 2012). Whether Chinese speakers of English communicate effectively with monolingual English speakers in the target culture (Australian culture in this study) directly influences their academic performance, professional development and quality of life. More generally, what is happening in their use of the English language and how they perceive their language behaviour and the target culture is worthy exploring because research as such will benefit ESL learners, ESL teachers, language policy makers and various individual cross-cultural communicators.

Studying how ESL learners use English in Australia involves a study-abroad context, where English is spoken as an official language, vastly different from the context in their home country, where other language(s) are official languages. Thus, issues relating to pragmatic language use, and cross-cultural or intercultural communication, need to be addressed. Kecskes (2014, p. 6) explains that "Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the use of language in social contexts and the ways in which people produce and comprehend meanings through language." Thus, in a sense, being pragmatically competent means a person is able to communicate effectively, taking into account contextual information. Kecskes (2014, p. 3) also points out that theoretical pragmatics "remains predominantly monolingual" and "major issues of pragmatics are researched and discussed in a monolingual framework lacking or excluding any explanation of or reference to the applicability of ideas, theories, and research findings to bilingual and multilingual scenes". Identifying patterns and problems in intercultural communication, and searching for empirical answers to confirm and solve existing problems, is what intercultural pragmatics is set to do (cf. Kecskes, 2014).

When drawing up the scope for my research project, I probed possible theoretical frameworks relating to both monolingual/monocultural and multilingual/multicultural issues (see Chapter 2). I realised that my study is primarily situated at the intersection of cross-cultural/intercultural communication, cross-cultural/intercultural pragmatics and

interlanguage pragmatics. My research is also related to second language acquisition and applied linguistics. Beyond this scope, it is of relevance to researchers in Chinese studies and international studies.

Some key concepts that are crucial to this study are represented by terms that include “pragmatics”, “cross-cultural”, “intercultural”, “interlanguage” and, unavoidably, “international”. Because there is already a large body of literature exploring and differentiating such terms in studying human communication, I will not delve into details to distinguish these concepts, but offer a brief introduction (see section 2.1). Though terms such as “cross-cultural”, “intercultural”, and “interlanguage” are differentiable, they are interrelated to one another and they all involve both first language (hereafter L1) and second language (hereafter L2), both L1 culture and L2 culture, and complex relationships between L1 and L2, as well as L1 culture and L2 culture. In lay terms, these terms describe the kind of communication involving two languages, or one language but with more than one set of cultural values, that I would like to focus on in this study.

By “one set of cultural values”, I do not mean that different sets of cultural values exist in parallel channels and never overlap with each other. Rather, I align myself with the view that communication is a co-constructed process of human action with language (cf. Kecskes, 2014). I intend to highlight the co-constructiveness of communication in different social contexts. To further explain the co-constructiveness of communication in various contexts, Lüdi (2006) describes the situation for interlocutors as follows:

> A situation is not simply given in advance, but constructed by the partners in the interaction itself by a common effort of interpretation and definition. In other words, language is not the outcome of a mechanistic calculation of situational factors, but, on the contrary, a significant tool at the disposal of interlocutors for defining the situation in a way that suits their intentions. In many situations there are no clear rules or habits and the interlocutors must make an active, creative choice. (p. 15).

Following both Kecskes’ (2014) view that speakers are expected to create or co-construct commonalities, conventions, standards and norms when formulating utterances in a new communicative context, and Lüdi’s (2006) firm belief in the descriptive nature of language, the notion of culture needs to be reviewed. It is obviously questionable to align culture with language, and vice versa. I am aware of the many versions of definitions of culture, and its debatable use in claims regarding intercultural communication. In this thesis, I take Kecskes’ (2014, p. 4) view of culture in the field of intercultural pragmatics as “a socially constituted set of various kinds of knowledge structures that individuals turn to as relevant

situations permit, enable, and usually encourage", and that culture is both "relatively static and ever-changing".

My research project is a continuation of the endeavor of exploring cross-cultural/intercultural/interlanguage pragmatics with regards to compliment responses. By examining how Australian target culture affects Chinese speakers of English in their compliment responses, I aim to make a small contribution to the understanding of cross-cultural/intercultural communication from a pragmatic perspective. The title of this thesis, *The effect of Australian culture on compliment responses of mainland Chinese speakers of English*, denotes two layers of meaning. One layer focuses on how Australian culture has had an impact on Chinese speakers of English, in terms of their responses to compliments. This layer of meaning suggests the objective change that is happening among Chinese speakers of English out of the control of the speakers. This means that, whether they are willing or unwilling, some form of change occurs in their language behaviour subconsciously. The other layer of meaning focuses on how Chinese speakers of English change their language behaviour after immersing themselves in a study-abroad context. This layer of meaning suggests that speakers can make a subjective choice of whether they want to change their language behaviour, according to their personal will. To investigate the objective and subjective language use of Chinese speakers of English, I need to investigate both what is said and what is meant, in other words, the linguistic form and the communicative function. Thus, a more specific goal of this research project is to dig deeper into what is (metaphorically) on stage (i.e., linguistic forms) and what is backstage (i.e., intended communicative functions).

1.1 Why intercultural/cross-cultural communication?

The development of this research project can be traced back to 2007, when I first started volunteering for 'Bring Me Hope' as a translator. 'Bring Me Hope' is an American charity organisation that arranges summer camps in China for children in need. In 2008, I worked as their summer camp staff member, and subsequently, in 2009, as their summer camp director. I had the opportunity to meet the so-called "westerners" in China and use my bilingual skills to help with communication and coordination between 'Bring Me Hope' and Chinese welfare institutions. It was then that I learned that there were both similarities and differences in Chinese and American conversational styles. To put it in another way, there were both similar and different communicative features in Mandarin and English.

Communication problems are more likely to arise when the approaches to conversation are dramatically different from one another. To give an example, once, at a meeting between the director of 'Bring Me Hope' and a representative of a welfare institute in central China, the Chinese director made a welcoming speech, including a brief introduction to the welfare institute, with guest-welcoming remarks, and proposed future directions for collaboration, which are politically, culturally and situationally appropriate in China. It was a rather group-identity-portraying speech that had no element revealing any individual-level information. Then it was the first conversational turn for the American director to respond. The American director asked, "How many years have you been working here?" The Chinese representative looked stunned, puzzled, and embarrassed. To a Chinese person, this question sounds very direct and impolite as if the American director is questioning the authority of the Chinese representative. As a translator, I was shocked as well because these two conversational styles seemed to have come from two different ends of the world, and I instantly found something else to say and then translated the question indirectly with a very gentle tone. Still, it was a tough start to the conversation, and I struggled to let the conversation flow.

One of the "9 Things People Traveling to China Should Know"[3] posted on the official website of the American charity organisation 'Bring Me Hope' is:

> While driving, remember you're not in Kansas anymore. In many places there are driving rules and regulations … in China, well they are more like suggestions. Believe me, it feels like the old video game Frogger and will be an experience [that] can both terrify & excite you … giving you a road trip/drive you will never forget![3]

Communication styles are like driving styles: when an interlocutor leaves his or her country for a new country, or interacts with a person with an entirely different cultural background, he or she should expect to be "terrified and excited". However, this is not the end of the story. If there is something professional to be done to aid cross-cultural communication, or at least help understand it, it is like a piece of jade hiding in vast mountains, very worthy of pursuit and discovery by researchers. My personal witnessing of mismatching conversational styles and curiosity of different cultures has driven me to pursue higher degree research in the area of cross-cultural/intercultural communication between China and other countries, especially countries where English is L1. Having explained the personal experiences that motivate me to study intercultural/cross-cultural communication, I will now turn to the specific focus of my research topic.

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[3] Bring Me Hope (n.d.). *9 Things People Traveling to China Should Know*. Retrieved from http://www.bringmehope.org/9thingspeoplegoingtochinashouldknow/ on 5 January 2015.

1.2 Why compliment response?

My research project investigates compliment responses because complimenting behaviours occur frequently in various conversational settings, and they vary according to different social and contextual variables (Herbert, 1989). Furthermore, research has shown that they serve multiple functions, such as establishing social solidarity (e.g. Holmes, 1988), building rapport (Holmes, 1995), opening conversations (Wolfson, 1981b), expressing sarcasm (Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004), expressing off-record reprimand (c.f. Brown & Levinson, 1987), substituting greeting, thanking or apologising (Wolfson & Manes, 1980), and expressing envy (Agyekum, 2010) (see section 3.1.1 for more details). Moreover, complimenting behaviours have been found to reflect the speakers' speech conventions and cultural norms (c.f. Pomerantz 1978).

In my MA dissertation, I studied compliment responses from a comparative perspective, and verified that it is an effective approach to study cross-cultural/intercultural communication empirically (Li, 2011). My study then investigated how direct contact with Australian culture influences compliment responses of Chinese speakers of English as part of a group project. Despite a small amount of data, I acquired interesting insights into the complimenting behaviour of Chinese speakers of English. That study proved that studying compliment responses from a comparative perspective is a feasible empirical approach for cross-cultural/intercultural communication, as well as for second language acquisition.

1.3 How to monitor the "change"

After determining the general research area, cross-cultural/intercultural/interlanguage pragmatics, I needed to search for a more specific conceptual framework to describe the nature of this research. One starting point to search for such a framework is speech act theory by Austin (1975) and Searle (1976), who maintain that words are tools for us to carry out an action. A speech act is speech behaviour, a form of performance or a kind of action (see Chapter 2). Although this theory well illustrates different types of speech acts that may have multiple functions, including indirect speech acts, it does not in particular address cross-cultural/intercultural matters. It is not sufficient to account for the phenomenon I am trying to explore.

The second attempt in my search for a theoretical framework is the notion of pragmatic transfer. The term "transfer" means elements of speech features or conventions that are moved from one language to another. This notion emphasises how L1 influences L2, and more recently, the bi-directional influence between L1 and L2 (more discussion

see Chapter 2). Though the notion of "pragmatic transfer" is highly relevant to my study, it does not help to solve the problem of how to draw a borderline between L1 and L2, and L1 culture and L2 culture in terms of form and function. How to classify the elements that have been transferred in either direction is open to debate. As there are contradictory results from previous researchers examining pragmatic transfer (e.g. Lai, 2009) (see section 2.3.1), both increased and decreased pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 can mean increased level of proficiency, which can signify an increased level of similarity between speakers of ESL and speakers from the target culture (Chang, 2009). However, this notion is not adequate to examine the similarity level aimed at in this study.

The third attempt at searching for a theoretical framework is accommodation theory (see section 2.3.2). This theory illustrates how ESL learners may adopt speech features from the target culture. The fourth attempt in searching for a theoretical framework is the notion of acculturation (see section 2.3.3). The notion of "acculturation" addresses the cultural aspects of change in language use by L2 learners, especially the social and psychological factors that may play a role in the change of language use. Such psychological issues are not the main focus of this study, though part of my research design – the structured interview – does help to retrieve thoughts from participants that are relevant (see Chapter 6). Both the concept "acculturation" and the notion "accommodation" describe the process of change in language use and language development. However, the active, creative and co-constructing role of the ESL learners is neglected.

In view of the insufficiencies and interrelations of existing theories and concepts that are relevant to my research (see section 2.3.4), I developed a resynthesised approach that suits my research interest – the effect of the target culture on Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses. This resynthesised approach involves looking at change in language use in light of the effect of the target environment from both formal and functional perspectives. As signified in the explanation of the title of my thesis earlier, I consider Chinese ESL learners in the target environment, not only as "takers" or "absorbers", but also the "creators" and "contributors". To include such considerations, I have introduced a relatively less-used concept in the field of intercultural pragmatics to describe the nature of this study – "approximation".

The term "approximation" came to my mind after discovering a long-buried research question proposed in a research agenda by Kasper and Schmidt (1996). Their question, "How can approximation to target language norms be measured?", has not been

adequately answered. This is exactly what my research tries to address. “Approximation” touches on issues of transfer, acculturation and accommodation, but highlights the nature of “approximateness”, rather than a clear-cut line of any evolving phenomenon of change in language use. There are researchers who contend that L2 learners are able to acquire pragmatic knowledge quickly, once they come into direct contact with the target culture (e.g. Thomas, 1983). It is a highly contentious issue if ultimate convergence toward the target culture in their use of L2 should be the goal of L2 learners (cf. Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). I use the term “approximation” in this thesis to describe “approximate similarity” detected among Chinese ESL learners, resulting from direct contact with, or immersion in, the target culture.

“Approximation” has been adopted as part of the conceptual basis for this thesis, because it describes partial transfer, acculturation, and accommodation in a study-abroad context. By “partial”, I mean when the ESL learners change their use of language at a formal level, or at a functional level. When there are both formal and functional aspects of change, together with perceptions that operate behind language use, similarity toward the target culture remains “approximate”, because there might be some commonalities of norms at a deeper level across the involved cultures, and the differences in two language systems have exaggerated the difference of norms at a surface level. For example, one of the findings from the interview data analysis (see Chapter 6) in this thesis suggests that both Chinese speakers of English (including both those residing in China who have not been overseas, and those who have lived in Australia for a period of time), and monolingual Australian English speakers, are concerned about moderation when responding to a compliment. Such concerns of moderation are much more salient in Chinese culture because of the well-known concept of “modesty” (cf. Gu, 1990). Although in Australian culture, there is no significant emphasis on such a concept in Australian education or language, there is widespread acknowledgement of “the tall poppy syndrome”, and Australians who do not want to become “the tall poppy” worry about being cut down. If “modesty” is considered to be an explicit cultural norm of moderation of speech in Chinese culture, “the tall poppy syndrome” is an implicit cultural norm of moderation of speech in Australian culture. The latter is more hidden and invisible, and yet the operation of concerns for both “modesty” and “the tall poppy syndrome” influence the form of language use in a similar way.

The focus of this thesis is to examine if and how Chinese ESL learners become more similar to monolingual Australian speakers of English in their compliment responses.

I use the term “approximation” to describe a phenomenon that Chinese speakers of English become similar to monolingual speakers of English in their compliment responses due to the effect of the target environment. Thus the verb “approximate” describes the process of change or “becoming similar to” after direct contact with the target language norms. To specify what is involved in approximation in a study-abroad context, I take into account both the formal and functional level of language use (see section 2.4). Gender and compliment topic have been chosen as variables of interest that, in this study, help to visualise similarities or differences, caused by the influence of the target culture (for a discussion see section 3.2).

I used a modified discourse completion task to collect a large sample of written responses (formal level), an audio-recorded, structured interview to examine reflections of written responses (functional level), and a video-recorded role play, using the same scenarios designed in the discourse completion task, to prompt comparative semi-spontaneous responses (see Chapter 4). The discourse completion task helped me to collect a large amount of written data for quantitative analysis, as I had expected. The structured interview helped me to collect more data than I had expected. However, the role play did not generate a large amount of data for nonverbal cues, but generated data regarding the level of spontaneity, because its requirement of an immediate response from the participants. I used the same group of participants for the discourse completion task and the structured interview, but a different group of participants for the role play, as the role play is an additional experiment aiming to add more insights into the main aim of this study – investigating approximation phenomena of compliment responses by Chinese speakers of English in Australia.

With analyses from three sources of data (Chapter 5-7), signs of approximation toward the target culture are identified and discussed. It is found that Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia for one to ten years have approximated to the target language environment in their use of compliment responses in English, compared with Chinese speakers of English in China. Approximation at “a formal level” refers to changes in the use of compliment response strategies in terms of length of response, formality, formulaity and linguistic repertoire. Approximation at “a functional level” includes level of phaticity, level of modesty, level of directness and level of sincerity. More details regarding “formal” and “functional” aspects of change in language use will be discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 8.

1.4 Definition of terms

A compliment in this study is defined as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some "good" (possession, characteristic, skills, etc.), which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1988, p. 446). I adopted Holmes' (1988) definition because she has pointed out that a compliment, like any other speech act, can be "explicit" or "implicit", which will be a focus of my exploration in this research project in relation to "form" and "function". A compliment response is a reply to a given compliment in one conversational turn or the second part in an adjacency pair.[4] Complimenting behaviour in this study refers to complimenting, or responding to compliments, or both. Though I do not intend to investigate compliment responses with a discursive perspective, I am aware that compliment response is interdependent on compliment, and may also contain elements that are compliments, given the relevant sequential context. In this thesis, I focus on the examination of "compliment responses" in one conversational turn, but involve the use of the term "compliment", and "complimenting behaviour", wherever necessary.

In terms of naming different participant groups, "Chinese in China" refers to mainland Chinese (ethnic Han) speakers of English (20-35 years old, with intermediate to advanced proficiency) who have never been overseas or immersed in a culture where English is spoken as the dominant or official language. "Chinese in Australia" refers to mainland Chinese (ethnic Han) speakers of English (20-35 years old, with intermediate to advanced proficiency) who have lived in Australia for more than one year but less than ten years. "Monolingual Australians" refers to Australians who speak English as their primary language, and have no or very limited knowledge of other languages. "Australian culture" refers to the English-language-dominated cultural environment and social domain in Australia.

Having outlined the main issues that have prompted this research project, and having provided a general introduction of the development of this research project, I will now briefly present the structure of this thesis. Following the thread of "what has been done", "what is to be done" and "what this thesis has done".

1.5 The structure of this thesis

As shown in the table of contents, there are nine chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 is an overall introduction of the thesis. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide a review of the existing

[4] For details of adjacency pairs, see section 3.1.2.

literature, following a general to specific, and theoretical to empirical direction. These three chapters report “what has been done”. More specifically, Chapter 2 introduces relevant theories and concepts that have shaped the theoretical premise and illustrated a general research context for my research. Chapter 3 introduces responding to compliments in a target environment, which forms a specific research context for my research. Chapter 4 explains methodological considerations in the process of sketching my research design, and provides details of research design for this study. This chapter informs the reader “what is to be done” in this thesis. Chapter 5 presents my discourse completion task data analysis. Chapter 6 presents my interview data analysis, and Chapter 7 presents my video-recorded role play data analysis. Chapter 8 offers a discussion of main findings, and their relevance to the existing body of literature on compliment responses. In Chapter 9, an overall conclusion is provided.

CHAPTER 2: RELEVANT THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

> *If concepts and theories developed by others seem like reasonable summaries or accounts of what we have observed then we will make use of them. Where our observations are new or different or are not adequately summarized by existing concepts and theories we may need to adapt or modify the existing ideas.*
> *(De Vaus, 2014, p. 11)*

Following De Vaus' (2014) suggestion, I start my literature review with the goal of either adopting an existing theoretical framework or modifying existing ideas. In this chapter, I aim to provide a general research background that contributes to the development of the conceptual work that is essential for my research. In the last few decades a multitude of literature has been published on intercultural issues of language use under the umbrella of "intercultural communication" (e.g. Piller, 2011; Scollon , Scollon & Jones, 2011), "cross-cultural pragmatics" (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1991), "intercultural pragmatics" (e.g. Kecskes, 2014) and "interlanguage pragmatics" (e.g. Kasper & Schmidt, 1996) (section 2.1). Existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks, such as "speech act theory", "politeness", "pragmatic transfer", "accommodation", and "acculturation", were developed and widely used for investigating connections between the use of L1 and L2 in different contexts (section 2.2). What remains ambiguous is the rather fluid relation between formal and functional aspects of language use, which is often related to notions such as "literal versus nonliteral meaning or figurative meaning" (c.f. Kecskes, 2014), "implicature", and "indirectness" (Haugh, 2007b). The process of disambiguating between "formal" and "functional" meaning is complicated enough in a monolingual and monocultural context. It is particularly complex to investigate "formal" and "functional" aspects of language use in an intercultural context. However, the relationship between "formal" and "functional" aspects of language use in an intercultural context is exactly where the challenge lies, where the research gap is, and where my primary interest lies. I argue that both "formal" and "functional" aspects of language use should be considered when examining the change of language use in an intercultural context (section 2.3).

2.1 Intercultural, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics

The origin of the term "pragmatics" can be traced back to 1938 when Charles Morris distinguished pragmatics as "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (Levinson, 1983, p. 1). A range of definitions of "pragmatics" evolved later, e.g. "the study of language from a functional perspective … it [pragmatics] attempts to explain facets of linguistic structure by reference to non-linguistic pressures and causes" (Levinson, 1983, p.

7), and “the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised, or encoded in the structure of a language” (Levinson, 1983, p. 9). The term “pragmatics” is also defined as “the theory of utterance interpretation” (Wilson & Sperber, 1986, p. 1). “Pragmatics” also formulates organised logic rules to assist interlocutors to find out what the utterances intend to express (Grundy, 2000). Three core elements of pragmatics include “the linguistic code that is the means of interaction, the producer-interpreters of the code and the socio-cultural context (frame) in which interaction takes place” (Kecskes, 2014, p. 22). In the literature of pragmatics studies, the element “the linguistic code” often refers to the formal aspects of language use, whereas “the socio-cultural context” often assists researchers to study functional aspects of language use.

I approach intercultural and cross-cultural aspects of pragmatics with a brief discussion of “intercultural communication” and “cross-cultural communication”. “Intercultural pragmatics” is a branch of linguistic research that combines “pragmatics” and “intercultural communication”. The term “intercultural communication” is, to some degree, similar to the term “cross-cultural communication”, because they both involve more than one culture. Some researchers use the term “cross-cultural communication” to emphasise the comparative study of two cultures, treating cultures as different entities, whereas “intercultural communication” emphasises aspects of communicative practices in an interactive context (e.g. Scollon & Scollon, 2011). Other researchers have shown preference for using “intercultural communication” in a way that takes on the process view of “culture” as a performance, and assigning the communicators the role of constructing cultural differences (c.f. Piller, 2011). Therefore, it is arguable that pragmatics research focusing on an interactive context belongs to “intercultural pragmatics”; whereas pragmatics research focusing on a comparative perspective of two or more cultures belongs to “cross-cultural pragmatics”.

After achieving a general understanding of intercultural and cross-cultural aspects in pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics is also worthy of discussion. “Interlanguage pragmatics” is defined as “the branch of second language research, which studies how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge” (Kasper, 1992, p. 203). In this definition of “interlanguage pragmatics”, understanding and carrying out “linguistic action”, and acquiring “pragmatic knowledge”, correlate with the core elements of pragmatics discussed earlier: “the linguistic code” (formal aspects of language use) and “the socio-cultural

context" (functional aspects of language use). What is more than traditional pragmatics here is the "interlanguage aspects" which involve "non-native speakers in a target language". The term "non-native speaker" is often used in contrast with "native speaker". In recent years, there are growing debates about the concept of "native speaker" (e.g. A. Davies, 2013; Doerr, 2009; Z. Han, 2004; Piller, 2002; Selvi, 2011). As "native speaker" is seen as a political appraisal rather than a linguistic appraisal, another term, "native user", was introduced to describe a speaker of a second language who possesses "native speaker" competence (A. Davies, 2013). In this thesis, I use "native speaker" and "non-native speaker" when it is unavoidable in the literature review. Because "native speakers" can be multilinguals who have a rather blended cultural identity, I use "monolingual speakers of English" to refer to "native speakers" who have very little mastery of languages other than English. To do so, the participants from the target culture, i.e. monolingual Australians, become clearer in their identity and representativeness in the context of this research (see Chapter 4). In contrast to "monolingual speakers of English", I use "English as second language (ESL) learners" rather than "non-native speaker" to describe Chinese participants whose English proficiency has not reached a "native user" level (see Chapter 4).

Having outlined the general research field involving "cross-cultural pragmatics", "intercultural pragmatics" and "interlanguage pragmatics", I will move into exploring more specific theories and concepts in the next section. I will first introduce speech act theory and theories of politeness from a general point of view (section 2.2). Then I will introduce three concepts (pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation) that are particularly relevant to comparative and interactive aspects of pragmatic research (section 2.3). While introducing these theories and concepts, I will pay special attention to the relation between "form" and "function" in order to get a deeper understanding of "formal" and "functional" realms of language use in interaction. Hence, the relation between "formal" and "functional" aspects will be a recurring theme throughout the literature review.

2.2 General theories in pragmatics: speech act theory and politeness

My research interest in formal and functional aspects of a particular utterance evolved in the review of theoretical frameworks in the field of pragmatics. The functions of utterances are described in terms of a "speech act" (Austin, 1975), emphasising the "acting" aspects of an utterance. What I am particularly interested in exploring is the force in a certain speech act (section 2.2.1) because it contributes to the main thread of my thesis – formal and functional aspects of compliment responses. Functional aspects of speech acts are

often meanings in context. It is interesting to trace the causes of these contextualised meanings. A very common factor that influences the realisation of speech acts is politeness (section 2.2.2).

2.2.1 Speech act theory

Speech act theory (Austin, 1975) has been one of the most influential theories in the field of pragmatics. This theory has encouraged language researchers to think of language as different units that carry "performative" power. Hence, speaking is carryied out as action. For example, a speech act that has performative power could be "I promise that I will give you a lift home tonight". According to Austin (1975), there are two kinds of performatives: implicit performatives and explicit performatives. In contrast with "performative", he proposes another notion, "constative", to refer to descriptive statements possible to be true or false (e.g. "This is a rubber ruler"). Though the distinction between "performatives" and "constatives" is obvious, he clarified that there are occasions of utterance in both performative and constative ways. Based on the notion of "performative" Austin (1975) came up with three categorisations of speech acts. The three kinds of speech acts are locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act is the production of an utterance which has purposeful meanings that explain the grammatical sequence and correctness of the sentence. The illocutionary act is the real-life action to be performed in accordance with the intention of the utterance by the speaker. This is a linguistic expression-generated act. The perlocutionary act stresses the effects and consequences of linguistic expressions.

Out of the three kinds of speech acts, the illocutionary act is the act that the speaker accomplishes, or intends to have some impact on, vis-à-vis the interlocutor (Austin, 1975). Illocutionary acts are conventional acts, as they are authentic social actions taken in everyday life context. For example, a command such as "Hand in your essay on Friday" invites a response or an obedient behaviour that fulfills the command. Austin (1975) acknowledges that there are utterances that are outside of the above three classifications of speech acts because they are not applicable or realisable in daily life. These utterances can happen in a humorous or poetic context. For example, an utterance like "Get a stair and climb up to the moon" is not performable and thus cannot be counted as either an illocutionary or perlocutionary act. In contrast with illocutionary acts, no person has been able to get a stair and climb up to the moon. Therefore, unconventional speech acts do not fit into the framework of illocutionary or perlocutionary forces. This is one issue that leads to limitations of speech act theory.

Another problematic issue is that the boundaries between those three kinds of acts are ambiguous. For example, a perlocutioanry act might have both promise and request: "I promise you that I will come back home early if you cook a good dinner". This type of act has the illocutionary force of letting the hearer cook dinner. Some researchers are reluctant to accept the terminology of "perlocutionary act" because of these insufficiencies (Levinson, 1983; Searle, 1969). However, speech act theory still proves highly relevant to our understanding of language use in interaction, and of different functions of language units.

A further development of speech act theory is the differentiation between direct and indirect speech acts (Searle, 1979). Both Austin's (1975) explicit versus implicit performatives, and Searle's (1979) classification of direct versus indirect speech acts, stress the importance of studying the meaning in form and the meaning in function. The "explicit performative" and "direct speech act" refer to meanings that are easy to acquire, formal and literal. The "implicit performative" and "indirect speech act" refer to meanings that require reflection of sociocultural backgrounds. A direct speech act of request, e.g. "Pass that stapler to me", becomes indirect if expressed in another way: "Could you please pass me that stapler?" (Searle, 1979, p. 13). The former sentence does not give the addressee a choice, and the latter sentence gives the addressee the option of refusing to meet the request. Therefore, it is argued that the latter is more polite than the former. This supports the idea that politeness is the driving motive of using indirect speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Leech, 2008; Searle, 1975).

Speech act theory has been developed based on an analysis of the English language. Whether it is applicable to other languages is open to debate. For example, indirect speech might be a way of expressing politeness in the English language (ibid.), but direct speech can also be a way of expressing politeness among speakers in an intimate relationship (Ye, 2004). In the next section, I will continue to explore how formal and functional aspects are reflected in theories of politeness.

2.2.2 Politeness

How does politeness drive the use of indirect speech acts rather than direct speech acts? This is an important question to explore to understand meaning in interaction, especially meanings that are not literal. A polite behaviour in one culture may be regarded as impolite in another culture. The notion of "politeness" has been explored by researchers from various cultures (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Gu, 1990; Holmes,

1988; Leech, 2008). The most influential model of politeness is pioneered by Brown and Levinson (1987). They explain that all politeness strategies are based on face. Face, in this model, refers to the social worth of a person based on assumptions of others' perceptions of him or her during a certain social interaction (Goffman, 1967). Societies mobilise individuals through rituals that teach individuals "to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self-expressed through face, to have pride, honour, and dignity, to have considerateness, to have tact and a certain amount of poise" (Goffman, 1967, p. 44). Face is also "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). This self-image includes positive face and negative face. Negative face is a person's desire to be unimpeded by his or her actions, whereas positive face is actively seeking to be recognised in a community.

Brown and Levinson also treat face as basic wants. In human interaction, when a speaker is only concerned with his or her own face wants, it is likely that the speaker will threaten the addressee's face wants. Face can be lost or gained, improved or denigrated, and it is necessary to be mindful of face-threatening acts in conversations (Fraser, 1990). The notion of face-threatening act (FTA) is proposed on the basis of speech act theory. It is argued that FTAs can intrinsically threaten an interlocutor's (either the addresser or the addressee) positive face, negative face, or both positive and negative face at the same time. Five strategies are outlined for doing FTAs, as demonstrated in the following table (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69):

Table 1 A summary of Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-threatening act (FTA)

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Do the FTA</td><td rowspan="3">On record</td><td>(1) Without redressive action, baldly</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">With redressive action</td><td>(2) Positive politeness</td></tr>
<tr><td>(3) Negative politeness</td></tr>
<tr><td>(4) Off record</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>(5) Don't do the FTA</td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
</table>

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), "on record" refers to a speech act that is uttered with a recognisable intention. For example, in the sentence "I guarantee you that I will buy you a watch", the word "guarantee" shows the speaker's clear (on record) intention of wanting to buy a watch for the addressee. In contrast, off record strategies are used when the speaker gives the addressee a chance to figure out what is the speaker's intention. For example, if a person says, "Oh, no! My pen is broken!", he or she may also

be inferring, “Could I borrow one from you?”. Instead of mentioning the word “borrow”, the speaker in this example is using an off-record strategy. These kinds of off-record strategies are very similar to indirect speech acts (see examples in section 2.2.1). On the other hand, on-record strategies are similar to direct speech acts that express explicit meanings.

Positive politeness is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as speaking with the intention of catering to the addressee’s positive face wants, and negative politeness as speaking with the intention of catering to the addressee’s negative face wants. Three positive politeness substrategies and five negative politeness strategies are summarised in the following table (Brown & Levinson, 1987):

Table 2 Positive and negative politeness strategies

Positive politeness substrategies	Looking for common ground in terms of in-group membership etc.
	Indicating cooperativeness between the parties
	Satisfying the addressee's desires
Negative politeness substrategies	Being direct (conventionally indirect)
	Avoiding assumptions
	Avoiding pressuring acts
	Strategically expressing the speaker’s wants without imposition to the addressee
	Taking the initiative to sacrifice the speaker's wants to avoid indebting the addressee

The distinction of positive and negative face is now regarded as ethnocentric-oriented, and is in need of reconceptualisation (e.g. Grundy, 2000; Haugh, 2006). Though Brown and Levinson’s model has been used as a theoretical premise for different researchers (e.g. Ralarala, 2007), controversy in eastern and western approaches to politeness is prevalent (c.f. Lang, 1998; Ye, 2004). In particular, Ye (2004) claims that interpersonal relationships (e.g. insider-outsider continuum) should be treated as a theoretical variable, which forms a very different conceptual foundation in Chinese social interaction compared with Brown & Levinson’s (1987) model. Yu (2004, p.89) argues that face is “something that is emotionally invested”. There are researchers who examine face and politeness (li mao 礼貌) in Chinese culture (Gu, 1990; Hu, 1944; Mao, 1994). It has been argued that Brown and Levinson’s model of face is inadequate to account for the concept of face (mian zi 面子) in Chinese, and that social identity and individual autonomy are two competing constraints in shaping speech behaviours (Mao, 1994).

Further, Brown and Levinson's model ignores the social constraints of politeness in an individual's linguistic choices (Gu, 1990). Four areas accounting for Chinese politeness outlined by Gu (1990) are respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement. Generally speaking, in hierarchical societies, speakers from lower classes tend to adopt negative politeness strategy compared to upper classes or elders. Since,. in modern Standard Chinese, with the decreased emphasis on hierarchical relations, showing restraint (ke qi 客气, e.g. being polite like a guest), and sincerity (cheng yi 诚意) in Chinese interactions have become more prominent and significant (c.f. Haugh, 2006). The concepts of face and politeness are deconstructed with a metalinguisitic approach, since both face and politeness involve external evaluations of people (Haugh & Hinze, 2003). Expressions involving face in Chinese are categorised into four main groups: "negative changes in, and states of, 'face'; positive changes in, and states of, 'face'; managing one's own and others' 'face'; and attitudes towards or judgments about one's own and others' 'face'" (Haugh & Hinze, 2003, p. 1588).

For Holmes (1995a, p. 326), to avoid impoliteness is to maximise agreement and minimise disagreement. Taking gender variations into consideration, for females, being negatively polite involves "avoiding, minimising or mitigating disagreements", whereas being positively polite refers to "agreeing with others, encouraging them to talk, expressing support verbally and ensuring they get a fair share of the talking time (Holmes, 1995, p. 329)". In contrast, for males, even disagreeing bluntly, and challenging and interrupting assertively, are viewed as positive politeness strategies which enhance solidarity. Holmes' discussion of gender-related politeness with regards to solidarity, or the social distance between interlocutors, also challenges the semantic boundary between positive and negative face proposed by Brown and Levinson.

The off-record FTAs and negative politeness in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is in the same vein as the Cooperative Principle (CP). The Cooperative Principle presumes that the conversationalists adopt cooperative efforts in what to say, and how to say it, to achieve communication. The Cooperative Principle is typified as "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

Leech (1983) proposed the politeness principle on top of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. He tried to enrich the existing system of principles and maxims (e.g.

Grice 1975) taking into account the relation between sense and force. According to Leech (1983), there are six maxims of politeness, summarised as follows:

> Tact maxim: (a) minimise cost to other; (b) maximise benefit to other. Generosity maxim: (a) minimise benefit to self; (b) maximise cost to self. Approbation maxim: (a) minimise dispraise of other; (b) maximise praise of other. Modesty maxim: (a) minimise praise of self; (b) maximise dispraise of self. Agreement maxim: (a) minimise disagreement between self and other; (b) maximise agreement between self and other. Sympathy maxim: (a) minimise antipathy between self and other; (b) maximise sympathy between self and other. (p. 132).

What is seen as polite or impolite behaviour is prone to change at any time during the interaction, as contextual factors vary. It seems that little agreement regarding the constitution of politeness could be achieved. Until recently, attention has been paid to the intersection of the notions of politeness and implicature, namely, politeness implicature, which means that politeness arises when implying (Haugh, 2007). According to Haugh (2007), politeness implicatures arise from "joint, collaborative interaction between speakers and hearers". This approach to politeness implicature is conceptualised on the basis of the Conjoint Co-constituting Model of Communication (Arundale, 1999, 2010), which describes communication from an interactive and co-constituting perspective. As Arundale (1999) explains in contrast to the Gricean approach, this model:

> recognises that all interpretings are provisional until assessed in view of an interpreting of the adjacent utterance of another; it explains how interpretings are co-constituted in the inter-action of two or more individuals; it explains how mutual and reciprocal co-constituting generates emergent properties distinct from the properties of participants' individual actions; and it defines 'communication' as the presence of emergence, rather than the recognition of intention. (p. 142).

Thus, politeness implicature is "interactively achieved" and "emergent or nonsummative" in nature. While approaching politeness implicature from a general perspective of communication, rather than developing an independent theory, is convincing, more research needs to be done to further examine the relationship of politeness and implicature, as suggested by Haugh (2007).

A significant amount of research on impoliteness has been generated following the research on politeness in the last two decades (Archer, 2011; Bax, 2011; Blitvich, 2009; Bousfield, 2007; Cashman, 2006; Culpeper, 1996, 2005; Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2002; Culpeper, Marti, Mei, Nevala, & Schauer, 2010; House, 2010; Limberg, 2009; Locher, 2010; Mills, 2005, 2009; H.-Y. Wang, 2008). Among these researchers, Culpeper (1996) maintains that to be impolite is to do the opposite of Brown and Levinson's super-strategies and it is other-oriented, as it threatens the addressee's positive

face wants. Similar to the five politeness strategies for performing FTAs proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpeper (1996) proposes five strategies for performing impoliteness":

> (1) Bald, on-record impoliteness. (2) Positive impoliteness - attacks addressee's need to be approved. (3) Negative impoliteness - attacks addressee's need to be unimpeded. (4) Sarcasm or mock politeness - use of insincere politeness strategies. (5) Withhold politeness - don't be polite where expected. (pp. 356-357).

Watts' (2003, p. 18) use of impoliteness is defined as "a salient form of social behavior in the sense that it appears to go against the canons of acceptable, appropriate behaviour operative for the ongoing social interaction". The impolite side of research has been underscored (Locher, 2006). Locher (2006) shows concern for the borderline between politeness and impoliteness, attempts to account for politeness with a discursive approach, and tries to stay away from the dichotomy between politeness and impoliteness by adopting Watts' (2005) notion of relational work. He argues that a dichotomy between politeness and impoliteness is not sufficient to account for the many shades of relational work, and that the boundaries between politeness and impoliteness are traversable. Recently, impoliteness together with politeness, is often regarded as the hearer's evaluations of speakers' behaviour in discursive politeness research (Haugh, 2013). Haugh (2013) argues that (im)politeness evaluations are interrelated with social actions, interactional achievement, and moral order, and therefore they are a kind of social practice.

The debates on different approaches to politeness reveal that it is nearly impossible to find a golden rule to define politeness through a continuum of directness-indirectness; neither can ways to realise politeness in conversations be strictly regulated. Impoliteness can be transformed into politeness under given situations, such as irony among intimate friends (Burgers, van Mulken, & Schellens, 2012), or if taken into another culture (c.f. different conceptualisations of "tact constraint" in English and Japanese, Haugh, 2007). Polite indirectness, regardless of the motivation of such a move, can be regarded as impolite among extremely close interlocutors. Taking into account contextual variables, such as the gender of an interlocutor who initiates the conversation (c.f. Holmes, 1995b), or the familiarity between the interlocutors (c.f. Fraser, 1990), an arguable approach to politeness is to simultaneously interpret formal and functional aspects (which are often indirect) of language use in a given conversational context.

2.3 Change in language use in an intercultural context

Having introduced speech act theory and politeness theories (section 2.2), I will move on to introduce the three concepts (pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation) that are highly relevant to understanding the essence of intercultural, cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatics. These three concepts examine change of language use in an intercultural or cross-cultural context from different perspectives. The first concept I will introduce is pragmatic transfer (section 2.3.1), then I will introduce the concept of accommodation (section 2.3.2). After that I will introduce the notion acculturation (section 2.3.3). After introducing these three concepts, I will provide a discussion of the three concepts in accounting for the framework of this study, and point out their insufficiencies (section 2.3.4), and why resynthesising these concepts is necessary (section 2.4).

2.3.1 Pragmatic transfer

Pragmatic transfer is "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information (Kasper, 1992, p. 207)". The term "transfer" has been explained as "the systematic influences of existing knowledge on the acquisition of new knowledge" (Zegarac & Pennington, 2008, p. 142). Pragmatic transfer has also been defined as "the transfer of pragmatic knowledge in situations of intercultural communication" (2008, p. 143). Two types of pragmatic transfer are categorised: negative pragmatic transfer and positive pragmatic transfer.[5] Negative transfer is to generally transfer acquainted pragmatic knowledge from L1 to speech situations in L2, whereas positive transfer is to behave like the native interlocutors when what they speak is less significant. Compared with negative transfer, positive transfer is less noticeable. Difference between languages is arguably another factor that account for the occurrence of positive and negative transfer. Beebe & Giles (1984) note that the more similar the structures and pragmatic features between two languages, the more likely positive transfer would occur. In contrast, the more different the structures and pragmatic features between languages, the more likely negative transfer would occur.

"Pragmatic transferability" is a notion defined by Takahashi (1996) as the transferability rate according to contextual appropriacy, exploring the conditions under which pragmatic transfer occurs. The conditions for pragmatic transfer often refer to

[5] Barron (2003) notes that, whether transfer of pragmatic knowledge from L1 to L2 causes miscommunication, is the motivation for researchers to further distinguish positive pragmatic transfer from negative pragmatic transfer.

factors such as length of stay in the target culture, context of acquisition, and proficiency of L2. These factors have been investigated by different researchers (e.g. Ahn, 2007). Motivation level was found to have a positive and moderate relationship to Korean ESL learners' pragmatic competence; length of residence also had moderate influence on the participants' pragmatic competence; the amount of contact only had a minor effect on the participants' pragmatic competence (Ahn, 2007).

The relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency remains controversial. Wannaruk (2008) investigates the similarities and differences in American English and Thai refusals, and whether or not pragmatic transfer from Thai to English is evident in the English spoken by Thai EFL learners. She concluded that the EFL learners with lower proficiency transfer pragmatic knowledge from L1 to L2 due to their insufficient L2 knowledge. This finding is in line with Robinson's (1992) (as cited in Chang 2009) finding that lower proficiency learners are more likely to be influenced by their L1 behaviour than higher proficiency learners. However, the learners with high proficiency can negotiate their cultural stance in operating speech behaviours, which result in a higher degree of pragmatic transfer (e.g. Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, & Kasper, 1996). Some researchers tested true that the higher the L2 proficiency level is, the more likely the speaker will transfer pragmatic knowledge from L1 to L2 (c.f. Chang, 2009).

The bidirectionality of pragmatic transferability is a relatively new concept. Compared with the amount of literature examining transfer from L1 to L2, literature examining L2 influence on L1 has been largely overlooked (Kecskes, 2008). Different from L1 influence on L2, which is often seen as negative, the influence or transfer from L2 to L1 is often seen as positive (Kecskes, 2008). In order to illustrate the interactional relationship of two language channels, the model of the Dual Language System (DLS) is proposed, which refers to "an organism with two language channels and a Common Underlying Conceptual Base" (Kecskes and Papp, 2005, p. 49). To further discuss transfer and bidirectionality, Kecskes and Papp (2000) contend that:

> For us, the word "transfer" denotes here any kind of movement (structures, forms), in either direction between the L1 and the subsequent language(s). Our understanding of the term is not restricted to L1 → L2 influence but presupposes bidirectionality and includes not only structure and form transfer but knowledge and skill transfer. It is assumed that in the case of multicompetent speakers concepts, knowledge, and skills can flow between languages through the Common Underlying Conceptual Base, and this process can have either a neutral, negative, or positive influence depending on the concrete phenomenon in question. (pp. xvi - xvii).

Empirical studies examining bidirectional transfer between L1 and L2 have been carried out. For example, Su (2010) investigates the bidirectionality of language transfer from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1 by focusing on the speech act of request. Transfer in both directions occurred mostly in the use of request strategies among learners with different proficiency levels (Su, 2010). The intermediate and advanced learners did not show much difference in the use of conventional directives. Another study on the bidirectionality of pragmatic transfer was carried out by Liu (2010). Liu explores bidirectional pragmatic transfer ("borrowing transfer") occurring in Chinese EFL learner's compliment responses. It is found that the Chinese EFL learners who have had a longer period of English learning, and achieved a higher level of English proficiency, are more likely to adopt "acceptance" and "combination" strategies, but the Chinese EFL learners who have had a shorter period of English learning tend to adopt "non-acceptance" and "no-acknowledgement" strategies. All the situations in the DCT focus on ability, and they were designed in the Chinese language. This shows that studying English can change Chinese EFL learners' language behaviours. However, the hidden cultural norms that affect the bidirectional pragmatic transfer of these speech behaviours are not discussed in that study.

2.3.2 Accommodation

Speech accommodation theory, also known as communication accommodation theory, is also essential to pragmatic research, as it accounts for various aspects of intralanguage communication, such as adaption to the target language norms (Schumann, 1978). Giles (1980) proposes that speech accommodation theory includes four perspectives: similarity-attraction perspective, social exchange perspective, causal attribution perspective, and intergroup distinctiveness perspective (as cited in Y. Yuan, 1996). More specifically, accommodation means that the speaker intends to conform to his or her target language interlocutor in terms of phonology, syntax, lexicon, and other aspects, in order to become more attractive and socially approved. Alternatively, being accommodating is to satisfy the other interlocutor's desires. Ylanne (2008) claims that the accommodation theory is a rich and influential model of how communicative interactions between individuals and social groups are achieved, and how meaning is recognised in different cultures or subcultures.

From an in-group or out-group perspective, an individual might accommodate their speech behaviour to the other interlocutor out of a motive of strengthening in-group solidarity, particularly if the individual is a member of the group (Giles, Liang, Noels, & McCann, 2001). On the other hand, the individual can choose to communicate in a negative manner that purposely differentiates himself from the target language interlocutor,

to express disinterest and show distinctiveness (Beebe & Giles, 1984; Giles et al., 2001). To explain these speech manners in accommodation processes, convergence and divergence are arguably two effective concepts. Convergence refers to both interlocutors merging toward each other's language style, with various linguistic features such as pauses, discourse markers, pronunciation, and lengths of utterances (c.f. Beebe & Giles, 1984). Divergence is the intentional differentiation of the interlocutors' own speech styles (see also Zegarac & Pennington, 2008). The direction of converging and diverging can go "upward" or "downward" depending on the concern of the prestige of the speech style (Ball, Giles, Byrne, & Berechree, 1984).

The concepts over-accommodation and under-accommodation are drawing researchers' attention (c.f. Ylanne, 2008). These concepts raise the question of how much second language learners should accommodate to the target culture and language. What interlocutors face in the accommodating process is the dilemma and uncertainty when searching for a balanced middle ground between over-accommodation and under-accommodation. According to Ylanne (2008, p. 169), "a judgement about over- or under-accommodation can only be made relative to the norms and expectations which speakers hold about communication, and relative to their judgements of speakers' and listeners' rights and obligations in particular situations."

Zhang & Hummert (2001) explore intergenerational communication harmonies and tensions, and suggest that the old and the young should honour each other's autonomy and practice by accommodating and respecting different communication methods in order to reduce intergenerational misunderstandings. Thomas (1983) recommends that second language teachers give students room for using their own conversational styles and expressing their personal values rather than blindly accommodating the norms of L2. An attempted solution to when and how much to accommodate is dependent on a specific interactive context. Ball, Giles, Byrne and Berechree (1984) investigate situational constraints and boundaries on the significance of speech accommodation in a job interview context. They argue that in such a context, a job applicant should use formal and standard pronunciation in order to meet the criteria of the job, and thus accommodating should be tailored according to the dynamics of situation.

The reasons for divergence or convergence to target norms vary from the level of proficiency to intentional linguistic choices. Researchers have found that second language learners may resist converging to target speech behaviours due to bias or linguistic

preferences developed in their home country. For example, Korean ESL learners have demonstrated their preference for North American English and resistance to Australian English (J. Davis, 2007). Other researchers also find that attitudinal factors and subjectivity among high-proficiency learners have obvious impact on resisting L2 pragmatic forms (Kim, 2007; Siegal, 1996). I will discuss affective factors in more detail in the next section.

2.3.3 Acculturation

Acculturation means that learners of a second language assimilate to the target language group socially and psychologically (Schumann, 1978). Every learner approximates to the speaker of the target language with different social and psychological distance, and "the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates" (Schumann, 1978, p. 29). When a speaker is psychologically ready to adopt the input in the target language, input turns into intake.

According to Schumann, five factors are particularly useful in explaining the various aspects of acculturation from one culture to another. These five factors include social factors, affective factors, personality factors, cognitive factors and instructional factors. Social factors explain the social pressure a second language speaker faces when living in the target culture that may prompt him or her to adopt the target culture. Affective factors explain the motivation behind the change of language behaviour. Personality factors involve a person's sensitivity to a more acceptable self-presentation in the other culture. Cognitive factors may include conscious or subconscious imitation of what the speakers from the target culture do. Instructional factors illustrate the education effect one receives from the target culture. The above five categories of factors elaborate the complex process of acculturation.

Acculturation is labeled as a causal variable in second language acquisition, and it originates from the cluster of social factors and affective factors (Schumann, 1986). Schumann (1978) contends that second language acquisition is one of many aspects of acculturation. He noticed that simplification of the target language by second language learners might be a result of pidginisation, decreolisation or hybridisation.

The acculturation process in light of ethnicity and second language acquisition of Hmong students in the United States was studied by Bosher (1992). Results suggest that due to the multicultural nature of North America, ethnic immigrant groups vary greatly in their cultural adaptation patterns in the host society. In fact, many immigrants choose some form of bicultural adaptation in which accommodation is made toward the host society, but

without relinquishing traditional cultural values and customs. This means that cultural values and systems may take a significantly longer time to be changed compared with linguistic forms.

Having introduced three concepts that contribute to explaining different aspects of change in language use in an intercultural or cross-cultural context, I would like to point out their insufficiencies to account for the conceptual framework of my study (section 2.3.4).

2.3.4 Insufficiencies of existing conceptual frameworks

Either one-way or bidirectional pragmatic transfer is generally examined based on the assumption that L1 (with its sociocultural norms) and L2 (with its sociocultural norms) are completely separate entities without overlapping areas. Thus, elements of transfer from A to B, or B to A can be measured. This assumption is problematic. The contradictory results by different researchers regarding the effect of L2 proficiency on pragmatic transfer is another problem that has not been solved. For the concept of accommodation, one issue is also the assumption that a member from L1 culture adopts language features from L2 culture. The co-constructing role of the ESL learners is under-addressed. The concept of acculturation stresses psychological factors of change of language use, which are not enough to account for instances of change in language use of different groups of people in a target culture. The degree of acculturation may vary in a study-abroad context, depending on the addressee's ethnic identity.

Some aspects of change in language use in an intercultural context have been described respectively under the conceptual frameworks of pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation. However, the change in language use in an intercultural context that stresses the "interculturality" of language use has been under-studied. The term "interculturality" refers to "a situationally emergent and co-constructed phenomenon that relies both on relatively definably cultural norms and models as well as situationally evolving features" (Kecskes, 2014, p. 96). This kind of intercultural language use in a target culture needs to be examined from both a comparative and an intercultural perspective, taking into account priori and emergent, co-constructed and interactive aspects of language use. Are some elements of pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 temporary? Does bidirectional pragmatic transfer, especially pragmatic transfer from L2 to L1, signify a deeper degree of acculturation that involves cultural values? Do some elements of accommodation only stay at a formal level? How do we describe acculturation in ESL

learners when the line between L1 cultural norms and L2 cultural norms is blurry? Next, I will discuss a resynthesised conceptual framework for this study.

2.4 A resynthesised approach to change in language use in an intercultural context: approximation

As discussed at the very beginning of this chapter, when existing theories and concepts fall short of the need of a new study, modification is necessary. Both the illocutionary forces of speech acts (section 2.2.1), and indirectness for the sake of showing politeness, involve two dimensions of language use (section 2.2.2). One dimension is the formal aspects of language use, which can be acquired through the literal meaning of the utterance or speech act. The other dimension is the functional aspects of language use, which involve indirectness, concerns of politeness, face, socio-cultural norms and values. To identify change in language use in an intercultural context that involves both a priori and emergent elements of language use, only comparing forms of one language with forms of another language is far from enough. Neither can investigations about functional aspects of language use in context alone fully account for change in L2 use that happens in the target culture. In order to have a better understanding of language use in context, both formal and functional aspects of language use need to be explored (c.f. Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Change in language use in an intercultural context has been often researched and described without directly addressing formal and functional levels of meaning. Is it possible to measure change in language use from both a formal perspective and a functional perspective? That is, to investigate change in language use in both formal linguistic expressions and affective factors? A realistic expectation of such an examination is to get an idea of the approximate change (or approximation to the target culture) that has happened. By combining insights gained from research on pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation, as well as the notion of interculturality, I propose to use the term “approximation” to describe a newly synthesised way of examining change in language use in an intercultural context. This synthesised approach to change in language use includes both formal and functional aspects. I will first introduce the term “approximation”, and then explain what formal and functional aspects mean in my thesis.

In the field of pragmatics, the term “approximation” has not been widely used to describe language behavior. “Approximation” often refers to numerical approximations (c.f. Wachtel, 1980). To account for approximation, “one has to rely on assumptions concerning the way people ordinarily speak about certain things. One may wonder whether the

principle of relevance will be able to explain such talking habits, which can become sociocultural norms" (Franken, 1997, p. 15). In relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986), approximation is regarded as a kind of loose or generalised manner of talking that involves utterances not to be interpreted as literally as other ways of talking. The utterance "I earn £800 a month", though seemingly not ambiguous at all, does not necessarily give the exact amount of a person's salary, which could be £797.32 (Franken, 1997, p. 147). The number £800 could be a precise number in the speaker's head, either based on his/her acquired perceptual knowledge or second-hand knowledge. Gouvard (1995) maintains that "approximate utterances entail that the hearer has to reconstruct the initial thought of the speaker, who is supposed to have an exact knowledge … people use – and expect their conversation partners to use – approximate figures in accordance to sociocultural norms" (Franken, 1997, pp. 137-138).

These definitions have by and large remained in the field of mathematics, or in a monocultural or monolingual context. "Approximation" is rarely seen to describe dynamics of interlanguage pragmatics. About two decades ago, a research question, "How can approximation to target language norms be measured?" was listed on a research agenda to address understudied areas in interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, p. 155). This question was prompted by the complex phenomena of transfer in interlanguage pragmatics studies using L1 and L2 baseline data (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Approximation and transfer to the target norms in relation to gender is also under-addressed (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). More attention needs to be paid to "the complexities of changes in learners' sociocultural perceptions over time and the impact of such altered perceptions on their strategies of linguistic action" (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, p.165). This call has contributed to my decision to explore "approximation" between ESL learners and monolingual English speakers in the target culture as one way of examining the complexities of change in language use involving both linguistic strategies and sociocultural norms. The term "approximation" is used in this thesis to describe the elements of change in language use that *resemble* L2 monolingual speakers in the target culture.

One the one hand, I use the term "approximation" to also mean that I do not look at change of language use in an intercultural context based on an assumption that L1 and L2, or L1 culture and the target culture, are completely separate entities. On the other hand, elements that appear similar to those used by L2 monolingual speakers in the target culture,

that do not exist in L1 culture, are not necessarily completely adopted from the target culture, because they could be newly emergent hybrid phenomena.

The issue of measurement of how second language learners approximate to target language norms have not been solved, as some researchers argue that they will be able to acquire pragmatic knowledge quickly, as soon as they come into direct contact with the target culture (e.g. Thomas, 1983). Other researchers, however, have found that ESL learners may have limited direct contact, even when they physically reside in the target country (e.g. Pacey, 2014). Meanwhile, it is problematic to assume that the ultimate goal for ESL learners to achieve is complete convergence to target norms, as this may not be perceived as desirable, due to variations in identity (c.f. Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Therefore, approximation to the target language or culture by ESL learners is indeed approximate and fluid, but salient enough to be distinguished by researchers.

In order to tackle the issue of measurement of approximation to the target language norms, the elements of approximation need to be categorised. I broadly categorise the elements of approximation into formal and functional aspects. Defining the formal and functional aspects is, and will continue to be, an ongoing process in this study. It will be a starting point in the conceptual framework for the exploration of change in language use in compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners in an intercultural context. Furthermore, it is also a landing point for a description of the overall phenomena – approximation.

Approximation toward target language norms often involves both linguistic strategies and sociocultural norms, both superficial linguistic repertoire and deeper mastery of its multiple purposes and functions, both grammatical utterances and attitudinal perceptions. By “formal aspects” I mean aspects that are connected with linguistic forms (lexicon or sentence), such as length, formality, formulaity, and literal meanings that are easy to see with or without some contextual information. By “functional aspects” I mean the aspects that are connected with meaning in context, and that involve a deeper understanding of the affective factors that influence language use, such as mood, attitudes, feelings, personal habits, motivation, personal way of thinking and comprehension, personal approach to sincerity, awareness of pragmatic knowledge in different cultures, mentality, intuition, individual accent, tone of voice, and functional (non-literal or figurative) meanings. I will keep refining the main formal and functional aspects in my research design (Chapter 4), and in my data analysis (Chapters 5 to 7).

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the general research context of my study. I started with the general discipline of “intercultural communication” and different approaches to pragmatics (section 2.1). Then I reviewed two prominent theories in the field of pragmatics research (section 2.2), which provide a general understanding of (indirect) speech acts in light of politeness. In section 2.3, I reviewed concepts that are relevant to change in language use in an intercultural context, and pointed out insufficiencies of existing conceptual frameworks for my research. After that, I developed a synthesised approach to look at change in language use in an intercultural context: to examine approximation of ESL learners to target language norms, from both formal and functional perspectives (section 2.4). In the next chapter, I will turn to the specific research context of my study – responding to compliments in a target environment.

CHAPTER 3: RESPONDING TO COMPLIMENTS

Complimenting is a complex social activity that requires sensitivity to the concrete social environment and the participants inhabiting it. (Gathman, Maynard & Schaeffer, 2008, p. 292)

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the fields of intercultural, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics are complex areas of research that tap into issues of change in language use in an intercultural context. Moving from a general to a specific research context, Chinese ESL learners in Australia were chosen as subjects for exploring the effect of the target language environment (by direct contact or immersion in the target environment) on ESL learners' compliment responses in English. In order to examine how Chinese ESL learners respond to compliments in English in a study-abroad context, I regard literature covering topics such as compliment, or compliment response, or both, as relevant to my study.

There are many studies that investigate compliments, compliment responses or perceptions of compliments (see Appendix A). Among the existing studies, there are different perspectives, different focuses and different conceptual frameworks (see Appendix A). Some studies are from a monolingual or monocultural perspective (e.g. R. Chen, 1993). Others are comparative (e.g. Yu, 1999). Some researchers compare complimenting behaviour in L1 with that in L2, and focus on the differences. Other researchers examine salient cultural values, such as modesty (e.g. Sharifian, 2008). Very few studies examine the effect of the target environment on ESL learners' compliment responses in L2 (e.g. Lai, 2009). Among the small number of studies that investigate the effect of the target environment, Lai's (2009) study is most relevant to my topic. Hence, this study will be reviewed in detail where applicable.

In this chapter, I will first introduce my chosen topic by explaining the significance and adjacency of compliments and compliment responses, compliment topics, and the categorisation of compliment responses (section 3.1). Then I will discuss responding to compliments in the target environment based on a relevant study carried out by Lai (2009) (section 3.2). In particular, the geographical region of the complimentees, and gender variations will be discussed (section 3.2). In section 3.3, I will discuss factors that are relevant in measuring the effect of the target environment on compliment responses of ESL learners' compliment responses. In section 3.4, I will present two research questions, and

explain how the research questions have evolved in the process of reflecting on and reviewing the literature.

3.1 Understanding compliments and compliment responses

To explain why complimenting behaviour is chosen as a relevant subject to explore intercultural, cross-cultural and interlanguage aspects of language use, I will first discuss the significance of compliments (section 3.1.1). Then I will explain the adjacency of compliment and compliment responses (section 3.1.2). Afterwards, I will discuss the categorisation of compliment topics (section 3.1.3). Finally, I will discuss issues in categorising compliment responses, and will come up with a modified version of categorisation for the purpose of the present study (3.1.4).

3.1.1 The significance of compliments

The significance of compliments lies in their multiple functions in communication. Compliment functions are at the center of compliment investigations across cultures. Many researchers share the consensus that complimenting establishes and reinforces social solidarity and rapport between the speaker and the addressee (Golato, 2005; Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1988; Jaworski, 1995; Migdadi, 2003; Petit, 2006; Wolfson & Manes, 1980, 1981; Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Yu, 2011). Complimenting is a multifunctional speech act that plays important roles in many other dimensions of conversation (Johnson, 1992; Jaworski, 1995). Jaworski (1995) took a dichotomous approach to compliments in Polish, and distinguished two types of solidarity: procedural solidarity and relational solidarity. Procedural solidarity is also seen as textual, which follows routines, and does not have to signal genuine praise to the complimentee. However, relational solidarity means genuine appreciation or praise. He also reports that boundaries between compliments and other speech acts can be blurred, such as complimenting someone on their possession, just for the sake of congratulating, in Polish. Many other researchers are also aware of the multifunctionality of compliments. For instance, compliments can function as substitutes for other speech acts, such as greeting, thanking, apologising (Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Wolfson, 1981b), conversation openers (Wolfson, 1981b; Yu, 2011), expressing sarcasm (Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004; Wolfson, 1981b), off-record reprimand (see positive politeness strategies in Brown & Levinson, 1987), and envy (Agyekum, 2010).

Since compliments function multidimensionally, phaticity[6] of compliments has been discussed by a few researchers (Agyekum, 2010; Boyle, 2000; Holmes, 1995; O'Connor, 1993; Wolfson, 1981a, 1981b). For example, Agyekum (2010) notes that in Akan society, compliments serve as phatic communication that keeps conversation going,[7] and bridge conversational gaps, especially in some cultures or contexts where silence in conversation is awkward or rude. O'Connor (1993) discovered that textbook writers tend to focus on the transactional functions of speech acts, rather than the phatic aspects of language teaching or communication. He maintains that complimenting as a phatic act has not been given due attention in textbooks, and the need for this kind of phatic communication to achieve pleasantries in everyday interactions has not been raised. Phatic communication is to some degree related to rapport, which may vary because of gender relations. Holmes (1988) reports functions of compliments as "solidarity signals, cementing relationships, attenuating demands, smoothing unruffled feathers and bridging gaps created by possible offences especially for women (p. 464)". Gender-differentiated compliment functions also include women's unambiguous belief in using compliments to express affection, and establishing rapport, as opposed to men's ambiguous and ambivalent view of compliments (Holmes, 1995).

Putting compliments in a conversational context, Golato (2005, p. 204) argues that "it is with respect to the sequential organisation of the interaction in general, and with reference to preference organisation in particular, that compliments can be said to be face-saving or face-maintaining, or to have a social-solidarity-building function". Compliment functions have been analysed comparatively by Behnam & Amizadeh (2011). They studied complimenting behaviours in Persian and American TV interviews. There are more types of functions found in the Persian data (eleven functions) than those found in the American data (six functions). Six functions classified from the American English data include introducing the guest, affective function, commenting on personality, evaluative function, self-praise and thanking. Eleven functions classified from the Persian data include the affective function, commenting on personality, evaluative, self-praise and thanking, saying goodbye, greeting, criticizing, asking for ideas, and a compliment followed by a question

[6] In Wolfson (1981), the study of invitations shows that it is a prevalent feature of American speech behaviour that promises or suggestions of invitations do not equate with social commitment. Holmes (1995) also mentions that a non-specific invitation allows a general indication of goodwill, without any significant social commitment.

[7] Compare with Cedar (2006) who reports that Americans are more likely to elaborate compliment responses by asking questions, and to keep the conversation going.

and taarof (politeness or etiquette). Compliment functions can be analysed from different perspectives and different dimensions in different cultures. Holmes (1986) states that it is important to record intonation along with syntax and lexis when analysing compliment functions.

3.1.2 The adjacency of compliments and compliment responses

I consider the terms "compliment" and "compliment response" undividable because they are known as "adjacency pairs". Adjacency pairs often contain the first part and a second part after the first part, such as question and answer, greeting and greeting in return, compliment and compliment response, accusation and offence (Adams, 1981). The rule for formulating adjacency pairs is that the speaker should stop when his or her utterance is delivered, and wait for the conversational partner to produce the second part in response to his or her initial utterance, with relevance (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Thus an answer "I am going swimming!" is not the adjacent pair for the first utterance "Where is the bookshop?", as it has violated the operation rule of relevance.[8] The characteristics of adjacency pairs can be summarised as follows: (1) two utterances; (2) certain allocated positions of the utterances; (3) each utterance is produced by different speakers taking turns; (4) one part follows the other part sequentially; (5) determinative relation between the parts (e.g. if the first part utterance is a question, it often determines the second part to be a certain type of answer) (c.f. Adams, 1981).

The sequential nature of adjacency pairs make them rather convenient for light-hearted greetings in formal or informal conversational settings. They can be used as conversational openings or closings to smooth face-to-face communication, as concluded by Scollon & Scollon (1995, p. 59), "in short, adjacency sequences are formulas for cohesion". The formulaic adjacency pairs allow non-native language learners to master them fairly quickly and achieve high fluency. However, they may also put interlocutors into embarrassing situations when they fail to carry on the conversation beyond the few adjacency turns, as four to five turns seem to be the maximum number of adjacent sequences (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Even though adjacency pairs do not fully account for the complexities of conversations (Goffman, 1976), they are still a means to understand the speech acts of compliments and compliment responses in one conversational turn. The significance of the concept "adjacency pair" to this research is that a compliment in a specific setting will generate a certain response that is to some degree adjacent. This kind

[8] Compare with relevance in conversational maxim theory by Grice (1975).

of adjacency allows researchers to do comparative studies of compliment responses. While acknowledging that compliment responses are to some extent dependent on how the compliment is paid, I will move on to explore existing categorisations of compliment topics.

3.1.3 The categorisation of compliment topics

Among the existing body of research on compliments or complimenting behaviour, there are variations in the categorisation of compliment topics (Knap, Hopper, & Bell, 1984; Lee, 2009; Manes, 1983; Parisi & Wogan, 2006; Ralarala, 2007; Wieland, 1995; Yang 1987). Which compliment topics are good enough to represent common compliments in the daily conversations of different groups of English speakers? Compliment topics need to be carefully categorised. In Lai's (2009) study, four types of compliment topics are studied: appearance, achievement, clothes, and possession. A closer examination of the compliment topics categorised by Lai (2009) reveals that the topics "appearance" and "clothes" are very similar to each other. Similarities and differences of these two topics are not discussed in Lai's (2009) research.

Some studies only categorise compliment topics into three types: ability (skill), appearance, and possession (e.g. Ralarala, 2007). In this kind of categorisation, the first topic "ability (skill)" is sometimes categorised as "performance" or used with "ability" interchangeably (Yu, 1999). In the present study, I group similar compliment topics "ability", "skill", "performance" and "achievement" as one topic: "performance" (see section 4.4.2). The topic "appearance" often includes both facial appearance as well as clothing. In my study, I have grouped a person's appearance and clothes together as "appearance" (see section 4.4.2). For example, the compliment "you look amazing tonight!" can refer either or both to a person's facial appearance and/or body figure, as well as to the clothes and/or accessories the person is wearing. The topic "possession" is one popularly adopted compliment topic with less variation. I will continue to include this as a main category of compliments. One more compliment topic that Lai (2009) has not addressed is "personality" as a compliment topic. Personality[9] as a compliment topic has been addressed by some studies in the literature (Knapp et al., 1984; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Petit, 2006). Personality compliments often involve an overall, and somewhat ambiguous, compliment, not on a specific object, but on the person in general (c.f. Li, 2011; Motaghi-Tabari & de Beuzeville, 2012). Some researchers choose to focus on one compliment topic,

[9] Compare with "character and comportment" by Agyekum (2010).

e.g. “performance”, instead a range of topics for different research purposes (e.g. Yu, 1999). In my study, I will include four recategorised compliment topics: appearance, performance, possession and personality (see section 4.4.2). Having commented on categorisation of compliment topics, and outlined the compliment topics that dictate the compliment responses in the context of this research, I will now discuss the categorisation of compliment responses.

3.1.4 Categorisation of compliment responses

The study of the speech act of compliment response was pioneered by Pomerantz (1978). Starting with the communication frustration caused by denigrating sincere compliments between a wife and a husband, responding to compliments is found to be closely linked to managing interpersonal relationships. Relationship management involves processes of assessment. Paying compliments involves a first assessment, and responding to them can be construed as a second assessment. The second assessment therefore involves choosing from two constraints systems: agreements or disagreements toward compliments; and accepting or rejecting compliments (Pomerantz, 1978). While making choices, the main struggles speakers face are between, on the one hand, accepting or appreciating compliments, and agreeing with the content, or, on the other hand, avoiding self-praise, and risking being seen as impolite by rejecting or disagreeing with compliments abruptly. Hence, compliment responses are affected by the operation of multiple constraint systems, including supportive actions and/or self-praise avoidance (Pomerantz, 1978).

Since Pomerantz (1978) points out that both agreement and disagreement tokens are used in compliment responses in American English, subsequent researchers have tried to categorise compliment responses with special terms. For example, some common broad terms used by Herbert (1986) include AGREEMENT, NON-AGREEMENT, and OTHER INTERPRETATIONS (see Table 3), and other terms by Yu (1999) include ACCEPTANCE, AMENDMENT, NON-ACCEPTANCE, FACE RELATIONSHIP RELATED strategies, COMBINATION strategies, and NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT strategies (see Table 5). It is very common for researchers to categorise two levels of compliment response with one from a macro perspective – a relatively broad perspective, the other being micro perspective which provides detailed categorisations (e.g. Holmes, 1988). Though there are variations in categorising compliment responses in different languages, a shared goal by all researchers seems to be reporting data as completely and as systematically as possible. As compliment responses vary in form and in function and from

culture to culture, it is more of a reasonable option, rather than a problem, to modify compliment response categories in order to report data more completely.

Is the categorisation for English language or for multiple languages? This is a question worthy of mention in the process of categorising compliment responses. The categorisation of compliment responses for multiple languages is certainly more complex than categorising compliment responses involving the English language alone. In the context of categorisation involving multiple languages, or one language but multiple cultures, the generalisation and applicability of the compliment response categorisation has to be considered. This could be the very reason why there are so many different versions of compliment response categorisations. Before I present a modified version of categorisation for the purpose of this study, I will provide an overview of a few versions of compliment response categorisation that are relevant to my thesis, and have guided the categorisation for my study in different ways.

Herbert's (1986) categorisation of compliment responses in American English (see Table 3), and Holmes' (1988) categorisation of compliment responses in New Zealand English, are among the most widely accepted (see Table 4). A similarity between these two versions is that they apply to the English language only. Some researchers have completely adopted existing versions of compliment response categorisation for their own study. For example, Lai's (2009) study and Tang and Zhang's (2009) study have adopted Holmes' (1988) categorisation of compliment responses. The difference is that Lai's (2009) study involves only the English language, whereas Tang and Zhang's (2009) study involves both Mandarin and English, and a comparative analysis. Adopting a complete set of compliment response categorisation has a somewhat dictating influence on the overall research findings, because the terms for describing response categories eventually become terms to describe the research results. For example, in Tang & Zhang's (2009) study, it was found that Chinese participants used fewer ACCEPT strategies and more EVADE and REJECT strategies than their Australian counterparts. The Australians were found to be more direct in responding to compliments than Chinese, and Australians used more combination strategies than the Mandarin Chinese.

Table 3 Herbert's (1986, p. 79) categorisation of compliment responses

Response Type			**Example**
A. Agreement	I. Acceptances	Appreciation Token	Thanks; thank you; [smile]
		Comment Acceptance	Thanks, it's my favourite too.
		Praise Upgrade	Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it?
	II. Comment History		I bought it for the trip to Arizona.
	III. Transfers	Reassignment	My brother gave it to me.
		Return	So's yours.
B. Non-agreement	I. Scale Down		It's really quite old.
	II. Question		Do you really think so?
	III. Non-acceptances	Disagreement	I really hate it.
		Qualification	It's all right, but Len's is nicer.
	IV. No Acknowledgement		[silence]
C. Other Interpretations	I. Request		You wanna borrow this one too?

Are categorisations of compliment responses applicable to other languages? In Herbert's (1986) study, this question is posed as "Do non-American speakers of English behave similarly?" (p. 81). In a comparative study (Herbert, 1986, p. 82), English-speaking South Africans are found to be much more likely (75%) to use ACCEPTANCE responses than American English speakers (25%). The following comments (Herbert, 1986) further illustrate this phenomenon:

> Certain data suggest that the pattern reported here may be uniquely American. That is, varieties of English differ from one another not only in phonology, syntax, and lexicon, but also in pragmatics, that is, in the ways in which speakers use the linguistic repertoire available to them. Such differences have crucial importance for learners of English and for speakers of other varieties of English; both groups, operating with other norms, are liable to misinterpret and be misinterpreted in the American context. (p. 81).

In the context of the present research, neither American English nor New Zealand English are in focus, but rather Australian English and Chinese ESL learners' English. Therefore, I refrain from borrowing a complete set of compliment response categories from previous researchers. Coincidentally, it seems that a plausible way of dealing with the issue of their applicability in languages other than English, or in addition to English, is by modifying compliment strategies or creating add-on compliment strategies (e.g. Yuan, 1998; Yu, 1999).

Table 4 Holmes' (1988, p. 460) categorisation of compliment responses

Response Type		**Examples**
A. ACCEPT	l. Appreciation/agreement token	Thanks, yes
	2. Agreeing utterance	I think it's lovely too.
	3. Downgrading/qualifying utterance	It's not too bad, is it?
	4. Return compliment	You're looking good too.
B. REJECT	1. Disagreeing utterance	I'm afraid I don't like it much.
	2. Question accuracy	Is beautiful the right word?
	3. Challenge sincerity	You don't really mean that.
C. DEFLECT / EVADE	1. Shift credit	My mother knitted it.
	2. Informative comment	I bought it at that Vibrant Knits place.
	3. Ignore	It's time we were leaving, isn't it?
	4. Legitimate evasion	(Context needed to illustrate)
	5. Request reassurance/repetition	Do you really think so?

The categorisation of compliment responses in Yu's (1999) dissertation applies both to English and to Taiwan Mandarin compliment responses (see Table 5). Compared with Herbert's (1986) and Holmes' (1988) categorisations, Yu (1999) developed new strategies to reflect different types of data. For example, ASSOCIATION is a strategy to describe more than one substrategy within a main strategy (macro strategy). FACE RELATIONSHIP-RELATED RESPONSE strategies refer to those strategies that do not indicate a clear stance, i.e. neither accept nor reject the compliment, and this is called a "metacommunicative response" because it "does not deal with the propositional content of the compliment" (Yu, 1999, p. 69). The categorisation in Yu's (1999) study reflects the different needs of data involving different languages.

Table 5 Yu's (1999, pp. 61 – 70) categorisation of compliment responses

Response Type		**English Examples**
Acceptance strategies	Appreciation Token	Thank you !
	Agreement	Yeah, I think it went well, too.
	Pleasure	I'm glad you liked it.
	Association	Thank you! I'm glad you liked it.
Amendment strategies	Return	Yours was as good as mine.
	Downgrade	Oh, I think I'm only doing okay.
	Upgrade	You can say that again!
	Question	You really liked it?
	Comment	I've been practising a lot recently.
	Transfer	I believe you will have a good one too.
	Association	It's only OK I think yours is pretty good.
Non-acceptance strategies	Disagreement	I'm not sure.
	Qualification	Well, actually, I think it sort of dragged out.
	Diverge	You must be kidding!
	Association	I don't think so. You've got to be joking.
Face relationship related response strategies	N/A	I'm embarrassed.
Combination strategies	N/A	Thank you! Do you really think it's good?
No acknowledgement	N/A	N/A

In Yuan's (1998) study of compliment responses in one type of Mandarin in China, more strategies are added (see Table 6). Yuan (1998) avoided using macro-level strategies, and categorised thirteen semantic formulas to analyse compliment responses in Kunming Chinese, as shown in Table 6. All the 13 strategies Yuan (1998) categorised are parallel individual strategies. I will make comments here on strategies that reflect Yuan's (1998) efforts in tailoring the response strategies for achieving applicability in a Chinese context (Kunming).

Table 6 Yuan's (1998, pp. 101-106) categorisation of compliment responses for Kunming Chinese

Response Type	**Mandarin Examples**	**Translation in English**
1. Acceptance	我很高兴你这么说。	I'm glad you said so.
2. Explanation	自己的房间嘛肯定都会整得干干净净的。	Well, it's one's own room, and one should of course keep it very clean.
3. Return	再漂亮也没得你新娘漂亮……	No matter how beautifiul [I may be, I'm] not as beautiful as you, the bride.
4. Appreciation	谢谢你的夸奖。	Thank you for your compliment.
5.Question	咯是？	Is it?
6. Reassignment	这是媳妇的功劳。	This is all because of my wife.
7. Suggestion	赶快去买， 这几天要便宜一点。	Go and buy [one yourself] quickly. They're cheaper at the moment.
8. Invitation	不用客气，您也常来玩。	Don't be polite. You come and play often too.
9. Upgrade	哎， 么咯是我平常不漂亮嘎？我平常比这个还漂亮！	Well, do you mean to say I'm not beautiful at other times? I'm even more beautiful at other times!
10. Downgrade	哎，也只是代表云南队了。	Well, [I'm] only representing Yunnan. (= No big deal.)
11. Disagreement	没，没，没，一般点了。	No, no, no. Just so so.
12. Refusal	佩服哪样，应该的嘛。	Why respect! [It's what I] should do.
13. Opt out	N/A	N/A

EXPLANATION is a strategy similar to COMMENT ACCEPTANCE or COMMENT HISTORY in Herbert's (1986) study, INFORMATIVE COMMENT in Holmes' (1988) study, and ASSOCIATION in Yu's (1999) study. SUGGESTION is first used by Yuan (1999) to describe culture-specific responses that suggest to the speaker to do something as a way of responding to compliments. INVITATION is a new semantic formula (strategy) introduced by Yuan (1999) to describe responses inviting the speaker to take part in an activity.

Having outlined a number of important versions of compliment response categorisations, I now turn to point out a few challenges researchers face, before I present the categorisation of compliment responses for the present study.

One of the challenges in categorising compliment responses is to distinguish if speakers agree or disagree, i.e. accept or do not accept the compliments. For example, in Yuan (1998), DISAGREEMENT and REFUSAL are two very similar strategies. The

example she gave, “No, no, no. Just so so”, for DISAGREEMENT strategy is also a REFUSAL such as “Don’t be so polite!” (see Table 6). The utterance “Why respect!” could be QUESTION if followed by a question mark and at the same time a REFUSAL. How to categorise this kind of response depends on the researcher’s personal intuition to judge whether a compliment response is to show DISAGREEMENT (sincere REFUSAL) or just a conventional insincere REFUSAL. Therefore I prefer to categorise responses expressing both DISAGREEMENT AND REFUSAL as REJECTION (see Table 7). As AGREEMENT and DISAGREEMENT involve a speaker’s personal interpretation, and seem to be more ambiguous than the terms ACCEPTANCE versus NON-ACCEPTANCE, I did not use these terms.

The challenge of distinguishing response types also includes dealing with overlapping strategies. Herbert’s (1986) taxonomy: REQUEST strategy in his OTHER INTERPRETATIONS “You wanna borrow this one too?” can be interpreted as a QUESTION strategy. Tang and Zhang (2009) adapted Holmes’ (1988) compliment response taxonomy. Their categorisation has three macro strategies (ACCEPT, REJECT, and EVADE) and ten micro-strategies. DOWNGRADING or QUALIFYING are treated as micro strategies under the macro strategy ACCEPT. This is problematic, as sometimes qualifying is not DOWNGRADING. For example, a compliment response to a compliment on academic achievement such as “Thank you. I have worked really hard for that” should be categorised as QUALIFICATION, rather than DOWNGRADING. The micro strategy REQUEST assurance under EVADE strategy is similar to QUESTION strategy. The response “Really?” is an example listed for both REQUEST ASSURANCE and QUESTION ACCURACY (see Table 4). This kind of categorisation causes confusion. To deal with this problem, UNCERTAINTY is used to represent both compliment responses with a question mark and those expressing uncertainty in a statement. In this case, both “Really?” and “At first, I’m not so sure about my decision” are categorised as UNCERTAINTY. For compliment responses that reassign the credit to someone else, return the compliment to the complimenter, or change conversation topic, I use the term “TRANSFER”. For example, in “… Guy at the shop was very helpful”, the complimenter reassigned the credit to the guy at the shop when he was complimented for his iPad.

Whether to categorise stylistic features as compliment response type is another challenge. For example, JOKING is categorised as one of the ten strategies by R. Chen (1993). However, humour or joking can happen to a variety of compliment response strategies. A compliment response such as “Next year, I am going to soar up in the sky” is

JOKING, meanwhile, it is a praise UPGRADE. Therefore, stylistic features of compliment responses should be treated separately from the response strategies that distinguish in general whether they are REJECTIONs or ACCEPTANCEs.

One more challenge in categorising compliment responses is the vagueness and oversimplification of categories, possibly for the sake of simplifying the process of data analysis. This kind of vagueness and oversimplification can be exemplified in Lai (2009). In Lai's (2009) study, three kinds of compliment responses are broadly categorised based on Holmes' (1988) study: ACCEPT, REJECT, and DEFLECT or EVADE. These three strategies are not specific enough to account for the complex varieties of compliment responses (see section 3.1.3). Regardless of the length of compliment responses, one response generated by one scenario was categorised as one category (c.f. Lai, 2009). This causes a problem because one response may contain contradictory utterances. For example, in response to the compliment on appearance, the response "Thank you very much. I slept very well last night. It's so nice of you being thoughtful of me. How was your sleep last night?" (Lai, 2009, p. 53) is not simply a DEFLECT or ACCEPT. Rather it contains strategies such as APPRECIATION in "Thank you very much"; comments that signify ACCEPTANCE in "I slept very well last night"; returning the credit in "It's so nice of you being thoughtful for me"; and a QUESTION in "How was your sleep last night?" Hence, categorisations of compliments need to be more specific and based on elements of the response rather than an overall type.

Based on the analysis of the challenges and categorisations (c.f. section 3.1.3) by previous researchers (c.f. Herbert, 1986; Holmes, 1988; Pomerantz, 1978; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Y. Yuan, 1998; Yu, 1999), I provide a relatively more complete version of compliment response strategies (see Table 7) to represent compliment response types in the context of this study, which includes fourteen strategies. I have rejected the idea of categorising a few sentences in one data entry (all utterances as an answer to the pre-designed compliment scenario) as one compliment response strategy. Instead, every instance of the compliment responses in one entry is categorised as one type. To take an example from Herbert's (1986, p.79) categorisation, the response "Thanks, it's my favourite too" is no longer categorised as one strategy COMMENT ACCEPTANCE but one APPRECIATION TOKEN strategy plus one COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategy. For strategies in each of the macro types (ACCEPTANCE, NON-ACCEPTANCE and OTHER INTERPRETATIONS), I tried to avoid overlap as much as possible. However, at times, when compliment responses do not instantly fit into any of the fourteen response

types, I opt for the most similar strategy by instinct. For example, as a response to the compliment on cooking skills, the expression "You can come to my house again and we can cook together" is categorised as INVITATION. In responding to a compliment on the iPad, the expression "you can get one too" is a SUGGESTION, and the expression "I can teach you how to play" is categorised as an OFFER. I now describe all the fourteen strategies as follows (see Table 7 for preliminary examples):

ACCEPTANCE STRATEGIES: utterances that acknowledge the compliments received (c.f. Yu, 1999). The literal meaning often signify that the speaker accepts the compliments. Some researchers preferred to use AGREEMENT (e.g. Herbert, 1986). Five sub-strategies as varieties of ACCEPTANCE strategies are as follows:

1. APPRECIATION TOKEN: utterances that show acceptance of the compliments independent of the semantic meanings of the compliments (c.f. Herbert, 1986).
2. COMMENT ACCEPTANCE: utterances that show acceptance of the compliments, and they are often relevant comments to the complimented topic. (c.f. Herbert, 1986). This strategy also includes the sub-strategy "COMMENT HISTORY", used by Herbert (1986, p. 78) to refer to comments that are impersonal.
3. UPGRADE: utterances that are referred to as "PRAISE UPGRADE" by Herbert (1986, p. 78), which signifies that the given compliment is not enough in force. This kind of strategy is often related to humourous speech or hyperbole.
4. RETURN: utterances that show that the complimentee returns back to the complimenter similar or different compliments (c.f. Herbert, 1986).
5. TRANSFER: utterances that shift the credit of the compliment to another person (c.f. Herbert, 1986). This strategy is similar to Herbert's (1986) REASSIGNMENT strategy (see also Y. Yuan, 1998). This kind of strategy is a strategy the complimentee can use when they do not feel they deserve the credit.

NON-ACCEPTANCE STRATEGIES: utterances that directly or indirectly show that the complimentee is unwilling to accept the compliments (c.f. Yu, 1999). Some researchers use the term NON-AGREEMENT instead (e.g. Herbert, 1986). Common sub-strategies under this main category are listed as follows:

6. REJECTION: utterances that show the speaker directly that the complimentee does not take the compliment. This strategy is similar to Holmes' (1988) main category REJECT and Yuan's (1998) category REFUSAL, which asks the complimenter not to give compliments for the sake of being polite.
7. QUALIFICATION: utterances that qualify the compliments received, partially denying the compliments with words such as "but", "well", "though", etc. (c.f. Herbert, 1986, p. 78).
8. DOWNGRADE: utterances that show the speaker tries to reduce the degree of the compliment because the complimentee could not agree with the compliment. This strategy is similar to Herbert's (1986) strategy SCALE DOWN.

9. UNCERTAINTY: This strategy has not been found in the literature. It is a term that is similar to QUESTION (see Herbert, 1986) and the strategy QUESTION ACCURACY (see Holmes, 1988). In addition, I use this term to refer to utterances that do not appear to be a question but expresses uncertainty, such as the expression "I'm not sure about that".

10. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: also known as OPT OUT (see Y. Yuan, 1998, p. 106), this strategy means that the complimentees either do not respond at all or change conversation topic (Herbert, 1986).

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS: This main strategy was first used by Herbert to refer to a subtype REQUEST strategy in which the complimentee had interpretations of the utterance other than compliments. As there was overlap problems with REQUEST strategy, I exclude this strategy, but include the following four substrategies for the present study:

11. INVITATION: This strategy was first added by Yuan (1998) for studying compliment responses in Kunming Chinese. It refers to utterances that invite a complimenter to do an activity or several activities. Even though this thesis looks into compliment responses in English (by Australians and Chinese ESL learners), this is a highly applicable strategy due to possible transfer from Mandarin to English.

12. SUGGESTION: This strategy is also from Yuan's (1998) categorisation, which refers to utterances expressing suggestions.

13. OFFER: This strategy has not been used in the literature. I use this strategy to refer to utterances that express offering help from the complimentee to the complimenter based on the compliments received, often used after a SUGGESTION strategy or INVITATION strategy.

14. JUSTIFICATION: This strategy is also a newly added strategy for the current study. JUSTIFICATION includes responses that do not express a clear stance, such as conventional and formulaic responses that could be taken as a relatively neutral response, or, a response that has very little meaning. A similar type is seen in Yu's (1998) cateogrisation – FACE RELATIONSHIP-RELATED RESPONSE strategies. JUSTIFICATION also includes some responses that offer a reason to explain why the complimentee is doing something for the complimenter (see example in Table 7), in particular, when the complimenter receives a compliment on his or her personality. A typical example in Australian English would be "No worries" or "Cheers".

15. INTERJECTION: This strategy is a newly categorised strategy in the present study. Interjections are often categorised into other types of strategies according to the utterance following the interjections (e.g. Y. Yuan, 1998; Yu, 1999). The interjections are treated as an independent strategy in this study to achieve better accuracy in data analysis.

Table 7 CR strategies for data analysis for the present study

Macro strategies	**Micro strategies**	**Examples**
Acceptance	1. Appreciation Token	Thanks / Thank you / I really appreciate that.
	2. Comment Acceptance	I really like it too.
	3. Upgrade	Yeah, I may join the World Cup.
	4. Return	You look awesome too / So do you!
	5. Transfer	My mother taught me how.
Non-acceptance	6. Rejection	Not really.
	7. Qualification	I have worked hard for it.
	8. Downgrade	It is actually not that good.
	9. Uncertainty	You think so? / I'm not sure about that.
	10. No acknowledgement	(Silence)
Other Interpretations	11. Invitation	Please come to my house for dinner again soon.
	12. Suggestion	You should buy one for yourself.
	13. Offer	If you want me to help you buy the book, I can go with you.
	14. Justification	It's my pleasure because we are friends / It's my pleasure/no worries.
	15. Interjection	Well / You know / Oh / Wow/ Aww / etc.

With the awareness of the challenges all compliment response categorisers face, I refrain from contending that the above modified strategies (see Table 7) are perfect for studying compliment responses in an intercultural context. It is nearly impossible to avoid overlap of categories of compliment responses, despite all the efforts researchers make to distinguish speakers' speech behaviour. In my opinion, the categorisation of compliment responses is largely based on formal meanings of speech, i.e. literal meaning out of a discursive conversational context. A question I could not help raising while categorising compliment responses is, how sincere are the speakers? The sincerity of these strategies in form is to be determined in a conversational context. Among the above 14 strategies, JUSTIFICATION is the very strategy that stands on the fence between formal and functional aspects of a compliment response. Highly formulaic expressions are categorised in this type, which means that it is very unlikely that they have strong literal meanings. It might be just for the sake of dealing with face issues (c.f. Yu, 1999) or phatic communications that go by speakers' ears. The issue of applicability or generalisability to different varieties of English in the context of this research will continue to be a challenge. Despite discrepancies in all versions of compliment responses, the categorisation in Table

7 forms a basis for data (discourse completion task data, more details see section 4.4.2) analysis in the present study. The accuracy of compliment response categorisation is relative, depending on different research contexts. As argued in the theoretical framework in section 2.3.4, both formal aspects (general meaning from linguistic forms) and functional aspects (meaning in context) of compliment responses need to be considered, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of them. I will discuss such issues further in section 4.4.3, where I present how interview themes for the present study.

Having introduced the significance of compliments (section 3.1.1), the adjacency of compliments and compliment responses (3.1.2), the categorisation of compliment topics (section 3.1.3), and the development of compliment response categorisation for this study (section 3.1.4), I will now discuss responding to compliments in an intercultural context (section 3.2).

3.2 Responding to compliments in the target environment

The term "target environment" has been used to refer to the language environment where English is spoken as a dominant language, first language or official language, such as the United States (c.f. Lai, 2009). The target environment is often related to terms such as "target language norms" (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996), "target language environment" or "target culture". In this section, I will first introduce Lai's study (section 3.2.1). Then, I will use Lai's (2009) study as a prompt to further my discussion of important factors that cause variation in compliment responses: regional variation in language use of complimentees (section 3.2.2) and gender of interlocutors (section 3.2.3).

3.2.1 Lai's (2009) study on the target environment

In the existing body of literature on complimenting behaviour, one of the most relevant studies to my topic is carried out by Lai (2009). In Lai's (2009) study, English compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners were studied in view of their length of stay in the target environment – the American English environment. Four groups of participants were chosen to participate in this study: one US group and three groups of participants with different lengths of stay in the US (less than 6 months, 1 to 2 years, and 3 years and above). The participants included 27 US college students and 45 Chinese ESL students (15 students in each group). The ages of the participants vary from 20 to 30 years old. The Chinese participants in Lai's (2009) study are from China or Taiwan.

In the questionnaire for Lai's (2009) study, four complimenting situations are included, covering four topics: appearance, achievement, clothes and possession. Data was

categorised with Holmes' (1988) categorisation of compliment responses, including three broad categories: ACCEPT, REJECT, and DEFLECT or EVADE (see Table 4). ACCEPT includes compliment response strategies that express appreciation or agreement. REJECT includes compliment response strategies that show disagreement. DEFLECT or EVADE refer to compliment responses that transfer the credits.

In the data analysis of Lai's (2009) study, the gender of the complimentee, the compliment topic and the length of stay, were the main variables resulting in variations in Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses. What is surprising is that the participants from all groups used similar compliment responses, regardless of their nationality. The effect of the target environment in terms of length of stay on the compliment responses of Chinese ESL speakers is not significant. For example, in responses to compliments on academic performance, the group of Chinese ESL students that has the shortest length of stay showed the highest tendency to use ACCEPT. Another example is for the compliment on clothes. The Chinese ESL group with the shortest length of stay in the US was found to show the most resemblance to the US group. Furthermore, among responses to compliments on appearance, the Chinese ESL group that has the longest length of stay has shown a persistent high tendency to use DEFLECT strategies. Therefore, Lai (2009) concludes that the examination of the effect of the language environment ESL should no longer be limited to the learners' physical presence in the second language environment. The influence of the target environment may transcend geographical boundaries due to the proliferation of communication online (Lai, 2009).

The compliment topic is found to play an influential role in deciding the compliment responses (Lai, 2009). For compliments on performance, the preferred compliment responses were ACCEPT; for compliment on clothes, the preferred responses were DEFLECT and ACCEPT; for appearance, the preferred responses were DEFLECT; and for possession, ACCEPT is the main response type. More variations of compliment responses regarding compliment topics will continue to be reported in the following report of gender-related variations.

The gender of the complimentee is considered in Lai's (2009) study. For gender-related variations, Chinese female participants, regardless of their length of stay in the US, tend to return the compliments most when responding to compliments on performance and clothes. Another finding regarding gender variations is that Chinese female ESL learners are more likely to accept compliments on academic performance, whereas their male

counterparts tend to use multiple strategies such as ACCEPT, DEFLECT, REJECT, or a mixture of different responses. Chinese female groups' responses to clothes-related compliments often include a lexical hedge such as "Really?" to express uncertainty. Following the hedge is often the strategy of accepting or returning the compliment. However, Chinese male groups are less likely to accept the credit, often using a mixture of different responses or deflecting it with additional comments. In the US group, female participants deflect the clothes-related compliments more frequently than their male counterparts. For compliments on appearance, both Chinese male and female ESL learners preferred to use DEFLECT strategies. In the US group, male and female participants also use DEFLECT as a predominant strategy, but the male group use more explicit disagreement in addition to DEFLECT. Regarding compliments on possession, Chinese female participants preferred to use ACCEPT, whereas the male responses are mixed. In the US group, no significant variations between male and female groups are found.

Deflecting the credit is a strategy used by all participants (Lai, 2009). DEFLECT is often used with additional information, which is seen as the most common tactic to avoiding taking all the credit from the complimenter (Lai, 2009). Lexical hedges are used in different ways by the Chinese ESL learners and the US group: for Chinese, lexical hedges are used to express modesty and politeness, whereas the US group used them as implicit rejections of compliments and ways of maintaining solidity (Lai, 2009).

Having reviewed one of the most relevant studies to my topic, I will now discuss in more detail the issues that have not been addressed, or have not been addressed in detail, in Lai's (2009) study. Because of its relevance to my study, I continue to use Lai's (2009) research as a prompt for my further discussion of factors that influence compliment responses in the next section.

3.2.2 Region of the complimenter and complimentee

A close look at Lai's (2009) research design and data collection procedures reveal that the issue of regional difference has not been considered, which may have an impact on realisations of complimenting behaviour. As reported earlier, the Chinese ESL participants for Lai's (200) study are either from China or Taiwan, contacted through friends or members of the Taiwanese Student Association in a US college. Mainland China and Taiwan vary in their political environment, which is related to educational environment, in particular, the amount of contact with English L1 speakers from other countries. The region of the Chinese ESL learners has some impact on the realisations of compliments in

L2 (Lin et al., 2012). Mainland Chinese ESL learners and Taiwan ESL learners share commonalities in eliciting explicit compliments as the most popular strategy of complimenting, but vary significantly in eliciting a few implicit compliment strategies (Lin et al., 2012). In terms of regional impact on complimenting behaviour, Mack and Sykes (2009) compare the Spanish spoken in Spain and Mexico respectively, and find that native Spanish speakers from Spain are more humorous and ironic, compared with native Spanish speakers from Mexico. More specifically, compliment responses vary more significantly to compliments with positive irony than responses to compliments with negative irony. Mexican Spanish speakers used more SCALE DOWN and COMMENT HISTORY strategies than the speakers in Spain (Mack & Sykes, 2009). To address the issue of pragmatic variation existing in different varieties of the same language due to regional impact, in this study I only recruited participants from mainland China (see section 4.5).

3.2.3 Gender of the complimenter and complimentee

The gender of the complimenter is often ignored in complimenting behaviour research compared, with most of the attention paid to the gender of the complimentee (Wolfson, 1989). In some cases, the gender of the complimenter and the complimentee is considered at the same time (e.g. Cordella, Large & Pardo, 1995). Discussions of gender variation in paying compliments start with Wolfson (1983). In American English, it is found that the number of compliments given and received by women in American English is higher than that of men (Wolfson, 1983a). In another study, it is found that gender roles in different social settings account for these differences (Wolfson, 1984). For example, it is considered a social norm for women to be judged in terms of their self-presentation and social manners, whereas men are less prone to judgements or comments on their behaviour in these areas (Woflson, 1984). Different complimenting styles between men and women are also found by Johnson (1992). It is found that women tend to use more compliment intensifiers and personal referencing than men, and women tend to accommodate to the addressee more. Based on Woflson's (1983, 1984) and Johnson's studies, the gender of the complimenter and the gender of the complimentee are both relevant in shaping a speaker's compliment responses. The question is, how to integrate these issues when doing a comparative study, such as examining ESL speakers' compliment response behaviour in the intercultural and interlanguage target environment. In a designed conversational setting, is it possible to design gender-friendly compliments that are suitable to be given and received for both men and women? I call this kind of ideal compliment "relatively gender-neutral compliments" as it is suitable to be used and received by both men and women.

In order to include the gender of the complimenter, both male and female complimenters and complimenteees should be examined. So I will use relatively gender-neutral compliments as an approach for including the gender of the complimenter and the gender of the complimentee in collecting comparative data. Now the question is: if gender-neutral compliments are helpful for comparative studies, such as is the focus of this study – examining the effect of the target environment on Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses – are they representative enough for the dynamic and vast complimenting behavours across cultures? As a researcher, these issues have to be addressed in one way or another. One the one hand, the representativeness of different compliments has to be sacrificed to some extent, because there are already a large number of variables involved in an intercultural study-abroad context for monitoring ESL learners' speech behaviour. The representativeness of different compliments in terms of gender variations should not be over-emphasised, because in some conversational settings, men and women nearly equally give and receive compliments (Rees-Miller, 2011).

Having used Lai's (2009) study as an anchoring point in discussing various factors (region of complimentees, compliment topics, and gender of the interlocutors) that influence how ESL learners respond to compliments, I will continue to explore other approaches to measure the effect of the target environment.

3.3 Measuring the effect of the target environment

The above discussions inspired by Lai's (2009) study have addressed the region of the complimentees, compliment topic and gender of complimenters and complimentees. As the main focus of this study is to examine change in language use in an intercultural context (see section 2.3), more specifically, I aim to examine the effect of the target environment on compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners. I will continue to use Lai's (2009) study as an anchoring point to discuss the key factors regarding "the effect of the target environment" on ESL learners' compliment responses. I will start the discussion with ESL learners' "length of stay" and "intensity of interaction" in the target environment (section 3.3.1). Then I will discuss the relevant factor "the role of instruction" (section 3.3.2), Other factors such as age, the relationship between interlocutors, and status, will also be discussed (section 3.3.3).

3.3.1 Length of stay and intensity of interaction

The ESL speakers' length of stay in the target culture and intensity of interaction with monolingual English speakers, are the two obviously correlated factors that impact their L2

acquisition and pragmatic development.[10] As reported earlier, Lai's (2009) study shows that there are neither significant differences between the Chinese ESL groups that have different lengths of stay in the US, nor significant differences between Chinese ESL groups and the US group in their compliment responses. This result is questionable, because of a number of issues. Some issues have been discussed above, i.e. the region of the complimentees has been neglected (see section 3.2.2) and the categorisation of compliment responses is very broad (see section 3.1.4). Other factors that are closely related to the effect of length of stay on the compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners have also been ignored. For example, intensity of interaction with English L1 speakers in the US, as well as the level of proficiency of the Chinese ESL learners at the point of entry to the US, have not been considered.

An ESL learner's length of stay in the target environment cannot be looked at alone when examining the effect of the target environment on the compliment responses of Chinese speakers of English. As mentioned by Lai (2009), online communication is becoming more prevalent, and the exposure to online media might be influential in Chinese ESL learners' English proficiency levels. This means that length of stay in the target environment could not fully account for the variations in compliment responses. This could be a reason why no significant differences are found among different groups of Chinese ESL learners.

Beyond the influence of the online communication, I call the influence of other forms of communication, such as direct face-to-face interaction with English speakers in the target environment, or conversations on the phone, as "offline communication". Both online and offline communication is communication that makes a difference in ESL learners' speech behaviour. Such communication constitutes "intensity of interaction" with the English L1 speakers. Research has shown that intensity of interaction, in contrast with social seclusion, plays a major role in affecting ESL learners' speech behaviour (c.f. Bella, 2011). For example, intensity of interaction is a more effective mechanism than length of residence in influencing non-native speakers of Greek in their politeness strategies and mitigation devices used to refuse an invitation (Bella, 2011). While using "length of stay" as a variable to measure the effect of the target environment is insufficient, is intensity of

[10] ESL learners' proficiency level in L2 is also a very important factor that influences their pragmatic approach in responding to compliments. Research has shown that different levels of L2 may use similar syntactic structures in compliment responses, but differ in frequencies of occurrence and lengths of utterances (Holtman, 2005). Because L2 proficiency has been discussed as a correlating factor in section 2.3.1with the degree of pragmatic transfer, I will not delve into detail in this section.

interaction enough? Are considerations of both length of stay and intensity of interaction enough? What about the role of instruction? I will respond to these questions in section 3.4, but now I will keep discussing factors influencing ESL learners' compliment responses in the target environment in the following section.

3.3.2 The role of instruction

How instruction, or different approaches to instruction, influence language learners' speech act behaviour has been investigated by a number of researchers (e.g. Kasper & Rose, 2002; Sadeghi, 2012). As for teaching the giving and receiving of compliments, researchers have found that implicit and explicit instruction of appropriate complimenting behaviour, in relation to cultural norms or social rules of speaking, have positive effects on learners' communicative performance (see Dastjerdi & Farshid, 2011; Grossi, 2009; Karimnia & Afghari, 2010; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011). I will provide more examples of research that studies the role of instruction.

Billmyer (1990) studies how instruction affects Japanese ESL learners' complimenting behaviour. It is reported that, compared with the untutored group, the tutored Japanese ESL learners produced a larger number of norm-appropriate compliments, demonstrated a higher level of spontaneity in initiating compliments, and used a more extensive repertoire of semantically positive adjectives in compliments. As for response types, the tutored group used a richer variety of deflections, and longer responses, whereas the other group used simple expressions of acceptance or rejection.

Other researchers find that instruction can serve as a role model for improving learners' pragmatic language use. For example, in Huth's (2006) study, culture-specific compliment-response sequences have been taught to 20 American learners of German (Huth, 2006). After a period of instruction, participants are able to produce German culture-specific complimenting patterns with L2 discourse markers. Meanwhile, they also demonstrate their ability to negotiate cultural identity when using L2 sequences.

Classroom instruction of cultural values in one's own country, as well as in the target culture, can assist learners to achieve cultural literacy and linguistic control of the target language (Ishihara, 2010). Learners can be helped to interpret others' compliments and compliment responses, and they can be encouraged to negotiate their identities, subjectivities and personal intentions in paying and responding to compliments in cross-cultural contexts (Ishihara, 2010).

Having explained some main factors that may influence ESL learners' compliment responses (section 3.3.1 and section 3.3.2), I will further discuss other personal factors that may influence ESL learners' compliment responses (3.3.3).

3.3.3 Other personal factors

In addition to length of stay, intensity of interaction, and the role of instruction that affect ESL learners' performance in L2, I will discuss here more personal variables that affect L2 performance, such as age, the relationship between interlocutors, and social status. In light of the discussion of these variables, I will also point out how they have shaped the direction of my research.

The social variable of age has received less attention and treatment compared to gender. Only a few researchers have included this variable in their research with regards to compliment studies (Cordella et al. 1995; Knapp et al. 1983; Migdadi, 2003; Y. Yuan, 1998). In the Cordella et al. (1995) study, the differences in complimenting behaviours between interlocutors above 30 years old and those under 30 years old are discovered. Compliment recipients under 30 years old are most likely to receive compliments on their appearance, whereas those older than 30 are more likely to receive compliments on their skills (Cordella et al., 1995). The compliment recipients' ages are more influential than the complimenters' ages (Cordella et al., 1995). Migdadi (2003) also considered the variable of age in his research of Jordanian Arabic compliments. Three age groups were chosen for this study: young (18-35), middle-aged (36-55), and older (56 and over). The fieldworkers who collected compliment examples were young people, which resulted in a larger repertoire of compliments from young people. Young people paid compliments more frequently than the other two groups. The older people group paid compliments the least frequently. It was concluded that this result was to do with sociopolitical conditions of Jordan. It was also found that compliments were most frequently directed to people of similar age, which is in the same vein as Yuan's (1998) findings.

The relationship between the interlocutors also influences the complimenting behaviour. For example, Doohan and Manusov's (2004) study indicates that compliments in romantic relationships do not tend to follow the formulaic structures of compliments as found in former research, and that women are more aware of compliments than men. The relationship between the interlocutors is often related to social status. The social variable of status involves both vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal dimensions of the relationship between the complimenters and compilmentees. The vertical relationship is concerned

more to do with power relations, whereas the horizontal relationship manifests the degree of intimacy between interlocutors. It was found that in America, compliments occur most frequently between status equals who share similar age (Wolfson, 1983a). This supports Wolfson's (1988) bulge theory, in which acquaintances "bulge out" in complimenting frequencies, exceeding strangers at one end of the continuum and intimates at the other end.[11] With regard to the frequency of compliments, complimenters generally compliment others who are of the same age (Knapp et al., 1984). Complimenters of different age show preference toward different compliment topics (Knapp et al., 1984). People under 30 years old prefer to compliment on appearance and attire, whereas older interlocutors prefer to compliment on performance and personality.

The interacting effects of different factors on ESL learners' compliment responses make it nearly impossible to measure the effect of the target environment. How can researchers measure the effect of the target environment accurately? The accuracy of the effect of the target environment is at stake if researchers only choose one or a number of factors to consider. Hence I argue that a new perspective is needed to provide in-depth insights into how ESL learners change their language behaviour in responding to compliments. I will now explain the evolvement of research questions in the next section, based on the discussions in this chapter so far.

3.4 Evolving research questions

> *It does not matter how well you design a questionnaire or how skilled an interviewer you are; you must be clear about your research questions.*
> *(Bryman, 2012, p. 10)*

As mentioned in section 3.1.1, complimenting behaviour is a very complex phenomenon that has multiple functions. Categorising compliment response is also a challenging task (see section 3.1.4). The way of responding to compliments in a target environment is not only influenced by general factors, such the region where the interlocutors come from, compliment topics, and gender variations (see section 3.2), but also length of stay and intensity of interaction, L2 proficiency, the role of instruction, and other factors (see section 3.3). I am to some degree steering away from the approach of exploring the effect of the target environment by examining ESL learners' length of stay, intensity of interaction, and L2 proficiency, or other co-existing factors, because it is nearly impossible to achieve a high degree of accuracy. Instead, I will turn to a relatively holistic approach

[11] Compare with Cordella, Large & Pardo (1995).

and focus on the formal and functional aspects of change in language use in the target environment with regards to Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses (see section 2.4).

Moving from a general research context (Chapter 2) to a specific research context, and meanwhile developing specific research questions, has been a challenging journey, because my research questions are both leading my research but also being shaped by the existing literature. Research questions are sometimes regarded as "constant but changing companions" (Benitt, 2014, p. 81). Having discarded the idea of using one factor, such as length of stay in the target environment to measure the effect of the target environment, the elements of effects have to be re-organised and re-evaluated. Recalling the discussions of "culture" (Chapter 1) and the co-constructiveness of the intercultural environment for ESL learners (Chapter 2), I use the term "approximation" to describe the measure to which they have changed their compliment responses (see Chapter 2). Chinese ESL learners are influenced by the external target environment, and they are playing a constructive role in creating a new hybrid form of language behaviour (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). To monitor what is happening in their language behaviour, examining compliment responses at a formal level, which is the focus of most of the empirical studies completed to date, is far from adequate. Functional aspects are worthy of study because they involve a wider and deeper understanding of "what is meant" in light of "what is said" in form.

Evaluating the focus of the existing research (out of 106 studies in Appendix A), research on compliments account for 21.7% (23 of the 106 studies); research on compliment responses account for 27.4% (29 of the 106 studies) (e.g. Holmes & Brown, 1987; Holtman, 2005; Manes & Wolfson, 1981); research involving both compliments and compliment responses account for 43.4% (46 of the 106 studies) (e.g. Golato, 2005; Migdadi, 2003; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011); perceptions of (reactions to) compliments or compliment responses account for 5.7% (6 of the 106 studies) (Fong, 1998; Garcia, Miller, Smith, & Mackie, 2006; Lang, 1998; Ochiai, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Ng, 2001;Wieland, 1995); research on compliments and other speech acts account for1.9% (2 of the 106 studies). This calculation shows that little attention (5.7% of the total 106 studies) is paid to compliment response studies from a functional perspective, which looks into perceptions or evaluations of complimenting behaviour (see more details as follows).

Though there are only a few studies that have examined perceptions of, or reactions to, compliments from a functional perspective, it is evident that valuable insights can be gained. For example, degree of directness or sincerity can be discovered in complimenting

behaviour through examining perceptions from a functional perspective. For example, through examining perceptions of compliment responses in French and American cross-cultural dinner conversations, Wieland (1995) discovers that in American culture, compliments are ways of expressing approval, appreciation and solidarity, and are paid in a more explicit, lengthy or even exaggerated way.[12] In contrast, in French culture, complimenting behaviour is more conservative in terms of respecting others' personal territory (space), and expecting to be respected the same way. With a similar approach, Lang (1998) finds that Chinese students regard American compliments as formal politeness acts that do not express truth-values. The response types are either American ways of formal politeness strategies or Chinese ways of politeness strategies (modesty) (Lang, 1998). In another study that examines how Chinese immigrants in America interact with Americans in terms of giving and responding to compliments, Chinese immigrant participants normally communicate compliment interactions indirectly with interlocutors from the target culture, but they vary in their intercultural communicative competence (Fong, 1998). These studies have shed light on the understanding of the degree of directness, sincerity, or even phatic expressions, which is significant in understanding "what is said" and "what is meant" by the ESL learners in a target environment. To add to the discussion of "what is said" and "what is meant", Wolfson (1981b) examines the speech acts of compliments and invitations, and finds that it is a prevalent feature of American speech behaviour that promises or suggestions of invitations do not equate with social commitment. This kind of phatic communication requires research from a functional perspective.

Examining compliment responses from a functional perspective is also a way to reveal sociocultural norms and affective factors that influence language use (e.g. Spencer-Oatey et al., 2001). Spencer-Oatey et al. examine how Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese evaluate and judge compliment responses, but their conclusion that "to blatantly accept a compliment is considered impolite" is an over-simplification. Their complex attitudes toward compliment responses shed light on the Chinese understanding of modesty in the modern sociocultural context. In Garcia et al.'s (2006) study of emotional reactions to compliments and insults,[13] it is found that participants react to positive compliments with positive evaluations, except for some unqualified compliments containing stereotypes.

[12] For comparison, see hyperbole in Tsuda (1992).
[13] For more details about irony or humour, see stylistic features under contextual variables.

Reactions to negative compliments include anger or intent to revenge. Garcia et al.'s study sheds light on emotional aspects of language use, which is worthy of more research.

In order to address the under-researched area of functional aspects of language use, I propose that the effect of the target environment on ESL learners' compliment responses needs to be investigated both from a formal and a functional perspective. Investigation from a formal perspective mainly looks into compliment responses in terms of "what is said". This may include lexicon, formulaity, formality and interjections (see section 2.4). Investigation from a functional perspective mainly looks into "what is meant" by the forms of "what is said". "What is meant" is to be examined from speakers' perceptions or reflections of compliment responses.

By this stage, I have painted a more specific picture of what my study is set up to do: identifying the elements of change in language use in light of the effect of the target environment among Chinese ESL speakers from both a formal and a functional perspective. To interpret this mission and turn it into research questions, my first question, which is also the main research question for this study is:

- *Do Chinese ESL learners in Australia respond to compliments in English differently in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China and monolingual Australians?*

This question is a reflection of the angle I have taken after theoretical and empirical review of the existing literature. The differences or changes in language use that I am exploring may include both elements of accommodation from the target environment, and newly emergent language features constructed by the Chinese ESL learners, but these elements and features are not necessarily the same with respect to pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2, or from L2 to L1, or one-way acculturation from L1 norms to L2 norms respectively. Rather, they form an approximate measurement of what is evident among Chinese ESL learners in their pragmatic development, in light of the influence of the target environment. Therefore, such change or adaptation is a kind of "approximation" to the target environment, either at a formal level or at a functional level (see section 2.4). Change at a formal level mainly includes compliment response forms such as length of utterance, formality and formulaity. Change in language use at a functional level mainly involves awareness of different functions of compliments, and ESL learners' reflections of compliment responses. Alternatively, change in language use at a functional level can be understood as the exploration of functional aspects in contexts of compliment responses.

The second research question (see below) is closely related to the first question, and it is based on the review of relevant literature. Gender and compliment topic are two variables in this study because they are helpful to visualise the variations in compliment responses, and some aspects (e.g. the gender of the complimentee, and the topic of personality) are under-researched. I have limited the consideration of other variables such as age or status or relationship between interlocutors, because the existing literature has clearer findings regarding when and how complimenting happens (see section 3.3).

- *Do Chinese ESL learners in Australia respond to compliments in English differently in view of gender differences (i.e. the gender of the complimenter and complimentee) and different compliment topics (appearance, performance, possession, personality)?*

To answer the second research question, I recruited equal numbers of male and female participants. Gender and compliment topic have been integrated into the research design throughout. This means that gender and compliment topic penetrate throughout the data analysis. More details about gender and compliment topic will be provided in Chapter 4.

These two research questions demonstrate my main research interest in this study. I aim at discovering and describing the elements of change or approximation towards the target environment. The conceptual framework of this aim is based on the co-existence of a priori as well as emergent language features used by ESL learners in an intercultural target environment (c.f. section 2.1). This study does not aim to examine the effect of length of stay or intensity of interaction, nor other factors in relation to L2 proficiency on ESL learners' compliment responses in English. In other words, I am exploring "what is said" (Chapter 5) and "what is happening" in the speakers' reflections with regards to the functional aspects of their compliment responses (see Chapter 6).

3.5 Summary

In Chapter 3, I introduced the specific research context for my study: how Chinese ESL learners respond to compliments in light of the effect of the target environment. In section 3.1, I introduced the significance of the chosen topic, the adjacency of compliments and compliment responses, the categorisation of compliment topics, and the categorisation of compliment responses. After this, I discussed important factors that influence ways of responding to compliments from a general perspective (section 3.2). Then, I discussed factors relating to the measurement of the effect of the target environment on ESL learners' compliment responses (section 3.3). With full acknowledgement of Lai's (2009)

contribution in examining the length of stay as a way of measuring the influence of the target environment, I steered away from this approach, and proposed a different perspective in examining a similar problem: examining the effect of the target environment on the formal and functional aspects of compliment responses. In section 3.4, I refined my research interest based on the perspective I developed in Chapter 2 and the present chapter, and presented two research questions. In Chapter 4, I will discuss methodological considerations, and introduce my research design.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

> *Methodological thinking is being attentive to all elements in the design process, including what lies behind the scenes – theoretical perspectives, types of reasoning, understanding of the study in relation to the existing scholarly dialogue, characteristics of the research questions, and conceptualization and operationalization. (Loseke 2013, p. 11)*

As called for by Loseke, research, and making sense of research design, involves methodological thinking behind the scene. While discussing methodological thinking, Loseke (2013) also points out:

> Standard texts are characterized by a great deal of attention to method and not enough attention to methodology. Sometimes methodology – the underlying logic and principles of research methods – is not covered in any depth; sometimes, methodology is covered but lost in a blizzard of vocabulary definitions and technical details. (p. xiv).

To avoid unintentional negligence of "the underlying logic and principles of research methods", I continue reviewing literature relevant to my topic in this chapter, but with a focus on methodological considerations that lead to the research design of my study. First, I will provide an overview of the main research methods used in previous studies on complimenting behaviour, starting with discussions of the categorisation of research methods (section 4.1). Then, I will introduce in detail the characteristics of mixed research methods in the context of this study, highlighting the concept of "mixing" (section 4. 2). Following that, I will comment on the role of research questions in designing research (section 4.3). In section 4.4, I will introduce the research instruments chosen for this study. Then, I will introduce the participants for this study (section 4.5). Following that, I will present premises for data analysis (section 4.6). In section 4.7, I will briefly review the ethical requirements necessary for conducting this research (section 4.7).

4.1 The categorisation of research methods

Among the debates in adopting various methods by previous scholars, Clark and Bangerter (2004) have tried to categorise research methods in a rather simple manner (as cited in Jucker, 2009). They argue that there are three general ways of studying speech acts in linguistics or pragmatics, which are "the armchair method", "the field method", and "the laboratory method". "The armchair method" refers to those linguists who use philosophical methods and analyse data with their intuition. Searle (1969) studied the philosophy of language in this way. This method does not involve any kind of empirical data collected by any researchers or their trainees. "The field method" refers to linguists who go to the real

speech-act-producing environment and manually collect data, whether by note-taking or any kind of technical method. Thus, this method uses empirical data as the basis of further research and analysis. It might also involve training assistants in collecting data in various locations, as was done by Yu (2005). "The laboratory method" refers to those researchers who organise participants according to their research need to act or perform in a way that generates certain speech behaviours. Often different elicitation techniques are used. According to Jucker (2009), no matter how much researchers defend their chosen research methods, and criticise other unchosen methods, there is, in the end, no perfect research method. In a way, Jucker (2009) argues that all research methods are equally valuable, as they are diverse ways of collecting different types of data.

The three broad categories of methods are obviously insufficient to represent specificity of research design tailored for different studies. There are obviously variations in categorising research methods. In Kasper and Dahl's (1990) study of research methods from 39 studies L2 speech acts (comprehension, acquisition and production), five types of data were categorised: discourse completion task (DCT) data, role play data, natural (observation) data, multiple instruments data, and combined production and metapragmatic assessment data. For the methods that elicit production data, such as DCT and role play, it is explained that an increase in the number of variables considered for one study requires an increase in the number of items in data collection instruments, and also in the number of subjects. The challenge often lies in how much control there should be in designing a valid method. Observation of authentic conversation cannot provide adequate data for cross-culturally and cross-linguistically comparable data, except for extremely formulaic speech acts (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Strictly controlled elicitation instruments are not satisfactory, as they tend to miss the various facets of interpersonal communication in natural conversational contexts (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Therefore, specific types of data collection methods should be used to suit specific research questions (Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Y. Yuan, 2001).

The five data collection methods addressed by Kasper and Dhal (1991) are based on reviews of studies on the speech acts of requests and apologies. Inspired by researchers like Kasper and Dhal (1990), as well as Felix-Brasdefer (2008), whose study of research methods demonstrates that the linguistic backgrounds of the researchers affect the choice of research instruments, I tried to categorise research methods used in studying the speech acts of compliments or compliment responses.

To get an overview of the main research methods used in previous studies on complimenting behaviour, I examined all the 106 studies in Appendix A. As there are three studies (Manes, 1983; Pomerantz, 1978; Tsuda, 1992) that do not specify the research methods used, they are excluded from this data collection method analysis. Thus, the number of compliment studies for method analysis is 103. To categorise and quantify the numbers of different research methods used by various researchers for studying complimenting behaviour, all of the research methods used in the 103 studies are categorised into seven methods. This categorisation is an adapted version of the categorisations of Kasper and Dhal (1991) and Felix-Brasdefer (2008) (see Table 8, further down).

The examination of different research methods focuses on how data is collected by researchers, co-researchers or trainees, and how data is produced or elicited by participants. Though data analysis methods such as descriptive analysis, conversation analysis, corpus analysis, and text analysis, seem to be intriguingly related to data collection methods, and some researchers use data analysis methods to refer to research methods (see "conversation analytic methodology" in Golato, 2002), they are not the aim of discussions in this section.[14] I will discuss methods for data analysis in section 4.6.

Table 8 Main research methods used in previous studies on complimenting behaviour

Questionnaire	Discourse Completion Task, multiple choice questionnaire, judgement task, questionnaire, metapragmatic assessment questionniare (rating scales), survey
Ethnography	Ethnographic method, natural conversation (audio- or video-recording), intuition, notebooks, observation, personal experience (researchers' experience)
Role play	Open role play, closed role play
Interview	(Semi-)structured interview, verbal report, introspective and retrospective interview
Experiment	Actual interaction, experimental paradigm
Media[15]	Movie, TV program (TV interviewing), textbook, written text
Mixed methods	Triangulation, combination

[14] For comparison see Kasper & Dahl (1991).
[15] As written texts (articles, lectures, speeches, etc.) include computer-mediated materials, they are classified under the Media category.

Compliment studies in single-language settings or interlanguage settings have adopted either one method or a combination of a number of research methods. Of the 103 selected empirical compliment studies with clear research methods, ethnographic data (natural data) were analysed as the only data source in 31.1% (or 32) of the 103 studies, whereas 23.3% (or 24) of the 103 studies used a combination of at least two research methods. Questionnaire as the only research method occurred in 25.2% (or 26) of the studies. Media as the data collection source was used in 7.8% (or 8) of the studies, and 4.9% (or 5) used role-play-initiated data. Interview and experiment data were used in the same number of studies, each method accounting for 3.9% (or 4 of the 103) of the studies.

Having provided an overview of the research methods used in existing compliment studies, I will now turn to introducing mixed methods research in the context of this study.

4.2 The concept of mixing in mixed methods research

A combination of two or more methods has been used by many researchers who study complimenting behaviours, ranking as the second most chosen research design, equal to questionnaire (25.2%) after ethnography (29.1%) (c.f. Appendix A)[16]. Every data-collection method has its strengths and weaknesses. There is neither a perfect research method, nor a perfect mixed research design. Based on the discussion of research methods and the review of different empirical studies on compliment and compliment responses, it seems that a combination of different research methods does provide a more complete picture of complimenting behaviour. Several researchers have carried out in-depth studies on a complimenting event with a combination of multiple research methods (Yu, 1999). The act of combining different methods is also called mixed methods research.

Before I discuss the concept of mixing research methods, I will provide a definition of what "mixed methods research" is. There are different definitions and understandings offered by different researchers, among which, I found a definition of core characteristics of mixed methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2011):

[16] Examples include: ethnography video and audio recording (Golato, 2005); ethnography and role play (Migdadi, 2003); ethnography and experiment (Herbert, 1986; Yu, 2011); ethnography and interview (Agyekum, 2010; Cedar, 2006; Mustapha, 2011; Wieland, 1995); questionnaire and ethnography (Anderson & Asiama-Ossom, 2010; Golato, 2003; Ishihara, 2010; Lee, 2009; ethnography and media (Grossi, 2009); interview and DCT questionnaire (Falasi, 2007; Holtman, 2005); semi-structured interview and questionnaire (Barnland & Araki, 1985); ethnography and DCT, metapragmatic assessment questionnaire (Kryston-Morales, 1997); interview and role play (Saito & Beecken, 1997); oral DCT and interview (Gajaseni, 1994); DCT, interview and ethnography (Yu, 1999); DCT, oral DCT, interview and ethnography (Yuan, 1998); DCT questionnaire and experiment (Garcia et al., 2006); role play and interview (Cheng, 2011).

> In mixed methods, the researcher collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions); mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other; gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes); uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study; frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study. (p. 5).

In this description of key characteristics, all the principles such as collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data, mixing, sequential or embedding design approaches, giving priority, and combining, are applicable to my study.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I support Loseke's (2013) claim that more attention needs to go to the underlying logic and principles of research methods. The reason I adopted mixed research methods is twofold: (1) the requirement of the research questions (Yuan 2001); and (2) the many advantages that mixed methods research offer (Creswell & Clark, 2011). According to Creswell and Clark (2011), mixed methods research:

> provides strengths that offset weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research; provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone; provides a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers; encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms, rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others for qualitative research. (p. 12).

What is more, "mixed methods research is practical in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem" (Creswell & Clark, p. 13). Though there are multiple advantages in using mixed methods research, and this method has been adopted commonly – 23.3% of the 103 empirical compliment studies (see Appendix A), disadvantages of mixed methods research need to be considered.

The disadvantages or challenges in terms of implementing mixed methods research lies in its inherent complexity of how different methods are coordinated with one another. In reference to the above advantages, the challenges can be understood by thinking about how to do it. The key issues recommended by the advocates of mixed methods research often circulate around "the different ways that the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study relate to each other" (Creswell & Clark, p. 63). The relations and connections between different research methods is where the term "mixing" comes in. "Mixing" is "the explicit interrelating of the study's quantitative and qualitative strands and has been referred to as combining and integrating – that is, it is the process by which the researcher

implements the independent or interactive relationship of a mixed methods study" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 66).

Continuing the exploration of the concept of "mixing", and the "how to" question, another way to explain it is through the consideration of key decision-making. Designing and carrying out research involves multiple stages of decision-making. Four decisions that influence the design of appropriate mixed methods research are: timing, weighting, mixing and theorising (Creswell, 2009).

The first decision is timing. There are mainly two ways of timing qualitative and quantitative data collection: sequential data collection and concurrent data collection. In the context of this research, I used both sequential and concurrent approaches, i.e. sequential relationship between discourse completion task and follow-up interview, simultaneous relationship between role play and the first two instruments (see section 4.4 for more details). The second decision is weighting. Weighting – how much priority is given to quantitative or qualitative research – is another key decision to be made by the researcher. The distribution of weight depends on the researcher's interest, focus of study, and audience for the study (Creswell, 2009). In the context of my research, formal and functional aspects of language use in an intercultural context (see section 2.4) are the focus of research, so primary weight is given to the discourse completion task (quantitative, formal aspects of research), then interview (qualitative, functional aspects of research), The third method, role play, is supplementary. Therefore, less weight is given to this method in my research (see section 4.4 for more discussions). The third decision is how mixing occurs. Mixing may occur in varying ways at different stages of data collection, data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2009). The fourth decision, theorising, involves an integrating theoretical framework that penetrates through many stages of the research. Having introduced the concept of mixing in detail, I will now move on to introduce the role of research questions.

4.3 The role of research questions

> *No matter how the research questions are generated, scholars writing about mixed methods research uniformly agree that the questions of interest play a central role in the process of designing any mixed methods study. The importance of the research problem and questions is a key principle of mixed methods research design. (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 60)*

Following Creswell & Clark's (2011) idea that the significance of research questions plays a role as an underlying principle for mixed methods research design, I will explain how the methods chosen and designed in this study match the research questions that evolved in section 3.4. There are broadly two major issues to illuminate the matching relationship between research questions and mixed methods research: matching the research methods with the research questions; and matching the design of each research method with the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

A resynthesised theoretical framework in view of the insufficiencies of current intercultural pragmatic theories (see section 2.3.4), and the under-studied topic of "the effect of the target environment" (see section 3.3), contributed to the forming of a general research context for this research project. Compliment responses in English by Chinese ESL learners in an intercultural context provide a specific linguistic carrier – the specific research context – to explore the issues in light of the general context. My two stated research questions reflect both the general and specific contexts for this study. The primary purpose of this study, as shown in the first research question, is to examine the effect of the target environment – whether the Australian English language and cultural environment influences Chinese ESL learners in their English compliment responses from both formal and functional perspectives. This research question leads to a comparative research design that uses multiple research methods to collect data that reflect both formal and functional aspects of language use. It also provides guidance and targets for the researcher in the process of research design, data collection, data analysis as well as interpretation.

The second research question reflects the secondary purpose of this study – the exploration of two relevant variables. In the specific context of this study, both gender of the complimentee, and compliment topics, are two major variables explored. I will pay special attention to these two variables in the process of looking for answers to the first research question.

Research questions not only guide literature research but also guide the process of data collection and data analysis (Bryman, 2012). It helps the researcher to stay on track, with a clear direction, and provide readers with a clear sense of the focus of the study (Bryman, 2012). Using the research questions as a guide, and the key principle, in mixed methods research, the role of the researcher is integrated to the research design, from the early stages of synthesising theoretical frameworks, to the point of forming an angle to investigate (in this case, compliment responses in light of the effect of the target culture); and from the design of other instruments to collect data, to the process of data analysis.

4.4 The research instruments

> *Research into human behaviour is notoriously "squishy" and requires multiple approaches in order to reach a level of validity which will give our analyses both predictive power and generalisability (Wolfson, Marmor, & Jones, 1989, p. 194).*

Having explained the role of research questions in the process of mixed methods research design, I will now provide a summary of the research gaps that contribute to choosing and designing research methods for this study. In the existing body of literature on compliment responses, first of all, researchers tend to pay immense attention to studying the forms of compliment responses in Chinese (e.g. Lin et al., 2012) or comparing them with English responses, ignoring the issue of translation and inherent differences between different languages (e.g. Tang & Zhang, 2009). How Chinese speakers of English respond to compliments in English in different cultural contexts remains under-investigated. Secondly, an enormous amount of research has been carried out studying English compliment responses in the US, either aside from, or together with, other languages (e.g. Lai, 2009); very little research has been done to investigate Australian English and Australian culture. Thirdly, for theoretical challenges, although the speech act theory is problematic in the sense that it does not explain the reality of one speech act performing the functions of multiple speech acts, previous researchers often adopt this theory and tend to classify compliment responses by assigning another speech act type to represent one response (e.g. Herbert, 1986). The means that the complex phatic effects of speech act, such as sincerity of the speech, have been under-addressed (c.f. O'Connor, 1993). Fourthly, in the existing research designs, the gender of the complimentees is widely evaluated in compliment response studies, but gender variation of the complimenter has not been taken into consideration (c.f. Wolfson et al., 1989). Further, some over-simplified questionnaires were used to collect data without providing details of the conversation settings (e.g. R.

Chen, 1993). Moreover, with respect to spontaneity of responses, most researchers tend to examine the speech act of compliment response from a relatively static point of view, ignoring the spontaneous aspects of language behaviours such as tone of voice or other features (e.g. Lee, 2009).

In light of the above research gaps, and the research questions (see section 3.4), I propose a further developed research design with three data collation instruments (discourse completion task, audio-recorded follow-up interview, and video-recorded role play). Before I introduce each research method in detail, I will first comment on the role of the researcher in the research process.

4.4.1 The role of the researcher

In mixed methods research, the researcher plays different roles in different research methods. Researchers need to become pragmatic, by utilising and appreciating both quantitative and qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). To further explain the role of the researcher, Gray (2009) summarises:

> In quantitative research the role of the researcher is to try to maintain objectivity and detachment from the research process. In qualitative research, the researcher's role is very different. … researchers need to adopt a stance of 'theoretical sensitivity', which means being 'insightful', demonstrating the capacity to understand and the ability to differentiate between what is important and what is not. They must be able to perceive of situations holistically and be responsive to environmental cues in the field. For example, they need to be sensitive to situations where they risk biasing the responses of people they are interviewing. In addition, they usually adopt a reflexive stance, reflecting on the subtle ways in which bias might creep into their research practice through the influence of their personal background and belief systems. (p. 183).

In quantitative research, the researcher maintains more distance from the research process, compared with the relative participatory role in qualitative research. As mixed methods research involves both quantitative and qualitative research, the researcher's distance toward the research process varies. Therefore, in mixed methods research, the researcher plays dual roles, both as an instrument and as a participant. Reflections of the researcher are always valuable in eliminating possible bias.

When talking about the role of the researcher in mixed methods research, it is unavoidable to ask the question: how could the insights discovered from the researcher's lenses prove to be insightful for the research? The insightful understanding of an issue is often achieved through triangulation. The concept of triangulation is defined as follows (Flick, 2007):

> Triangulation includes researchers taking different perspectives on an issue under study or more generally in answering research questions. These perspectives can be substantiated by using several methods and/or in several theoretical approaches. Both are or should be lined. Furthermore, it refers to combining different sorts of data against the backgrounds of the theoretical perspectives that are applied to the data. As far as possible, these perspectives should be treated and applied on an equal footing and in an equally consequent way. At the same time, triangulation (of different methods or data sorts) should allow a principal surplus of knowledge. For example, triangulation should produce knowledge at different levels, which means they go beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach and thus contribute to promoting quality in research. (p. 41).

According to Flick (2007), there are various forms of triangulation, such as triangulation of methods, triangulation of data, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation. The purpose of triangulating methods is similar to the strengths of mixed methods research design as discussed in section 4.2. Triangulating data often involves using different sources of data through which the researcher achieves maximal theoretical understanding of the issue (c.f. Flick, 2007). Theory triangulation involves examining an issue from multiple perspectives, and avoiding sticking to the researcher's preliminary assumptions at the cost of ignoring alternative attributes of the phenomenon (Flick, 2007).

In this study, the triangulation of methods, data and theory started from the early stages of the formation of the project (see section 2.3). The concern for functional aspects of language use led to the very step that was taken on the basis of formal aspects of speech act research. The angle taken in this study – examining language use, and change in language use in an intercultural context (see Chapter 2), is the reason for choosing mixed methods. The insufficiencies of the existing theories discussed in section 2.3, and the proposal of the resynthesised theoretical approach in section 2.4, is the foundational work for theory and data triangulation in this study. As stated by Flick (2007):

> To maximize the theoretical value of their studies, investigators must select their strongest methods. … Researchers must be flexible in the evaluation of their methods. Every action in the field provides new definitions, suggests new strategies, and leads to continuous modification of initial research designs. (p. 44).

Having explained the role of the researcher in mixed methods research, and the practice of triangulation as a sound strategy to reduce researchers' bias and ignorance, I will move forward to discuss my journey of evaluating each research method, new strategies of research and modifications of initial research designs.

4.4.2 Discourse Completion Task

Discourse completion task (DCT), also known as discourse completion task questionnaire, is a form of elicitation survey (see categorisation of research methods in Table 3). Researchers have used the term "questionnaire" and "survey" interchangeably (c.f. Bryman,

2012. p. 185). Questionnaire is one of the seven categories of research methodologies used by compliment researchers (Table 3). Among different types of questionnaires (DCT questionnaire, multiple choice questionnaire, judgement task questionnaire, rating scale questionnaire, and survey), written DCT is known as one of the most efficient data collection methods allowing researchers to collect sufficient data, and to also control various social and contextual variables (Beebe & Cummings, 1996). It was first invented to study the speech acts of requests and apologies (Blum-Kulka, 1982)[17]. DCT is used as the only research method by some researchers to generate speech acts (e.g. Yu, 2004; Dastjerdi & Farshid, 2011). In many other cases, DCT is used together with other research methods, such as with ethnographic method (e.g. Kryston-Morales, 1997; Golato, 2003), with interview (Jeon, 1996; Holtman, 2005), and with experiment (Garcia et al., 2006).

Other forms of DCT have been developed by some researchers to enhance its validity, such as oral DCT (Y. Yuan, 1998), E-DCT (Mack & Sykes, 2009) and DCT with embellished scenarios (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000). Oral DCT was first used by Yuan (1998), along with a written DCT, ethnography, and interview, to study compliment behaviours in Kunming Chinese. Oral DCT refers to a DCT that was recorded, and participants responded to the DCT orally, and then it was recorded for the second time. By comparing oral DCT with other methods in studying complimenting behaviours, Yuan (2001) concluded that oral DCT is a better way to elicit speech act data than written DCT and observational natural data, because, on the one hand, it is more natural than written DCT; on the other hand, it avoids the problem of missing important speech features inherent in note-taking. This strategy has been integrated to the third instrument in this study – role play (see section 4.4.4).

The design of DCT in this study is based on considerations of previous researchers such as Mack & Sykes (2009) and Billmyer and Varghese (2000). In support of Yuan's (2001) argument for oral DCT, Mack & Sykes (2009), designed an E-DCT which is an electronic DCT with a built-in component for verbal responses. They argue that by collecting verbal reports through computers, the respondents realised some degree of interaction with the verbalised discourses in the DCT, and the gaps between elicited data and natural data. However, the electronically recorded DCT does not include variations caused by the complimenter's gender or other variables. Nevertheless, it is an innovation that can be further developed for speech act studies. Except for the form of oral DCT and

[17] For more extensive use of DCT for studying speech act realisations see (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

E-DCT, Billmyer and Varghese (2000) investigated the effect of enhancing the written DCT situational prompt on the production of request behaviours by native and non-native English speakers. Results demonstrated that the modification of the DCT questionnaire did not change the response strategies or internal variations. However, using a DCT with systemically enhanced situations produced noticeably longer, and more elaborated requests in both the native and non-native groups. Their findings point to the importance of modifying research instruments, and the significance of balancing the attention of both variation and context. They suggest that more research needs to be carried out on what constitutes social norms and proper pragmatic strategies in different cultures. Having introduced different forms of DCTs, I will now provide a summary of the limitations and strengths of DCT.

Though DCT is popularly used, its limitations are criticised by many researchers (c.f. Wolfson et al., 1989; Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Y. Yuan, 2001; Golato, 2003) as summarised here: (1) DCT data, though reflecting authentic conversations to some extent, fail to capture the negotiated sequences in natural conversations; (2) DCT respondents may write down responses that do not match real-life situations; (3) DCT does not allow the choice of silence or no answer, as respondents tend to respond sequentially according to the scenarios; (4) DCT causes inaccuracies in terms of adding extra unnatural data, or falling shorter than it could be in natural settings; (5) DCT fails to capture special effects, such as emotional features, repetitions, stylistic features, hedging devices, and nonverbal cues. These limitations were addressed by including two other research methods in this study: structured interview (see section 4.4.3) and role play (see section 4.4.4).

The strengths of DCT are summarised by Wolfson et al. (1989) as follows: (1) Gathering a large amount of data quickly; (2) Creating an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that will occur in natural speech; (3) Studying the stereotypical perceived requirements for a socially appropriate (though not always polite) response; (4) Gaining insight into social and psychological factors that are likely to affect speech and performance; (5) Ascertaining the canonical shape of refusals, apologies, partings, etc. in the minds of the speakers of that language. (p. 183).

Having outlined the limitations and strengths of DCT as a data collection instrument, I will now further discuss the gender of complimenter and complimentee. An ignored problem is that DCT questionnaires are often designed with situations in which the complimenter's gender is ambiguous, such as using dual gendership ("he/she").

Participants may easily ignore this important factor that causes variations in their speech behaviours in real life. Wolfson et al. (1989) maintain:

> Research on language and gender done over the past 15 years has shown that the gender of interlocutors affects their linguistic behaviours. It seems that additional situations are needed in which the sex of the dialogue participants are reversed. … the gender of the speaker and addressee conditions speech behaviour, such additional situations are needed for cross-cultural comparisons. (p. 193).

Following Wolfson et al.'s (1989) call for the need of designing more situations to examine the effect of reversed gender relations on informants' speech behaviours, the gender of the complimenter is distinguished in all the situations in the DCT in the present study (see section 4.4.2). To give the participants a clearer impression of the complimenter's gender, male complimenters are assigned with male names and female complimenters are assigned female names.

Having dealt with gender-related issues, the translation of questionnaires is another issue worthy of mention. Translation of different versions of questionnaires into different language varieties is an underexplored issue that may cause problematic data transcriptions and conflicting findings. Of the 106 studies listed in Appendix A, about one third (35.8% or 38 of 106 studies) involve some sort of translation. Discussions about linguistic variations caused by language or translation itself have been under-addressed (e.g. Gajaseni, 1994; Tran, 2008). Issues concerning translation have been acknowledged by many researchers in multilingual empirical studies of speech acts (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Jeon, 1996). The main concern involves either translating findings from L1 to L2 in research reports (e.g. Yuan, 1998) or the translation of questionnaires into multiple language versions out of context, for the sake of achieving comparative results (e.g. Yu, 1999). The challenge of the translation process in complimenting interactions is acknowledged by Daikuhara (1986, p. 106): "It is very hard and sometimes almost impossible to find the exact word in English to correspond to a Japanese utterance. As a result, some Japanese words require an explanation in English to show their nuances of meanings" (Daikuhara, 1986, p. 106).[18] However, by adding an extra explanation, new speech acts may be generated that need to be studied further.

The speech act of compliment response has often been studied by comparing L1 and L2 (c.f. S. H. E. Chen, 2003; Lang, 1998; Wang & Tsai, 2003). What is problematic is that translating the questionnaire into the target participants' mother tongue can be a way

[18] For comparison see Jeon (1996).

of encouraging the participants to speak according to their L1 sociocultural norms. Research design involving translation of questionnaires, and comparative analysis of such data, may produce rather problematic results. For example, in Han's (1992) study of differences in compliment responses in English and in Korean, by Korean international students in the USA, Korean female students were most likely to respond to compliments with ACCEPTANCE strategies in English, but with REJECT or DEFLECT strategies in Korean. This study opens windows for issues of translation. If the same group of participants responds to compliments differently in different languages, then questionnaires translated into different languages might result in some meaningless, empty, or pre-existent differences, before taking into account other variations caused by gender, age, or social status differences.

Similarly, Sharifian (2008) also found differences in responses caused by different versions of questionnaires. What has been examined includes the relationship between cultural conceptualisations and speech acts, more specifically, how the Persian cultural schema "modesty" interrelates with compliment responses. An English version of a discourse completion task was completed by a group of Persian learners of English first, and then a Persian version was completed after two weeks by the same group of people. Interestingly, it was found that the responses were different. "Modesty" appeared in L2 in some cases that did not occur in L1 in terms of the compliment strategies. This reveals the complex relationship between speech acts and cultural conceptualisations. It also indicates that cultural schemas are reflected and realised in dynamic language behaviours. The findings of this study demonstrate the problematic nature of translating a questionnaire from L2 to L1, as the responses in L1 and L2 by the same participant are different.

Only a few researchers have carried out studies without having to deal with translation issues (Lin, 2003; Lai, 2009). As the purpose of the present study is to examine compliment responses by Chinese speakers of English with intermediate to advanced proficiency levels, all data was collected in English, to avoid any translation-related inaccuracies. This study takes Lin's (2003) and Lai's (2009) study further by using three (mixed) research methods to improve validity, instead of one research method. Using English as the only language in questionnaires, interviews and role plays offers an effective way to examine the participants' struggles and hesitations when making a decision as to which cultural norm to stick to in a cross-cultural communicative context.

All in all, discourse completion task is a popular instrument used by many researchers, due to its convenience and many advantages. Researchers, however, need to be aware of its shortcomings, and should consider modifying it to suit a particular research project. In this study, discourse completion task is used as a starting point for quantitative data collection and analysis, and for prompting the second research instrument – structured interview (see section 4.4.3) – to collect data related to perception. Having discussed the use of DCTs in detail, I now turn to report on the design of DCT for the present study.

The design of the DCT questionnaire benefited from compliment studies by Motaghi-Tabari and Beuzeville (2012), as well as my own Masters dissertation (Li, 2011), which has served as a pilot study for this research. Tabari and Beuzeville (2012) adapted Sharifian's (2005) Discourse Completion Task, which aims at comparing compliment responses between Persians and monolingual Australians. To further develop the questionnaire, Tabari and Beuzeville have redesigned the DCT into 15 items with 3 items evenly distributed in the five categories of compliment topics, appearance, possession, performance, skills and others. In their study, Persian cultural schema of shekasteh-nafsi (modesty or humility) motivates Persians to respond to compliments differently from monolingual Australians.

In my Masters dissertation (Li, 2011), I adopted Tabari and Beuzeville's (2012) DCT for a comparative study of compliment responses by different groups of Chinese speakers of English and monolingual Australians. The DCT in the present study is a further modification of the design used in my Masters dissertation (see section1.2). This latest version has integrated participants' feedback on that DCT questionnaire, such as about the over-simplicity of compliment scenarios, and repetitiveness of compliment topics, as well as those used by other researchers (e.g. Billmyer & Varghese, 2000) (see discussions in section 3.1.3). The layout of different situations in relation to topic is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9 The structure of the questionnaire situations by compliment topic

Appearance	**Performance**	**Possession**	**Personality**
Situation 3	Situation 1	Situation 4	Situation 2
Situation 7	Situation 5	Situation 8	Situation 6
Situation 11	Situation 9	Situation12	Situation 10

In the DCT for the present study (see Appendix C), the compliment topics of performance and skill are combined into one topic – PERFORMANCE. The re-categorised

compliment topics include four types, eliminating another unspecified type (OTHERS): APPEARANCE, PERFORMANCE, POSSESSION and PERSONALITY. The compliment scenarios are elaborated.

For the purpose of comparison, I used the same DCT questionnaire (see Appendix C) for Chinese in China (group 1), Chinese in Australia (group 2), and monolingual Australians (group 3). The only variation between the questionnaires lies in the first part that collects demographic information from the participants, such as the participant's age, gender, education level, language learning experience, residential history in relation to second language acquisition, proficiency level, and any other languages they may speak. The assumed relationship between the speakers in the DCT questionnaire is among acquaintances. This design is based on the bulge theory (Wolfson, 1983, 1988) that compliments occur most frequently between acquaintances, rather than between strangers or between intimates. Having introduced the data collection instrument DCT, I now turn to discuss structured interview.

4.4.3 Structured interview

Interview has proven to be an effective research method to collect data for describing and analysing compliments. For example, Knapp et al. (1984) report on three studies on complimenting behaviours using the method of interviewing (see Appendix A). In their report, the first study involves interviewing 58 interviewees who are parents, relatives of students attending a midwestern university in the USA, and some workers from Social Security Administration Headquarters in Washington, DC. Each interviewee provides information on a compliment he or she has recently both given and received. The second study involves interviewing 394 interviewees from midwestern USA, with each interviewee providing information about one compliment recently given and one received. The third study involves interviewing 65 interviewees who provide additional information, such as frequency of compliment types and responses, the manner of delivery of compliments and responses, the relationship between speakers, and demographic information (age, gender, and status information of the interviewees). The ten interview questions for the third study are presented below (Knapp et al., 1984, p. 15):

1. What was the exact wording of the compliment?
2. What was the exact wording of the reply to the compliment?
3. How did you feel about the compliment? (open-ended)
4. What was the sex of the giver and receiver of the compliment?

5. What was the relative status of the compliment giver and receiver (higher, lower, same)?

6. What was the age of the compliment giver and receiver (0-17, 18-29, 30-45, 46-65, 66-80)?

7. What was the relationship between the giver and receiver? (open-ended)

8. At what point in the conversation did the compliment occur (beginning, middle, end)?

9. Why was the compliment given? (open-ended)

10. Was the compliment given face-to-face, in writing, or by telephone?

The above interview questions include both closed questions and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allow the participants to talk about their personal feelings and intuitions about complimenting behaviours. The total database from the three studies mentioned above includes about 1,000 compliments and responses. Main findings of Knapp et al.'s study include: (1) a description of compliment taxonomy (performance, attire, appearance, and possessions); (2) compliments are more likely to be focused on performance and appearance/attire); (3) a categorisation of four dimensions of compliment forms (direct/indirect; specific/general; comparison/no comparison; normal/amplified); (4) a categorisation of compliment responses, including four main types: ACCEPTANCE (RITUALISTIC, EMBARRASSED, PLEASED), ACCEPTANCE WITH AMENDMENT (TEMPERED, RETURN, MAGNIFIED, CONFIRMATION SOLICITED), NO ACKNOWLEDGMENT, and DENIAL; (5) age, gender, perceived status, and relationship, all influence the realisation, frequency and content of compliments and responses; (6) people generally compliment others who are of the same age, status, and to a lesser degree, gender. Interview also yielded findings that are particularly related to speakers' perceptions (Knapp et al., 1984):

> The recipient of a compliment (a) perceives it as positive and rewarding, (b) motivated by the sincere efforts of the speaker to reward something earned or deserved, and (c) perceives the need to acknowledge the compliment using various forms of acceptance and/or agreement and to discount the substance of the compliment if an unqualified acceptance/agreement seems to violate sanctions against too much self-praise. (p. 28).

Although, interview has proven be an effective method for studying complimenting behaviours, the use of this method in an intercultural context requires extra caution. A primary concern for using this method in the context of the present research is to assure comparability across language use across groups, which means the interview questions I use for different groups of participants needed to be structured in the same way, or at least

in a similar way. A structured interview, also known as "a standardised interview" (Bryman, 2012):

> entails the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. The aim is for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning. This means that each respondent receives exactly the same interview stimulus as any other. The goal of this style of interviewing is to ensure that interviewees' replies are in response to identical cues. Interviewers are supposed to read out questions exactly and in the same order as they are printed on the schedule. Questions are usually very specific and very often offer the interviewee a fixed range of answers (this type of question is often called closed, closed ended, pre-coded, or fixed choice). (p. 210).

The goal of the structured interview is to minimise differences between interviews, and key issues in designing structured interviews involve:

> (1) the reason why structured interview is a prominent research method in survey research; this issue entails a consideration of the importance of standardization of the process of measurement;
>
> (2) the different contexts of interviewing, such as the use of more than one interviewer and whether the administration of the interview is in person or by telephone;
>
> (3) various prerequisites of structured interviewing, including: establishing rapport with the interviewee; asking questions as they appear on the interview schedule; recording exactly what is said by interviewees; ensuring there are clear instructions on the interview schedule concerning question sequencing and the recording of answers; and keeping to the question order as it appears on the schedule;
>
> (4) problems with structured interviewing, including: the influence of the interviewer on respondents and the possibility of systematic bias in answers (known as a response sets). (ibid.)

In the present study, the structured interview is a follow-up instrument after using the instrument DCT (the gap between these two approaches is 1 to 2 weeks) – an approach I designed to follow up the DCT participants and investigate their reflections on complimenting behaviours, in particular, with compliment responses. While DCT mainly generates data for the sake of analysis of language forms, employing the research method of structured interview can also be seen as my attempt at exploring the functions, or functional aspects, of language use. Understanding functions of speech acts, as well as when and why certain speech acts were used, is crucial to explicate rules that assist smooth communication (c.f. Knapp et al., 1984). Rules that operate behind different forms of language use can only be obtained through exploring the speakers' cultural norms or assumptions that help to justify what they say as appropriate under certain conditions (Mezirow, 1990):

> To understand the meaning of a sentence or any expressed idea, one must understand under what conditions it is true (in accord with what is) or valid (justifiable) (Habermas, 1984, p. 276). We can turn to an authority, tradition, or force to establish the validity of an assertion,

> or we can turn to a decision by rational discourse, that is, a consensus regarding its justification … In everyday situations, we challenge the validity of what is being communicated when we have doubts about the truth, comprehensibility, appropriateness (in relation to social norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is said or about the truthfulness of the speaker or writer. Further dialogue is interrupted until we can satisfy ourselves that the problematic assertion is justifiable. (p. 10).

Following Mezirow's footsteps, the conceptual framework for using structured interview in the context of this research can be seen as a journey of, or efforts made for, "validating meaning". According to Mezirow (1998):

> Reflection, a "turning back" on experience, can mean many things: simple awareness of an object, event or state, including awareness of a perception, thought, feeling, disposition, intention, action, or of one's habits of doing these things. It can also mean letting one's thoughts wander over something, taking something into consideration, or imagining alternatives. One can reflect on oneself reflecting. (p. 1).

Based on Mezirow's definition of reflection, I have selected ten interview themes that are of central relevance to the aim of this study. These ten interview themes are: (1) linguistic repertoire, (2) gender variations, (3) personal assumptions, (4) overgneralisations, (5) sincerity, (6) indirectness, (7) modesty, (8) phaticity, (9) acceptance versus non-acceptance, and (10) overall reflection on approximation toward the target language environment in language use. Further explanations of these themes are listed as follows:

1. Linguistic repertoire: this theme is a general factor related to language proficiency that limits or contributes to variations in compliment responses (see section 2.3.1). Linguistic repertoire is related to an ESL learner's pragmatic skills. In the case of this study, linguistic repertoire refers to the pool of vocabulary for responding to compliments in English.

2. Gender variations: this theme is also treated as a general factor that contributes to the different functional aspects of compliment responses because it is one of the targets of the research questions (see section 3.2.3).

3. Personal assumptions: this theme is designed to test if the speaker holds any fixed answers in response to a compliment. Inappropriate language use could be involuntary, depending on their overall pragmatic knowledge.

4. Possible overgeneralisations: this theme is designed to test if the speakers from the target language environment have conventional expressions that are dominant expressions in response to compliments.

5. Sincerity: this is a concept derived from my research interest of literal and nonliteral meanings of speech acts.

6. Directness: The notion of directness is closely related to indirectness or implicature, which I have introduced earlier (see section 2.2).

7. Modesty: The notion of modesty and its relation to politeness and face has also been discussed (see section 2.2).

8. Phaticity: this term is defined as "a multidimensional potential for talk in many social settings, where speakers' relational goals supersede their commitment to factuality and

instrumentality" (Coupland, Coupland, & Robinson, 1992, p. 207). The term "phatic" originated as "phatic communion", used by Malinowski (1923), in which language is used to describe what is happening linguistically as "a mode of action", instead of communicating thoughts. In this study, I use the term "phatic communication" to refer to "communication which gives rise to, or is intended to give rise to, phatic interpretations" (Zegarac and Clark, 1999, p. 346).

9. "Thank you" versus "No, no, no…": "Thank you" is a typical example of compliment response in English and "No, no, no…" is a typical example of compliment response in Chinese (Mandarin) (see Lang, 1998).

10. Overall reflection on approximation: this theme is designed to examine the overall impression or reflection of the speakers regarding to what degree they approximate toward the target language environment.

The interview consists of two parts. The first part is a brief introduction (detailed in Appendix D). The second part of the interview consists of ten interview questions based on the ten themes illustrated above. To further illustrate the ten interview themes and their corresponding interview questions, I provide interview questions with interview themes in parentheses for Chinese ESL learners in the China group (for the other two groups see Appendix D), as follows:

1. Do you feel that you have fewer choices when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin? Please explain why, and add any other comments. (Linguistic Repertoire)

2. What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English? When you respond to compliments, do you think about values such as modesty? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Modesty)

3. In your opinion, what is an ideal response to a compliment in English? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Possible Assumptions)

4. Would you respond differently according to the gender of your complimenter? (Gender Variations)

5. What are some of the implicit (indirect) complimenting behaviours (compliments or compliment responses) that you have noticed in your everyday conversations with others? Do you think that they are difficult to express in English? How would do you respond to compliments in an implicit (indirect) way? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Directness)

6. Do you often respond to compliments insincerely or sincerely? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Sincerity)

7. Do you think monolingual Australian English speakers always accept compliments by saying "Thank you"? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Possible Overgeneralisations)

8. Do you think that in many situations saying "No, no …" to compliments is equal to saying "Thank you" as a response to compliments? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Comparison of a typical example of compliment responses in Chinese and in English)

9. Do you think that many comments in response to compliments are just phatic communication (Hanxuan 寒暄: speech or utterances that serve to establish or maintain social relationships or create an atmosphere of shared feelings, goodwill or sociability rather than to impart information, communicate ideas), and that the statements are not sincere? Would this cause misunderstanding? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Phaticity)

10. Do you think living in the Australian English environment will make your responses become more similar to monolingual Australian English speakers' speech behaviour? Please explain why and add any other comments. (Approximation)

The design of the interview questions is to provide additional insights into compliment responses offered by Chinese ESL learners in the DCT. The same interview themes are used for all groups. However, there are very slight variations in the interview questions for different groups in terms of sequencing and wording, to increase applicability. While sequencing the ten interview questions for different groups of participants (Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians), I followed the principle of "from familiar to unfamiliar; from close to far away; from more relevant to the interviewees to less relevant to the interviewees", which is an invisible way of prompting a good start of the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee (see Appendix D). The interviewees are not clearly aware of the interview themes. To minimise interviewer variability, I personally conducted all the interviews, and used the same method of establishing rapport with the interviewees, by introducing the research topic, asking questions in the same order within each participant group (see section 4.5 for information on participants groups), and recording exactly what the interviewee said with an audio recorder.

In summary, the interview questions I have developed in this section are neither complete, nor the most representative. They are just critical themes that evolved in the particular context of this study. However, they serve the purpose of helping the researcher seek confirmation and deeper understanding of informants' speech behaviours, such as phatic aspects of communication, and acquiring participants' reflections and reasons for choosing different compliment responses. Equal weight is given to the discourse completion task and structured interviews.

4.4.4 Role play

Role play is explained by Tran (2006, p. 3) as "simulations of social interactions in which participants assume and enact described roles within specified situations". Two main kinds of role plays are used by researchers to study different speech acts: open role play and closed role play (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Open role play allows a few conversation turns,

whereas closed role plays only produce one adjacency pair of speech acts. Open role plays produce data that are more similar to natural data, compared with closed role play. It serves as a bridge between natural data and elicited data, as it enables the study of speech acts in their discourse contexts.

Compared with natural data, role play helps researchers to control social and contextual variables for the sake of the comparative study of speech acts, as well as to record the oral discourse of the speech act (see Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Compared with questionnaire-elicited data, role play enables researchers to notice paralinguistic and extra-linguistic features such as laughter, body gesture, intonation, silence and repetition (Tran, 2006). However, this method can be criticised in that roles designed the role play situations are imaginary, and might not reflect real life situations (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993). Since the participants are like movie actors or actresses, their own identity might affect the roles that need to be played to fulfil the discourse task (see Golato, 2005). The way in which the speakers execute the speech acts, and the degree of exhaustiveness, may also diverge from real life experience (see Y. Yuan, 2001).

A number of researchers have used role play as the only way to collect data to study compliments and compliment responses (Ylanne-McEwen, 1993; Farghal & Haggan, 2006; Tran, 2007, 2008; Bu, 2010). Role play is also used together with other methods (e.g. Cheng, 2011). Attempts were made in the present study to design situations as close to the authentic conversational context as possible. Farghal & Haggan (2006) studies compliment behaviours of bilingual Kuwaiti college students. Before the participants were asked to carry out the role play in the classroom, they were first asked to note down compliments they have paid to their fellow friends on different compliment topics. This technique certainly helps the researcher to make the role play scenarios close to real life situations.

The use of role play in this study is inspired by previous researchers (e.g. Tran, 2007). To improve the degree of naturalness of the role play scenarios, Tran (2007) uses a newly innovated role play technique, the naturalised role play, to study pragmatic and discourse transfer in complimenting behaviours by Vietnamese and native Australian English speakers. Naturalisation is the idea of trying to let the participants act naturally without any awareness of the purpose of the research, which makes the data more natural than those emanating from open role plays. In contrast with the reliability of real-life natural data, Tran (2006) maintains that spontaneous data do not have to emanate from real life. Naturalised role play does not produce the same kind of natural data as ethnography.

Nevertheless, naturalised role play produces spontaneous data, and it is so far the most innovative role play that aims to depict realistic conversations.

The role play in this study is also inspired by Cedar's (2006) observation that both verbal and nonverbal behaviours should be counted toward compliment responses. For example, the facial expression of smiling carries different layers of meanings in different cultures. According to Cedar's perceptions of Thai norms, smiling can be a way of showing pleasure, acceptance, friendliness, and intentions to smooth conversational frictions; whereas, it seems that smiling only serves as friendliness in American norms. Whether they serve more functions in America or not, it is not surprising that Americans can feel lost when faced with Thai smiles.

In sum, despite its limitation as a data collection procedure, role play suits this study, as it serves as a means to capture nonverbal cues as well as supportive linguistic or paralinguistic moves[19]. Compared with the equal weight given to discourse completion task and interviews, less weight is given to role play. Role play is used as a supplementary instrument for the triangulation of research methods and data in this study.

Role play is the third data collection instrument employed in this study (detailed in Appendix E). The participants for the discourse completion task and interviews are the same, whereas for the supplementary research method, I recruited new participants, i.e. role play participants only participate in role play. The role play is designed based on Tran's (2007) idea of naturalised role play. To achieve comparability, the role play is based on the scenarios designed in the DCT. As I have already explained in detail how the DCT questionnaire for the present study is developed, in section 4.4.2 above, I will not discuss it in detail here. The entire role play was video-recorded. Instructions for the role play procedure regarding conductors and informants are presented in Appendix E.

Having explained the research instruments, i.e. the data collection tools (the role of the researcher, discourse completion task, structured interview, and role play), I will now move on to introduce participants for the current study.

4.5 The participants

This section presents information on the participants for this study, and the data collection procedure. This research project involves a total of 180 participants. All of the participants

[19] Paralinguistic moves here mean speech features such as laughter and intonation that are not explicit words that carry clear meanings.

are university students or graduates, aged 19 to 35. The selection of this age range is based on considerations of availability of participants. While it might not be difficult to find older Chinese or monolingual Australian participants in Australia, it is a challenge in China, as older generations are not generally eloquent in English, due to historical and educational reasons. All the Chinese participants from Mainland China have sufficient English skills to read the questionnaire and to reply to the compliments, yet they have never lived in a foreign English-speaking country. All the Chinese participants in Australia are intermediate or advanced English speakers who have lived in Australia for no less than one year, but no more than ten years. All the Australian participants are native monolingual Australians. Descriptions of the three groups of participants are shown in the following table.

Table 10 Participants description

Group Name	**Participants Description**
Chinese in China	Mainland Chinese speakers of English who were born and educated in China, and who have never been overseas.
Chinese in Australia	Mainland Chinese speakers of English who were born and educated in China, and who have lived in Australia for one to ten years.
Monolingual Australians	Monolingual Australians who were born and educated in Australia.

One hundred and twenty (120) informants were chosen for the DCT questionnaire and the audio-recorded structured interview, with 20 males and 20 females in each of the three groups. The DCT questionnaire was completed by the informants first. Then they were interviewed about the perception and understanding of their responses. The Chinese in China group (40 in total) participating in research with the DCT questionnaire and interview had two weeks to finish their questionnaire first, and then complete the follow-up interview. For Chinese in Australia and the monolingual Australian group, it took approximately four weeks to finish all the data collection, due to the larger number of participants (80). Sixty (60) informants were chosen for the role play, with 10 male and 10 female informants in each group. There were 6 role play conductors, with one male conductor and one female conductor in each group. The average time for collecting video data from each group (Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia, and monolingual Australians) was two days. The structured interviews were audio recorded, and the role plays were video recorded. The number of participants for different groups regarding different research methods are summarised below. Only participants with intermediate to

advanced English level (CET 4 or IELTs) are able to fulfil the purpose of this study completely[20].

Table 11 Number of participants for different groups regarding different research methods

Participant group	**Chinese in China**		**Chinese in Australia**		**Monolingual Australians**	
Gender of participants	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number of participants for DCT and interview	20	20	20	20	20	20
Number of participants for role play	10	10	10	10	10	10
Place of origin	China		China		Australia	

Demographic information

All Chinese participants (for DCT, interview and role play) in China are from Henan University of Economics and Law, Zhengzhou, Henan, China (see Table 6 in Chapter 5). They are undergraduates (aged from 19 to 26) majoring in English from the Department of Foreign Languages. They have studied English for 6 to 10 years. These participants have very limited interactions with monolingual speakers of English. All of their teachers are Chinese except one oral English class taught by a native English speaker. These participants have been taught by a foreign English teacher from Australia or America. The foreign teacher's class is organised only in the first and second year of their candidature. Most of the students' English level is intermediate. Very few of them are able to speak English at an advanced level. All the participants in China are from the Han ethnic group. Minorities in mainland China are beyond the scope of this study.

All the Chinese participants in Australia (aged from 20 to 28) are from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Regarding the participants who have completed the DCT questionnaire and interviews, 60% (12 out of 20) of the male participants report that they work or study with monolingual Australian English speakers, but socialise with Chinese in Australia. Forty per cent (40%) of Chinese male participants in Australia report that they do not work or study with monolingual speakers of English, and rarely socialise with them. Chinese male participants have stayed in Australian for one to seven years. For the 20 female Chinese participants in Australia who participated and completed the DCT questionnaire and interview, 70% (14 out of 20) report that they work or study with

[20] All the Chinese participants residing in Australia and China need to reach intermediate or advanced English level before they were counted as valid candidates for this study. CET 4 is a Chinese national College English Test for students who study English in a university. All participants for this study have passed CET 4, or have achieved at least 6 in an IELTS exam.

monolingual Australians, but socialise with Chinese. About 30% of them report that they work or study with monolingual Australians, and often socialise with them. Only one female participant reports that she does not work or study with monolingual Australians, and rarely socialises with them. Chinese female participants have stayed in Australian from one to five years.

Regarding Chinese role players in Australia (aged from 20 to 28), the length of stay is from one to seven years, intensity of interaction with monolingual Australians varies from person to person, with a majority of them choosing "work or study with monolingual Australians, but socialise with Chinese"[21], and a few socialising with monolingual Australians often. It was noted that their intensity of interaction may fluctuate, depending on their intensity of study, and level of education. All monolingual Australian participants (aged from 18 to 32) are also from Macquarie University. They have different amounts of contact with Chinese speakers of English in Australia.

4.6 Data, and principles for analysis

> *Data represents the fruit of researchers' labor because they provide the information that will ultimately allow them to describe phenomena, predict events, identify and quantify differences between conditions, and establish the effectiveness of interventions. Because of their crucial nature, data should be treated with the utmost respect and care. (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005, pp. 214-215)*

The overall data in this mixed-methods study consist of 1440 written entries of compliment responses elicited from a discourse completion task (see section 4.4.2), over 20 hours' interview audio recording elicited from the instrument of structured interview (see section 4.4.3), and approximately 5 hours' video recording elicited from the instrument role play (see section 4.4.4). In mixed methods research, the mixing of methods in data collection requires mixing methods for data analysis. In this study, the discourse completion data will be analysed quantitatively, whereas interview data and role play data will be analysed qualitatively. The process of analysing and presenting quantitative data involves the following steps (taken from Gray, 2009, p. 449):

(1). Prepare quantitative data for analysis.

(2). Select appropriate formats for the presentation of quantitative data.

(3). Choose the most appropriate techniques for describing data (descriptive statistics).

[21] See Appendix E.

(4). Choose and apply the most appropriate statistical techniques for exploring relationships and trends in data (correlation and inferential statistics).

The process of analysing and presenting qualitative data involves the following steps (taken from Gray, 2009, p. 493):

(1). Describe some of the principles of qualitative data analysis.

(2). Select appropriate qualitative analytical methods.

(3). Apply qualitative methods to produce valid, reliable and trustworthy data.

(4). Make use of the 'voice' of the researcher.

Mixed methods analysis requires analytical techniques for quantitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis, and mixed analysis of the two forms of data (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 203). The sequential data analysis involves analysing particular data generated by a research instrument. The concurrent data analysis is the synchronised interpretation of data from all sources of data in this study. I define "analysis" as both primary categorisation of data and further comments on categorisation of one source of data. I define "interpretation" as analysis of results from one, or more than one, kind of data source, in light of the broader research context.

To Creswell and Clark (2011, p. 209), interpreting results involves "stepping back from the detailed results and advancing their larger meaning in view of the research problems, questions in a study, the existing literature, and perhaps personal experiences". The interpretation of results from both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis involves explaining how the research questions are answered, and comparing the results with findings or predictions from previous research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). There are differences in interpreting qualitative data analysis on top of the shared procedures in interpreting quantitative and qualitative results. These differences lie in the researcher's role. The qualitative researcher is obliged to address personal views or assessments of the results, since the researcher is seen as an integrated part of the instrument. In this study, I see the researcher role as an integrating part of the whole research process, as the researcher is the director role of all research methods for collecting either quantitative or qualitative data.

Having defined the basic concepts "analysis" and "interpretation", and reflections of the researcher role, I will continue to discuss data analysis and data interpretation in the context of this research. I have broadly categorised two stages of data processing in this mixed methods study: pre-merging analysis and post-merging interpretation. The concept

of "pre-merging" analysis is inspired by Creswell and Clark's (2011) merged data analysis strategies, which involve merging results from two databases (in the context of this research, three databases), and checking if they confirm or disconfirm each other. To begin with, I will outline strategies for pre-merging analysis (detailed in Chapter 6).

4.6.1 Pre-merging analysis

Pre-merging analysis of data in this mixed methods research refers to the presentation of results from quantitative and qualitative data analysis respectively. In the context of this research, pre-merging analysis involves a sequential report of analysis of DCT data (Chapter 5), interview data (Chapter 6) and video-recorded role-play data (Chapter 7). The DCT data are transcribed according to the modified CR categories in Table 7 (see section 3.1.4).

For pre-merging interview data analysis, I utilised the themes while structuring the interviews (see 4.4.3). These ten themes include inquiries of participants' perceptions and understandings of cultural effect on language use, overgeneralisation, multi-functionality of speech acts, phatic communication, pragmatic transfer, and the implicit speech style. I will provide summaries of main streams of ideas and perceptions from a comparative perspective, that is, reporting from the Chinese in China group to the Chinese in Australia group, and the monolingual Australian group. As one of the interview questions inquires about perceptions of gender relationship, the interview results will not be specified by groups with gender distinctions. More details of interview data presentation will be provided in Chapter 6.

For the role-play data, the initial design of this instrument is to focus on nonverbal communicative cues (e.g. facial expressions, body movement), hedging devices (e.g. "er –", "you know"), stylistic features (e.g. humour, laughter), and rhetorical speech (e.g. euphemism, metaphor, polysemy, hyperbole). However, the designed instrument failed to capture a substantial amount of nonverbal data for comparative quantitative analysis. For this type of data, I do not have a fixed analysis package to draw on, as Dunleavy (2003) explains:

> Analysis packages can only work well for you if you already know what shape of data you have. This is easy enough in coursework where you are replicating someone else's prior analysis, but often very difficult for brand-new information that you have just generated by research. (p. 185).

Therefore, I used qualitative analysis investigating individualistic features of compliment responses, and the effect of the gender of the complimenter on the complimentee. This

instrument requires participants to respond to compliments immediately, the effect of the gender of the complimenter seems to be more evident than other approaches. Having explained the detailed approaches to pre-merging analysis, now I will turn to discuss issues in post-merging interpretation (detailed in Chapter 8).

4.6.2 Post-merging interpretation

> *Published reports of research typically are cleaned up; they do not include truthful descriptions of the actual messiness of the research process. (Loseke, 2013, p.12)*

With full acknowledgement of the messy process of mixed methods research, I approach the post-merging interpretation of quantitative and qualitative analysis with the guidance of the research questions (see section 3.4). The process of post-merging interpretation is also known as the mixed methods interpretation as illustrated in the following extract (Creswell & Clark, 2011):

> Once analyses are complete, mixed methods interpretation involves looking across the quantitative results and the qualitative findings and making an assessment of how the quantitative results and the qualitative findings and making an assessment of how the information addresses the mixed methods question in a study. (p. 212).

The post-merging interpretation will be presented in Chapter 8, and I will demonstrate how the research questions are answered by drawing on evidence from three categories of data analysis. After outlining pre-merging analysis and post-merging interpretation, I now discuss the issue of validity in mixed methods analysis and the practice of triangulation.

4.6.3 Validity and triangulation

> *We define validity in mixed methods research as employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination.*
> *(Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 239)*

The definition of validity above reflects the principle of "methodological thinking" as discussed in Chapter 4. The issue of validity is related to the logic behind the whole story, as Loseke (2013, p. 9) argues, "High-quality research design is a package of components that are logically related to one another." To further unpack the logic that holds everything together, I used the term "mixed methods validity" to further my exploration of validating mixed methods research.

Drawing back the principles of carrying out quantitative and qualitative analysis (section 4.6), mixed methods validity can be broadly categorised as quantitative validity and qualitative validity. Quantitative validity involves internal validity (the causal relationship verified among variables) and external validity (how applicable the result to a general context) (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Qualitative validity involves how the researcher gleans accurate findings from interactions with participants and external reviewers (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Member-checking and triangulation of data are two common ways for validating qualitative research. I have not used member-checking for two reasons. The first reason is that I am qualified as a participant observer for this study, and I have integrated my observations of compliment responses by Chinese ESL learners in Australia into the design and analysis of this research. The second reason is that the structured follow-up interview in the design of this study is primarily about member-checking seeking for "perceptions" of "what has been said" in the DCT. In this study, I use triangulation of results as a means of improving the overall validity of this research, as discussed earlier with the role of the researcher (section 4.4.1). An additional approach to improve validity is increasing the sample size. The sample size of this study (180 participants) provides a reasonably large amount of data to answer the research questions. In the next section, I will address the issue of research ethics.

4.7 Ethical safeguarding

> *Data analysis is not just a technical matter. Social scientists have ethical responsibilities to analysis data properly and report it fairly. (De Vaus, 2013, p. 208)*

As discussed in section 4.4.1, the researcher plays a significant role in the research process. To simply characterise the researcher role, researchers are fundamentally "human themselves" and they "enjoy the capabilities of human problem solvers, while trying to identify and reduce the perils and pitfalls that are at times evident in our day-to-day problem solving" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012, p. 271). The research respondents are "above all, human beings" (Oliver, 2010, p.123). In the research process, however, the dignity of the "human beings" (the research respondents) can be neglected by the "human themselves" (the researchers), especially when the latter are preoccupied with meeting their research goals (Oliver, 2010). The key issues in research ethics often involve the level of informed consent, i.e. how genuinely the respondents are informed, the issue of anonymity and confidentiality, and other relevant code of practice to protect the respondents and the quality of research (Oliver, 2010).

This research study is primarily conducted in Australia. All research activities have adhered to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)[22] and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated in March, 2014),[23] which were monitored by the National Health and Medical Research Council in Australia. Prior to conducting this research, final ethics approval (see Appendix B) has been obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University. Ethics application for this research project is classified as no more than low risk, which is defined by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) as "research in which the foreseeable risk is one of discomfort [only]"[24]. This research has considered the wellbeing of the participants and confidentiality, privacy, consent and research, as required (see details of advertisements for recruiting participants in Appendix F, and different versions of consent forms in Appendix G).

For conducting research in China, which accounts for one third of the data collection activities for this research, there is no obligatory requirement, thus, I followed the research ethics as required in Australia accordingly.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the theoretical and methodological considerations underlying the development and formation of the research design for this study. Starting from an introduction of the categorisation of research methods that are evident in existing literature of relevance (section 4.1), I proceeded to introduce the concept of "mixing" in mixed methods research, which suits the purpose of this research (section 4.2). Further explanation of the rationale in adopting mixed methods research was provided by introducing the driving force of a given research project – the research questions (section 4.3). The detailed description of the research instruments was provided in section 4.4. In section 4.5, I introduced the participants for this study. Following that, I presented principles for data analysis (section 4.6). Finally, I reviewed the ethical requirements necessary for conducting this research (section 4.7). The following Chapter 5 is dedicated to the analysis of the first source of data – DCT data.

[22] http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/r39.pdf. Retrieved on 15 March 2015.
[23] https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72_national_statement_march_2014_141126.pdf. Retrieved on 15 March 2015.
[24] http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/about_human_research_ethics. Retrieved on 15 March 2015.

CHAPTER 5: DCT DATA ANALYSIS

> *The data analysis stage is fundamentally about data reduction – that is, it is concerned with reducing the large corpus of information that the researcher has gathered so that he or she can make sense of it. (Bryman, 2012, p. 13)*

While Bryman (2012, p. 13) argues that raw data has to be "managed" and "reduced" in order to "make sense of it", there are definitely different ways of depicting the process of data analysis. Here is another way to put it:

> Analysis is not simply a matter of classifying, categorizing, coding, or collating data. It is not simply a question of identifying forms of speech or regularities of action. Most fundamentally, analysis is about the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 108)

Combining the two views above, I continue to treat data analysis as part of the methodological thinking process lying behind the conceptualisation and operationalisation of this study (c.f. Chapter 4).

The total data elicited with 120 DCT questionnaires consist of 1440 entries of compliment responses (see section 4.6). Each entry is generated by one scenario in the questionnaire. In each entry, data may contain multiple compliment responses or single compliment responses. All DCT data are transcribed based on CR categorisations presented in Table 7 (see section 3.1.4). A data entry in the DCT data that contains multiple strategies can be exemplified as follows:

> Thank you. You look pretty good yourself.
>
> APPRECIATION TOKEN + RETURN (CR strategy numbers: 1+4)

A data entry containing a single strategy is exemplified as follows:

> Thanks.
>
> APPRECIATION TOKEN (CR strategy number: 1)

DCT data suggest that the majority of response entries are multiple compliment response strategies, and the minority of them are single strategies as detailed in Table 12. This means that most respondents tend to make additional comments on top of a primary response.

Table 12 The utilisation of multiple strategies and single strategies in six micro groups

CR TOPICS	CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
Appearance	Single	10	7	8	4	13	1
	Multiple	50	53	52	56	47	59
Performance	Single	8	3	9	9	8	3
	Multiple	52	57	51	51	52	57
Possession	Single	13	12	16	10	8	7
	Multiple	47	48	44	50	52	53
Personality	Single	12	8	25	16	16	8
	Multiple	48	52	35	44	44	52

To respond to the compliment in situation 5 (see Appendix C) "…I really like all the food you prepared tonight. You're a fantastic cook!" a single strategy to respond to this compliment would be "Thank you". Most of the responses however use multiple strategies such as:

> I am very glad that you like it. It is my father who taught me to learn how to cook, it's interesting to learn.
>
> COMMENT ACCEPTANCE + TRANSFER + COMMENT ACCEPTANCE (2+5+2)

Since this example is provided by the second female participant in the Chinese in China group, I will present this data entry in the following style in this chapter:

> CH IN CH F2S5: I am very glad that you like it. It is my father who taught me to learn how to cook, it's interesting to learn. (2+5+2)

In this presentation style, I use "CH IN CH" to represent "Chinese in China" and "F2S6" to represent "compliment response(s) to situation 6 from female participant number two". The same pattern applies to other groups. I use "CH IN AU" to represent "Chinese in Australia" and "MO AU" to represent "monolingual Australians". I will also use similar acronyms to differentiate gender groups. For example, I use "CH IN CH M" to refer to "Chinese in China male group" and "CH IN CH F" to refer to "Chinese in China female group" (see Table 12).

Having provided an overview of the DCT data, I now turn to present data in detail from a comparative view in order to examine the effect of the target environment. First of all, I will provide analysis that shows the overall tendency of Chinese ESL learners in their compliment responses when they come to Australia (section 5.1). Specific compliment response examples will be provided. Then, I will present data analysis regarding the gender of the complimenter (section 5.2). Section 5.3 presents data analysis regarding the four

researched compliment topics, and explores possible elements of change in language use in an intercultural context.

5.1 Overall tendency of compliment response strategies across groups

Table 13 shows an overview of the distribution of compliment response strategies across groups without gender variations. The total amount of responses generated by discourse completion task is 3407 instances. This includes laughter such as “haha” or “ha”, which has been categorised as INTERJECTION strategies. INTERJECTIONs were considered because including small particles provides a more thorough data analysis and complete view of the use of different strategies. Chinese in China have produced the highest number of CR strategies, followed by monolingual Australians and then by Chinese in Australia.

To examine change in language use among Chinese in Australia caused by direct contact with the target culture, a comparative view of the distribution of compliment responses are provided in Figure 1, which is designed on the basis of the data in Table 13. I will follow such patterns of data presentation across this chapter. I have chosen mainly two types of figures for this chapter, i.e. line charts and column charts. There are no fundamental differences between these two charts as they both reflect the distribution of CR strategies in different groups. The choice of either line charts or column charts is solely for the purpose of enhancing visualisation in the process of data analysis. I will provide an overview of the general data tendency without providing empirical examples (as shown in Figure 1). Then I will provide examples of CR strategies from the data while presenting and overview of distribution of CR strategies across groups in light of the gender of the complimentees (section 5.1)

Table 13 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three macro groups

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH	CH IN AU	MO AU	TOTAL CRs
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	250	232	238	720
	2. Comment Acceptance	390	280	303	973
	3. Upgrade	9	7	27	43
	4. Return	112	76	81	269
	5. Transfer	5	9	8	22
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	10	5	21	36
	7. Qualification	61	43	72	176
	8. Downgrade	10	7	17	34
	9. Uncertainty	36	54	72	162
	10. No acknowledgement	0	1	1	2
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	16	8	0	24
	12. Suggestion	57	54	41	152
	13. Offer	32	32	14	78
	14. Justification	146	166	141	453
	15. Interjection	77	59	127	263
TOTAL CRs		1211	1033	1163	3407

Figure 1 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups

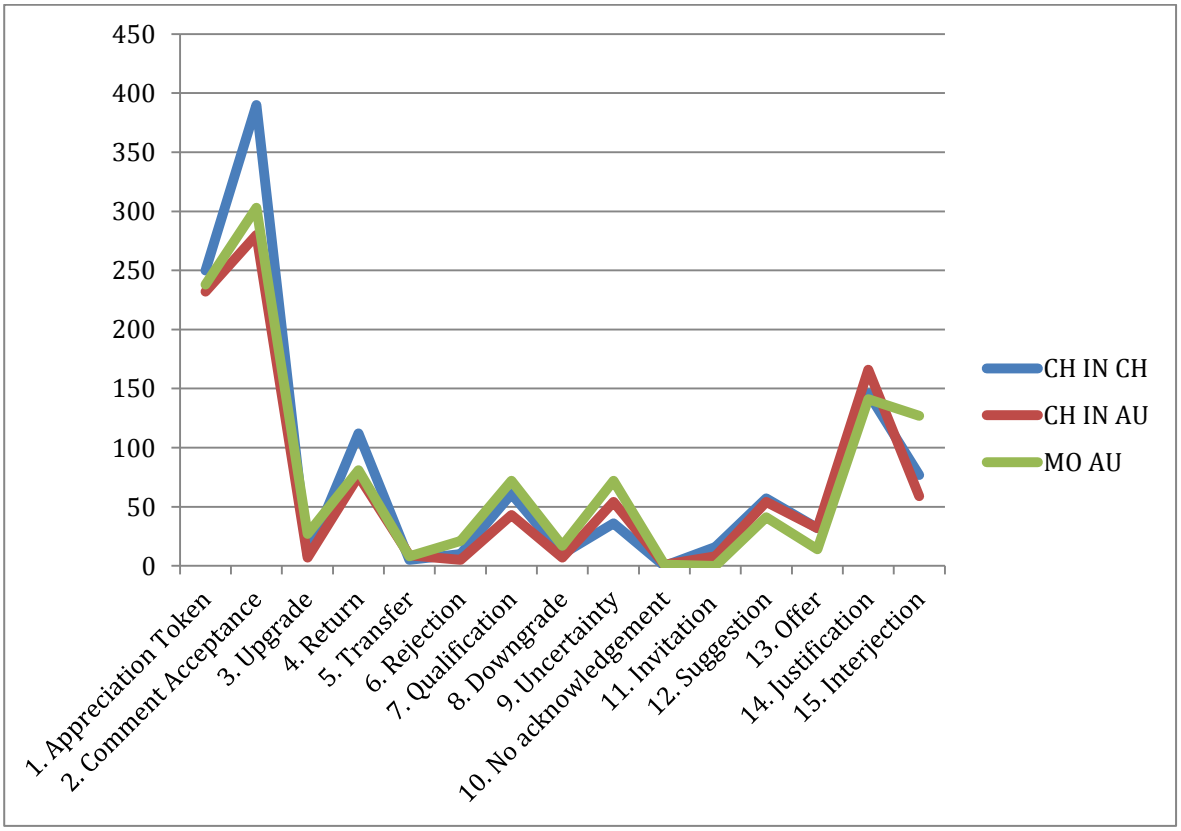


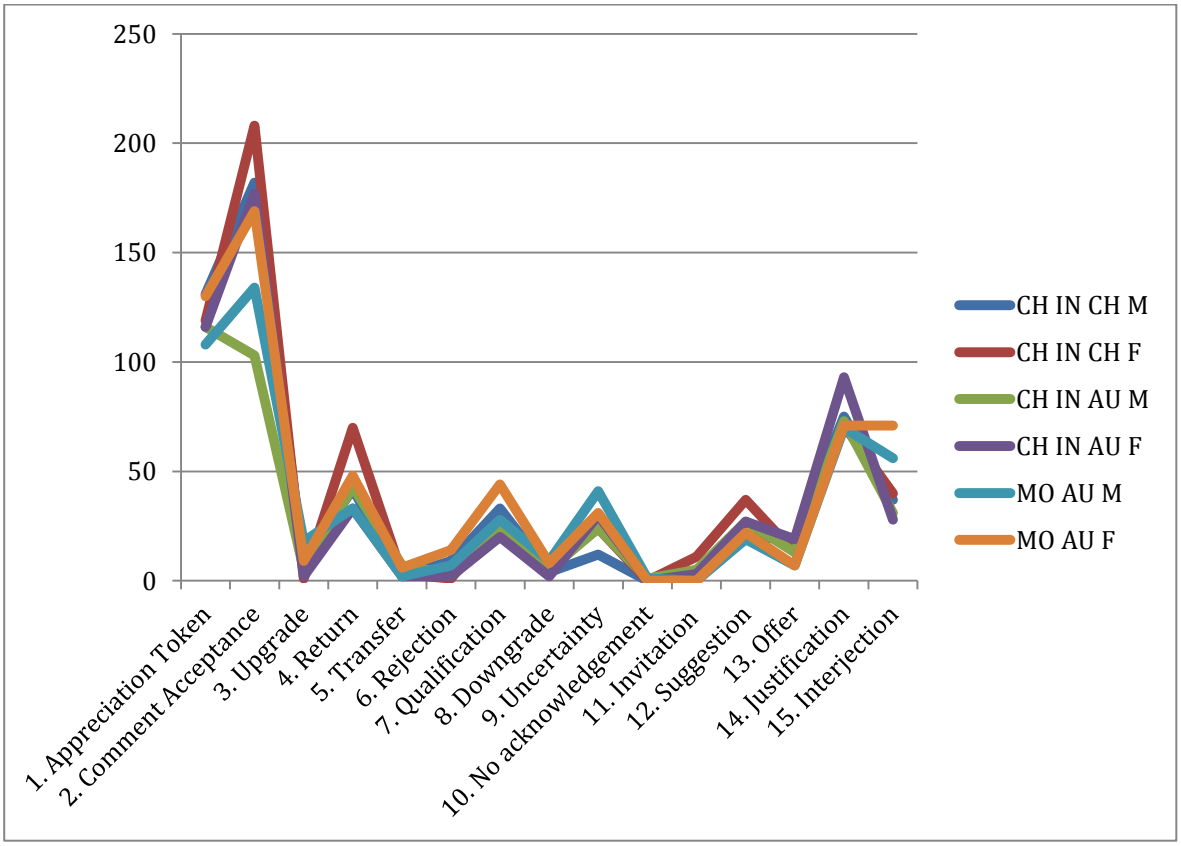
Figure 1 demonstrates the overall tendency of three groups of participants (Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia, and monolingual Australians) in their English compliment responses. The three groups have shown a rather similar fluctuation line in the frequency of different CR strategies. This means that participants from all groups have provided a similar number of responses to the same compliment situations in the DCT questionnaire with regards to most of the compliment strategies (e.g. APPRECIATION TOKEN, UPGRADE, TRANSFER, REJECTION, DOWNGRADE, NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, INVITATION AND JUSTIFICATION). Some obvious differences among the three participants groups lie in the frequency of some strategies such as COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, RETURN, INTERJECTION, and UNCERTAINTY. For COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, Chinese in China have used significantly more such strategies than Chinese in Australian and monolingual Australians. The same phenomenon is visible in the distribution of RETURN strategies. Monolingual Australians have used the highest number of INTERJECTIONs and RETURN strategies. Other visible differences as shown in Figure 1 lie in the use of QUALIFICATION, INVITATION, SUGGESTION, OFFER, and JUSTIFICATION. Monolingual Australians have used the highest number of QUALIFICATIONs but the least number of INVITATION, SUGGESTION, OFFER and JUSTIFICATION. From this Figure 1, the degree to which how much Chinese in Australia have approximated to monolingual Australians cannot be concluded at this stage.

Having provided a general overview of the CR distribution in three groups without considering gender variations, I now move on to explore how complimentees of different gender cause variations in their compliment responses. Table 14 and Figure 2 show a summarised comparative view of CR distributions in all gendered groups.

Table 14 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	131	119	116	116	108	130
	2. Comment Acceptance	182	208	103	177	134	169
	3. Upgrade	8	1	5	2	18	9
	4. Return	42	70	43	33	33	48
	5. Transfer	2	3	7	2	2	6
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	9	1	3	2	7	14
	7. Qualification	33	28	23	20	28	44
	8. Downgrade	4	6	5	2	9	8
	9. Uncertainty	12	24	24	30	41	31
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	1	0	1	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	5	11	5	3	0	0
	12. Suggestion	20	37	27	27	19	22
	13. Offer	19	13	13	19	7	7
	14. Justification	75	71	73	93	70	71
	15. Interjection	37	40	31	28	56	71
TOTAL CRs		579	632	479	554	533	630

Figure 2 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups



Having presented the overview of compliment response distributions with regards to different gender groups, I now discuss each strategy in detail following the order of the CR strategies ACCEPTANCE (strategy 1 to strategy 5) (section 5.1.1) – NON-ACCEPTANCE (strategy 6 to strategy 10) (section 5.1.2) – OTHER INTERPRETATIONS (strategy 11 to strategy 15) (section 5.1.3).

5.1.1 ACCEPTANCE strategies

As discussed in Chapter 4, DCT data only provides insights to the dynamics of CR strategies at a formal level. The DCT data is categorised most according to their literal meanings unless some strategies become highly repetitive and shows a high level of formulaity.

Strategy 1: APPRECIATION TOKEN

APPRECIATION TOKEN is one of the most frequently used strategies across all groups. Detailed distributions of the use of “thank you” and “thanks” across groups are provided in Table 15. Chinese in China groups tend to use “thank you” much more frequently than “thanks”. Chinese in Australia groups have decreased the use of relative formal APPRECIATION TOKEN “thank you” and increased the use of the relatively informal APPRECIATION TOKEN “thanks”, narrowing the gap between formal and informal APPRECIATION TOKENs. Such change in APPRECIATION TOKENs in the target culture suggests clear accommodation of the target norms. Monolingual Australian groups preferred using informal APPRECIATION TOKENs “thanks” much more frequently than the formal APPRECIATION TOKEN “thank you”. The following table provides a summary of the number of informal and formal APPRECIATION TOKENs across from all groups.

Table 15 The distribution of informal and formal appreciation tokens

GROUP NAME	APPRECIATION TOKEN "Thanks"	APPRECIATION TOKEN "Thank you"
CH IN CH M	34	101
CH IN CH F	9	109
CH IN AU M	58	56
CH IN AU F	48	68
MO AU M	115	28
MO AU F	101	29

Strategy 2: COMMENT ACCEPTANCE

COMMENT ACCEPTANCE is one of the most frequently used strategies by all groups of participants. Because of its general high frequency in compliment responses, the use of COMMENT ACCETANCE strategies is often related to the overall length of the responses to compliments. Generally speaking, females tend to use more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies than their male counterparts. The following examples show COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies from Chinese in China groups. Chinese in China male ESL students often use complete sentences and expressions that are likely to be formal (see the following example). Instead of using "it's", they often use "it is". This shows that they might not distinguish colloquial forms from written forms in their compliment responses.

> CH IN CH M14S4: Thanks. I bought it several days ago. It is convenient to ride my bike at our university. (1+2+2)

There are examples of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies used by Chinese in China males that show grammatical errors (see the following two examples). In the first example, "tell you the truth" is supposed to be "to tell you the truth". In the second example, "It's look" is supposed to be "it looks".

> CH IN CH M4S7: I'm really glad to hear that. Tell you the truth that I spent 3 hours to make up. (2+2)

> CH IN CH M13S3: Thank you. The weather is hot. So I decide to change my haircut. It's (It) look (looks) cool and very interesting. (1+2+2+2)

Chinese in China females have also used formal expression in their COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies (see the following two examples). In the first example, "I am so glad that you like" could be "I'm so …". Similarly in the second example, "It is a great honour for me …" could be "It's a great honour for me …".

> CH IN CH F4S3: Oh, Thanks. I am afraid at first that you don't like it. This is the first time I coloured my hair purple. I am so glad that you like it. (15+9+2+2)

> CH IN CH F3S7: Thanks! It is a great honour for me to get such a high evaluation. (1+2)

Though formal expressions occurred frequently in compliment responses from Chinese in China females, informal expressions are also commonly used. In the following example, the expression, the written form "it is" is changed into "it's". The second COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategy "Saving a lot of time" does not contain a subject which less formal.

CH IN CH F3S4: Thank you! It's useful for me. Saving a lot of time. (1+2+2)

Chinese in Australia overall have provided less COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies which result in their overall shorter responses to the questionnaire. One possibility is that Chinese in Australia have learned to use the least words to get by in situations what Chinese in China would say more. Using shorter expressions or abbreviations is also a sign for approximating monolingual Australian English speakers whose language show the highest degree of informality.

CH IN AU M3S3: Thank you. It's very nice of you to say so. (1+2)

CH IN AU M18S4: Haha, yep, Thank you. It's a good exercise. (15+1+2)

CH IN AU F7S5: Thanks for saying that, Jim. I'm pretty glad that you like them. Cooking, actually, is one of my hobbies. I learned how to cook at the time when I was in high school. Sometimes, I even buy many cooking books or download such kind of information from iPhones to updating my cooking skills. How's your cooking skill? (1+2+2+15+2+2+15+2+9)

CH IN AU F8S12: No worries. Sally. This model is up-to-date and good at high-quality video recording. It is really a good choice ever. (14+2+2)

The following COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies are examples from monolingual Australian male group. They show that responses to compliments are quite succinct and informal. The word "mate" in the expression "Thanks mate" is a typical example that reflects Australian speech features. Humour also appears more frequently in this group compared with Chinese ESL groups in China and in Australia such as the example "It's a good cover up" in response to a compliment on the graduation gown in situation 11. Humour strategies are also found in UPGRADE strategies, which I will report on in the next CR strategy.

MO AU M1S1: Yeah, I suppose. Thanks. (2+1)

MO AU M16S4: Thanks mate, I love it. (1+2)

MO AU M10S8: Ah, I guess so. It's something I enjoy! (15+2+2)

MO AU M17S11: It's a good cover up. (2)

Monolingual Australian females also used COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies that are short and informal as in the following examples,

MO AU F7S3: Thanks! Yeah, I wanted something different. I just thought why not? Sometimes weird and out there for the summer. (1+2+2+2)

MO AU F8S3: Thanks! I took a risk. I hope it paid off! (1+2+2)

Monolingual Australians have their own choices of words that have not been found in Chinese ESL learners, a reflection of the different linguistic repertoires behind

expressions we can see. For example, the word "choosy" in the following example suggests that in Australian English, it is very common to use such kind of adjectives.

> MO AU F9S4: Thanks. It took me a lot of time to pick out. I was so choosy obviously. I picked the right chance. (1+2+2+2)

Unlike Chinese ESL learners in China, using expressions without subjects is a common phenomenon, which shows informality in language use (see the following examples).

> MO AU F10S4: Hey, thanks it comes in handy. Worked for it. Your bike? (15+1+2+2+9)
>
> MO AU F11S4: Thanks! I'm really enjoying having it. (1+2)
>
> MO AU F13S4: Thanks. Just get it. Makes everything easier. (1+2+2)

What is interesting is that the word "mate" is used by both males and females in Australia, see the follow example:

> MO AU F12S4: Thanks mate. It's great exercise! (1+2)

Overall, COMMENT ACCEPTANE is a very popularly used strategy across all groups. In all locations, it could be concluded that females tend to make more comments in their compliment responses compared with males. Chinese in China ESL learners have used relatively more formal and complete sentences in their compliment responses. Chinese in Australia have performed less formally but more succinctly in their compliment responses even though long responses were found occasionally among Chinese in Australia ESL learners. Monolingual Australians used the most informal and succinct responses to compliments and show signs of a different linguistic repertoire compared with Chinese ESL groups.

Strategy 3: UPGRADE

UPGRADE is a relatively less frequently used strategy across groups. In comparison to COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, UPGRADE is found to occur more frequently among male complimentees than in female groups. Monolingual Australian male group stands out in using the highest number of UPGRADE strategies. Such strategies are often associated with humour. In other situations the complimentee compliments himself for being a person of knowledge or full of information. This kind of compliment responses are generated by situation 10 when the complimentee is complimented because he directed the complimenter where to buy books (see examples below):

> MO AU M13S10: Well, I'm a man of much knowledge, hey, if you want, I'll take you there. (15+3+15+13)

MO AU M4S10: I'm full of useful information. (3)

When the possession such as a camera is complimented, the complimentee can also UPGRADE the compliment in the following way:

MO AU M11S12: Clearly, it's due to my excellent taste. (15+3)

Monolingual Australian females also used UPGRADE strategies such as the following examples:

MO AU F13S6: Haha, you won't survive without me. Try to come back in one piece though. (15+3+2)

MO AU F12S5: I'm glad you like my cooking. It's one of my many skills. (2+3)

MO AU F16S5: Thank you! I pride myself on my cooking. (1+3)

Strategy 4: RETURN

RETURN is one of the most frequently used strategies across groups. Situation 7, which contains a compliment on a night outfit has generated many RETURN strategies across all groups. Chinese male participants in China have shown formulaity in their RETURN strategies (see the following examples).

CH IN CH M14S7: Thank you. You are so beautiful tonight too. (1+4)

CH IN CH M15S7: Thank you. You are wonderful tonight. (1+4)

CH IN CH M16S7: Thank you. You look amazing too. (1+4)

There are instances that show translation from L1 to L2 or transfer from L1 to L2. In the following example, the expression "I think you can hold all of us" is very possible a translation from Mandarin which means "you have astonished all of us that we were left holding our breath".

CH IN CH M17S7: Thank you. You look so beautiful tonight. And I think you can hold all of us. (1+4+4)

CH IN CH M18S7: Thank you. Actually you are the shining star! (1+15+4)

There are inappropriate choices of words in the Chinese in China male group. For example, the word "handsome" used in the following response is used to return a compliment to a female complimenter. There were two possible reasons to account for this phenomenon. The first reason is that this participant did not read the questionnaire careful enough to find out the complimenter was named "Grace" – clearly a female name. The second reason is that the boy may assume that "handsome" can be used to compliment both males and females.

CH IN CH M19S7: Thanks. You are also handsome. (Grace- use 'handsome' to a girl, by mistake probably) (1+4)

Compared with Chinese males in China, Chinese females in China seem to use more intensifiers such as "really" in the following examples.

CH IN CH F11S7: Thank you! Actually your dressing is really beautiful. You are so charming tonight. (1+15+4+4)

CH IN CH F12S7: Thank you for inviting me. You are really attractive tonight. (1+4)

The use of RETURN strategies also varies depending on the specific compliment topic. For example, in response to situation 1 (a compliment on performance), Chinese females in China have extended their RETURN strategies with more comments (see the examples below).

CH IN CH F10S1: Thank you and congratulations! (1+4)

CH IN CH F14S1: Thank you. Your marks are not bad. Maybe we can have a talk and I think it is good for both of us. (1+4+12+2)

CH IN CH F16S1: Thank you! I am very glad too. Your college is a good college too. It is very famous in Australia. (1+2+4+2)

Another feature found in Chinese in China females is their use of comments showing good wishes (see the following examples). Such good wishes starting with "I (also) hope…" or "I (do) believe" can phatic or conventional expressions preferred by females in China (see the following examples).

CH IN CH F17S1: Thank you! At the same time, I also hope you can live a happy life in college. (1+4+2)

CH IN CH F18S1: Thank you so much. Thomas! So do you. You also did a good job. I do believe you can do better in your university! (1+4+4+2)

CH IN CH F20S1: Thank you! You're doing very well. (1+4+2+12)

Chinese in Australia seem to have expanded their linguistic repertoire in the target culture by picking up new vocabularies in using the RETURN strategies. For example, adjectives are no longer the same as Chinese in China (e.g. beautiful, wonderful or amazing). New adjectives or relatively new words such as "gorgeous", "stunning", "fantastic" and "good", appeared together with the frequently used adjectives found in Chinese in China.

CH IN AU M13S7: Thank you Grace, you look stunning as well, let's rock this party. (1+4+12)

CH IN AU M14S7: Thank you. You look gorgeous. (1+4)

CH IN AU M15S7: Thanks. But look at you, Grace, you look fantastic tonight. (1+4)

CH IN AU M17S7: Thanks. You look beautiful tonight. (1+4)

CH IN AU M18S7: Oh, Thank you very much. You look amazing too. (15+1+4)

CH IN AU M19S7: You also look good. May I have your phone number? Such a beautiful creature stands around me. (4+9+4)

Similar expressions were found in the Chinese in Australia female group as well (see the following examples):

CH IN AU F6S7: Thank you for inviting me. You look so gorgeous! (1+4)

CH IN AU F16S7: Thank you, you look stunning in your dress too. (1+4)

There are also similar formulaic responses to Chinese in China (see examples below):

CH IN AU F13S7: Thanks. You must be the most attractive one today. (1+4)

CH IN AU F9S11: Thanks Vivian. You look really smart too! (1+4)

CH IN AU F4S11: Thank you. Your dress is nice. (1+4)

CH IN AU F6S11: Thank you. The same you are. (1+4)

CH IN AU F6S9: Thank you. Your comment encourages me a lot. I also enjoy to rending your essay. (1+2+4)

Monolingual Australians have shown their own preferred formulas in RETURN strategies such as “you did not do too badly yourself” or “you look nice yourself”.

MO AU M12S9: Thank you, you did not do too badly yourself. (1+4)

MO AU M20S9: Thanks! You clearly did alright yourself. (1+4)

MO AU M12S7: Thanks. You look nice yourself. (1+4)

Succinct responses that differentiate them from Chinese ESL learners in China and in Australia include the use of “so do you” or “as do you”, a very simple way to let go of the compliment.

MO AU M17S7: As do you. (4)

MO AU M1S7: Thanks, so do you! I like your outfit! (1+4)

Strategy 5: TRANSFER

TRANSFER is a much less frequently occurring strategy. Both Chinese males and females in China have used complete sentences to transfer the credit to God, or a person or a university (see examples below). Chinese in Australia have used relatively shorter responses such as the example from CH IN AU M6S9. Examples from each group are provided as follows:

CH IN CH M4S10: God helps me to get this chance to talk with so many friends, especially you, so that I can tell you where to find the very book you want. In other words, you should thank the God. (5+2+15+12)

CH IN CH F2S5: I am very glad that you like it. It my father who taught me to learn how to cook, it's interesting to learn. (2+5+2)

CH IN CH F17S11: Oh, really? Thank you! I also think I become much more mature than before, which should owe to the experience at university. (15+9+1+2+5)

CH IN AU M6S9: Thank you very much. Without you, I'm unable to do that. (1+5)

CH IN AU M9S7: Thanks, Grace often talk about you in front of me. (1+5)

CH IN AU F18S1: Thank you so much, Thomas, I think God gave me a lot of grace this time. I hope things are working out for you. (1+5+2)

CH IN AU F12S5: I'm glad you enjoy it! Thanks! Next time, I can cook some other dishes for you! (2+1+3)

Monolingual Australians used strategies that are similar to SUGGESTION, but the main meaning is to transfer the credit to someone else, for example, the expression "you should try my mum's food" from MO AU M7S5 is to transfer the credit to the complimentee's mother. Monolingual Australian females have occasionally used long responses that contain TRANSFER with a combination of different strategies such as UPGRADE that often involves humorous speech (see example MO AU F7S5).

MO AU M8S8: Not really, I needed my wife to show me how it all works. (6+5)

MO AU M7S5: I'm OK. You should try my mum's food. (6+5)

MO AU F2S5: Thanks. My mother was a great teacher. (1+5)

MO AU F6S5: Yeah? Thanks, but I actually can't cook, this is all just from the take home restaurant around the corner. I'll tell them you said their food was fantastic! (9+1+6+5+5)

MO AU F7S5: Yeah, I was going to try out for Masterchef but I had commitments at this other restaurant so I couldn't. I'm in such high demand. Just joking, but thanks. The recipes are all from Google. Haha. (3+3+2+1+5+15)

Monolingual Australian females also used succinct RETURN strategies such as "so do you" or "you look nice as well". Occasionally, respondents may elaborate the situations (see MO AU F6S7). In the example from MO AU F6S7, it also shows high energy in the expression. The adjective "gorgeous" from the example offered by MO AU F7S7 confirms that the above illustration of accommodation among Chinese in Australia which results in more varieties of the usage of adjectives.

MO AU F1S7: Thanks. So do you. (1+4)

MO AU F2S7: Thank you. You look nice as well. (1+4)

MO AU F3S7: Thanks Grace. I wasn't really sure what to wear. You look great too! (1+9+4)

MO AU F6S7: Oh, my God, you too! Haha matching outfits, we should get a photo together! (15+4+15+2+12)

MO AU F7S7: So do you! You look gorgeous! Tonight's going to be fun. (4+4+2)

5.1.2 NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies

Among the five NON-ACCEPTNCE strategies, QUALIFICATION and UNCERTAINTY are the two more frequently used strategies. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT is the least preferred strategy that hardly occurred in any groups. REJECTION and DOWNGRADE have low occurrence across groups. In this section, I will pay more attention to QUALIFCATOIN and UNCERTAINTY strategies.

Strategy 6: REJECTION

REJECTION is one of the least frequently used strategies. Monolingual Australian females have used the higher number of REJECTION strategies, followed by Chinese in China male group. Chinese in China male participants have used REJECTIONs that show clear transfer or translation from L1 to L2. For example, expressions such as "Don't say like this" or "No need to say thanks" (see examples below). REJECTION is also used with a similar strategy QUALIFICATION such as "It's not so difficult for me to do this tiny affair…" from CH IN CH M2S2. Such kind of expressions is also translated from phatic formulas in Mandarin.

CH IN CH M5S12: Don't say like this! You are welcome! (6+14)

CH IN CH M2S2: It's not so difficult for me to do this tiny affair, so you don't need to be so thankful, we are friends so it's my pleasure to help you, so we shall help each other in future, right? (7+6+14+9)

CH IN CH M5S2: No need to say thanks. It is just a little help. (6+14)

Chinese in China females hardly used this strategy so I will not provide examples here. Chinese in Australia also show their continuation in transferring speech conventions from L1 to L2, which is similar to the Chinese in China male group (see example CH IN AU F20S12). QUALIFCATION is also found to be used next to REJECTION strategy (see example CH IN AU M9S9).

CH IN AU F20S12: We are classmates, so no need to say 'thanks'. (14+6)

CH IN AU M9S9: Not at all. I just spent lots of time and read lots of materials. (6+7)

CH IN AU F13S8: Not at all. I just like its look. (6+2)

Monolingual Australian males show humour in their REJECTION strategies (see example MO AU M11S3). REJECTION is also used as part of a combination of different strategies (see examples below).

> MO AU M11S3: This isn't a haircut, man. This is ink from that giant squid I fought. Didn't you see it on the news? (6+3+9)
>
> MO AU M12S8: Thanks, not really. It's nice to have though. (1+6+2)

Monolingual Australian females either use a common formula "not really" in their REJECTION strategies (see examples below) or a complete sentence "I'm not a great cook" (see example MO AU F4S5). The illocutionary force of the REJECTION is tuned by laughter or expressions before or after it.

> MO AU F11S5: Not really. They're just easy recipes. (6+7)
>
> MO AU F6S11: Haha, thanks but I don't feel mature at all!! Haha going to get wasted tonight! (15+1+6+15+7)
>
> MO AU F4S5: Oh, thanks. I'm glad it all came together-I'm not a great cook. (15+1+7+6)

Strategy 7: QUALIFICATION

For QUALIFICATION strategies, the Chinese in China male group have frequently used QUALIFICAITON strategies when responding to compliment situation 9 (a compliment on essay). It seems a formula announcing the speaker's intention to work hard is a way to qualify the compliment indicating a voice such as "there is still a lot of room for improvement" or " I should not be proud of myself or stop making progress" (see the two examples below).

> CH IN CH M9S9: Thank you. It's my honour to hear that. I should still work hard. (1+2+7)
>
> CH INCH M12S9: Thanks. I'm glad to hear that. I'll study hard to improve myself. (1+2+7)

In the following examples, the group identity signifier "we" in the QUALIFICATION strategy "we're all growing up" is a way to avoid standing out. Such kind of desire in wanting to belong to a group is possibly related to the collectivism shared by many Mandarin speakers in China. The group identity marker "we" appeared even more frequently among Chinese in China female groups which I will analyse shortly.

> MO AU M2S11: Thank you! That's it, we're all growing up, not only me but all of you are much more mature than the first day of our college, so the time makes us grow and we shall make ourselves leaders of our own areas, come on! (1+2+7+4+12+15)
>
> CH IN CH M14S11: Thank you. I think we all get much more mature these years. I missed the school life very much. Yet it's gone. (1+7+2+2)

The speaker may decide if they would like to express modesty by using QUALIFICATION strategies according to their assumptions of the other speakers' speech norms. For example, CH IN CH M11S9 has provided comments as follows:

> CH IN CH M11S9: If she is foreigner, I say 'thank you, I just did my best.' If not, I will show modest and say 'This is just my personal opinion and everyone has advantages.

Basically, this speaker is assuming that foreigners are somehow less modest than Chinese and therefore there is no need to stick to Chinese modest conventions in speech. The concept of "foreigner" in China is an overgeneralised concept. As illustrated in analysis of strategy 6 REJECTION earlier, monolingual Australians are the kind of foreigners that actually use REJECTIONs, which could be motivated by modesty or similar concerns.

Chinese in China females have also used group identity markers such as "everyone" or "we" as a way of qualifying the compliments as something shared rather than individually owned (see the following examples).

> CH IN CH F12S1: Thank you! Everybody has his own strong points. I'm sure that you'll be successful in the future! (1+7+2)
>
> CH IN CH F16S11: Oh, thank you. The academic dress look great. Everyone looks more mature than before. (15+1+2+7)
>
> CH IN CH F18S11: Time flies so fast! We are all more mature obviously. Look at you, you look like a white collar! (2+7+4)
>
> CH IN CH F19S11: Wow, we all will grow up. We all become more mature. (15+7+7)

For Chinese in Australia, especially Chinese females in Australia, situation 9 (a compliment on essay) has generated more QUALIFICAITON strategies than Chinese in China participants, a clear approximation toward the monolingual Australian group. The compliment designed in situation 9 is "Your essay is indeed impressive. You're very intelligent and knowledgeable". Both monolingual Australians and Chinese in China have used QUALIFICATION strategies that show acknowledgement of hard work behind the essay and seem to accept the essay. This raises the question of the strategy itself. Even though QUALIFICATION strategy is categorised as one of the NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies, it can actually mean that the complimentee accepts the compliment. I will provide more discussion on this in the Chapter 8. Acknowledging hard work is rarely seen in data from Chinese participants in China as such an act may be misinterpreted as being proud and not modest. So the Chinese in China groups tend to use RETURN or COMMENT ACCEPTANCE that suggests they need to improve further. Acknowledging hard work in Australian culture, or at least in this complimenting setting, is actually a way

to denigrate the compliments expressing a voice that to some degree saying "I am not that intelligent and knowledgeable. I just worked hard on it". Examples for acknowledging hard from Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians are provided as follows:

> CH IN AU M7S9: Thank you. I really did a lot of research. (1+7)
>
> CH IN AU F2S9: Actually, I did make a lot of efforts to improve my study. (15+7)
>
> CH IN AU F3S9: I just do my best and prepare useful structure draft for essay. And I did much research for this essay. (7+7)
>
> CH IN AU F5S9: Thank you. I have worked hard on this essay. (1+7)
>
> CH IN AU F7S9: Thank you, Amanda. As I know, you've got a high mark too. Any hard labour yields and deserves the sweetest fruits. What I have done is just tried my great effort and best to do it. (1+15+4+7+7)

Similar examples are found among monolingual Australians. This shows that it is very common to confess hard work as the reason that has produced a good essay.

> MO AU M9S5: Thanks. I just tried my best. (1+7)
>
> MO AU F8S9: It probably has more to do with how much work I put into it- far too much! You did quite well, too. (7+4)
>
> MO AU F9S9: Thanks, I studied so hard last night. You did great too! (1+7+4)
>
> MO AU F10S9: thanks, I put a lot of work into it. You did really well too. (1+7+4)
>
> MO AU F19S9: Thank you Amanda, I worked hard! (1+7)

Other possible ways of qualifying the compliment is to attribute it to luck. Both Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians have been found to use this strategy (see the following examples):

> CH IN AU M6S1: It's purely luck and talent. (7)
>
> MO AU F4S9: Oh, I think I may have gotten lucky this time, but thank you! (15+7+1)

Despite of the clear approximation found among Chinese in Australia ESL learners, there are QUALIFICATOIN strategies that show transfer from L1 speech conventions (see the following examples).

> CH IN AU M7S1: Thanks. But it will also mean that I will have miserable days thereafter because competition will be intense in that university. (1+7)
>
> CH IN AU M10S9: Thanks. I also need to work hard on the final. (1+7)
>
> CH IN AU M11S9: You too, I need to strong some parts. (4+7)

For monolingual Australians, there are also other ways to qualify the compliment such as showing surprise, reducing the significance of marks or others.

MO AU M5S1: Yeah thanks man/but where you study isn't that important – there's lots of different ways to get to where you want to be. (1+7)

MO AU M2S5: Oh, thanks. It wasn't much though. Just something I put together. (15+1+8+7)

MO AU M5S8: Well... it just makes it easier to do what you need – especially the iPad, so useful. (15+7+2)

MO AU F6S9: Yours is good too. Anyway it's not so much about the marks. (4+15+7)

MO AU F6S9: Yeah, you too! Actually nah I'm not really, this is the only essay I've passed. (4+15+6+7)

MO AU F1S9: Thanks, I'm surprised! I really love this subject. (1+7+2)

Ultimately, the use of any QUALIFICATION strategies is dependent on a particular compliment situation, and the complimentees' situation, such as the complimentees' confidence, real performance and speech habits etc.

Strategy 8: DOWNGRADE

DOWNGRADE belongs to the less frequently occurring strategies. Monolingual Australians used slightly more such strategies than all other Chinese ESL groups. Among DOWNGRADE strategies, Chinese in China participants continue to be the group that has provided relatively longer responses and formal responses. Transfer or translation from Mandarin can also be seen in strategies used together with DOWNGRADE. For example, "hehe" is a direct transcription of laughter from Mandarin (see example CH IN CH M7S11). DOWNGRADE also occurs together with similar denigrating strategies such as QUALIFICATION (see example CH IN CH M11S11).

CH IN CH M7S11: Hehe, thank you. But I'm only a student now. (15+1+8)

CH IN CH M11S11: I'm just older than before. We are all mature than freshman, and we still have a long way to go in our lifetime. I hope you can have a bright future. (8+7+2+2)

CH IN CH M20S5: Your comments really let me be overwhelmed by an unexpected favour! I just know a little about cooking.(2+8)

CH IN CH F18S5: Thank you so much! It's quite simple and I can cook next time for you if you'd like. (1+8+11)

CH IN CH F13S1: Thank you. Maybe our Chinese are just good at exams. (1+8)

Chinese in Australia have used shorter responses (e..g CH IN AU M15S2). Occasionally, longer responses that contain DOWNGRADE strategy were found (e.g. CH IN AU F7S6). Monolingual Australian males keep showing humorous speech style in DOWNGRADE strategies (e.g. MO AU M13S3). Due to the small number of DOWNGRADE strategies, I will not make comments on approximation.

CH IN AU M15S2: You are welcome, just so so! (14+8)

CH IN AU M16S3: Thank you. I know it's strange, haha. (1+8+15)

CH IN AU M10S1: Thanks man. There is nothing special on me. Just do more practice. (1+8+12)

CH IN AU F7S6: It's my great honour as well that you trust me and willing to store your personal belongings in my living place. (Missing data) is my best friend, you are her friend, which means you are my friend too. Nothing too special for the help among friends. (2+14+8)

MO AU M11S8: Actually, I'm just really good at appearing competent. Don't tell anyone. (15+8+12)

MO AU M13S3: Thanks! I must've been drunk when I got it but hey, it'll be cook for now. (1+8+2)

MO AU F17S5: Well, thank you. I'm a bit rusty. (15+1+8)

Strategy 9: UNCERTAINTY

UNCERTAINTY strategies occurred at the highest frequency among monolingual Australian male group. The compliment on haircut in situation 3 has generated UNCERTAINTY strategies, especially among female participants across groups. For Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia, females have used more UNCERTAINTY strategies than males. Chinese in China male group have used the least UNCERTAINTY strategies. "Really?" has been one of the most comment UNCERTAINTY strategies across groups. Other varieties of strategies often include expressions such as "I'm not sure…" (e.g. CH IN CH F12S3) , "I have been worrying…" (e.g. CH IN CH F3S3), or "I am afraid…" (e.g CH IN CH F4S3). Expressions such as "I have been worrying…" or " I am afraid…" show that Chinese ESL learners in China tend to use written forms of language that are relatively more formal than colloquial language.

CH IN CH M7S5: Oh, really? In that case, you should eat more. (15+9+12)

CH IN CH M8S3: Yeah, you think so? Not kidding? I like it. Thank you. (9+9+2+1)

CH IN CH M2S7: Thank you, you look also very sparkling in this suit, I have not known you so well, but judging from your looking tonight, you impressed deeply, may I have your name? Maybe we can make good friends. (1+4+2+2+9+2)

CH IN CH F1S3: Really? I think the haircut very suits me, do you think so? (9+2+9)

CH IN CH F3S3: Oh, really? I have been worrying about it for a long time. I'm relieved now. (15+9+9+2)

CH IN CH F12S3: Oh, really? Thank you! At first, I'm not so sure about my decision. Now, it seems that I have made a right decision. (15+9+1+9+2)

CH IN CH F4S3: Oh, thanks. I am afraid at first that you don't like it. This is the first time I coloured my hair purple. I am so glad that you like it. (15+9+2+2)

Chinese in Australia seem to have become less formal in their UNCERTAINTY strategies such as using abbreviations "How's it going…" (e.g. CH IN AU F8S3). Meanwhile, they were able to use the right tense such as "I was a little worried about this style…" (e.g. CH IN AU M7S3), rather than using present tense. This however does not mean they do not make grammatical mistakes. They sometimes seem to make more mistakes (e.g. CH IN AU M1S3) than their Chinese counterparts in China possibly due to their academic background is different from those from China who were majoring in English.

> CH IN AU M1S3: Really. I just worried about whether it look (looks) beauty (beautiful) or not. I am very happy to hear that. (9+9+2)
>
> CH IN AU M15S5: Really? That sounds so great. Hope you enjoy your meal tonight. (9+2+2)
>
> CH IN AU M7S3: Thank you. I was a little worried about this style because I had never tried that. (1+9)
>
> CH IN AU F1S3: Thanks you like it. I was worried if it is so terrible. (1+9)
>
> CH IN AU F3S3: Really, thanks. After finish colour, I worry about this colour didn't look well. (9+1+9)
>
> CH IN AU F7S3: Thanks, David. It's the first time I coloured my hair to purple. I'm not sure at first whether it matches me or not, but now I'm really glad to hear such compliments from you. (1+2+9)
>
> CH IN AU F8S3: David, you are so sweet. How's it going these days? (2+9)
>
> CH IN AU F8S11: Haha, do I? Hopefully it could come true one day. (15+9+2)

Monolingual Australians have used more varieties in using UNCERTAINTY strategies, which also demonstrates their flexibility in compliment responses. The expression "I don't know about that!" (MO AU M7S9) seems to be a very convenient response. Humorous speech continues to appear in the monolingual Australian male group (e.g. MO AU M7S7). Informal language use, such as using expressions without a subject, is also common (e.g. MO AU M13S5), or abbreviations (e.g. you're in MO AU M6S8). Adding an interjection such as "huh?" at the end of a statement is also a way of expressing UNCERTAINTY that has not been found by Chinese ESL learners.

> MO AU M7S9: I don't know about that! (9)
>
> MO AU M7S7: This old thing? Thanks! (9+1)
>
> MO AU M3S11: Haha, really? Wow, you don't look too bad yourself. What made me immature before? (15+9+15+4+9)
>
> MO AU M13S5: Thanks, wanna take it to the bedroom? (1+9)
>
> MO AU M6S8: Not really! I'm not as good as you're. How about you, are you the modern technology type or the stone and chisel type? (6+4+9+9)

MO AU M6S12: Why don't you get one for your own? (9)

MO AU M7S12: Yeah, it's not bad huh? (9)

MO AU M5S5: Yeah? Well I'm glad you enjoyed it – I do a bit of cooking every now and then, I do enjoy it... you cook much? (9+15+2+2+2+9)

Monolingual Australian females also used different expressions from Chinese ESL learners, such as "I'm not 100% sure…" (MO AU F3S3) or "I'm nervous about it" (MO AU F4S3). More examples are presented below:

MO AU F1S3: Thanks. I've decided to try something new. Do you like it? (1+2+9)

MO AU F2S3: Thanks, I'm still not sure about it. (1+9)

MO AU F3S3: Oh thanks! I'm not 100% sure this colour suits me that much, but I thought I'd give it a go. (15+1+9+2)

MO AU F4S3: Thank you! I'm nervous about it, but I love it! (1+9+2)

MO AU F5S3: Really? Thanks! (9+1)

MO AU F13S5: Thanks, glad you like it. Do you cook? (1+2+9)

Strategy 10: NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT may occur more frequently in real life than what has appeared in this survey. As strategy 10 was very uncommon, I will refrain from making detailed comments.

5.1.3 OTHER INTERPRETATIONS

Among OTHER INTERPRETAION strategies, JUSTIFICATION strategy has occurred most, followed by INTERJECTIONs, SUGGESTION AND OFFER. INVITAITON is the least frequently adopted strategies. I will now comment on the distribution of each strategy across groups one by one.

Strategy 11: INVITATION

INVITATION has mostly been generated by situation 5, which involves a compliment on the complimentees' cooking skills. INVITATION has occurred at the highest frequency among Chinese in China female group. Chinese in Australia females has reduced the use of this strategy but males stay the same. Monolingual Australians did not use this strategy at all. I now provide some examples of this strategy among Chinese ESL groups. The following examples suggest that it is very common for Chinese ESL learners to use INVITAITON strategies.

CH IN CH M2S5: It's very kind of you to say so, and I am so glad that you like the food I cooked, I've been always crazy about cooking, so I am just a little good at cooking, if you want more please come here once more and more often, you're welcomed here. (2+2+2+7+11)

CH IN CH M4S5: Wow, thanks, I learnt most of the methods of cooking from my mom, and I enjoy myself very much when i cook. I can cook for you next time again. (15+1+5+2+11)

CH IN CH M6S5: Thank you. Welcome next time. (1+11)

CH IN CH M11S5: I just love cooking and I'm glad you enjoy the dinner. If you like, you can come often. I also love talking with you. (7+2+11+2)

CH IN CH M13S5: Thank you for your compliment. If you really like my cook, the next time, we can eat together. I will do other style to you. (1+11+2)

No obvious change of INVITATION expression has been found among Chinese ESL learners in Australia, except for the reduced frequency among the females. The reduction of such frequency could be approximation toward the target culture. More specifically, INVITATION strategy is often related to share of personal space or privacy. It is possible that in Australia, speakers generally are less likely to offer INVITATION to people frequently. This, of course, is related to the relationship between speakers. In this research alone, the design of the interlocutor relationship is between acquaintances. Thus, it is possible that Chinese ESL learners are more used to inviting acquaintances again when receiving a compliment on his or her cooking skills. Whether the INVITATION is sincere or just phatic expression of politeness is another issue (to be further discussed in Chapter 6). The fact that Chinese ESL learners in Australia have kept using INVITATIONs suggests that it could be transfer of pragmatic conventions from L1 to L2.

CH IN AU M20S5: Thanks, please feel free to come if you want. (1+11)

CH IN AU M16S5: Thank you. My door will open for you whenever you want. (1+11)

CH IN AU M1S: Thank you so much. If you like, we may have a try some other food next time. (1+11)

CH IN AU M2S5: Thank you. I'm happy you like it. Next time you come, I'll cook more special food. (1+2+11)

STRATEGY 11 CH IN AU F5S5: Really? If you have time, you can come to have dinner. (9+11)

CH IN AU F6S5: Thank you Jim, that is really nice of you, I will call you when I trying to cook some new dishes next time. (1+2+11)

Strategy 12: SUGGESTION

SUGGESTION occurred at the highest frequency among the Chinese in China female group, followed by the Chinese in Australia groups. Chinese in China males and

monolingual Australians used similar amount of SUGGESTIONs. SUUGESTION strategies have occurred in different situations across groups. SUGGESTION strategies often happen at the end of the compliment responses, offering a way to end the conversational turn (see examples below):

CH IN CH M12S5: Thanks. Please enjoy yourself. (1+12)

CH IN CH M7S5: Oh, really? In that case, you should eat more. (15+9+12)

CH IN CH M17S8: Thank you. You know I like everything of new. If you have time, we can enjoy it together. (1+15+2+12)

CH IN CH M4S6: Come on, it's not a big thing at all, forget it. (15+14+12)

CH IN CH M11S6: I'm glad to offer the help and we are friends. We can help together in the later time. (2+14+12)

CH IN CH F1S6: That's just a little thing. Enjoy your trip! (14+12)

CH IN CH F6S6: Well, it is my pleasure to help you, just help yourself with me! (15+14+12)

While utilising SUGGESTION strategies, Chinese in China females used another group identity marker, "together". Togetherness can be used either to continue on a certain response to a given compliment or to transfer to doing something irrelevant to the compliment. For example, in situation 3, when the complimentee's haircut was complimented, the following speaker accepted it and then used SUGGESTION to do something irrelevant to the haircut (CH IN CH F7S3). In other situations, SUUGESTION is used to extend the response in relation to the compliment. For example, in situation one, when the complimentee's performance in an exam was complimented, "let's make progress together" was used after returning the compliment to the complimenter (CH IN CH F11S1).

CH IN CH F7S3: Thank you. I like it. Let's go to class together. (1+2+12)

CH IN CH F19S1: Thank you very much. You also did well except for maths. But I really admire you and we should keep fight for our bright future. (1+4+4+12)

CH IN CH F15S1: Thank you. Congratulations too. You have also done a good job. But it's just a new start. Let's work hard together in the university. (1+4+4+8+12)

CH IN CH F11S1: Thank you. The same to you. Let's make progress together. (1+4+12)

No general conclusion could be drawn regarding the change of SUGGESTION strategies among Chinese ESL learners in Australia. There are succinct expressions such as "Do not give up" as a way to encourage the complimenter (CH IN AU M9S1). More examples from Chinese in Australia are provided as follows:

CH IN AU M4S5: We can get together often, and learned with each of us. I also feeling it is a good thing. (12+2)

CH IN AU M10S5: Thanks man, glad you like it. May you could cook for me next time. (1+2+12)

CH IN AU M13S4: Thanks Jack, you should try ride bike with me. It helps you keep fit. (1+2+12)

CH IN AU F1S9: Thank you. I think we can learn from each other. (1+12)

CH IN AU F17S7: Thank you for your comments. You are beautiful too. Let's enjoy the party. (1+4+12)

CH IN AU F1S5: Thank you. Hope you enjoy it, and if you really like it. We should have more gathering. (1+2+12)

CH IN AU F4S4: Really? Do you like cycling? We can (go) cycling together. (9+2+12)

CH IN AU F7S12: I'm glad that you like it and manage it very well. Having a camera myself really provides me many conveniences while doing my studies. I'm sure maybe you'll have your own one sooner or later. But before that, please feel free to borrow it if you really need them. (2+2+12+13)

Monolingual Australians continue to differentiate themselves from the Chinese ESL learners in using informal language or abbreviations (e.g. "keep ya head up" in MO AU M15S1), very short responses (e.g. "no worries" and "now go" in MO AU F19S2), humour (especial for monolingual Australian males) (e.g. MO AU M4S6) and interjections that Chinese ESL learners are less likely to use (e.g. Aww, MO AU F6S3). SUGGESTION is also preferred in most cases as the end of the conversational turn. Some examples from the monolingual Australian male group are provided as follows:

MO AU M4S6: Just don't let my find out your storing your drugs at my place! Just kidding, Tony. You're welcome. (12+2+14)

MO AU M15S1: Thanks man. I studied hard. Don't worry, keep ya head up. You will be there soon. (1+7+12+12+2)

MO AU M16S6: Don't worry about it. You'll owe me one. (14+12)

MO AU M5S12: Yes, I found this particular camera really easy to use... I'd recommend it. (2+12)

MO AU M17S2: Sure is. You owe me a coffee though. (2+12)

Some SUGGESTION examples from the monolingual Australian female group are provided as follows:

MO AU F6S3: Aww thanks man! Maybe you should dye your hair too! And then we can be colour buddies. (15+1+12)

MO AU F14S5: Let's do it again sometime. (12)

MO AU F15S5: Aww, you're too kind. You shall make me food one day to let me test your cooking. (15+7+12)

MO AU F19S2: No worries. Now go, don't miss your bus, see you next week. (14+12+2)

MO AU F17S10: Any time, we should catch up out of Uni sometime. (14+12)

Strategy 13: OFFER

OFFER is a strategy similar to INVITATION but generated mostly by situation 12 when the complimentee's video camera is complimented on. OFFER strategies used in different groups are very similar. This means OFFER is a highly formulaic strategy when the compliment topic is fixed on a possession such as a video camera. As for length of responses, Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia occasionally used long responses the contain OFFER strategies, whereas monolingual Australians used relatively brief responses all the time. What is different are the strategies used before OFFER strategy. The Chinese in China male group often use COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, JUSTIFICATION strategies before using OFFER.

CH IN CH M2S12: It's very kind of you to say so. I am so glad that I can do something to help you, we are eager to help you to get familiar to this major as soon as possible, so as you're trying to get nice, we'll offer help to you, work hard, and you'll get more. (2+2+2+13+12)

CH IN CH M3S12: It is my pleasure! No thanks. If you need to use it in the future, you can borrow it at any time. (14+6 +13)

CH IN CH M4S12: I'm glad you like it. Next time when you need it, just ask, OK? (2+13+9)

CH IN CH M7S12: Don't mention it. I'm glad to lend it to you if you need next time. (14+13)

CH IN CH M8S12: Yeah, it's just worth what I've paid to it. Maybe you need a new one. I can tell you how to get a discount when you buy it online. (7+12+13)

CH IN CH M10S12: My pleasure! You can use it when you want! (14+13)

The Chinese in China female group has mostly used JUSTIFICATION strategies such as "You're welcome" before using OFFER strategies. This phenomenon shows that mastery of formulaic language, and using it very frequently, can also mean lack of variety.

CH IN CH F9S12: You're welcome. And if you have some questions, you can ask me. Maybe I can help you. (14+12+13)

CH IN CH F11S12: You are welcome. You can use it anytime. (14+13)

CH IN CH F12S12: You're welcome. I'm glad you like it. You can use it anytime you need. (14+2+13)

CH IN CH F13S12: You're welcome. Tell me whenever you need it. I'll lend to you. (14+13)

For the Chinese in Australia groups, strategies before OFFER strategies have shown more varieties than Chinese in China groups. For example, more varieties of JUSTIFICATION are used, such as "no worries" (e.g. CH IN AU M1S12), "no problem" (e.g. CH IN AU M19S12), and APPRECIATION TOKEN "thank you" (e.g. CH IN AU F17S8) and starting with addressing the complimenter's first name (e.g. CH IN AU M15S12).

CH IN AU M1S12: No worries. I am like to hear that. If you want to borrow, just let me know. (14+2+13)

CH IN AU M4S12: I've also thought so, if you like it, we can learn to use it together. (2+13)

CH IN AU M15S12: Sally, I am so glad to hear that my camera is so helpful to bring convenience to you. Just feel free to contact me if you need it. (2+13)

CH IN AU M19S12: No problem, hope it can help your studying and I can buy another with you since you need that. (14+2+13)

CH IN AU F4S12: You are welcome. If you need next time, find me. (14+13)

CH IN AU F7S12: I'm glad that you like it and manage it very well. Having a camera myself really provides me many conveniences while doing my studies. I'm sure maybe you'll have your own one sooner or later. But before that, please feel free to borrow it if you really need them. (2+2+12+13)

CH IN AU F17S9: Thank you. You did a good job too. If you need any help. I can do it for you. (1+4+13)

CH IN AU F17S8: Thank you. I like my iPad very much.it is so useful to me. If you like it, you can keep playing it now. (1+2+2+13)

Monolingual Australians also used more varieties of strategies before using OFFER strategy, such as "not to worry" (e.g. MO AU F2012). Moreover, the OFFER strategy itself has seen more varieties such as sentences starting with "feel free to…" (e.g. MO AU M3S12) and "any time you need it…" (e.g. MO AU F18S12). These expressions are not seen among Chinese in China but are seen in Chinese in Australia (e.g. CH IN AU F7S12). This is evidence of speech accommodation among Chinese in Australia.

MO AU M1S12: Yeah, it's quite nice. Let me know if you need it in the future. (2+13)

MO AU M2S12: No worries. If you want to know where I got it from, let me know. (14+13)

MO AU M3S12: You're welcome, Sally! I'm glad you liked it. Feel free to borrow it anytime while you're saving up for a camera. (14+2+13)

MO AU F3S12: That's ok! I'm glad you found it useful. Let me know if you ever need to borrow it again. I look forward to seeing the video that you made! (14+2+13+2)

MO AU F18S12: You're welcome! Any time you need it, just let me know. (14+13)

MO AU F2012: Not to worry, glad I could help. Let me know if you need to borrow it again. (14+2+13)

MO AU F1S12: Glad you liked it. No problem. Just let me know if you need to borrow it again. (2+14+13)

Strategy 14: JUSTIFICATION

The design of strategy 14, JUSTIFICATION, is to categorise responses that are highly repetitive or formulaic or responses that clearly contain reasoning or justifying. Figure 1 does not show much difference in the number of JUSTIFICATIONS across three groups. A close look at Figure 2 shows that the Chinese in Australia female group have used the highest number of JUSTIFICATION strategies, whereas the rest of the groups used similar amount of such strategies. From the above analysis, I have found that it is inaccurate to investigate approximation toward the target culture by Chinese ESL learners solely based on changes of numbers of certain strategies. This is because changes in the numbers or frequencies of certain strategies do not indicate the detailed length of response, formulaity and formality of the responses. Length of responses is often related to formality because whether using a complete sentence or short key words without subject matters influence the length of the response. Formulaity can also tell if there are changes of formulas happening in an intercultural context, which is an important window to examine the change of linguistic repertoire among Chinese ESL learners.

Personality compliments have prompted the most JUSTIFICATION strategies. For Chinese in China males, "you are welcome" (e.g. CH IN CH M14S2) "it's my pleasure" (e.g. CH IN CH M8S2) and "Don't mention it" (e.g. CH IN CH M18S2) are the most frequently used expressions. Chinese in China females have used more varieties of expressions for JUSTIFICATION strategies such as "that's all right" (e.g. CH IN CH F5S2), "never mind" (CH IN CH F6S2), or "it's just a little thing" (e.g. CH IN CH F1S2). Chinese in China females, however, rarely used the expression "don't mention it".

The expression "don't mention it" sounds like an imperative command, rejection or suggestion. It is categorised as JUSTIFICATION because of the illocutionary force or the actual function is not so much about expressing command, rejection or suggestion but implying that there is nothing to worry or it is a matter too trivial to mention. This expression is similar to "that's just a little thing" (CH IN CH F10S2)

Basically, both “don’t mention it” and “that’s just a little thing” are acts to brush off the compliments. Such highly formulaic expressions are very possibly translated from Mandarin. There are very typical idiomatic expressions in Mandarin such as “xiao shi yi zhuang, he zu gua chi (小事一桩, 何足挂齿)?” which means “this is a small matter, it is not worth of mentioning”. The literal meaning is “this is a small matter, how come it is enough to hang on the teeth?” Therefore, it is arguable that Chinese in China are very likely to transfer L1 conventions to L2. Other evidence of translation or transfer from L1 to L2 among Chinese include “it’s not a matter” (CH IN CH M15S2). Some examples of JUSTIFICATION strategies from Chinese in China male group are provided as follows:

> CH IN CH M14S2: You are welcome. It’s just a piece of cake to do this. And it can save your time. (14+14+2)
>
> CH IN CH M15S2: You are welcome. It’s not a matter. (14+14)
>
> CH IN CH M8S2: That’s my pleasure dude. Go ahead, catch your bus! (14+12)
>
> CH IN CH M19S2: It’s my pleasure. Friend in need is friend indeed. (14+2)
>
> CH IN CH M9S2: Don’t mention it. (14)
>
> CH IN CH M2S6: Don’t mention it, it’s not difficult for me, I am willing to help you, we ‘re friends, so have a nice vacation. (14+7+2+2+2)
>
> CH IN CH M2S10: Don’t mention it, it’s my pleasure to help you, helping you also makes me feel happy. What’s more it’ll offer you convenience too. (14+14+2+2)
>
> CH IN CH M18S10: Don’t mention it. It’s my pleasure. (14+14)
>
> CH IN CH M20S10: Not at all! It’s not a big deal. (6+14)

Some examples of JUSTIFICATION strategies from the Chinese in China female group are provided as follows:

> CH IN CH F10S6: Don’t mention it. (14)
>
> CH IN CH F10S2: It’s just little thing. I’m glad to help you. (14+14)
>
> CH IN CH F1S2: You’re welcome. That’s just a little thing. (14+14)
>
> CH IN CH F2S2: It’s my pleasure. Take your time. You won’t miss your bus. (14+12)
>
> CH IN CH F3S2: It’s my pleasure. Hurry up or you will be late. (14+12)
>
> CH IN CH F4S2: My pleasure. I am very glad that I can help you. After all, it is much nearer for me to take the books there. And you do very good job in this course. I guess it concerns about your wide reading. And I think I should learn from you to read more books. (14+2+15+2+4+2)
>
> CH IN CH F5S2: That’s all right. It won’t take me long time. I just go there. (14+2+2)
>
> CH IN CH F6S2: Never mind, it is my pleasure! (14+14)

The Chinese in Australia groups have shown very clear accommodation of language features popularly used in the target language environment on top of expressions they have possibly acquired in China prior to directly interacting with monolingual Australians. Typical examples of accommodation or approximation toward the target language environment are the frequent use of "no worries" (see the following examples). The frequency of "no worries" by Chinese in Australia, especially female ESL learners, has surpassed their monolingual Australian counterparts. This could be described as over-accommodation possibly due to their limited understandings of when and in what situations such strategies could be used. Over-accommodation is also very possibly caused by their rather limited linguistic repertoire. When Chinese ESL learners run short of vocabulary, they can draw on highly formulaic and simple expressions such as "no worries".

Meanwhile, compliment topic or the design of the compliment has significant influence on their responses. In situation 2, the compliment "Thank you very much! That is very kind of you!" has generated the most number of JUSTIFICATION strategies containing the newly adopted strategy "no worries" (see the examples below):

CH IN AU M2S2: No worries. See you around. (14+2)

CH IN AU M3S2: No worries. You are welcome. (14+2)

CH IN AU M9S2: No worries. We are friends. (14+14)

CH IN AU M13S2: No worries Bro, buy me a drink next time. (14+12)

CH IN AU M1S2: It is my pleasure. We are friends. (14+2)

Situation 6 also generated similar responses, such as:

CH IN AU M14S6: No worries, just a little thing. Enjoying your trip. (14+14+2)

CH IN AU M15S6: No worries buddy. It does not matter. Just have fun on your trip and take care. (14+14+12)

JUSTIFICATION expressions that are similar to those used by Chinese in China are exemplified as follows:

CH IN AU M6S6: My pleasure. How is your holiday? (14+9)

CH IN AU M7S6: Don't mention that. It's not a big deal. (14+14)

CH IN AU M8S2: You are welcome. That's my pleasure. (14+14)

Similar accommodation phenomena were found among the Chinese in Australia female group (see examples generated by situation 2 and situation 6, as follows):

CH IN AU F8S2: No worries. Paul. Catch your bus, see ya. (14+12+2)

CH IN AU F9S2: No worries. You better go and catch your bus. (14+12)

CH IN AU F10S2: No worries. That's my pleasure. (14+14)

CH IN AU F11S2: No worries. Hurry and catch your bus! (14+12)

CH IN AU F12S2: No worries. It's my pleasure! (14+14)

CH IN AU F12S6: No worries. I have vacant space in my home anyway. It's always good to help you out. (14+2+2)

CH IN AU F15S6: No worries. It's really my pleasure. (14+14)

CH IN AU F12S6: No worries. I have vacant space in my home anyway. It's always good to help you out. (14+2+2)

There are also JUSTFICATION strategies that are similar to those used by Chinese in China (see examples as follows):

CH IN AU F6S6: It's a piece of cake. (14)

CH IN AU F11S6: That's not a big deal. Enjoy your holiday bro. (14+12)

CH IN AU F14S6: You are welcome! (14)

CH IN AU F17S6: Don't mention it. I will help you to take care (of) your belongings. Please don't worry. (14+2+14)

For monolingual Australian participants, their frequent use of "no worries" (e.g. MO AU M2S2) or "no problem" (e.g. MO AU M1S2) verifies the accommodation happened among Chinese ESL learners in Australia as reported earlier. Expressions such as "That's Okay" (e.g. MO AU M18S10) and "You're welcome" (e.g. MO AU M17S10) also occurred but at a very low frequency. Monolingual Australian male participants have used rather informal expressions such as "no probs man" (MO AU M15S2) or the "Nah, don't worry about it" (MO AU M5S2):

MO AU M15S2: No probs man. (14)

MO AU M1S2: No problem, any time. (14+14)

MO AU M2S2: No worries, man. I was going that way anyway. (14+2)

MO AU M3S2: It's no problem! The library is on my way home any way. (14+2)

MO AU M4S2: No worries, mate. See you later. (14+2)

MO AU M5S2: Nah, don't worry about it – it's on my way anyway. (14+2)

MO AU M6S2: Oh, no worries. (15+14)

MO AU M7S 2: No problem! (14)

MO AU M8S2: No worries, you better get going. (14+12)

MO AU M9S2: It's no problem for me. I'm happy to help out a friend. (14+2)

MO AU M10S2: No worries. I'm glad I could help you out mate. (14+2)

MO AU M18S10: That's Okay, happy to help. Really glad to have met you. If you need company, I'd be happy to go with you. (14+2+2+13)

MO AU M19S10: Ah, no worries, glad to help. (15+14+2)

MO AU M17S10: You're welcome! (14)

Monolingual females also used informal expressions such as using "ya" instead of "you" (e.g. MO AU F3S2) or using "brah" instead of "man" (e.g. MO AU F6S2). Monolingual females also distinguish themselves from Chinese ESL learners in adding adverbs such as "absolutely" before "no problem" (e.g. MO AU F17S2) or adding "most" in front of "welcome" in the expression "You're most welcome" (e.g. MO AU F18S2). Humorous speech styles are also noticed in monolingual Australian females, as found in the following examples:

MO AU F6S6: Thanks and no worries as long as what I'm storing is not any illegal substances! (1+14)

More examples from the monolingual female Australian group are provided as follows:

MO AU F1S2: No problem, it's on my way. Have a lovely afternoon. (14+2+2)

MO AU F2S2: No worries, hope you make your bus. (14+2)

MO AU F3S2: No worries, see ya next week! (14+2)

MO AU F4S2: No worries-not a problem. (14+14)

MO AU F17S2: Absolutely, no problem. (15+14)

MO AU F18S2: You're most welcome :) (14)

MO AU F20S2: Don't worry about it. It's not any trouble. (14+7)

MO AU F16S6: It's really no problem. (14)

MO AU F18S6: That's no problem at all. Glad I could help. (14+2)

MO AU F20S6: It's no trouble, don't worry about it. (14+14)

The expressions in JUSTIFICATION strategies across groups show that speakers of English often show variations in expressing the same meanings. These variations exist both intra-culturally and cross-culturally. Gender of the complimentee also affects linguistic choices. Overall, data suggests that expressions in JUSTIFICATION strategies are highly formulaic across all groups, but there are variations in their choice of vocabulary, formality and interjections.

Strategy 15: INTERJECTION

INTERJECTION occurred at the highest frequency among monolingual Australians, especially among the monolingual Australian female group. Chinese in Australia have used the least amount of INTERJECTIONs. Chinese in China ESL learners have used INTERJECTIONs such as “oh”, “anyhow”, “oh, my man”, and “as you see” (see following examples):

> CH IN CH M20S9: Oh, it’s really nice of you to say that. But anyhow, thank you! (15+2+15+1)
>
> CH IN CH M17S5: I’m so happy to hear that. You know actually you are (have) encouraged me a lot. (2+15+15+2)
>
> CH IN CH M19S5: Oh, I’m glad to hear that you enjoy the dinner. (15+2)
>
> CH IN CH M8S1: Oh, my man, thank you. (15+15+1)
>
> CH IN CH M13S8: As you see, the modern technology is so useful! It changes so many in our life. I’m very like electronics. So I know something about modern technology. (15+2+2+2+2)

Laughter is categorised as INTERJECTIONs because of their similar functions to other INTERJECTIONs. Two common functions of INTERJECTIONS are either helping the speaker find time to think of what to say or serving as a means to express different emotions. Chinese in China females have translated INTERJECTION strategy, such as the sound of laughing, directly from L1 to L2 (see “hei hei” in CH IN CH F19S4). Chinese in China female group also used INTERJECTIONs such as “actually” (CH IN CH F11S11), “wow” (CH IN CH F19S11), and “oh” (CH IN CH F13S6).

> CH IN CH F19S4: Thanks very much. I have saved money for a long time. Hei hei. (1+2+15)
>
> CH IN CH F19S8: Yes, It’s really useful. In fact, it isn’t difficult, I can teach you. (2+15+7+13)
>
> CH IN CH F13S6: Oh, you are so kind to say these words. (15+2)
>
> CH IN CH F11S11: Actually, we all get mature now. (15+7)
>
> CH IN CH F19S11: Wow, we all will grow up. We all become more mature. (15+7+7)

Chinese in Australia males also used INTERJECTION strategies that are translated from Mandarin to English such as “hehe” (CH IN AU M12S8) but very rarely. “Haha” is a more frequently used INTERJECITON to indicate laughing (CH IN AU M13S8). Other commonly used INTEJRECTIONs by Chinese in Australia males include “Oh”, “OK” and “Oh, really?” (see following examples). INTERJECTIONs that are close to target culture language use such as “well” and “you know” are also found (e.g. CH IN AU M15S8).

CH IN AU M9S10: Oh, really? That is a great deal. (15+9+2)

CH IN AU M17S3: Oh, thanks. I have been thinking long time to change my style. (15+1+2)

CH IN AU M18S3: Oh, Ok, thank you. (15+15+1)

CH IN AU M20S3: Oh, really? I got the haircut just yesterday. (15+9+2)

CH IN AU M14S10: No worries. Btw, It's very glad to talk to you, too. (14+15+2)

CH IN AU M15S8: Well, you know, I just keep using it as often as I can to finish my assignments and have fun. You can make it as well. All right, let me show you some more amazing functions. (15+15+7+4+15+13)

CH IN AU M12S8: Hehe, yes, you are right. If you want, I can tell you how to use iPads. (15+2+13)

CH IN AU M13S8: Haha it is my personal choice to be updated with new things (there are no blue colour iPad exist in the world). (15+2)

Chinese in Australia females are found to use INTERJECTIONs to express overt surprises such as "wow" in the following expressions:

CH IN AU F10S7: Wow, so amazing. I really like this party. (15+2+2)

CH IN AU F14S7: Wow! Thank you! You look so nice too! (15+1+4)

CH IN AU F18S3: Oh really? Thanks, David! I was worried that it would be too much for me. (15+1+9)

CH IN AU F19S3: Oh I'm glad you said that. I felt rather self-conscious about it actually. (15+1+9)

CH IN AU F19S4: Yeah, I think so too! Haha, very happy with it. (15+2+15+2)

What differentiate monolingual Australian English speakers from Chinese ESL learners is the diverse and informal INTERJECTIONs used by both males and females. These INTERJECTIONs such as "Aww", "Hah", "Gee" and "Oh" are used in the following examples:

MO AU M18S3: Aww, thanks David! I really wanted to make a bold statement with my new haircut, I appreciate your feedback. (15+1+2+1)

MO AU M6S11: Hah! I'm glad you think so! (15+2)

MO AU M17S11: Gee thanks! (15+1)

MO AU M6S2: Oh, no worries. (15+14)

Monolingual Australian females also used relatively more diverse and informal INTERJECTION strategies such as "Aw", "Hey", "Oh", "Wow", "Ah" etc (see examples belwow). What is interesting is the INTERJECTION "hey" sometimes occurs at the end of a sentence to raise a question (e.g. MO AU F19S1):

MO AU F15S7: Aw thanks so do you. (15+1+4)

MO AU F16S7: Hey thanks! You look lovely yourself! (15+1+4)

MO AU F17S7: Oh thanks, you look lovely! (15+1+4)

MO AU F15S11: Haha, aw thanks. (15+15+1)

MO AU F16S11: Aw thanks! You look one too! (15+1+4)

MO AU F17S11: Wow, thank you. I will wear it more often. (15+1+2)

MO AU F18S11: Ah really? Awesome! Thank you. (15+9+2+1)

MO AU F7S6: Awww you're so nice. No problem. Don't worry about it. I hope you have lots of fun! (15+2+14+14+2)

MO AU F8S6: Aww, anything for a friend. They will be safe. I promise! (15+14+2+2)

MO AU F9S6: Oh, don't worry. It's no trouble for me! (15+14+2)

MO AU F15S6: Aw so are you! (15+4)

MO AU F19S1: Ha, thanks Tom, it's crazy hey? very excited. (15+1+9+15+2)

INTERJECTION strategies, despite their rather short forms, serve as multiple functions in real language. Thus it was included as one of the 15 CR strategies in this study. Even though no generalised conclusion could be made regarding the use of INTERJECTION among Chinese ESL learners, it is very clear that the diversity and flexibility shown by monolingual Australians in terms of using INTERJECTIONs are still somewhat unreachable for Chinese ESL learners regardless of their geographical location. This kind of language use may have deeper connection with cultural nuances, such as the issue of appropriateness in expressing emotions with INTERJECTIONs. It may also depend on individual preferences as to how frequently they use INTERJECTION strategies in compliment responses.

To sum up, analysis of distributions of different CR strategies across group have shown similar overall tendency. A look at the overall tendency of three groups without considering gender (Figure 1), or of six groups with gender of the complimentees considered (Figure 2), no general conclusion could be made in terms of change in language use among Chinese ESL learners in Australia. However, detailed analysis of CR strategies across groups show diversities in their choices of words, formality, formulaity and interjections. These diversities are directly or indirectly related to the length of responses. With respect to length of response, formality, formulaity or linguistic repertoire, Chinese in Australia have clearly accommodated language features from the target language environment, while maintaining some of the strategies acquired from the L1 language

environment. Translation or transfer from L1 to L2 is noticed frequently among Chinese in China. Such moves have become somewhat less frequent among Chinese ESL learners in Australia. In some cases, over-accommodation has occurred among Chinese in Australia groups possibly due to limited understanding of the target language conventions and limited linguistic repertoire.

5.2 Differences in compliment responses regarding the gender of the complimenter

In the DCT questionnaire, the gender of the complimenter is designed to be male for the first six situations, and the complimenter is a female for the second six situations. I have separated the first six and the second six situations, to provide a comparative analysis of the impact made by the gender of the complimenter. Table 16 and Figure 3 show the distributions of CR strategies across groups in situations when the complimenter is a male, whereas Table 17 and Figure 4 show the distributions of CR strategies across groups in situations when the complimenter is a female .

A close look at Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows that when RETURN strategies occurred much more frequently when the complimenter is a female, in comparison with the occurrence in situations when the complimenter is a male. This means generally speaking, females attract more compliments in return when giving a compliment either to a male or to a female. Another difference caused by varying genders of complimenters is that both male and female monolingual Australians used the highest number of INTERJECTION strategies when the complimenter is a female. This could be a strategy to express emotions that are regarded as appropriate in particular to female complimenters.

5.2.1 Responding to compliments from male complimenters

When the complimenter is a male, the most commonly used strategies are COMMENT ACCPETANCE, APPRECIATION TOKEN and JUSTIFICATION. For APPRECATIONT TOKEN, the monolingual Australian female group used the largest number, whereas the rest of the groups have similar occurrences. For COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, Chinese in China females and monolingual Australian females used the highest number whereas Chinese in Australia male participants used the least COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies. UPGRADE strategies rarely occurred in Chinese ESL groups regardless of their geographical location and occurred slightly more frequently in monolingual Australian groups.

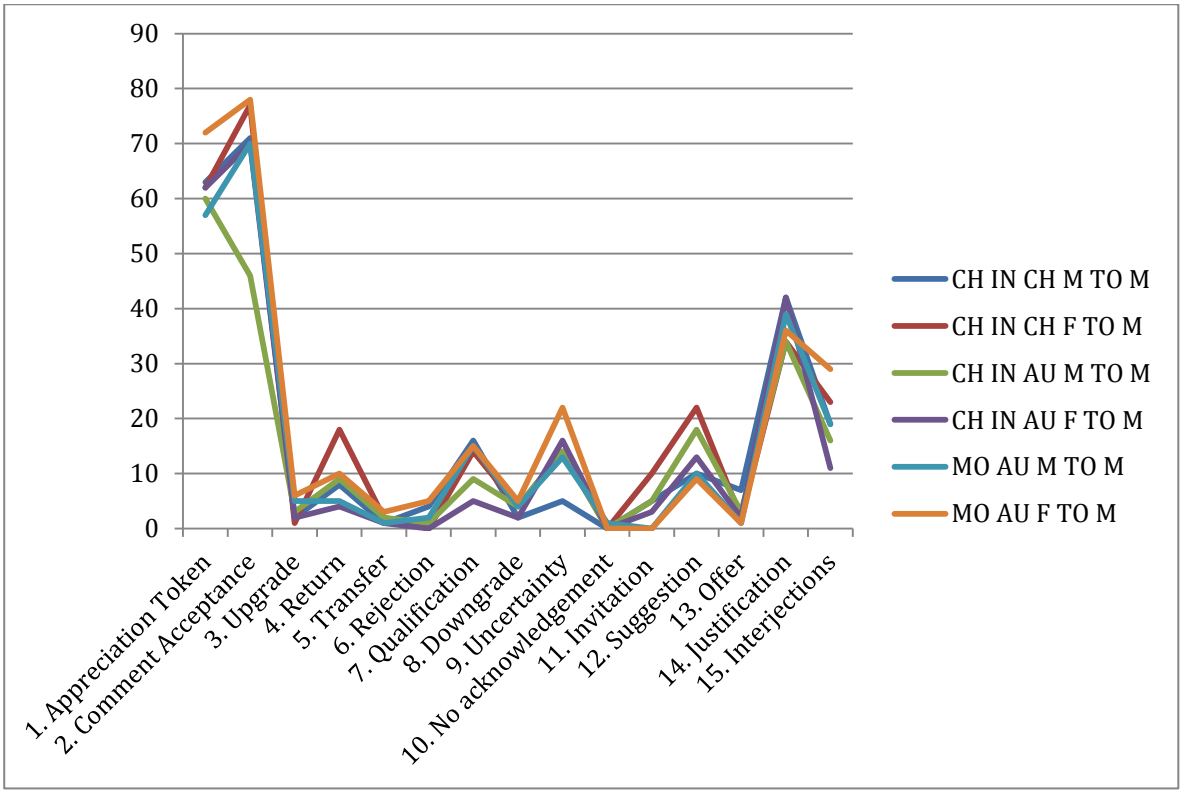
When responding to compliments from a male, the Chinese in China female group stands out in using the highest number of RETURN strategies. For Chinese in Australia, male participants used more RETURNs than females, whereas the opposite tendency applies to the monolingual Australian groups. Due to its relatively low occurrence in most groups, I will not make firm conclusions regarding the change caused by contact with L2 culture. REJECTION is also among the least popular strategies with Chinese males in China, and monolingual Australian females used slightly more than other groups.

When the gender of the complimenter is male, QUALIFICATION occurred at a similar frequency in all groups except the two Chinese ESL groups in China. The low occurrence among Chinese in Australia regarding DOWNGRADE is a rarely used strategy. UNCERTAINTY occurred most frequently among the nmonolingual Australian female group, and least frequently among the Chinese in China male group. It is possible that Chinese male ESL learners have approximated toward the target culture in using more UNCERTAINTY strategies. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT strategy was not used. INVITATION strategies were found among all Chinese ESL groups, but not in any Australian groups. The Chinese in Australia female group have reduced the number of INVITATIONs compared with females in China, a possible sign for becoming less phatic when they come to the target culture, because INVITATION is often used as phatic communication. Chinese in China females and Chinese in Australia males are found to use relatively high number of SUGGESTIONs. SUGGESTION is also a common strategy used by other groups.

Table 16 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	63	62	60	62	57	72
	2. Comment Acceptance	71	77	46	70	70	78
	3. Upgrade	2	1	3	2	5	6
	4. Return	8	18	9	4	5	10
	5. Transfer	1	2	2	1	1	3
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	4	0	1	0	2	5
	7. Qualification	16	14	9	5	15	15
	8. Downgrade	2	4	4	2	4	5
	9. Uncertainty	5	14	14	16	13	22
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	1	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	5	10	5	3	0	0
	12. Suggestion	10	22	18	13	10	9
	13. Offer	7	2	3	2	1	1
	14. Justification	42	34	34	42	39	36
	15. Interjection	19	23	16	11	19	29

Figure 3 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male



OFFER occurred slightly more frequently among Chinese in China male group. Due to its low frequency in other groups, I will not make general comments regarding the effect of the target culture. JUSTIFICATION strategies were frequently used by all groups when the complimenter was a male or female. INTERJECTIONs were also used relatively frequently by all groups, with monolingual Australian female group using the most.

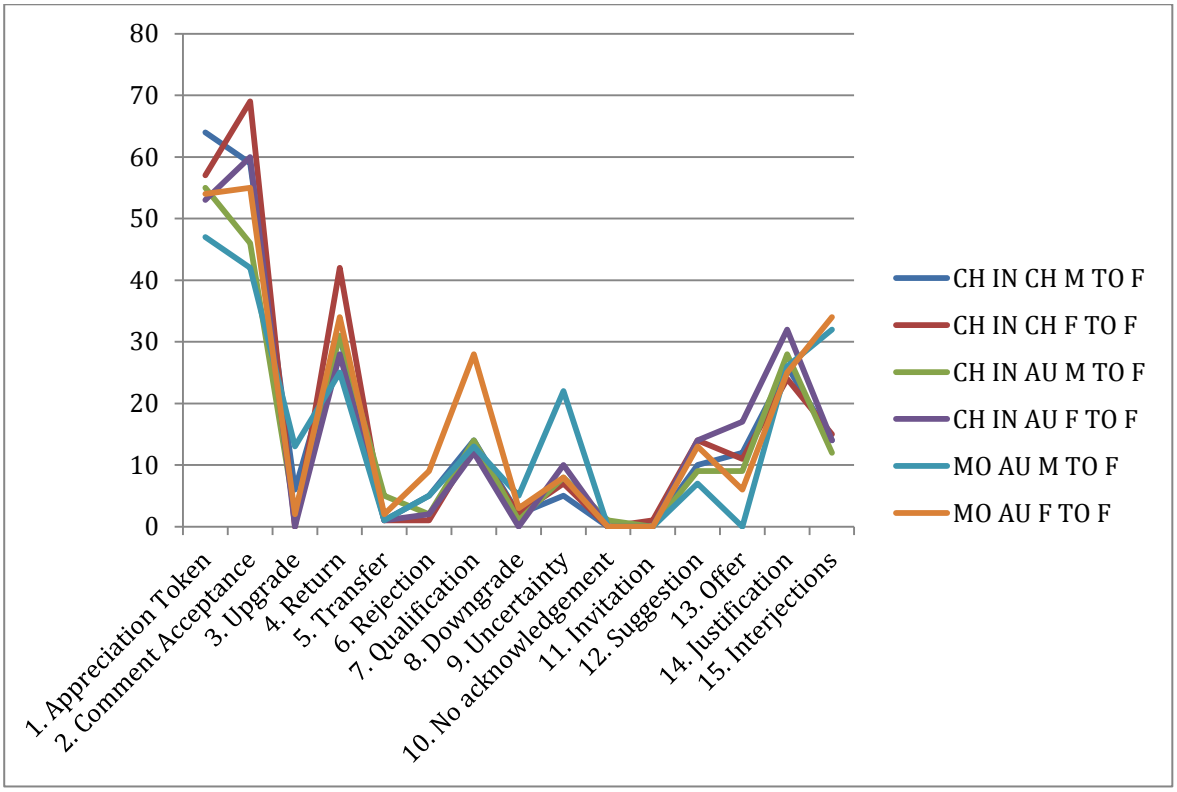
5.2.2 Responding to compliments from female complimenters

When the complimenter is a female, the Chinese in China male group used the highest number of APPRECIATION TOKENs, whereas the monolingual Australian male group used the least such strategies. It is one of the most commonly used strategies across groups. For COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, Chinese in China female group used the most, followed by Chinese in Australia female group and Chinese in China male group. The Chinese in Australia male group and the monolingual Australian male group used similar amounts of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, lower than all other groups. UPGRADE occurred most frequently among the monolingual Australian male group. This strategy is often associated with expressions that are humorous (see examples in section 3.1). RETURN strategies occurred most frequently among Chinese in China females, followed by monolingual Australian females. The rest of the groups used similar amount of RETURNs. TRANSFER and REJECTION are among the least frequently used strategies. Chinese in Australia males used the highest number of TRANSFER strategies whereas monolingual Australian females used the highest number of REJECTION strategies. QUALIFICATION occurred most frequently among the monolingual Australian female group and all the other groups used similar amounts of such strategies. DOWNGRADE is another strategy that is hardly used. For UNCERTAINTY, monolingual Australian males take the lead, followed by Chinese in Australia females. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT was only used once by the Chinese in Australia male group. INVITATION is another strategy that only occurred once in the Chinese in Australia male group. SUGGESTION is found to be used more frequently by males than females for participants from all locations. OFFER strategies were mostly found among Chinese ESL groups in China and in Australia, rather than monolingual Australian groups. JUSTIFICATION strategies are widely used by all groups with Chinese in Australia using the highest number. INTERJECTIONs are found to occur much more frequently among monolingual Australians than Chinese ESL groups.

Table 17 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	64	57	55	53	47	54
	2. Comment Acceptance	59	69	46	60	42	55
	3. Upgrade	6	0	2	0	13	2
	4. Return	31	42	31	28	25	34
	5. Transfer	1	1	5	1	1	2
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	5	1	2	2	5	9
	7. Qualification	14	13	14	12	13	28
	8. Downgrade	2	2	1	0	5	3
	9. Uncertainty	5	7	8	10	22	8
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	1	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	1	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	10	14	9	14	7	13
	13. Offer	12	11	9	17	0	6
	14. Justification	26	24	28	32	26	25
	15. Interjection	14	15	12	14	32	34

Figure 4 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female



Overall, the above analysis reveals that the gender of the complimenter and the gender of the complimentee both influence CR choices. When the gender of the complimenter is a female, more RETURN strategies are used in comparison with situations when the complimenter is a male. When the complimenter is a female, INTERJECTIONs were used much more frequently by monolingual Australians than Chinese ESL groups. When the complimenter is a female, monolingual male complimentees tend to use more UNCERTAINTY strategies whereas female complimentees tend to use more QUALIFICATIONs in comparison with other Chinese ESL groups. As for change of language use among Chinese ESL groups in Australia, no general conclusion could be drawn because in different situations, they have shown different choices of CRs. It is therefore important to consider the detailed expressions which have been analysed in section 5.1.

5.3 Differences in compliment responses regarding compliment topics

Compliment topics (appearance, performance, possession and personality) are crucial factors that cause variations of CR distributions across all groups. Tables 18 to 21 and Figures 5 to 8 present the overall distribution of CR strategies by compliment topics. A close look at Figures 5 to 8 suggests that compliment topic plays an important role in determining the most frequently occurring strategies across groups.

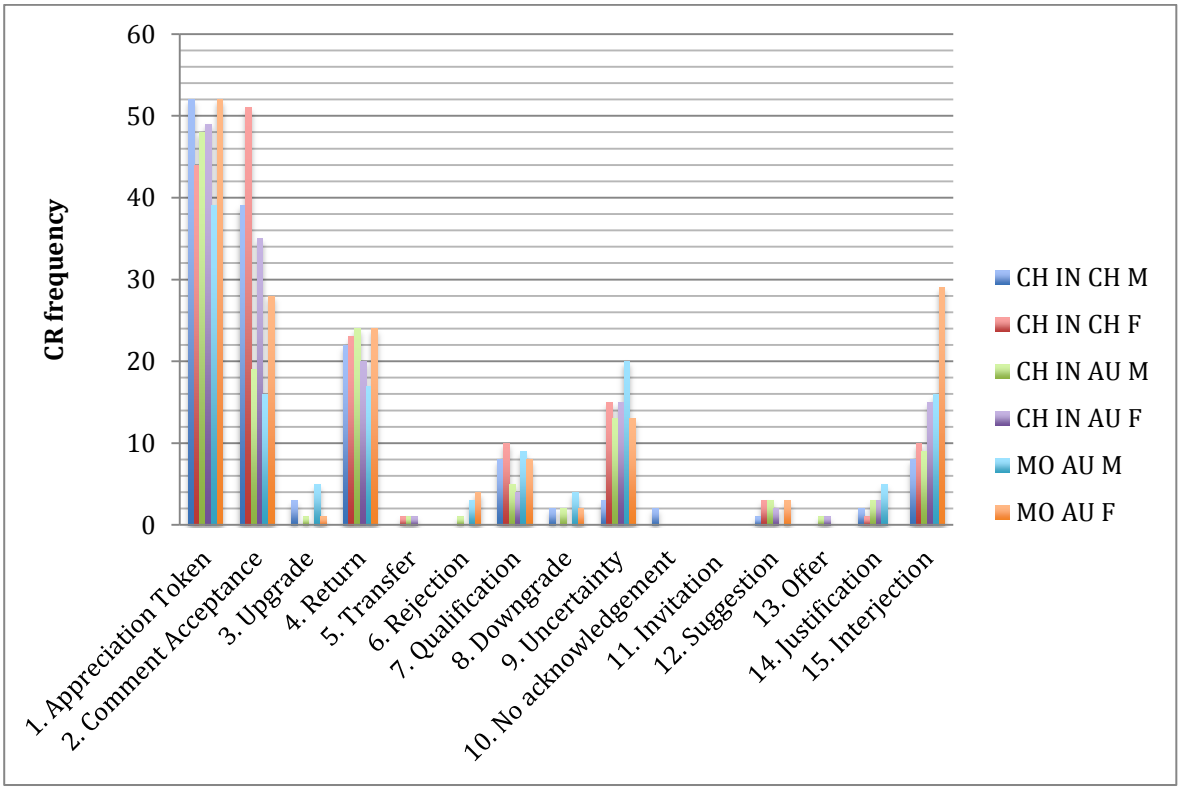
5.3.1 Responding to appearance-related compliments

For appearance-related compliments, most CR strategies fall into APPRECIATION TOKEN, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, and RETURN strategies, followed by INTERJECTION and QUALIFICATION strategies. The decrease of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, and the increase of INTERJECTION strategies shown among the Chinese in Australia groups are signs of approximating to monolingual Australian groups.

Table 18 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	52	44	48	49	39	52
	2. Comment Acceptance	39	51	19	35	16	28
	3. Upgrade	3	0	1	0	5	1
	4. Return	22	23	24	20	17	24
	5. Transfer	0	1	1	1	0	0
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	0	0	1	0	3	4
	7. Qualification	8	10	5	4	9	8
	8. Downgrade	2	0	2	0	4	2
	9. Uncertainty	3	15	13	15	20	13
	10. No acknowledgement	2	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	1	3	3	2	0	3
	13. Offer	0	0	1	1	0	0
	14. Justification	2	1	3	3	5	0
	15. Interjection	8	10	9	15	16	29

Figure 5 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments



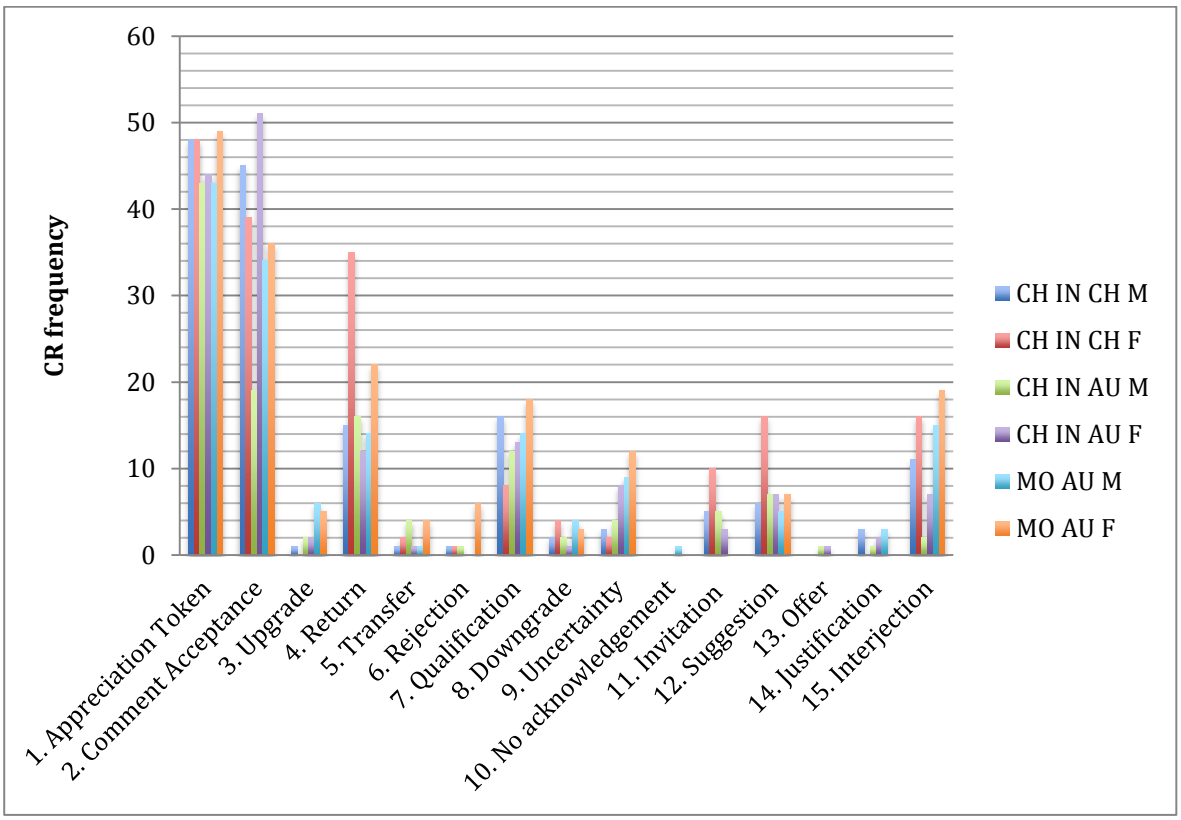
5.3.2 Responding to performance-related compliments

For performance-related compliments, the most frequently used strategies are APPRECIATION TOKEN and COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, followed by strategies such as RETURN, QUALIFICATION, SUGGESTION and INTERJECTION strategies. What is different from the distribution of the appearance-related CR strategies is that the number of RETURN strategies has decreased in all groups except for the Chinese in China female group. In comparison with appearance-related CR distributions, the use of UNCERTAINTY strategies has decreased, whereas SUGGESTION has seen a slight increase especially among Chinese in China female group. Regarding approximation or any change in language use that occurred in Chinese in Australia groups, no general conclusion can be drawn.

Table 19 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	48	48	43	44	43	49
	2. Comment Acceptance	45	39	19	51	34	36
	3. Upgrade	1	0	2	2	6	5
	4. Return	15	35	16	12	14	22
	5. Transfer	1	2	4	1	1	4
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	1	1	1	0	0	6
	7. Qualification	16	8	12	13	14	18
	8. Downgrade	2	4	2	1	4	3
	9. Uncertainty	3	2	4	8	9	12
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	1	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	5	10	5	3	0	0
	12. Suggestion	6	16	7	7	5	7
	13. Offer	0	0	1	1	0	0
	14. Justification	3	0	1	2	3	0
	15. Interjection	11	16	2	7	15	19

Figure 6 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments



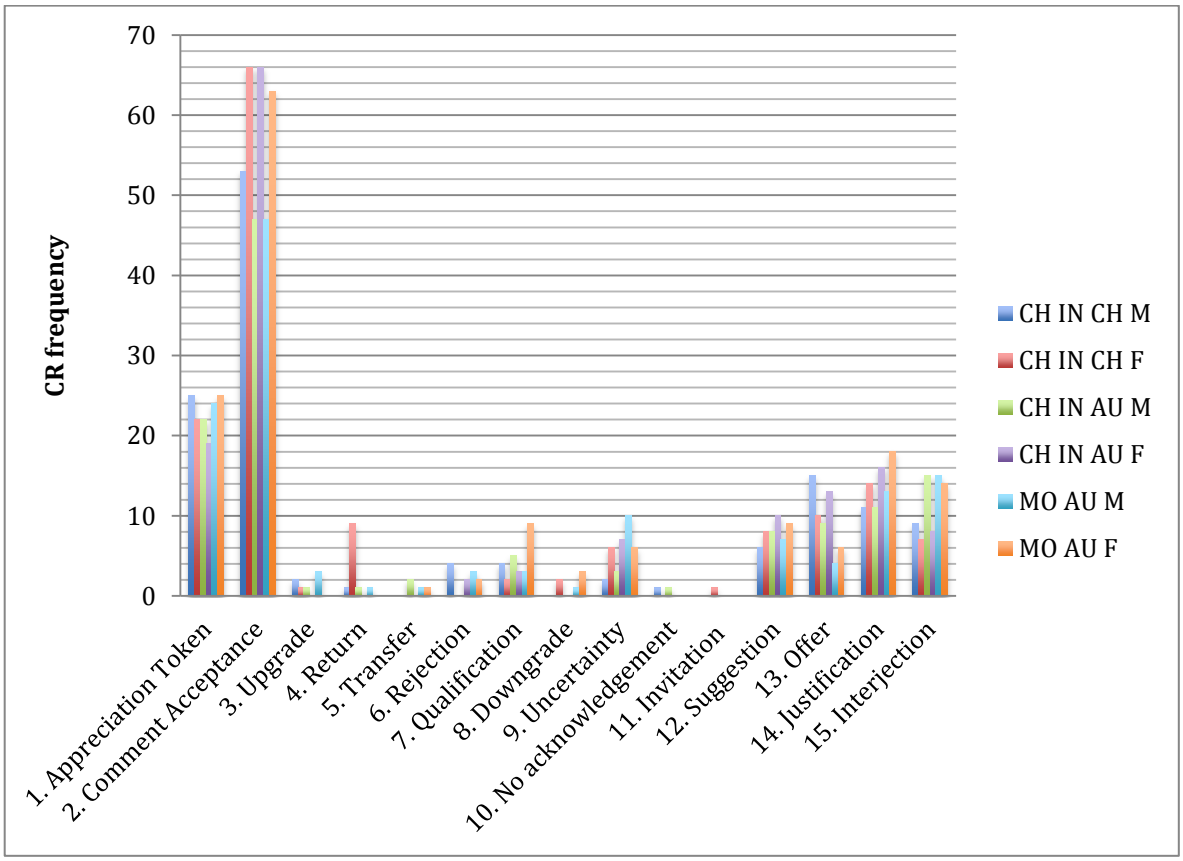
5.3.3 Responding to possession-related compliments

For possession-related compliments, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE becomes the most frequently used strategies across all groups, well above all the other strategies. Following COMMENT ACCEPTANCE are strategies that belong to OTHER INTERPRETATIONS, such as JUSTIFICATION, SUGGESTION, OFFER and INTERJECTION. Compared with appearance- and performance-related CR distributions, the use of APPRECIATION TOKENs has seen a sharp decrease but an obvious increase is shown in the use of OFFER and JUSTIFICATION. What is interesting for performance-related CRs is that all females from diverse groups have used more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies that their male counterparts (see Figure 7). This means that when receiving the same compliment on a possession, females are more likely to elaborate the topic and make longer comments. In other words, females are more talkative or chatty about possession compliments. As for signs of change in language use among Chinese in Australia groups, the use of JUSTIFICATION strategies has shown visible approximation toward monolingual Australians.

Table 20 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	25	22	22	19	24	25
	2. Comment Acceptance	53	66	47	66	47	63
	3. Upgrade	2	1	1	0	3	0
	4. Return	1	9	1	0	1	0
	5. Transfer	0	0	2	0	1	1
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	4	0	0	2	3	2
	7. Qualification	4	2	5	3	3	9
	8. Downgrade	0	2	0	0	1	3
	9. Uncertainty	2	6	3	7	10	6
	10. No acknowledgement	1	0	1	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	1	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	6	8	8	10	7	9
	13. Offer	15	10	9	13	4	6
	14. Justification	11	14	11	16	13	18
	15. Interjection	9	7	15	8	15	14

Figure 7 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments



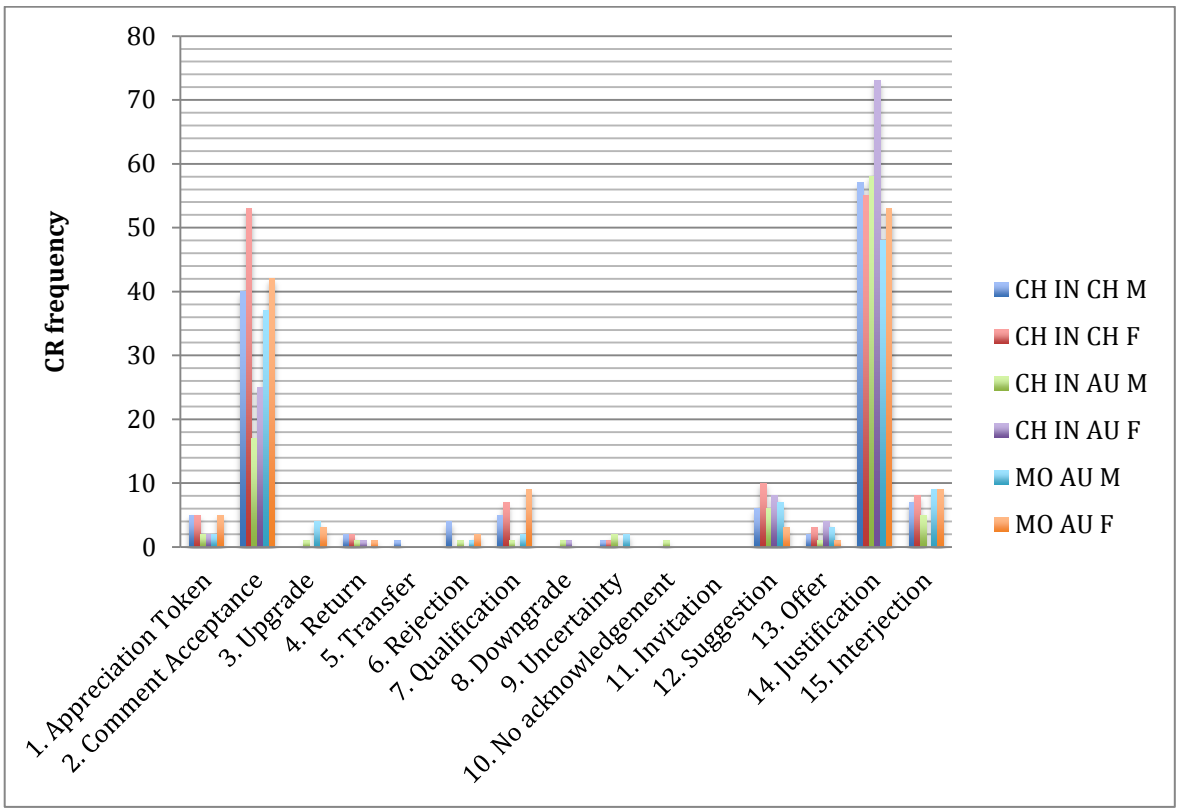
5.3.4 Responding to personality-related compliments

For personality-related CR distributions, most responses fall into JUSTIFICATION strategies, clearly exceeding the rest of the CR strategies. The second most frequently used strategies are COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies. Less frequently strategies include SUGGESTION and INTERJECTION. The distributions of CRs in Figure 8 confirm that certain compliments with certain topics prompt certain types of CRs. For the most frequently used strategy JUSTIFICATION, Chinese in Australia, especially the Chinese female group in Australia, have overtaken monolingual Australians, a very possible sign of over-accommodation. A phenomenon like this could be explained by over-reliance of certain formulaic strategies (see also analysis in section 5.1.3) due to lack of vocabulary or limited linguistic repertoire. What is worthy of mention is that females across all groups have used more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies than their male counterparts, another piece of evidence suggesting women in general are more interested in elaborating their responses when receiving compliments on personality.

Table 21 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	5	5	2	2	2	5
	2. Comment Acceptance	40	53	17	25	37	42
	3. Upgrade	0	0	1	0	4	3
	4. Return	2	2	1	1	0	1
	5. Transfer	1	0	0	0	0	0
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	4	0	1	0	1	2
	7. Qualification	5	7	1	0	2	9
	8. Downgrade	0	0	1	1	0	0
	9. Uncertainty	1	1	2	0	2	0
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	1	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	6	10	6	8	7	3
	13. Offer	2	3	1	4	3	1
	14. Justification	57	55	58	73	48	53
	15. Interjection	7	8	5	0	9	9

Figure 8 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments



To sum up, CR distributions across all groups by four compliment topics have clearly revealed that compliment topic is one of the most significant determinants in influencing types of CR strategies. Chinese ESL learners in Australia used less COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, but increased their use of INTERJECTION strategies, in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China, when responding to appearance-related compliments, see Figure 5). Over-accommodation is also seen among Chinese ESL learners in Australia (e.g. JUSTIFICATION strategies among the Chinese in Australia female group in response to personality-related compliments, see Figure 8). However, there are situations when no general tendency could be concluded (e.g. CR distributions in response to performance-related compliments, see Figure 6).

5.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the DCT data analysis. Even though participants from Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians have shown similar tendencies in their compliment response strategies, there are clear variations in their choices of words and expressions, which result in variations in length of response, formality, formulaity and linguistic repertoire (see section 5. 1). Both the gender of the complimenters, and the gender of the complimentees, affect the choice of compliment

response strategies (see section 5.2). As for compliment topic, it is proven to be one of the most influential determinants that cause variations of CR distributions across groups.

Change in language use among Chinese ESL learners in Australia caused by direct contact with L2 target language environment cannot simply be described as becoming more accepting or non-accepting in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China. This is because, while responding to a compliment, often multiple compliment response strategies are used by the speaker. Contradictory or very different compliment response strategies often coexist to serve multiple purposes of the speaker, such as achieving politeness and propriety. In this case, strategies such as APPRECIATION TOKEN, despite its affiliation with the macro type ACCEPTANCE strategy, may be neutral in contrast to responses that clearly signify acceptance or rejection. Strategies under NON-ACCEPTANCE and OTHER INTERPRETATIONs are the same in terms of not being able to account for the overall accepting or rejecting power of the entry of the compliment responses. Thus, change in language use cannot solely be investigated based on the statistics of compliment response frequencies.

In many cases, the functions or meanings the participants want to express are the same, but are realised in different forms, resulting in an appearance of using different speech acts. For example, in the Chinese in China ESL group, the expression "Don't mention it" appeared repetitively, similar to the expression "No worries". The function of "Don't mention it" is similar to the function of "No worries", as they are both acts of brushing off the compliments, and reducing the illocutionary force of the compliments. Therefore, it is arguable that the functional aspects that determine meanings in context have to be considered in determining the compliment response type. It is inaccurate to draw a conclusion based on the comparison of frequencies of CR strategies in different groups. Such inaccuracy would be caused by ignorance of word choices, such as the usage of interjections in the same type of CR strategies.

The modified questionnaire has provided more contextual information for the speaker, which has helped to generate longer responses to some degrees. The downside of such design is that compliment responses in one entry or one conversational turn may contain CR strategies that denote different meanings. Specific categorisation of each instance of compliment responses means that the overall quantification of CR distribution in each group can only be used as reference rather than as a firm indicator of how accepting the speaker tends toward the pre-designed compliment responses.

In order to describe change in language use among Chinese ESL learners, the approach of relying on frequencies of CR distributions is complemented by a resynthesised view of the overall approximation. This chapter has mainly dealt with the approximation at a formal level, such as visible increase or decrease of certain types of CR strategies, increase or decrease of the amount of transfer from L1 to L2, which is often closely related to the behaviour of translation, and under- or over-accommodation. In Chapter 6, I will move on to explore functional aspects of language use through the presentation of the second source of data – interview (reflexive) data.

CHAPTER 6: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

> *Despite their particularity, stories often capture our interest in a way that statistics do not. Stories also tell "truths" about the human condition. In the end, every population is just the sum of unique stories that make it up. Clearly, statistics and stories are just two sides of the coin, the forest and the trees respectively. And, just as statistics have a mathematical logic, so too do stories. Stories have logical structures in the same sense that sonatas and symphonies do. (Northey, Teperman & Albanese, 2012, p. viii)*

The illustration of "statistics versus stories" is part of Northey et al.'s (2012) argument that the statistical analysis (often referred to as quantitative data analysis) and storytelling (often referred to as qualitative data analysis) are, as a matter of fact, compatible. They are just "two sides of the coin" and "approaches to reality" (Northey et al., 2012, p. viii). It is just that one approach is somewhat "scientific", the other somewhat interpretive. I agree with Northey et al.'s (2012. p. 48) stance that "a social phenomenon can – and often must – be examined at various levels of analysis simultaneously". This chapter is a continuation of the journey of seeking answers to research questions, but with a qualitative approach. Data analysis in this chapter is unfolded through analysing story-like quotes from interviewees across groups. The interview themes were structured in the original design of the interview questions (see section 4.4.3), which were aimed at exploring the functional aspects of language use in an intercultural context. Data analysis in this chapter is based on a total of 20 hours of audio recording from 120 participants in China and Australia (see section 4.6). While organising the interview data, I have taken Corbin & Strauss' (2008) suggestion:

> The first step in any analysis is to read materials from beginning to end … The idea behind the first reading is to enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us. (p. 163).

Regarding general procedures of analysis, I follow Gray's (2009, p.493) suggestions (see section 4.6). To illustrate the principles (step 1) and analytical techniques (step 2) of data analysis, I recall the methodological thinking as a whole principle for this study. The process of producing trustworthy results (step 3) involves the active voice of the researcher (step 4). According to (Corbin & Strauss, 2008):

> It is the freedom to think, the ability of the researcher to change his or her mind, to check out ideas, and to follow the data trail wherever it leads that makes the findings derived through qualitative research so compelling and relevant and the process of getting there such an exciting voyage of discovery. (p. 227).

These four steps of carrying out qualitative data analysis are actually an integrated procedure. There are still debates about to what extent data should be analysed, because

sometimes less analysis means less "subjective interpretations of the researcher", and therefore more objective presentation of data, so that they can "speak for themselves" (c.f. Gray, 2009, p. 494). In the case of this study, I only try to analyse the data to the extent that it is helpful to answer the research questions.

Because the interview questions are pre-structured to serve as a follow-up approach to examine functional aspects of language use, I use "thematic analysis" as a general method. Since this mixed methods research design is comparative in nature, and interviewing is structured, the responses to each of the interview questions were not very long. In-depth interviewing is neither essential in this research, nor feasible, due to a large number of participants (120 interviewees). I present data following the order (1) Chinese in China, (2) Chinese in Australia, and (3) monolingual Australians. While I will indicate whether examples come from male or female speakers, I am not going to analyse this aspect in detail for all the interview themes, except for the subsection on gender variation, where this is the focus of the attention.

The interview data are aimed at exploring functional aspects of compliment responses in an intercultural context. What is more, the productivity of interview data analysis is dictated by its own nature – because the interviewees can simply comment on anything they like, insofar as it is of relevance to the structured interview questions. Meanwhile, I intend to treat the data analysis as a process of reconstructing and representing a social phenomenon – responding to compliments in an intercultural context (c.f. Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

The organisation of the interview data analysis follows the interview themes introduced in section 4.4.3, and explores reflections of participants accounting for their linguistic choices. The purpose of this research instrument is to glean general understanding behind the scenes, i.e. what is perceived in relation to what has been said in the DCT questionnaire. Since the lengths of the interviewees' responses vary, I have chosen to report major categories of opinions with approximate level of quantification. By "approximate level of quantification" I mean that I may provide a general indication of participants' opinions toward a phenomenon. For example, I may use terms such as "approximately one third of the participants in this group …" to report a general distribution of certain reflections of functional aspects of compliment responses. This choice of report style is different from the rather statistical comparisons made in the DCT data analysis (see Chapter 5).

Interview data analysis as part of the process of qualitative research is supposed to be exploring existing variables that influence the subject of investigation, while being open to report new variables volunteered by the interviewees, as suggested by Corbin & Strauss (2008):

> Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables. (p. 12).

Having provided a general introduction of the principles for interview data analysis, I now turn to present thematic interview data analysis one by one.

6.1 Reflections on linguistic repertoire

This section investigates the theme of linguistic repertoire in influencing compliment responses of Chinese speakers of English. The interview question (#1) for Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia is "Do you feel that you have fewer choices when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin?" For the monolingual Australian group, the question (#8) sets out as "From your personal experiences in interacting with Mainland Chinese ESL learners, what are the differences between Chinese ESL learners' compliment response behaviour compared with that of the monolingual Australian English speakers?"

Chinese in China

All of the Chinese interviewees in China answered yes to this question, except for three female students who reflected that there are different responses in English as well, if they translate from Chinese or by other means. There are a few challenges that speakers of English face in China, which include: (1) lack of vocabulary; (2) different ways of thinking; (3) failure in translating Chinese varieties of compliment responses into English; (4) difficulty in utilising what they have learned; (5) fear of making mistakes; (6) failure in expressing different feelings; and (7) anxiety of not understanding English culture.

One male student in China points out the issue of lack of vocabulary in responding to compliments (see first example below). Another male student illustrates his experience of having to think about how to translate from Chinese when he speaks English (see second example below).

> Yes, of course, because my mother tongue is Chinese. You know we Chinese people have a huge variety of words and we have such a long history. I only studied English for nine years. I feel I don't have a lot of words in my mind when I speak English. I always feel I don't have enough to express myself. (CH IN CH M)

> Sometimes, when you want to say something, the first thing coming to your mind is your mother tongue. If you want to think it in English, you have to translate it from Chinese into English after you think in a Chinese way. So I think maybe you have to choose some words. You have to pick up some particular words in order to show your intention and not to mislead others, so, fewer choices. (CH IN CH M)

Some female students explain that they found it hard to express their feelings in English, and the reason for overreliance on the use of "thank you" (see first example below). Similarly, another female student points out the majority of the times she would choose to say "thank you' for fear of making mistakes if she elaborates on the subject (see second example below).

> I think the application of language is a big problem. We don't know how to express our feelings in English properly. When we respond to others in Chinese we have all kinds of choices. Not only "thankyou" but also "I am glad to hear that". (CH IN CH F)

> Yes, fewer choices. Mostly I just say "thank you". Very simple. Of course, Chinese is my mother tongue. I have many more choices. Maybe we can start a chat. Not only the vocabulary. I am afraid if I talk too much, I will make mistakes. (CH IN CH F)

There are instances of overgeneralisation toward the monolingual English speakers, and the use of "foreigner" as a homogenous term for English speakers, as demonstrated by a male Chinese student below:

> Yes, that's true, because Chinese people have to appear moderate and implicit in responding to others" compliments. Sometimes you have to respond to some clichés to show you are polite and well-mannered. In my opinion, foreigners can only say "thank you". I know this from books. Foreigners accept compliments directly. Maybe I will use "thank you" in English. (CH IN CH M)

One of the female students in China notes that both languages have their formulaic answers which can be context-free as explained in the following quote:

> Yes, not only in English, but also in both languages. We often think compliments are overpraised (overpraising). Just want to make me happy. In those circumstances, (I) feel OK. Make them happy too. Say some familiar questions or sentences. Doesn't matter with the language or the specific situations. (CH IN CH F)

The Chinese interviewees in China are well aware of the different problems they face when responding to compliment responses. How they cope with compliment responses when they come into direct contact with monolingual Australian speakers of English will be manifested by the Chinese interviewees in Australia. The majority of Chinese interviewees in Australia also answered that they have less choices when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin.

Chinese in Australia

Distinct from the overwhelming "yes" in the Chinese in China group, 8 out of 40 students in Australia answered "no", and demonstrated an extended understanding of the question. The difficulties that the Chinese students in Australia share with the Chinese students in China include: (1) lack of vocabulary or wording; (2) fear of making mistakes; and (3) difficulty in translating responses from Mandarin to English. For example, a female Chinese student mentions:

> Sometimes I feel I just have a few choices. I just know to say "thank you" "never mind" or "it's OK". In Mandarin, I will say a lot say "mei guan xi" (doesn't matter, 没关系), "bu yong ke qi'（don't be too polite 不用客气）, sometimes, I don't know how to express appropriately what I can in Mandarin. (CH IN AU F)

Another male student is not only concerned about making linguistic mistakes, but also worries about offending others:

> Yeah, I also have the same problem. If I talk about, hurt other ones, it's not good. Offend people. I worry about making others angry. For me it is. (CH IN AU M)

Fearing of offending others did not seem to worry the Chinese students in China, possibly because monolingual English speakers in China are the minority and they do not form the mainstream of sociolinguistic conventions that can generate a threatening atmosphere for English speakers. As for wording and expressing themselves appropriately, a female shares the experience in Australia that is identical with the problem of Chinese speakers of English in China:

> Yeah, sometimes, I feel limited response to respond to my friends' compliments. I think the reason should be the language. English is my second language. I am not familiar with (the) oral part. I don't know how to use it in a gentle way. Probably in Chinese, (there are) more choices. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese students in Australia have adjusted their language use and deeper understanding of the two languages. A female student in Australia reports that she has increased her appreciation of others' clothing since she came to Australia (see first example below). Some Chinese students are able to make additional comments in addition to the widely used "thank you" (see second example below). Further, Chinese students in Australia tend to opt for different ways of responding to compliments, depending on whether the speaker is Australian or Chinese, which I call "double standards" (as shown in the third example below):

> Both in English and Chinese, I say "thank you" …I will appreciate people when they wear beautiful clothes. In China, when people compliment on my clothing, I feel strange

(uncomfortable). In Australia, I feel more comfortable when people appreciate each other. (CH IN AU F)

I think in Australia, I don't think that's true. For me, I will say something more… Not just "thank you" maybe say something more. Maybe I will ask them a question or say something to compliment back. Yes, I have different choices. (CH IN AU F)

In English, I will say "thank you" just say "thank you". If it is someone who comes from a Chinese background, I will say "na you la, bu shi la, hai hao la"(没有啦，不是啦，还好啦, not really, it's not, it's OK) . With Australians, just say "thank you." (CH IN AU F)

Since Chinese in Australia mix with both Chinese and Australians, it is not surprising that they maintain the Chinese speech norms while speaking with Chinese, but tend to merge toward Australian culture when talking to Australians. Chinese students in Australia also demonstrate their awareness of more linguistic variables, such as familiarity and relationship that may affect their speech behaviour (see the following examples):

Yes, I think so. Because responding in English, I just say "thank you". In Mandarin, I can say a lot of things, like "It's not true" or just "xia che dan la" （瞎扯淡啦, mocking around), it depends on the people (if) I'm familiar with. Because I know a few Australian people, we don't really imitate (have intimate) relationship. So I just say "thank you" to show respect….If with people I am really really familiar with, I will say something like, "shut up" or "bie che, shuo dian zheng jing de" (别扯，说点正经的, stop mocking around, let's talk about something serious).With people, I am not familiar with; I will be polite and show respect. Like here speaking English. (CH IN AU M)

It depends on the situation. I think if the person who compliments me like(s) I am very familiar with. I will use as many words as I like to give compliments or talk to him or her. If the person has (a) long distance with me, the language matters. If the person I am not familiar with, the language doesn't matter. Depend on relationship. (CH IN AU M)

The above two examples show the closer the relationship is between the interlocutors, the less formal their speech becomes. Some of the expressions such as "shut up" can be rude in some situations, yet they are also markers of solidarity that the interlocutors share.

Compared with Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia still struggle with expressing themselves appropriately, due to lack of adequacy in vocabulary. Signs of approximation to Australian culture include their ability to increase the variety of compliment responses, and the ability to make relevant comments. Some of them also adapted to the Australian culture in increasing their appreciation to other's dressing code, and explicitly expressing their appreciation. The journey of approximation on the whole seems to be slow, and it is not a sudden change that could occur overnight, as Chinese culture remains a powerful factor that influence their behaviours, as commented on by one Chinese female student in Australia:

Yes, actually, because we learn, we don't know that much in English when we respond others. Because I am a Chinese and I learned Chinese for more than 20 years. Definitely,

> we know more words or some traditional expressions than English. When we respond others in English, only have a few words, "ok, thank you, so good", can't have a really good expression. Yeah, some abbreviation. It's hard. (CH IN AU F)

Monolingual Australians

Australians' reflections of the difference between Chinese students and Australian monolinguals are valuable to examine, because they approach the matter from an outsider's point of view. Overall, Australian participants have expressed different opinions of what the Chinese students' compliment responses are like with their own experiences. There are three main opinions: (1) Chinese students are a bit shy, they keep to themselves, do not take the compliments that well, play down, tend to use non-verbal language such as smiles, giggle or use shorter answers than Australians; (2) Chinese students are happy to receive compliments and affirm the compliments more favourably than Australians, can be direct, go to extremes such as completely agree or disagree; (3) Chinese students respond to compliments more or less, being uncertain about it, due to limited experience interacting with them.

For the first opinion, a male Australian student reflects the image of Chinese speakers of English in his mind:

> If I were to think, the impression I get is they are a bit shy. They wouldn't take it so well. That's the impression or image I have. They would be very shy and embarrassed. Whereas I find if they live here long, they would be more comfortable to take the compliments, because it's more the culture here to give and take the compliments. Again, I could be wrong, but I get the impression that people from other countries may be less willing to give compliments. (MO AU M)

This Australian student also explains possible approximation a Chinese student may have when they live in Australia for a while. An Australian female recalls that Chinese students tend to use shorter responses to compliments than monolingual Australians:

> I think Australians would say more. When we compliment, (they say) "thank you. That's very nice of you". I feel their responses are quite short. Maybe like gestures. "Thank you, that's so nice of you". I think they say "thank you". But I think that's it, recognising that it is a compliment. But they are not going to continue to compliment back. Maybe they don't know how to say thanks. (MO AU F)

Chinese ESL learners are remembered for playing down compliments. One example for playing down the compliment is shown in the following example. The monolingual Australian male interviewee seems to have understood Chinese ESL learns to a certain degree. Chinese ESL learners' rejecting compliments may seem blunt to him, but the statement "the Chinese perception of modesty would be to reject the comment and to not

believe it" is questionable, because what lies in the Chinese speaker's heart can be an agreement to the compliment.

> I guess with my first experiences with Chinese English learners, I will compliment them, they will down play immediately say "actually I am quite average with math, I am not that good-looking, my hair isn't that nice". I mean there are different perceptions of modesty there, definitely. The Chinese perception of modesty would be to reject the comment and to not believe it. In a way, this will make Australian complimenter feel very awkward. Oh, hanging on, what does that mean here? He is just shutting down my compliment completely. Oh yes (a bit confronting), the first few times it happened to me, I thought, oh, gee, did I say the compliment wrong, have I got a touchy subject or something? Then you found out … (MO AU M)

For the opinion that Chinese students may pay unexpected compliments or go for extremes when dealing with compliments, a female Australian student shares her experience:

> In my experience, Chinese people compliment strangers a lot more. For example, they will say "I like your so and so", they'll keep following it up with compliments which I find unusual, it's not something I'm used to[25]. More compliments on a certain (topic when) compared with the native speakers. They are a bit more enthusiastic. They seem to be, they either completely deny the compliment, which can be a little bit offensive or they completely agree with you. They'll be like, oh, yeah, of course. I'm smart because I'm smart, why would you bother saying that, of course, I'm smart. I suppose that's what I'm saying. … I don't think they understand the boundaries, or the rules, I suppose, you could say, which is understandable when they come from a completely different culture and a different language. (MO AU F)

Interestingly, Australian interviewees have expressed different opinions about Australians in compliment responses as well. A male Australian student comments:

> When I compliment them on their English, they tend to be very happy. In my limited experience, they will affirm the compliment, maybe, well, Australians are not so ready to affirm the compliments. (MO AU M)

The conflicting opinions of whether Australians tend to affirm compliments more than Chinese speakers of English show that it is hard to draw a general conclusion about what monolingual speakers of English do, as their speech behaviours might be related to their level of self-esteem or personality.

Some Australian participants try to reach out to help Chinese ESL learners by being more polite in their speech behaviours because they are aware of the language barrier. For example, a female Australian interviewee says:

> I haven't had a lot of, there was not a lot of Chinese students in my year, but we do get students from Japan, and around Europe as well. But I think it's mainly, sometimes, it's

[25] This phenomenon could possibly be explained as Chinese phatic communication (hanxuan 寒暄), which I will discuss in detail in section 6.2.4.

> just language barrier. But often I am always very polite. I try to be very very polite to international students. (MO AU F)

This is a sign of bi-directional efforts or bi-directional approximation, as the two parties tend to reach each other and bridge the gap through different means. Such language use means that there is a high possibility for an emergent discursive context co-constructed by the complimenter and the complimentee. The concern for politeness from Australian participants to international students, and the fear of offending Australians by the Chinese international students, demonstrates that interlocutors from both cultures want to sound right in their speech.

To sum up, Chinese in China interviewees overwhelmingly acknowledge that they have fewer choices (insufficient linguistic repertoire) when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin, confirmed by factors such as lack of vocabulary, different ways of thinking, failure in translation from L1 to L2, difficulty in utilising what they have acquired, fear for making mistakes, failure in expressing different feelings, and anxiety of not understanding foreign cultures. The majority of Chinese in Australia have also responded that they have fewer choices when responding to compliments in English due to lack of vocabulary, difficulty in wording properly, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty in translating from L1 to L2. Chinese in Australia seem to be less anxious about not being able to understand the target culture, being different in ways of thinking from the speakers from the target culture or not being able to express their feelings. Perceptions by monolingual Australians regarding Chinese speakers of English with their linguistic repertoire disclose that Chinese speakers of English may not take compliments well, by depending on nonverbal language, playing down or affirming compliments more than monolingual Australians, using shorter answers, or going to extremes (e.g. being too direct or too affirmative). Meanwhile, monolingual Australians expressed conflicting views regarding the response norm to compliments and suggested no generalisation can be made except that compliment responses are situation-specific.

6.2 Reflections on gender variations

Reflections of compliment responses caused by gender variations will be explored in this section. The question (#4 for Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, #6 for Chinese in Australia) for investigating the theme of gender across all groups is “Would you respond differently according to the gender of your complimenter?”

Chinese in China

Both male and female interviewees in China have answered an overwhelming "yes" to the above interview question, except a few instances of variable-dependant answers and "no" to the interview question. Male Chinese students with the "yes" answer report that they will be more "gentle", "respectful", "polite", "formal", "sentimental", "shy", "embarrassed", or "nervous" when they receive a compliment from a female in China, while they will try to portray themselves as more "masculine", "humourous", "impolite" (if the relationship is close), "informal", "casual" and "frank" with male Chinese.

> Yes … I must show respect to the girls. When I respond to her, I will consider my words, polite and respectful. For boys, if he is a close friend, we may talk in a casual way, more open-minded. Talk, if he is a close friend, he doesn't need to respond. Such as is say "thank you". He will say "no, no, no, no need". (CH IN CH M)

One example illustrates the concern of respect for females and shows the tailored words in giving a compliment:

> Yes, of course. If she is a girl … she is not so strong in mind. She will be very easy to be blue and even cry. So I have to take this into consideration when make compliments to others. Yes, of course. They are different I mean in Mandarin such as if she or he did a good job. I will say "you did a good job, continue to make good efforts next time" ("biao xian de hen hao, xia ci ji xu nu li 表现得很好，下次继续努力") to a man, but I will say "you did really well"(zuo de zhen hao,做得真好) (in) a very passionate (way) to encourage the girl but to be more gentle. But I will be strict with the man, (and) masculine. (CH IN CH M)

Some Chinese male interviewees in China maintain that their reactions depend on variables such as compliment topic or circumstances (see examples below):

> To tell the truth, I think I will according to the things not male or females. The topic matters. (How do you respond to "nice hairstyle!"?) I will feel glad in my heart but I don't want to show in my appearance. I will show a big smile (as indirect way of responding to compliments). (CH IN CH M)

> It depends on the circumstances. If the complimenter is my close friend, I may be kidding them. For example, I once wore a beautiful T-shirt. He said "you are so beautiful". I kid him like "true, I am born beautiful!" If the complimenter is a girl, I am very shy. Maybe I can respond like … I don't know much about that. (CH IN CH M)

Chinese females in China tend to return the compliment back, or joke with and talk, more with females rather than with males, for fear of causing misunderstanding. With the opposite gender, Chinese females in China may use smile, a brief response of "thank you", questioning, or formal responses (see examples below):

> No, I don't think so. If a boy praises me, I will say "really?" When a girl praises me, I will say "really? You look good too." I will praise her back. (CH IN CH F)

> Absolutely yes, when I talk to a boy, maybe I will pay more attention to my behaviour and what I say. I do things unconsciously, when I talk to a girl, I will do whatever I like. I don't know why I take different actions. It is natural. (CH IN CH F)

Some females feel happier when the compliment comes from the opposite gender, as explained by the following examples:

> If a boy compliments me, first, I will feel happy. I am a girl. He praises me. When I do some(thing). I will think a little. What he said just 70% truth, 30% just for the need. Maybe he just wants to please you, or want to have longer conversation. If a girl compliments me, maybe it is 100% true and trust you. On the other hand, she is completely not that complimenting you. What she has said is just to please you. I will respond differently, respond the same to her if she really means that. I receive lots of compliments from boys. (CH IN CH F)

> Yes, I think I am a girl, the people who compliment me is a boy. I will feel much better, I will express differently. As my Chinese thought, a girl complimenting me in most occasions, just say something good about me without true feelings. (CH IN CH F)

In addition to the above findings from the Chinese in China group, the frequency of receiving compliments from the opposite gender seems to be lower than those from the same gender, as illustrated by a female interviewee in China:

> Actually it is quite a hard question. I am not often complimented by the opposite sex. Our class has so few boys, only one boy. I don't have much contact with many boys. If someday, they compliment me, I may feel the same as girls because I don't know what to say. I think it is natural for girls to compliment girls. Girls get in touch with girls more than boys. Boys if they are shy, if they have secret love for you. I receive few compliments from boys compared with girls. (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in Australia

Chinese male interviewees in Australia are more or less similar to the opinions of Chinese males in China. They report that they are "shy", "gentle", "serious", "polite", or "careful" with females, yet they are more "casual", "relaxed", "jokingly" with boys. Female Chinese students in Australia are "shy", "cautious", or "flirtatious" with males, but "talkative", more explicit in expressing emotions, and more likely to compliment back with females (see the following examples):

> Yes, especially the male people compliment us, there will be gap between two of us. Some people like females talk deeper about certain topics as we sometimes have more common topics between each other. With boys, talk less, topics are different. For example, hairstyle, males might not be so concerned about hairstyle as girls would. (Do you compliment back to boys?) Maybe not. More to girls (than) to boys. (CH IN AU F)

> If a girl, I will give a bigger smile and more passion and appreciation. If a boy, I will give him less than this. I think girls should be more jinchi (矜持, implicit, holding back, not freely expressing oneself). It is a difference. (CH IN AU F)

> If a boy compliments me, I feel more sexual and flirtatious. If a girl, they may want to be friends with me or really appreciate me. I prefer compliments from girls. (CH IN AU F)

The frequency of cross-gender complimenting behaviours is higher in Australia than in China, for example, a female Chinese interviewee notes:

> From boys, it feels different. Normally a boy wouldn't compliment a girl so directly, unless the boy likes the girl. For local Australians, they might be different. Boys and girls compliment each other simply. If the compliment is from a boy, say "xie xie" (thank you) nothing else to day. (CH IN AU F)

It is salient that only one quarter of the twenty Chinese interviewees answered yes to the interview question. This reveals that it is possible that Chinese females in Australia have become more comfortable and confident in dealing with cross-gender compliments.

Similar to the Chinese females in China, both Chinese males and females in Australia express that they feel happier, and pay more attention, if the compliment comes from a female (the opposite gender) (see examples below):

> Definitely. When you are talking with a girl, you must pay more attention to something you are going to say. You must take it more seriously sometimes. In most cases, that's true (to be more casual and joke more with boys). (CH IN AU M)

> I will feel happy if a guy gives me compliments in English. I just say "thank you, I am happy". But I won't say something in return like "you are so handsome!" or something. But, if that's a girl, we usually will discuss about it. For example, she said, "OK, your dress is good". Maybe we will discuss about the dress. If she gives me a compliment, she is interested in it. That's a good topic and we can extend the topic and have fun. For girls, we share something, for boys, we sometimes, learn some new things. Maybe we will have different topic(s) too. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese males in Australia seem to be concerned more about same sex attraction than Chinese males in China. This may be caused by the relatively more open social environment in Australia. For example, a male Chinese student in Australia shares:

> When a man gives me a compliment, I will say, just say "thank you". Try to avoid all the misunderstandings …when a man compliments me, I will say "I am strict, I am not gay" (laughing out loud). Here, it's unusual to get a compliment from the same gender. Maybe between girls, it's very common. But between men, it's uncomfortable. To a girl, I will say "thank you" and maybe give her a compliment later. Sometimes, just say "thank you". Maybe joke. I joke a lot. I will try to be humorous. I am always humorous. (CH IN AU M)

Monolingual Australians

The majority of monolingual Australian interviewees have replied "yes" to the above interview question with various comments. Monolingual Australian male interviewees are more "careful", "self-deprecating", and "gentlemanly" with females, but prefer to be "manly", "cool", "jokingly", "laughing-off", "shrugging-off", or "funnily arrogant" with males, as shown in the following quotes:

> Yeah, I'd say so. Your language changes. As a boy you have to be a bit more careful with girls. They might take it the wrong way, might see it something sexual or crossing a certain boundary. But with boys, with gender similarity you can get away with saying cheeky things. You can have a bit of a joke (joke with girls?) you have to know them very well. Like you and I, I wouldn't say anything out of the ordinary. I don't know you very well. (MO AU M)

> If a guy compliments you at something, you don't make a big deal about it. If a girl compliments you about something, your first thought is "Is this just an introduction to start a conversation? Or is this an excuse to start up chatting with you?" and even if it's not. That's the first thought going through your head. You don't want to be seen too arrogant about it. You do want to play it down a little bit. I act very differently depending on which gender has complimented me. (Depend on individual personality?) Yeah, definitely, I am relatively insecure. So if someone pays me a compliment, my first thought is: are they just trying to boast me a bit. 'Cause they think I need a bit of ego-boosting? Or something like that. Or is this an excuse to start a conversation? (MO AU M)

Some monolingual Australians comment that their responses depend on different variables, such as compliment topic, situation, the person, the relationship, context, the motive of the compliment, or the emotional connection with the complimenter, as demonstrated by the following examples:

> Again it depends on the compliments. Generally no. in certain situations, there is probably difference in complimenting. Like physical appearance compared with exam results. I won't say different unless it is something specific about man or women. (MO AU M)

> This would depend highly on the content of the compliment. I think if either a boy or girl compliment on one of my possessions, or perhaps about my ability in study or my ability, play an instrument or to drive, then I will respond the same. However, if it is about my appearance, well, if I take a flirtatious note, I might respond differently if it was a female. But I think for the vast majority of subject matter of compliments, I would respond mostly the same to different genders. (MO AU M)

Similarly to some Chinese in Australia, some monolingual Australians also mention that they would feel happier if the compliment is from the opposite gender (see first example below). However, complimenting between males is less common (see second example below):

> I think I would be happier with the compliment is from a girl, and try to reply back the same thing or something else. (MO AU M)

> I think guys are more unusual to compliment back to guys. Maybe it's easy for girls. For girls to girls, it is easier. If the other person complimenting you has also achieved, it is OK to compliment back. If they have failed dismally, maybe not. Say succeeded in something else. You don't want to say "Congratulations on your failure! (MO AU M)

For monolingual females, the majority of them maintain that they would respond differently according to the gender of the complimenter. They are more likely to be "knocking off", "defensive", "careful", or "reluctant to RETURN compliments" with

males, yet “accepting”, “returning”, “genuine”, “willing to elaborate topic” with females, as suggested by the following examples:

> Yes I do. If a guy approaches me anywhere, and tells me I am beautiful. It depends on who there are. I either knock them off or compliment back. To a girl, I will definitely compliment her back. Say thank you. I will be way more modest to a girl than to a guy. It is a lot of guys in Australia. The way they approach you is different from a girl. Some guys can be sleazy. (MO AU F)

> I would. For example, if a woman tells me that I look pretty or attractive, or compliment a physical aspect, I would be uncomfortable ‘cause I am shy and I don’t think I’m attractive. But I’ll say “thank you”. But if a man does it, I will get very defensive and I will feel quite vulnerable and frightened. And I’ll feel very very reluctantly to say “thank you” because it’s polite. I don’t want to encourage. (Is compliment from a male odd?) Anything to do with a woman’s physical appearance, (would achievement or performance be more acceptable?) yes, that’s different. definitely, the immediate thought that comes to my mind when that happens to me, particularly when I am with nonnative English speakers, I’d say “thank you” very shortly, I wouldn’t provide and stimulus for any further conversation, particularly with my body language. I will be very standoffish. I will be like “leave me alone, stay away. (MO AU F)

Like monolingual male Australians, some monolingual female Australians also explain different variables that can impact their responses, such as age, hierarchy, relationship, the complimenter’s personality, or motive of the compliment. For example, a monolingual female Australian comments:

> I don’t think I would respond differently. (Do you compliment back to both boys and girls?) I think it should be the same basically. You know, we are all the same people, again for me, it sort of depends on the age. Say if it was my grandmother, I’d be polite. If it was someone like my brother, it will just be really simple, you know he can give me a shrug of his shoulders, and I don’t. (MO AU F)

To sum up, for CR variations in response to the gender of the complimenter, Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians have expressed remarkably similar concerns. Male interviewees across geographical locations comment that they will use masculinity-reflecting speech style (e.g. casual, manly, and humorous) with males, yet be gentle, careful, and polite with females. Females across all groups recall that they are more likely to be more talkative and return similar compliments to females, rather than to males, to avoid flirtatious misunderstandings. The fact that the complimentee feels happier when the compliment is from the opposite gender is proved true by all groups. Conspicuously, complimenting and responding to compliments between males is less common, as suggested by male interviewees across all groups. Chinese in Australia males have explicitly expressed their concern for being regarded as homosexuals when discussing male-male complimenting behaviours.

6.3 Reflections on personal assumptions

This section examines the reflections of ideal responses to compliments by three groups. The interview question (#3 for Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, # 5 for Chinese in Australia) for the three groups is "In your opinion, what is an ideal response to a compliment in English?"

Chinese in China

Chinese in China expressed the following major opinions on what an ideal response to a compliment should be: (1) conventional answers such as "thank you", "you are welcome", "thank you, I'm glad to hear that"; (2) depend on the variables of relationship, people, place or gender; (3) no ideal response or fixed answer. Both male students and female students mentioned their concern of politeness, face, and appropriate manners.

An example of the conventional answers (1) is provided by a male interviewee in China (see first example below). The concern of the variable of relationship is also mentioned (see second example below). The variable of gender is of relevance to answering the above interview question (see third example below):

> Thank you, it's very nice of you. I'm glad to hear that'. That is OK. (CH IN CH M)

> Practically, we say "thank you". But that depends on the relationship you are with the person you are talking to. Like with my roommates, if we talk in English, we may say something like a joke. That Is not English style. We talk in English but not in English way. If we talk to our foreign teachers, we tend to adopt the "thank you' style or something like that. (CH IN CH M)

> When a person says "you look amazing", I will say "thank you, you look amazing too". And also give her the compliment. If a boy, I will be shy and just smile and say "thank you". No I think complimenting back is not necessary. (CH IN CH F)

Two male interviewees argued that there was no ideal response to a compliment, as exemplified in the following two answers:

> I think there is no one ideal response to compliments in English. You know we usually meet different circumstances. (CH IN CH M)

> I think it is different. Everyone has his own answer. (CH IN CH M)

In addition to the above explanation of the three major opinions regarding ideal compliment response, politeness, face and manners are valued apparently. For example, a female interviewee in China expresses her value of politeness (see first example below) and a male interviewee in China shows his concern of face (see second example below).

Appropriate manners regarding ideal responses to compliments are also a factor considered (see examples below):

> Thank you or thank you very much. If somebody helps you, you can say it is my pleasure, I am glad to help you. … care about modesty to show good character. It is very important to be polite. (CH IN CH F)

> I think an ideal response should express my thanks and on the other hand it doesn't cause me to lose my face. For example, when someone speaks highly of my grades, I should thank him and in order to not show my pride. I would just say a normal word "thank you" or "it's my pleasure", I also will add some word to the people who compliment me. I will add some sincere words or some polite words. When somebody help me, I always "thank you". I will say "xie xie" to people who compliment me. (CH IN CH M)

> First we have to concern culture. Sometimes, the most important thing we have to say in a good manner and reply appropriately to compliments. (CH IN CH M)

> I think we should express our polite manner and use some body language it is better. I don't think there is an ideal re when you need to thank others. (CH IN CH M)

Compared with male interviewees in China, female students in China highlight the concern of sincerity and decency of speech, which reveals that female students are more sensitive in some trivial matters of speech (see examples below)

> Friendly, sincere are ideal responses (ideal responses should be sincere) ... Sincerity is important. It is a very important quality of a person. If you compliment in a sincere way, you will make others more comfortable. (CH IN CH F)

> Maybe to behave in a decent way is not wrong everywhere. You make people feel comfortable without misunderstanding. Do not make them nervous. Example: Oh, thank you. If you are in a party, you maybe reflect your thoughts about other people's appearance and so on. (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in Australia

Chinese in Australia expressed the following main types of answers regarding their reflection of an ideal response to a compliment: (1) formulaic answers such as "thank you"; "cheers", "no worries" with or without additional comments; (2) depend on variables such as the compliment topic, person, age, position, and situation; (3) no standard answer. An example of the formulaic tendency is offered from a male Chinese interviewee in Australia, "no worries. Thank you. It's my pleasure". Another example from a male interviewee is "I think they are all the same: "thank you" "cheers" "no worries". The same result. If I choose, I would choose "thanks". Simple".

A few variables are mentioned by Chinese interviewees in Australia, for example, a female interviewee in Australia explains her concern for age and person:

> That depends on different person. If for younger person, maybe I will say some short words, I will say "yeah, sure, cool, how is going?" if for the senior person, maybe different. Just say "thank you". (MO AU F)

Another female interviewee points out the situational variations:

> "Thank you", normally say "thank you". Sometimes, you need to see the situation. If they say "Your food is delicious", I may say "Thanks, if next time I cook again, I will let you know. (MO AU F)

For the third opinion, a female interviewee in Australia comments:

> I think there is no standard answer. Like the Australian people always say "no worries" here. If you say "sorry" they could say "no worries". If you say "thank you", they could say "no worries" as well. It's very flexible. (MO AU F)

Monolingual Australians

Monolingual speakers of Australian English in their comments to ideal responses to compliments include the following views: (1) conventional answer of "thank you", "cheers", "thanks" with or without qualifying statements; (2) appropriate answers depend on the variable such as the formality of the situation, compliment topic, and the complimenter; (3) expression of uncertainty regarding interview question. For conventional answers to compliments, a male Australian interviewee says "thank you", "that's very nice of you to say so" or something like that". Similarly, another male interviewee says "like 'Oh, cheers.' Or 'thanks for that'. Yes (to both boys and girls), I say 'cheers' a lot". A female Australian interviewee says, "like 'thank you, that's really nice of you, thanks for noticing' something like that".

When discussing ideal responses to compliments, both male and female monolingual Australians have expressed their concern for modesty in light of different variables (see first example below). Another male Australian student comments on the formality of situation, which could influence their responses (see second example below). Relationship is another factor concerned by interviewees as explained by the following male interviewee (see third example below):

> Yeah, depends. It is best to be modest and realistic. It's healthy to accept a compliment if it holds true especially if it related to your skills. With looks, I think better to be modest. With skills, it is good to be true. (MO AU M)

> I think informal situations like this (at food court having food with his friends), "cheers' or something like that. If at a formal situation, maybe say "thank you". (MO AU M)

> It is situational to offer some sort of thanks. To recognise the compliment and then play down what you've done. If you are amongst very close friends pay a compliment, you can't just go "ha, yeah, I am just that good". If a stranger compliment you, you

> immediately want to play it down a bit if somebody notice you did something well. (MO AU M)

Because of the existence of different variables, a male Australian further argues:

> There is no ideal response. It really does depend on what they say and how they say it. It depends on the situation. if someone comes up to you and straight, flat out , say a girl comes up to me flat out "I think you are hot", then she probably thinks you are hot. If not, how could she dare? But then, if someone comes up to you and compliment on the speech you just did that you are nervous about or you are insecure about your looks. You are still going to say "no", those situations are so completely different. It's just along those lines for the person giving the compliment and the person receiving. So it's situational. (MO AU M)

Being well aware the situational variables, both male and female Australian monolinguals have mentioned the view of achieving a balanced point as an ideal response to compliment, as summarised by a female interviewee:

> I don't think you should. You need to do it right. Don't over exaggerate, but don't kill it (laughing). Just don't keep on saying it saying it saying it. Don't repeat yourself, just keep it smooth. (MO AU F)

Australian interviewees seem to be comfortable to express what they do not know, or they are unsure about the answer of what an ideal response to compliments is. This implies that they are less concerned about losing face when they fail to provide a solid answer to a question.

> I'm not sure. This is something I struggled with whether there is an ideal response. I suppose "thanks". … If I really thought that the person, like we were talking about a great piece of work they've written. I'll say it again. I don't think I would be offended at all. To be honest, I think I'd be more offended if just say it's a long friendship, I always compliment to the person, and they always say "thanks". Maybe I would just felt like the person is a bit self-involved. I'm not sure. But I don't think I will be offended if the person doesn't take the compliment because I don't always. (MO AU F)

One female Australian interviewee also mentions that it is very common to treat a compliment as a gift and say "thank you" to appreciate it. For example, a female Australian student comments, "Ideally, it should be "thank you". Like accepting it like a gift. Or you could expand on that say "thank you. That's very kind of you". Another female Australian interviewee suggests to make compliments a reciprocal thing, as explained by a female interviewee, "I will probably say "thank you, but then…" reciprocate the compliment. And say a compliment back to them". Further, another female Australian shares:

> You make it quick. Pretty much just say "thank you" or "thank you, I really appreciate that', and it's usually very nice to compliment them in RETURN. So say "Claire, thank you so much for that lovely dinner you made." I would respond "thank you. I was inspired

> by what you cooked for me. That was so lovely last time we had dinner together." So compliments are very reciprocal by nature. (MO AU F)

Australian interviewees make comments based on their own experiences and reflections. They seem to be unaware of the difference between Chinese speakers of English (ESL learners) and monolingual Australians, such as their respective demonstrations of emotional energy.

In summary, reflections of ideal compliment responses from the Chinese in China group show that they depend on conventional answers such as "thank you", "you are welcome", or adding a comment such as "thank you, I'm glad to hear that"; variables such as relationship with the complimenter, place and gender are considered; politeness, face and appropriacy are important sociocultural constraints to be considered in choosing CR strategies. Though the Chinese in Australia group have revealed similar types of opinions to Chinese in China, they have approximated to Australian culture in using conventional responses such as "no worries", and "cheers" with or without additional comments. More variables were mentioned by Chinese interviewees in Australia, such as compliment topic, position, age, and situation. Another sign of approximation is that Chinese speakers of English become more explicit in expressing facial expressions showing overt emotions. Monolingual speakers of English prefer either culturally predominant conventional responses such as "no worries" and "thanks", or choose CRs according the situation, compliment topic and gender of the complimenter.

6.4 Reflections on possible overgeneralisations

This section reports on reflections of conventional way of responding to compliments of monolingual Australian speakers by three macro groups of participants. The question (#7 for Chinese in China, #9 for Chinese in Australia, and #1 for monolingual Australians) across all groups is designed as follows "Do you think monolingual Australian English speakers always accept compliments by saying 'Thank you'?"

Chinese in China

Chinese in China mostly believe that Australian monolingual speakers of English would say "thank you" when they respond to compliments. Chinese students in China also point out that the responses of monolingual speakers of English are more truth-based than those of Chinese. For example, one male student says:

> Yes, I don't know how to say it. I think it suitable. I think foreigners are often honest and frank. He will give his answer according to truth. (CH IN CH M)

Some students comment that learning English has changed their language and personality to be more accepting when receiving compliments and confident in speaking in public, as commented by the following male student:

> Yes, I think so. I always watch movies. I see it on TV series, it is very common for them to say "thank you" to compliments. I also have some foreign friends. It is also very common for them to say "thank you" when I give compliments to him. Now it has almost become a habit to say "thank you" to my Chinese friends. Yes, it is changing my way now. I don't know how it will go. Maybe I will, I mean, after learning English for so many years, my character has changed a lot. I used to be shy. I didn't talk a lot in front of many people. Now after learning English, I become more confident and talk more in front of people. Now I am using my experience to influence others to make them become more confident. And help them to realise their dreams or goals that are hidden in their hearts. (CH IN CH M)

When expressing their views toward Australian monolinguals' compliment responses, there is an obvious tendency for overgeneralisation, for example, a male student maintains:

> I think foreigner and Chinese are different in culture. I think foreigners are not humble. I think this is a difference between Chinese and foreigners. Americans are more confident and they are more attitudes to show themselves. Chinese are modest. Australians are the same to Americans from my knowledge. It is widely accepted that monolingual Australians are either not humble or less humble compared with Chinese. (CH IN CH M)

A small number of them expressed uncertainty, and refrained from making absolute comments. For example, on male student in China observes:

> Yes, my foreign teacher is Australian. He is influenced by Chinese a lot. He stayed in China for four or five years. He has Chinese modesty and very humble. He was a judge. In the end, he made a very splendid and brilliant comments, and very brilliant ideas. Next day, I said good things to him. He said "no, no ..." I am not sure if he would say so in Australia or he is just influenced by our Chinese culture. (CH IN CH M)

Very few students in China think that Australian monolingual speakers of English should have various ways of responding to compliments, depending on the situations. For example, a female student in China says:

> They will have more ways to accept others' compliments. Maybe I don't know how they express themselves. In Chinese, we have a lot of ways to express "thank you". In other foreign countries, there must be many ways to express it. (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in Australia

Based on their experiences with monolingual Australians, most of the Chinese interviewees in Australia think monolingual Australians tend to say "thank you", or variations of thank you. For example, a male student recalls his experience of playing computer games with Australian monolinguals:

> I play games online … After game, we will say something. If their performance is good, I will compliment them, they will say "thank you". If they are happy, they will compliment back to me and say "you are good too" (CH IN AU M)

A female student draws on her part-time job experience:

> They are polite. From interacting with them, I learned from them how to use different ways to say "thank you". Like "ta". I learned from my part time job. After they order something, they will say "ta" not "thank you". (CH IN AU M)

More female interviewees than males have disagreed with the opinion that monolingual Australians always say "thank you" when they receive a compliment (see the examples below):

> I think it won't be always. But often, the majority of them will say "thank you". Some of them will say other things, and have other ways to show appreciation. Don't use "thank you". Maybe they will say "thank you" plus something. Or maybe some of them skip the "thank you" and directly show their appreciation. (CH IN AU F)

> I think it is based on that person. Not everyone. Sometimes, they just ignore. (CH IN AU F)

A few students mention that the difference between Chinese and Australian monolinguals lies in their expression of emotions when responding a compliment, as suggested by the following examples:

> From my observation, most Australians are confident in receiving compliments. They will be very happy to take it and accept, much happier than Chinese people. They are not arrogant but very happy to accept it. (CH IN AU F)

> For people whoever I met, they will always say "thank you" they will be extremely excited about and really appreciate it. I think the local people tend to give compliments more. Maybe didn't see you for a long time, they will say "Oh, look at you! You look so nice! You look amazing!" are you really amazing? Maybe you just look good not amazing. (CH IN AU F)

A small number of interviewees explain that they do not have much interaction with Australians, and abstain from making comments.

Compared with Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia are able to observe from direct contact with monolingual Australian speakers of English, they have shown marks of approximation such as being able to elaborate the topic with relevant comments. For example, a Chinese male interviewee in Australia reports:

> Yeah, I think so … But they always say "thank you" in the front. For example, if you say "you did a good job". I will say "thank you" and talk about the job, like how hard the job is. (CH IN AU M)

As variations of compliment responses such as abbreviations of "ta", "thanks" have been noticed, there is less overgeneralisation in this group.

Monolingual Australians

The majority of Australian interviewees perceive that they do not always say "thank you" when they respond to compliments. They say "thank you" with some qualifying statements, self-deprecate, brush off, and even deny the compliments. They are constantly expressing themselves in a way that it does not show "s/he blows his/her own trumpet". Some interviewees maintain that it is polite and OK to say "thank you" in response to a compliment, regardless of what the other comments after or before "thank you" are (see following examples):

> They usually shorten it to "thanks" instead of "thank you". And in Australian culture, it's polite to respond to a person's compliment by saying "thank you". But it's in the way you say it, you want to make sure you don't sound pretentious or up yourself. You just say "thank you" and then usually follows a self-denigrating joke. For example, if someone says "thank you so much for making dinner, it was really nice". You say, "I'm glad I didn't poison you or kill you, ha ha ha …", and everybody laughs. (Is humour a big thing?) Yes, definitely, because you don't want to say "thank you, yes, I did make a very delicious dinner, I am such a good cook", cause that just makes you seem up yourself. And Australians don't like that. It's called the tall poppy syndrome. But if you are not used to that and you can't pick up on irony, I think nonnative English speakers, particularly in Australia wouldn't pick up that. They think that the person is just being really conceited. (MO AU F)

> No not at all. Some natives don't accept compliments at all. They may react in a bad way because they are insecure. Or they may want to look modest even if they are not. So they don't accept it. (Is that rude?) Not necessarily, probably a little rude. Depend on how you say it. "I don't agree with you. That's not true". (How do they say no?) "That's not true, but thank you very much", there is a tall poppy syndrome in this country which if you are above everyone else, people tend to cut you down or insult you. It's not everyone, just generalisation. (MO AU M)

Another feature that distinguishes monolingual Australians from the two Chinese groups is that they mentioned that their responses will vary, depending on the following variables: person, gender, and context. For example, an Australian female interviewee comments on gender variations:

> No, I think probably Australian girls wouldn't accept compliments as easily. I don't know. If they are young, or their self-esteem isn't great or the will be like "no, no, that's not true, that's not true". (Are boys more confident?) Yeah, but I think there probably people who wouldn't compliment guys as much as girls "cause people always compliment girls like "Oh, you're so pretty". bla bla bla. You never say to a guy "Oh, you are so handsome". (MO AU F)

Compared with the two Chinese groups, Australian monolinguals expressed the least overgeneralisation regarding their use of "thank you".

In summary, most Chinese in China showed overgeneralisation in believing that monolingual Australians would always say "thank you" when they respond to compliments,

whereas very few interviewees comment that monolingual Australians have various ways of responding to compliments. It was also commented that responses from monolingual Australians are more truth-based than CRs from Chinese. Chinese in Australia noticed that monolingual Australians say "thank you", and variations of "thank you", such as "ta", and more female Chinese than males in Australia answered "no" to the interview question, and a sign of approximation is that Chinese speakers of English are more capable of making relative comments after they receive a compliment. The majority of monolingual Australians note that they do not usually only say "thank you" when they receive a compliment. Instead, they tend to add qualifying statements, self-deprecating or denying comments, which is a reflection of the implicit concern of modesty.

Having presented interview data analysis regarding the four general factors that contribute to functional aspects of compliment responses, I now turn to a specific case of compliment responses – examining a popular way of responding to compliments in Chinese culture and the target culture comparatively.

6.5 Reflections on acceptance and non-acceptance

Reflections of functional versus literal meanings, more specifically, the conventional response of "thank you" in English versus the conventional response "no" (na li na li or mei you la) in Chinese, will be discussed in this subsection. The question for the two Chinese groups (#8 for Chinese in China, #2 for Chinese in Australia) is "Do you think that in many situations saying "no, no…" to compliments is equal to saying "thank you" as a response to compliments?" The question (#9) for monolingual Australians is "Do you think that in many situations saying "no, no…" to compliments by Chinese ESL learners is equal to saying "thank you" as a response to compliments in English?"

Direct REJECTIONs "no", "not really" or denigrations of compliments are known as conventional responses to compliments in Mandarin. "No, no, no …" is used as a representative of answers of such kind in the design of interview question. "Thank you" is regarded as the popular way of responding to compliments in English, with or without additional comments. Whether they correspond with each other in their meaning and function, is worth investigation, as it reveals interlocutors' cultural concerns behind their linguistic choices.

Chinese in China

Chinese in China have reported different understandings when asked if the Chinese "no, no, no …" is in anyway similar or equal to the popular English response "thank you". The main categories of opinions regarding this question include: (1) yes, they are the same thing; (2) similar, not equal; (3) treating speakers of Mandarin and speakers of English differently (double standards); (4) No, "no, no, no …" is an expression of modesty whereas "thank you" is a way of appreciation.

Chinese interviewees in China who think that the "no, no …" is the same as "thank you" in English argue that they are just different in forms, but serve the same functions (see following examples):

> Yes, I think they are the same because their cultures are different. The same answer. The meanings are the same. The expressions are different. (CH IN CH F)

> Maybe "no, no…" is a Chinese habit. They can be equal. In Chinese, when invited to dinner or lunch, they always want us to have more. We always say "no, I have had enough". (CH IN CH F)

The second opinion is that they explain that "no, no…" is similar to "thank you", but that they are not equal to each other (see example below):

> Yeah, in Chinese, you can understand. Similar but not equal … the cultural differences. In China, we always think being modest is the best. It will not be useful in the foreign countries. (CH IN CH M)

The tradition of saying "no, no …" is also explained as associated with a legend or folklore by a female participant in which rejecting compliments or hiding true intentions are acts of protection (see example below):

> In China, I think they always say "no, no," maybe in their hearts, they are grateful for the people who praise them. But on the surface, they may say "no, no". You know, there is a saying in China, if a person receives good things or praise (and) if the God of evil knows that they are good and perfect have good fortune. They will be punished. The good things will be taken away from them. So they always say "no, no" just to say "you see, I am not so perfect." The God of evil will not find them. They will be safe. But in their heart, they will be grateful for people who compliment them. (CH IN CH F)

Saying "No, no…" also means that the complimentee likes the compliment. It can mean "Thank you", or modesty, which often causes confusions to an outsider, the so-called "foreigners" (see example below).

> His mind is to say "thank you". In Chinese, to say "no, no" is to show modesty. But they like the compliments. I think the foreigners might be confused with what's in our heart and what we say. Maybe now, more and more foreigners know our Chinese behaviours because in the old times, they will think like that. (CH IN CH M)

It is also a common approach for Chinese people to keep "double standards" depending on whether their counterparts are either "Chinese" or "foreign", as confirmed by the following examples:

> Maybe it is a habit for Chinese to say "no, no, no". When we speak to foreigners, I will first say "thank you". I think it is not good to say "no, no, no". When you are in Rome, do what the Romans do. When you speak English, I think you should say "thank you". (CH IN CH M)

> If we say "no, no, no" it means that we are very modest. If we say "thank you", we are accepting what they think. If I talk with foreigners I will say "thank you". If with Chinese, I will say "no, no, no." (CH IN CH F)

The fourth opinion is a firm "no" to the question arguing that "no, no …" and "thank you" are rather different responses to compliments (see first example). At different stages of a person's life, linguistic choices are developed based on external influence, which may include parental guidance, peer influence at school and teachers' input (see second example):

> No, I think "no, no" is very rude. It is not the same as what we say "no" in Chinese in a modest way. (CH IN CH M)

> No, I don't agree with this. Yes recently, a girl in our class wears a long green dress. Yes, it is very beautiful and it suits her very much. I really want to say it is so nice. She said thank you. If she says "no no no", I will be a little upset. She is so beautiful in that dress. I just want her to be happy. I think saying "thank you" or positive. It is good. I think studying English changes the way I speak Chinese. In fact, it changed me. When I was in junior high school, if someone makes a compliment on me, I will always say "no, no". Because my family members, my father taught me to do that. But nowadays, I have my own opinions. I am learning English. I opened my will. I think saying "thank you" is also positive to yourself, maybe to others. I think it is good. It gives me more confidence. To some degree, it changed me. (CH IN CH F)

> Yes, it is fairly normal in China. People may compliment me; I will say "no no, I didn't do a good job. I should be doing better". It is a habit. Doesn't matter what you think in your heart. People should behave modestly. Our teachers teach us to say "thank you" when receiving compliments from foreigners. It is not polite to say "no". (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in Australia

Chinese in Australia have expressed similar categories of opinions compared with Chinese interviewees in China, from regarding "no, no…" and "thank you" as the same, or being similar to each other, or being completely different. The strong concern of lifting up others and putting down oneself (bei ji zun ren 卑己尊人) in order to build strategic reciprocal relationships remains.

> I think different countries have different cultures. In China, people like to beat around the bush not necessarily what they think in their heart. In China, we always talk with modest way, to make other comfortable. It is good to make others feel comfortable, as you might

> need their help with something later on. If they are comfortable, you will also feel comfortable. Friendship is not real. In society, it is to "make do" (ying chou 应酬), it is very normal in Chinese eyes. But for foreigners they might take it as every other type of conversation. (CH IN AU M)

Some Chinese in Australian maintain that the two conventional responses are similar in the sense that they both express happy feelings (see examples below):

> I never thought about it. I think they are the same thing. Cause when I say "no, no, no" or "na li, na li". You feel very happy about what you are doing. In Australia, they say "thank you" also means they are happy to stay with you. (CH IN AU M)

> Actually, to be honest, almost the same, in China, even though we use "na li, na li", seems to show humble. But when they say "na li", still from the bottom of their heart, it means to accept or "thank you". In English sometimes, I say "really?" (CH IN AU F)

There are also Chinese in Australia who think they are very different (see first example below), completely different (see second example below), or expressions that have different layers of meanings (see third example below) responses:

> I don't think so. "No, no" is not equal to "thank you". In China, "no no" is like saying 'you flatter me in English'. 'Thank you' seems to be a polite way of response. Very casual. (CH IN AU M)

> I don't think so. "No" seems to be very rude to other people. Yes, "na li na li" (where, where) is to be modest with other people. Sometimes, they just compliment you. I think Chinese people understand the situation. They can see the implication of the word "no". I think it is cultural differences. (CH IN CH M)

> Not really. I think ("no" in Chinese) can have several meanings. If we want to say something in China, reject some people, we can say a lot of words. "Wo bu xiang" (I don't think/want) or "wo bu ke yi" (I can't). In English "no" can cover everything. Some of them are sincere. Some of them are just to "make do" (ying fu 应付). (CH IN AU F)

Chinese in Australia have grasped more layers of meanings of the two conventional strategies to respond to compliments in Mandarin and in English. For example, a male Chinese interviewee in Australia notes that there is truth value attached to the response "no" in some conversational settings when the compliment goes "over the top":

> Yeah, I think so. Because they just want to show some "qian xu"(谦虚) or modesty, that kind of thing. Maybe say "thank you" is like "I really appreciate that". You say these words. I mean "no, no, no" in China, there is something different when people say "no, no, no" compared with when people say "thank you"…. Say (ing) "no, no, no" is not true. I think, sometimes maybe it's true. I don't want to accept that. It's too much. If someone always tells you "you did a good job!" You will say "it's no big deal, the work is very simple". (CH IN AU M)

Change in language use may occur over time, as demonstrated by some Chinese ESL speakers in Australia (see first example below). Some participants do point out that the interview question is difficult to answer, because the meanings of the expressions often depend on the lengths of the conversation (see second example below):

> Maybe in the beginning when I arrived in Australia, I used to say "no, no". I did not want to admit that I was so and so. Now I am used to saying "yeah, sure". (CH IN AU F)

> I think it's very hard to tell. It really depends on how long they have stayed in Australia. A lot of Chinese people, when they first come to Australia, they are not used to the way how Australian people talk. A lot of Chinese people think that taking compliments for granted is not so appropriate. I think in most cases, they are the same. But I think if the conversation is long enough, they will tell you the true ideas. I think the first section is just like "warm up". (CH IN AU M)

Rather than solely relying on the English response "thank you", Chinese in Australia sense that sometimes they would expand the topic, and make additional comments, in addition to saying "thank you", as shown in the following example:

> I think there is a little difference. In Chinese we say "no, no, no" just like to say "hi". But In English, sometimes they speak highly of us, we say "thank you" and extend on this topic and have a conversation about it, not just saying "hi"". (CH IN AU F)

Monolingual Australians

Monolingual Australian speakers of English have shared different reflections toward compliment responses by Chinese speakers of English. Main opinions of compliment responses "no, no…" and "thank you" include: (1) Yes to different degrees; (2) No, "no, no…" indicates rejection, humility, modesty or being shy, whereas "thank you" means accepting compliments; (3) literal meanings are different, but the function (purpose) is the same; (4) hard to say or don't know. For the first opinion, one monolingual male interviewee states:

> Yeah, I think they are exactly the same thing both different ways to be polite. It would be rude to say "no" in English. It might be rude to say "thank you" or "that's nice" in Mandarin. I think they are both conventions to respond to compliment. Strategies in certain cultural conditions, by meaning, no. but they have the same kind of functions or semantic content. (MO AU M)

For the second opinion, one male monolingual Australian interviewee indicates that Australians tend to brush off compliments with different linguistic forms, rather than a confronting "no" (see first example below). Monolingual Australians do not seem to use the word "modesty" often, while describing their choices. Instead, other descriptions such as "not being arrogant or self-conceited" as well as "qualifying compliments" are more commonly used (see second example below).

> No, because "no" is indicating humility or modesty. "Thank you" is accepting it. (Is it confronting to say no?) I think you can still say "no" but you phrase it slightly differently. "Oh, you are too kind". Respond in negative, try to tone it down for instance, "thank you for all the hard work you put in to the event today". "Oh it was a privilege, you are too kind, it was my honor/pleasure, it is a small part to play compared with what you did today".

> Wouldn't say "no". Some way you put it back on someone else. Make smaller your contribution. So you are not seen to be arrogant. Not bigheaded about it. (MO AU M)

> I don't think in terms of "thank you" itself. I think "thank you" is receiving a compliment, but if you add anything to that, like again, the qualifying statement, for whatever that is, but I think that kind of function as a, I wouldn't have thought about this if you haven't phrased that way, as a way to maintain modesty. I don't think Australians would use the word "modesty", they will be more concerned about not being too ego, not thinking too big themselves, not being arrogant, or self-conceited. But so I think the qualifying statement is used a lot, would function in a similar way to the "no". (MO AU F)

A female monolingual Australian interviewee explains that she sees a combination of both strategies used by people in different contexts, but they are not the same thing. One means complete deflection to them, and the other means acceptance. "no, no…" can be taken in a wrong direction:

> I think they're different. But at the same time, occasionally if someone says to me, "thanks so much. You did a great job with that". I'd say "no, thank you, thank you for something you did together" or something. So I think it's a combination of both. So I think both can happen in Australia. I don't think they are the same thing. Because one is a complete deflection, the "no no …" seems to be a complete deflection, whereas "thank you" is an acceptance of it. But I think if you completely deflect the compliment all the time, they can lose their…, if you deflect the compliment with a "no, no", sometimes, that can be taken in the wrong way. (MO AU F)

The third opinion is that the two types of answers to compliments ("no, no…" and "thank you") are differently only linguistically (literally or by form), but they convey the same cultural meanings (functions), as explained by a female monolingual Australian interviewee:

> That's a difficult question. Literally it's not. Linguistically, maybe no. But culturally perhaps yes. The fact that you are socially required to say "no, no, no", I think this is similar to the Middle East cultures, you don't ever accept straight up. Or if you were to buy something, you have to bargain and haggle, you don't just pay. You've got to get into that process, but if you don't, you just accept it, and then you are breaking the social convention. I mean "no, no" can be a way of saying "thanks". But also not at the same time, because if you don't have the awareness of that, and someone says "no, no" to you, it is a "no". (MO AU F)

Similarly, another male monolingual Australian explains that "no, no…" and "thank you" serves the same purpose but with different forms. The following quote is an interesting one. It shows that the speaker has understood both formal and functional aspects of an expression. By form, these two typical examples to compliments are "diametric opposites", yet they both contribute to "the flow of the conversation":

> In terms of the purpose of they serve in social circumstances. I think so. They are considered natural responses to the flow of the conversation. They serve the same purpose. They let the other person know that you are sincere. You'd like to be perceived as modest. They both thank the complimenter. Literally, if you take it in one language, they look diametric opposites. (MO AU M)

The fourth category of opinions is that they found the above interview question hard to answer, as there might be other variables affecting how people respond to compliments. For example, a monolingual Australian female student raises the issue of the place and level of education, which may affect speakers' linguistic choices:

> It depends who you are. And I guess that I would try to understand the culture before I offend or anything. Depends on your level of education as well on the other culture that you're dealing with. (MO AU F)

The key to successful conversation, according to some monolingual Australian interviewees, is to find the fine line between being confronting and not being arrogant. For example, a monolingual Australian female points out a case of offence due to rejection to a compliment (see first example below):

> I think they would take that as offensive. To some people, "you are pretty" "Oh, I am not". I would be "are you blind?" I think they should compliment back … (MO AU F)

> Not really. But I suppose if it is the default response, then yeah, I think Australians are more likely to say "no" as well, or to deflect it. So (Is "no" confronting?) no, because it means you are not arrogant, you are not just accepting. You are not trying to say "yeah, you are right. I am fantastic". So they might say something like. I don't know. There is such a range or responses. Some of them may say something like "did you think so?" or "no, I didn't think I did very well". Or they might say. "Oh, yeah, it was OK but you know, I want to do better next time". Or something like that. (MO AU M)

What is worth mentioning is that the significance of the tone of voice in conveying different meanings in speech. One male monolingual Australian interviewee notes that how the tone of voice matters:

> Yeah, well. I believe the modesty aspect does have a place in like Australian culture. If someone complimented me, with a friend, I'll say "Oh, you're just being silly". It's important to be humble. It also depends on how close you are with the person you are talking with. (Are they the same thing?) Definitely there is an aspect of accepting the compliments. (You mean the "no"?) Yeah, I have heard people say "no---" (in a friendly way, long low voice). (Is it sincere?) Sometimes, it means they want more compliments. (Is "no" confronting to Australians?) It depends on how it is said, I suppose, there are different ways you can say "no". I'm sure everyone knows that. So yeah, I can say "no – (prolonged soft voice)" or "no!" (MO AU M)

To sum up, Chinese in China have expressed contradictory views toward the question if "no, no, no" equals to saying "thank you" from being the same, to being similar, from being similar to being different ("no, no, no" expresses modesty whereas "thank you" is simply appreciation). A strategy to cope with such linguistic dichotomy is to use "no, no, no" when interacting with Chinese, and "thank you" when interacting with "foreigners". Chinese in Australia appeared to have similar categories of opinions as Chinese in China. Chinese in Australia have realised different layers of meanings with using "no, no, no" in

terms of the truth value of the compliment and they are able to find out true meanings of expressions if the conversation is long enough (see comments from Chinese male interviewees in Australia). Monolingual Australians have also expressed contradictory views regarding the functional and literal meanings of "no, no, no" versus "thank you". The fact that quite a number of them tend to observe these two expressions literally (one suggests REJECTION and modesty whereas the other suggests ACCEPTANCE), signify that "no, no, no" is open to misunderstanding if used in Australia the same way it was used in China. A proposed solution from monolingual Australians is to find the fine line between appearing confronting and appearing arrogant, and meanwhile using the right tone of voice.

6.6 Reflections on sincerity

Reflections of sincerity behind the forms of compliment responses will be discussed in this section. The question (#6 for Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, #8 for Chinese in Australia) for all groups is set out as follows, "Do you often respond to compliments insincerely or sincerely?"

Chinese in China

Chinese interviewees in China have reported the following major opinions regarding the above interview question: (1) Try to be sincere all the time; (2) Sincere but not always; (3) Joke with people depending on the relationship; (4) double standards, treating Chinese speakers of English and foreigners differently.

Both male and female interviewees in China have answered that they would try to be sincere in their responses to compliments all the time. Some of them simply emphasise the importance of sincerity for the sake of maintaining friendship (see first example below). Others suggest that being sincere can be natural (see second example):

> It must be the latter, sincerely. Because think if you want to make some friends, you must describe what your true meanings (are) directly and sincerely. Or you will lose some friends. It is important to be sincere. (CH IN CH M)

> At least the compliments I received mostly are sincere. It must be sincere. If I don't like somebody, I can't pretend to like him or her. If I really think somebody is good, I can't help sending compliments to them. I think they send compliments to me; I must and should be sincere to them and respond them sincerely. If they are not sincere, it is not my business, I will still be sincere to them. (CH IN CH F)

The second type of answer to the above interview question is that they are sincere, but not always sincere. Chinese interviewees point out that there are occasions when the

complimenter is not sincere, and he will respond according to the complimenter's sincerity (see first example below). At other times, it may be associated with how frequently the complimentee gets the compliment. If the compliment becomes repetitive, the response may become less sincere (see second example below).

> Many times sincerely, most of the time. Sometimes, men say something to you just to… I don't know how to describe this kind of feeling. He says something against what the truth is. I will respond to what they are. (CH IN CH M)

> Sincerely. When I first look at this question, I think of a person. She always compliments me. So if I met this kind of people, I won't respond sincerely. Maybe my response depends on the person who compliments me. If the person's compliments (are) sincere and real, maybe I will do so according to how I feel. (CH IN CH F)

The third type of answer is that they would choose to joke with the people, depending on the relationship (see example below).

> That depends on the person. In workplace, you did a good job. Some of your colleagues compliment you. They can be your rivals. They want to achieve that. They want to say compliments out of respect to the boss. If they are from family members or close friends, you should be sincere. You have to make a choice. (CH IN CH M)

The fourth type of answer is that they would choose to use "double standards", treating Chinese speakers of English and foreigners differently. For example, a male Chinese interviewee in China justifies:

> In this aspect, sometimes if they say I am good. I will say "thank you". The relationship between friends in society, relationship is very complex. Sometimes, you should not say sincere things. I think I am double fish because I am a human being. Sometime, I must say something sincerely. And sometimes say something not sincerely. (CH IN CH M)

Chinese in Australia

Chinese interviewees in Australia have differing views towards the sincerity of compliment responses. Some Chinese speakers of English in Australia share that they would be sincere with Chinese, as their Chinese counterparts can tell if they are being sincere or not, and may be less sincere with monolingual Australian speakers of English.

> I think I am a direct person. I normally trust what they say. Of course it depends on their tone and I can normally sense that. My mother always tells me "you don't look good today. Why do you dress up like this?" but in her heart, she is happy with me and she likes me. (CH IN AU F)

There are others who said they would be insincere, worrying that they may want to take their words back, as suggested by a male Chinese interviewee (see first example below). However, there are Chinese speakers of English who fail to express sincerity, due to the language barrier, though their hearts intend to be sincere (see second example below):

> Insincerely. Because I am not sure whether I am right or wrong. I worry if I talk too seriously, I will hurt someone. If you are insincere, you still can use something to compensate. If you are too serious, it will be problematic if it is not correct. (CH IN AU M)

> Sincerely. Maybe my way and my method to respond may be insincere but I want to be insincere, because sincerely maybe I should say a lot of sentences and words to express my sincerity. But I can't say lots of sincere words. (CH IN AU M)

There are some other variables that may influence individuals' performance of compliment responses regarding sincerity such as different plans for personal gain (see first example below), interlocutors' mood (see second example below), and the seriousness of the subject matter (see third example below):

> I don't have many thoughts about this. Say whatever I think. There are not many restrictions in Australia. I am not a local, and don't plan to stay here. After I say something, it's over. We don't know each other that well. (CH IN AU M)

> It depends on my mood. Sometimes, it depends on my mood. When I am not happy, I couldn't respond to things immediately. If I am not happy, I may stay silent. If I am unhappy, I may say "thank you" insincerely. (CH IN AU F)

> It depends. Sometimes, depends on the thing that really matters or not. If the thing doesn't matter to me, I won't bother. I will use body language or respond quickly. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese in Australia were able to pick up some conventional speech behaviours in English after they lived here for a while. For example, a male Chinese student in Australia mentions that he got to understand the phrase "what's new?" as a form of greeting (see first example below). The easiest way to some Chinese speakers of English is not to be very concerned, but to go with their feelings, or follow speech conventions (models of speech), and they do not concern themselves much about other issues (see second example below):

> Sincerely. Sometimes, the member of the group or teacher, "You did a good job", I will say "yeah". No, because some of the Australian students talk a joke, I don't know how to deal with it. The first semester, "What's new?" the first direct meaning is "What is the news today?" He actually means "How is it going today?" (CH IN AU M)

> I think as Chinese people, we do it like a model. You say something. I respond something. I don't think (that) it matters whether it is sincere or not. Maybe you say "xie xie" like a model. (CH IN AU M)

Monolingual Australians

Amongst the monolingual Australian interviewees, there are four major views toward sincerity in responding to compliments: (1) be sincere, or at least try to be sincere; (2) depend on the variables such as context, person and how genuine the compliment is; (3) develop a certain personal conversational style; (4) sincerity may change over time, as part of personal development. For the first category of opinions, a female monolingual Australian notes:

> I'd like to think sincerely. But I think if I'm being honest, probably sometimes, it's insincere. Like a social convention, just "thanks"
>
> . I think the fact that I do deflect a compliment to someone else and say "Oh, no, you did this and this well." Or saying "no worries, it's not a big deal". (Are the compliments given to you mostly sincere?) I'd like to think so. Maybe not, maybe a social politeness. I think some compliments maybe. I don't know how you could tell whether they are sincere or not sincere. Some are just there to just fill the space. (MO AU F)

For the second opinion, that is, depending on different variables, a male monolingual Australian exemplifies in his work environment that there are chances for him to get compliments on his work or on himself. The level of sincerity expressed by the complimentees is often related to how genuine the complimenter is, who the complimenter is, or what the compliment is about (see examples below):

> Sincerely, It depends. If I am at work where I am serving drink, I am so used to hearing saying "thank you". I will just say "oh, no worries". That could be a bit insincere. But if it is more personal, if it's not work, it's me. I will say "thank you". It is very genuine. The more genuine the "thank you" is, the more genuine my response will be. (MO AU M)
>
> I guess it depends on the way you perceive the compliment. I think in the natural compliment in the Australian culture. It is often a natural reaction to say "thank you". It is expected to say that. I personally always would prefer to say something sincerely. I wouldn't just respond with a "thank you" maybe RETURN something equally sarcastic. If a compliment comes from an acquaintance, I will be less likely to think it is insincere, I will reply sincerely. (MO AU M)
>
> Sometimes, people just say things as part of general banter. It is not to be taken literally. It's just common courtesy, like I give someone a pat on the back as part of the conversation. In those cases, if I understand they were those types of compliments, I won't pay much attention to it. Whereas if I think it is a specific compliment with depths, then I will show. (MO AU M)

Another male monolingual Australian explains his concern of same-sex attraction (homosexuality) when responding to compliments sincerely. A monolingual Australian male interviewee illustrates that it is less common for him to get compliments from males, due to the possibility of being regarded as homosexual.

> Sincerely. I like to be sincere and truthful about the compliments. I wouldn't get many compliments form guys you know the Australian culture. Well, I think compliments you know with the same gender equate to attraction. If you're offering compliments to someone more often than not, that person will see it as a move or signal of attraction toward him or her. (Are Australians over-aware of homosexuality?) I don't know about the compliments. I think there is more ACCEPTANCE bromance (two guys) in Australia especially to acknowledge the love between two guys even though there is no attraction to do with them. They are not homosexuals. But they are really really close enough to joke around, that they can almost be gay. (MO AU M)

The third type of answer to the above interviewee question is not to reject the compliments too strongly, and find a conversational style such as joking that is suitable for different situations, as explained by a male monolingual Australian speaker of English:

> I will say insincerely, but that is a bit of loaded term. Like you're responding sincerely in the sense that you know you are not actively trying to check how you think about it. You don't want to boast about yourself. If you've done something really well. A stranger comes up to you and says "that was really good". You will say something "oh, yeah, it was pretty good". That was probably the best I have done. Normally, I'm much worse than that. So you talk yourself down a bit. If a friend comes up and compliment you, you might even just turn around and go, "what do you want?" sort of make a joke about it. So not really thanking them for it. (MO AU M)

The fourth opinion worthy of mention is that sincerity in responding to compliments may change over time as part of personal development, as observed by a female monolingual Australian:

> I used to be fairly insincere. But nowadays I think I'm more sincere. Because I have really low self-esteem, whenever someone gives me a compliment, I always thought they would be insincere. But now I have sort of realised that when people are actually sincere, you can be sincere in your acceptance when you respond to that compliment. (Could you distinguish sincere compliments from insincere ones?) Not all the time, but generally. The way to distinguish is by the body language and the tone of their voice when they say it and how they say it. In their voice, "I like your bag" (not too exciting). "It's interesting". "Interesting" is basically the polite way of saying that you don't like something, ha ha ha… Or unique. You could say "Oh, it's unique!" (MO AU F)

To sum up, Chinese in China expressed that they would try to be sincere all the time, but may not always realise sincerity, as it depends on the relationship between interlocutors. A popular way of dealing with sincerity is still maintaining double standards, treating Chinese with Chinese conventions and foreigners differently. This kind of broad way of distinguishing interlocutors as either Chinese or "foreigners" is still used by Chinese in Australia who mention that sincerity in speech highly depends on who they are talking to. Language barrier is mentioned to be a main barrier for realising sincerity sometimes. Signs of approximation to the target culture are demonstrated by Chinese speakers of English in Australia understanding and adopting formulaic ways of greeting (e.g. what's new?). Monolingual Australians shared a few main opinions: (1) try to be sincere; (2) decide sincerity according to context, person or genuineness of the complimenter; (3) develop a personal conversation style (e.g. joking) and use that across situations. An additional note made by monolingual Australian interviewees is that sincerity may change over time as part of personal development (e.g. the enhancement of self-esteem over time can lead to sincere acceptance of compliments).

6.7 Reflections on directness

Reflections of implicit complimenting behaviours will be investigated in this section. The question (# 5 for Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, #7 for Chinese in Australia) for all groups is "What are some of the implicit (indirect) complimenting

behaviours (compliments or compliment responses) that you have noticed in your everyday conversations with others? Do you think that they are difficult to express in English? How would do you respond to compliments in an implicit (indirect) way?"

Chinese in China

To answer the above interview questions, Chinese in China have mainly used body language including gestures and facial expressions such as smiles, as well as different types of actions such as sending gifts etc. It seems that what counts as indirect or direct ways of complimenting or responding to compliments varies from person to person. Most of the interviewees in China think some gestures, eye contact and facial expressions can be used as indirect ways of responding to compliments.

> There are some gestures. Like compliments through eye contact. I sometimes feel very uneasy with that way. I know that in some countries. This may mean you did a good job. In other countries, it may be insulting. So I am very cautious when using gestures. Sometimes, a smile will do. Sometimes you say some words like "thank you" or follow that. Sometimes I feel difficult; I am confused about showing compliments. Not sure if it is right for them to accept compliments. Sometimes, I avoid saying compliment in an indirect way. (CH IN CH M)

> Oh, yeah, there are these kind(s) of responses. It is very common. I don't know how often foreigners use this way. It is very common in China. Many Chinese will use body language or smiling or other gestures to express special feelings that they do not want to express in language. If someone says something good to me, I will say "yes, thank you, and that's my advantage". I will accept his compliment. Maybe I will say something good about him or her. I won't say "no". I will say "yes, you are right". (CH IN CH M)

Indirect ways of complimenting include complimenting on someone's clothing in a less overt way (example below):

> I think indirect compliments are more acceptable than direct compliments. If I dress up beautiful, if others say you are gorgeous, you look amazing. It is hard to accept. Maybe if they are indirect, it will be easier to accept it. "You look different from others days". Such as this. (CH IN CH F)

… writing a letter or sending a gift (see example below):

> Sending a gift to you can be indirect compliment. Sending one gift back can be an indirect way of responding. I may send a card with "thank you very much." Maybe facial expressions. (CH IN CH F)

… or carrying out other actions. There are also participants who regard giving out a seat on a bus is regarded as compliment (see example below):

> Yes, such as when you help someone across the road, give a seat in a bus. I think there are some compliment behaviours in our daily life. Maybe I will smile (as an indirect way of responding to compliments). (CH IN CH F)

For some male interviewees, a compliment of his voice is an indirect compliment of his speech (see fifth example below). It seems that different interviewees have different reflections. What is interpreted as indirect seems to vary from person to person. The line between directness and indirectness seems to be ambiguous.

> When I give a speech in our English club. Somebody say my voice sounds good. I feel happy because he not only thinks highly of my speech and also my voice. It is indirect compliment. I found it a bit difficult and tricky to give compliments. But response to compliment is easier. Yeah, direct. I always respond to the person with a big smile and respond to her. (CH IN CH M)

Female interviewees in China may also use smile and gentle tone of voice as an indirect way of responding to compliments (see first example below). It is obvious from the discussions of Chinese speakers of English that they use implicit strategies to respond to compliments and some of the implicit complimenting behaviours are very culturally-embedded and can be difficult to recognise (see second example below):

> Such as some people if they want to compliment you, he may behave well and want to make friends with you. Always smile to you or big smile to you. (Is it difficult to be indirect?) Yes, it is a little difficult. As for me, my English is not good. It is direct for me. Talk something with him or her, slowly, start complimenting on him/her. (CH IN CH F)

> About the indirect compliments, it happens less. But I remember once it was my first time to cook at home. I was not good at cooking. Because my parents are very busy. One night they arrived home late, I stayed with my brother at home. My brother said "sister, I am hungry". I didn't know how to cook but I didn't want him suffer hunger. So I just made some simple cooks (food). When my parents came home, my father said to me that "your cooking is worse than your mother's". At that time, I was not feeling good. My mother said to me, "your father is praising you. At your age, cooking is difficult for you". I think sometimes indirect compliment is very important for us. (CH IN CH F)

A few of the participants comment that they would opt for direct responses based on their personal preference (see following examples):

> Yeah, I think I just speak very directly. I will say "you are flattering a lot" or "no, no, no" as indirect way. Direct is very simple because I just say what you see or think. Indirect, you have to consider their idea and thought. (CH IN CH M)

> Whey your friend gets a new haircut. You may say "your haircut is impressive". Yes, mostly I will tell her directly with some body gestures, like "wow", or some other body gestures. (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in Australia

Reflections of indirect complimenting behaviours from Chinese in Australia suggest that (1) there are different interpretations of the concept of indirectness, and no general rule could be concluded regarding the question if body language or gestures should be considered as indirect ways of speech behaviours; (2) sometimes participants use gestures in response to

the requirement of the particular environments; (3) degree of directness is dependent on other variables, such as relationship between speakers.

Chinese interviewees in Australia are able to understand more than the literal meanings, based on their overall cultural experience in Australia.

> Maybe for me. I don't know. If I heard something about it, in that environment, you can know that attitude and word. Behind what they say. Depend on the context. (CH IN CH M)

> All I understand is "it's perfect". It's indirect. Sometimes, they don't say "It's OK". They say better than it is. "It's OK" is an indirect way to say. (How do you speak indirectly?)Just smile. I don't know how to use words indirectly. Like "good job". (CH IN CH M)

Chinese speakers of English in Australia explain that sometimes they use body language, because of the practical need of the social environment. For example, a male student recalls his experience when working in a noisy restaurant, signing becomes a necessary means of communication (see first example below). Gestures are also used when the speaker does not want to disturb others or attract unnecessary attention (see second example below), or for showing encouragement on the sports field (see third example below):

> I do a part-time job in restaurant. In restaurant, there is a lot of noise. If I do a good job cleaning or cooking, they will use thumbs up to give me compliment. (How to reply to gestures) sometimes I just raise hand and acknowledge that I noticed it. The life pace is very fast. Local Australian people's life pace is not that quick, but the international students" life pace is very fast. I don't have a lot of time to talk to them. If I talk a lot to customers, my boss might think I am not concentrating on my work. (CH IN CH M)

> I think yeah, I will use my body language to respond. Most of the time, I will use verbal responses. If to keep quiet/in quiet occasions, if people use thumbs up to compliment me, I will do the same thing. I don't want to interrupt other people. I will use my mouth if in normal occasions. (CH IN CH M)

> Thumbs up, may pad on shoulders when playing basketball. "Give me five". (CH IN CH M)

What is worthy of mention is that Chinese speakers of English have shown that they have different interpretations of gestures in complimenting behaviours. For some Chinese students, receiving financial support from their father is like receiving a compliment indirectly (see first example below). The degree of intimacy between speakers is also a factor that influences directness of speech (see second example below):

> I will use thumbs up. (How do your parents give you a compliment?) Money. ("give you money" means a compliment? Do your parents give you hugs and say "I love you"?) My father never does that. My mother does it. So like it's like "son, you are good." (CH IN CH M)

> That's kind of rude (smile and say nothing). Having close friends, I may wave my hair and give a new pose to show off my hair. But with people am not familiar with, I will be more polite. (CH IN CH M)

Unlike many interviewees who seem to agree with the idea of using gestures as indirect speech behaviours, a male student points out that gestures are direct ways of giving or responding to compliments, as explained:

> Not really. You use gestures or something. I use it just because I want to show my appreciation to your work or something. It's not indirect. I think it' really direct. (Do you smile and keep silent?) No, I hate keeping silent. I'll say something. (CH IN CH M)

Chinese in Australia tend to choose strategies rather than "smile and keep quiet", which some female interviewees in China reported they would do in some situations.

> You are so sweet. I am not that good. I should say something with the body language. I won't keep silent. I don't think I will do so. (CH IN CH F)

> For middle-aged woman, you want to tell her "you look so young". "Are you the sister of this boy?" But actually they are mother and son. "Are you a student at this university?" Maybe I will say quite similar things back. Not keep quiet. (CH IN CH F)

Some Chinese in Australia tend to believe that Australian monolinguals use more body language, whereas Chinese speakers of English use a higher frequency of indirect approaches to respond to compliments (see examples below):

> Not that much body language. Australians might use body language more than Chinese in general. If there are language barriers, we might use more body language to help. If there is no problem, we will use the language. Sometimes, I don't use body language quite often just use verbally. (CH IN CH F)

> Yeah, sometimes, I can feel it. But I think it happens more frequently with Chinese. If they are Australians, they definitely will express themselves more directly. I think it is more often the Chinese people express their compliment more indirectly. (Does your father compliment you directly?) If he feels like I look beautiful today, he will give me a hug. If not, he will not give me a hug. If indirect compliment, maybe I will smile. (CH IN CH F)

It is not uncommon to treat Chinese speakers of English and Australian monolingual speakers of English differently for Chinese in Australia, for example, a Chinese female in Australia mentions:

> When I speak with locals, I will say "thank you", when I speak with Chinese, I will use indirect compliments, I will be modest. I will say "thank you" to locals. Oh, more, I will smile and nod. If they ask me direction, I will show them I don't know with shrugging. (CH IN CH F)

More Chinese students in Australia have stated that they would choose direct ways to deal with compliments, which is a reflection of speech accommodation to Australian culture. For example, a female student discusses her experience of becoming more direct after living in Australia for a while:

> I think indirect thing depend on the situation. Sometimes, they are not on purpose. They are interested in something. Like saying "your dress is good". Maybe she is interested in it. She didn't mean to give … not just to say "hi". Maybe she is thinking about buying one. Sometimes, we just "you look good today" do you really look better than the other day? Not really. Who care? Just a way to say hello. My parents don't normally give me compliments. If they feel happy and speak with me happily, that means they are happy. Maybe I came here for too long, I prefer to respond directly. (CH IN CH F)

Monolingual Australians

Monolingual Australian interviewees have the following major reflections in their discussion of indirectness in complimenting behaviours: (1) using different body language, such as thumbs up, shrugging off, smile, waving away, facial expressions such as raising eye brow as indirect ways of responding to compliments; (2) carrying out certain actions; (3) believing that being direct and honest is Australian verbal culture; (4) maintaining that the line between direct and indirect speech is very ambiguous.

> Yeah to an extent I found myself doing this (be indirect, smile or be quiet) a little bit if someone compliments me. Maybe wave my hand in front of me. Sometimes I brush something out of the way by waving my hand. I accept the compliment but I feel a bit awkward perhaps they are complimenting something on me that is not so natural. If people compliment me on my ability to speak another language, I might accept it, I may be OK at it but by no means perfect. Maybe push it away. That would be the nonverbal ways to respond to the compliment. (MO AU M)

Both male and female monolingual Australians have reported that they would actually do something to show compliments or respond to compliments (see examples below):

> You might tap somebody on the shoulder depend on what you are thanking them for. If it was dinner. Might pick up all the dishes and clean them in the sink rather than letting me clean up after the dinner. (MO AU M)

> An indirect compliment would just be showing support. If you've got a friend who is playing musical instruments and they play it really well, and you know they are in a competition of some sort, you will show up to support them. That is a kind of compliments: "yes, I would be here while you are playing" but without actively saying it. Or like getting someone something, if you are at a bar, ad someone did something really cool, you might just buy them a drink. You might go "that was pretty cool. I'll get you next round" or something like that. (MO AU M)

Female Australians have provided other reflections (see example below):

> Sometimes, I can get someone to do something. Maybe select someone to lead a group because they can do better than you. I have never thought about smile and be indirect with body language. I guess it's very ambiguous. If I were to respond to a compliment indirectly, probably, just keep being motivated to keep doing it. (MO AU F)

There are interviewees who maintain that it is better to be direct (see first example below). The question of directness or indirectness (implicitly) is debatable. A few interviewees indicate that there is no clear-cut line between indirect speech and direct

speech regarding compliment responses. A person has to be "switched on" in order to pick up some subtle hint for indirectness (see example below):

> I will try to use direct response and get to the point, so to speak. I think being direct and honest is probably Australian verbal culture compared with British culture. I think it is OK to open your mouth and say what you think. (MO AU M)

> Yeah I agree with what Jason said. (Is it hard to be indirect?) Probably, I don't know if I'm less subtle about everything, but I'm guessing indirect compliments are more subtle. You've got to be switched on, I guess. Look into it a bit more. My perception is that, maybe other countries are more indirect….They might just be a subtle hint in the compliment. A lot of the times, you wouldn't pick up on it. (MO AU M)

In summary, in response to the indirectness-related interview question, the majority of Chinese in China tend to regard gestures, eye contact and facial expressions as indirect CRs, and different interpretations of indirectness have been found, such as performing certain actions (e.g. complimenting on an object instead of the person; writing a letter instead of verbal responses; giving up a seat on a bus). Chinese in Australia are able to sense culturally nuanced meanings in some expressions (e.g. "It's OK" indicating bad performance), as well as expressing humour in English. Different interpretations for indirectness (e.g. a son receiving financial support from his father was a compliment to him) are also found among Chinese in Australia. The issue of whether gestures are direct or indirect ways of responding to compliments is controversial. Reflections of indirectness by Chinese in Australia also suggest Australian monolinguals tend to use more body language than Chinese speakers of English, whereas Chinese speakers of English tend to use more indirect approaches in compliment responses. Different approaches were mentioned to deal with Chinese and non-Chinese speakers of English in Australia. Monolingual Australians mention that indirectness can be realised by using thumbs up, shrugging-off, smile, waving away, and facial expressions such as raising eye brow(s), as responses to compliments, and other means of indirect responses can also communicate meaning. It was confirmed by some monolingual Australians that being direct and honest is Australian verbal culture. Across all groups, it is found that there is no clear-cut line between directness and indirectness.

6.8 Reflections on modesty

This section reports on the value of modesty of concern to Chinese speakers of English in their compliment responses. Monolingual Australians' reflections of modesty will also be presented. The interview question (#2 for Chinese in China, #4 for Chinese in Australia) for Chinese is "What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English? When you respond to compliments, do you think about values such as modesty?"

The interview question (#2) for monolingual Australians is "What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English in Australia? Do you think about values such as modesty?"

Chinese in China

Chinese in China have expressed the following categories of opinions toward concern of modesty: (1) considering modesty as well as politeness in responding to compliments in English; (2) not being concerned, or being less concerned, about modesty when responding to compliments in English; (3) overgeneralising all monolingual English speakers as "foreigners", and claiming modesty as a Chinese cultural value; (4) acting in relation to other factors such as degree of closeness between speakers.

For the first point of view, the majority of Chinese interviewees in China would consider the value of modesty in their compliment responses. Both male and female interviewees have reported that they think politeness as well as appropriateness in speech is important when discussing their concern of the cultural value modesty. A salient phenomenon is that male interviewees (about one third of the twenty interviewees) would choose to use "double standards" more than female interviews, when interacting with different people (see examples below):

> Foreigners like to stand out. They like accept others' compliments and their affirmation. But in Chinese, we have to be a low-key and put down ourselves. So to make your fellows feel more balanced. When I talk to foreigners, I will be just like them. With Chinese, I will be in Chinese way. Speaking English with Chinese, (I'll use) Chinese style. (CH IN CH M)

> Yes, absolutely. As a Chinese, modesty is a virtue in traditional culture. The first thing you think is about modesty. If someone praises me, maybe in Chinese, I will say "no, no, I am not so good". In English, you have to say "thank you" this is a different culture. First to say "thank you", agree with opinions with the English speakers, then I will share my experiences. (CH IN CH F)

As has been mentioned earlier, speakers of English from different countries are labelled with the homogenous term "foreigner" by some of the interviewees (see first example above). With this term widely used by Chinese students in China, there is high possibility of overgeneralising about "the foreigner(s)" in their compliment responses.

Some Chinese in China mention that modesty is less important when speaking English. Depending on the personal choice of the participants, some may try to express what is in their heart if the other party is genuine (see first example below). A few students contend that they would be direct in what they intend to say, and not be concerned about

modesty at all. A person's personality may have significant impact on their linguistic choices (see second example below):

> I don't think modesty is important when I speak English, if someone praise(s) you, if he or she is a native speaker, he praised me with his true heart, in this occasion, I think it is not polite to deny his opinion. So I think I won't be modest. I will respond to him with my true heart. If I talk to a Chinese person in English, maybe I will treat him in Chinese way, if she is affected by Australian culture not according to Chinese measure, I will treat him in a(n) immodest way. (CH IN CH F)

> No, not at all. The first thing I think about is how to express the deep feelings myself instead of thinking so much about modesty. I just want to say something in my mind or my heart. And make clear. I won't care so much about others. (CH IN CH M)

In their discussion of concerns of modesty, Chinese students in China acknowledge that there are factors such as personal relationship, as well as their linguistic competence in L2, which may influence their expressions of modesty (see example below):

> It depends, I think. Unconsciously we are influenced by our values. If the person who compliments me is my best friend and is close to me, I will make a joke, it will pass. If it is from acquaintance, I will respond "thank you" more formally. It is more difficult to be humourous in English compared with that in Chinese. (CH IN CH F)

Chinese in China also have opportunities to learn about monolingual Australian speech norms. It happens that Chinese in China interviewees have an Australian oral English teacher (see section 4.5). A Chinese female student points out that she received overt praise from her Australian teacher that has surprised her, as she did not receive these remarks often:

> Different countries have different attitudes. Chinese people always say "no, no, I am not so excellent'. In the English class, I just write down an easy essay, my Australian teacher will say it is amazing. I was so shocked. It was not so good. I think it is just encouragement. No, I don't think so. Chinese, especially young people are more active and positive, they want to be praised by other people. Getting praise is a common thing, we can do better next time. I also think it is an international trend. (CH IN CH F)

She also explains that, despite the difference in the frequency of giving out compliments between China and Australia, Chinese young people tend to follow the international trend of trying to be active and positive in dealing with compliments. However, her idea of the international trend is as ambiguous as the homogenous term "foreigner".

Chinese students seem to be confident in claiming modesty as a Chinese-owned value, and this impression is reinforced by some foreign English teachers' language behaviour in China. For instance, a male interviewee happily describes:

> Yeah, sure. Not just me. Even some foreign teachers come to China. And they become modest. For example, my foreign teacher Robert (from Australia), when I say some good words to him, "you are handsome" or "you are (sic) … really did (made) good comments

> in yesterday's English contest", and he said, "no, no" that kind of things. Some of them are very interesting. (When I speak English, do you still care a lot about modesty?). Not really. Modesty is Chinese. Actually, I am not a very modest man. (CH IN CH M)

Whether the Australian teacher has been changed due to his contact with Chinese culture, or he just spoke the way he would in Australia, is subject to question. Australian monolinguals' reflections of modesty will be discussed later in this section.

Chinese in Australia

Chinese in Australia have offered a few major options in terms of their concerns of modesty, which includes, (1) not being concerned, or being less concerned, about modesty in Australia; (2) using double standards, depending on the speaker's ethnicity; (3) depending on other variables. Of 40 interviewees in Australia, nearly one third of the interviewees would not be concerned, or would be less concerned, about modesty in their compliment responses in Australia (see examples below):

> Just a little bit (of concern about modesty), when people give me a compliment, I just say "thank you" to them. So to be polite or something. Not so much. With Chinese people, yeah, but not as much as I would in China. When I was in China, someone gives a compliment, I more care about modesty. I think I really become less modest when I came here. I have come to Australia for almost one year. (CH IN AU M)

Some of these changes concerning less modesty could be signs of cross-cultural assimilation. Another female Chinese reflects:

> Yeah, the students in my class will compare marks or assessment. Maybe you get 5 out of 10, another person get 7. The other one will say you are better than me in English. I will say "yes, I tried my best to get good marks." In China, maybe I will say "just so so, not very high marks" just like that. The locals will say "you are better". (CH IN AU F)

This shows that she has become more comfortable stating the fact that she has worked hard for the results. It is a reflection of the value of hard work in Australia as an attribute (compare with section 5.1.2). A male Chinese in Australia also shares that he has become more confident in accepting compliments after living here for a period of time, as demonstrated below:

> Speaking English, I feel more confident in accepting compliments. When I was young, my parents taught me to give myself some space. If I said something big, not be able to make it. Others won't have a good impression on me. It should be appropriate (de ti 得体) not to be proud. (CH IN AU M)

A small number of interviewees tend to use "double standards", which means they are modest when talking to Chinese in Australia, and tend to say "thank you" to monolingual Australians (see example below):

> It depends on the speaker, if they are Chinese international student just like me, I will do the same thing just like when I was in China. But for a western Chinese, I will reconsider how to respond to it. (CH IN AU F)

When discussing the cultural concern of modesty, more than one interviewee has the impression that monolingual Australians tend to be more direct in their speech, compared with Chinese students (see examples below):

> I think in English conversation, I am a little bit relaxed. People normally talk about things very straightforward. We don't need to think about it for one or two seconds. There is nothing hiding behind or potentially hiding behind what I said. I just say it. It's easier. I have a Taiwanese friend who works here. She said in China, when people don't like you, they may stay away from you. Here in Australia, if a person dislikes you, he will come over and say "I am watching you" so you know that person dislikes you. But in Taiwan, You will never know who like you or dislike you. Here more direct. You can get it. (CH IN AU F)

> I don't want other people think that I have too much confidence but I really would like that the think I respect them. Don't think too much about modesty. If they are Chinese people, if they say I am good. If I just say "thank you". It might be a little weird. May think about it. Definitely, (Chinese in Australia are) much more sensitive. Australians usually think in a direct way. Chinese will try to find what is hiding behind your emotion. I have a girl always says things without thinking. I heard from a boy "I think she must think before she said so. There is a purpose for what he said." (CH IN AU F)

The level of directness or indirectness in accounting for the level of modesty seems to be closely linked with concern for modesty and politeness; meanwhile it is also connected with other variables such as location, age, and relationship or personality, which are also mentioned in their answers. For example a female Chinese in Australia explains that her linguistic choices will depend on the closeness between her and her friends:

> For me I will just say "thank you" I don't want to be too modest. If I dress up a beautiful dress, if people tell me "you are so beautiful", I will say "thank you". It depends on who I speak to. If with close friends, I will say whatever I like. If with strangers, I will be modest at first". As for concerns of age difference, a male Chinese in Australia says, "Not really. Cause ru xiang sui su (入乡随俗 the Chinese version of "When you are in Rome, do what the Romans do"). If I were in China, I will be more modest. If I am in Australia, I will become more like Australians. … No, if I talk to people older than me, I will be more straightforward. If I talk to people like my age, I will joke more. Not truly modest. (CH IN AU F)

On top of the three major opinions, there is a new perspective shared by a female interviewee who maintains that feelings may stay the same. Her following comments contain some form of unspoken universality that may be true for monolingual Australian speakers of English as well:

> Exactly, I will think about it, who is complimenting you, they must really care what your responses are. Sometimes, I will respond very polite and humble and more acceptable for them. (Are you less modest in Australia when speaking English?) No, the same as if I were in China. Almost the same. Even though we speak English, but the feelings in our deep

> heart is still the same. Because we want to respect people when they compliment us. (CH IN AU F)

Monolingual Australians

With respect to reflections of modesty, three major opinions from monolingual Australian interviewees are summarised as follows: (1) the majority of participants are concerned about modesty to various degrees; (2) depending on different variables; (3) a small number of participants (about one fifth) are not concerned about modesty, and their speech just comes naturally. Overall, the concern of modesty is widely acknowledged to various degrees.

In regards to the first group (1), some participants immensely emphasise the importance of being modest in their day-to-day conversations. They use terms of "a huge thing", "a big thing", "social convention" and "inbuilt cultural value" to describe the importance of modesty in Australians culture.

> Yes, I think it (modesty) is pretty important. You do appear modest. When you get complimented, Depending on situations, maybe compliment back … saying "thank you" alone might be rude. Maybe compliment on the other person on what you are complimented on. (MO AU M)

According to some of the interviewees, a well-known phenomenon in Australia is "the tall poppy syndrome", which means that people who elevate themselves above the average are like tall poppies to be harvested or cut down. It implies that if a person does not want to distinguish himself or herself from others, or attract criticisms or attacks, he or she should stay modest. This is rather identical to the concept of maintaining social harmony, trying to lift up others and putting down themselves (bei ji zun ren 卑己尊人) in Chinese (see example below):

> When you respond to compliment, there is a bit of the tall poppy syndrome. People don't want to appear very high. There is an inbuilt modesty to some extent. (MO AU M)

Other variables such as the truth value of compliments, familiarity (relationship), gender, and age are discussed when the monolingual Australian interviewees try to think about how modesty operates in their speech. Some variables may outweigh the concern for modesty. For example, one male Australian student says his responses to a compliment depend on the truth value of the complimented object, or the type of compliment topic (see first example below). The relationship seems to be just as important as any other variable. For example, the compliment from a person's spouse is taken differently to a compliment from a stranger, or a close friend (see second example below).

> No, not really, I like to think whether it's true or not before accepting or rejecting it. If I did really well in a test, someone said "you did really great", I would more likely accept it compared when I did poor. If it comes to my appearance, I am more likely to be modest, I will be willing to reject it. If it is to do with my actions, to do with my work or Uni, or personality traits, I might say "oh, thank you". (MO AU M)

> It really depends on who I am sort of talking to. If it were my spouse, then I will usually accept it and say "thank you" and compliment back to her. But if it were someone I hardly know or hardly see, I will sort of be, I'd say "thank you" but will try to be a lot more modest about it. A lot of the time, when people say like that, especially with my group of friends, I usually take it jokingly. Sort of muff it off and make it funny, maybe say something slightly egoistic or arrogant. (MO AU M)

For the variable of gender, a female interviewee mentions that she would be more modest toward female complimenters, and often return the compliments back. However, when the compliments are from a male complimenter, she is more likely to accept it for being polite, possibly not wanting to appear to be fishing for more compliments, and making the male complimenter feel more comfortable (see first example below). Age also affects the degree of modesty in speech (see second example below):

> Yes, I think if I was replying to a compliment from another girl, I would say, you don't want to be "ya, I am so good." If it was girl, you have to be more polite I think. And you should compliment them back. Otherwise, they might be offended. But if a guy, if my boy friends compliment me, I always say "thank you" and I always accept it. I know a lot of guys they really don't like it when girls are like "ah, I'm so ugly, I'm so ugly." They just want compliments. And the guys are like "Oh – (sighing)" the girl is not taking my compliment. You know. (MO AU F)

> Depends on who you're actually speaking to, if I were speaking to a grandmother, I will be very polite of course, if she gives a gift I will say "thank you very much". Value it much more. If it's just friends, just laugh it off, "ta!". (MO AU F)

A few interviewees, mostly from the female group, suggest that they would not be so concerned about modesty, they just let it go as naturally as possible when responding to compliments, and it is a desirable option just to say "thank you" and move on with the conversation.

In addition to the above findings, a few interviewees observe that responding to a compliment with a rejection, such as "no, no, no" can be regarded as a move of fishing for more compliments, as it prompts the complimenter to repeat the compliment again (see example below).

> Maybe if someone compliments me, I will be like might just say "thank you" rather than delving deep into it. You are not fishing for compliments I guess … (MO AU M)

From the strong concern of modesty in responding to compliments to the attitude of not thinking about them, a middle ground is probably to summarise reflections of modesty as implicit modesty. Compared with the salient notion of modesty explicitly taught and

immensely valued in China, the concept of modesty is implicitly cultivated in Australia. In cases where interviewees do not acknowledge the popularity of this term, modesty operationalises the concern of not wanting to appear "proud", "forward", "arrogant", "cocky", "self-centred", "boastful", "big oneself" or "overconfident" (see example below):

> Maybe not so much modesty. …I don't want to be ever seen, I think I am better than I am or I think I am better than other people. Some people compliment me, I always try to cut it down. "Oh, you know, thanks so much," and add some qualifying statements: "it's really hard". Instead of just being able to say "oh, thanks" I might say "It is hard". Add a qualifying statement or explanation why it is complimented in the first place. (Do you think there is this default modesty but not very explicitly expressed?) Yeah, actually, I have never thought of that way. But there is certainly that kind of implicit modesty. I think the perception of Americans as being quite forward and craving for compliment and approval. I don't want to be ever seen like I am asking for compliment or anything. Whenever they are offered, I try to shut if off as quickly as possible. You don't want to be seen like you are in love of yourself. Or you think great of yourself. There is implicit "I don't want to be seen proud". (MO AU F)

"Thank you" is used as a way of "shutting off" a compliment for the sake of not wanting to appear proud. To manage an impression that is more acceptable, denigration or joking is a common approach to adjust what has been complimented. Acknowledging one's hard work, which is less commonly used in China, because it can be a signal for appearing proud instead, is used as a way for denigration in Australia (see examples below):

> But I suppose (and) think you still consider it (modesty) … I used to play piano. I was good at it. But I still need to be modest about it anyway. Not just "yes, I am just awesome". It would be "I might, but it is because I practiced hard, or maybe I do I spent two hours a day practicing". It's like modesty without modesty. (MO AU M)

> I think modesty probably plays a big role in how people respond to compliments in Australia. But I don't know how that differs from overseas. (Modesty not explicitly taught in Australia?) Oh, I think definitely, for the most part, it's implicit. I can't remember something to be taught at school about something to be modest. Actually everything that could be taught would be the opposite. (MO AU F)

To conclude, Chinese in China have shown different opinions regarding the cultural concern of modesty when responding to compliments in English. The majority of the interviewees in China mention the importance of politeness and appropriateness in speech when discussing modesty. Quite a few of them suggest that they would not be concerned, or so concerned about modesty in English. It is salient that many Chinese in China have misassumptions and overgeneralisations toward monolingual Australian speakers of English in believing that modesty is more of a Chinese cultural value, rather than a value held by the "foreigners". Chinese in Australia mention that they would not be concerned about, or be less concerned about, modesty in Australia, and converging to the

sociocultural norms of the speaker, depending on their ethnicity or other variables. Chinese in Australia tend to approximate to the target norms in their willingness to accept compliments more, and acknowledge their hard work (which can be mistaken as proudness in China) when responding to compliments. Chinese in Australia have less misunderstanding toward the monolingual Australians' treatment of modesty compared with Chinese in China. Approximation among Chinese speakers of English in Australia is a complex phenomenon, as they have developed the use of "double standards" based on their Chinese/foreigners division, originating from China. Conspicuously, monolingual Australians do not overtly teach or talk about the notion of modesty, yet, the implicit actions and concerns of not wanting to appear arrogant is widespread across both genders.

6.9 Reflections on phaticity

As introduced in section 4.4.3, "phaticity" is a concept that is highly relevant to functional aspects of speech behaviour. I use the term "phatic communication" in the interview question because it is slightly more accessible to participants than the term "phaticity". The closest translation in Mandarin is hanxuan (寒暄). Hanxuan is used as a significant term to familiarise the interview question, especially to Chinese groups (Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia) because "phaticity" and "phatic communication" are both unusual terms for Chinese participants. The question (#9 for Chinese in China, #3 for Chinese in Australia, and #7 for monolingual Australians) including the definition of "phatic communication" is designed as "Do you think that many comments in response to compliments are just phatic communication (hanxuan 寒暄: speech or utterances that serve to establish or maintain social relationships or create an atmosphere of shared feelings, goodwill or sociability rather than to impart information, communicate ideas) and the statements are not sincere? Would this cause misunderstanding?" [26]

Chinese in China

The reflections of phatic communication (han xuan) by Chinese interviewees in China can be summarised by the following categories of opinions: (1) a lot of complimenting behaviours are han xuan, and should not be taken seriously; (2) han xuan is a Chinese traditional communication style; (3) han xuan is a global phenomenon; (4) han xuan serves other functions, such as expressing implicity, politeness, friendliness and establishing relationships. It may cause misunderstandings in a cross-cultural communicative context.

[26] The question for monolingual Australian group does not include Chinese characters, see appendix D.

Compliments are used as ways of phatic communication for people to start a conversation and may not have the literal meaning all the time, as shown in the following quote:

> Yeah, in most situations, people are just (doing) han xuan (phatic communication), instead of expressing their true feeling. When you met a friend or relative, they will say "ah, you look much taller than you used to be, much beautiful". Maybe they just say something. The fact is that you are just like you are used to be. There are misunderstandings if we talk to foreigners. Because the pattern of our thought is different, if I use the Chinese thought to praise them, "you look much more beautiful than you are used to be". Maybe she will think so, but I just han xuan. So there is a misunderstanding. (CH IN CH F)

To further discuss literal meanings and nonliteral meanings in phatic communication, different phatic communication strategies can be factors causing culture shock (see quote below). Conventional conversation starters in some parts of China may be asking the person if he or she has had a meal, instead of asking how they are. Alternatively, the speaker can often lift the other person up (metaphorically, i.e. by praise) by asking a question such as "which high ground have you landed on?" (instead of asking "where do you work?"), which to some degree shows respect, and to some degree shows modesty, as shown in the following quote:

> We have learned many examples like cultural shock. Some people say a lady is very beautiful, she says "Where? where?". English people like to talk about weather. But just to start a conversation. But you should appear to be very interested in this topic so that to show your sincerity to him. Chinese people like in Henan, "Have you ever eaten the meal?" "Which high ground have you landed on? (你在哪儿高就呀)？" (CH IN CH F)

Han xuan can be encouraged by present fellow speakers, rather than initiated by the speaker him/herself. Whether or not to use phatic communication also depends on how close the relationship is between the speakers (see the following comments):

> Yes, some of that is not sincere. For example, if I (were) with other four friends to have dinner together. Maybe I do a brilliant thing, I got first in exam or just in a sports meeting. If three of them say "you did a good job". Maybe the other one will also say so. They are influenced by others. If they don't do it, maybe in relationship, they might not be so close to me. With new friends, I will do that kind of thing (han xuan). With close friends, we don't have to. (CH IN CH M)

Some Chinese interviewees in China think that han xuan is a Chinese tradition. Han xuan can be transformed into less phatic or non-phatic communication, depending on how it is said. This is often linked to sincerity expressed in the speech or taken by the hearer. It may not be always possible to draw a line between phatic communication and non-phatic communication (see the following example):

> I think han xuan is very Chinese. In English speaking countries, if you just drop by at a friend, in China, they will say "wow, nice to meet you, long time no see, how about your

> health and children?" In America and England, they just let you come in. I think han xuan is part of our culture. It is a traditional thing. It is in need. A lot of educators, the most brilliant Laozi or Confucius, they emphasize li (rituals or rules propriety). I think han xuan depends on the mind of people, if you say these things and hear it sincerely, and then it is sincere. If you say it insincerely and I hear it insincerely, then it is insincere. So it has two aspects. (CH IN CH M)

Phatic communication style might be a global phenomenon, but it may be used with different frequencies as suggested below:

> Everyone want(s) to look enthusiastic when someone meets another person, they just want to have something to say. Compliment is a good choice and good topic between people. I think (in) this aspect, the foreign people, like Chinese, in my mind, they also han xuan a lot. Actually, I don't know much about foreigners' life. They are not so often as our Chinese people according to the TV. (CH IN CH F)

Similar views are shared by other participants, who believe that phatic communication strategies are not only speech styles frequently presented in popular Chinese TV drama, but also speech styles used by politicians from different nationalities to demonstrate their manners. Meanwhile, in the globalised world, information is becoming more accessible, misunderstandings can be reduced by doing research about speech conventions of other cultures as explained below:

> You say you are like MBA star. You pay compliments on twitter or facebook. You do it in a phatic way. Sometimes it is phatic communication. Sometimes, it is true. I hold the view, not out of gender discrimination. Chinese TV play (Zhen Huan Zhuan) there is a war among some women. They appear to be very friendly. They respect you and want to have a very close relationship with you. You don't know what they are aiming to. Sometimes, you have to be aware of that. (Do you think that foreigners also use this kind of communication style?) Yes, why say so. The reason is that when the president or (a) public speaker makes a speech. They have to say something like: "thank you for your time", "thank you for coming", "thank you for listening". They say these things not out of respect. They just want to show that they are very educated. They know the manners, the rules. They don't want to appear rude or something like that. So they say thank you. I think that is not very sincerely (sincere). Like Barak Obama, he said "this is the people's country. We are in a very good relationship with China". Then we hear the news of Snowden. So something I feel very complex. So people are complex. (Will phatic communication cause misunderstandings?) Not really. This is a global society. People tend to know people they are dealing with. They prepare and they try to get some information about their culture, in order to avoid misunderstandings. They have to do their business. They have to move on and do good communications. They will prepare and there will not be any misunderstandings. (CH IN CH M)

Chinese interviewees in China reveal that sometimes they refrain from saying the truth for the sake of showing politeness. Politeness is often achieved through using indirect or implicit speech styles, which is a distinctive feature in comparison with the relatively direct speech styles of the "foreigners". Such styles are also connected with the cultural value of modesty. These kinds of han xuan speech styles are believed to be a factor causing misundertandings, as commented below:

> It's hard to say, you know sometimes, people are doing han xuan. Sometimes, people say it very sincerely. So it depends. Yes, foreigners are quite direct. If they say something, they mean something mostly. Chinese people are quite the opposite, they do han xuan. The meaning can be very different. It is easy to cause misunderstandings. This is the difference of culture. Chinese people are quite modest, …I think Chinese people's han xuan is quite easy to cause misunderstanding, it doesn't mean Chinese people are not sincere. It means politeness. It means they are polite. It is totally because of difference of cultures. I think the foreigners should understand it. (CH IN CH F)

The reason for phatic communication causing misunderstanding could be that the speaker may pay the same amount of attention to every utterance. Overusing phatic communication may cause confusion to speakers other than Chinese, as suggested in the following quote:

> Maybe to others, there are many comments … to make others comfortable. But it has nothing to do with the real matters they are talking about. In other words, the comments are useless. Maybe it is very possible for misunderstanding. When Chinese talk to Chinese, maybe it is not a problem. Because we all know it is a Chinese habit. When talking to foreigners, they don't know. They will try to make sense of everything you are saying. In other words, they pay equal importance to the things you are saying. Sometimes, if you say too much phatic communication, this kind of things, maybe the Chinese will make the foreigners confused. (CH IN CH M)

Chinese in Australia

Compared with Chinese interviewees in China, Chinese in Australia are able to (1) grasp more nuanced meanings relating to tone of voice or the utilisation of adverbs to increase the illocutionary force of the speech; (2) work out that monolingual Australians use phatic strategies as well, which means phatic communication is a global phenomenon; (3) sense the higher frequency of complimenting, thanking and apologising used by people from the target language environment.

Tone of voice is now given more attention by Chinese ESL learners in Australia compared with Chinese in China who have not commented on this point. Adverbs utilised by speakers from the target language environment to stress the intended meaning are also noticed by Chinese ESL learners in Australia. For example, a male Chinese interviewee in Australia notes:

> Sometimes, especially in western conversations, as far as I know, Australians talk this way. I think it depends on the tone. When I was taking class, no matter what people said, the teacher always gives positive compliments. But if you really say something very important, she will say something like "very well", "very excellent". You can feel it. (CH IN AU M)

Some Chinese interviewees think the phatic communication is similar to conventional or formulaic speech for entertaining guests, which are known as ke tao hua 客套话. Complimenting behaviours are also regarded as a form of greeting. They have noticed that Australian people tend to use less ke tao hua, and Australians are more direct, compared

with Chinese. They have also noticed that monolingual Australians say “thank you” and “sorry” more often. An increase in the frequency of saying “thank you” or “sorry” is seen among Chinese in Australia – a clear sign of speech accommodation from the target language environment, as explained below:

> Maybe to us, han xuan is greetings. Like Australians say “it’s a good day” when they meet each other. Ke tao hua is deeper than Hanxuan. Ke tao hua is for politeness. Australian people do this very little. This might be related to cultural differences. We are deeply influenced by Confucianism. I have lived in Australia for more than three years, I haven’t met such occasions. I think they are often very direct. They say “thank you” more often when you help them. Other things are more or less the same. When you bump into someone, it is normal in China. But now when I go back, I will blurt out “sorry”. (CH IN AU M)

Chinese in Australia have learned that monolingual Australians use phatic communication styles as well, and contend that it is a global phenomenon. Phatic communication is often commented on in relation to sincerity because of the similarity of these two concepts. Han xuan can be sincere or insincere, depending on the particular situation. Han xuan is also commented on as expressions of greetings, often as short conversation openers:

> They (han xuan) are not sincere. Last year, I talked to one of my friends. We were in a restaurant. The waiter said to me “if the dish is not delicious enough, we can always make another one for you”. The time he said to me, Australian people say something like this, but they don’t really want to do it for you. Just like you bump into someone and say “hi, that’s a nice outfit”, just a conversation opener. It’s not sincere at all for me. …Australian people do that (han xuan) as well. All countries do that. When I see the older classmate on the road, he will say “hey, how are you? How is everything going?” If you really have a nice haircut compared with last time I saw you, I might give a compliment “nice haircut”. If the haircut is really good, I may be sincere. Han xuan is not sincere at all. If you see some familiar faces on the road, you definitely say hi. (CH IN AU M)

After being immersed in an Australian English speaking environment, some Chinese interviewees in Australia are able to pick up some nuanced meanings between the lines, such as “it’s OK” indicates that “there is room for improvement” or “it could have been better”. Reading between the lines is a signal of increased pragmatic competence developed over time. It also shows that Chinese ESL learners are able to understand nonliteral meanings in addition to the literal meanings as shown by the following example:

> I think both the Chinese people and Australian people use phatic communication. Because some Australian people want to be friendly to visitors and overseas students, “Hello” “how are you?” “How is it going” things like that. Australian people say “Yeah, that’s OK”. That means “it’s not good. Not perfect”. But some Chinese people think that’s OK and they can pass the group assignment. Australian people might say “this job is OK.” I always mistake that as “we can pass”. The meaning is “we can do better and be perfect”. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese interviewees in Australia also notice that Australian monolingual speakers of English sometimes give more compliments than Chinese speakers of English, for the purpose of giving encouragement (see example below). Becoming aware of such pragmatic variations is often the first step for further speech accommodation, as mentioned earlier.

> I think it is kind of like encouragement. I think it is a good way. Most of them are sincere. I think they are the same in China and Australia. Even in Australia, they have more times to say good things to you. Like, when you go to the lecture, even English is not your first language, you answer their questions not fluently, the teacher always says "well done" "you did very well" to encourage me and motivate me. (CH IN AU M)

Monolingual Australians

Monolingual Australian speakers of English perceive that complimenting behaviours can be phatic communication, which is a common conversation style. To monolingual Australians, compliments can serve as (1) conversation openers, (2) forms of greeting, but not the same as greetings, (3) opportunities for joking (humorous talks), (4) purposes such as atmosphere lighteners, which can be difficult to grasp for ESL learners, (5) value in compliment (illocutionary forces) may decrease over time, or in situations, when used repetitively. Data from monolingual Australian groups show that compliments should not always be taken by their literal meanings. On some occasions, if the compliments are taken too literally, it may cause problems. Complimenting talks are often expected to be short and a transit for other conversational topics. If being delved into in too much detail, they may sound awkward or cause discomfort to the hearer.

> They are like topic conversation starter or something. …Just maybe in a room, with new people or something, someone might give you a compliment. …So it's not always so literal. .... They could, I mean some people might be very literal in how the think. If you just only see it for the literal view for what it is, "oh whatever, you did that well". You don't see it as a topic starter. It could cause some problems I guess. It could be socially awkward, because that person might be expecting you to respond with something else. Then you just take it very literally, and then don't talk any more. …Yeah, to start a conversation, that's it. . (MO AU F)

> Most of them, the majority of them (are phatic communication). Definitely, very confidently. That's been my experience, that's just the done thing. Compliments don't really need to further discussion. Certainly not to do with certain ideas. So one person compliments another person, they say, "thank you", and then the topic usually changes to something else. …or you keep making jokes (haha). So for example, if one person is complimenting someone too much, that person is going to feel "OK, what does this person want from me, there?" They are sucking up to me. It put them on the defensive. It's going to make them feel uncomfortable. (MO AU F)

Monolingual Australians also comment that complimenting is a common way for making playful comments or joking. Such kind of humour or jokes are similar to phatic communication or Chinese han xuan. Joking or humour delivered in diverse Australian

ways, especially in Australian slang, can sometimes be difficult for ESL learners to pick up (see the follow data):

> I think they are not meant to be too full-on, it's just most of our compliments between our mates are jokingly, they do mean something, but the best way to do is to laugh it off, most of the comments people make are very playful in the way they compliment.(MO AU M)

> Similar sort of thing (to phatic communication). There are different ways of saying a compliment. In Australia, you will often either over exaggerate or under exaggerate something. If someone has done something really good, you will say "that's all right". If someone has done a decent job pouring a beer, you will say "that is art work!" Get a bit of variety there. It is very difficult for the second language learners to understand. (MO AU M)

To some degree, compliments are like greetings, but they are not the same as greetings. Forms of greetings can be followed with a genuine answer. Compared with greetings, complimenting can be more formal and requires the speaker to pick the right time to do it.

> To some degree, they are like greetings: "hi, how are you" I still expect to hear how they are. They say, "I am good". That could be a start of the conversation. It depends how well you know the person. "How are you going?" I will say, "pretty tired actually" rather than saying "I am good". (MO AU M)

> No I think it's a bit more formal (than greetings). Greeting you can say to anyone. If you tell a compliment too early to someone, they might be a bit shy. Go into their shell a bit. It might cause the conversation with some sort of, stagnate the conversation. If you are doing something important, you want to pick the right time. (MO AU M)

Monolingual Australian interviewees point out that the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary forces) of compliments may decrease due to the high frequency of occurrence in life. The value of the compliment can be reduced if paid too repetitively for no good reason. Giving compliments at proper frequencies, and at proper times, can be a way to preserve its value (see the following examples):

> I will say because people say them so often, the meaning has decreased as a compliment. Like people say "how are you?" they don't really expect to know how you are. I'd like to think that they still have retained the literal meanings. Otherwise, people will be talking dishonestly. (MO AU M)

> In Australia, in my family at least, if you complimented overtly and repetitively, it would be considered as insincere. If you repetitively compliment, with each compliment, you lose some of, diminish the value of the compliment. So if I compliment, say, my sister a lot, but if I were to do it six times in the one day, it will starts to lose its value. That kind of thing. Not to say that I don't compliment her at all, but 'cause I want to preserve the value of the compliment. Once a week or something. I don't consciously do that. But if my family to compliment each other aimlessly or repetitively, it will lose its value. (MO AU F)

Monolingual Australians have commented that complimenting may also be used for other purposes. Different ways of using compliments can be difficult for ESL learners to sense

(see first example below). For example, compliments are used to lighten the atmosphere of conversation (see second example below):

> I think it can cause misunderstanding within the Australian sort of wide culture. When you bring into the equation to a different context, for whatever reason having trouble communicating, whether it's language or whatever, I definitely can see some problems happening. In terms of insincerity, definitely using a compliment as a way to say something else. Offer a different purpose rather than just "oh my Gosh, you did a great job. You should be really happy with that", depending on who they are and who you are and your personal relationship with them. It can be kind of used in another way for another purpose rather than simply complimenting. (MO AU F)

> Yeah probably (just phatic, to make a certain atmosphere) as in I think sometimes, people give compliments just lighten the mood or, kind of make it a bit more easy-going. And then people just respond and accept the compliments; it's a nice thing to do. (MO AU F)

Phatic communication is often treated as a token of insincerity by monolingual Australians. Such insincerity may be caused by different factors, such as personal history between the speakers or relational issues. Personal relationships may play a crucial role in influencing complimenting behaviour, such as influencing how outspoken or energetic the utterance is (see example below).

> I think it depends on who is in this situation. So I think that (phatic communication) can absolutely occur, a kind of insincerity. If you have got a personal history with someone, that is kind of a bit tense. If that person compliments you, you might be less forthright or willing to say "Oh, thanks so much!" In terms of a sincere response, I think you can say, "thank you" but for me, they meant something else by it. I might be questioning the compliment. You know are they using the compliment for a specific reason? Are they manipulating me? You know, are they trying to build me up? That kind of thing. (MO AU F)

In summary, Chinese in China have expressed different views toward the phenomenon of phatic communication style in CRs which include: (1) complimenting behaviours are phatics, and should not be taken seriously; (2) phatic communication is a typical Chinese style serving multiple functions such as expressing indirectness, politeness, friendliness, and building rapport; (3) phatic communication is a globalised phenomenon, which could lead to misunderstandings when form and function of speech fail to match. Chinese in Australia are more capable of distinguishing the seriousness of the communication style by examining the tone of voice. They perceive that monolingual Australians use a phatic communication style that is similar to Chinese hanxuan, but to a lesser degree compared with Chinese speakers of English. Some Chinese speakers of English conclude that the key to distinguish whether complimenting behaviours are phatic or truthful is to feel the overall conversational ambience rather than the words. Similar to what was discovered earlier, signs of approximation to Australian culture among Chinese in Australia include increase in using APPRECIATION TOKENs, and willingness to

accept compliments. Monolingual Australians comment that phatic communication is a common conversation style found in Australia, and should not be taken fully by its literal meaning. Phatic complimenting sequences serve multiple functions such as conversation openers, conversation smoothers, atmosphere lighteners, and greetings to some degree. It was illustrated that the meaning of compliments may decrease due to high frequency of occurrence.

6.10 Reflections on approximation

Among the ten interview questions, reflections on change in language use caused by direct exposure to the target language environment are discussed in question #10 in three versions of interviews. For the two macro Chinese groups, the question is "Do you think living in the Australian English environment will make your responses become more similar to monolingual Australian English speakers' speech behavior?" For the monolingual Australian group, the question is "Do you think Chinese ESL learners tend to respond to compliments more similarly to monolingual Australian English speakers after living in Australia for a while (e.g. 1 to 10 years)?"

Chinese in China

To offer an overview on reflections of change in language use caused by living in the target language environment, Chinese in China have provided the following key categories of reflections: (1) Yes to the interview question, and believing "when you are in Rome, do what the Romans do"; (2) misassumptions of the impact of the target language environment, i.e. speedy improvement of L2; (3) awareness of Chinese ways of thinking, and speaking English by translating from Mandarin expressions or bi-directional impact between L1 and L2; (4) uncertainty and hesitation in terms of adaptation.

To begin with, when being asked the above question about approximation regarding compliment responses, Chinese in China seem to have an overwhelmingly positive prediction that they will certainly or possibly become more similar with monolingual Australians. A Chinese version of the saying of "when you are in Rome, do what the Romans do" (ru xiang sui su, 入乡随俗) has been frequently quoted.

> Oh, yeah, in China, it is normal. We always say "no, no, just so so". We do not often say "thank you". If I were in Australia, I would do as the westerners do. There is a proverb saying that if we are in Rome, do what the Romans do. (CH IN CH M)

> Yeah, the answer is positive, we all know that environment has a big effect on human behaviours. Living in an Australian English environment, talking to the English-speaking

> people every day, of course, our behaviours, our ways of talking and thinking will become more and more similar to Australian people. I can draw a conclusion that to me, English is getting more and more popular in the world. (CH IN CH M)

Some interviewees express high expectations and overgeneralisations of what could happen to their language behavior when they come to Australia (see first example below). They tend to believe the target language environment will automatically help them improve their L2 performance quickly (see second example).

> Yes, I think I will learn better and better. The environment is very important. If I live in Australia, I can talk with them from morning to the afternoon. They have lots of time. (CH IN CH M)

> Yes, I think so, environment for language learners is very important, if you stay in foreign countries for a period of time, you will know more about many things especially for your language, it can be improved quickly. Yes, I think I will say "thank you" to compliments after living in Australia for a while. We should know more about others' cultures and communicate with foreigners smoothly. (CH IN CH F)

Though Chinese in China have limited exposure to authentic Australian culture and English, they are generally aware of the fact that they are speaking English based on a Chinese way of thinking. Thus, the version of English they use is more of a translated version of English from Chinese. One interesting perspective is that Chinese students will keep their Chinese way of life and way of thinking while picking up an Australian way of life and thinking, as maintained by a female interviewee:

> The Chinese thinking style is different from Australians. I don't think they will change. They will keep the way of thinking in China. If a student lives in Australia, they will adopt the Australian thinking style. I think they will have two life styles and two ways of thinking.

Between the views of changing themselves quickly in a new environment, and not being able to change at all, is the softer stance of uncertainty. One more point worthy of mention concerning Chinese interviewees in China is the bidirectional influence happening between L1 and L2, along with thinking patterns, as explained by a Chinese male participant:

> Language can affect the way of our thinking. If we speak English, our thinking may be close to the native English speakers. But we are not native speakers, maybe we will feel a conflict in our mind. I think it can change. I major in English, before I study English, if somebody compliments me, I will say "na li na li (哪里, 哪里)" and be humble. Now I will directly answer them "thank you" or "xie xie (谢谢)". (It) can change your way of thinking and maybe your behaviour. (CH IN CH F)

Another example is that a female interviewee in China says that she found it hard to switch back to her local dialect after speaking Putonghua (Mandarin) in the city for a long time. This yields evidence for bidirectional influence between different languages or dialects.

One more prediction of what will happen when Chinese speakers of English live in Australia is that they will have difficulty in choosing conversational styles influenced by two cultures, as mentioned below:

> I think after living in Australia for a few years, we will be influenced by Australian culture and we will behave similarly as Australian people. Sometimes, it is a little difficult to choose between modesty and straightforwardness. (CH IN CH M)

His answer indicates that his view is based on the assumption that Chinese people are more modest and "foreigners" (here referring to Australians) are straightforward. Beside the above main views of predictions of change in language use toward the target culture regarding compliment responses, a few other interviewees have also emphasised the importance of knowing how to manage compliment responses, and expressed the importance of paying respect to people of higher age, or expressing personal feelings of compliments.

Chinese in Australia

To move from predictions made by Chinese in China, the Chinese in Australia group reveal the more concrete realities of what is happening with their language behaviours. Main categories of reflections of change in language use are: (1) becoming similar to monolingual Australians in their compliment response to varying degrees; (2) increasing their frequency of popular expressions such as "thank you", "sorry" and "no worries"; (3) bringing back home country change in language use, such as higher frequency of thanking, complimenting on appearance, and sense of humour;

The majority of Chinese interviewees in Australia maintain that they will assimilate to Australian ways of responding to compliment responses to different degrees. The female group seems to have stronger tendencies, compared with the male group, among whom five male interviewees said that it was hard to change, due to different reasons, whereas only two females say it depends on the length of residence in Australia or on individual preference.

The most luminous change in language use to the target culture in compliment responses is increasing the frequency of the use of "thank you" and "sorry". About one quarter of the total 40 Chinese interviewees (6 females and 3 males) in Australia confirmed that they use "thank you", "sorry" and "no worries" more frequently than before. For example, a Chinese male student notes:

> Yes, the individual will change a little bit from Chinese cultural style to Australian style. (I say) “thank you” , “sorry” and “excuse me” much more than China. (CH IN AU M)

> Yes, a little bit. I think before going to Australia, I didn’t say “thank you” often. Now I changed my habit. (CH IN AU M)

> If I touch some people in a hurry, I will say “sorry”. I will say “thank you” more often… I also say “thank you” now in Australia to bus drivers. (CH IN AU F)

> (In the past), I say “thank you” to a bus driver, I feel quite embarrassed and also very awkward. But now I am more comfortable and fluent with using “thank you”. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese male interviewees in Australia also notice they would pick up the local tone of voice after living in Australia for a while (see first example below). Chinese in Australia, especially females, tend to adopt emotional reactions such as excitement when hearing a compliment, or tend to accept compliments more than before (see the second example below).

> When we were a child, we learned American English in China. Like the tone “thank you” (going down), but in Australia people say “thank you” (going up). If you come here for two years, you would pick up the Australian tones. (CH IN AU F)

> Of course. I have changed a little bit. Just like someone who says “I like your shirt, I like your topic. It looks beautiful on you”. “Thank you” and will appear very happy to hear that. In China, I will say “shi ma? na you, hai hao ba” (is it? where? It’s OK). But to be polite and to engage myself in Australian culture, I will appear very happy and say “thank you, thank you”, appear really happy and excited to hear that. This is my change. (CH IN AU F)

Chinese female interviewees in Australia mention that they greet strangers in Australia after living in Australia for a while, which speakers normally would not do in China (see first example below). Another change is embracing Australian values, such as freedom of expression of your own feelings and honesty (see second example below).

> But I can feel a little change, actually when I met someone, I do not know how to greet people when I first came here. Now I say “how are you?” the first time. Actually another example, since I am communicating with Australian people, you know, more openly and freely. But before, there were some barriers and obstacles between Chinese and Australians...now I am more adapting to the environment around us. I have more Australian native friends now. It becomes easier for me to express myself. If I am on my way to Uni(versity) or home, I will say “hi”. A few days ago, a postman (was) on his way to deliver letters, I chatted with him for 5 or10 minutes. Things gradually changed on ourselves. Sometimes we couldn’t feel it. In China, I don’t talk with strangers. So I think culture is very flexible. It’s not something that is cannot be changed. Maybe after three or four more years, I will be changed more. (CH IN AU F)

> I think Chinese people compliment people in a different way and be more implicit. In China, sometimes people compliment others just to show politeness. Might be different from what they think in their heart. In Australia, people are more direct. If they think it is good, they will say so. It depends on the relationship as well. (CH IN AU F)

Some of them tend to use “xie xie” (谢谢“thank you” in Mandarin) more often when they go back to China. This kind of bidirectional influence from L2 to L1 is very obvious here. For example, one male student shares that he not only becomes more appreciative in Australia, but also expresses his thanks more frequently in China:

> I think that’s for sure. When I go back to China in the last three years, when people help me, I always say “thank you”. If I haven’t lived in Sydney for three years, I would respond in the way like other Chinese. One more thing, here, in Australia, I have a habit to appreciate more. When people help me, I don’t take it for granted. Here, you can hear people say “thank you” rather than nothing. You get used to people saying “thank you” to you in a certain way.

Another example of how Australian English speech conventions have influenced Chinese students’ speech behaviours is that it can increase a person’s frequency of giving compliments, as experienced by the following interviewee:

> Now If I come back to China, I will continue to do some things I do in Australia. Like walking to the left side of the elevator. After I came to Australia, I was direct, I didn’t comment on people much. Now when I go back to China, I will comment more on people’s appearance. In the past, I normally didn’t say it just had some thoughts in my mind. But now I will say “you look good today’ sincerely. (CH IN AU F)

One female interviewee struggles with picking up cross-cultural jokes, as a joke might be extremely funny in Australian culture, but may lose its taste to for some Chinese, who do not share the same sense of humour.

The reality of not being able to improve their English that quickly, but instead, having their Chinese level slowly drop down, seems to have disappointed some Chinese speakers of English in Australia, as shown in the following examples:

> In Australia, I couldn’t talk the formal Chinese with each other. I think my Chinese level has dropped down. I don’t have many times to talk to locals, my English has not improved that much. I spoke English mostly in the language class when I first came to Australia, the first two months, because I can communicate with other international students in English naturally. But after I started the formal class, I had little chance to continue speaking English. (CH IN AU M)

> Sometimes, it is hard to remember Chinese characters. It happens. Because of the vocabulary, I almost use the same expression just “Thank you. Thank you very much.” I also say “xie xie” now more freely. (CH IN AU F)

What has been reported about Chinese in Australia so far is experience-based. Since some Chinese students fail to mix with the local Australian monolingual speakers of English, they reveal that they are not sure about what approximation has occurred. However, more than one interviewee acknowledges that it depends on the length of stay in Australia, and the ethnicity of the person.

Interestingly, in Australia, some male participants mention that they are learning a kind of international English, rather than British, American or Australian English, because they have been influenced by different cultures, such as Korean or Japanese. Another male student said that, due to globalisation, speakers across the globe share the same frame for conversation, and thus there is not much difference between Chinese speakers of English and Australian monolingual English speakers.

Monolingual Australians

For reflections from monolingual Australians on the same topic, there are three main cateogories of opinions: (1) Chinese ESL learners will surely become similar to monolingual Australians in their overall speech behaviour; (2) not necessarily, may depend on other factors such as length of stay or personal motivation; (3) uncertain, due to limited contact with them. For the first category of opinions, some monolingual Australians support the idea that Chinese speakers of English will definitely pick up the local speech norms if they live in Australia for a while, based on their personal experience. For example, one male interviewee says:

> Yeah, if you go to any culture, any sort of, you end up saying, like I went to Fiji recently, you end up wanting to say "Bula" to everyone when you come back because I suppose, like "hello" "how are you doing?" They say that to everything, you sort of come back and feel like that. And I do think our response like that, like a guy come back from England, he started saying "cheers" to me. I thought that was a better, nicer and relaxed way of saying "cheers" rather say "thank you", cause they say that all the time over there. Being around him every day, it leads to me saying it all the time. So I do reckon that they do have an influence on their responses. (MO AU M)

What is interesting is that the above interviewee mentioned monolingual Australians picking up different languages by travelling, and the expression "cheers" is not regarded as Australian. Chinese ESL learners might not be aware of such kind of differentiations.

For the second type of opinions, monolingual Australian speakers of English, regardless of their gender, maintain that the amount of change in language use in compliment responses by Chinese speakers of English will depend on one, or more than one, of the following factors: intensity of interaction, length of stay in Australia, level of proficiency in English, personality, level of comfort, conversational context, and level of adaptation, age, personal wish and commitment (see examples below):

> Not necessarily. Well, the Chinese students I try to hang out with, they're trying very hard to improve their English. Probably they will start talking, saying "heaps," they'll say "really" these things that Australians say or words that Australians use all the time. But I think a lot of Chinese students; their English doesn't get any better because they just keep speaking Chinese at home and with their friends, and they never speak English very

> much. … I have seen some people changed a lot. Their English gets really good. But I have seen people, they are like, they never get any better. 'Cause they just always speak Chinese. It depends whether they practice or not. I think some people are really good at adapting to another culture, anyway. Some people just pick up on it, some people they can speak very good English but they can't understand sarcasm…, Australian people say something, the meaning is different. So it's hard for people to understand. (MO AU F)

> I think depends on how many Australians the Chinese person seeks out. For example, if they live in Australia at a day-to-day basis and work with Australians, they will assimilate lots of habits like saying "thank you" to respond to compliment. In cases I can think of in my own life, I think I have found that Chinese speakers for instance have to work in a majority Anglo-Australian context. They have fairly quickly assimilated to the kind of language Australians would use. When you are ESL students in a university, they might necessarily seek out to Australians at a day-to-day basis, they may only use English with lecturers or tutors. I think the assimilation is quite high if they use idiosyncratic English and work with colleagues every day. In general, there will be some assimilation. Yeah, inevitably, assimilation on everyone highly depends on the person. (MO AU M)

There are also Australian interviewees who are uncertain about the subject matter as they do not have many interactions with Chinese speakers of English, or have not witnessed the longitudinal change of their language behaviours, as shown by the example below:

> I don't know. I think there is always a potential to. But I think how willingly and individually to involve themselves. You can for better and for worse, there are people who like to hang on the patterns of speech of who they are and that kind of stuff which is fine, and then there are other people who are more willing to engage more fully, I suppose, in the new kind of cultural context. So I think there is definitely the potential for Chinese speakers who have come to Australia to adopt Australian kind of speech. But I wouldn't necessarily say that it's something that all Chinese speakers especially that I don't know that many of them. (MO AU F)

In summary, there are similar opinions discoverable among participants from all groups, but there are also opinions that are distinctive in groups of particular geographical location. Compared with the Chinese in China group, Chinese in Australia have shared hands-on experiences in Australia. Chinese in China interviewees have expressed varying views regarding approximation toward the target culture in their compliment responses. It is evident that some of the interviewees in China express high expectations, such as that they will quickly adapt to the target norms, and behave like monolingual Australians, which have been proved untrue by some Chinese speakers of English residing in Australia, who comment on their limited chances to interact with monolingual Australians. Pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 is most likely to occur in the Chinese in China group, as they acknowledge their reliance on constant translation from Chinese to English in their compliment responses.

Signs of change in language use revealed by the Chinese in Australia group include increasing the frequency of the use of "thank you" and "sorry", and lightening their tone of

voice (e.g. by increasing pitch), adopting the target social-cultural norms in giving and accepting compliments more frequently, and openly, converging to the target culture psychologically in valuing straightforwardness and truth. Bidirectional pragmatic transfer occurred among the Chinese in Australia groups (e.g. giving and accepting compliments more frequently, and using APPRECIATION TOKEN in Mandarin more frequently). Reflections from monolingual Australians include varying views toward how Chinese speakers of English approximates to Australian culture in their compliment responses, as demonstrated by the following variables mentioned by monolingual Australian interviewees: intensity of interaction, length of stay, level of proficiency in L2, personality, level of comfort, conversational context, level of adaptation, age, personal wish, and commitment.

6.11 Summary

> *It is not difficult to analyse and report results in ways that distort the underlying patterns. It is easy to use selectively 'juicy' quotes from in-depth interviews to support almost any proposition you might want to suggest. (De Vaus, 2013, p. 208)*

As suggested by De Vaus above, it is highly possible to be "selective" in presenting data analysis that reflects the researcher's agenda. In this chapter, I have carried out preliminary interview data analysis trying to present the "original" data, and to let the data "speak for themselves". The less juicy quotes, though not all presented, are represented by the summarising comments made in analysis of each of the interview themes.

The interview data analysis suggests that Chinese in China (1) are most restrained by their insufficient linguistic repertoire, and fears of making mistakes and not being able to understand foreign cultures; (2) have idealistic, ambiguous and positive expectations of study-abroad experience in Australia; (3) have most obvious overgeneralisation and misassumption toward the target culture in assuming the monolingual Australians always use "thank you" to respond to compliments; (4) tend to claim that modesty is a typical Chinese cultural value, emphasise the importance of politeness and appropriateness in all speech behaviours, and consider modesty less when speaking English; (5) depend on conventional CRs learned from textbooks, such as "you're welcome"; (6) show cross-gender variations in CRs regarding the gender of the complimenter (females tend to make more comments and return to compliments to females rather than males; males tend to be manly and casual to men but polite, respectful and gentle to women); (7) tend to see gestures, eye contact and facial expressions as indirect CRs, and achieve indirectness by

carrying out actions (e.g. writing a letter instead of using verbal responses); (8) express contradictory views regarding the two conventional responses “no, no, no” and “thank you”, and used double standards strategies to treat Chinese and non-Chinese (foreigners to them) differently; (9) have different opinions regarding phatic communication style, either claiming it is a Chinese style or a globalised phenomenon; (10) maintain that they will try to be sincere in CRs, and use double standards to cope with cultural differences.

Signs of approximation to the target culture found among Chinese in Australia include (1) increasing the frequency of the use of “Thank you” and “Sorry”; (2) lightening the tone of voice in the utilisation of APPRECIATION TOKENs; (3) adopting the target sociocultural norm in giving compliments and accepting compliments more frequently and openly; (4) converging to the target culture psychologically in valuing straightforwardness, honesty, and truth; (5) expressing overt appreciation and overt facial expressions and emotions in appearance-related complimenting behaviours; (6) decreasing level of anxiety in not understanding the target culture; (7) expanding the variety of responses; (8) enhancing the capability of making additional comments relevant to the compliments; (9) being less concerned about modesty, and becoming less phatic with speakers of English from non-Chinese ethnic backgrounds; (10) accommodating conventional and formulaic expressions such as “no worries” in the target culture; (11) considering a broader range of variables such as compliment topic, age, position, and situation; (12) increasing pragmatic awareness regarding variations of CR strategies in the target culture, such as “ta” and “thanks” in the APPRECIATION TOKEN; (13) improved capability to sense the truth value attached to CRs and culturally nuanced meanings behind linguistic terms.

Monolingual Australians (1) perceive approximation processes among Chinese speakers of English in Australia, depending on a broad range of variables such as intensity of interaction with monolingual Australians, length of stay, level of proficiency in L2, personality, conversational context, level of adaptation, age, personal wish and commitment; (2) perceive that Chinese speakers of English in Australia use nonverbal responses, down play or affirmative answers, go to extremes, and use brief answers in their CRs; (3) express implicit modesty operating behind their CRs, by using a combination of APPRECIATION TOKENs plus additional deprecating or qualifying statements; (4) do not overtly emphasise modesty, but stress “not appearing arrogant” in their CRs, for both males and females; (5) use both conventional CRs, such as “no worries”, and varied CRs, according to situational context; (6) show cross-gender variations regarding the gender of the complimenter (same as Chinese in China); (7) maintain that indirectness can be

realised by gestures such as waving away, yet the line between directness and indirectness is ambiguous; (8) express contradictory view towards functional and literal meaning of "thank you" and "no, no, no", indicating that using "no, no, no" improperly in Australia may lead to misunderstandings, and that a suggestive move would be to sense the fine line between appearing confronting and appearing arrogant; (9) note that complimenting behaviours can be phatic in Australia, and serve multiple functions, such as conversation opener and conversation smoother, and that the truth value of complimenting may decrease if given too repetitively; (10) may try to be sincere, or to adjust the level of sincerity according to context, developing a personal conversation style regarding sincerity management in CRs; and discerning that the level of sincerity in CRs may change as part of personal development (e.g. enhancement of self-esteem).

The overall interview data analysis suggests that no generalised rule can be drawn to represent all the participants' accounts for their linguistic choices in responding to compliments. What is confirmed is that Chinese ESL learners absorb elements of language use from the target culture selectively, and meanwhile make sense of their linguistic behaviour based on their overall intercultural knowledge and experiences. The contradictory findings or different opinions in response to different interview questions demonstrate that the ESL learners' language skills, and reflections on their language behaviour, vary from person to person. Nevertheless, what is similar is that there is a certain degree of influence by living in the target language culture on their overall awareness of mastering compliment responses. In the following Chapter 7, I will present analysis of the third source of data – video-recorded role play data.

CHAPTER 7: ROLE PLAY DATA ANALYSIS

As introduced in section 4.4.4, role-play data were based on the same scenarios designed in the discourse completion task. The 60 participants from the Chinese in China group, Chinese in Australia group and monolingual Australian group produced a total of 2018 compliment responses (CRs) (see Table 22). The total length of video recording from all groups of participants is about 5 hours (see section 4.6). The Chinese in China female group produced the highest number of compliment responses (n = 473), followed by Chinese males in China (n = 416). Chinese in Australia females produced more than Chinese males in Australia (n = 301), but less than the two groups in China. Monolingual Australians produced the least amount of compliment responses, with females (n=249) slightly above males (n=246).

The difference in the number of compliment responses produced by different groups suggests that with the same scenarios in role play, Chinese in China produced longer responses than other groups. There are a few possible reasons to account for such differences. The first reason is that Chinese in China are very serious about playing a role in the role play, because of their lack of confidence in speaking a second language; they tried to produce relatively more complete sentences and relatively more formal responses. Though the Chinese in China participants have never been abroad, they are majoring in English, and their English proficiency can be higher than some Chinese in Australia, which may also influence their way of responding to compliments. Chinese participants in Australia have become briefer than Chinese in China in their responses. One reason to explain their brief response is that they have approximated toward their Australian counterparts, who were the briefest in their responses. Meanwhile, Chinese in Australia also have limitations in their English proficiency. Monolingual Australians' brief responses show that they are very succinct and informal in their speech behaviour. For example, they may opt for responses that are abbreviations (detailed in section 7.1).

Table 22 also shows the number of compliment responses generated by all groups by different topics. Overall, the topic "performance" generated the highest number of compliment responses (n=537), followed by the topic "appearance" (n=525), then the topic of "possession" (n = 491) and "personality" (n = 465) (more detailed analysis will be provided in section 7.3). In the following sections, there will be a table and a figure reflecting the CR frequencies in the table for comparison purposes.

Table 22 The number of compliment responses in different groups in video-recorded role play

Total CRs Across Groups (n=2018)							
	CH IN CH M	**CH IN CH F**	**CH IN AU M**	**CH IN AU F**	**MO AU M**	**MO AU F**	Total
Appearance	109	125	80	91	60	60	525
Performance	119	128	79	83	64	64	537
Possession	92	109	74	91	66	59	491
Personality	96	111	68	68	56	66	465
Total	416	473	301	333	246	249	2018

In this chapter, I will first provide an overall analysis of change in language use – the approximation tendency of Chinese ESL learners in Australia in the data, by comparing different groups of participants (section 7.1). Then I will explore change in language use in Chinese ESL learners under the condition of male or female complimenters (section 7.2). After that, I will investigate CR distribution according to the four different compliment topics (section 7.3). In section 7.4, I will provide some comments about the use of body language in compliment responses.

7.1 Overall tendency of compliment response strategies across groups

Table 23 and Figure 9 have shown three groups of participants without considering gender differences of the participants. Overall, it has shown that there are frequencies of strategies used by Chinese in Australia that have fallen in between Chinese in China and monolingual strategies. In particular, Chinese in Australia have used less COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, less RETURN, DOWNGRADE and OFFER strategies compared with Chinese in China but more than monolingual Australians. A possible explanation is that Chinese in Australia have somewhat become more similar to monolingual Australians in their choice of CR strategies. However, there is also a possibility that Chinese in Australia happen to fall in between Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia because of other reasons, such as their overall lengths of responses. I will delve into detailed analysis in section 7.2.

Table 23 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH	CH IN AU	MO AU	TOTAL CRs
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	100	105	100	305
	2. Comment Acceptance	322	165	142	629
	3. Upgrade	7	5	7	19
	4. Return	46	23	7	76
	5. Transfer	10	2	7	19
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	13	14	9	36
	7. Qualification	29	27	23	79
	8. Downgrade	33	7	5	45
	9. Uncertainty	41	30	16	87
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	1	1
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	5	5	0	10
	12. Suggestion	24	18	5	47
	13. Offer	46	21	2	69
	14. Justification	90	91	65	246
	15. Interjection	123	121	106	350
TOTAL CRs		889	634	495	2018

Figure 9 The distribution of compliment response strategies in three groups

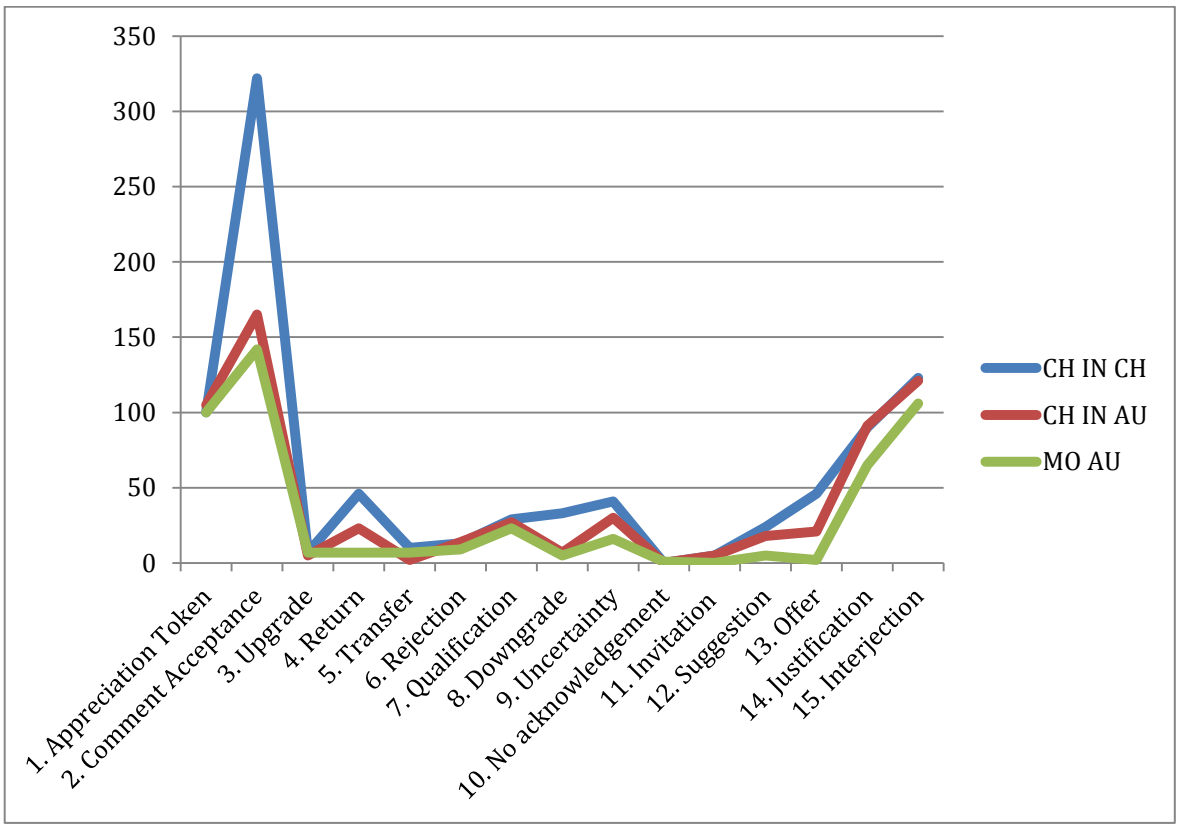
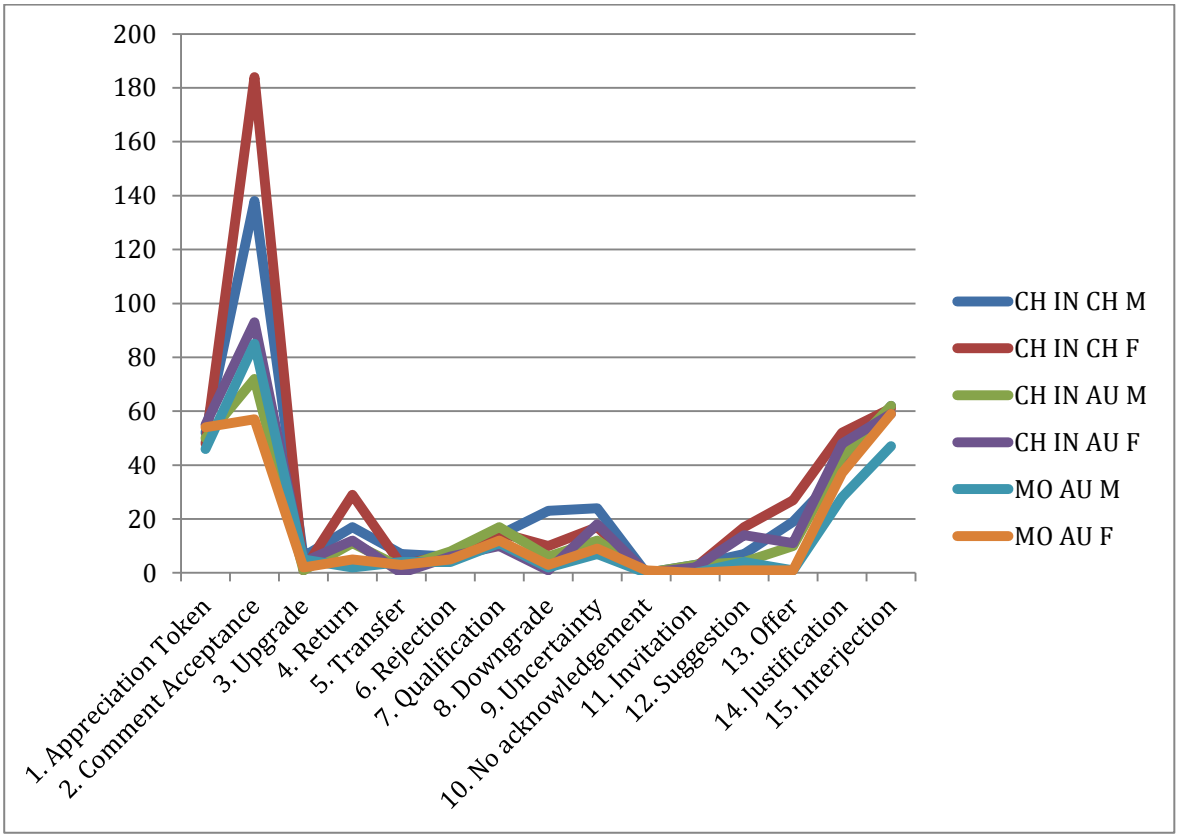


Table 24 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	52	48	50	55	46	54
	2. Comment Acceptance	138	184	72	93	85	57
	3. Upgrade	6	1	1	4	5	2
	4. Return	17	29	11	12	2	5
	5. Transfer	7	3	2	0	4	3
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	6	7	8	6	4	5
	7. Qualification	14	15	17	10	11	12
	8. Downgrade	23	10	6	1	2	3
	9. Uncertainty	24	17	12	18	7	9
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	3	2	3	2	0	0
	12. Suggestion	7	17	4	14	4	1
	13. Offer	19	27	10	11	1	1
	14. Justification	38	52	43	48	28	37
	15. Interjection	62	61	62	59	47	59

Figure 10 The distribution of compliment response strategies in six groups



Among the six groups of participants, there are visible similarities as well as differences in their compliment responses in English (see Table 24 and Figure 10). I now illustrate the distribution of compliment responses in each compliment response strategy. First of all, I will analyse ACCEPTANCE compliment response strategies, which are micro strategies 1 to 5 (section 7.1.1). Then I will report NON-ACCEPATNCE strategies, which are micro strategies 6 to 10 (section 7.1.2). Following that, I will report on distributions of strategies 11 to 15, which belong to OTHER INTERPRETATIONS (section 7.1.3).

7.1.1 ACCEPTANCE strategies

ACCEPTANCE strategies in this study include five subordinate CR strategies, namely APPRECIATION TOKEN, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, UPGRADE, RETURN and TRANSFER (see section 3.1.4). I now analyse compliment response strategies across groups in each strategy one by one.

Strategy 1: APPRECIATION TOKEN

For the first strategy APPRECIATION TOKEN, six groups have demonstrated great similarity in frequency. What is interesting is the formality of APPRECIATION TOKENS. The following table suggests a summary of the frequency of the relative informal APPRECIATION TOKEN “thanks” and formal APPRECIAITON TOLKEN “thank you”. Chinese in China female group has used the least number of “thanks”. The informal “thanks” also occurred at a very low frequency in the Chinese in China male group. This shows that Chinese in China participants tend to use formal “thank you” more than “thanks”. Chinese in Australia male and female groups have increased their use of “thanks” and decreased their use of “thank you”, a very clear tendency to approximate to monolingual Australian male and female groups who used the same number of the informal APPRECIATION TOKENS (see Table 25). Overall, the use of APPRECIATION TOKENS across groups has shown definite approximation toward the target environment.

Table 25 The distribution of informal and formal appreciation tokens

GROUP NAME	APPRECIATION TOKEN "Thanks"	APPRECIATION TOKEN "Thank you"
CH IN CH M	6	50
CH IN CH F	2	49
CH IN AU M	14	40
CH IN AU F	15	36
MO AU M	22	27
MO AU F	22	36

Strategy 2: COMMENT ACCEPTANCE

The second strategy, COMMENT ACCPETANCE, is one of the most commonly used strategies across the six groups. Because of its relatively high occurrence, the use of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies is directly related to the overall length of response across groups. Chinese in China females have used the highest number of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies (see Table 24 and Figure 10). For example, a Chinese in China female responds to situation 3 as follows:

> Ch in Ch F4S3: Really (showing surprised facial expression)? It's the first time I have this kind of hairstyle. I am glad you like it. This is the first time I show this new hairstyle to others. I am very shy. And I think you give me confidence. And I will be more confident if you like it. (9+2+2+2+2+2+2)

Responses at such length are found quite commonly in the Chinese in China female group. Chinese in China males may also provide long responses. For example, a Chinese in China male participant responds to situation 11 as follows:

> Ch in Ch M8S11: Oh, you're talking I'm old (joking, laughing)? Maybe because through four years later I think I have grown a lot. During college, I learned some knowledge. And I think, with so much know, I will use it properly. In society, I really want to use it to earn some money, really want to be a big boss ad I know you will be a big boss if you work hard, if you have the ability. (15+9+2+2+2+2+2+2+2)

Though there are long responses among the Chinese in China male group, the frequency of responses at great length is lower than the Chinese in China female group.

Chinese in Australia participants produced a similar amount of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies to their monolingual Australian counterparts. This can be a sign of approximation toward the monolingual Australians, who tend to be briefer and less formal in their compliment responses. There are, however, other factors such as limitations in Chinese ESL learners' linguistic repertoire, or personal enthusiasm in the given role-play topic, that could influence their productivity of compliment responses. Chinese females in China produced more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies than their male counterparts in China. This tendency applies to the Chinese in Australia female and male groups. What makes monolingual Australians stand out is that Australian males have produced more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies than their female counterparts. An example of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategy from each group is provided as follows:

> CH IN AU M1S4: I think so, I think a lot of thoughts on it, and I actually bought it. It's really expensive. It's worth it. (2+2+2+2)

CH IN AU M3S3: Yeah, thank you. You know what? I just got a haircut yesterday, I talked to the hairdresser, and I suggest him to give me a haircut for a wedding. He was a good hairdresser as well. (15+1+15+2+2+2+2)

CH IN AU F1S3: Yeah, thank you (two hands put on jaw, a bit shy). Hairstyle is very important for a person. It's just like if you change it. It's going to change your mood. You can get your haircut, and you know all the miserable stuff are going to go away. (15+1+2+2+2+12+15+2)

MO AU M7S9: I know. I was a bit surprised too. I'm a bit above the average. So I am pretty happy too (nodding slightly). (2+2+2+2)

MO AU F4S1: Oh, thanks. It'll be all right next time. Next time when we do an exam, you will do better. I'm sure. (15+1+2+2+2)

Strategy 3: UPGRADE

UPGRADE has very low frequency of occurrence across all groups. Due to its small number of occurrence, no general comments can be made in terms of approximation toward the target language environment.

CH IN CH M3S1: Oh, thank you. I think I have made great efforts to achieve this. So I am proud of it (smiling). (15+1+7+3)

CH IN CH F9S3: Really? (hands on hair briefly, laughing happily), I'm very glad to hear that. And you know the summer I coming. I want to change a new style. I will be more attractive. Do you think so? (hand gestures). (9+2+14+14+3+9)

CH IN AU M1S9: Yeah, I knew that. Everybody said that to me since I was two (Being humorous, nodding). (2+3)

CH IN AU F1S2: yeah, I'm a nice person. (15+3)

MO AU M7S5: Yeah, I really pride myself with cooking (nodding). (15+3)

MO AU F1S1: I am very proud of myself. (3)

Strategy 4: RETURN

For Strategy 4, RETURN, the Chinese in China female group have used the largest number of all groups. Chinese in China male and female participants used similar amounts of return strategies. Monolingual Australian males used the least number of RETURNs compared with other groups. An example from each of the gender groups using RETURN strategy is provided as follows:

CH IN CH M4S7: Really? (Two hands stretching out, surprised), I think you are also looking very good. (9+4)

CH IN CH F2S1: Thank you, and I think every achievement must require hard working, and I think you also did a good job. (1+7+4)

CH IN AU M1S7: Oh, thanks (looks himself up and down). You as well. Dramatically amazing. (15+1+4+4)

> CH IN AU F5S7: Wow, really (two hands touching herself from up to legs, laughing)? Thank you. You like my dress? I like your dress too. (15+9+1+9+4)
>
> MO AU M8S7: Thank you (look up and down), you didn't look bad yourself. (1+4)
>
> MO AU F5S11: Oh, so do you. Thanks. (15+4)

Strategy 5: TRANSFER

TRANSFER is the final ACCEPTANCE strategy in the categorisation of compliment responses. TRANSFER is a rarely used strategy, and no such strategy is used by Chinese in Australia females. An example of the use of TRANSFER strategy from each gender group except Chinese in Australia female group is provided as follows:

> CH IN CH M8S1: Thank you. Thank you. First I want to thank my mother, because she always encourages me to finish my homework, and something about study. And here I want to say thanks to my teachers. Because they really taught me a lot (with hand gestures). (1+1+5+5)

This is a rather long and formal response that reflects a speech norm in a Chinese conversational context. This participant has transferred the credit to both his mother and teachers who have taught him.

> CH IN CH F10S11: Thank you. I'm glad to hear that. I'm very happy to hear that. I think that all of us becomes mature and elegant. I think it is our college that makes us become mature. Congratulations to us (smiling & laughing). (1+2+2+2+5+4)

This female from China transferred the credit to the college she studies at for accounting her "leader-like" appearance at the graduation ceremony (see Appendix C).

> CH IN AU M5S5: Yeah, I learned from my mom. (15+5)
>
> MO AU M3S4: Thanks. It's not the bike. It's the rider (Nodding slightly, laughing slightly). (1+6+5)
>
> MO AU F7S3: Oh, thanks. My hairdresser is pretty good (nodding head). She is pretty skilled (laughing). (15+1+5+5)

The three macro strategies ACCEPTANCE, NON-ACCEPTANCE and OTHER INTERPRETATIONS are general guidelines for categorising compliment responses. It depends on situational variables to determine how accepting the responses from different groups are. The video data analysis only provides insights to compliment responses at mainly a formal level.

Body language and other features of language (tone of voice) are influenced by the gender of the complimenters. Such findings apply to all groups. No general conclusion can be drawn in terms of how Chinese ESL learners approximate toward the target language environment in their use of body language. However, signs of approximation happen

among individual participants, such as the pitch of voice becoming higher in the video data. Also, the expressions became less formal.

Having commented on the occurrences of the five micro CR strategies signifying the macro strategy ACCEPTANCE, I now turn to report the occurrences of CR strategies categorised in the macro NON-ACCEPTANCE strategy.

7.1.2 NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies

NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies in the present study include five subordinate strategies namely REJECTION, QUALIFICATION, DOWNGRADE, UNCERTAINTY, NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (see section 3.1.4). Now I provide detailed analysis of each strategy across groups.

Strategy 6: REJECTION

The first NON-ACCEPTANCE micro strategy, REJECTION, is also a relatively less frequently used strategy. REJECTION belongs to one of the least popularly adopted CR strategies across groups. Because of the similar number of occurrences across groups, no obvious approximation to the target language environment is concluded. Some examples from each of the gender groups are analysed as follows:

> CH IN CH M3S9: Oh, thank you. I'm not so intelligent. I just do great efforts (smiling). (15+1+6+8)
>
> CH IN CH M4S2: You know we are friends. Don't say some things like this any more (waving his hands). Come on. (14+6+15)

In this response, the REJECTION is more than a friendly or phatic style rejection. Generally speaking, in China, people say "thank you" less often than in Australia, and other things such as "no worries" or "sorry". Because the compliment in scenario 2, which has generated this response – "Thank you so much. That is very kind of you!" – includes a "thank you". The expression "Don't say some things like this any more" is a rather direct REJECTION to the compliment, which could be a direct pragmatic transfer from Mandarin to English. Another example from the same participant also shows such indication:

> CH IN CH M8S6: No thanks. I always have some free time. I want to make some good friends. So I will do something for you (eyes looked away for a while). (6+2+2+2)

"No thanks" is a direct translation from the Mandarin expression "bu yong xie" （不用谢） or "bu xie"（不谢） (no need to say "thanks" or "no thanks"). Such expressions show very strong effect of L1 on L2 use in China.

For Chinese females in China also used REJECTION strategies that reflect transfer from L1 (see examples below):

> CH IN CH F8S6: Oh no (shaking head briefly). You're so welcome. It's my honour to help you. (15+6+14+2)
>
> CH IN CH F10S2: No, thanks. I think it's a very easy thing for me to do. I'm very glad to help you. If you have something else, I can help you too (hand gestures and smile). (6+1+7+2+13)

There are also general REJECTIONS used by Chinese females in China that does not show clear transfer from L1 (see example below):

> CH IN CH F7S3: Oh, really? I think my haircut is so bad and I'm not fit on it (hands touches hair briefly, smiling). (15+9+6)

When Chinese ESL learners come to Australia, the degree of the effect from L1 on L2 seems to have decreased. Their REJECTIONS seem to have become less abrupt. The following examples show that REJECTIONS can be expressed in a more flexible way other than "no, thanks":

> CH IN AU M4S3: I think it's too long. Time to cut. (6+6)
>
> CH IN AU M5S12: Because you're good at making videos, not because of my camera. (hand gestures). (4+6)
>
> CH IN AU M9S9: Wow, I just think that my writing is not very good. This is awesome. Thank you. (15+6+2+1)

Similar phenomenon has appeared in the Chinese in Australia female group:

> CH IN AU F6S9: (As if not appropriate compliments to her) Thank you. But I don't think I'm good at it. But thanks anyway, I really appreciated what you said for me. (1+6+1+1)
>
> CH IN AU F9S8: Not really, because my friends told me that the iPad is really good for youth. That's the reason I bought it. Not really, I'm not technique, you know. (6+14+14+6+6+15)

This kind of phenomenon, however, does not mean all of the Chinese ESL learners who have come to Australia no longer use more direct strategies. The following REJECTION example is a seemingly very direct REJECTION:

> CH IN AU F6S12: No, it's fine. We are friends (shaking heads slightly). (6+2+2)

Monolingual Australian males have used a few very direct REJECTIONs, but the degree of REJECTION is adjusted with the help of using soft and gentle tone. Such fluctuation in managing tone of voice is something that Chinese ESL learners do not seem to manage as well (see the following examples):

MO AU M1S8: No---, I am not (slow and soft tone, shows reluctance to accept the compliment). (6)

MO AU M2S4: No (soft gentle rejection), it's just, just natural. Excellent (smiling). (6+7+2)

Monolingual Australian females used REJECTIONs that are different from Chinese groups (see following examples):

MO AU F4S5: No, I learned by myself, but I can let you know the secret ingredients. (6+2+13)

MO AU F5S5: Thanks. I try really hard. I'm not really good at cooking. (laughing). (1+7+6)

Strategy 7: QUALIFICATION

QUALIFICATION is also a rarely used strategy. Examples of QUALIFICATION are provided as follows:

CH IN CH M1S11: A great leader? Oh, thanks. I never thought about it. A normal person is quite enough (smiling, laughing quietly). (9+15+1+7)

CH IN CH M3S1: Oh, thank you. I think I have made great efforts to achieve this. So I am proud of it (smiling). (15+1+7+3)

CH IN CH M5S7: Thank you. I prepared for this for a long time (hand gestures). (1+7)

CH IN CH F5S12: It's very easy for me to lend this camera. And let me see some photos you took. It must be fantastic. (7+12+2)

CH IN CH F8S1: Thank you. I just kind of lucky. I think we still can work hard in university. And you are so diligent. I think you can be very successful in the future. (1+7+12+4+4)

CH IN CH F8S9: You speak too highly of me. I think your essay is more better than me. And I love your essay. (7+4+4)

CH IN CH F9S9: Thank you for the compliment. I just enjoy writing something at random. I think, I'm very glad if somebody can enjoy it. (1+7+15+2)

Acknowledgement of working hard itself seems to be a way to show modesty in Australia, qualifying the compliment by implying that the complimentee is not intelligent or smart. This is a more commonly used strategy among Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians than Chinese in China (see the following examples):

CH IN AU M3S9: OK. Thank you. Yeah, I think I'm not that smart. I will try to make efforts to make me smart. I always do. (15+1+15+8+7+2)

CH IN AU M8S9: Oh, no, I'm just working hard (shaking head slightly). (15+6+7)

CH IN AUF2S7: Yes, I just try to be professional. And you look quite nice too. (15+7+4)

MO AU M4S8: Yeah, I am – I don't know. I'm pretty nerdy. I guess, you know, like my iPad. (2+9+7+15+15+2)

MO AU F3S1: Thank you. I did work hard (smiling). (1+7)

MO AU F6S9: I tried really hard, how did you go? (7+9)

Acknowledgement of hard work occasionally happens among Chinese in China. Depending on how it is said, there is a great possibility that this can be considered proud.

Strategy 8: DOWNGRADE

DOWNGRADE is found mostly used by Chinese males in China, followed by Chinese females in Australia, Chinese in Australia have shown approximation toward monolingual Australians in reducing the number of such strategies (see the following examples):

CH IN CH M6S10: Oh, nothing, nothing, I'm familiar with there. So nothing. (15+8+8+2+8)

In this response, "nothing, nothing" is a direct translation from "mei shen me" (没什么) in L1 to L2. Similar translation happened in the Chinese in China female group (see example below):

CH IN CH F1S6: I'm very happy that I could help you. It's nothing serious. (2+8)

For Chinese in Australia, evidence is found to show improved coherence in expressions for DOWNGRADE:

CH IN AU M4S5: Because I often cook (by) myself in my leisure time every week. It's very normal. I think. (14+8+15)

CH IN AU F1S9: The essay just takes me ages to do it. I'm not sure about others. I'm not generally good at it. (7+9+8)

In the above two examples, "It's very normal" and "I'm not generally good at it" expressions that demand higher pragmatic competence than those from Chinese in China such as "nothing, nothing". Among the monolingual Australians, different ways of expressing DOWNGRADE is found. In the following two examples, the word "that" is used as an adverb – in a way that Chinese ESL learners are not seen to be able to do – although a corresponding Mandarin expression "na me" (那么) does exist in Mandarin:

MO AU M4S1: Thanks. But I didn't really study that much. (smiling, looks as if he is lucky). (1+8)

MO AU F1S5: Well, I (missing data), I am not really that good chef. (shaking head slightly, to show disagreement). (15+8)

Strategy 9: UNCERTAINTY

UNCERTAINTY strategies occurred at the highest frequency with Chinese in China males, followed by Chinese females in Australia, Chinese females in China and Chinese males in Australia. Monolingual Australian groups used the least amount of such strategies (see following examples from each groups):

> CH IN CH M1S7: Thank you. Thank you (a little embarrassed). Do you think it's great (hand touching his shirt)? You look great too. (1+1+9+4)
>
> CH IN CH F5S11: Yeah, really? I even dreamed that I can be a leader in the future and maybe my dream will come true. (15+9+2)
>
> CH IN AU M8S4: Oh, really? Thanks mate. I like it as well. My friend bought it for me. (15+9+1+2+2)
>
> CH IN AU F5S9: Oh, really? I think if you want to write a good essay, you need to practice. You will improve. (15+9+12+2)
>
> MO AU M5S9: You think it'll do well? Thanks for looking at it. (9+1).
>
> MO AU F5S1: Oh, maybe, I'm not sure until I get the results back (smiling). (15+9+9).

A first look at the UNCERTAINTY strategies does not reveal clear change in language use among Chinese in Australia. A close look at such strategies across groups suggests that monolingual Australians are good at using informal speech features such as "You think it'll do well? Thanks for looking at it". For such a response, it is very likely for the Chinese ESL learners to say, "Do you think it's great?" or "You think it will do well?"

Strategy 10: NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT is the least preferred strategy, with only one occurrence in the monolingual Australian female group. Therefore I will make no further comments on this strategy.

7.1.3 OTHER INTERPRETATIONs

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS include five strategies in this study on top of strategies belonging to ACCEPTANCE and NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies, which are INVITATION, SUGGESTION, OFFER, JUSTIFICATION and INTERJECTION. I now report them one by one.

Strategy 11: INVITATION

INVITATION strategies occurred at the same frequency in the two Chinese male groups and the two Chinese female groups. Monolingual Australians used no such strategies. This

result indicates that INVITATION is more likely to be phatic or conventional speech styles used by Chinese ESL learners. Chinese in Australia have reduced slightly the amount of transfer from L1 to L2 in the target language environment. An example from each of the Chinese ESL learners group is provided as follows:

> CH IN CH M8S5: So, thank you. I lived with my mother. My mother is very good at cooking and always cook(s) something wonderful and delicious for me. If you like this food, you can always come to my home. (1+5+11)
>
> CH IN CH F3S5: Thank you. I'm very glad that you enjoyed it. You know what? I think cooking is a fantastic thing. Because we all enjoy it and also we learn from each other. We enjoy the beautiful dishes. So I hope you can come another time, OK? (1+2+15+2+2+2+2+11)
>
> CH IN AU M8S4: Oh, man thanks. I want to open up a business one day, come to my restaurant. (15+1+2+11)
>
> CH IN AU F2S5: Yeah, I love cooking so next time if you have time, welcome to my house. We can cook together and have a big meal with our friends. (15+2+11+12)

As shown in the above examples, INVITATION strategies are often associated with some activities to be realised in the future. Whether the speaker means it, or it is just phatic talk, has to be determined by the hearer according to contextual factors such as the relationship between the speakers, how sincere the host might be, and tone of voice.

Strategy 12: SUGGESTION

SUGGESTION occurred mostly in the Chinese in China female group and Chinese in Australia female group, exceeding their male counterparts. Monolingual Australians used very few such strategies. Chinese in Australia have shown a slight tendency in approximating monolingual Australians. SUGGESTION is another strategy that reflects much more Chinese speech styles than monolingual Australian speech styles. Depending how it is said, the use of this strategy among Chinese ESL learners could be phatic. Examples of such strategies are provided as follows:

> CH IN CH M7S8: You know society is advancing, so we should keep up with the trend and know what's new. (14+12)
>
> CH IN CH M10S10: I'm glad I can help you. I suggest you can shop online. I know an online store. I can tell you. (2+12+2+13)
>
> CH IN CH F7S12: Oh, actually my camera is usually very useful and advanced. And I think we should learn how to use much more advanced object to do many things. (15+2+12)
>
> CH IN CH F4S10: You know I know this book store, and the first time when I wanted to buy a book, someone also tell me where to go. Today I tell you. Maybe next time, you can tell others. So we can help more and more people (with hand gestures). (15+2+2+12+2)

Overall, the Chinese in China ESL learners tend to use complete and formal sentences in the role play, whereas Chinese in Australia have become less formal in their speech (see examples below):

> CH IN AU M1S8: Easy man, just go get one yourself. I'll teach you how to use it. (Shrug off at the beginning). (2+12+13)

The sentences also become shorter:

> CH IN AU F6S4: Yeah, I just got it. It's good. I like sports and exercise. It helps me a lot. We can go cycling sometimes? (15+2+2+2+2+12)

Monolingual Australians are even more succinct and informal in their speech. Abbreviations and sentences with subjects omitted is a very common phenomenon (see the following examples):

> MO AU M4S9: Yeah, don't plagiarise (slight smiling). (15+12)

> MO AU F9S4: Thank you. Go riding sometimes (left hand pointing to the bike). (1+12)

Strategy 13: OFFER

OFFER strategies occurred the most in the Chinese in China female group, followed by Chinese in China males. Fewer strategies were used by Chinese in Australia groups, but still much higher than the frequency among monolingual Australians. This is another strategy type that reflects Chinese speech styles in particular and decreased transfer from L1 to L2, when Chinese ESL learners come to the target culture. Examples of such strategies are provided as follows:

> CH IN CH M4S10: It's only because that I noticed some details about our campus. If there is anything I can help you, you can think of me for help. (8+13)

> CH IN CH F2S6: I'm so happy to hear you say that, and I'm also happy to help others. If you have other problems that need my help, I will help you. (2+2+13)

Chinese in Australia have picked up the rather frequently occurring expression "no worries" as well as "any time" as a way of denigrating compliments and offering help (see examples below):

> CH IN AU M2S12: No worries. Next time if you want to borrow, I still can lend it to you any time. (14+13)

> CH IN AU F5S5: If you like it, I will make some for you. (13)

Similar to SUGGESTION strategies, monolingual Australians seem to be good at using short expressions to mean extended meanings. For example "Any time man" can be

extended as “You can come to me for help any time” or “I will try to offer help to you any time you need me”.

> MO AU M5S2: Any time man (shaking head once to show attitude that it was not a big deal to return the books …(13)
>
> OFFER strategies may also happen after rejecting the compliment first (see the example below).
>
> MO AU F4S5: No, I learned by myself, but I can let you know the secret ingredients. (6+2+13)

Strategy 14: JUSTIFICATION

The frequency of JUSTIFICATION strategies in female groups overtakes their frequency by their male counterparts in all macro groups. Monolingual Australians, especially monolingual Australian males, have used fewer such strategies. Though the frequency does not show clear approximation toward the target culture among Chinese in Australia, their linguistic repertoire seems to have been expanded. Such expansion can be explained by their accommodation of the formulaic expressions in the target culture such as “no worries”.

> CH IN CH M5S2: You’re welcome. You know we are best friends. Yeah (with hand gestures). (14+14+15)
>
> CH IN CH F1S2: You’re welcome, and I’m glad that I can help you (smile). (14+2)
>
> CH IN CH F7S6: Oh, because we’re classmates. Help each other is a common thing. I want to help you next time. (15+14+14+13)
>
> CH IN AU M7S2: No problem, willing to help (with two hands opening in front of himself quickly). (14+2)
>
> CH IN AU M8S1: Cheers mate. I put a bit of effort for that one (smiling). (14+7)
>
> CH IN AU F2S12: That’s no problem (smiling). (14)
>
> MO AU M6S12: No worries. I have lots of space in my flat. (14+2)
>
> MO AU M9S2: Oh, I’m just going ‘cause I know how much trouble I’ve been fined as somebody else do. It’s all good. (15+14+2).
>
> MO AU M8S5: Cheers man. My family taught me about it. (14+5)
>
> MO AU F4S2: You’re welcome, it’s good to help out someone. (14+2)
>
> MO AU F7S12: Oh, it’s OK. No worries. I got it every time I (unclear data). Make sure I had good fun. (15+14+14+2+2)

Strategy 15: INTERJECTION

INTERJECTION is a popularly used strategy across all groups, with the monolingual Australian male group using slightly less such strategies. Two main reasons could explain

the use of INTERJCTION strategies among Chinese ESL learners. One is their high proficiency in managing INTERJECTION in L2. The other is that they need to use INTERJECTIONs to help with their overall fluency. For example, INTERJECTION strategies give the participants time to think and pause before they come up with other forms of utterances. Chinese in China have used a variety of INTERJECTION strategies such as “oh”, “yeah”, “you know”, and “wow” (see examples below).

> CH IN CH M2S6: OK, thank you, you know, I’m glad to help others. Helping others makes me feel happy. (15+1+14+2)
>
> CH IN CH M3S8: Oh, yeah, it can do a lot of useful things. if you like, I can teach you. (14+2+13)
>
> CH IN CH F10S9: Oh, I think you are more intelligent and beautiful (laughing). (15+4)
>
> CH IN CH F8S11: A great leader? Wow, you’re kidding. But I’m really glad to hear that I’m mature because it may be really be helpful for me. (9+15+2+2)
>
> Chinese in Australia also used INTERJECTIONs such as “oh” and “yeah” (see examples below).
>
> CH IN AU M6S8: Oh, no worries. Yeah, I like new technology products. (15+14+15+2)
>
> CH IN AU F6S2: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think your book is very helpful with my essay. I really appreciate what you do for me, thanks. (15+15+15+4+1+1)

Instances of accommodation from the target culture have been found in the Chinese in Australia, such as “hey” with a tone going up, and “Ah – ” with a tone going down (see the following examples):

> CH IN AU M8S8: Oh, yeah, technology hey, nowadays quite popular. I only discovered that recently as well. (15+15+2+15+2+7)
>
> CH IN AU F6S8: Ah – It’s all right (facial expression-brushing off).Thanks for that. But I think an iPad is common stuff, is it? I don’t know, my personal feelings. Thanks. (15+14+1+7+9+2+1)

Monolingual Australians used INTERJECTIONs such as “hey”, “ah”, “aww”, “oh” and “yeah” (see examples below):

> MO AU M7S11: Hey, I feel a bit silly in these robes. (hands pointing up and down) Feel odd (moving around). But thanks. (Oh, my God, you look so mature. Congrats on graduating!) (15+3+7)
>
> MO AU M8S2: Ah, it’s ok. (quick shrug off, shows that it’s not a big deal). (15+14)
>
> MO AU M9S9: Oh, thanks heaps. Thank you for helping me out. (15+1+2)
>
> MO AU M10S2: Sure, no worries. (2+14)
>
> MO AU F1S11: Aww---- thank you (smiling, not agreeing not disagreeing but sincerely thanking). (15+1)

MO AU F5S2: Oh, no worries (smiling). (15+14)

MO AU F9S6: Yeah, no worries. I've got heaps of room. Any time. (15+14+2+14)

Due to diversity in compliment response strategies and possible co-existence of both ACCEPTANCE and NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies or OTHER INTERPRETATIONS, I will not be able to draw a conclusion as to what degree any of the studied groups accept compliments in general.

It is arguable that the use of compliment responses by Chinese in Australia has converged toward monolingual Australians at a formal level in terms of their length of response, formality, formulaity, and use of interjections. More specifically, there is evidence suggesting that compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners in Australia are shorter, less formal, more formulaic, and more diverse and flexible in using interjections than those of Chinese in China. What I would like to clarify is that this finding may not apply to every single participant, due to the existence of individual conversational styles and personal preferences. Chinese ESL learners in Australia are more similar to monolingual Australians in their productions of compliment responses in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China. Meanwhile, Chinese in Australia, as a significant part of the population of ESL learners, contributed to the dynamics of English language in a multicultural environment.

7.2 Differences in compliment responses regarding the gender of the complimenter

As introduced in section 3.4, the gender of the complimenter has been an under-investigated variable in influencing speakers' compliment responses. All of the role-play data has been organised in two parts: data generated by the first six compliment situations when the complimenter is a male, and by the second six compliment situations when the complimenter is a female. I have summarised each part of the data according to the gender of the complimenter into a table and a figure. The table displays in detail the frequency of each strategy across all groups of participants. The figure displays a comparative view of the distribution of compliment responses across groups.

Before I comment on compliment response variations in an intercultural context associated with gender of complimenters, I would like to clarify the limitations of role-play data. The role-play conductors (one male and one female) in China and Australia are chosen from an ethnic background similar to the participant group. For example, for Chinese in China group, the male and female complimenters are Chinese in China who

have not been overseas; for the Chinese in Australia group, the male and female complimenters are Chinese in Australia. For the monolingual Australian group, the male and female complimenters are monolingual Australians. The arrangement of complimenters in this way is helpful to prompt compliment responses that resemble real-life conversational situations, because, generally speaking, speakers might be more comfortable and relaxed when they are communicating with one of their own kind. However, I am aware that complimenters in Australia can be from different ethnic groups, which may influence compliment responses in different ways. The multicultural and multilingual environment in Australia makes strictly controlled groups in research almost impossible. Therefore, the comparative analysis in this section is relative.

When the complimenters are males, most compliment responses across groups fall into COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, APPRECIATION TOKEN, JUSTIFICATION and INTERJECTION strategies (see Figure 11). When the complimenter is a female, most responses across from all groups also fall into COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, APPRECIATION TOKEN, JUSTFICATION, INTERJECTION and RETURN strategies. What is different is that compliment responses fall into RETURN (except for monolingual Australian male to female group), QUALIFICATION and UNCERTAINTY more when the complimenter is a female than when the complimenter is a male.

Having provided a brief overview, I now report on distribution of CR strategies following the order of ACCEPTANCE strategies, NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies and OTHER INTERPRETATIONS.

7.2.1 Responding to compliments from male complimenters

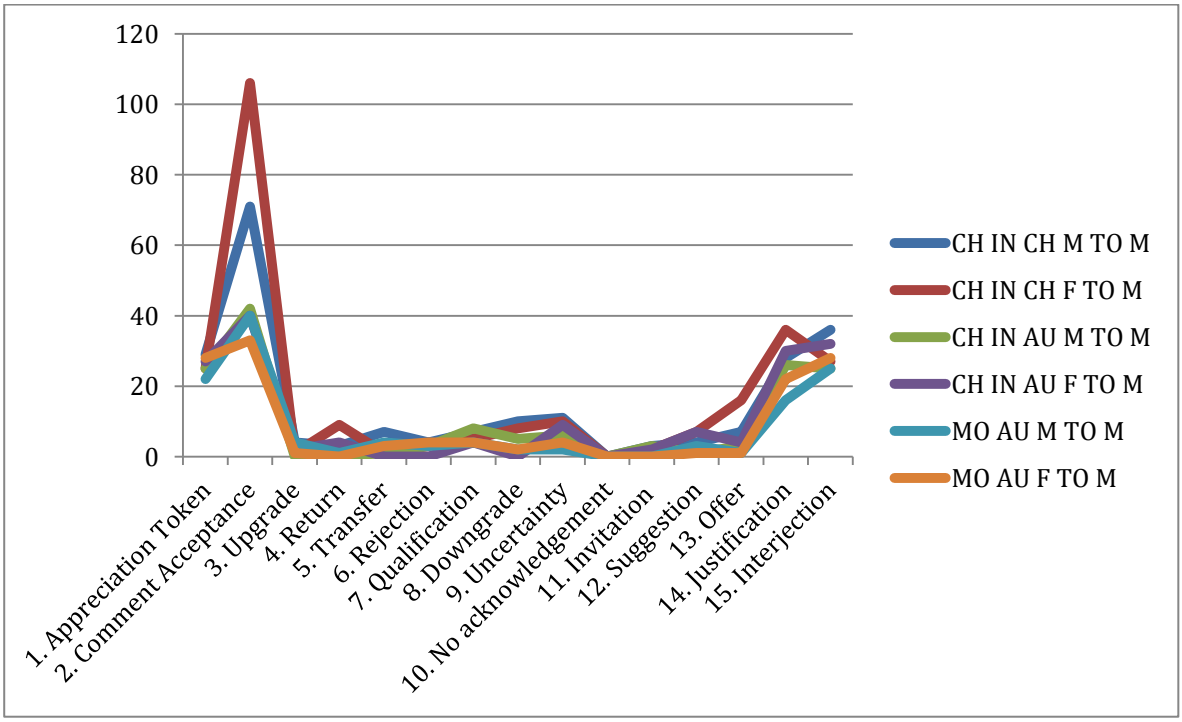
When the complimenter is a male, APPRECIATION TOKEN has occurred at a similar frequency across groups (see Table 26 and Figure 11). For COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies, the Chinese female to male group has produced many more than the Chinese male to male group. This shows that Chinese females tend to use longer responses, and they are more talkative than males. The topic of research may also be of more interest to females than to males. For UPGRADE, all groups used very few such strategies. This could be attributed to the fact that the pretended acquaintance-relationship in the role play does not take effect as it would in real life. When the participants do not know each other too well, they are less likely to UPGRADE, which is often associated with humour. For the strategy TRANSFER, the Chinese in China male group has used the most. Having reported

on the distribution of ACCEPTANCE strategies in situations when the complimenter is a male, I now move on to report on distribution of NONACCEPTANCE strategies.

Table 26 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	29	25	25	27	22	28
	2. Comment Acceptance	71	106	42	40	40	33
	3. Upgrade	4	1	0	2	4	1
	4. Return	3	9	0	4	1	0
	5. Transfer	7	1	1	0	4	3
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	4	3	3	0	3	4
	7. Qualification	7	5	8	4	4	4
	8. Downgrade	10	8	5	0	2	2
	9. Uncertainty	11	10	6	9	2	4
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	3	2	3	2	0	0
	12. Suggestion	4	7	1	7	3	1
	13. Offer	7	16	3	4	1	1
	14. Justification	28	36	26	30	16	22
	15. Interjection	36	27	25	32	25	28

Figure 11 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a male



The next strategy, REJECTION, is a rather unpopular strategy, which did not occur in the Chinese in Australia female group, and only occurred at a similar low rate across other groups. QUALIFICATION also belongs to the less frequently used strategies. What is interesting is that Chinese males in China and Chinese males in Australia have both used slightly more such strategies than their female counterparts. However, the monolingual male and females used the same number of such strategies. DOWNGRADE also occurred more frequently in the Chinese in China groups, but was less preferred by Chinese males in Australia. Chinese females in Australia did not use such a strategy at all. Monolingual Australian males and females again used the same number of such strategies, but with a very low occurrence. The distribution of DOWNGRADE strategies suggests that it is very possible that Chinese in Australia have become less modest at a formal level in their compliment responses. Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia use UNCERTAINTY strategies at a similar frequency. Chinese in Australia have decreased the use of such strategies, approximating the occurrence among monolingual Australians, who used the least number of such strategies. The last strategy in the group of NONACCEPTANCE strategies is NO ACKNOWLEGEMENT, which did not occur in any of the groups. This suggests that role play is a good way to prompt responses from all participants who may have chosen to opt out in other forms of data collection. Having reported the distribution of NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies in situations when the complimenter is a male, I now report on the CR strategies that are OTHER INTERPETATOINS.

Among the OTHER INTERPRETATIONS, INVITATION, SUGGESTION and OFFER are strategies that have a high possibility to be phatic. For INVITATION, Chinese males in China and Chinese males in Australia used the same amount of such strategies. Chinese females in China and Chinese females in Australia also used the same of amount of such strategies. No monolingual Australian participants used such strategy. Chinese in China females used SUGGESTION slightly more frequently than Chinese in China males. Chinese in Australia have decreased significantly the use of such a strategy, with only one occurrence in the male group. SUGGESTION is also a rarely used strategy among the monolingual Australian groups. For OFFER strategy, Chinese in China females stand out in producing the largest number of such strategies, twice as much as Chinese males in China. OFFER occurred less frequently among the Chinese in Australia male and female groups. Only one such strategy is found in monolingual Australian male and female groups respectively. The use of OFFER suggests that it is very possible that the degree of phaticity has decreased among Chinese in Australia, moving toward the conventions of the target

culture. For JUSTIFICATION strategies, females tend to use more such strategies than males, which applies to participants in all groups. Monolingual Australian groups used the least number of such strategies. As JUSTIFICATION strategies are often formulaic, and there are conventional responses such as “No worries”, there is a possibility that Chinese ESL learners rely on such strategies more than monolingual Australians, resulting in different frequencies of occurrence. INTERJECTION is found to be a commonly used strategy across all groups. Chinese males in China have used the highest number of such strategies.

Having reported comparative results of CR distributions across groups in situations when the complimenter is a male, I now move on to present CR distributions across groups in situations when the complimenter is a female (see Table 27 and Figure 12). I will follow the same order of CR strategies for the following analysis.

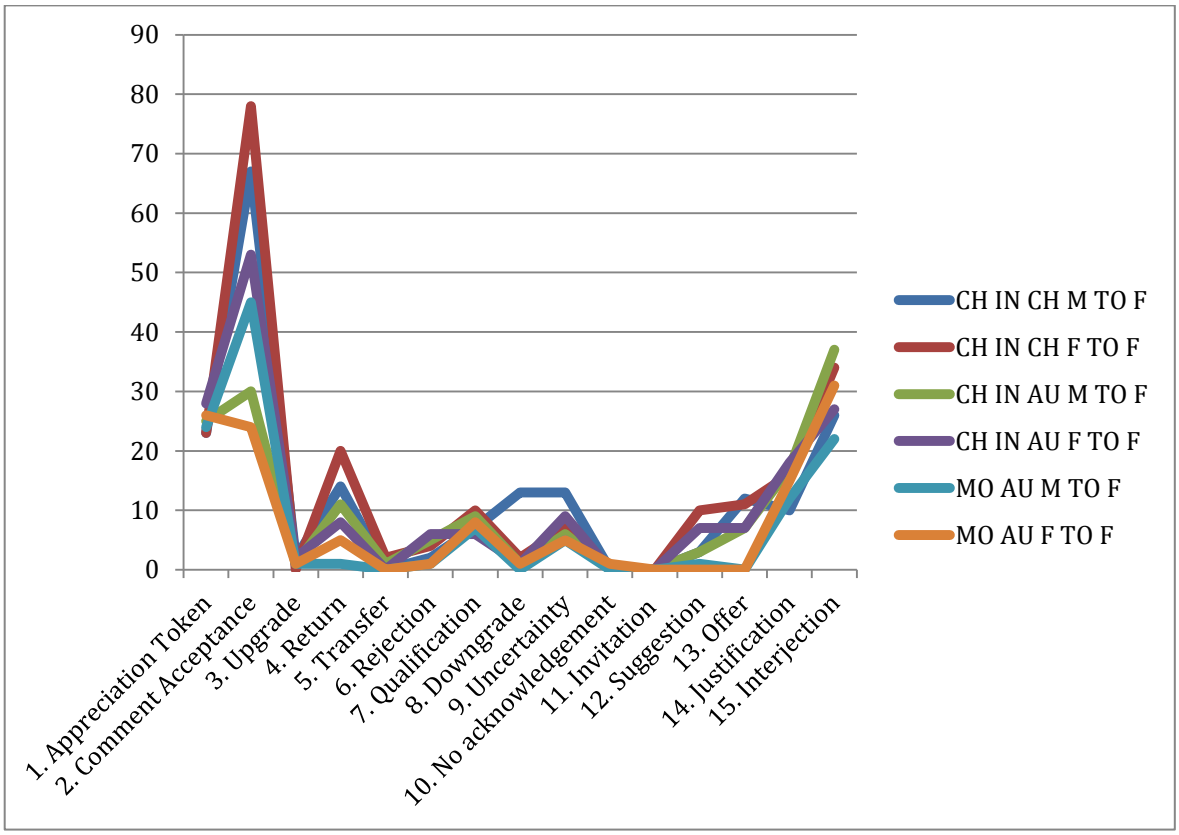
7.2.2 Responding to compliments from female complimenters

When the complimenter is a female, APPRECIATION TOKEN is commonly and frequently used across all gender groups of participants (see Table 27 and Figure 12). The Chinese in Australia female group used the largest number of such strategies. Both Chinese males and females in Australia have slightly surpassed the number of APPRECIATION TOKENS used by Chinese in China, even surpassing their monolingual Australian counterparts. This suggests that Chinese in Australia have over-accommodated to the target culture. Similar to the above analysis when the complimenter is a male, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE is a frequently-occurring strategy across all groups. For both Chinese ESL learners in China and in Australia, females tend to use more COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies to females than in situations when females respond to males. This shows that for Chinese ESL learners, they have more to talk about with same-gender complimenters, but are less talkative when the complimenter is the opposite gender. This finding is especially true among Chinese participants in Australia. However, the opposite is found to be true among monolingual Australians. Monolingual Australian females used less COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies when the complimenter is a female but more of such strategy when the complimenter is a male.

Table 27 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	23	23	25	28	24	26
	2. Comment Acceptance	67	78	30	53	45	24
	3. Upgrade	2	0	1	2	1	1
	4. Return	14	20	11	8	1	5
	5. Transfer	0	2	1	0	0	0
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	2	4	5	6	1	1
	7. Qualification	7	10	9	6	7	8
	8. Downgrade	13	2	1	1	0	1
	9. Uncertainty	13	7	6	9	5	5
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	3	10	3	7	1	0
	13. Offer	12	11	7	7	0	0
	14. Justification	10	16	17	18	12	15
	15. Interjection	26	34	37	27	22	31

Figure 12 The distribution of compliment response strategies when the complimenter is a female



UPGRADE remains as a rarely used strategy across all groups. RETURN is a very interesting strategy to look at, because it reflects how careful the complimentee is to pay back a similar compliment to the different complimenters. Chinese in China females have shown more preference to return the compliment back to a female complimenter than to return the compliment back to a male complimenter. Monolingual Australian females also used more RETURNs to their female complimenter than to their male complimenter. For Chinese in Australia females, however, slightly less RETURN strategies were used to a female complimenter than to a male complimenter. TRNASFER is also a rarely used strategy across all groups. REJECTION occurred most frequently among Chinese in Australia groups and least frequently among monolingual Australian groups. QUALIFICATION occurred at a similar frequency across all groups. This is possibly associated with compliment scenarios designed with the compliment topic "performance", which is likely to generate qualification strategies.

For DOWNGRADE strategy, Chinese in China males stand out in using the highest number of such strategies, and the rest of the groups rarely used such a strategy. This demonstrates that Chinese in Australia males and females consider modesty (possibly for a phatic purpose) to a lesser degree than Chinese in China, at least at a formal level. Similar to DOWNGRADE, the Chinese in China male group also used the highest number of UNCERTAINTY strategies, compared with other groups. Monolingual Australian male and female groups used the same number of such strategies, slightly less than Chinese in Australia groups. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT is only used in one situation found in the monolingual Australian female group. INVITATION does not occur in any groups when the complimenter is a female. For SUGGESTION, Chinese in China females stand out in using more such strategies than Chinese in China males. A similar tendency happened in the Chinese in Australia groups. Monolingual Australian groups rarely used such a strategy. OFFER is another strategy that is only used by Chinese in China and Chinese in Australia. Chinese in Australia used slightly fewer such strategies, but males and females have equal preference for such strategies. No OFFER is used by monolingual Australians. For JUSTIFICATION, Chinese in Australia used the highest number, exceeding both Chinese in China and monolingual Australians. This is another piece of evidence for over-accommodation of the conventional and formulaic speech from the target culture. INTERJECTION strategies are frequently used strategies in role-play data across all groups. For Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, females used more

INTERJECTION strategies than their male counterparts. For Chinese in Australia, the reverse is found to be true.

The occurrences of SUGGESTION and OFFER strategies in the Chinese in Australia groups show that they transferred such strategies from their L1 to L2, but with slightly lower frequency. This kind of transfer is a clear contrast to the extremely low occurrence of such strategies among the target culture participants. This shows that Chinese ESL learners come to the target environment to take away or absorb new language features that they do not possess in China, but also contribute and add new L2 phenomena to the pool of language features enjoyed by monolingual Australians. In some cases, over-accommodation occurred because of their over-reliance on certain strategies. For some strategies, accommodation does not occur at all, or no general conclusion could be made.

To sum up, the above analysis shows that both the gender of the complimenters, and the gender of the complimentees, is accountable for variations in compliment responses. Compared with male complimenters, female complimenters are more likely to receive reciprocal compliments, especially from female complimentees. Chinese in China males stand out in using the highest number of DOWNGRADE and UNCERTAINTY strategies when the complimenter is a female.

7.3 Differences in compliment responses regarding compliment topics

As discussed in section 3.1.3, in this study four compliment topics were studied. These four compliment topics are: appearance, performance, possession and personality. As shown in Table 22, compliments on different topics have generated slightly different numbers of compliment responses, with the topic of performance ranking as the most productive (n = 537), followed by appearance, then by possession and personality. This is possibly due to the suitability of performance (e.g. academic achievement) to both males and females. The compliment situation on personality is often vague, or can be taken as something else, depending on other contextual information provided in the scenario.

The overall distribution of compliment response strategies according to compliment topics is summarised in Tables 28 to 31 and Figures 13 to 16). Before I delve into detailed analysis of change of compliment responses in terms of compliment topics, I would like to provide a brief overview of the distribution of compliment response strategies. Certain compliment topics have generated certain responses. Across all gender groups, to respond to appearance-related compliment, APPRECIATION TOKEN, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, RETURN, UNCERTAINTY, INTERJECTIONS are frequently used; for

performance-related compliments, APPRECIATION TOKEN, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, QUALIFICATION and INTERJECTION are frequently used; for possession-related compliments, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE stands out as the most dominant strategy used across all groups, followed by INTERJECTION, APPRECIATION TOKEN, JUSTIFICATION, OFFER, SUGGESTION and UNCERTAINTY; for personality-related compliments, JUSTIFICATION stands out as the most frequently used strategies. COMMENT ACCEPTANCE and INTERJECTIONS are also used. Having provided a brief overview of the CR distributions by compliment topic, I now move on to provide comments regarding each compliment topic, following the order of appearance, performance, possession and personality.

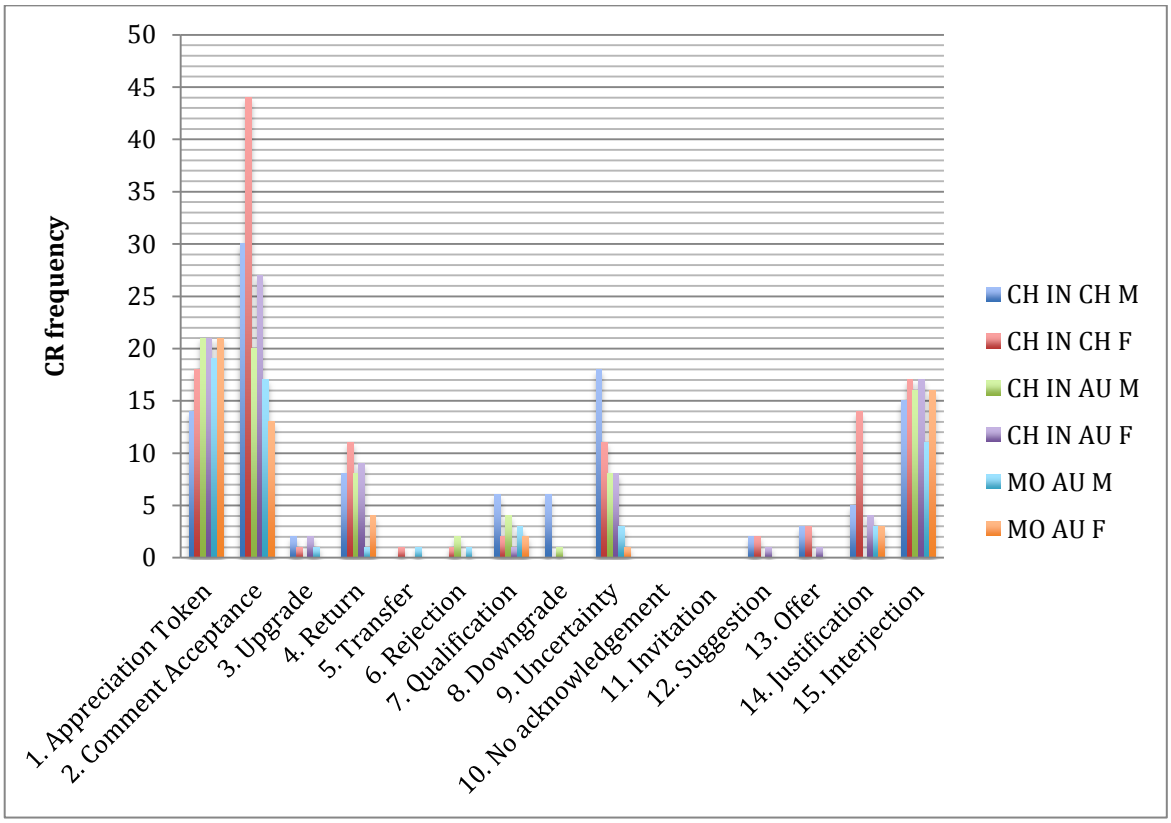
7.3.1 Responding to appearance-related compliments

To respond to appearance-related compliments, Chinese in Australia ESL learners have increased their use of APPRECIAITON TOKEN. In particular, Chinese male ESL learners in Australia are found to catch up with Chinese female ESL learners in approximating monolingual Australian speakers of English. Chinese in Australia ESL learners are also found to use less COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies than Chinese ESL learners in China, standing in between Chinese in China and monolingual Australians, a possible sign of approximation. RETURN strategy is found to remain at a similar frequency among Chinese in Australian, compared with Chinese in China. Monolingual Australian males are found to use the least RETURN strategies. The distribution of QUALIFICATION, despite its relatively low frequency, shows that male participants across groups tend to use more than their female counterparts demonstrating the males are less keen to be complimented on their appearance or accept compliments related to their appearance. Chinese in Australia males are found to use less DOWNGRADE strategies than Chinese males in China. The same is found true in terms of UNCERTAINTY strategy. The distribution of UNCERTAINTY strategy suggests a tendency approximating monolingual Australians, who used the least such strategies. Despite their low frequency, Chinese in Australia also used less SUGGESTION and OFFER than their Chinese counterparts, showing approximation toward monolingual Australians. Chinese in Australia used significantly less JUSTIFICATIONs than their Chinese counterparts, but similar amounts of INTERJECTIONs.

Table 28 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	14	18	21	21	19	21
	2. Comment Acceptance	30	44	20	27	17	13
	3. Upgrade	2	1	0	2	1	0
	4. Return	8	11	8	9	1	4
	5. Transfer	0	1	0	0	1	0
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	0	1	2	0	1	0
	7. Qualification	6	2	4	1	3	2
	8. Downgrade	6	0	1	0	0	0
	9. Uncertainty	18	11	8	8	3	1
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	2	2	0	1	0	0
	13. Offer	3	3	0	1	0	0
	14. Justification	5	14	0	4	3	3
	15. Interjection	15	17	16	17	11	16

Figure 13 The distribution of compliment response strategies for appearance compliments



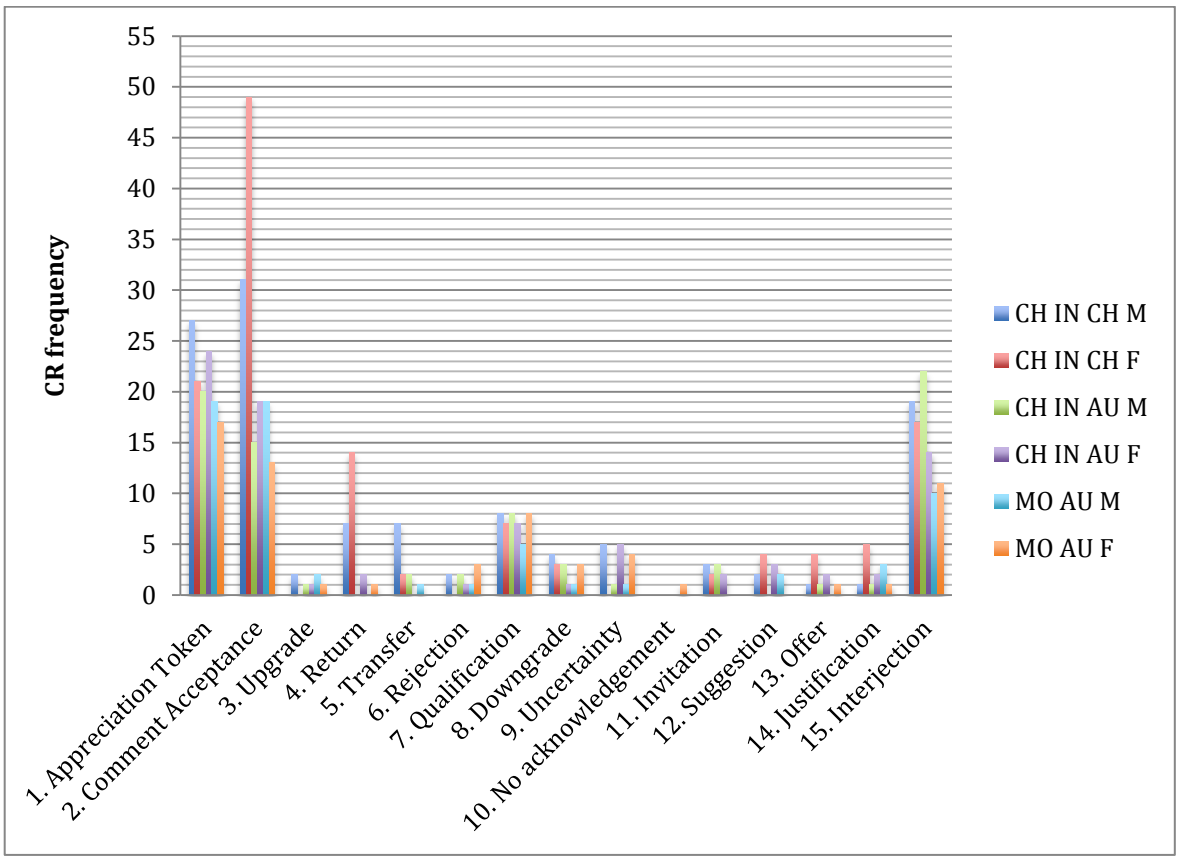
7.3.2 Responding to performance-related compliments

Performance-related compliment response distribution suggests that no general conclusion can be made regarding approximation in Chinese in Australia groups. Chinese females in China have produced the highest number of COMMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies and RETURN strategies. QUALIFICATION is a response type that particularly appeared in responses to performance-related compliments. The frequency of such response types is similar across groups. This suggests that performance is a relatively less gender-sensitive and context-sensitive topic. In other words, it means that it is the topic in which the least approximation toward the target culture could be identified.

Table 29 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	27	21	20	24	19	17
	2. Comment Acceptance	31	49	15	19	19	13
	3. Upgrade	2	0	1	1	2	1
	4. Return	7	14	0	2	0	1
	5. Transfer	7	2	2	0	1	0
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	2	0	2	1	1	3
	7. Qualification	8	7	8	7	5	8
	8. Downgrade	4	3	3	1	1	3
	9. Uncertainty	5	0	1	5	1	4
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	3	2	3	2	0	0
	12. Suggestion	2	4	0	3	2	0
	13. Offer	1	4	1	2	0	1
	14. Justification	1	5	1	2	3	1
	15. Interjection	19	17	22	14	10	11

Figure 14 The distribution of compliment response strategies for performance compliments



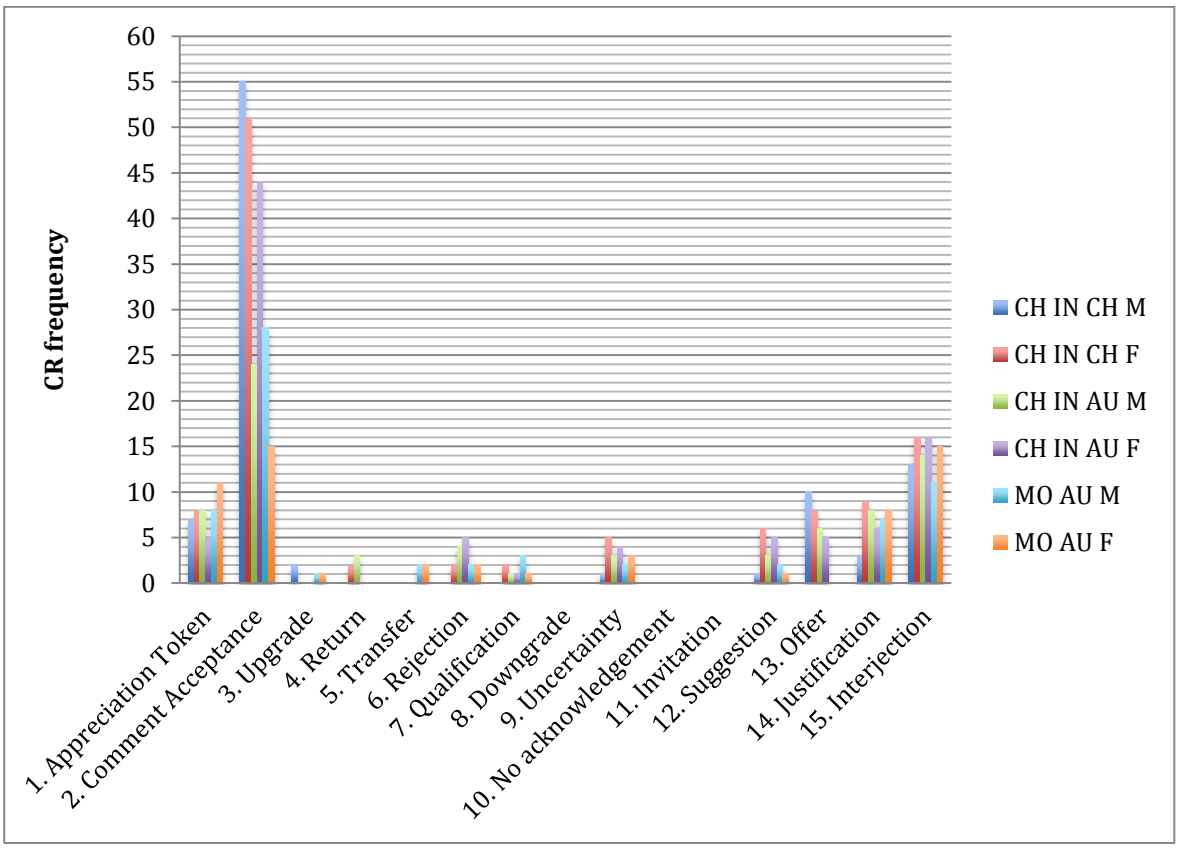
7.3.3 Responding to possession-related compliments

In response to possession-related compliments, no general conclusion can be made in terms of approximation among Chinese in Australia ESL learners. This is similar to performance-related compliment responses.

Table 30 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	7	8	8	5	8	11
	2. Comment Acceptance	55	51	24	44	28	15
	3. Upgrade	2	0	0	0	1	1
	4. Return	0	2	3	0	0	0
	5. Transfer	0	0	0	0	2	2
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	0	2	4	5	2	2
	7. Qualification	0	2	1	1	3	1
	8. Downgrade	0	0	0	0	0	0
	9. Uncertainty	1	5	3	4	2	3
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	1	6	3	5	2	1
	13. Offer	10	8	6	5	0	0
	14. Justification	3	9	8	6	7	8
	15. Interjection	13	16	14	16	11	15

Figure 15 The distribution of compliment response strategies for possession compliments



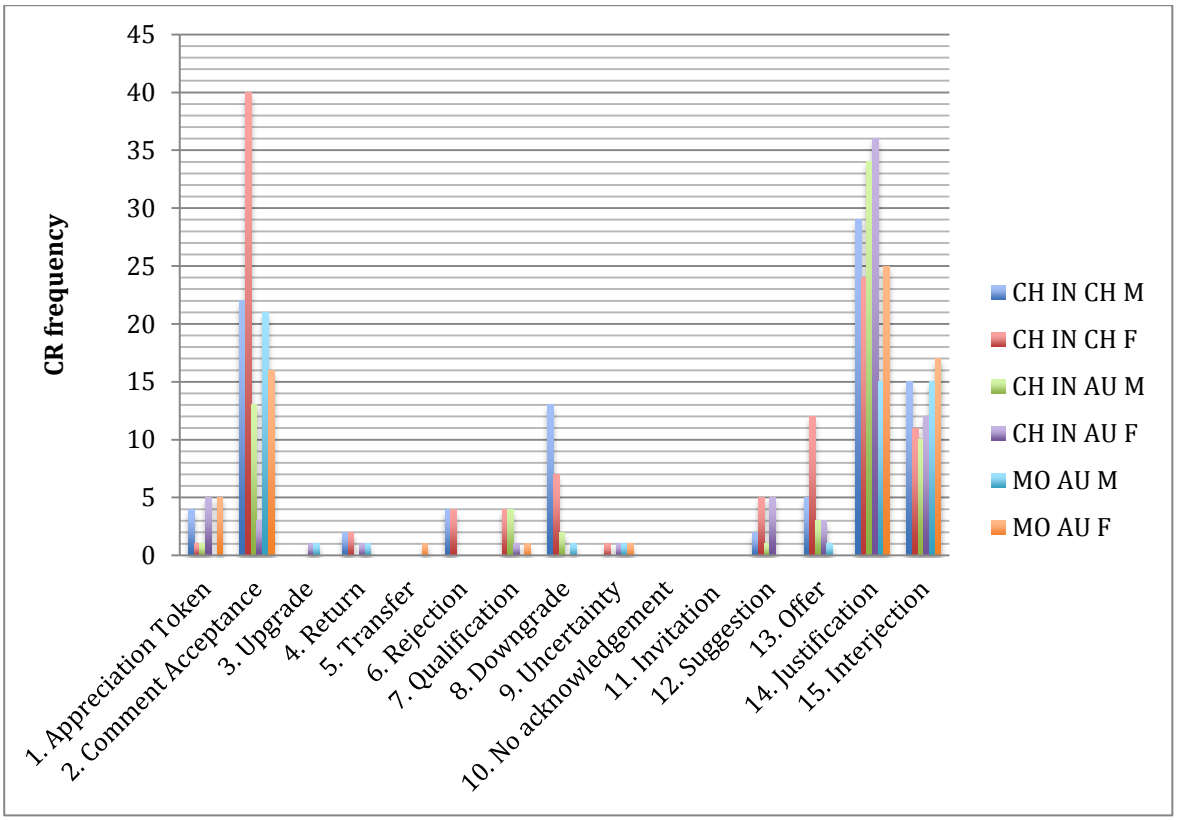
7.3.4 Responding to personality-related compliments

In responding to personality-related compliments, APPRECIATION TOKEN is much less frequently used compared with responses to other compliment topics. Chinese in Australia, especially Chinese females in Australia, used the least number of COMMENT ACCEPTANCE strategies. This could be because of the rather general nature of compliments regarding the compliment topic of personality. Chinese in Australia stand out in using the highest number of JUSTIFICATION strategies, overtaking both Chinese in China and monolingual Australians. Over-accommodation of a certain strategy does not signify that their overall pragmatic competence is higher than Chinese in China. It only shows that they have picked up a certain strategy and used it frequently.

Table 31 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments

MACRO CR TYPE	MICRO CR TYPE	CH IN CH		CH IN AU		MO AU	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
ACCEPTANCE	1. Appreciation Token	4	1	1	5	0	5
	2. Comment Acceptance	22	40	13	3	21	16
	3. Upgrade	0	0	0	1	1	0
	4. Return	2	2	0	1	1	0
	5. Transfer	0	0	0	0	0	1
NON-ACCEPTANCE	6. Rejection	4	4	0	0	0	0
	7. Qualification	0	4	4	1	0	1
	8. Downgrade	13	7	2	0	1	0
	9. Uncertainty	0	1	0	1	1	1
	10. No acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	11. Invitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	12. Suggestion	2	5	1	5	0	0
	13. Offer	5	12	3	3	1	0
	14. Justification	29	24	34	36	15	25
	15. Interjection	15	11	10	12	15	17

Figure 16 The distribution of compliment response strategies for personality compliments



Results from compliment-topic-related compliment responses suggest that certain compliment topics generate certain kinds of compliment responses. To investigate approximation toward the target culture, the appearance-related compliment responses have shown more change in language use caused by direct contact with the target environment. Other topics such as performance and possession are less gender-sensitive and context sensitive. Personality is a relatively more general compliment topic that has not generated regularities in compliment responses in light of the effect of the target environment.

7.4 Body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, laughter

I looked at the videos of the role play in order to assess body language. The data set for the analysis of body language consisted of 5 hours of video-recorded data from the role plays undertaken. Evaluating those data did not yield significant differences across the three different groups: Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians. What could be observed, however, is that the use of body language together with the use of facial expressions, tone of voice and laughter co-influence the overall productions of compliment responses. It is not easy to do a systematic evaluation of the body language. The evaluation of body language has to be tied in with other factors. Even though no

systematic differences are found between different participant groups regarding the use of body language, video data does show individual preferences of body language or other speech features, such as the use of laughter.

Chinese in China

Body language used by three of the Chinese in China role players shows that the personality of the participants plays a role in compliments responses. Participants may treat compliments from both the male and female complimenters formally. One of the male participants tried to answer the compliments very sincerely all the way through (e.g. CH IN CH M2). In that case, the scenarios are taken as appropriately truthful life experiences. Some participants' gestures are more formal, which can be explained by the comparatively formal body language used by the complimenters (e.g CH IN CH M1). The gender of the complimenter affects body language and facial expressions of the complimentee (see the following example):

> CH IN CH M3S12: That's OK. I can lend it to you if you want next time (eye looking into the sky, he is too shy to have constant eye contact with the female complimenter. His responses are somewhat like reciting or drawing hard from much postulation).

The gender of the complimenter seems to influence the tone of voice of the Chinese males in China. For example, a Chinese in China male participant used a very strong and explicit tone to express that the compliment is not necessary in the following responses:

> CH IN CH M6S6: You're welcome. Nothing. We are good friends.

When the complimenter becomes a female, his tone of voice becomes more gentle, compared with speaking with a male (see example below):

> CH IN CH M6S9: Oh, thank you very much. I did it very carefully.

Another Chinese male in China did the same (see the following example):

> CH IN CH M8S7: I just wear very casually (smiling, hand gestures). I think it is just OK. I think you look very beautiful! (hand gestures, looking at the girl, voice becomes more friendly).

Chinese in China males also show more excitement when the complimenter becomes a female (see the following example):

> CH IN CH M7S7: Really? You know, it is a party, isn't it? So I wear my best clothes (more surprised, excited, more vivid gestures when the male complimenter is replaced by a female).

The friendliness or politeness shown by Chinese in China males to females suggest that the distance between males and females, physically or psychologically, can be more pronounced there than amongst their monolingual Australian counterparts (see the following example):

> CH IN CH M4S9: Thank you. I think it must be that I have read a lot of books. I think you can do it too (eye contact, looking at somewhere else. A bit shy to keep having eye contact with female complimenter).

The gender of the complimenter also influences Chinese females in China (see the following examples):

> CH IN CH F1S8: Thank you. I'm happy that you like it. it can help us a lot. (voice become higher pitch and more comfortable and fluent in speech when the complimenter becomes a female).

> CH IN CH F3S7: Oh, great, (one fist out to show excitement, more vivid gestures and emotions when the complimenter becomes a female). I think you are more beautiful tonight than me (laughing).

What is worthy of mention is that the complimenter also adjusts his or her behaviour according to the participants' need, a sign of the co-constructing nature of any conversation. For example, when the participant is a quiet girl (CH IN CH F1), the male complimenter becomes more serious and uses less body language and tries to help the participant to understand the compliment.

Chinese in Australia

For the Chinese in Australia male group, data suggests that sometimes a certain gesture is used by one particular individual. Except for the common, explicit gestures, a lot of them are individualistic body language styles. These styles depend on the habits of the individual. Therefore, body language can be individual-specific (see the following example):

> CH IN AU M5S10: It's my pleasure to meet you (hand out for shaking hands).

Chinese in Australia male participants may react more comfortably with another male, but become very brief with the appearance compliments (e.g. haircut). With compliments from a female, Chinese in Australia male participants may become a bit shy (e.g. CH IN AU M7). For some Chinese in Australia male participants, a female complimenter may encourage them to speak with more energy or excitement (see the following example):

> CH IN AU M9S12: Oh, you are beautiful, so it is a good match for you. (laughing, joking).

Chinese in Australia females have used laughter, gestures such as "shrug off", and humour in their compliment responses. The body language "shrug off" seems to be more Australian than Chinese, because of its informality. A few examples from the Chinese in Australia female group are provided as follows:

> CH IN AU F1S10: It's OK. Things happen. We just have to help each other (one hand plus a shrug off).
>
> CH IN AU F4S3: I paid $1000 for it because I am rich (humorous, joking, laughing).
>
> CH IN AU F4S6: Because you're very handsome so I should help you (laughing, humour).

Despite of the above evidence for using humour, Chinese in Australia females also used rather formal gestures (CH IN AU F2). A point of difference regarding body language features in the Chinese in Australia female group is hugging, which reflects approximation toward the Australian culture (see example below):

> CH IN AU F4S7: Thank you so much (female participant gives female complimenter a hug).

Monolingual Australians

Monolingual Australian males have shown that tone of voice and body language play a significant role in their compliment responses. Even though their responses could be short, managing body language and tone of voice helps the message to get through (see the following examples):

> MO AU M1S7: Thank you! (A little shy and embarrassed, slight smile)
>
> MO AU M2S1: Thanks (low tone of voice, shrugging shoulders and facial expression as if not a big thing).
>
> MO AU M3S8: I do! Actually! Cheers, man (look up slightly, confident and firm in voice).
>
> MO AU M4S7: (nodding, a little embarrassed, smiling). Oh, thanks (low pitch of voice to show brushing off compliments).

Monolingual Australian females used a few types of body language. The gender of the complimenter influences some of the participants. For example, a monolingual Australian female becomes more excited when the complimenter was a male (MO AU F4). This does not mean that all of the monolingual Australian female participants respond in the same way. For example, one participant shows equal pleasure with compliments from both a male and a female (MO AU F8). This could be because of her relatively more reserved personality.

Personality seems to play an important role in determining the body language used in responding to compliments. Participants may smile all they way through and use similar gestures (e.g MO AU F5). This means that it is possible that some body language is independent of the content of the conversation. For some occasions, however, body language is a clearer or only message that offers an answer to the compliments (see the following two examples):

MO AU F6S1: Thanks. Took a while. Got it (Shrug off, laughing).

MO AU F6S11: Finally (thumbs up in front of herself to show excitement).

The gesture "thumbs up" seems to express an omitted voice "I finally made it or I finally achieved it".

7.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented video-recorded role-play data analysis. I followed a structure similar to Chapter 5 – DCT data analysis, because the two sources of data are similar, except that the role-play data offers additional information on language features such as body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. I started this chapter by providing overall tendencies of CR strategies across groups, and providing detailed analysis of each strategy, in particular, paying attention to the Chinese in Australia groups, for the sake of observing differences in language use caused by contact with the L2 target language environment (section 7.1). Then, I presented an analyses in terms of gender variation of the complimenter (section 7.2), as well as the effect of compliment topic (section 7.3). Observations of body language, facial expressions and tone of voice are also reported in section 7.4. The gender of the complimenter and complimentee, as well as the individual personality, play important roles in determining their choices of body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. Monolingual Australian participants are definitely using body language to express themselves as a substitute for verbal language. The distance between males and females, and the use of body language in compliment responses, are complex issues to be determined by individual preferences. The use of video-recorded role play has caught some body language, and facial expressions to some degree. However, because there is only one conversational turn in the role play, the body language captured across groups is not enough for systematic quantifiable analysis. Future research may capture more features of body language by designing role play situations with more conversational turns. Despite the limitation of this instrument, extra information gathered with this technique is valuable.

CHAPTER 8: RESULTS – DISCOVERING AND DESCRIBING CHANGES IN LANGUAGE USE

There are different ways of conceptualizing process. A researcher might think of process in terms of phases, stages, levels, degrees, progress toward a goal, or sequences of action. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 261)

Having gone through the most "messy" stage in mixed methods research - the data analysis stage, I now come to the point of looking across both quantitative and qualitative results in order to answer my two research questions. In order to remind readers, I present them here again:

- *Do Chinese ESL learners in Australia respond to compliments in English differently in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China and monolingual Australians?*
- *Do Chinese ESL learners in Australia respond to compliments in English differently in view of gender differences (i.e. the gender of the complimenter and complimentee) and different compliment topics (appearance, performance, possession, personality)?*

This stage of the study involves reporting post-merging interpretations based on all the findings illustrated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The data analyses in this mixed methods study include analysis of DCT (written) data in Chapter 5, analysis of interview (reflective) data in Chapter 6, and analysis of role play (verbal) data in Chapter 7. These three sources of data have provided insights into the complimenting behaviours of Chinese ESL learners from different perspectives. To provide an overall summary of the main thread of this study, I use the term "approximation to the target language environment" to describe changes in language use by Chinese ESL learners in Australia with respect to compliment responses. Based on findings from different sources of data analysis, I reconstructed two main levels of approximation (formal and functional levels) in compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners in Australia, in contrast with Chinese ESL learners in China. Chinese ESL learners may easily adopt salient speech features from the target language environment resulting in an approximation phenomenon at a formal level. Given an increase in overall pragmatic awareness, Chinese ESL learners may acquire deeper understanding of the linguistic features they have adopted, such as their multiple functions in different contexts, resulting in approximation at a functional level. The mixed methods approaches in this study make further exploration of formal and functional approximation possible (see section 8.1). While exploring formal and functional aspects of approximation, gender and compliment topic are the two main variables considered in the context of this

research, and they are found to play significant roles in yielding certain compliment response strategies (see section 8.2).

8.1 Approximation toward the target environment

Change in language use in an intercultural environment is a very complex process that involves "phases, stages, levels and degrees", as mentioned in the introductory quote. The conceptualisation of "change in language use" caused by the direct contact with the target culture is the focus of this study. As foregrounded earlier (see section 2.4), previous pragmatic theories such as pragmatic transfer, accommodation, and acculturation, are all applicable in this study to some degree, but not sufficiently enough to describe change in language use. Rather than using any of these theories alone, it seems to make more sense to treat them as parallel and co-existing theories to account for cross-cultural changes in language use, which contribute to the overall understanding of ESL learners' approximation toward the target culture.

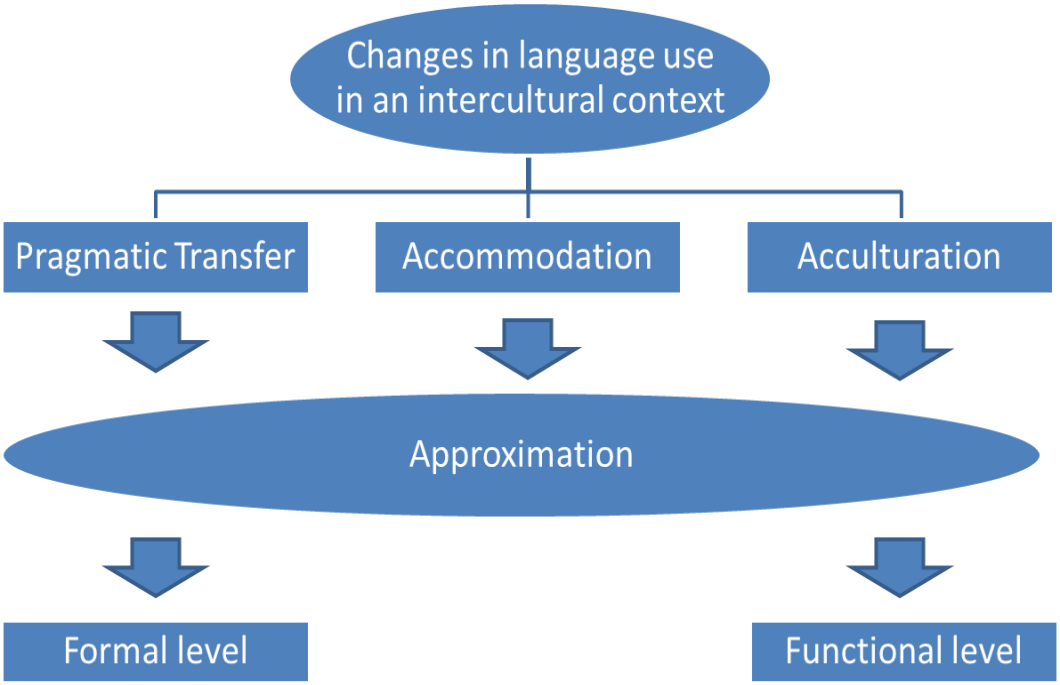
On one hand, I use the term "approximation" to stress partial or incomplete pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation in situations, such as Chinese ESL learners using "double standards" to treat speakers of their own culture, and speakers that are categorised as "foreigners", differently in their compliment responses. "Double standards" is a strategy that represents Chinese ESL learners' ability to switch back and forth whenever they need to, and wherever they are, in their CR strategies. Alternative strategies, as such, make it problematic to generalise how accommodating or acculturating they are toward the target culture, because any kind of accommodation or acculturation they demonstrate can be transient as well as fluid. The degree of pragmatic transfer is also a very tricky issue to measure. The amount of pragmatic transfer is also related to how "switched-on" the ESL learners are in terms of adopting language features that reflect the target language norms. On the other hand, I use "approximation" to describe the co-existing spectrums of change in language use in terms of pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation. Following the same vein of thought, pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 or L2 to L1, speech accommodation from the target language environment (not necessarily monolingual Australians in the present study), or acculturation involving a deeper level of embrace, based on reflections of language norms in the target environment, should not be investigated alone, but together. This means that while describing changes in language use in an intercultural context, these three theoretical frameworks (pragmatic transfer, accommodation and acculturation) could serve as simultaneous pathways to clarify what is happening among Chinese ESL learners' language behaviour. To describe

the approximation phenomena among Chinese ESL learners' language use in the target environment, the Australian multicultural and multilingual environment is also an unavoidable issue to be addressed.

Even though only monolingual Australian English speakers participated in this study, interview data analysis suggests that Chinese ESL learners are not only influenced by monolingual Australians who speak English as the first language, but are also influenced by international students from all over the world. Input from different international students is an important factor that influences the co-constructing process of language behaviour among Chinese ESL learners in Australia. Taking into account different sources of language input in the multicultural and multilingual environment, speech conventions from monolingual Australians can only be regarded as one of the important sources of influence. Therefore, any claims derived from this research are only valid if treated as a reflection of the salient influence of the target language environment. Such influence can only be partially attributed to monolingual Australian English speakers. Alternatively, it can be said that views concluded from this research are only representative to a certain degree defined by the sample of participants involved. Nevertheless, findings of this research shed light on language development in an intercultural environment, and in relationships between self and other in terms of speaker- or user-identity.

The multicultural and multilingual nature of the target language environment pushes researchers to keep updating intercultural pragmatic theories. Hindrances to making generalisations in the target language environment about ESL learners can be exemplified by the degree of pragmatic transfer. It is found that the amount of pragmatic transfer varies according to the ethnicity or nationality of the fellow interlocutors. Pragmatic transfer is most likely to happen among Chinese speakers of English in China while they speak English, due to frequent need for translation from L1 to L2, and the shared social-cultural identity between the speakers if the conversation happens among Chinese, as well as limited cultural input from speakers from English-speaking countries. The amount of pragmatic transfer is reduced (meanwhile, approximation to the target culture increases) when Chinese speakers of English come to Australia, to a greater extent if they interact with speakers who are from ethnic groups other than Chinese, to a lesser extent if they are interacting with Chinese speakers of English who have a similar cultural background. Based on the above considerations, I would like to consolidate the conceptual framework I proposed earlier (see section 2.4) which has been further developed in this study (see Figure below):

Figure 17 A resynthesised framework to describe changes in language use in an intercultural context



In the context of this research, compliment responses often contain multiple forms of language use that reflect different illocutionary forces. For example, CR strategies that belong to the APPRECIATION TOKEN strategy can be regarded as the speech act of thanking. Their functions can also be decided in terms of how directly, sincerely or politely it is said. The same principles apply to some other categories of compliment responses. This means that compliment response strategies can not only be regarded as "acts for responding to compliments" but also "acts for inviting, suggesting, and offering" (see data analysis regarding the use of INVITATION strategy, SUGGESTION strategy and OFFER strategy in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). Having outlined a framework consolidated by the data analyses in the present study, I now move on to discuss in detail the critical aspects that emerged under the umbrella of formal and functional levels.

The differentiation between formal and functional aspects of compliment responses have been developed based on conventional approaches to compliments that consider lexical, syntactical, semantic or pragmatic features of compliment responses (c.f. Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Y. Yuan, 1998; Yu, 1999). Though I have not highlighted terms such as "lexical", "syntactical", "semantic" and "pragmatic", formal and functional levels of investigation into compliment responses do cover these areas. Following the theoretical framework and empirical considerations formed in earlier chapters in this study (Chapters 2 and 3 respectively), I use terms such as "length of response", "formality", "formulaity"

and “linguistic repertoire” to represent the key points derived from data analysis at a formal level (see section 8.1.1). From these terms, it could be seen that the formal level of analysis mainly deals with “lexical” and “syntactical” matters of language use. In contrast, the functional level of compliment responses mainly deals with reflections of “level of phaticity”, “level of directness”, “level of modesty” and “level of sincerity” (see section 8.1.2). That “semantical” and “pragmatic” features of language use are explored as the functional aspects outlined above, reflects considerations of meaning in context.

8.1.1 Approximation at a formal level

Changes in language use at the formal level include four critical aspects: length of response, formality, formulaity and linguistic repertoire (see Figure 18). Among these targeted four aspects, “length of response” refers to the overall length of one entry, i.e. responses to one compliment scenario. The term “formality” is sometimes related to the length of a response. For example, a monolingual Australian English speaker may form a sentence without pronouns, which is shorter and more colloquial than a complete sentence. I consider this kind of response as informal. The term “formulaity” has been studied in previous compliment studies, and has been used to describe speech features that are repetitively used by interlocutors (e.g. Holmes, 1988). I continue to use this term because of its empirical significance. In the context of this research, I focus more on the formulaity of the compliment responses than the compliments, as the compliments were all preset. The phenomenon of formulaity is also related to norms and conventions. Reflective data in Chapter 6 has touched on norms and conventions from time to time. The last aspect of the focus of analysis at a formal level is “linguistic repertoire”.

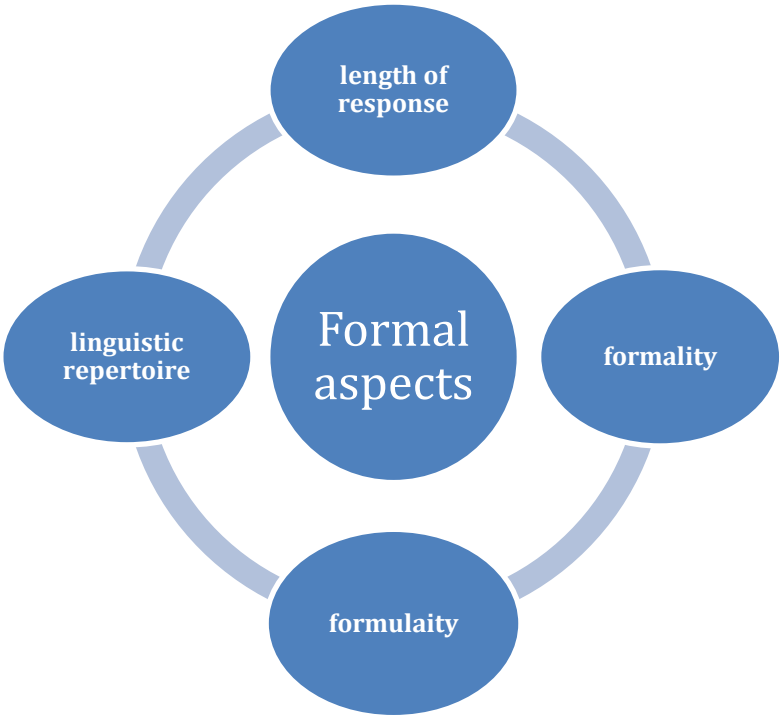
The formal aspects of compliment responses are interrelated. For example, long responses found in Chinese ESL learners in China are often because they are least likely to use abbreviations, but most likely to use complete sentences in their compliment responses, as if they are using written English. Using written English also results in using relatively more formal expressions to respond to compliment responses. Chinese in Australia, have, overall, used shorter responses, which have made their speech less formal, and adopted formulaic expressions such as “No worries” and “Cheers”, as shown by DCT data analysis (see section 5.1.3) and role play data analysis (section 7.1.3). However, short responses by Chinese ESL learners in Australia may also be caused by their limited linguistic repertoire.

Accommodation of formulaic expressions from the target language environment signifies that their linguistic repertoire built in China has expanded when they came to

Australia. However, it does not mean their overall proficiency or pragmatic competence has improved significantly. They are still short of vocabulary in many situations, as suggested by interview data analysis (see section 6.1). Monolingual Australians, overall, are the least formal, but considered the most humourous participants. Their compliment responses often contain abbreviations such as "No probs" or "Congrats", and sometimes omit subjects of a sentence (see section 7.1.3).

The linguistic repertoire of the Chinese ESL learners across the groups continues to influence their overall mastery of the English language and their CR strategies. Varying linguistic repertoires among participants suggests that accommodation of highly formulaic CR strategies such as JUSTIFICATION (e.g. "No worries") from the target environment could be a reflection of approximation toward the target culture, or a reflection of their shortage of linguistic strategies due to limited linguistic repertoire. A graphic demonstration of the relationship between the formal aspects is as follows:

Figure 18 Formal aspects of compliment responses



Issues such as multilingualism in the target language environment, diverse compliment response practices by monolingual Australians, and individual variations among Chinese ESL learners, have not been duly considered. I became more aware of these issues in the process of designing research instruments, collecting data, analysing data and searching for evidence of changes in language use.

At a formal level, the distribution of various compliment response strategies shows that language use in reality is a much more diverse and dynamic activity than what a single concept can comprise. It is not valid to generalise that all Chinese ESL learners have become similar to monolingual Australians compared with Chinese in China, or to argue that Chinese in Australia, overall, have become more accepting to compliments after interacting with monolingual Australian speakers of English. One of the reasons that makes such claims fallible is that monolingual Australians do not accept compliments as much as is assumed by Chinese ESL learners in China, who often tend to group all speakers of English as a first language as one kind – "foreigners". Other reasons include the use of multiple CR strategies across groups (see Table 12 in Chapter 5), making it difficult to decide if combined responses to compliments mean acceptance or rejection, or something in between (for more details, see section 8.1.3). Meanwhile, individual preferences or speech styles are also factors that make the generalisation of change in language use in CRs of Chinese ESL learners in Australia nearly impossible.

Having discussed the interrelationship between the four formal aspects, now I will provide a discussion on the four aspects for analysis at a functional level.

8.1.2 Approximation at a functional level

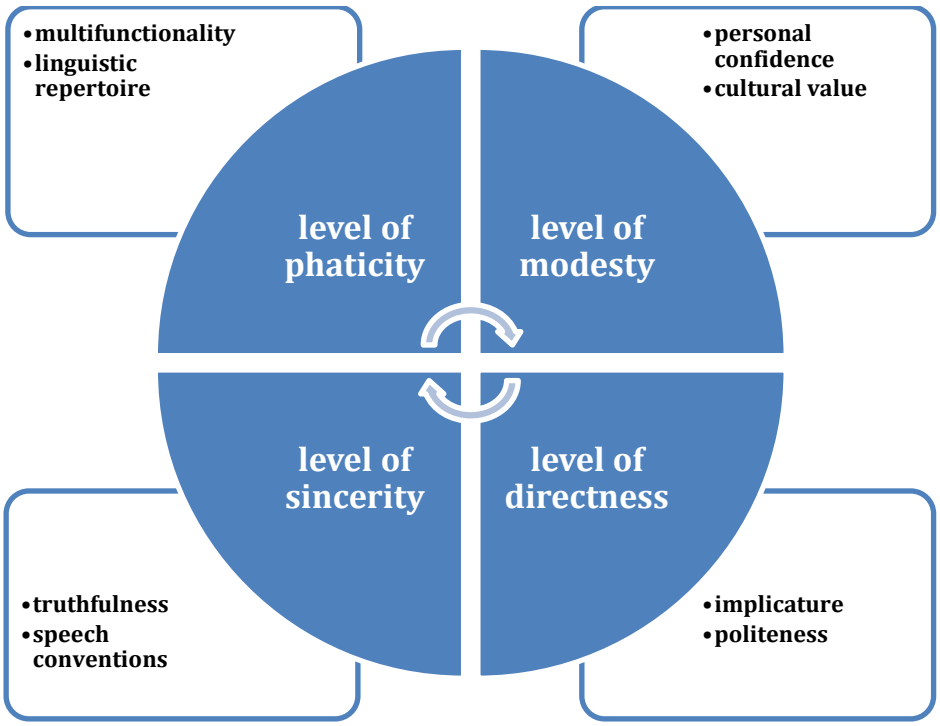
As for functional aspects of investigation in this research, I have outlined four critical aspects: level of phaticity, level of modesty, level of directness, and level of sincerity (see Figure 19). Overall, the use of compliment response strategies by Chinese ESL learners in Australia has shown signs of approximation toward the target language environment by appearing less phatic, less modest, more direct and more sincere. I now discuss these four aspects one by one.

These four functional aspects of compliment responses are interrelated with each other. Among the four functional aspects (see Figure 19), "level of phaticity" primarily deals with pragmatic functions of the speech behaviour that is consistent or inconsistent with the most apparent literal meaning. "Complimenting as phatic communication" is a view confirmed by all participants. Both Chinese ESL learners and monolingual Australians are aware of the multiple functions of complimenting behaviour, i.e. when the compliments are more phatic than sincere. All groups have directly or indirectly confirmed that a clear line between phatic and non-phatic communication does not exist because, at the very least, phaticity in the case of complimenting is transformable under certain conditions. However, to mention a few differences, firstly, it seems to be a more familiar

concept to Chinese ESL learners, due to its similarity to two Chinese concepts han xuan and ke tao hua, than to monolingual Australians (see section 6.9). To monolingual Australians, it makes more sense to use the term “insincerity” as a substitute for “phatic communication”. Secondly, Chinese in China interviewees have presented rather diverse opinions regarding whether phatic communication is particularly a Chinese communication style, which reveals different levels of intercultural awareness. In monolingual Australians, it seems that there are no such contradictory opinions from one individual to another.

Regarding change in level of phaticity in compliment responses among Chinese ESL learners in Australia, they have definitely gained more awareness of what monolingual Australians do. Evidence of the increase of pragmatic awareness among Chinese ESL learners in Australia can mainly be demonstrated by three findings: (1) they have become more capable of distinguishing the degree of seriousness or sincerity of the communication style, by examining the tone of voice or other intensifiers (e.g. certain adverbs such as “very”); (2) they perceive that monolingual Australians use a phatic communication style which is similar to Chinese han xuan, but to a lesser degree compared with Chinese speakers of English. This also shows that many Chinese ESL learners in Australia no longer hold to the stereotype (as some Chinese in China interviewees do) in regarding phatic communication as a distinctive of Chinese culture; (3) they have sensed the higher frequency of complimenting, thanking and apologising used by people from the target language environment.

Figure 19 Functional aspects of compliment responses



"Level of modesty" is a cultural value that is particularly related to the speech act of compliment response, and it primarily involves the question of whether the speaker considers modesty or not, in different communicative contexts. It may also relate to the speaker's confidence in regards to whether the speaker feels he or she deserves the compliment received. The majority of the interviewees in China mention the importance of politeness and appropriateness in speech when discussing modesty. It is evident that many Chinese in China have misassumptions and overgeneralisations toward monolingual Australian speakers of English, by believing that modesty is more of a Chinese cultural value rather than a value held by the "foreigners". Chinese in Australia mention that they would not be concerned about, or less concerned about, modesty in Australia, nor about converging to the sociocultural norms of the speaker, depending on their ethnicity or other variables. Chinese in Australia tend to approximate to the target norms in their willingness to accept compliments more, and acknowledge their hard work while responding to performance-related compliments. Chinese in Australia have less misunderstandings toward the monolingual Australians' treatment of modesty compared with Chinese in China. Approximation among Chinese speakers of English in Australia is a complex phenomenon, as they have developed the use of "double standards" based on their perceived "Chinese/foreigners" dichotomy, originating from China. Conspicuously, monolingual Australians do not overtly teach or talk about the notion of modesty, but it is

arguable that implicit modesty strategies are widespread in the target language environment.

The "level of directness" mainly deals with implicit speech styles (c.f. indirect speech acts, implicature in section 2.2). "Level of directness" also reflects speakers' considerations of politeness. The majority of Chinese in China tend to regard gestures, eye contact and facial expressions as indirect CRs, and different interpretations of indirectness have been found, such as carrying out certain actions (see section 6.7). Chinese in Australia are able to sense culturally-nuanced meanings in some expressions, as well as expressions of humour in Australian English. Different interpretations for indirectness are also found among Chinese in Australia. The issue of whether gestures are direct or indirect ways of responding to compliments is controversial. Reflections of indirectness by Chinese in Australia also suggest that Australian monolinguals tend to use more body language than Chinese speakers of English, whereas Chinese speakers of English tend to use more indirect approaches in compliment responses. Different approaches were mentioned as being used, depending on whether the other speaker is Chinese. Monolingual Australians mentioned that indirectness can be realised by using gestures such as thumbs up, shrugging-off, smile, waving away, and facial expressions, such as raising eye brow(s), as responses to compliments, and other means of indirect responses. It was confirmed by some monolingual Australians that being direct and honest is Australian verbal culture. Across all groups, it is found that there is no clear-cut line between directness and indirectness.

The aspect "level of sincerity" involves personal habits of the speaker, and whether the speech is sincere or not. Chinese in China expressed that they would try to be sincere all the time, but may not always realise sincerity, as it depends on the relationship between interlocutors. A popular way of dealing with sincerity is still maintaining double standards, treating Chinese with Chinese conventions and foreigners differently. This kind of broad way of distinguishing interlocutors as either Chinese or "foreigners" is still used by Chinese in Australia, who mention that sincerity in speech highly depends on to whom they are speaking. Language barrier is sometimes considered to be a main barrier for realising sincerity. Signs of approximation to the target culture are demonstrated by Chinese speakers of English in Australia in their understanding and adopting of formulaic ways of greeting (e.g. "What's new??). Monolingual Australians shared a few generalised opinions about CRs: (1) try to be sincere; (2) decide sincerity according to context, person or genuineness of the complimenter; (3) develop a personal conversation style (e.g. joking),

and use that across situations. An additional note made by monolingual Australian interviewees is that sincerity may change over time as part of personal development (e.g. the enhancement of self-esteem over time can lead to sincere acceptance of compliments).

The four functional aspects are often related to gender variations, assumptions, and overgeneralisations that the speakers hold toward the target language environment. The research site in China (Zhengzhou) is a less multicultural environment compared with the research site in Australia (Sydney). Chinese participants in China have shown clear evidence of overgeneralising all English L1 speakers as one homogenous type – "foreigners". This homogenised term could often lead to misassumptions such as that "all foreigners do not, or care less about modesty" or that "the ideal response to compliments in English is 'Thank you', because the text book told me so", or that "all foreigners tend to speak their mind, and indirectness is not necessary". These assumptions have been confirmed to various degrees by participants in China (see Chapter 6). Chinese in Australia are relatively more informed of how monolingual Australians respond to compliments, which could be described as increased pragmatic awareness. Though having shown obvious increase in their acquisition of the target language norms, contingent on personal efforts made in adapting their use of L2, Chinese in Australia also vary in terms of the amount of accommodation from, and acculturation to, the target language environment.

When it comes to language use at a functional level, it is no longer only about the mastery of language in terms of forms, or expanding existing linguistic repertoire, it involves understanding of the target language norms and conventions, and meanwhile negotiating with the target language norms and conventions in terms of how much to converge or diverge.

8.1.3 Approximation synthesised

The matter of acceptance of compliments is an issue very much worthy of discussion from an interfacing point of view of formal and functional aspects of language use. Even though I have built on previous researchers' compliment response taxonomies, and added new compliment response types in order to reflect the data more completely, there were many occasions when I noticed the transformability of compliment response strategies. By "transformability", first of all I mean one entry of compliment responses contains multiple functions that make them equivalent to a number of different speech acts. Secondly, one type of meaning (or one compliment response strategy) can change into another type of meaning if it is spoken with a different tone. In this case, the five strategies

APPRECIATION TOKEN, COMMENT ACCEPTANCE, UPGRADE, RETURN, and TRANSFER, under the macro type ACCEPTANCE, might not always be accepting of compliments. Similarly, the five strategies REJECTION, QUALIFICATION, DOWNGRADE, UNCERTAINTY, and NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, under the macro type NON-ACCEPTANCE, might not always be non-accepting. For example, the expression "Don't mention it" (see section 5.1.3) used frequently by Chinese male speakers of English in China, may seem to them to be a rejection to a compliment, but its illocutionary force of rejecting is minimal. Instead, it is more equivalent to, than distinctive from, the expression "No worries", found prevalent in data from monolingual Australians and Chinese in Australia, if given due consideration of its functions. This is because when expressions such as "Don't mention it" become highly repetitive, the original rejecting power has decreased significantly. However, the process of decreasing its original illocutionary force may take a long time, as confirmed by views from the monolingual Australian female group in interview data (see section 6.9). Therefore, it would be misleading to categorise expressions such as "Don't mention it" as either ACCEPTANCE strategies or NON-ACCEPTANCE strategies, because it may only have a neutral meaning, neither accepting or not accepting the received compliment. Bearing functional aspects of language use in mind, I categorised into the macro type OTHER INTERPRETATIONS – more specifically, the JUSTIFICATION strategy – a newly developed strategy, to represent conventional expressions or instances of compliment responses that offer clear conventional reasoning.

The strategies categorised in the macro type OTHER INTERPRETATIONS, such as INVITATION, SUGGESTION, OFFER, JUSTIFICATION and INTERJECTIONS, are often phatic expressions, especially the first three OTHER INTERPRETATION strategies, found to be more commonly used among Chinese ESL learners in China (see section 5.1.3, section 7.1.3 and section 6.9).

The level of phaticity has to some degree decreased in compliment responses of some Chinese ESL learners in Australia, as demonstrated by DCT data analysis (see section 5.1) and interview data analysis (see section 6.9). So it is arguable that Chinese participants who have been living in Australia for a while become somewhat less, phatic compared with Chinese in China, especially when they are speaking with people who belong to the target language culture. The same tendency can also be construed as becoming more sincere (see section 6.6) and direct in their speech – converging toward Australian verbal culture in terms of being direct and honest (see section 6.7). Meanwhile,

a decrease in the level of phaticity, and an increase in the level of sincerity and directness, also signify a tendency to decreasing the level of modesty (see section 6.8). This is because the expression of modesty in Chinese culture can often be phatic. While forming this argument, I am aware that there are Chinese ESL participants in Australia who may not show obvious tendencies in decreasing their relatively stronger phatic conventions developed in China, which could be attributed to personal factors, such as varying intentions for immigration to Australia.

The major findings in this study in response to the first research question are: ESL learners who have come to Australia approximate to monolingual Australians in their compliment responses in English at a formal level (length of response, formality, formulaity and linguistic repertoire) and at functional level (level of sincerity, level of directness, level of modesty and level of phaticity). Although multiple sources of evidence are found to support this claim, there is diversity in terms of individual preferences. In terms of methodology, theoretically and empirically speaking, formal and functional perspectives of compliment responses should be considered, irrespective of which research methods are used in intercultural communication.

The four formal and four functional aspects explained above are selected from a pool of key concepts to describe the matter of change in language use in an intercultural context, in the case of this study, Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses in English. The main formal and functional aspects outlined in the research questions are by no means exhaustive to represent all facets of language use, but they provide critical channels to investigate language use in an intercultural context. So they are able to represent change in language use only to a certain degree.

8.2 Gender and compliment topic

Both gender differences of the complimenter and the complimentee, as well as differences in compliment topics, are influential factors that account for change in language use in all circumstances. Differences in gender and compliment topics are two kinds of variables examined in this study. Compared with the gender of complimentees, gender of the complimenter is very much under-researched. In this study, gender of the complimenter is found to play a significant role in influencing both male and female compliment responses. Certain compliment topics are likely to prompt certain compliment responses. Other factors, such as how a compliment is paid, may also influence compliment response strategies.

8.2.1 Gender of the complimenter and complimentee

Gender difference of complimenters and complimentees is a common factor that influences speech behaviours across participant groups. As shown in the interview data analysis (section 6.2), Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia and monolingual Australians have made similar comments in the context of responding to compliments. Male interviewees across geographical locations comment that they are more likely to use manly or humorous speech styles with males, but speak more carefully and politely with females. Females across all groups recall that they are more likely to be more talkative and return similar compliments to females, rather than to males, to avoid being mistaken as flirtatious. There is evidence from three macro groups showing that complimentees feel happier when the compliment is from the opposite gender.

The gender of the complimenter is clearly a factor that can determine the compliment responses (see section 6.2). DCT data analysis and role-play data analysis also demonstrate that the gender of the complimenter is able to cause variations in CR strategies among participants from the same region or cross-culturally. As the effect of the complimenter's gender is often related to how the compliment is paid, in light of humour, directness and tone of voice, I will not make generalised claims here. Therefore, the results in this study will not be suitable to support Yuan's (1998) finding that the gender of the speaker has less decisive effect compared with the gender of the complimentee.

Merged results from Chapters 5 to 7 show that males tend to opt for masculine speech styles in CRs in situations when the complimenter is a male whereas opt for less masculine speech styles with a female complimenter. Chinese in Australia have become more aware of possibilities of portraying same-sex attraction, which does not seem to bother Chinese in China as much. Monolingual Australian males also commented on the less likelihood of giving or receiving compliments from the same gender, worrying about being perceived as same-sex attraction. Data from females across all groups have not mentioned concerns about being regarded as homosexual. Females tend to use feminine speech features, and are more likely to return compliments back to a female complimenter, but reluctant to reciprocate compliments to male complimenters. The findings in this study only partially confirm Tannen's (1990) claim that males tend to treat conversational interactions as either asserting their independence and social power, whereas females tend to treat conversation as ways of connecting with others, and less assertive. For example, when the complimentee is a female, Chinese in China males mentioned that their speech will soften and become gentler, to show politeness to females.

Yuan (1998) finds that Chinese males are less overt than women in complimenting behaviours in Mandarin regarding general statements, and women were more attentive to the interlocutors' face than men, by being appreciative of the compliments, and by giving abundant supportive moves. Again, results from my study partially agree with Yuan's (1998) results. Yuan's study is conducted in a monocultural environment, whereas the present study involves intercultural comparisons. The degree of overtness, which is similar to the degree of sincerity or directness in this study, is fluid, and contingent on the specific conditions of the conversational context. Chinese males in Australia may have become more overt because of their interaction with monolingual Australians, and they exceeded the degree of overtness among Chinese in China. Therefore, the results of the present study are only comparable to previous research to a certain degree.

8.2.2 Compliment topic

Different compliment topics have resulted in different distributions of CR strategies as discussed in sections 5.3 and 7.3, which is similar to Lin et al.'s (2012) view that compliment topic is a more influential variable than the variable of region. Similar to formulaic structures in compliments found by other researchers (e.g. Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Ye, 1995; Holmes, 1988), compliment responses are likely to be formulaic depending on the compliment topic and conversational context. In this study, rather than appearance, performance, and possession, it is found that personality compliments prompted formulaic responses, such as JUSTIFICATION strategies, across all groups. Among these responses, Chinese in China tend to use the expression "You're welcome" or "It's my pleasure", whereas Chinese in Australia tend to use a mixture of "No worries", "Cheers" and "You're welcome", and monolingual Australians tend to use only "No worries" or "Cheers". This shows that Chinese speakers of English in Australia have acquired the most prevalent use of conventional responses in Australia. The compliment topic of possession has generated CRs that revealed the least salient cross-gender variations across all groups, suggesting that males and females tend to respond to possession compliments similarly.

8.3 Summary

In this chapter, I summarised the results of the mixed methods study, and provided answers to the two research questions that became evident in this study. I presented a resynthesised description of changes in Chinese ESL learners' compliment responses in the target language environment, i.e. Chinese ESL learners in Australia approximate to the target culture in their compliment responses on formal and functional levels (section 8.1). At a

formal level, four aspects are categorised as critical aspects of change in language use: length of response, formality, formulaity, and linguistic repertoire (section 8.1.1). At a functional level, four critical aspects of change in language use are also categorised: level of phaticity, level of directness, level of modesty, and level of sincerity). In section 8.2, the effect of gender variations and compliment topics was discussed.

In regards to the first research question, it can be summarised that Chinese ESL learners in Australia have approximated to monolingual Australians in their compliment responses at both a formal and a functional level, in comparison with Chinese ESL learners in China. However, to what degree Chinese ESL learners in Australia approximate to the target language environment strongly depends on the individual speaker's personality, or personal efforts made in improving their L2, and also various contextual factors. In regards to the second research question, it can be summarised that both the complimenter's and the complimentee's gender type, and also compliment topics, cause variations in compliment responses of Chinese ESL learners, regardless of where they are.

In the following chapter, I will conclude by summarising signs of approximation among Chinese ESL learners in Australia, and recalling the relevance of the findings in this study for the field of intercultural pragmatics (see section 9.1), pointing out limitations of the study, suggesting what remains to be investigated further (see section 9.2), and providing some final remarks (see section 9.3).

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Persons choose to do research because they have a dream that somehow they will make a difference in the world through the insights and understandings they arrive at. But it is not enough to dream. Dreams must be brought to fruition. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.20)

This study aims at empirically investigating whether, and how, Chinese ESL learners change their language use in an intercultural context, more specifically, in terms of responding to compliments in English. The intercultural context in this study is a study-abroad context for the Chinese ESL learners. This study is a cross-sectional study, and as such I will not be able to report findings in terms of the development of individual Chinese ESL learners in different learning environments, as would be possible in a longitudinal study. However, this study does allow me to draw valuable inferences about changes in language use in Chinese ESL learners in Australia, based on the differences across groups with regards to their compliment responses in English. In the following sections, I will first briefly summarise the relevance of my study in the context of intercultural pragmatics (section 9.1). Then, I will point out limitations of this study, and outline areas for future research (section 9.2). Finally, I will make some concluding remarks on this study (section 9.3).

9.1 Relevance of the findings

Even though the Chinese ESL learners and monolingual Australians featured in this study are not representative of all speakers of English for an intercultural enquiry, the research has discovered a number of critical findings. The signs of change in language use that I examined in this study are defined as approximation toward the target culture by Chinese ESL learners in Australia. I used a resynthesised framework to describe change in language use – approximation at both a formal and a functional level (see section 8.1). This framework can be generalised to other contexts that involve intercultural communication between English L1 speakers and second language learners. As data analysis in Chapters 5 to 7 suggest approximation may take place in various ways, including both a formal level of change (length of response, formality, formulaity and linguistic repertoire) and a functional level of change (level of sincerity, level of directness, level of modesty and level of phaticity). When performing as active agents in intercultural communication, Chinese ESL learners both learn from, and contribute to, the multilingual target language environment. They accommodate salient language features from the target environment, acculturate to the target language environment by gradually embracing cultural norms

behind certain speech conventions, and adjust the amount of pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 according to specific conversational situations. Chinese ESL learners in Australia tailor their compliment response strategies in English based on their increasing pragmatic awareness. Meanwhile, Chinese ESL learners negotiate their identity in the target culture in terms of how much they should hold onto their own cultural heritage and speech conventions. The line between involuntary approximation toward the target culture and intentional accommodation of what is new and exciting for them in the target culture is fluid and invisible.

As discussed in section 3.2, only certain aspects have been explored regarding whether and how exposure to an English-speaking environment influences ESL speakers of English (e.g. Lai, 2009). Such aspects of exploration often focus on investigating language behaviour at a formal level, which can often be seen directly from elicited data. However, what the speakers really mean, in specific conversational contexts, which I call functional aspects of language use, cannot be easily concluded based on written data alone. Therefore, this thesis makes a contribution to the body of empirical research in intercultural pragmatics based on its implementation of mixed methods that integrate the elicitation methods of discourse completion task (DCT), audio-recorded interview that allows the researcher to explore reflections of the speakers, as well as video-recorded role play to gather verbal data which is more close to naturally occurring data. The results advance current intercultural pragmatic research a step forward by (1) updating existing theoretical frameworks in intercultural communication, (2) revealing the challenges in categorising speech acts in intercultural contexts, (3) raising questions in terms of describing change in language use in ESL learners caused by direct contact with the target environment, and (4) discarding existing misassumptions and stereotypes held by ESL learners to different degrees. Further, the results of this study highlight the complex nature of intercultural pragmatic research and the issue of comparability. What is more, this study can serve for ESL teachers and learners to achieve a relatively more comprehensive understanding of what is happening in their L2 development, in light of the effect of an intercultural environment. Finally, cross-cultural communicators may consider the findings useful in accounting for similarities and differences in diverse communication styles.

Firstly, my findings illuminate the deep-down commonalities shared by English speakers from different cultural backgrounds, which are often covered by the often-over-emphasised differences at a formal level. Norms from different cultures reflected in formulaic language are often regarded as separate entities distinctive from one another.

However, reality may highlight evidence for shared similarity, as much as for differences. This is true, at the very least, in regards to those norms that are relevant to the case of responding to compliments amongst English as L1 or L2 speakers. Linguistic features evident in the language use of English L1 speakers and ESL learners seem drastically different on the surface; they can be easily mistaken as verifications of different cultural norms. Although linguistic forms from different groups are mismatching, they could be motivated by similar cultural pragmatic norms operating behind the scenes. Reflections of language use across participant groups strongly suggest that it is necessary to investigate formal aspects of language use together with functional aspects (see section 8.1). No matter how different linguistic choices are made across participant groups on the surface, it is arguable that English speakers across cultures share the motivation of wanting to achieve propriety in their speech.

Secondly, my findings emphasise the functional aspects of language use, and their connection with literal meanings at a formal level. The differentiation between formal and functional aspects of language use is often determined by the degree of phatic communication. DCT data analysis reveals similar tendencies across all the groups in terms of the overall occurrences of compliment response strategies, but differences in length of response, degrees of formality, formulaity, and linguistic repertoire (expressions or choice of words). Speakers from different cultural groups in this study are often found to have the ability or potential to be sincere or insincere, to be direct or indirect, to be modest to less modest, and to be phatic or truthful. It could be concluded that all participants carry out different linguistic moves to varying degrees, depending on the specific conversational contexts.

Thirdly, my findings show that all the participants groups have a limited amount of understanding of "the other" – speaker groups that are relatively more foreign to them – which often causes overgeneralisations or stereotypes (see Chapter 6). These overgeneralisations or stereotypes are often factors that influence speakers' employment of different linguistic strategies. Interview data analysis in this thesis is an approach that goes beyond the written or verbal forms of language. Reflections and perceptions of language use among Chinese ESL learners in Australia over time is a process of becoming critical of their own assumptions of "what the foreigners actually do", and overthrowing stereotypes they have developed or accumulated over time in their home country.

In comparison with DCT data analysis, role play data analysis reveals factors that facilitate linguistic choices or expressing the desired illocutionary forces. Both DCT data and role-play data can be regarded as different forms of linguistic choices or realisations of the common beliefs shared by all participantsas confirmed by interview data. What I would like to clarify is that the often taken-for-granted beliefs in terms of pragmatic or cultural differences between ESL and English L1 speakers are nothing but different degrees of realising similar motives or desires relating to social conventions.

Overall, Chinese in China, Chinese in Australia, and monolingual Australians, have shown both similarities and differences in their linguistic choices to respond to compliments in English. Phatic communication seems to be a prevalent speech style both in Chinese culture and in Australian culture. The difference is that Chinese in Australia seem to have reduced their degree of phatic communication after interacting with monolingual Australians. Monolingual Australians also use phatic communication styles, but to a lesser extent. The evaluation of the degree of consideration of the cultural value "modesty" also lends support to this claim. The similarities, or the similar functional aspects, expressed by different participant groups are often unseen, because of the different linguistic realisations at a formal level. The differences at a formal level include the length of responses, degree of formality, degree of formulaity, and the utilisation linguistic repertoire. There are also other factors, as revealed by video-recorded role play data, such as tone of voice (intonation), body language, and facial expressions (Chapter 7).

The similarities across all the groups can be summarised as existing norms to use polite and modest strategies, and to care for the fellow speaker's face wants. The findings of this research reinforce some parts of the speech act theory (Austin, 1975). The functional aspects of language use investigation in this study are inspired by existing literature, such as direct and indirect speech acts, illocutionary force carried by different speech acts, implicature and politeness.

This study has not taken into account minority groups in China who speak different languages and have their own distinguishable minority cultures, or other multilingual Australians such as indigenous Australians. Therefore, generalisations of findings of this research to other contexts can be problematic. Nevertheless, it has raised various issues in pragmatic research, such as dealing with confounding variables. It also provides a useful tool for language researchers, cross-cultural communicators, relevant policy makers, and teachers of pragmatics.

9.2 Beyond this study

Even though my study has brought to light some interesting and critical aspects on change in language use in an intercultural context, there are still many areas to be further investigated. First of all, change in language use in an intercultural context among Chinese ESL learners needs to be further explored. The findings of this research suggest that new research that reflects current dynamics of intercultural communication needs to be done in order to update or advance existing theoretical frameworks. Researchers often tend to approach change in language use based on the assumption that ESL learners are subjects who need to absorb or take something away from the native speakers in terms of language development, or acculturate toward the target culture by adopting certain cultural values. As shown in Chapter 6, there are obvious misassumptions among Chinese ESL learners about English L1 speakers. Comparing CR strategies and reflections of CR strategies between Chinese ESL learners and monolingual Australians is a very effective way to find out the differences between the linguistic practices in reality and linguistic practices in ESL learners' assumptions. Since misassumptions or stereotypes to some degree dictate ESL learners' language behaviour, ESL learners can improve their overall intercultural pragmatic competence if they become aware of the differences between what is practised in reality and what is assumed to be reality. Therefore, further research in this area will continue to assist the overall enhancement of L2 proficiency as well as speakers' intercultural pragmatic competence.

Secondly, although this research has strived to use data collection techniques to gather data that reveal body language, facial expressions and tone of voice, and has confirmed their obvious impact on CR strategies, the amount of data is very limited, due to pragmatic reasons. More research needs to be done in order to study nonverbal acts or tone of voice more thoroughly. Future research designs may allow for more conversational turns in order to study body language in specific discursive contexts. Further, even though the gender of the complimenter has been considered in the role play, the complimenters are participants with similar ethnic background. Complimenters with different ethnicities may have an impact on the CR strategies used. Future research can also carry out experimental designs to explore such areas.

Thirdly, even though this study has used mixed research methods to improve overall validity and acquire more insights on the investigated subject matter, CR frequencies among Chinese ESL learners reported in this study should be treated as referential evidence to determine the degree of approximation toward the target culture.

This is because there are factors that impact their length of responses (e.g. the participants' personal interest in the research topic). Even though I have modified the DCT based on previous researchers' suggestions, with the aim of prompting longer responses, the fact that participants are not paid to do the DCT questionnaire may result in some people's low level of commitment in reading the relatively longer scenarios designed in the questionnaire. Though I have tried to design a version of the questionnaire to suit all participant groups, some situations completely embraced by Chinese in China may seem to be slightly too formal, or excessive, to monolingual Australians, due to different speech conventions.

Finally, other unexplored areas that may become interesting research projects include how external factors (such as others' comments about the speaker's accent) and internal factors (if the speaker becomes willing to adopt more salient speech styles from the target culture) influence speakers' language behavior. Reflections of "nativeness" among Chinese speakers of English in China and in Australia might be interesting to explore as well. This study is a cross-sectional study that represents a slice of the world of intercultural communication. Researchers may acquire more insights with a longitudinal design from a cross-cultural perspective that follows the participants for a considerable amount of time.

9.3 Final remarks

Instead of confirming or verifying those hypotheses that were in my mind before I started this research, this study has overthrown many of my assumptions and stereotypes regarding the phenomenon of change in language use among Chinese ESL learners due to direct contact with an L2 environment. By unveiling the complexity and diversity of language use, and reflections of change in language use in different contexts, this study adds insights to the ever-dynamic field of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication, or intercultural pragmatics, as a field of enquiry, could be viewed as a fluid web of ideas and thoughts co-constructed by the speakers involved, by connecting dots of speech conventions and cultural norms.

What readers or cross-cultural communicators can take away from this research is that there is no golden rule to apply in the rather dynamic complexities of intercultural communication. It is stereotyping and naive to make any claim that is based on the assumption that the target language, or the target language environment, is static and unchanging. The "targeted" language environment is a hybrid, international and

multicultural context after all. So Chinese ESL learners should not expect to only co-construct language behaviours with monolingual Australians but also expect to open their mind for the internationalisation of English language use. Such kind of open-mindedness does not necessarily mean they are in an intercultural context to become like the monolingual speakers of English but to embrace diverse sources of stimulation in developing their pragmalinguistic skills. It might be helpful for cross-cultural communicators to move away from the focus of stressing cultural differences, and trying to understand the other (e.g. "the foreigners" for Chinese ESL learners in China and in Australia), but rather to move back to understanding misassumptions or serotypes carried by the speaker himself or herself. If speakers are able to detect stereotypes and misassumptions about what L1 English speakers do, intercultural communicative or pragmatic competence can be improved.

It is not unreasonable to argue that intercultural pragmatics is ultimately about the understanding of cultural pragmatic norms. Cultural differences are often based on stereotypes of individuals, and can be reinforced by researchers who have conducted research with limited data collection techniques. Conventions or rules of communication that have been discovered by researchers may be subject to change if examined with different conceptual frameworks. With a somewhat reframed and transformed mind, I would like to end my thesis by resonating with Strauss and Corbin (2008):

> At this point I am not satisfied that the "quality" is what I expect of myself as a researcher, though I think that the findings that I have arrived at are "credible." I think it would be interesting for students and readers of this text to do an evaluation of the study and to point out the flaws. (p. 311).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Summary of Empirical Studies on Complimenting Behaviour

Author & Year	Language	Method	Subjects & Sample Size	Speech acts	Variables	Theoretical Focus
Pomerantz (1978)	(Am) English	N/A	N/A	CR	CR strategies	N/A
Wolfson & Manes (1980)	(Am) English	Ethnography (note-taking)	950 Cs	C	Syntax, C functions	Social function
Manes & Wolfson (1981)	(Am) English	Ethnography	686 Cs	C	C formulas, semantic, syntactic, discourse features	N/A
Wolfson (1981a)	(Am) English other languages	Ethnography (note-taking)	N/A	C	Different languages	Cross-cultural
Wolfson (1981b)	(Am) English	Ethnography (note-taking)	686 Cs	C &invitation	Structures, functions	Communicative competence
Valdes & Pino (1981)	(Am) English Mexican Spanish	Ethnography (note-taking, recordings), Tr	N/A	CR	Response strategies	Comparative, monolingual bilingual, rules of politeness
Manes (1983)	(Am) English	N/A	N/A	C & CR	Compliment topics, response strategies	Social values, cultural values
Wolfson (1983a)	(Am) English	Ethnography	About 1,000 Cs	C	C functions, status, sex	Speech community
Sims (1984)	(Am) English	Ethnography	150 C sequences	C & CR	Status, gender	Modesty
Mulkay (1984)	Hybrid English	Media	39 lectures 20 speeches	C & CR	C adjectives, CR strategies	Positive descriptors, ceremonial discourse

Knapp, Hopper & Bell (1984)	(Am) English	Interview	58 interviewees (116 CRs); 396 interviewees (768 Cs &CRs); 65 interviewees	C & CR	Topics, age, syntactic forms, response strategies, gender, status, position in discourse	Compliment taxonomy
Barnland & Araki (1985)	(Am) English Japanese	Interview (semi-structured), Questionnaire Tr	20 Americans, 18 Japanese in U.S, 18 Japanese in Japan (for interview); 260 Americans in U.S, 260 Japanese in Japan (for questionnaire)	C & CR	rate of occurrence, sex, status of partner, responses, C themes, attributes, CR content	Intercultural
Herbert (1986)	(Am) English	Combination (Ethnography & Experiment)(note-taking)	1062 CRs Undergraduate Sts	C & CR	Topics, settings, frequency of occurrence of CR types	N/A
Holmes (1986)	(NZ) English	Ethnography	Over 500 C exchanges	C & CR	Status, syntactic patterns, functions, discourse contexts, position in discourse	Speech acts, politeness,
Daikuhara (1986)	Japanese (Am) English	Ethnography (observation) Tr	50 middle-class Japanese subjects 115 Cs	C & CR	praise attributes (topics), linguistic patterning	Japanese language, comparative, politeness, modesty
Holmes & Brown (1987)	(NZ) English	Ethnography (corpus analysis)	200 compliments	C	C topics, functions, position in discourse, status, contexts	Sociolinguistic competence, pragmalinguistic failure, sociopragmatic failure instruction

Yang (1987)	(Am) English Mandarin	Ethnography (note-taking, audio-taping), Tr	67 C sequences	C &CR	CR strategies, C topic	Address forms, greetings, farewells, modesty, values
Holmes (1988)	(NZ) English	Ethnography (note-taking, corpus analysis)	450+ C exchanges	C	Gender, topics, status, position in discourse, syntactic patterns, lexicon, functions	Politeness, cross-cultural
Sims (1989)	(Am) English	Experiment (quasi-natural recording)	150 C sequences	C& CR	Status, position in discourse, topic, formula	Rapport
Herbert & Straight (1989)	(Am) English (SA) English	Ethnography (note-taking)	1062 (AE) CRs 492 (SAE) CRs	C & CR	Response types, functions	Comparative social values
Billmyer (1990)	English by Japanese learners	Experiment (semi-natural conversation partners program)	18 ESLs	C & CR	Frequency of norm-appropriate Cs, level of spontaneity, level of appropriateness length of reply	Instruction of social rules of language use
Herbert (1990)	(Am) English	Ethnography (note-taking)	1062 CRs	C & CR	Gender, personal focus, syntactic patterns, response strategies	Sex-based differences, sociopragmatics, ethnography of speaking
Johnson (1992)	(Am) English	Media (Written texts, peer reviews)	51 ESL texts (by graduate Sts) 256 Cs	C	C frequency, C forms, C strategies, C functions	Politeness,
Han (1992)	Korean (Am) English	Ethnography (field notes) Interview Tr	10 Korean Sts (F) 10 American Sts (F)	C & CR	Language variety, CR strategies, frequency of occurrence of response types	Pragmatic transfer

Tsuda (1992)	(Am) English Japanese	N/A Tr	N/A	C	C functions	English hyperbole, Japanese humility
Johnson & Roen (1992)	(Am) English	Media (written text)	Media (written texts, 47 texts)	C	Gender, position, discourse strategies, personal focus	Politeness, cross-sex communication
Ylanne-McEwen (1993)	(Br) English Finish Finish English	Role-play (recorded); Tr	20 British females 30 Finish females	C	Length of C, syntactic structure	Cross-cultural, pragmatic transfer
O'connor (1993)	(Am) English	Media (texts from ESL/EFL textbooks)	21 textbooks	C & gratitude CR	Length of utterance, degree of implicity (implicit vs explicit), CR types, C function	Presentation of speech acts in written discourse
Chen (1993)	(Am) English Xi'an Chinese	Questionnaire (4) Tr	50 (Am) College Sts (339 responses); 50 Chinese (292 CRs)	CR	Relations of interlocutors	Linguistic politeness, social values
Gajaseni (1994)	(Am) English Thai; Tr	Combination [Oral DCT (16) + Interview]	40 American Sts in the U. S; 40 Thai Sts in Thailand	CR	Gender, social status, CR strategies, gender of fictitious complimenter	Comparative, gender, speech act theory
Jaworski (1995)	Polish	Ethnography (note-taking)	252 compliments	C& CR	Functions	The expression of solidarity
Holmes (1995a)	(NZ) English	Ethnography	484 compliments and compliment responses	C & CR	Status, gender, C functions, C frequency	Politeness

Wieland (1995)	French	Combination [Ethnography+ Interview]	7 audio-recorded conversations (15 Americans+16 French); 32 French interview participants + 30 American interview participants)	C & CR Perception	Frequency of occurrence, functions	Face, politeness cross-cultural implicit compliment
Nelson, Bakary & Batal (1995)	(Am) English Egyptian Arabic	Interview (retrospective, audiotaping); Tr	20 Egyptian Sts in Egypt; 20 American Sts in U.S	C	Frequency, C attributes, gender	Comparative, communicative competence
Cordella, Large & Pardo (1995)	Spanish (Au) English	Ethnography (note-taking, collected by 3 females) Tr	Monolingual Celtic Australians (148 examples) Spanish speakers (48 examples)	C	Frequency of Cs, dyads, social power, age, educational & economic background, ethnicity, position in discourse	Wolfson's Bulge Theory, insincere Cs
Baba (1996)	Japanese (Am) English (Am) Japanese Japanese English	Combination [Questionnaire+ Ethnography (recording)], Tr	60 participants (12 native Americans, 14 native Japanese, 17 Japanese ESLs, 17 American JSLs), with 30-60 minutes' conversations each	C& CR	Topic, target the intensity of C, gender, length of stay	Politeness (P,N), sociolinguistic convention, humility
Yuan (1996)	(Am) English (Ch) English	Questionnaire Tr	20 Chinese Sts in U.S. 14 Chinese Sts in China 12 Native Americans	CR	Length of stay, semantic formula	Speech accommodation theory

Jeon (1996)	Korean Korean English (Am) English	Combination [DCT+Interview (informal)] Tr	19 college Sts in Korea; 19 Korean EFLs in Korea;18 Korean ESLs in U.S; 21 American Sts	C & CR	C topics, syntactic patterns, learning environment	Pragmatic competence, second language development, politeness, pragmatic transfer
Nelson, Batal, & Echols (1996)	Arabic (Am) English	Combination[Ethnography (note-taking)+Interview] Tr	52 Arabs 87 Americans	CR	CR strategies, gender, length of CR	Communicative competence, cross-cultural, contrastive
Kryston-Morales (1997)	Spanish (Am) English Tr	Combination [Ethnography+DCT+ Metapragmatic assessment questionnaire]	221 Sts for DCT; 25 in New York, U.S; 25 in Puerto Rico (in English); 25 in Puerto Rico (in Spanish)	C & CR	Gender, intensifiers, position in discourse	Nativeness
Saito & Beecken (1997)	Japanese (Am) English	Combination [Role-play (closed)+ Interview (post hoc informal)],Tr	10 Japanese ESLs in U.S; 10 American Natives; 10 American learners of Japanese	CR	Semantic formula, CR strategies	Pragmatic transfer,
Lang (1998a)	(Am) English Mandarin	Questionnaire (open-ended, 5-point Likert scale) Tr	62 ML Chinese students 52 questionnaires	C & CR, perception	Status, gender, compliment types, perceptions, responses to (Am) Cs	Politeness

Fong (1998)	(Am) English Chinese	Interview (semi-structured)	39 (18 HK, 14 TW, 7 Mainland)	C & CR, perception	Topics	Perception, semantic dimensions, intent, CR
Yuan (1998)	Kunming Chinese	Combination [DCT+ Oral DCT+Interview+ Ethnography (notebook)]	185 informants	C& CR	Gender, age, social status, functions, topics, personal focus, educational level	Sociolinguistic dimensions, variation theory
Yu (1999)	(Am) English (TW) Mandarin	Combination [DCT (6)+Interview+ Ethnography], Tr	128 college Sts	C& CR	Gender, strategy, topic, status	Speech act theory, face, politeness, cultural difference
Boyle (2000)	(Br) English	Ethnography	About 150 hours of natural audio-and video-recorded conversation	C	Interpretation procedure	Implicit compliment, phaticity, documentary method
Rose & Kwai-fun (2001)	English Cantonese	Questionnaire Tr	16 Sts in deductive group;16 Sts in inductive group;15 Sts in control group	C & CR	CR strategies, instruction methods	N/A
Rose (2001)	(Ca) English	Media (Film data)	40 films; 408 Cs; 132 Cs & CRs	C & CR	Gender, syntactic forms, C topics	N/A
Lorenzo-Dus (2001)	(Br) English Spanish	Questionnaire [DCT (9), 2 versions], Tr	32 Spanish Sts 20 British Sts	CR	Gender	Contrastive, politeness

Spencer-Oatey & Ng (2001)	(Br) English (ML) Mandarin (HK) Mandarin	Questionnaire (multiple-choice) Tr	172 British; 168 Mainland Chinese; 158 HK Chinese	reactions to CR	CR criticisms	Modesty
Farghal & Al-Khatib (2001)	Jordanian Arabic	Ethnography (note-taking)	268 responses from undergraduate Sts	CR	Gender	Politeness, FTA, socio-cultural differences attitudes and values
Aakhus & Aldrich (2002)	(Am) English	Experiment (semi-naturalised)	2 C corpora (34 Sts, 136 C sequences	C	N/A	Felicity, face
Payne et al., (2002)	(Am) English	Questionnaire	28 Sts	C & CR	C motives	Kraft & Martin motives
Pexman & Olineck (2002)	(Ca) English	Questionnaire (rating task)	60 Sts (with 46 Fs)	C	Perceptions of ironic insults & compliments	Irony, politeness
Golato (2002)	German (Am) English	Ethnography (conversation analysis); Tr	25 hours' video-recorded conversations, 6 hours' audio recording of telephone conversations	CR	N/A	Comparative, cross-cultural
Yoko (2003)	Japanese	Ethnography; Tr	15 Japanese (20 conversation exchanges,8 Fs & 7 Ms)	CR	CR strategies	Comparative cultural & social values, laughter, modesty

Golato (2003)	German	Combination [DCT+ Ethnography]	25 hours video recording of natural conversation 6 hours' telephone conversations	C & CR	CR strategies	Research methods
Lin (2003)	(Am) English Chinese (ML, HK, TW)	Questionnaire	30 Americans 30 Chinese	C & CR	Gender, social distance, C topic, CR strategy	Politeness, pragmatic competence,
Yu (2003)	(TW) Mandarin (Am) English	Ethnography (intuition) Tr	N/A	CR	CR strategies	face, politeness, cultural difference
Migdadi (2003)	Joranian Arabic	Combination [Ethnography+ Role-play (15 situations, open+closed)]	802 complimenting events; 103 hours of audio recording	C & CR	Syntax & lexicon, stylistic features, position in discourse, format, gender, age	Politeness, (in)directness
Chen (2003)	(TW) Mandarin	Questionnaire [DCT(8)], Tr	60 college students (745 responses)	CR	Status, relationship, frequency of occurrence	Politeness, function of social status
Wang & Tsai (2003)	(TW) Mandarin	Ethnography	454 compliments	C & CR	Gender, topic, syntactic pattern	Modesty
Yu (2004)	(Am) English (TW) Mandarin	Questionnaire (DCT) Tr	128 participants (32 Native Taiwanese; 32 EFL in TW; 32 ESL in U.S; 32 Native Americans)	CR	Addressee's status, gender, linguistic contexts, pragmatic constraints	Pragmatic transfer

Doohan & Manusov (2004)	(Am) English	Questionnaire [Survey (relationship assessment scale)]	163 participants (528 compliments)	C & CR	Gender	perception in romantic relationship, sex differences & similarities
Pexman & Zvaigzne (2004)	(Ca) English	Questionnaire (a pencil-and-paper ratings task, 8 scenarios)	120 undergraduates (59 F, 61 M)	C & Irony	C production, C interpretation, relationship type	Ironic insults, ironic compliments
Yu (2005)	(TW) Mandarin (Am) English	Ethnography (audio-recording) Tr	356 Chinese (410 C exchanges); 636 Americans (789 C exchanges)	C	Frequency, function, topic, interlocutor relationship, social status	Culture-specificity, universality, (in) directness cultural norms
Holtman (2005)	(Am) French ESL	Combination [Written DCT+ Interview (oral "show-and-tell")]	56 (French and American)	C	level of proficiency	Pragmatic transfer
Golato (2005)	German (Am) English	Ethnography (video and audio recordings) Tr	34 women, 27 men, 30 hours of video-recorded, non-elicited natural data, 6 hours' telephone conversation recordings (62 compliment sequences)	C &CR	Gender, topic, syntactic& semantic features,position in discourse, sequential contexts, grammatical structures	Grammatical structure, sequential organisation (design), positiveness, preference organisation

Sharifian (2005)	Persian (Au) English	Questionnaire [DCT (10), 2 versions] Tr	30 Monolingual Australians 30 Persian speakers (2/3 females in each group)	CR	N/A	Comparative, cultural schemas, modesty, collective concern, cultural conceptualisation
Parisi & Wogan (2006)	(Am) English	Interview (audiotaping)	14 college students	Cs	Gender, topic	Rules of romance, social values
Farghal & Haggan (2006)	English by Arabic students	Ethnography (note-taking) Role-play Tr	79 bilingual Kuwaiti college Sts; 632 compliment responses; 635 compliments	C & CR	N/A	Bilingualism, cross-linguistic pragmatics
Garcia et al., (2006)	(Am) English	Combination [DCT+ experiment (laboratory)]	95 Sts for study 1 90 Sts for study 2 42 Sts for study 3	C & Insults	Reactions to Cs, group level, individual level	Emotional reactions, stereotypes
Cedar (2006)	Thai (Am) English	Combination [Interview+ Ethnography (observations)]	12 American native speakers (6M + 6F) (74 CR); 12 Thai (6M + 6F)(68 CR)	CR	Gender, CR strategies	Pragmatic transfer, smile
Petit (2006)	French	Ethnography	8 conversations (4 F only+4 M only)	C & CR	Gender, functions of C/CR	Gender, C functions, femininity

Huth (2006)	German ESL	Ethnography (conversation analysis, audio recording)	20 American learners of German	CR	Sequence of L2	Cultural values, cultural reflection, identity, pragmatic transfer, instruction
Tiono & Nova (2007)	(Am) English	Media (Film data)	Main F and M character from movie	C & CR	Gender, social status	N/A
Ralarala (2007)	Xhosa (SA)	Combination (Questionnaire+Ethnography)	200 CRs	C & CR	Gender, C situations, topics, functions	Politeness
Tran (2007)	Vietnamese English (Au) English	Role play	60 Sts	CR	N/A	Pragmatic transfer Vietnamese speakers of English
Falasi (2007)	Emarati Arabic English (Am) English	Combination [DCT(6) Interview]	10 American Native English Speakers;10 Emarati; 6 Non English Majors	CR	Language proficiency	Pragmatic transfer (L1→L2), universal norms, misconceptions
Davis (2008)	(Au) English	Questionnaire	10 hours at shopping mall; 20 subjects (10M +10F)	CR	Gender	Sexual-intent, cross-gender
Sharifian (2008)	Persian Persian English	Questionnaire [DCT(2 versions)] Tr	30 Persian learners of English for about 3 years	CR	N/A	Cultural schemas, cultural conceptualisation

Ochiai (2008)	(Am) Japanese Japanese	Questionnaire [DCT (open) (survey, self-esteem scale, perception test)]; Tr	98 American Sts; 199 Japanese Sts; 100 responses	CR	CR strategies, level of self-enhancement	Impression management, self-enhancement, self-representation, politeness, face, pragmatic transfer
Gathman et al. (2008)	(Am) English	Experiment (interviews, corpus analysis, actual interaction)	50 digital recordings of interviews	C & CR	CR strategies	Laughter, interactive, dimension, survey research, cognitive
Tran (2008)	(Au) English Vietnamese Vietnamese English	Role-play (naturalised) Tr	20 Australian NSs; 20 Vietnamese NSs; 20 Vietnamese in Australia	CR	Combination of CR strategies	Pragmatic & discourse transfer
Mack & Sykes (2009)	Mexican & Peninsular Spanish	E-DCT (oral, includes verbal report); Tr	14 native speakers of Spanish (7 Mexicans & 7 Spanish)	CR	CR strategies, CR functions,	Positive irony, politeness system, pragmalinguistic strategies
Grossi (2009)	(Au) English	Combination [Ethnography+Media (Film)]	A variety of examples	C & CR	CR strategies, topics	Pragmatic competence
Lee (2009)	Mandarin Hokkien Cantonese Teochew	Combination [Ethnography (note-taking, audio recording)+ Questionnaire]	300 people recorded by 58 students (for natural data); 250 students (for judgement survey)	C & CR	Age, gender	Chinese, politeness, convention, phatics Chinese New Year

Tang & Zhang (2009)	(Au) English Mandarin	Questionnaire [DCT (4)]; Tr	30 Australian English native speakers; 30 Mandarin Chinese native speakers	CR	N/A	Cross-cultural, contrastive, cross-linguistic
Lai (2009)	(Am) English (Ch) English	Questionnaire	27 Americans 45 Chinese (TW & ML)	CR	Length of residence, CR strategies, gender	Chinese speakers of English, pragmatic transfer
Ishihara (2010)	Japanese English (not specified)	Combination (Ethnography+Questionnaire), Tr	N/A	CR	Context	Instruction, assessment of pragmatic development, cross-linguistic
Bu (2010b)	(ML) Mandarin English (not specified)	Role play (naturalised) Tr	10 Native English speakers, 10 Chinese learners of English, 10 native Chinese speakers (40 CRs in each group)	C & CR	CR strategy	Pragmatic transfer
Liu (2010)	(Ch) English	Questionnaire (DCT)	35 Non-English majors 47 English majors	CR	Participants' English proficiency (English Majors vs Non-English majors)	Pragmatic transfer
Chen & Yang (2010)	(Am) English Xi'an Chinese	Questionnaire (4) Tr	160 undergraduate Sts	CR	N/A	N/A
Hudak et al. (2010)	(Am) English	Ethnography (audiotaping)	59 patients & 39 surgeons; 10 compliments	C & CR	Position in discourse, C functions, CR strategies	C agenda (motives)

Agyekum (2010)	Akan	Combination [Ethnography (observation)+ Interview (introspective)]	A variety of data (e.g. advertisements on radio & TV)	C & CR	C topic, gender, function	Politeness
Anderson & Asiama-Ossom (2010)	Akan English	Combination [Ethnography (note-taking, audio recordings)+ Questionnaire (recall protocol)]	500 respondents	C & CR	Topic, gender, power status	Positive transfer
Karimnia & Afghari (2010)	(Am) English Persian	Media (TV data) Tr	32 speakers; 65 compliment sequences; 50 hours	C &CR	N/A	Comparative, natural semantic metalanguage
Mustapha (2011)	Nigerian English	Ethnography [Recall protocol (mixed dialects)]	12000 CRs	C& CR	3 schemes, CR strategies	Social norms, values
Behnam & Amizadeh (2011)	(Am) English Persian	Interview (TV interviews, corpus analysis) Tr	8 video-recorded (Am) TV interviews; 8 Persian TV interviews; 42 English C events; 101 Persian C events	C & CR	Topics, functions, CR strategies	Cross-cultural, media discourse
Dasjerdi & Farshid (2011)	Iranian English	Questionnaire [DCT (14)]	20 Sts in experimental group; 18 Sts in control group	C	Instruction approach	The effectiveness of instruction, input enhancement

Tajeddin & Ghamari (2011)	Farsi (Persian)	Questionnaire [(MAQ)Metapragmatic assessment questionnaire]	40 Farsi-speaking females	C & CR	Formulas, CR strategies	Instruction, learnability
Rees-Miller (2011)	(Am) English	Ethonography	47 Sts 267 Cs +194 Cs	C	Gender, C topics, C content, settings	Gender, phatic communication, impoliteness
Cheng (2011)	(Am) English (Ch) English	Combination[Role play+ Interview (retrospective, in Chinese)]	45 (15 NS, 15 Chinese ESL, 15 Chinese EFL)	CR	CR strategies, topic	Comparative
Yu (2011)	(TW) Mandarin (Am) English	Combination[Ethonography(note-taking)+ Experiment], Tr	TW Chinese 360 interactions Am English 360 interactions TW ESL in U.S 360 interactions	C	C functions, semantic carrier, syntactic patterns, supportive moves, small talk	Language transfer, socio-cultural competence, comparative
Maiz-Arevado (2012)	Peninsular Spanish	Ethnography (audio-recording, corpus analysis)	70 audio-recorded conversations (400 C exchanges)	C & CR	Social relationship	Pragmatic motivation, implicit compliment, politeness, face
Lin, Woodfield & Ren (2012)	(TW) Mandarin (ML) Mandarin	Questionnaire [DCT(8) (+refusals, +requests)]	60 Mainland Chinese (507 Cs); 60 Taiwanese (516 compliments)	C & Perceptions of C	Impact of region, compliment topic	Variational pragmatics, sub-national varieties, intra-lingual variation
NOTES: C = Compliment; CR = Compliment Response; DCT = Discourse Completion Task; N/A = Not Applicable; Tr = Translation Involved; Sts = Students; Am = American; Br = British; Ch = Chinese; SA = South Africa; Au = Australian; Ca = Canadian; ML = Mainland; TW = Taiwan; HK = Hong Kong; M = Male; F = Female; P = Positive; N = Negative; FTA = Face threatening act						

Appendix B – Approval of Human Research Ethics Committee

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY ~ SYDNEY

6 May 2013

Ethics Application (Ref: 5201300141) - Final Approval

Dear Prof Mollering,

Re: 'The effect of Australian culture on compliment responses of Mainland Chinese speakers of English'

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval of the above application has been granted, effective 6/05/2013. This email constitutes ethical approval only. This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research: Prof Martina Mollering, Dr Shirley Chan, and Miss Xiu Tao Li.

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:
1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 06/05/14
Progress Report 2 Due: 06/05/15
Progress Report 3 Due: 06/05/16
Progress Report 4 Due: 06/05/17
Final Report Due: 06/05/18

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before

1

implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website: http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C – DCT Questionnaire

DCT Part I for Chinese in China

PART 1:

- Age: .....
- Gender: .....
- Education Level: .....
- Where and how long have you studied English?

.....

- How do you rate your English proficiency level:

Intermediate☐ Advanced☐

- Have you ever lived in any English-speaking country? .....
- If yes, for how long? .....
- Do you have any regular interaction with any English native speakers? .....
- If yes, briefly describe.....
- Have you ever in the past had regular interaction with English native speakers? .....
- If yes, briefly describe.....
- Do you know any languages other than Mandarin and English? .....
- If yes, please name the language/s and your level of proficiency:
- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced☐

- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced☐

DCT Part I for Chinese in Australia group

PART 1:

- Age: .....
- Gender: .....
- Education Level: .....
- How long have you been living in Australia? .....
- How is the extent of your interaction with Australians[27]?

  ☐Do not work/study with monolingual Australians and rarely socialise with them
  ☐Work/study with monolingual Australians, but socialise with Chinese
  ☐Work/study with monolingual Australians and/or often socialise with them
  ☐Other –please describe.....
- Have you ever lived in any country other than Australia? .....
- If yes, where? ..... For how long? .....
- Do you know any languages other than Mandarin and English? .....
- If yes, please name the language/s and your level of proficiency:
- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate☐ Advanced☐

- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate☐ Advanced☐

[27] "Australians" hereby mean Australian monolingual speakers of English

DCT Part I for monolingual Australians

PART 1:

- Age: .....
- Gender: ....
- Education Level: .....
- Country of birth: .....
- Have you ever lived in any country other than Australia? .....
- If yes, where? ..... For how long? .....
- Do you know any languages other than English? .....
- If yes, please name the language/s and your level of proficiency:
- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced☐

- Language: .....

Basic☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced☐

DCT Part II of the questionnaire across groups

PART 2:

Thank you first for showing interest in participating in this study. You are kindly asked to fill out this questionnaire to contribute to a research project on "Language and Culture". What you are invited to do is to imagine yourself in a situation where you are being complimented by acquaintances and write down what you would say back to the compliments. There are a total number of twelve situations in this questionnaire. Compliments in the first six situations are paid by a male complimenter. Compliments in the other six situations are paid by a female complimenter. It is estimated that this questionnaire will take you 20-30 minutes.

In reply to the questions please note the followings:

- Please do this survey alone. I want to hear JUST YOUR responses.
- No need to think too much about your answers. Just imagine the situation and tell me what would be your responses.
- Your responses can be as long or as short as you personally like. You are also free to choose your own conversational style that reflects what you would say in real life situations. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. You have been studying hard for more than one year to prepare for the entrance exam to a university. When the results are released, you have achieved high marks for all of the subjects and been offered enrolment in a prestigious university. One of your classmates, Thomas, knows your results. He admires your achievement and feels happy for you. Thomas only gets an offer to go to a technical school because he did not do very well in math. He congratulates you on your success by saying: “You did so well in the entrance exam. That is the most important test after all. I am so happy for you. You are very fortunate to get an offer from such a famous university. Our teachers are pleased with your performance. Your parents must be so proud of you. Congratulations! ” (Compliment on performance by a male)

You say:

.....

2. You are taking a course called Language, Culture and Society. There are a large number of students who have chosen this course. At the end of each lesson, many students tried to ask the teacher questions. After asking some questions, your classmate, Paul, realises that

he has to catch his bus back home in a hurry. He has a few books due to return to the library which is on the way to your on-campus dormitory. You voluntarily offered to help return his books to the library for him to save time. He is very glad that you could help him. He said to you cheerfully: “Thank you very much! That is very kind of you!" (Compliment on personality by a male)
You say:
.....
3. Summer is coming and the weather is getting very hot. You decide to get a haircut with a new hairstyle. You normally do not have any special hairdo. This time you make a bold decision to colour your hair purple. Today is the first day of university after a short semester break. On the way to your classroom, you see your friend David also going to class. He does not recognise you initially. You said hi to him first and after he realises it was you, David says to you, "Hey----! Didn’t recognise you at first. Nice haircut with a perm! It looks perfect on you!" (Compliment on appearance by a male)
You say:
.....
4. It is your second year at a university. You have found a part-time tutoring job and now you can afford to buy some personal items you need. It is a long walk every day at the university from one location to another. So you bought a brand new bike. You now save a lot of time traveling around the university and you also enjoy cycling for the sake of getting fitter. Your friend Jack bumps into you in front of the library when you are about to unlock your bike and go home. He said “Hello” to you, had a brief chat about how his study is going, and he complimented on your brand new bike, "Your new bike looks so good!" (Compliment on possession by a male)
You say:
.....
5. Jim is a friend you know from an Art club at the university. He is studying Finance. You are studying biology. You are very pleased to make friends with students from different departments through joining the art club. Jim is an acquaintance that you share mutual interests with and enjoy spending time together. You wish to get to know him better. So you invite him to your home to have dinner with you during the weekend. You cook a wonderful dinner of your favourite dishes and prepare snacks and desert. Jim comes and seems to have enjoyed the dinner a lot. After dinner, he compliments your cooking skills by saying, "I really like all the food you prepared tonight. You're a fantastic cook!" (Compliment on performance by a male)
You say:
.....
6. Summer vacation is coming. Your friend’s friend Tony is planning to go back to his hometown which is in a different city far away from where your university is. He also plans to go travelling to a mountainous area for sightseeing. He will be away for about two months and needs to store some of his personal belongings away. Your home is not far from the university. When he asks if he could store his things into your home, you agree without hesitation even though you have not known him for a long time. She is very pleased to know this and says to you “What am I going to do without you? It is great to have a friend like you. You’re such a helpful person!" (Compliment on personality by a male).
You say:
.....
7. At the end of the year, you are going to a goodbye party organised by a few friends from another country. They told you to dress up beforehand as there will be some dancing activities. You are well-dressed. When you get to the party, your friend’s friend Grace, who is also dressed-up, greeted you first to welcome you to the party. Grace studies at

another university and you do not know her very well. She says to you, “Welcome to the party! You look amazing tonight in this outfit!” (Compliment on appearance by a female)
You say:
.....
8. You have bought a new iPad in your favourite colour blue. You take it to the university to take notes in a lecture theatre. An acquaintance named Jennifer, who is from another facility, has also chosen the same elective course you are attending. It is the first lecture for this course and you say hello to each other. Jennifer comes to you and sits next to you. She takes notes with her pen and notebook. She shows great interest in what you are doing with your iPad. You show her how to organise files, play games, take pictures, and take notes with iPad. She says to you, “your iPad is so useful. I never know it can do so many things. You are good at keeping up with modern technology!” (Compliment on possession by a female).
You say:
.....
9. One of the compulsory courses you have chosen requires each student to submit a mid-term essay. The teacher tells you that this essay will account for 40% of the overall marks for this course. Most students would take this seriously and put a lot of time and efforts in to it. You try your best to do it. The teacher marks the essay and returns them to all the students. You have got very positive comments about the structure and content and a high mark. All your classmates are discussing their essay results. You share your result with Amanda who is sitting next to you. Amanda also receives a good mark, and some feedback about her strengths and weaknesses in writing. Amanda reads your essay and says to you afterwards, “Your essay is indeed impressive. You're very intelligent and knowledgeable!" (Compliment on performance by a female).
You say:
.....
10. You have attended a lecture. During the group activities, you talk with other students about many interesting topics of this lecture. After the lecture ends, you decide to have lunch together in the student cafeteria and continue your conversation. As you find out one of the friends, Vicky, needs to buy a book for her computing class. You know a bookshop that has that book and offers discounts to everyone who becomes a membership. You tell Vicky where the bookshop is and how to get there. Vicky says to you, “it’s great to talk to you, otherwise I wouldn’t know where to buy the book!" (Compliment on personality by a female)
You say:
.....
11. On graduation day, all students are attending the ceremony. All of the students at the graduation ceremony are wearing academic dress. Your peers around you are very excited. Some of them are talking about how different the graduates look compared to the first day they step into the university. You join their conversation and one of them named Vivian says to you excitingly, “You look so much more mature now compared to a few years ago. The academic dress makes you look like a great leader!” (Compliment on appearance by a female)
You say:
.....
12. You have a high-quality video camera. In your university, not many students have cameras or video cameras. You have bought it because you are majoring in media and film studies. During the semester, your flatmate’s friend Sallie wants to borrow it from you for making a film on campus. She is a new student studying the same major but she has not bought her own video camera yet. You lend your video camera to her for a week. After she finishes using it, she returns the video camera back to you, and says, “Thank you for

lending me the camera. Your video camera is really good. It makes high-quality videos and it is easy to use! (Compliment on possession by a female)
You say:
.....
Please write down if you have any comments about this questionnaire or any other thoughts about compliments and compliment responses.

.....
.....

Thank you again for your time!

Appendix D – Interview

Introduction for the interview across groups

In this interview, you are kindly invited to discuss your perceptions and understandings about compliment responses in English. There are ten questions that you will discuss with the researcher. Discussions on each question should take five minutes. You are encouraged to recall some of your own experiences about receiving compliments in your daily conversations, and share your personal opinion about why speech behaviours occur as the way they do. This interview will be carried out in ENGLISH ONLY.

Interview questions for Chinese ESL learners residing in China

1. Do you feel that you have fewer choices when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin? Please explain why and add any other comments.
2. What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English? When you respond to compliments, do you think about values such as modesty? Please explain why and add any other comments.
3. In your opinion, what is an ideal response to a compliment in English? Please explain why and add any other comments.
4. Would you respond differently according to the gender of your complimenter?
5. What are some of the implicit (indirect) complimenting behaviours (compliments or compliment responses) that you have noticed in your everyday conversations with others? Do you think that they are difficult to express in English? How would do you respond to compliments in an implicit (indirect) way? Please explain why and add any other comments.
6. Do you often respond to compliments insincerely or sincerely? Please explain why and add any other comments.
7. Do you think monolingual Australian English speakers always accept compliments by saying "thank you"? Please explain why and add any other comments.
8. Do you think that in many situations saying "no, no…" to compliments is equal to saying "thank you" as a response to compliments? Please explain why and add any other comments.
9. Do you think that many comments in response to compliments are just phatic communication (Hanxuan 寒暄: speech or utterances that serve to establish or maintain social relationships or create an atmosphere of shared feelings, goodwill or sociability rather than to impart information, communicate ideas) and the statements are not sincere? Would this cause misunderstanding? Please explain why and add any other comments.
10. Do you think living in the Australian English environment will make your responses become more similar to monolingual Australian English speakers' speech behaviour? Please explain why and add any other comments.

Interview questions for Chinese ESL learners residing in Australia

1. Do you feel that you have fewer choices when responding to compliments in English than in Mandarin? Please explain why and add any other comments.
2. Do you think that in many situations saying "no, no…" to compliments is equal to saying "Thank you" as a response to compliments? Please explain why and add any other comments.
3. Do you think that many comments in response to compliments are just phatic communication (Hanxuan 寒暄: speech or utterances that serve to establish or maintain

social relationships or create an atmosphere of shared feelings, goodwill or sociability rather than to impart information, communicate ideas) and the statements are not sincere? Would this cause misunderstanding? Please explain why and add any other comments.

4. What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English in Australia? Do you hesitate or have difficulty in making choices between Chinese ways and Australian ways? When you respond to compliments, do you think about values such as modesty? Please explain why and add any other comments.
5. In your opinion, what is an ideal response to a compliment in English? Please explain why and add any other comments.
6. Would you respond differently according to the gender of your complimenter? Please explain why and add any other comments.
7. What are some of the implicit (indirect) complimenting behaviours (compliments or compliment responses) that you have noticed in your everyday conversations with others? Do you think that they are difficult to express in English? How would do you respond to compliments in an implicit (indirect) way? Please explain why and add any other comments.
8. Do you often respond to compliments insincerely or sincerely? Please explain why and add any other comments.
9. Do you think monolingual Australian English speakers always accept compliments by saying "thank you"? Please explain why and add any other comments.
10. Do you think living in the Australian English environment will make your responses become more similar to monolingual Australian English speakers' speech behaviour? Please explain why and add any other comments.

Interview questions for monolingual Australian English speakers residing in Australia

1. Do you think monolingual Australian English speakers always accept compliments by saying "thank you"? Please explain why and add any other comments.
2. What are your cultural concerns when you respond to compliments in English in Australia? Do you think about values such as modesty? Please explain why and add any other comments.
3. In your opinion, what is an ideal response to a compliment in English? Please explain why and add any other comments.
4. Would you respond differently according to the gender of your complimenter? Please explain why and add any other comments.
5. What are some of the implicit (indirect) complimenting behaviours (compliments or compliment responses) that you have noticed in your everyday conversations with others? Do you think that they are difficult to express sometimes? How would you respond to compliments in an implicit (indirect) way? Please explain why and add any other comments.
6. Do you often respond to compliments insincerely or sincerely? Please explain why and add any other comments.
7. Do you think that many comments in response to compliments are just phatic communication (speech or utterances that serve to establish or maintain social relationships or create an atmosphere of shared feelings, goodwill or sociability rather than to impart information, communicate ideas) and the statements are not sincere? Would this cause misunderstanding? Please explain why and add any other comments.
8. From your personal experiences in interacting with Mainland Chinese ESL learners, what are the differences between Chinese ESL learners' compliment response behaviour compared with that of the monolingual Australian English speakers? Please

explain why and add other comments.

9. Do you think that in many situations saying “no, no…” to compliments by Chinese ESL learners is equal to saying “thank you” as a response to compliments in English? Please explain why and add any other comments.
10. Do you think Chinese ESL learners tend to respond to compliments more similarly to monolingual Australian English speakers after living in Australia for a while (e.g. 1-10 years)? Please explain why and add any other comments.

Appendix E – Role Play

Invitation letter to potential role play conductors

Dear potential role play conductors,
My name is Xiutao Li. I am PhD student at Macquarie University and I am working on a research project with Prof. Martina Möllering and Dr. Shirley Chan on language and culture.
I would like to invite you to participate in data collection for this research project, by paying compliments to participants according to predesigned scenarios (see Role Play Questionnaire in attachment). The scenarios are easy to understand and the researchers will help you to prepare before you start to play any roles with the participants. Your identity will not be revealed in the final report of this study. It will take you approximately four hours. This is a great opportunity to gain valuable experience in doing linguistic research. If you are willing to volunteer, please reply to this email as soon as you can. There is no obligation, so please don't feel pressured to do it. I am looking forward to hearing from you.
Thank you in advance.
Kind Regards,
Xiutao Li

Instructions for the role-play conductors and informants

To the male role-play conductors (complimenters):

Thank you first for showing interest in participating in this study. The following six situations (situation 1- 6 in the DCT questionnaire) describe some occasions where complimenting behaviours occur. In the role play, you are invited to imagine yourself in a situation paying compliments to acquaintances and act as if you are the speakers in similar occasions in real life. You are to substitute six male students named Thomas, Paul, David, Jack, Jim, and Tony in six different situations. As you are the COMPLIMENTER, you are free to start the conversation in your own way. You can choose to PAY THE COMPLIMENT at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the conversation. You have five minutes to carry out one complimenting event with a male or female participant. The six complimenting events (scenarios) will take you approximately 30 minutes. Please bear in mind that the aim of the role play is to make the conversation as NATURAL as possible. Please feel free to use body language, smile, laughter, humour, or any language forms that you feel comfortable using as you would in real life settings. You can also modify the wording of the compliment. The compliment, however, has to stick to the specific topic (e.g. appearance) set up for each situation. This role play will be carried out in ENGLISH ONLY.

To the female role-play conductors (complimenters):

Thank you first for showing interest in participating in this study. The following six situations (situation 7-12 in the DCT questionnaire) describe some occasions where complimenting behaviours occur. In the role play, you are invited to imagine yourself in a situation paying compliments to acquaintances and act as if you are the speakers in similar occasions in real life. You are to substitute six female students named Grace, Jennifer, Amanda, Vicky, Vivian, and Sallie in six different situations. As you are the COMPLIMENTER, you are free to start the conversation in your own way. You can choose to PAY THE COMPLIMENT at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the

conversation. You have five minutes for to carry out one complimenting event with a male or female participant. The six complimenting events (scenarios) will take you approximately 30 minutes. Please bear in mind that the aim of the role play is to make the conversation as NATURAL as possible. Please feel free to use body language, smile, laughter, humour, or any language forms that you feel comfortable using as you would in real life settings. You can also modify the wording of the compliment. The compliment, however, has to stick to the specific topic (e.g. appearance) set up for each situation. This role play will be carried out in ENGLISH ONLY.

To the participants (complimentees):

Thank you first for your interest in participating in this study. In the role play, you are invited to imagine yourself in a situation receiving compliments from acquaintances and act as if you are the speakers in similar occasions in real life. There are a total of twelve situations where 12 acquaintances compliment you. The first six compliments will be paid by male acquaintances named Thomas, Paul, David, Jack, Jim, and Tony. The other six compliments will be paid by female acquaintances named Grace, Jennifer, Amanda, Vicky, Vivian, and Sallie. There will be one male speaker complimenter acting as Thomas, Paul, David, Jack, Jim, and Tony, and a female speaker acting as Grace, Jennifer, Amanda, Vicky, Vivian, and Sallie. You are to RESPOND to the compliments they pay to you for different reasons. You and your complimenters have five minutes maximum to complete each role-playing situation. Your complimenters may choose to compliment on you at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of your conversation. The twelve scenarios will take you approximately one hour. Please bear in mind that the aim of the role play is to make the conversation as NATURAL as possible. Please feel free to use body language, smile, laughter, humour, or any language forms that you feel comfortable using as you would in real life settings. Your responses can be as long or as short as you personally like. There are no right or wrong answers. This role play will be carried out in ENGLISH ONLY.

Appendix F – Advertisements

Advertisements for recruiting Chinese ESL learners in China

Linguistic Research Project on Language and Culture

Are you a Chinese student who has never been in an English-speaking country? Are you interested in speaking English? Are you 20 to 35 years old? Can you speak English and express your thoughts to a researcher studying language and culture? Have you passed the National College Test Band Four (CET 4)? (Or 6.0 or 6.0+ in IELTS)?
If so, you are qualified to participate in this research project focusing on compliment responses.
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to respond to 12 compliments in imagined conversation settings (For example, how do you respond to a friend who says to you "You look great today!"?). It will take you approximately 30 minutes. In return, you will be invited to attend a one-hour seminar on **Insights in Cross-cultural Communication** (by Xiutao Li, PhD candidate in International Studies, Macquarie University). You can also request results of this research project via email when results become available. For more details please email or phone:
Prof. Xirong Cui
+86 136 7339 1035
Email: Katecui2003@yahoo.com.cn

Advertisements for recruiting Chinese ESL learners in Australia

Linguistic Research Project on Language and Culture

Are you a Chinese student? Have you been studying or working in Australia for 1 to 10 years? Are you interested in speaking English? Are you 20 to 35 years old? Can you speak English and express your thoughts to a researcher studying language and culture? Have you passed Chinese National College Test Band Four (CET 4)? (Or 6.0 or 6.0 + in IELTS)?
If so, you are qualified to participate in this research project focusing on compliment responses.
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to respond to 12 compliments in imagined conversation settings (For example, how do you respond to a friend who says to you "You look great today!"?). It will take you approximately 30 minutes. In return, you will be invited to attend a one-hour seminar on **Insights in Cross-cultural Communication** (by Xiutao Li, PhD candidate in International Studies, Macquarie University). You can also request results of this research project via email when results become available. For more details please email or phone:
Xiutao Li
+61 (0) 403 763 768
Xiu-tao.li@students.mq.edu.au

Advertisements for recruiting Australian monolingual English speakers

Linguistic Research Project on Language and Culture

Are you an Australian monolingual English speaker? Are you interested in speaking English? Are you 20 to 35 years old? Can you speak English and express your thoughts to a researcher studying language and culture?

If so, you are qualified to participate in this research project focusing on compliment responses.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to respond to 12 compliments in imagined conversation settings (For example, how do you respond to a friend who says to you "You look great today!"?). It will take you approximately 30 minutes. You will be invited to attend a one-hour seminar on **Insights in Cross-cultural Communication** (by Xiutao Li, PhD candidate in International Studies, Macquarie University) as a reward. You can also request results of this research project via email when results become available. For more details please email or phone:

Xiutao Li
+61 (0) 403 763 768
Xiu-tao.li@students.mq.edu.au

Appendix G – Consent Forms
Consent forms for Chinese in China

Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Chinese Participants in China (DCT + Interview)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

You are invited to participate in a study of language and culture, in particular compliment responses in a cross-cultural context. The purpose of the study is to examine how Australian culture influence language behaviours of Mainland Chinese speakers of English. Compliment responses by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia from one to ten years will be compared with those by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have not been to an English-speaking country. Differences in speech behaviours will be identified to test if Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia for a while tend to become similar to the Australian monolingual English speakers in their compliment responses.

This study is conducted by Professor Martina Mollering (Head of International Studies, Coordinator of German Studies, Phone: +61 2 9850 7012, Email: martina.mollering@mq.edu.au), Dr Shirley Chan (Head of Chinese Studies, Senior Lecturer,
Phone: +61 2 9850 7021, Email: shirley.chan@mq.edu.au), and Xiutao Li (PhD candidate in International Studies, Phone: +61 2 9850 5108, Email: xiu-tao.li@students.mq.edu.au) in the Department of International Studies, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. This research project is being conducted to meet the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy in International Studies under the supervision of principal supervisor Prof. Martina Mollering and associate supervisor Dr. Shirley Chan in the Department of International Studies, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following task IN ENGLISH:

Complete a questionnaire with 12 conversation settings containing a compliment (e.g."You look great today!") paid to you, and write down your responses. This questionnaire will take you approximately 20-30 minutes. Then you will be arranged to attend a face-to-face interview with the

researcher to discuss your responses and a number of questions related to complimenting behaviour based on your understanding. The interview will take another 20-30 minutes and it will be audio-recorded. However, if for any reason, you prefer not to be recorded, the researcher will choose to take notes instead.

During your participation of this research project, you may feel very happy as you are being complimented on different things in various imagined situations. However, there is also a possibility you might feel slightly uncomfortable as you normally would not receive many compliments in a short period of time. All participants for this research project will be invited for a free lecture (1h) on Insights in Cross-Cultural Communication during which you will have time to ask questions.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (except as required by law). As you are de-identified in your participation in this research, no individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the three researchers as introduced above will have access to these data. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request via email.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you have any questions regarding your participation in this research project, you can send queries to the research conductors mentioned above. Alternatively, you can send queries to **Professor Xirong Cui (Phone: +86 13673391035, Email: katecui2003@yahoo.com.cn)** at Henan University of Economics and Law. You are to keep a copy of this information and consent form.

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Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: Xiutao Li Date:_____

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(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Chinese Participants in China (Role Play)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

You are invited to participate in a study of language and culture, in particular compliment responses in a cross-cultural context. The purpose of the study is to examine how Australian culture influence language behaviours of Mainland Chinese speakers of English. Compliment responses by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia from one to ten years will be compared with those by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have not been to an English-speaking country. Differences in speech behaviours will be identified to test if Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia for a while tend to become similar to the Australian monolingual English speakers in their compliment responses.

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If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following task IN ENGLISH:

Engage in conversation with a partner (a male role-play conductor and a female role-play conductor) and play the role in a pre-designed conversation setting such as bumping into your friend X at your library. You will receive one kind of compliment during your conversation. You are to respond verbally with the freedom to use non-verbal language (body language), or any other speech style you prefer such as laughter or humour in your responses. You will be asked to respond to six compliments by a male partner (complimenter), and six compliments by a female partner (compliments). The role play will take about 30 minutes. The role play will be video-taped by the

researcher. However, if for any reason, you request the role-play conversation not to be video-recorded, the researcher will take notes instead.

During your participation of this research project, you may feel very happy as you are being complimented on different things in various imagined situations. However, there is also a possibility you might feel slightly uncomfortable as you normally would not receive many compliments in a short period of time. All participants for this research project will be invited for a free lecture (1h) on Insights in Cross-Cultural Communication during which you will have time to ask questions.

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(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

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Consent forms for Chinese in Australia

Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Chinese Participants in Australia (DCT + Interview)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

You are invited to participate in a study of language and culture, in particular compliment responses in a cross-cultural context. The purpose of the study is to examine how Australian culture influence language behaviours of Mainland Chinese speakers of English. Compliment responses by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia from one to ten years will be compared with those by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have not been to an English-speaking country. Differences in speech behaviours will be identified to test if Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia for a while tend to become similar to the Australian monolingual English speakers in their compliment responses.

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If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following task IN ENGLISH:

Complete a questionnaire with 12 conversation settings containing a compliment (e.g."You look great today!") paid to you, and write down your responses. This questionnaire will take you approximately 20-30 minutes. Then you will be arranged to attend a face-to-face interview with the researcher to discuss your responses and a number of questions related to complimenting behaviour based on your understanding. The interview will take another 20-30 minutes and it will be audio-

recorded. However, if for any reason, you prefer not to be recorded, the researcher will choose to take notes instead.

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Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: Xintao Li Date:_____

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Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Chinese Participants in Australia (Role Play)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

You are invited to participate in a study of language and culture, in particular compliment responses in a cross-cultural context. The purpose of the study is to examine how Australian culture influence language behaviours of Mainland Chinese speakers of English. Compliment responses by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia from one to ten years will be compared with those by Mainland Chinese speakers of English who have not been to an English-speaking country. Differences in speech behaviours will be identified to test if Chinese speakers of English who have lived in Australia for a while tend to become similar to the Australian monolingual English speakers in their compliment responses.

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If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following task IN ENGLISH:

Engage in conversation with a partner (a male role-play conductor and a female role-play conductor) and play the role in a pre-designed conversation setting such as bumping into your friend X at your library. You will receive one kind of compliment during your conversation. You are to respond verbally with the freedom to use non-verbal language (body language), or any other speech style you prefer such as laughter or humour in your responses. You will be asked to respond to six compliments by a male partner (complimenter), and six compliments by a female partner (compliments). The role play will take about 30 minutes. The role play will be video-taped by the

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Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: Xiutao Li Date:_____

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Consent forms for monolingual Australians

Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Monolingual Australians (DCT + Interview)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

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Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: Xintao Li Date:_____

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Department of International Studies
Faculty of Arts
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (2) 9850 5108
Email: xiu-tao.li@ students.mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name:
Martina Möllering

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title
Professor

Information and Consent Form for Monolingual Australians (Role Play)

Name of Project: The Effect of Australian Culture on Compliment Responses of Mainland Chinese Speakers of English.

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Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: Xintao Li Date:_____

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