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台灣 EFL 學生回應間接抱怨的研究

A Study on Taiwanese EFL Learners' Responses to Indirect Complaints



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To

The Honored Accredited Prestigious Teacher of NCCU
The teacher who made magic happen
My lifetime mentor

Dr. Ming-chung Yu

獻給我的恩師
余明忠教授



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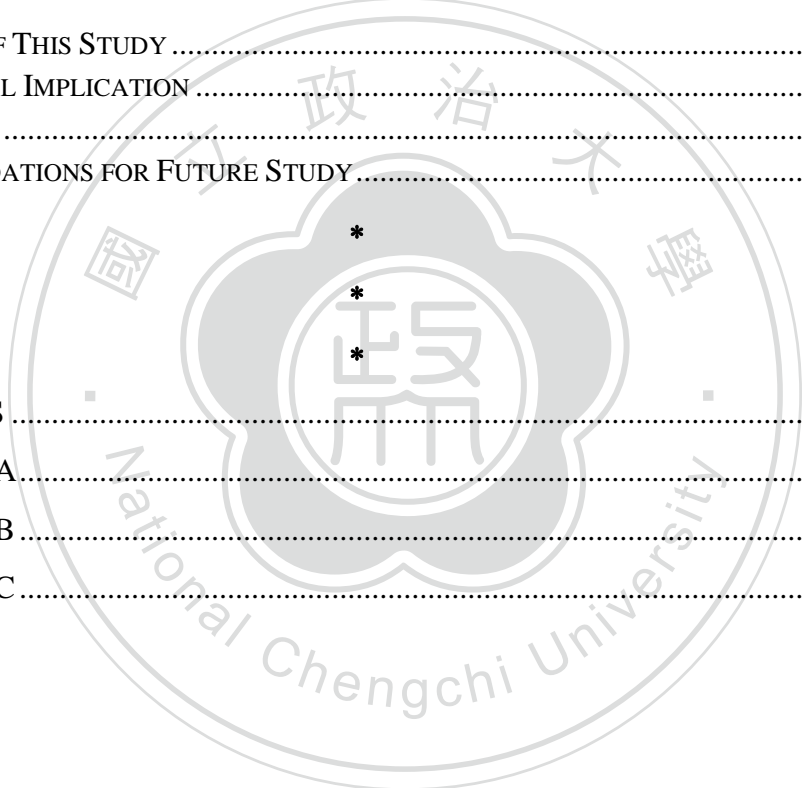
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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班
碩士論文提要

論文名稱：台灣 EFL 學生對間接抱怨回應的研究

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論文提要內容：

本研究主要在探討台灣的大學裡的英語學習者（EFL）在學習英文到全民英檢中級以上的程度後，面對間接抱怨的語言行為所採取的回應對策狀況。對照同樣情況下，以英文為母語的美國大學生，和以中文為母語的台灣大學生所採取的行為回應，了解文化是否會在語言學習過程中影響語言學習者的語言行為表現。研究者探索其語言表現，希望提供語言教育者課程設計的參考。研究的三組受試人分別為 40 位英語學習程度佳的台灣大學生，40 位以英語為母語的美國大學生，以及 40 位以中文為母語且以中文為學習主要媒介的台灣的大學生。蒐集語言資料的工具是語言言談情境問卷（Discourse Completion Task，簡稱 DTC），依照收集到的語言資料進行分析。研究結果顯示：三組回應間接報怨的表現習慣有很大的差異，台灣組的表現較為樂觀積極，會營造輕鬆的氣氛並提醒繼續下一個生活步驟。美國組則謹慎小心，較會以了解與提供事實解釋來安慰抱怨者。英語學習者回應的行為看起來好像與美國人的採用的行為對策類似，但受到本身文化的影響，學習者在文字表達，有語用轉移的現象，即語言學習者與台灣組在面對間接抱怨時所採用的用字及表達較為接近。

Abstract

This study investigated Taiwanese university students' response strategies to indirect complaints in English. The response differences were compared among those of native speakers of American English and those of Mandarin Chinese. Participants in the study were 40 learners of English living in Taiwan, 40 native speakers of American English living in the United States and 40 native speakers of Mandarin Chinese living in Taiwan. The learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) were with an intermediate to high intermediate English proficiency level. By comparing and contrasting the data collected from native speakers of American English living in the United States and native speakers of Mandarin Chinese living in Taiwan, we found the results informative for English course designers in Taiwan. The instrument used in the study was Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Based on the collected data, the researcher performed both qualitative and quantitative analysis and concluded that the three groups responded significantly differently toward indirect complaints. Taiwanese tended to give advice to their interlocutors and they liked to maintain convivial atmosphere in communication. Americans commiserated their interlocutors mainly based on facts and sympathy. EFL learners were found to bear great similarity with Americans in strategy taking when responding to indirect complaints, but if comparisons were made on the actual wordings used by the three groups, the wordings that the EFL learners used resembled Taiwanese group's preferences which might be a result of cultural influence.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Living in a community, people find ways to negotiate with others for their desires and displeasure. When people share a mother tongue, they understand one another much easier, but even such is the case, there is no guarantee of smooth communication. But, when people speak different languages, communication and comprehending others turns out to be much more challenging. People have to use a common language as a communication tool. English is one of the commonly used languages around the world and it is often the tool used in communication for many people.

Sometimes people who have a good command of English got misunderstood. In Taiwan and in many Asian countries, learning English in school has become mandatory for elementary school students. English, as a global language, is now spoken by more non-native speakers than native speakers. Non-native speakers use English as a tool to communicate with people around the world. There are risks: for even if non-native speakers know well the literal meaning and the grammatical structure of English yet if they are not aware of the allusive meaning behind the words; they might still experience a pragmatic failure. Misunderstanding may occur, and that might create troubles and difficulties in communication (Thomas, 1983).

They are unable to carry on conversations as intended. Boxer (1993) reasoned a possible explanation for the misunderstanding: native speakers understand non-native speakers have phonological, syntactic and lexical errors due to limited control

of English; but native speakers typically interpret errors of non-native speakers' sociolinguistic offense as breaches of etiquettes rather than misuse or mal-transfer of different sociolinguistic rules. Therefore, it is necessary to show people from different backgrounds how to use English properly in contexts (Yu, 1996). Thus, one of the language teacher's responsibilities is to introduce students how native speakers use their language and help them properly express themselves and carry on meaningful and sustainable communication as they want.

Native speakers acquire sociolinguistic rules "naturally" in everyday conversation, but non-native speakers do not have access to such knowledge unless they are taught with this information. Widdowson (1978) raised the issue if sociolinguistic rules should be and could be taught. Researchers have found that teaching sociolinguistic norms and rules are helpful for non-native speakers. It raises language learners' awareness in the speaking behaviors and patterns of native speakers and it helps language learners facilitate meaningful communication.

Why and how do interlocutors successfully converse with others? The basic idea is that interlocutors obey certain principles to converse successfully; and these principles in languages are somehow different. How people in different languages observe the sociolinguistic principles and use the languages has become an interesting topic in the studies of pragmatics.

"The main function of language is to use it in real communication rather than to learn the grammatical rules", Widdowson (1978) properly defined the function of language. This exactly explained why the studies of pragmatics have played a vital part in language teaching for more than three decades.

Many studies on pragmatics explore second language learners' utterances of speech acts cross-culturally, like request, compliment, complaint, and refusal (e.g.

Blum-Kulka, et al. 1989; Kasper & Rose, 1999, 2002; Rose, 1992; Thomas, 1983; Yu, 1997, 1999). With all the speech acts compared, indirect complaint turns out to be a less studied domain but not a less dramatic speech act. Complaints are often thought as a negative evaluation in opinions. Yet Boxer (1993) observed native speakers' language and found tacit values in indirect complaints. Indirect complaints built rapport solidarity like other well studied speech acts, and they often opened communication as a result. Boxer (1989) claimed that indirect complaints (IC) played a substantial role as conversation opener and built rapport solidarities. Through these studies, people observed how English had worked on its learners. However, little or no research focused EFL learners' responses toward indirect complaints had been conducted in Taiwan. The lack of research on this topic motivated this researcher to study on how English had worked on EFL students in Taiwan, and what could be learned from the studies.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate EFL learners' responses to indirect complaints in Taiwan. By comparing and contrasting the findings of Boxer's research (1993) on the language behaviors of native speakers of English, this research should help English language program designers in Taiwan integrate sociolinguistic norms and values of different cultures and provide options of appropriate behaviors for language learners. The findings of this research should provide insight for language teachers when working on lesson plans for English learners in Taiwan. For with more properly designed programs attending to students' own culture and targeted foreign culture awareness, learning a new language could be made illustratively easy and rewarding.

In this study, the researcher set up various contextual situations for university students to respond upon. In order to compare how exactly people of different cultures respond to some set situations, the researcher collected responses from native speakers of American English in the US and responses from native speakers of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan to serve as baseline information. With a focus on indirect complaint (IC) interactions, a pedagogical implication would be established.

Significance of the Study

This research explored in depth English learners' responses to indirect complaints. Boxer (1993) applied ethnographical research method of participating observation and recorded the responses of indirect complaints in a university community on functions of gender, social status and social distance. All data were categorized in a place of fit. The findings provided researchers with a bird's-eye view of patterns and functions of the speech act in question. Based on the results of Boxer's (1993) research, this study worked on contextual situations for students of one common speech community and observed how the language learners affirmed or rejected the choice of strategies when they were responding to indirect complaints in utterances. This would provide language teachers with empirical information in instructing pragmatics for English learners.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Act Theory

Speech acts are speakers' utterances, which convey meaning and make listeners do specific things (Austin 1962). The primary concept of speech acts is that various functions can be implemented by means of languages. Speech acts are determined by the context where multiple factors affect the speaker's utterances.

According to Searle (1975), when giving out a performative utterance, a speaker is simultaneously doing something. For example, when someone said, "I am hungry," he literally expressed his hunger and more importantly, he showed his intention for some food or even a request to have something to eat. Austin (1962) indicated that people performed three different kinds of acts when speaking.

1. Locutionary acts: they referred to the utterances used, which were the literal meanings. They're acts of *saying*.
2. Illocutionary acts: they referred to the intention that speakers had or the effects that the utterances wanted from the listeners. They were often used to perform certain functions and needed to be performed 'intentionally' (Searle, 1979). They're acts in *saying*.
3. Perlocutionary acts: they referred to the results or effects produced by means of speakers' illocutionary acts. They're acts by *saying*.

A speaker can use different locutionary acts to achieve one illocutionary force or

use one locution for many different purposes. For instance, when someone asking, “Can you pass the salt?”; he/she had the literal meaning concerning the listener’s ability to pass salt while the illocutionary act was to request the listener to pass the salt for the speaker. If the illocutions caused listeners to do something, they were perlocutionary acts. In short, the purpose of the speech act was for the listener to pass the salt. The locutionary act caused the illocutionary force that the speaker wanted the utterance to have on their listeners. One could perform his/her intention indirectly by using illocutionary acts to provoke perlocutionary acts. The illocutionary acts in Austin’s original framework were what subsequent researchers called speech acts, illocutionary force, or what Thomas (1995) called pragmatic force. Today most attention has especially focused on illocutionary acts, the speakers’ actual purpose of utterances. Illocutionary acts are categorized by language functions or by their intents (Hymes, 1962; Austin, 1962).

Austin (1962) classified speech acts into five types, and later Searle (1969) refined the typological system (here written in brackets):

1. Directives (Verdictives): an intention to get the listener to do something, such as request, command, advice, and invitation.
2. Declaratives (Exercitives): the exercising of power and rights or a completion of a change by the correspondence between the utterance and the illocutionary force, as in appointing, warning, and ordering.
3. Commissives (Commissives): an action that the speaker undertakes or commits to do something by announcing an intention, like promising.
4. Expressives (Behabitives): a psychological expression that shows the sincerity condition about certain affair, such as complaint, apology, gratitude, or congratulation.

5. Assertives (Expositives): a reference to the truth of the expressed utterance, as in argument or statement.

Austin (1962) pointed out that speech acts must meet felicity conditions to carry out the intended function. In order to make illocutionary acts successfully performed, Searle (1969) suggested four necessary conditions: they were preparatory condition, sincerity condition, propositional content condition, and essential condition.

Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a concept originated by Dell Hymes (1972) to contrast with linguistic competence founded by Noam Chomsky (1965). Hymes defines communicative competence as the ability to use a language appropriately in different social contexts. In other words, it is the ability to judge on how, when, where and to whom one should talk. According to Hymes (1972), a speech act is the smallest unit of speech in a speech behavior. Details of the speech units were illustrated as follows:

1. Speech community: the community that shares linguistic and cultural rules.
2. Speech situation: the type of situation, for example, a ceremonial situation, a fighting situation, etc.
3. Speech event: the actual physical event, such as a speech at a party.
4. Speech act: the smallest unit within a speech event, such as a request, a joke, or greetings.

(Hymes, 1972, pp. 59-60)

Furthermore, Hymes provides a useful schema for analyzing components of speech behaviors with the acronym SPEAKING:

S: scene or setting (e.g., formal vs. informal)

P: partner (the relationship between hearer and speaker)

E: end (goal of the speech)

A: act (sequence of the speech act)

K: key (manner, e.g., sarcastic or friendly)

I: instrumentation (e.g., oral or written)

N: norm of the culture in speech behavior

G: genre (e.g., poetry, political speech)

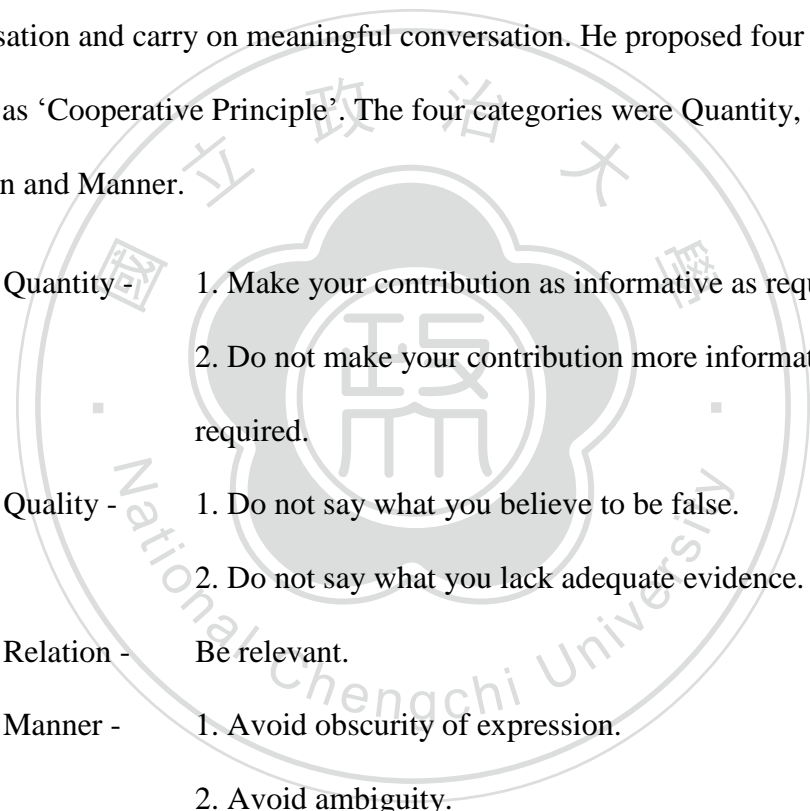
(Hymes, 1972, pp. 64-65)

In studying the speech act of responses to indirect complaints, we followed Hyme's ideas. The main setting in this research was a speech community of a university, and the speech situations were events of students' daily life experience and the speech acts were responses to indirect complaints.

Foreign language learners maybe eloquent speakers in target language when communicating with others, after all they have acquired and mastered grammatical and linguistic accuracy yet they may still face serious troubles; without knowing sociolinguistic rules of the target language, learners run the risk of being misunderstood for not saying the right thing at the right time. As a result, there has been a movement encouraging studies on sociolinguistic rules and these studies help enhance communicative competence of the language learners. A vital part of the ongoing movement is on various studies of speech act. Empirical studies have

contributed significantly to avoid cross cultural miscommunication. Studies of different culture backgrounds are popular in English, Spanish, and Japanese, yet little attention has been paid to native Chinese speakers' language behavior (Yu, 1999).

With the intention to understand how people communicate with others, it is essential to know the mechanism behind the utterance. As Grice (1975) said, people's exchanges of utterances are not disconnected. They were connected by some general principles, with these principles the interlocutors could recognize the purposes of conversation and carry on meaningful conversation. He proposed four categories known as 'Cooperative Principle'. The four categories were Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner.

- 
- Quantity -
1. Make your contribution as informative as required.
 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than required.
- Quality -
1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
 2. Do not say what you lack adequate evidence.
- Relation -
- Be relevant.
- Manner -
1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
 2. Avoid ambiguity.
 3. Be brief.
 4. Be orderly.

(Grice, 1975, pp. 45-46)

In Grice's words, people adhere to these principles to make their conversation effective. In one hand, Grice's Cooperative Principle explains what people said; in

the other hand, it allows hearers to infer what people meant. According to Leech (1983), “it helps to account for the relation between sense and force”. However, he claimed Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP) could not explain why people were often so indirect in saying what they meant, and what kind of relation lay in between sense and force when non-declarative types of sentences were used.

To solve the problems of building up the bridge of the missing links with real language use, Leech proposed ‘Politeness Principle’ (PP) to complement for Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP). In addition to regulating the textual goal and interpersonal goal, PP aimed to maintain the cooperative social equilibrium and friendly relations among the interlocutors. There were 6 maxims of PP, and the formulation of these maxims followed one general rule – “to minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and to maximize the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech, 1983).

The six maxims were:

- 1) Tact Maxim – (a) minimize cost to other
(b) maximize benefit to other
- 2) Generosity Maxim – (a) minimize benefit to self
(b) maximize cost to self
- 3) Approbation Maxim – (a) minimize dispraise of other
(b) maximize praise of other
- 4) Modesty Maxim – (a) minimize praise of self
(b) maximize dispraise of self
- 5) Agreement Maxim – (a) minimize disagreement between self and other
(b) maximize agreement between self and other
- 6) Sympathy Maxim – (a) minimize antipathy between self and other

(b) maximize sympathy between self and other.

(Leech, 1983, p.132)

Leech's politeness maxims were important in performing speech act. According to Leech (1983), giving others advice implied processing superior knowledge. People need to beware of not violating the Modesty and Approbation Maxims and being considered impolite. Indeed the terminology of the maxims was confusing. It was criticized for unconstrained numbers of maxims (Brown & Levinson, 1987). If all regularities in language use had specific maxims, there would be an infinite number of maxims. Brown & Levinson claimed that every discernible pattern of language use did not require a maxim or principle to produce it, and they said their production model on individuals' linguistic politeness was universal.

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Framework

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework was influential. The core concept was the notion of *face*, which was mainly derived from Goffman. Goffman (1967) put it as a positive social value that one and others assumed in a particular contact. Face could be lost, and it could be saved too. In interactions, people defend their own faces and protect others' faces. Based on Goffman's concept of face, Brown and Levinson declared that face is a public self-image that everyone wants to claim for himself. It is comprised of two aspects: positive face and negative face. Positive face is individuals' wants to be 'desirable', and negative face is individuals' wants to be 'unimpeded' by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Basically, any rational individual would cooperate to maintain faces of the interlocutors. However, there are chances that the positive face or the negative face of the interlocutors be threatened.

These acts are called “face threatening acts” (FTAs). Rational individuals would try to avoid or minimize the imposition caused by FTAs. And there are repressive strategies. The core concept in the framework is positive politeness and negative politeness (Yu, 2003). So through interactions, the positive politeness is to maintain harmonious relationship of the speakers and hearers, and the negative politeness is to avoid impeding on people’s freedom of action.

Politeness in Chinese Society. There was criticism that Brown & Levinson’s politeness framework may not cover the communication in Eastern culture (Gu, 1990; Lii-Shih, 1994; Mao, 1994). Face in Chinese society consists of *mianzi* and *lian*. *Mianzi* is one’s achievement ascribed by others in the community, the prestige or reputation of a person. *Lian*, on the other hand, is people’s respect for someone with good moral (Mao, 1994). Both of them came through the interactional process to the public community but not to an individual. Chinese do not focus much on individual’s desires or needs, but rather they focus on the harmony of the community as a result of behaviors of the group. Chinese are satisfied in the recognition or respect from the community that they belong to and not so much on the wants to be unimpeded or on their desire for freedom of action. Gu (1990) proposed Chinese *limao* to be equivocal with the Western politeness. There are four elements and two principles underlying *limao* in Chinese society. The four elements are “respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement,” and the two principles are “sincerity and balance”. The politeness concept in the Chinese society is more on sincere behavior and on the reciprocal behaviors but less on the individual face work as proposed by Brown and Levinson. Lii-Shih (1994) also noticed that Chinese emphasized more on the desire of being approved. Some face threatening acts actually satisfy the hearers’ face wants

and are called “face-satisfying-acts” (FSAs). For Chinese, if the speaker concerns a lot about the hearer’s benefits, their giving out advice to the hearer is considered a FSA. Different from the Westerner’s idea, the less indirect and the less ambiguous the utterance is, the more polite it appears to the Chinese people (Lii-Shih, 1994).

There are at least three differences observed from Brown & Levinson’s model:

- 1) Face in Chinese society is a public image that is interdependent with their community rather than a self-image responding their wants and desires.
- 2) Some FTAs in Brown & Levinson’s ideas are actually FSAs in Chinese if they are done sincerely.
- 3) Politeness is defined to satisfy individual’s wants and not impede other’s freedom and this is also norms and values in Chinese society.

(Gu, 1990, p. 242)

Brown & Levinson’s politeness framework cannot comprehensively explain the norms and values of Chinese society. In other words, culture difference cannot be ignored.

Culture Difference

Besides the discrepancies in face and politeness framework in the Western and the Eastern cultures, there are two distinct culture values: individualism and collectivism.

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and their immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite, pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups...

(Hofstede, 1991, p. 51)

American culture is considered individualism. They emphasize individual identity over group identity. People in the individualism culture are of self-orientation, independent self, to hold out-group values. Group benefit is not the priority, and their way of speaking to in-groups and out-groups are similar (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Chinese, on the other hand, is considered collectivism. They emphasize 'we' over 'I' and group obligations are placed above individual wants and desires (Ting-Toomey, 1994). People in collectivistic culture hold group's values and norms as guideline for everyday doctrine. They hold in-group values and their ways of speaking to 'in-group' and 'out-group' are different.

Pragmatic Transfer

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) defined pragmatic transfer as a transfer of L1 sociocultural competence in performing L2 conversation. Koike (1996) proposed that learners would transfer their L1 pragmatic knowledge when performing speech acts in L2. They may produce inappropriate utterances especially when they encountered relatively difficult speech act. Thomas (1983) named such inappropriate pragmatic transfer as "pragmatic failure". He divided the failure into two aspects: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the learners use an inappropriate linguistic form to express their intention in a

target language context. ‘Teaching-induced errors’ might be the reason for such failure. Learners were trained to react to a certain situation with a certain response that influenced their performance in the long run (Kasper, 1982). Sociopragmatic failure results from inappropriate transfer between discrepant socio-culture norms and value systems. The breakdowns in cross-cultural communications and the phenomena of pragmatic transfer were worth exploring (Zegarac & Pennington, 2000).

The Speech Act of Complaints

Complaints are an expressive category of speech act. The disapproval is directed to an addressee held responsibilities for perceived offense. It is typically a conflictive act (Leech, 1983) or a face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In contrast, indirect complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction to an interlocutor about someone or something that is not present (Boxer, 1993). It is not so much a FTA. It can be employed by the speaker as an attempt to establish solidarity with the addressee. The speaker’s chance of building relationship successfully depends on the addressee’s willingness to participate through the give and take of negotiation. Boxer (1989) classified such speech acts as ‘openers’— the speech behavior, which functions in a manner to indicate a desire to establish commonality with the addressee. It can be a subtle indicator of shared feeling or mutual interest to initiate a topic of conversation.

Previous Studies. Boxer (1989) investigated the usefulness of indirect complaints (ICs). Her research subjects included students, professors, administrative and support staff and their family members from the community of a university in Pennsylvania. She collected spontaneous conversation through observations of participants and found responses in six types: (a) zero response; (b) response

requesting elaboration; (c) response in the form of jokes or teasing; (d) contradiction or explanation; (e) response in the form of advice or lecture; (f) commiseration. While Boxer aimed to identify formulaic responses, she emerged no such patterns. For example, the most possible responses of commiseration, which accounted for 52 % of the corpus, were highly varied in structure and intent. The results of her study confirmed findings of earlier research: equality of status is a common characteristic of ICs. In addition to that, she found that most commiseration responses occurred among status equals with neither minimal nor maximal social distance.

In fact, Boxer had conducted research on indirect complaints and people's responses toward them, i.e. IC exchanges, for a long time. Her research discussed the functions of gender, social distance and social status. She claimed that there were stronger indicators of theme choice than did social status (Boxer, 1993). Men and women used different ICs and for different purposes; in order to have satisfactory responses, men and women strategically would choose their addressees and topics before they voiced their complaints. In response to ICs, men and women also used different strategies to continue or terminate the conversation in their ways. Boxer's research provided rich baseline information from the side of American English speakers.

Variables of Indirect Complaints

Theme. In analysis of the content of ICs, Boxer emerged three themes with distinct focus on (1) self, (2) other, and (3) situation. The focus of an IC could be on oneself (e.g., "Oh, I'm so stupid"), on another person or persons (e.g., "He's such an idiot!"), or on any personal and impersonal situation. The last category is divided into

two subgroups: a) type A situation, a situation IC with a personal focus; b) type B situation refers to that of impersonal focus.

Social status. The concept of social status is on the relative position or standing of interlocutors within the specific context of a conversational exchange. In Boxer's research, she found that IC theme and relative social status of the interlocutors were weaker than that of IC theme and gender. It pointed to some tentative conclusions about rights and taboos. Among the status equals, commiseration and contradiction were the two most frequent responses to indirect complaints. To limit the scope of the research, the present study focused on the interactions of equal status— students in the universities.

Social Distance. The concept followed Wolfson's Bulge theory (1988) with the categories of 'friends', 'strangers' and 'intimates'. These are not discrete categories but were points along a social distance continuum. If 'total strangers' was at one end of the continuum, then 'friends' fell near the middle, and 'intimates' was at the opposite end from 'strangers'. Wolfson (1988) examined the realization of compliments. Her research found two extremes of social distance, minimum and maximum, called forth similar behavior, which meant status-equal, intimates and strangers, had the most solidarity-establishing speech behavior. Boxer (1993a) countered the theory with the data collected from the speech act of indirect complaints. In her study, the Bulge was not in the middle (i.e., among friends and acquaintances), but was skewed toward to one side (strangers), or the other side (intimates). In contradistinction to compliments and invitations, her conclusion was that some rapport-inspiring speech behaviors almost occurred as frequently among interlocutors of extreme social distance as they did among friends and acquaintances. The present

study was focusing on the responses to indirect complaints, thus the result should be relevant to Boxer's findings.

Gender Differences. Men and women expressed differently when voicing complaints and when responding to complaints. Women normally commiserated much more than men and they tended to be more supportive to complainers. In terms of gender, Boxer claimed that a large number of ICs were between females. She attributed the outcome to reasons from data collection procedure and possibly the gender of the researcher. Therefore, in this study, a discourse completion questionnaire was designed with a consideration of the gender issue in all situations. The results should provide insight on the difference of responses from males and females alike.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were:

1. How were the EFL students' responses to indirect complaints different from those of native speakers of American English, and those of native Chinese speakers in Taiwan?
2. How did they respond when the social distances of the speakers and the hearers varied?

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design of this study. The first section reveals the information of the participants. The second section explains the reason for using discourse completion task (DCT) as the instrument and discloses the controlled variables and the context situations plotted in the task. The third section delineates the procedure of data collection. The fourth section describes the methods for data analysis. The fifth section provides the reliability of the coding among the inter-raters.

Participants

The participants in this study were composed of three groups: 40 native speakers of Chinese living in Taiwan (*Taiwanese*), 40 *English-as-a-Foreign-Language learners (EFL)* living in Taiwan, and 40 native speakers of English living in the United States (*Americans*). In each group, the numbers of male and female participants were kept equal. A total of 120 participants were included in the study. They were 20 male and 20 female native speakers of Chinese, 20 male and 20 female *EFL* learners, and 20 male and 20 female native speakers of English.

Targeted EFL Group. To eliminate chances of miscommunication raised because of participants' insufficient language proficiency (Hinkel, 1997), all participants of EFL group were English learners of intermediate to high-intermediate English proficiency level as attested by the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT)

conducted by Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan, or by equivalent standard tests, i.e., Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) from Educational Testing Service (ETS), or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) conducted by the British Council. To ensure that the participants in this study were homogenous, none of them ever had pragmatics training, and all of them were from a common speech community, a university in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, all undergraduate students are required to pass at least one English standardized test in addition to their academic requirement to graduate from universities. This researcher obtained a list of qualified undergraduate students from the university's academic office. A total of 1,530 students were invited to participate in this research via email with forms of personal background information and the discourse completion task (DCT) language behavior survey. Table 3.1 provided the population pool of the qualified *EFL* learners who had been invited to participate in the study.

Table 3.1 Population pool for qualified *learners of EFL*

School	Female	Male	Total
Communication	112	29	141
Commerce	226	116	342
International Studies	43	16	59
Foreign Language	250	79	329
Education	34	10	44
Liberal Arts	61	25	86
Law	122	47	169
Science	27	21	48
Social Science	233	79	312
Total	1108	422	1530

To make sure that the EFL participants were of a group with least targeted language influence, a concern raised by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986), all participants were required to declare their English learning experience in the personal background information sheet. The participants were asked if they had regular contacts with English speaking foreigners, and if they had ever stayed in an English speaking country. If they did have regular contacts with English speaking foreigners, participants had to declare the frequency of their contacts. If they did live in an English speaking country, the length and reasons for their stay were declared. Only those participants with minimum foreign influence were kept as the EFL subjects in this study.

Within the survey period, a total of 82 *EFL* students (35 females and 47 males) out of 1530 potential participants (5.36%) had responded to the questionnaires. Table 3.2 provided a summary of background of the 82 participants for this language survey. The responders were dominated by students from School of Commerce (29.3%), then were followed by students from School of Social Science (20.7%) and then by students from School of Foreign Languages and Literature (17.1%). Majority of survey participants were in their senior year (52.4%) and junior year (24.4%).

Only 30.5% (n=25) of people responded that they had frequent exposure to English speaking friends (on the daily basis, n=4; on the weekly basis, n=14, on the monthly basis, n=7). Thirty participants (36.6%) responded that they had visited an English-speaking foreign country. Majority (60%) of them only stayed there for less than 3 weeks, and 7 people declared to have stayed aboard for more than 1 year. Surprisingly that, there were more than 72% (n=59) of the responders could also speak other foreign language (mainly Japanese, 31.7% or n=26) in addition to English.

Table 3.2 Summary of returned questionnaires from learners of *English as a Foreign Language (EFL)* group

Gender	Female			Male			Total	
	<=20	21-30	Sub total	<=20	21-30	31-40		Sub total
Commerce	3	10	13	1	10		11	24
Communication	1	1	2	2	3		5	7
Education					5		5	5
Foreign Language	4	4	8	1	5		6	14
Int'l Studies		1	1		3		3	4
Law	2	2	4		2		2	6
Liberal Arts					2		2	2
Science	1		1	1	1		2	3
Social Science	3	3	6	2	8	1	11	17
Grand Total	14	21	35	7	39	1	47	82

To eliminate students with excessive exposure to English, only 40 selected *EFL* participants with the least targeted language contacts were kept in the data pool (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Background summary of the 40 selected learners of *English as a Foreign Language (EFL)* group

Gender	Female			Male			Total	
Age	<=20	21-30	Sub Total	<=20	21-30	31-40	Sub total	Total
Commerce	1	5	6	1	5		6	12
Communication				1	1		2	2
Education					1		1	1
Foreign Language	3	2	5		3		3	8
Int'l Studies		1	1		1		1	2
Law	1	1	2					2
Liberal Arts								
Science	1		1	1	1		2	3
Social Science	3	2	5	1	4		5	10
Grand Total	9	11	20	4	16		20	40

Cultural Baseline Groups. The cultural baseline groups were Taiwanese group and American group, composed of only native Chinese speakers and native English speakers respectively.

Taiwanese Group. To make sure the homogeneity of *Taiwanese* group, the Chinese version of questionnaires were distributed in a class studying local land development and management class. Among those returned questionnaires, only those from respondents who declared that they had not taken additional English classes except the mandatory freshman English and had no regular foreign contacts, were accepted data pool in the baseline Taiwanese group.

American Group. All members in this group were native speakers of American English. They were either with business major or minor, and none of them were of English major.

To make sure that gender difference was not the bias of the research, all three data groups were composed of 20 males and 20 females, a total of 40 participants in every group.

The information acquired from the native speakers of Chinese (*Taiwanese*) was treated as the baseline to compare and contrast with the information acquired from the *EFL* group, as from the viewpoint of their own culture. The information acquired from native English speakers (*Americans*) was served as the baseline to compare and contrast with the *EFL* group, from the viewpoint of the targeted foreign culture of American English speakers.

High Internal Validity

To ensure high internal validity of this study, all participants were university students. All participants were students from two discrete schools: (1) *EFL* and *Taiwanese* groups were from a university in Taipei, Taiwan, and (2) *Americans* were students from a university in Oregon, U.S.A.

Instruments

The instruments utilized for this study were a personal data sheet and a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT), a questionnaire with 24 scenarios.

Personal data sheet. Surveys were most commonly used to obtain a snapshot of conditions and events at a single point (Cohen & Manion, 1985), the participants in this study were first asked to provide their background information (see Appendix 1).

In this study, the personal data sheet for all *EFL* and *Taiwanese* participants included their age and gender, school major, experience in learning English as a foreign language, and the frequency of their contacts with English speaking foreigners.

The participants were also asked if they ever had experience living in or visiting an English speaking country, if so, their reasons and length of stay in the English speaking country.

For native English speakers, only age, gender and school major were asked in the personal data sheets.

Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire. Although using ethnographic data collection, such as field notes, participating observation and tape/video recording, etc., could help researchers collect authentic language data, it was through elicitation method that researchers could obtain large quantity data of in a comparatively short amount of time. The advantage of applying elicitation methods was that through Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire, some variables could be controlled. In addition, as all data were written down in prints, discussion of the similarity and difference could be extracted much clearer and easier. The major function of the DCT was to elicit a number of data with certain controlled variables in a comparatively short period of time.

The open-ended DCT questionnaire was the most frequently and effectively used method in pragmatics research to elicit respondents' utterances (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1994). In this study, the DTC provided different contextual situations for respondents to respond if they were in the said case and the questionnaire provided self-extendable columns for respondents to fill in as much information as they would like to. In cases that participants preferred not to say anything, they could choose not to give any responses and keep their responses true to their speech style.

In the DCT questionnaire, the scenarios were categorized by a number of episodes with a matrix of three variables: gender, social distance, and four indirect complaint (IC) themes from Boxer's study (1993). The four themes were: (1) IC about oneself (self IC), (2) IC about others (other IC), (3) IC about situation with a personal focus (type A situation), and (4) IC about situation with impersonal focus (type B situation). The word "complain" was intentionally avoided throughout the questionnaire to evade bias in participants' response choices (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

Although validity of written DCT questionnaire had long been a topic of discussion, it was agreed to be a feasible tool to elicit a quantity of speech data in a comparatively short time. It might lack for authenticity in negotiation in one-turn imaginary DCT, yet Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) indicated that for research on cultural comparisons of certain speech acts, stereotyped language use and character of responses could still be observed in a written DCT. Hence, this study adopted a written DCT to obtain stereotyped responses of the respondents to the indirect complaints.

Questionnaire design. The questionnaire had two versions: one in English, one in Chinese. For the Taiwanese group, a Chinese version of the questionnaire was used to acquire the original culture baseline information; for the native speakers of English in the US and the EFL in Taiwan, an English version of survey was applied to draw out the real language use of the targeted language. The contextual situations and the wording used in the questionnaires were proof-read by native speakers of Chinese and English respectively and later on by two other bilinguals to make sure that all

situations could be easily understood and no confusion could be caused among participants of different cultures.

The fundamental concern of the questionnaire was that every situation was cross-culturally comparable and authentic not only for *Taiwanese* but for *Americans* alike, and no defects of this reason should be criticized.

The DCT questionnaire was composed of 24 contextual situations. The situations were to reveal a systematic variation of two contextual variables-the gender of the speaker and a set social distance between the speaker and the hearer. All situational contexts were results of the interwoven of a gender and social distance with a theme of the indirect complaint (self IC, other IC, type A situation and type B situation) as categorized by Boxer (1993). Gender was binary, and social distance concept followed Wolfson's Bulge theory (1988) was triplet (strangers, friends and intimates.) The theme was four kinds as categorized by Boxer (1993): self IC, other IC, type A situation and type B situation. These resulted in the construction of the contexts. In this study, genders and themes were controlled variables to ensure that there was no bias caused by them in responses. To be clear, they were not the topics of discussion in this study.

There were twenty-four contexts, being a result of 2 (gender) x 3 (social distance) x 4 (theme). In every context, the topic of the speech act in question was an issue of unpleasant situation easily detectable in school life. Every IC theme was designed to relate to a male or a female speaker of a designated social distance.

In order to make the questionnaire less heavy loading for respondents, the final layout was a result of 24 reshuffled situations arranged with a first priority of

social distance and then with a consideration of a minimum page loads. A glance of the distribution of the questionnaire was spotlighted as Table 3-4.

Table 3.4 A glance of themes and topics of the 24 scenarios in the DTC

Question	IC Code	IC Theme	Topic
Q-1	1s3	female stranger, SA	Noise
Q-2	2s1	male stranger, self IC	Late for meetings
Q-3	1s4	female stranger, SB	Watching sad TV news while eating lunch
Q-4	1s1	female stranger, self IC	Late for class
Q-5	2s3	male stranger, SA	Rude or bad manners
Q-6	2s4	male stranger, SB	Venting for unexpected queue
Q-7	1s2	female stranger, other IC	Venting for bad food
Q-8	2s2	male stranger, other IC	Annoyed by out of focus Q&A
Q-9	2f3	male friend, SA	Noise made by strangers
Q-10	2f2	male friend, other IC	Angry for intrusive action
Q-11	1f2	female friend, other IC	Unhappy for indirect response
Q-12	2f4	male friend, SB	Impatient with internet access
Q-13	1f1	female friend, self IC	Upset with oneself
Q-14	1f3	female friend, SA	Disgusting public toilet
Q-15	2f1	male friend, self IC	Upset with money matters
Q-16	1f4	female friend, SB	Unsatisfied with old dorms
Q-17	2i1	male intimates, self IC	Not prepared for exam
Q-18	2i2	male intimates, other IC	Unpleasant smell of somebody
Q-19	1i1	female intimates, self IC	Lost controlling overeating
Q-20	2i4	male intimates, SB	Annoyingly hot weather
Q-21	1i2	female intimates, other IC	Annoyed by somebody
Q-22	2i3	male intimates, SA	Never ending labors
Q-23	1i3	female intimates, SA	Possible loss of a pen
Q-24	1i4	female intimates, SB	No clothes to wear

For IC code:

(initial Arabic number)

1=female, 2=male;

(middle English letter)

s=strangers, f =friends, i =intimates;

(ending Arabic number) 1= self IC; 2= other IC;
3= personal focus (SA); 4= impersonal focus (SB)

Categorization of the strategy used. In Boxer's (1993) research, all responses were categorized into 6 types of strategies, and every response had only one place of fit. Discrimination of every strategy was crucial. Different from Boxer's ethnographical approach (1993), this research used an open-ended DCT questionnaire. In a lot of cases, written responses might carry certain similarity yet with subtle differences; it was therefore important to have clear definition of the characteristics of every response strategy to keep classification consistent through the study. The definition was discussed by the inter-raters and described as follows:

a) *Zero response*

Zero response is either to minimize or terminate an exchange (ibid). In this research, the DCT questionnaire provided a blank line for participants to fill in reasons why they chose not to respond to the situation. This DCT tool encouraged respondents to give reasons for their "zeroing" in response.

Examples were:

1) *EFL group* (no response)

"The girl just talked about her feeling. And sometimes sad news does ruin my appetite and mood. But I wouldn't speak it out."

2) *Americans group* (no response)

"Nothing because it's a rude comment and I don't want to participate with it."

3) *Taiwanese group* (no response)

"他也把我的胃口和心情搞砸了。"

(Ta ie ba wo de wei kou he xin cing gao za le.)
(He too ruined my appetite and mood.)

b) *Response requesting elaboration or question*

These responses took the form of questions requesting more elaboration or clarification from the speaker. These questions usually gave the addressee some chance to get information behind the utterance and in this way the addressee could gain some time to be more certain on how they should respond to speakers under those circumstances. Questions might also be used for the purpose of verifying validity of these complaints. Examples are:

1) *EFL group*

“Do you still expect another great expense in the month?”

2) *American group*

“Hmm. Why is the weather keeping you from dressing up?”

3) *Taiwanese group*

“你真的很期待這場音樂會嗎?”

(Ni zhen de hen ci dai zhe chang yin yuei huei ma?)

(Are you really looking forward to this concert?)

c) *Response in the form of jokes or teasing*

These responses were found when a light banter functioned to bring the interlocutors closer to each other. The respondents wanted to help the speaker step aside and to face the case with a less serious attitude. Examples of this strategy from each group were:

1) *EFL group*

“Out bang[ing] them. When they are down and you ‘re still up, you win.”

2) *American group*

“Better start cutting back on the beer. Haha.”

3) *Taiwanese group*

“他可能怕你的工作太乏味, 所以找些事讓你做.”

(Ta kenen pa ni de gongzuo tai fawei, suoyi zhao cie shi ran ni zuo.)

(He might be worrying that your job was too boring so he helped find you something to keep busy.)

d) *Contradiction or explanation*

Sometimes, the utterance made was not accepted nor approved. The respondents might contradict the speakers with a truth statement of the golden rules, or accusation against the wrong attitude of the speaker, or an argument about whatever they thought differently. Examples of this strategy from each group were:

1) *EFL group*

“But it’s not his fault. You didn’t leave anything as well.”

2) *American group*

“They don’t ruin my mood. I feel a need to know what’s going on in the world.”

3) *Taiwanese group*

“抱歉, 但不是所有的人都這樣.”

(Baocian, dan bushi suoyou de ren dou zhe yang.)

(I am sorry but not everyone is like that.)

e) *Responses in the form of advice or lecture*

These respondents wanted to help out by giving some advice to solve the problem. They might take the forms of giving advice, suggestions, lectures or

morals. As often was the case that the respondents voluntarily offered themselves or anything that they thought could be of help. Examples of this strategy from each group were:

1) *EFL* group

“You have to talk to her much more directly.”

2) *American* group

“If you don’t want to disturb the class, stop talking.”

3) *Taiwanese* group

“就直接跟他們說他們很吵就好了。”

(Jiou zhijie gen tamen shuo tamen hen chao jiou hao le.)

(Just tell them directly that they are making too much noise.)

f) *Commiseration*

These responses were to show sympathy, understanding, agreement or reassurance to the speakers for their meaningful deeds. To differentiate strategy of commiseration from strategy of advice, responses that showed understanding and assurance to make speakers feel better were kept in this group; and responses carried extra function like suggestion, voluntarily help offering, moral lessons, etc., were categorized under strategy in form of advice or lectures. Examples of this strategy from each group were:

1) *EFL* group

“We won’t come this restroom again.”

2) *American* group

“I’m sorry but these things happen.”

3) *Taiwanese* group

“沒關係. 反正剛剛也沒做什麼.”

(Mei guanxi. fanzheng gang gang yie mei zuo shemo.)

(Never mind. We didn't do much just now.)

Procedures

There were five main stages in this study: questionnaire design, pilot testing, data collection, coding, and data analysis. First, the questionnaire design was discussed in previous section. The second step was to pilot the questionnaire with small population and to make sure those questions could be answered as per the researcher's wish. Third, the targeted participants completed the questionnaires. Fourth, the responses were reviewed and screened. Then valid responses were encoded. Finally, the collected data was analyzed through frequency counts and chi-square for further interpretation.

Data Collection and Coding Scheme. All valid questionnaires were encoded according to the six types of strategy categorized by Boxer (1993) as described. The six types of responses were: (a) zero response; (b) response requesting elaboration; (c) response in the form of jokes or teasing; (d) contradiction or explanation; (e) response in form of advice or lectures; (f) commiseration. Each response from the participants would be assigned to one specific category, in other words, all responses were mutually exclusive in one category. Furthermore, 20% of the data was randomly selected from each group and coded by a second rater to get the inter-rater agreement coefficients up to 85% at the least (Cohen, 1960). For the strategy categories, the inter-rater agreement coefficients in this research were 93%, 91% and 92 % respectively for American group, EFL group, and Taiwanese group.

Data analysis. There were two phases in the quantitative analysis.

Phase one—quantitative analysis. A statistical analysis software (Sigma Plot) was used to analyze the data obtained after the coding of the responses in the DCT. The results were also manually calculated and validated using formulas in Excel spreadsheet for error proof. Frequencies were counted and compared. Since the data collected in this study were nominal, a nonparametric chi-square was calculated to see if there was significant difference among the three groups.

Phase two—qualitative analysis. Based on the actual wording used in the responses, qualitative analyses were conducted to see if there were similarity and difference in the three groups when they responded to indirect complaints and toward people of different social distances. Sub-categories were established by the contents and characteristics of the strategy in responses.

a) Zero response

For those zero responses, participants explained the reasons why they chose to be silent in the space provided. The researcher reviewed the responses by the actual wording used and further sub-categorized them into 6 sub-groups under the category “zero response”:

- (1) Sub-group 1—agreement: the respondents generally agreed with what was said. They might feel that there was no need to say anything. Things had been or would be taken care of in due course or the speakers were excused and nothing should be said, or that what happened was common and it might happen to anyone so there was no need to say further. Or sometimes the respondents wanted to keep their response open for various situations, in their words, “it depends”;

extremes could be what they said, “No comments”. Or in some cases, the addressees just helped but not giving a word. Examples of reasons for agreement were:

EFL group-“It will be quiet when the movie starts.”

American group-“I wouldn't want to say anything as she is trying to minimize the disturbance, etc.”

Taiwanese group-“他應該不是故意的，讓會議繼續。(ta yinggai bushi guyi de, rang hweiyi jixu.)” (He shouldn't have done that on purpose. Let the meeting continue.)

(2) Sub-group 2—disagreement: the respondent disagreed with what was said. Sometimes speakers were just venting or complaining to the air, or they were rude and impolite that the hearers didn't want to respond in those circumstances and show their disagreement. The respondents didn't want to make a fuss of the situation and wouldn't want to make the speakers feel worse. Examples were:

EFL group-“I don't know her. Maybe she is just venting.”

American group-“I don't agree with her.”

Taiwanese group-“她可以不要看。(ta keyi buyiau kan.)” (She doesn't have to watch [the news].)

(3) Sub-group 3—stay trouble-free: the respondents might want to avoid contacts. The speakers might be too provocative, and the hearers wouldn't want to respond to get into troubles. The speakers might be in

a bad mood talking to him/her might result in fights or troubles, so the respondents didn't want to respond to the speakers. Examples were:

EFL group-“The class has already begun. Any voice could interrupt the class.”

American group-“I wouldn't want to further disturb the class.”

Taiwanese group-“反駁會引起紛爭，那就算了吧。(fanbuo hwei yinqi fenzheng, na jiou suanle ba.)” (Contradiction might result in fights. Forget it.)

(4) Sub-group 4—awkwardness: the situation was awkward, embarrassing for the respondents to give out any response. It might probably because the topics were personal, emotional or awkward; responding to the speakers was weird considering the close friendship between the two parties. Examples were:

EFL group-“It is weird talking something in this time.”

American group-“I would be embarrassed.”

Taiwanese group-“主廚我認識。(zhuchu wuo renshi.)” (I know the chef.)

(5) Sub-group 5—not-my-case: “Not me.” “Not my case.” These things were not likely to happen to the respondents. The respondents might have no clues on how to respond toward it nor did they know how to help the speakers. Examples were:

EFL group-“It's not my business.”

American group-“I just can't think of a response to that”

Taiwanese group-“不知道該說什麼. (bu zhedao gai shuo shemo.)” (Don't know what to say.)

(6) Sub-group 6—busy, too-much-work, the topic was too common to discuss. The respondents were busy and they didn't want to get involved with unnecessary conversations. They might not know the person too well. In other words, they were not familiar enough to respond to them. Examples were:

EFL group-“If I don't know her, [then] I won't say anything.”

American group-“[I] wouldn't want to start a conversation.”

Taiwanese group-“我正準備去另一間電腦教室. (wuo zhen zhuenbei qu ling yijan diannaoh jiaoshi.)” (I am on my way to another computer lab.)

b) Responses requesting elaboration or questions

Questions were cast to clarify things unclear to the respondents. They might be questions checking if the speakers had tried something, or if the speakers were in need of any help? The response in this category was small in number and questions were obvious but different in directions so no subgrouping was established.

c) Jokes or teasing

(1) For jokes or teasing response, four subgroups were established as based on the target been teased,: Teasing on the hearers themselves, examples were: “在我手上 (zai wuo shoushang.)” (It's in my hand), “I

know who took it! I did. So sit down and relax”, “hopefully my fat could be dried up as well”.

(2) Teasing on the speaker, the irritated person, examples were: “穿少一點就 OK 了!!! (chuanshaoyidian jiou OK le.)” (It’s ok to wear less.), “Are you falling in love?”, “You are mean”.

(3) Teasing on someone not in the talks, who was the one irritating the speaker, the person initiated the irritation, examples were: “他是不知道主題是什麼而已 (ta shi buzhidao zhuti shi shemo er yi)” (He just don’t know the topics are.), “When it costs more to keep the chamber pots than to replace them”, “Maybe it’s indeed too hard for him to figure it out”.

(4) Teasing on non-human materials or the situation happened, examples were: “住宿費跟外頭租屋費一樣時 (zhusufei gen wuai tou zuwufei yiyang shi.)” (When the dorm costs as much as you rent outside), “Welcome to NCCU”, “It makes life more interesting”.

d) Contradiction and explanation

For responses with contradiction or explanation, three subgroups were formed:

(1) To contradict with a statement of truth, some golden rules were stated.

Examples were: “That’s not true for everyone. Some people will always be inconsiderate”.

(2) Expression of disagreement on certain wrong doing or attitude of the

speaker. Examples were: “You weren’t sitting at the desk. It’s an honest mistake”.

(3) Explanation on what the hearer thought not proper about the speaker, a

different idea. Examples were: “It’s hot. But the sun is definitely better than a cold dark winter”.

e) *Advice, suggestion, lectures or morals*

There were responses from respondents who just wanted to help the speakers out of the unhappy situations. These responses were categorized under the name of advice, lecture or moral lessons. Among these responses, a lot of them were advice yet with different degrees of imposition. There were:

1) mild advice, like “you *can* ...”,

“你可以跟她說你很忙，改天聊啊！(ni keyi gen ta shuo ni han mang, gaitian liao a!)” (You can tell her that you are busy and maybe chat some other time.)

2) strong advice sounding more direct as “you *should*”, “you *have to*”,

“那你應該試著跟她談！(na ni yinggai shizhe gen ta tan!)” (You should try to talk to her.)

- 3) lectures or moral lessons,
“盡力從自己做起吧. (jinli cuong ziji juo ci ba.)” (Start doing it from yourself.)
- 4) advice in question form like “*why not*”,
“要不要游泳? (yaobuyao yiouyong?)” (Wanna to go swimming?)
- 5) inclusive us to share the loading with the speaker, read like “*let’s*”, and
“我們去把燈關掉吧. (wuome cu ba den guangdiao ba.)” (Let’s go turn off the lights.)
- 6) “*I’ll...*” said the hearer to shoulder the responsibility for the speaker.
“恩，我下次找她談談. (um, wo xiatsi zhao ta tantan.)” (Well, I will talk to her next time.)

f) Commiseration

For the purpose of differentiating subtle difference in the responses of commiseration and advice/lecture, only those with intentions to make speakers feel better but with **no** extra labor, nor intention to help solve problems were kept under the commiseration category. All responses were screened, and a total of 12 elements were detected from all the responses:

- (1) A hearing notice-the hearers gave notices to let the speakers know that their complaints were heard.

It might be an ‘um’, ‘oh’, ‘haha...’ just some utterances that gave signals that the respondents heard what was said.

(2) Sympathy-the hearers felt sorry about what happened to the speakers.

It could be an obvious “Sorry to hear that.” to a prayer like “God bless you” for the speakers. The hearers showed sympathy and felt sorry for what happened.

(3) Pacifier-the hearers attempted to cool down the irritated speakers.

They could be expressions like “Calm down”, “That’s not so terrible.” “That’s ok.” to soothe the unpleasant emotion of the speakers.

(4) Agreement-the hearers agreed with the speakers and sometimes

reinforced the speakers with a completion of what was said or to be said.

They could be “Yes.”, “That’s true.”, “You can say that again.” “I totally agree with you”. The strength of agreement could be very strong that the hearers followed the speakers’ thought and helped finish speakers’ sentences.

(5) Question-the hearers gave out questions and hinted an agreement in

answer. They were questions not really requesting answers, the so called rhetorical questions. Questions to show exclamation to what happened and check if they had got the situation right. They were repetitions of what just said but in interrogation forms.

- (6) Blaming-the hearers stood by the speakers by blaming the person for doing or not doing something that had upset the speakers.
- (7) Reassurance-the hearers claimed positive results of efforts made by the speakers and assured what the speakers had done was right. The respondent reassured the speaker on the efforts made. The reassurance could be an assurance of a coming reward or the going of a bad luck.
- (8) Neutral fact-“*c'est la vie*” (such is life). The hearers might suggest the speakers to accept the situations as they were facts in life so to let the speakers feel better. The hearers might not know how to deal with the situations by saying “I don't know” for things were beyond their control or imagination.
- (9) Other opinions-the hearers might propose possible reasons or grounding to soothe the speakers. By giving out different opinions, showing the speakers how to see things from different perspectives, the hearers commiserated the speakers.
- (10) Push for a quick follow-up action-the hearers might push the speakers for a quick follow-up action and catch up with pace in life. Sometimes, the hearers would said something like “come in”, “take a seat” to ease the speakers from present uneasy situations.

(11) Compliment-some hearers gave compliments to make speakers feel better. In case of speaker's self-complaint, some hearers might give compliments to save the speakers from self-pity. "You look good no matter what you wear." The hearers obviously tried to change the speakers from negative attitude to positive attitude.

(12) Doing or not doing-the hearers proposing doing or not doing something to let speakers feel better. In the case of a dirty toilet, the hearers might just propose not to come to that toilet again to show supportive efforts to the speakers, like "we will remember not to come to the toilet again."

With results of the qualitative analysis on the actual wording used in all responses, the data would show the norms and values and the sociolinguistic rules of the speakers. These showed the characteristics of the language users.

Inter-rater agreement coefficient. The subgrouping was first done by the researcher and then 20 percent of the data was randomly selected for a second rater to do the subgrouping. The inter-rater agreement coefficients were 91%, 90% and 92 % respectively for the American, EFL and Taiwanese groups.



CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results and findings from the collected data are presented in this chapter.

A quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the statistic meaning of the three groups' responses to indirect complaints. Based on the results of the quantitative analysis, a qualitative analysis was conducted on the actual language use of the groups to see the difference. All contributive factors were examined to find answers to the research questions.

The Quantitative Analysis

The result of the study based on strategy classification was provided in Table 4.1 as follows:

Table 4.1 Counts and distribution of responses by strategy classification

	<i>American</i>	%	<i>EFL</i>	%	<i>Taiwanese</i>	%
Zero response	151	16%	155	16%	112	12%
Question	26	3%	36	4%	31	3%
Jokes/teasing	61	6%	76	8%	143	15%
Contradiction	40	4%	24	3%	61	6%
Advice	257	27%	346	36%	257	27%
Commiseration	425	44%	323	34%	356	37%

The strategy distribution among the three subject groups was similar. It could be divided into three major chunks: (1) commiseration and advice/lectures, (2) jokes/teasing and zero strategy, and (3) question and contradiction.

Table 4.2 Chunks of responses by strategy classification

	<i>American</i>	%	<i>EFL</i>	%	<i>Taiwanese</i>	%
Contradiction	40	4%	24	3%	61	6%
Question	26	3%	36	4%	31	3%
Jokes/teasing	61	6%	76	8%	143	15%
Zero response	151	16%	155	16%	112	12%
Advice	257	27%	346	36%	257	27%
Commiseration	425	44%	323	34%	356	37%

Based on the results, the biggest chunk fell on commiseration and advice. *Taiwanese* and *American* groups tended to use commiseration more than advice strategy. *Taiwanese* utilized commiseration strategy 10% more than they used advice strategy. *American* group used commiseration strategy even more often than *Taiwanese* group. The chances that *EFL* group used the two strategies were about the same (advice vs. commiseration= 36% vs. 34%). *Americans* and *EFL* groups had about the same amount in counts but *Taiwanese* had about 60 counts less in comparison,

The second chunk was in zero response and jokes/teasing. *American* and *EFL* groups had similar weighting but *EFL* group had slightly more jokes than *American* group (8% vs. 6%, or 76 counts vs. 61 counts). *Taiwanese* group had less zero response, but they utilized jokes/teasing strategy more than the other two groups.

The third chunk was in question and contradiction. The figures in all three groups were low. *American* and *Taiwanese* groups used more contradiction than question strategy; *EFL* group used more question strategy than contradiction strategy.

Statistical Analysis. To get the meaning behind the data, chi squares were calculated. The chi square of the total responses among the three groups was $\chi^2=100.235$ (with degree of freedom = 10 and $P \leq 0.001$). The three groups responded significantly differently toward these indirect complaint utterances. To determine which strategies contributed to the making of significant difference, standardized residuals were calculated (Table 4.3). When the absolute value of the standardized residual was greater than 2, the representing strategy was a contributive factor in marking the significant difference.

Table 4.3 Calculated values of the standardized residual in the three groups

Response	Standardized Residual Calculation		
	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	0.988	1.327	-2.316**
Question	-0.898	0.898	0.000
Jokes/teasing	-3.347**	-1.794	5.141**
Contradiction	-0.258	-2.737**	2.995**
Advice/lecture	-1.752	3.504**	-1.752
Commiseration	2.971**	-2.346**	-0.626

** The absolute value of the residuals was greater than 2.

Based on the results in Table 4.3, the data interpretations were as follows:

1. *Taiwanese* used less zero responses than the other two groups. They tried hardest, among the three groups, to keep at least some conversation going.
2. *Taiwanese* tended to make situations not so serious while *Americans* exercised least jokes and teases in responding to indirect complaints from speakers.
3. *Taiwanese* were more likely to raise contradiction to those indirect complaints than *English learners (EFL)*, who on the other hand tried the hardest to sustain what they heard.
4. *EFL* group tried the most to help out by either giving suggestion or directly offered helping hands.
5. To ease bad feeling, *American* group tried the most to comfort speakers while *English learners (EFL)* group used least commiseration strategy in the three groups.

The question remained was that ‘*How did the groups respond when the social distance between them and the speakers varied?*’

All respondents to our questionnaires had to give responses as if they were in the situation. To ease the loading for respondents when working on the questionnaire, situations of the same social distance were kept together; in other words, situations 1 to 8 in the DCT questionnaire were complaints from strangers, situations 9 to 16 were complaints from friends and the rest were complaints from intimates. The data was further studied according to different social distances of the hearers and the speakers.

1) Strangers

The results of the first eight scenarios were reviewed, and the responses were categorized into six strategies (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Counts of strategy responses toward strangers

	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	89	91	61
Question	1	2	3
Jokes/teasing	15	18	38
Contradiction	14	5	19
Advice/lectures	38	58	30
Commiseration	163	146	169

On hearing indirect complaints from strangers, *Taiwanese* group tried the most to build up some conversation. All three groups asked few questions toward strangers. *Taiwanese* group used jokes/teasing strategy more than the other two groups. *EFL* group tended to stay away from contradiction, the count of frequency was about one third the frequencies of the other two groups. The big similarity lied on the total numbers of advice strategy and commiseration strategy among three groups (*American*, *EFL*, and *Taiwanese*). *EFL* group used advice strategy frequently (58 counts) and less commiseration (146 counts) compared with the other two groups.

The chi square value (χ^2) for responses of the three groups on hearing complaints from strangers was 40.854 (with degree of freedom=10 and $P < 0.001$). This meant that these three groups responded significantly differently toward indirect complaints uttered by strangers. To further understand how the different strategies

contributed to make the significant difference, standardized residuals were calculated and the values were listed as on Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Calculated values of standardized residual when facing strangers

Standardized Residual Calculation			
Response	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	0.967	1.190	-2.157**
Question	-0.707	0.000	0.707
Jokes/teasing	-1.781	-1.165	2.946**
Contradiction	0.375	-2.154**	1.780
Advice/lecture	-0.617	2.469**	-1.852
Commiseration	0.290	-1.056	0.766

** The absolute value of the residual was greater than 2.

Based on results in Table 4.5, the data interpretations were as follows:

1. On hearing complaints from strangers, *Taiwanese* tried hardest to bring up conversations.
2. *Taiwanese* group tried the most to reduce the seriousness in conversation after hearing indirect complaints from strangers.
3. *English learners (EFL)* group was the least group that would object to strangers' indirect complaints.
4. *English learners (EFL)* group tried the most to help out by giving suggestions or extra offers when they heard indirect complaints from strangers.

2) Friends

The results of responding to indirect complaints from friends were captured in the questions 9 to 16 in the DCT questionnaire. These situations were woven with different themes and genders but only among one social distance-friend.

Table 4.6 Counts of responses toward friends

	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	34	38	22
Question	18	25	24
Jokes/teasing	24	35	47
Contradiction	10	8	26
Advice/lectures	107	129	113
Commiseration	127	85	88

On hearing indirect complaints from friends, the three groups had very similar responses in terms of the strategy they used. *EFL* group had the biggest number in zero responses, and *American* group was next. *American* group used the question strategy least among three groups but all three groups asked more questions than when they were responding to strangers. *Taiwanese* used more jokes/teasing and contradiction strategy than the other two groups; yet, *Americans* had fewest jokes/teasing and *EFL* had fewest contradiction, i.e. only 8 counts, far less than *Taiwanese* group's 26 counts. The total counts of advice strategy and commiseration strategy were 234: 214: 201 (*American* group: *EFL* group: *Taiwanese* group). *Americans* commiserated more than the other two groups. *EFL* and *Taiwanese* groups

used more advice strategy than *American* group. But *American* group commiserated much more to their friends.

When we compared the responses of all three groups when hearing indirect complaints from friends, the chi square value was calculated as 39.676 (with degree of freedom=10 and $P < 0.001$). These three groups responded significantly differently when responding toward indirect complaints from friends. To further understand how the different strategies contributed to mark the significance, standardized residuals were calculated. The values were listed as on Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Calculated standardized residuals when facing friends

Standardized Residual Calculation			
Response	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	0.476	1.191	-1.667
Question	-0.917	0.564	0.353
Joke/teasing	-1.907	0.056	1.963
Contradiction	-1.219	1.741	2.959**
Advice/lecture	-0.865	1.174	-0.309
Commiseration	2.700**	1.500	-1.200

**The absolute value of the standard residual was greater than 2, and the captioned strategy contributed in marking the significant difference.

Based on the results in Table 4.7, the data interpretations were as follows:

1. When friends gave out indirect complaints, *Taiwanese* group rejected the standing or the validity of the complaints more often than the other two groups.

2. *Americans* gave out more commiseration toward their friends' indirect complaints.

3) *Intimates*

Questions 17 to 24 in the DCT questionnaires were indirect complaints from intimates. The counts of the responses towards intimates were listed as follows:

Table 4.8 Counts of responses towards intimates

	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	28	26	29
Question	7	9	4
Joke/teasing	22	23	58
Contradiction	16	11	16
Advice/lecture	112	159	114
Commiseration	135	92	99

The frequency of using zero response strategy toward intimates was almost the same. The counts of response requesting elaboration were far less than when they were with friends but a bit more than when they were with strangers. *Taiwanese* used jokes/teasing strategy twice more frequently than *American* and *EFL* groups (58:22:23). The frequency of using contradiction strategy was about the same, but *EFL* group had 5 counts less. In the total counts of strategies of advice/lectures and commiseration, *American* group had 247 counts, *EFL* group had 251 counts and *Taiwanese* group had 213 counts. *EFL* gave more advice and *Americans* served more commiseration.

When we compared the responses of all three groups when hearing complaints from intimates, the chi square value was 48.522 (with degree of freedom=10 and $P = < 0.001$). The three groups responded significantly differently when responding toward intimates. To further understand how the different strategies contributed to the significance, the standardized residuals were calculated and the values were listed on Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Calculated standardized residuals of responses to intimates

Standardized Residual Calculation			
Response	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Zero response	0.063	-0.317	0.253
Question	0.129	0.904	-1.033
Jokes/teasing	-2.105**	-1.934	4.039**
Contradiction	0.440	-0.880	0.440
Advice/lecture	-1.442	2.707**	-1.265
Commiseration	2.526**	-1.599	-0.927

** The absolute value of the residual was greater than 2 and the captioned strategy contributed in marking the significant difference.

Based on the results of Table 4.9, the data interpretations were as follows:

1. When reacting to intimates' indirect complaints, *Taiwanese* group tried hardest to make convivial atmosphere out of the seemed unpleasant situations ($R = 4.039$), while *Americans* were not so keen on this strategy ($R = -2.105$).
2. *English learners (EFL)* tried offering suggestion or even giving help to amend for the unhappiness of the irritated intimates.
3. *Americans* tried the most to commiserate the irritated intimates.

How did people in our study actually respond upon hearing those indirect complaints?

Although we had learned how these people responded to indirect complaints they heard, but what was the underlying pictures? Could more information be drawn from the data collected? The researcher worked on the actual wordings, the contents and the intention of these responses. With all the marked contributing response strategies, sub-grouping was established on the latter part of Chapter 3. Details of the qualitative analysis were as follows:

a) Zero response

All zero responses were further analyzed and organized into different subgroupings. The distribution and the raw counts were summarized as Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Counts (percentage) for not responding in face(zero response)

Reasons	<i>Americans</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Agreement	28 (18.54%)	32 (20.65%)	29 (25.89%)
Disagreement	37 (24.50%)	48 (30.97%)	18 (16.07%)
Trouble-Free	19 (12.58%)	4 (2.58%)	2 (1.79%)
Awkwardness	12 (7.95%)	13 (8.39%)	9 (8.04%)
Not-my-case	31 (20.53%)	34 (21.94%)	26 (23.21%)
Too common	24 (15.89%)	24 (15.48%)	28 (25.00%)
Total	151 (100%)	155 (100%)	112 (100%)

The least reason why *Taiwanese* and *EFL* groups would opt out was to avoid troubles. In comparison, *Americans* did show more chances to opt out as they wanted to avoid troubles.

The least reason why *Americans* would opt out was to avoid awkwardness. The counts and percentage of the other two groups' opting out for the same reason

were similar at around 8 percent (Table 4.10). From the same table, the respondents were also similar with the reason that they would not want to get involved in others' business. Details could be read from category "not-my-case".

One intriguing information was the opt-out for either agreeing or disagreeing with the speakers: the total counts of these two subgroups were 65: 80: 47 or 43.04%: 51.62%: 41.96% for *American: EFL: Taiwanese* groups. More than 50% of the zero response of *English learners (EFL)* was resulted from their agreeing or disagreeing with the speakers, and often time it was disagreement (30.97%) that kept them quiet. The reading that *English learners* group keep disagreement to themselves was 30 counts more than *Taiwanese* group (48 counts to 18 counts). On the other hand, one should be aware of the reading that *Taiwanese* group had the highest percentage of agreeing and the lowest percentage of disagreeing in the zero response strategy,

b) *Jokes and teasing*

The frequency of subgroups in using jokes/teasing strategy were as follows:

Table 4.11 Counts (percentage) of subgroups in jokes/teasing strategy

Tease on	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
The hearer	5 (8.20%)	13 (17.11%)	14 (9.79%)
The speaker	39 (63.93%)	49 (64.47%)	102 (71.33%)
Someone else	13 (21.31%)	4 (5.26%)	11 (7.69%)
The thing	4 (6.56%)	10 (13.16%)	16 (11.19%)
Total	61 (100%)	76 (100%)	143 (100%)

It seemed that all these three groups: *Americans, EFL, and Taiwanese* did tease most often on the speaker, the irritated person. Taiwanese even outnumbered the

other two groups by more than two times in counts, as the percentage showed the range from 63.93% to 71.33%.

All three groups teased more at the speakers but they did tease themselves sometimes. *English learners* proportionally teased themselves more often than the other two groups. *Americans* seldom teased themselves nor the situation happened; they teased more on someone else, the irritating person but still far less than they teased on the speakers.

c) *Contradiction*

The counts of the subgroups in contradiction were as follows:

Table 4.12 Counts (percentage) of the subgroups of contradiction

Sub-groups	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Golden rules	14 (35%)	4 (16.67%)	10 (16.39%)
Wrong doing/attitude	10 (25%)	4 (16.67%)	21(34.43%)
Disagreement	16 (40%)	16 (66.67%)	30 (49.18%)
Total	40 (100%)	24 (100%)	61 (100%)

Taiwanese group rejected/refused indirect complaints more often (61 counts) than the other two groups, *Americans* had 40 counts and *English learners (EFL)* group had 24 counts. The difference in counts was big. *Taiwanese* used contradiction strategy the most and *EFL* used it the least. All three groups seemed to veto indirect complaints by voicing out their disagreement from different perspectives. Other than that, a large part (35%) of *American* ways to veto indirect complaints was by objection based on golden rules, the truth statement in life. *Taiwanese* rejected indirect complaints pretty much when they thought the speakers did something wrong

(34.43%). *English learners (EFL)* group were modesty in contradicting indirect complaints by preaching golden rules or accusing others' wrong doing.

d) *Advice or lectures*

With different degrees of imposition, advice or lectures were further divided into six subgroups (Table 4.13). And if advice or lectures were given together with a touch of care, a token was noted. Counts of subgroups were presented as follows:

Table 4.13 Counts (percentage) of subgroups in advice and lectures

	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>
Mild (You could)	38(14.79%)	51 (14.74%)	19 (7.39%)
Strong (You should)	118(45.91%)	124 (35.84%)	143 (55.64%)
Lectures	28 (10.59%)	38 (10.98%)	19 (7.39%)
Question (Why not...)	17 (6.61%)	44 (12.72%)	22 (8.56%)
Inclusive us (Let's...)	29 (11.28%)	53 (15.32%)	21 (8.17%)
I (I'll..., Let me...)	27 (10.51%)	36 (10.40%)	33 (12.84%)
Total	257 (100%)	346 (100%)	257 (100%)
Caring token	112	203	70
(over total)	43.58%	58.67%	27.24%

Both Taiwanese and American groups had same counts of frequency (257 counts) in applying “advice and lectures” on hearing indirect complaints.

Comparisons could be made between these two groups first. *Taiwanese* group gave more direct commands (143 counts or 55.64%) than *American* group (118 counts or 45.91%). *American* group gave more mild suggestion (38 counts or 14.79%) than *Taiwanese* group (19 counts or 7.39%). Also from this table, we read that *American* group gave more lectures than *Taiwanese*. *Taiwanese* group made more suggestion in

forms of questions. *Americans* would share the loading of work but *Taiwanese* would were more aggressive; they would even take over the case by saying “I’ll...”
American group comforted people more often than *Taiwanese* by giving more caring tokens (112 counts to 70 counts).

As for *EFL* group, they responded to IC using the most of this advice or lectures strategy, amounting to a total of 346 counts. In the counts, more than half of that, 203 counts (58.67%), came with a caring token besides the advice.

English learners (EFL) group gave out less strong advice (35.84%) than *Taiwanese* group (55.64%); but *English learners (EFL)* group did give more mild suggestion (14.74%) than *Taiwanese* (7.39%). *English learners (EFL)* group were more willing to share the loading with the speakers by giving suggestions in inclusive forms, namely 53 counts or 15.32% of the total number of their advice. They made more suggestions in question forms (44 counts or 12.72%). One interesting thing to note was that *English learners* gave lectures a bit more than the other two groups (38 counts or 10.98%).

e) *Commiseration*

People commiserated to comfort people and let them feel understood. Reading through the wordings and contents of the responses in commiseration, the researcher detected 12 elements in the utterances. The raw counts of the twelve elements were presented as Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Counts of the 12 elements in commiseration responses

Elements	<i>American</i>	<i>EFL</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>	Sub-Total
1. A hearing notice	104	73	81	258
2. Showing sympathy	103	49	29	181
3. Pacifier, cooling down	101	80	89	270
4. Showing agreement	142	115	117	374
5. Rhetorical questions	18	7	13	38
6. Scolding, blaming	26	30	69	125
7. Reassurance	38	14	12	64
8. Neutral fact, such is life	77	37	38	152
9. Other opinions	56	48	46	150
10. Push to	31	35	45	111
11. Compliments	6	8	8	22
12. Doing or not doing	15	17	15	47
Elements counted in total	717	513	562	1792
Response counts in strategy	425	323	356	1104

American group comparatively commiserated complainers the most in these three groups. Table 4.14 showed that *American* group was especially strong in commiserating people and giving supports. *Taiwanese* group had more counts on blaming the party not present and urging the speaker to keep life pace going. *American* group had more counts in giving hearing notice, showing sympathy and

soothing the speakers' feeling. When it came to rhetorical questions, questions not requesting answers, *English learners* group had less counts. Then *Taiwanese* group showed twice and more the frequency of blaming on the party not present than the two other groups, namely *English learners (EFL)* group and *American* group. *Americans* showed to have more counts in reassuring speakers on efforts made; they stated neutral fact statements and/or gave out possible reasons to make it easier for speakers in taking the situation. *Taiwanese* showed more aggressive in pushing speakers for next steps to keep life going.

A bird's-view of data over the groups, subgroups and different social distances

An overall view of the data collected was needed. With the screens of respondents' strategy, subgroups of strategy categories, and social distance of complainers, how did these people react differently to indirect complaints come from people of different social distance? The data were summarized as follows.

a) Zero response

The frequency of the responses using "zero response" strategy with its subgroups and social distance were summarized in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Counts of subgroups and social distances in zero response

Sub groups	<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total
Agreement	16	9	3	28	22	4	6	32	20	3	6	29
Disagreement	27	4	6	37	35	9	4	48	10	2	6	18
Trouble-free	16	2	1	19	3	0	1	4	2	0	0	2
Awkwardness	4	5	3	12	5	5	3	13	1	3	5	9
Not-my-case	13	8	10	31	12	12	10	34	14	7	5	26
Too common	13	6	5	24	14	8	2	24	14	7	7	28
Total	89	34	28	151	91	38	26	155	61	22	29	112

The results in the vertical shaded area were presented in previous pages. The numbers in the bottom row were new *English learners* had the most counts of zero responses toward strangers, and then followed by to friends and the fewest to intimates. *Americans* had the same finding. But *Taiwanese* group exercised the fewest zero responses toward friends.

English learners and *Americans* had a big difference in how they used zero response to avoid troubles. In trouble-free, *Americans* had 16 counts of it in responding to indirect complaints from strangers; while the chance of those in the other two groups were only one digit numbers, *Taiwanese* group had only 2 and *EFL* group had 3.

On zero responses out of agreement and disagreement, the total counts for the three groups and different social distances were 0

1) With strangers *American: EFL: Taiwanese* = 43: 57: 30

2) With friends *American: EFL: Taiwanese* = 13: 13: 5

3) With intimates *American: EFL: Taiwanese* = 9: 10: 12

EFL group and *American* group were similar but Taiwanese were a little different. Taiwanese tended to be quiet for more agreement and less disagreement in zero response, and the counts of zero response in their agreeing/disagreeing toward friends were not as much.

b) Responses requesting elaboration (RRE)

Although there was no subgrouping in the responses requesting elaboration, Table 4.16 summarized the frequency of RRE by different social distances.

Table 4.16 Counts of responses by social distances in RRE

		<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
		strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total
1		1	18	7	26	2	25	9	36	3	24	4	31

c) Jokes and teasing

Details of counts by subgroups and social distances in jokes and teasing strategy were shown here.

The results in Table 4.17 showed that *Taiwanese* group teased more on intimates, *EFL* and *Americans* teased friends a bit more than they did to intimates. All three groups were comparatively more serious when with strangers.

Table 4.17 Counts of subgroups and social distances in jokes and teasing

Sub	<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total
Hearer	3	1	1	5	6	4	3	13	5	7	2	14
Speaker	6	17	16	39	9	22	18	49	20	34	48	102
Other P	6	2	5	13	0	3	1	4	7	2	2	11
Other T	0	4	0	4	3	6	1	10	6	4	6	16
Total	15	24	22	61	18	35	23	76	38	47	58	143

Note: Sub group 1 teased on the hearer
 Sub group 2 teased on the speaker
 Sub group 3 teased on other person not present
 Sub group 4 teased on the thing happened

Taiwanese found fun easily with all social distances and they joked on intimates much more often than the other two groups. All three groups teased more on the speakers, the people who made indirect complaints. When teasing on the speakers, *Taiwanese* had more teases on intimates and the other two groups joked more with friends though the *Americans* had just one count more teasing on friends than on intimates.

American group showed lowest counts in teasing on themselves with only 5 counts and 3 of them were to strangers. There were no records of *Americans*' teasing on the situation of what happened toward indirect complaints from strangers or intimates. *English learners* had no records teasing on the person not present when hearing indirect complaints from strangers.

d) *Contradiction and explanation*

Table 4.18 Counts of subgroups and social distances in contradiction

Sub	<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
	Strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total
G-rules	7	2	5	14	0	2	2	4	6	3	1	10
Wrong	1	4	5	10	1	2	1	4	4	8	9	21
Different	6	4	6	16	4	4	8	16	9	15	6	30
Total	14	10	16	40	5	8	11	24	19	26	16	61

Note: Sub group 1 was to contradict an indirect complaint with truth statement.
 Sub group 2 was to contradict the speakers by accusing their wrong doing.
 Sub group 3 referred to different opinions

Although *Taiwanese* group showed to have vetoed the speaker's complaints the most, they did apply this strategy mostly to their friends, and least with their intimates. *Americans* took the second place in rejecting indirect complaints; they contradicted more with intimates and least with friends. *EFL* group contradicted the least and they did contradict more with intimates and least with strangers.

An interesting observation was that all groups contradicted to people's indirect complaints mainly because they couldn't agree with what the speakers said and they voiced their different opinions. *Taiwanese* had a heavy show of contradiction with friends when they felt the impulse to have to say something. One thing worthy of notes was that *Taiwanese* had only one count in preaching golden rules to intimates. *EFL* had no record preaching golden rules to strangers and even to friends and intimates, the chances of preaching from the *English learners* were small.

Americans had accused wrong doing of five intimates, four friends and one stranger; *EFL* had accusation against 2 friends, one stranger and one intimate.

e) Advice and lectures

Table 4.19 Counts of subgroups and social distances in advice and lectures

Sub	<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total
Mild advice	7	23	8	38	12	22	17	51	5	8	6	19
Strong advice	13	54	51	118	12	51	61	124	8	66	69	143
Lectures	8	5	15	28	18	7	13	38	3	9	7	19
Advice in question forms	1	11	5	17	4	24	16	44	1	17	4	22
Inclusive us	4	3	22	29	6	11	36	53	3	5	13	21
I will	5	11	11	27	6	14	16	36	10	8	15	33
Total	38	107	112	257	58	129	159	346	30	113	114	257
Caring (efforts)	22	48	42	112	34	67	102	203	12	25	33	70

All three groups gave more advice and lectures to their intimates and then friends and least toward strangers.

EFL group reacted most often by giving advice and lectures out and they gave out more caring tokens when giving out advice. *Taiwanese* and *American* groups had the same counts in giving out advice and lectures, but *American* group gave out a lot more caring tokens than *Taiwanese* group.

Taiwanese were more direct in giving out strong advice, but they did not give as much strong advice to strangers as *American* group or *EFL* group. As for the chances of giving mild advice, *Taiwanese* group had the fewest counts and the

distribution of mild advice to the indirect complaints to the three different social distances were about the same in all three groups.

EFL group and *Americans* seemed used to give advice by giving lectures more often than *Taiwanese*. But *Americans* lectured more to their intimates and *English learners* lectured more to strangers.

f) *Commiseration*

The counts of subgroups and social distances in commiseration were summarized in Table 4.20.



Table 4.20 Counts of subgroups and social distances in commiseration

	<i>American</i>				<i>EFL</i>				<i>Taiwanese</i>			
	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	intimates	Sub total	strangers	friends	Intimates	Sub total
1	51	26	27	104	38	14	21	73	44	25	12	81
2	32	44	27	103	13	14	22	49	10	9	10	29
3	52	18	31	101	42	19	21	80	53	12	24	89
4	65	41	36	142	63	14	38	115	55	23	39	117
5	10	3	5	18	5	1	1	7	2	5	6	13
6	11	6	9	26	15	9	6	30	28	23	18	69
7	10	4	24	38	7	2	5	14	4	1	7	12
8	25	24	28	77	15	12	10	37	15	10	13	38
9	20	19	17	56	16	26	6	48	27	13	6	46
10	10	4	17	31	19	10	6	35	26	6	13	45
11	0	0	6	6	3	2	3	8	3	0	5	8
12	10	3	2	15	7	5	5	17	6	5	4	15
	296	192	229	717	243	128	144	513	273	132	157	562

Note: Sub 1, a hearing notice; Sub 2, showing sympathy;
 Sub 3, was a pacifier, cooling down; Sub 4, showing agreement;
 Sub 5, rhetorical questions; Sub 6, scolding; Sub 7, reassurance;
 Sub 8, neutral fact, such is life; Sub 9, grounding, giving other opinions;
 Sub 10, push to a quick action; Sub 11, give compliment to make feel better;
 Sub 12, propose of doing or not doing something to let feel better

The *American* group gave out more commiseration than the other two groups. They gave out more hearing notice to show attention paid to the speakers. Although all three groups gave more pacifier than sympathy, *American* group showed more

sympathy than *EFL*, and *Taiwanese* showed least of sympathy. *Taiwanese* did join the speaker blaming on the other party present. *Americans* comforted people by reassurance of the efforts made and they proposed what happened was mere fact to the speakers; more often than *EFL* and *Taiwanese* groups.

Taiwanese group made more efforts redirecting the attention of the speakers toward moving on what should come next. An interesting thing to note was on the rhetorical question part. *Americans* made more rhetorical questions than the other two groups and they had the response mostly towards complaints from strangers.

Based on the results and the findings, we proposed to answer to the research questions of this study:

- 1) How were the EFL students' responses to indirect complaints different from those of native speakers of American English and those of their counterparts in Taiwan?

The findings show obvious language universality and specificity. All the responses collected in the study found a place of fit in Boxer's categorization (1993), it confirmed the language universal rules. Yet, there were slight differences in the responses of the three groups' responses:

- a) Taiwanese had the fewest counts of zero responses.
- b) Taiwanese tended to make convivial atmosphere for unpleasant utterances, but Americans were moderate in jokes/teasing compared with the other two groups.
- c) Taiwanese contradicted indirect complaints more than Americans and comparatively, English learners (EFL) tried hardest to sustain people's indirect complaints.

d) English learners (EFL) did give more advice and lectures to people's indirect complaints.

e) Americans commiserated the most among the three groups while English learners (EFL) did the least.

2) How did they respond when the social distance of the speaker and the hearers varied?

The three groups responded differently to the speakers of different social distances:

a) On hearing indirect complaints from strangers

- Taiwanese tried the most to have at least some conversation with the speakers.
- Taiwanese tended to tell jokes or tease the speakers to make the situation less serious.
- English learners (EFL) tried to sustain what the speakers said most of all.
- English learners (EFL) gave out more advice and lectures to strangers than the other two groups.

b) On hearing indirect complaints from friends

- Taiwanese contradicted the indirect complaints more often than the other two groups.
- Americans commiserated the unhappy speakers more than the other groups.

c) On hearing indirect complaints from intimates

- Taiwanese tried the most to make the situation seem less serious while Americans were not as good in making situation less serious.

- English learners (EFL) gave more advice and lectures to the speakers.
- Americans commiserated more than the other two groups.

Details would be discussed in the following chapter.





CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter explains the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Comparisons are made with findings of previous studies. The language behavior of the two native groups is discussed with reasonable explanation, and then their possible influence on the language learners is scrutinized.

Contrast and Comparison with the Findings in Previous Studies

Boxer's (1993) study on the interaction of native speakers did shed a light for non-native speakers to know the explicit and implicit rules of speaking in native speakers. In order to ascertain the use of indirect complaints in native speakers and non-native speakers' conversation, Boxer assigned female native and non-native students to work as a pair. She collected an average of 3.9 hours of data from every pair respectively by recorders and found Japanese used a lot of backchannels and missed a lot of chances to talk with native speakers to develop native-like language performance. She concluded that their backchannels first came out of their linguistic limitations and that still there were cultural differences in interactional style: they were not aware that their American partners were expecting them to speak up and help carry on the conversation.

In our study, the data collected from the EFL group showed a comparatively different story. The EFL group was inclined to veto the fewest and gave advice the most. Their vetoes the fewest might partially explained why they had so many zero

response out of disagreement. In over 50% of the responses, EFL group kept quiet for reasons of agreeing or disagreeing with the speakers and they had zero response because they disagreed with the speakers more often than they agreed with the speakers. This is to say, when they disagreed with someone, they chose to keep quiet most of the time. This is consistent with Leech's (1983) Agreement Maxim; minimize the disagreement of self and other. Their taking the lead in giving advice was because of their eagerness to be of help to the speakers and to build solidarity. Unlike American participants who treated suggestion-making as a face threatening act (FTA); Chinese tended to take it as a face satisfying act (FSA). Lii-Shih (1994) found Chinese like to make suggestions as directly as possible. It's a positive politeness strategy to satisfy the speakers' desire to be liked and to be treated as in-group members and earn advice.

The quantitative analytical results showed that Taiwanese were inclined to utilize all they could to respond to the utterances of indirect complaints. They had comparatively fewer zero responses to show politeness of attitudinal warmth and respond to the given utterances of indirect complaints. And as they responded, Taiwanese showed aggressiveness in responses. Americans, on the other hand, were more conservative; they had less jokes/teasing and gave less advice.

As mentioned, Taiwanese had the fewest zero response. Their zero response out of agreeing with the speakers was the highest, and their zero response out of disagreement with the speakers was lowest. Taiwanese tended to speak up with their disagreement. This finding matches with the observation of Lii-Shih (1994) in responding the more directly and the less vaguely, the more polite they believe they are. And as a result, Taiwanese had the highest number in counts of contradiction.

One way to differentiate Chinese and Americans is in the culture influences. Chinese, which are more collectivism; they treat speakers as in-groups with whom they mutually shared background knowledge and values. There are basic positive politeness techniques, in Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea; the hearers are trying to put the speakers 'at ease'. On the other hand, Americans are much of individualism. They think faces are the endowment that individuals are inborn with. They believe that they have to protect the faces of themselves and of the speakers to show respect.

Take a closer look. In Boxer's (1993) ethnographical spontaneous data collection of the responses to indirect complaints, 533 exchanges of 100 males and 195 females were studied. Commiseration took the leading place with a frequency of 43.58%, followed with contradiction 14.72%, advice/lectures, 13.58%, question, 11.70%, and zero response, 10.19%. Joking and teasing took the least portion with a frequency of 6.23%.

In this study, 2880 exchanges of 60 males and 60 females collected by discourse completion task. Advice/lectures and commiseration were the dominated responses. Zero response and jokes/teasing were almost a quarter of all responses, and questions and contradiction were accounted less than 10% of the total counts. Although Boxer's categories were good enough to cover all responses, there was still difference in the definition of the responses. The reason for the difference might rise because Boxer obtained her data from spontaneous conversation with no control of variables. In this study, discourse completion episodes were with set controlled conditions and in the university environment, the data of the received responses did look comparatively much similar in contents.

Advice/lectures and commiseration. Americans took the lead with the advice/lectures and commiseration strategies. American had most of the commiseration but not the most counts in advice. EFL had the second place in the total counts of these two strategies, but a lot of counts were from advice. Taiwanese had the fewest counts in the sum-up but they had more commiseration than EFL groups. Based on the responses, EFL showed great difference from the other two groups by their aggressiveness in getting involved and to help out. A typical example from EFL was presented here for contrast: “This is the world- full of idiots and morons. But still we should save the world. If we don't, then no one will...” when the intention of the hearer was to say we should still do something. The overelaboration was due to the hearer's insecurity with the target with the target language norms. He might think that the more he said, the more convincing it is more likely is.

In this study, EFL group seemed to violate the Quantity Principle by speaking more than their counterparts. They aggressively show their intention to build up the solidarity by giving more verbal strategies to achieve a “specific pragmatic goal” (Edmondson & House, 1991) without knowing their good intention might be an imposition over others' negative faces. On the other hand, Taiwanese took advice as a face satisfying action, a “rapport-building strategy” (Hinkel, 1994), a token of solidarity (Du, 1995), an action to show they are treating the speakers as of “in-group”. Taiwanese highlighted collectivism while Americans emphasized individualism. Collectivism culture assumed that everyone belonged to “in-group”, and the “in-group” members protected the benefits of its people and seek to support and approve their groups. Americans viewed giving advice as strong offense in their culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As it showed in the data, Americans comparatively gave less advice toward their interlocutors.

Zero response and jokes/teasing. Based on the data of this study, zero response and jokes/teasing were the next largest strategies for responding to the survey. Americans and EFL had the similar response patterns. There were more zero responses than jokes/teasing. Taiwanese were on the opposite direction. Taiwanese had more jokes/teasing than zero response. The possible reason for this difference might be because of Taiwanese's culture norms. Their concept of politeness out of attitudinal warmth and the harmony of the community influenced their way of responding to others.

People are connected by "cooperative principles" (Grice, 1975). Interlocutors find ways to recognize the purpose of the speech and feel the responsibility to carry on conversation. Saying thing right and clear and not too much is the universal politeness.

Americans viewed individuals' image as a restricted territory for jokes/teasing. It seemed that the majority EFL learners acquired the competent knowledge and followed suit.

Question and contradiction. The most face threatening action in conversation was not been understood by what was said or even been rejected with the validity of utterances. Question and contradiction were face threatening actions in the responses. The three groups had the least response in this domain. It was interesting that EFL groups asked more questions than the other two groups; while Taiwanese and American groups contradicted more than asking questions. There were evidences of universality. It was polite for hearers to pay attention to what the speakers said and responded properly. A face threatening act was to veto what was said or to ask for further clarification. EFL students showed to be patient in acquiring more information

and were reluctant to reject what was said. On the other hand, it also showed that in lack of pragmatic knowledge, they might need to play the skill to gain time to be sure what to do.

The Native Groups

The two native speaker groups of English and Chinese showed to commiserate more than to give advice. There were times too much words would just impede the will of action for the others. Besides, they didn't ask many questions but they rejected speakers' indirect complaints if they couldn't think along with the speakers.

Americans were more individualism, and Taiwanese were more collectivism. Americans not only didn't want to give too much advice to impede people's negative face by showing superiority in knowledge over the speakers, and they would not want to run the risk of teasing themselves to put their self-image in danger and make light of the situation. This was not the case for Taiwanese, they worshiped collectivism and their concern was how to ease the situation and maximize group's benefits.

In the cases of contradiction, the native contradicted indirect complaints that were not acceptable; aside from expression different opinions, Americans emphasized truth statement while Taiwanese accused the wrong doings of the speakers more than Americans did.

Taiwanese gave more direct (strong) advice than mild advice; and Americans gave comparatively more mild advice than Taiwanese. Besides, Americans lectured on facts more than Taiwanese. Americans were more inclined to share loading of the

troubles than to shoulder the responsibility, and Taiwanese were brave on action and timid on lectures.

And finally, on commiseration, Americans had foreplay of giving hearing notice, showing sympathy, and giving pacifiers and Taiwanese were not as strong in showing sympathy. Americans reassured good efforts and fact, but Taiwanese didn't state the reassurance as much. But Taiwanese did show the dare to blame on the others by standing by the speakers and by pushing the complainers to move forward.

EFL group

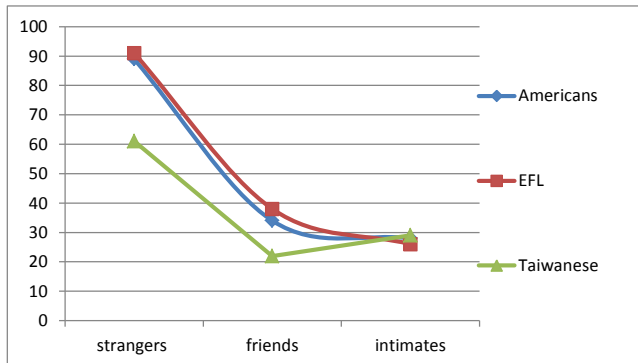
The EFL group, being learners of intermediate-to-high intermediate level language proficiency, showed certain resemblance to Americans in their attitude toward people of different social distances; they had less jokes/teasing, less contradiction. Such tendency got more support in analytical results of the actual wording used in the responses though three groups did share some features as well. With complainers of different social distances, EFL and Americans had the second high records with friends in zero response categories. They joked more with friends and contradicted more with intimates.

EFL group tried to find all reasons to sustain what speakers said and the counts of contradiction were only 24 and 16 of out of them were contradicted with different ways of seeing things.

A Contrast with Bulge Theory. Not as Wolfson's (1988) research on the speak act of compliment and invitation, the extremes didn't share the similar counts of experience; this research on the responses to indirect complaints is consistent with Boxer's (1933) research on that the bulge is not in the middle for friends, but at one end of the continuum of strangers or intimates. Here as a way to check the

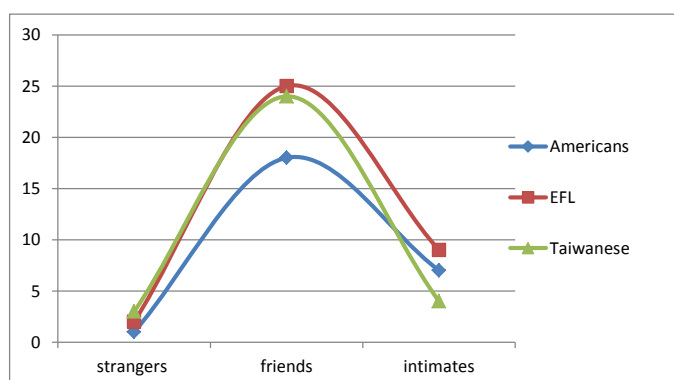
relationship of the strategies and the social distances, the line charts of the responses are follows:

Figure 5.1 Zero responses across social distance continuum



Americans and EFL had similar curve in the distribution of zero response strategy. Taiwanese had attitudinal warmth and were comparatively more responsive to friends and strangers than the other two groups. By reviewing the detail of subgrouping, Taiwanese had less zero responses out of disagreement. Although Americans and English learners exercised less zero responses towards intimates, Taiwanese did have slightly more zero responses with intimates. Although with intimates, people were free to express their true feeling. It was the interaction with friends and strangers that we found much more constrained to behave within the confines of politeness expectation (Boxer, 1993). Americans and English learners might apply the strategy to minimize possible conflicts in interaction. We observed that among interlocutors of strangers, the desire to be polite might be stronger than the desire to increase solidarity.

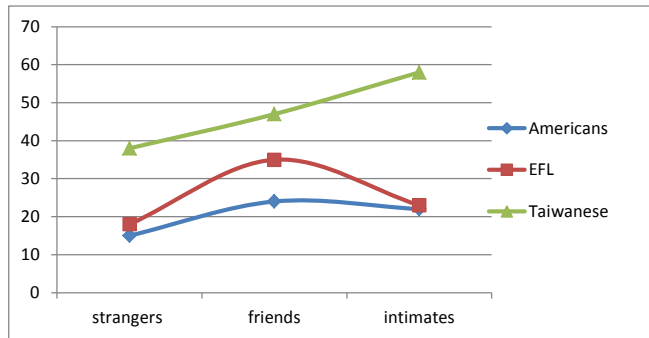
Figure 5.2 Response requesting elaboration across social distance continuum



Response requesting elaboration was the only strategy that showed no significant difference. Three groups had similar curve lines in the strategy of responses requesting elaboration. The chart was almost similar with Wolfson's (1988) study with the bulge in the middle of the continuum indicating friends showed marked difference in the frequency of responses in RRE. We observed that Taiwanese and English learners were more responsive. As mentioned, English learners in this study were motivated to language learning. They might take the chance to create opportunities in practicing negotiated interaction. They believed the solidarity-establishing speech behavior with native speakers is the root of successful sequential interaction. However, we observed that Taiwanese had records asking "How much do you have every month?" and English learners asked "Where did you spend your money?" but no such kind of topic in the questions raised by Americans in our study. Peeping into the privacy of money matters is a taboo in the American society but it was a caring gesture for Taiwanese and English learners among peers, We found questions of "Why....?" in the American group but no such utterances from Taiwanese group nor EFL group. This explained Taiwanese's weakness in

reiterating the power of facts and reasons. This pragmatic transfer was observed in the language behaviors.

Figure 5.3 Jokes/teasing across social distance continuum

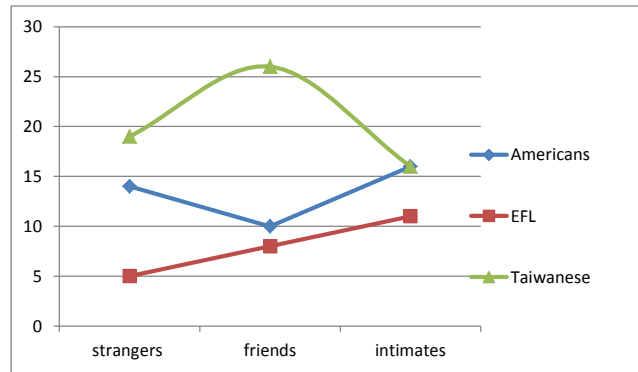


The diagrams for EFL and Americans shared great resemblance in Figure 5.3. It might be because Americans were more of individualism, they were careful with the protection of self-images and they wanted to play-it-safe. English learners learned there was a land mine territory, they were careful if they didn't want to be offensive with improper jokes/teasing, but still they would be in comparatively more joking mood with their friends. Taiwanese played with mood of the situations more often than the other two groups. They had more freedom and less worries while speaking with intimates.

Figure 5.4 presented the contradiction strategy used by different groups across the social distance continuum. Taiwanese utilized the contradiction strategy the most. They contradicted especially with their friends. Americans were the opposite. They contradicted less with the friends. While with English learners, they contradicted the least, and still they showed more confidence in interacting with

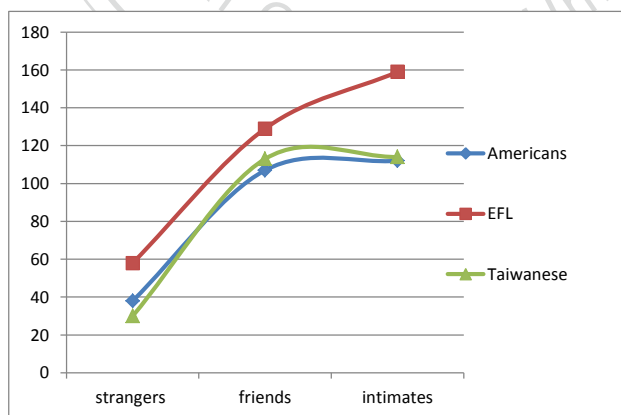
intimates by not worrying of offending them. The quantity analysis showed that Taiwanese contradicted the most and English learners contradicted the least.

Figure 5.4 Contradiction across social distance continuum



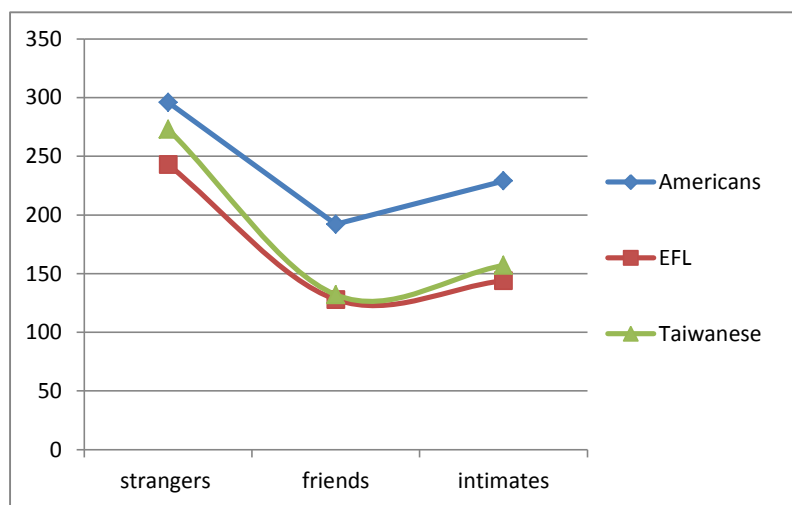
All three groups shared similar curve when utilizing advice/lecture strategy across social distance.

Figure 5.5 Advice/lectures across social distance continuum



Taiwanese showed giving more advice/lectures to their intimates. In here, we still observed English learners' willingness to interact with the speakers. They might have used more verbal strategy to achieve their pragmatic goal as mentioned above. They still inclined to give advice/lectures more to their intimates.

Figure 5.6 Commiseration across social distance continuum

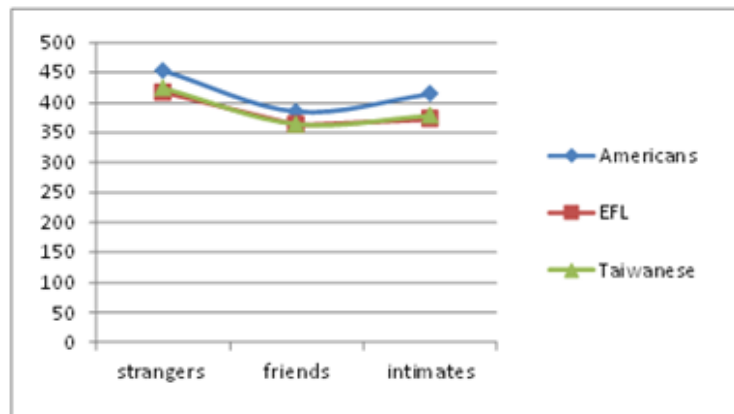


In our definition, the difference between advice and commiseration was that advice really showed the intention to help out with or without showing sympathy and understanding to their speakers. In other words, commiseration was more of showing sympathy with words, and this structure was quite mature with American speakers.

In comparing the subgrouping elements, we found that Taiwanese and English learners were consistent in their weakness in showing sympathy with words, especially in the use of “I am sorry”. In American English, “I am sorry” doesn’t really have to the expression of incidentally hurting someone. But Taiwanese and English learners seldom used the expression in showing commiseration. This illustrated what Giles’ (1979) viewpoint in that lexis could be an intra-lingual marker

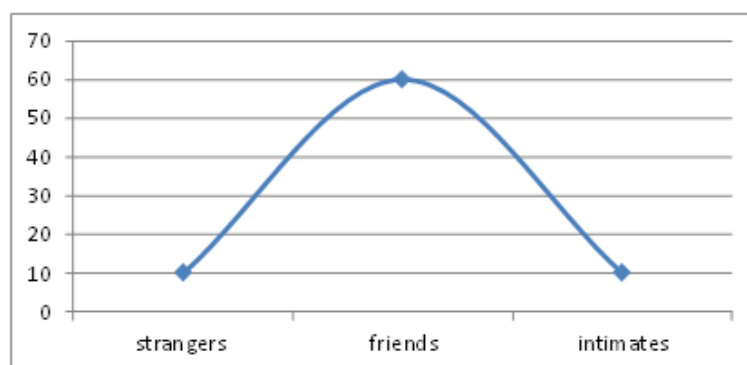
of group identity. The difference pertains to the socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of language use and may be treated as the pragmatics of the language.

Figure 5.7 Overall responses across social distance continuum



With all the respondents' counts in every cell of the strategies, it shows that all groups put in more efforts to strangers and then intimates but slightly a bit less efforts on the interaction with friends. The diagrams show the bulge slightly open to the up side.

Figure 5.8 Wolfson's Bulge



The diagram shows the bulge in Wolfson's Theory (1988). It was quite different with all the other diagrams that we discussed in the previous pages but only

that of responses requesting elaboration. Our study was consistent with Boxer's (1993) observation that the bulge was not seen in the speech act of responses to indirect complaints.



HAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the major findings are summarized. They focus on the social norms and values, and how they influence on people's responses to the indirect complaints. Pedagogical implications are provided. The limitations of this study and suggestions for future study are addressed.

As language behavior is closely bounded to the cultural norms, language performance is different from culture to culture. It is highly possible that a suitable speech behavior in one culture might be very disagreeable in another (Yu, 2004). To facilitate students with better communication skills, teachers should incorporate the concept of speech act into their syllabus design (Wikins, 1976).

Summary of This Study

People build solidarity on the interaction of indirect complaints. On hearing indirect complaints, people tended to comfort the speakers with advice and commiseration. EFL group might feel the urge to take the opportunity to practice the language and showed greater excitement in giving out responses. They were more delicate when responding toward others; waffle phenomenon implied they were insecure with the interaction. However, they were more careful when interacting with their interlocutors, i.e., they had more zero response when they disagreed with the speakers. They kept quiet and often they chose not to contradict the speakers. Instead, they asked questions and tried to gain time and find a way to respond to their interlocutors.

Pedagogical Implication

Based on the findings of the study, the pedagogical implications of the study are as follows:

- 1) Language instructors should include the social norms and values of targeted language in their teaching, and let students discuss the difference to help build up sociolinguistic awareness.
- 2) In designing advanced lessons, the lesson planner should highlight discussion on culture and pragmatics in addition to the discussion of grammar and function of language.

Limitations

This study was to investigate what people responded to indirect complaints and to understand how language learners responded to different cultures. The data were collected from university students and the results were informative, but the results were not generalizable.

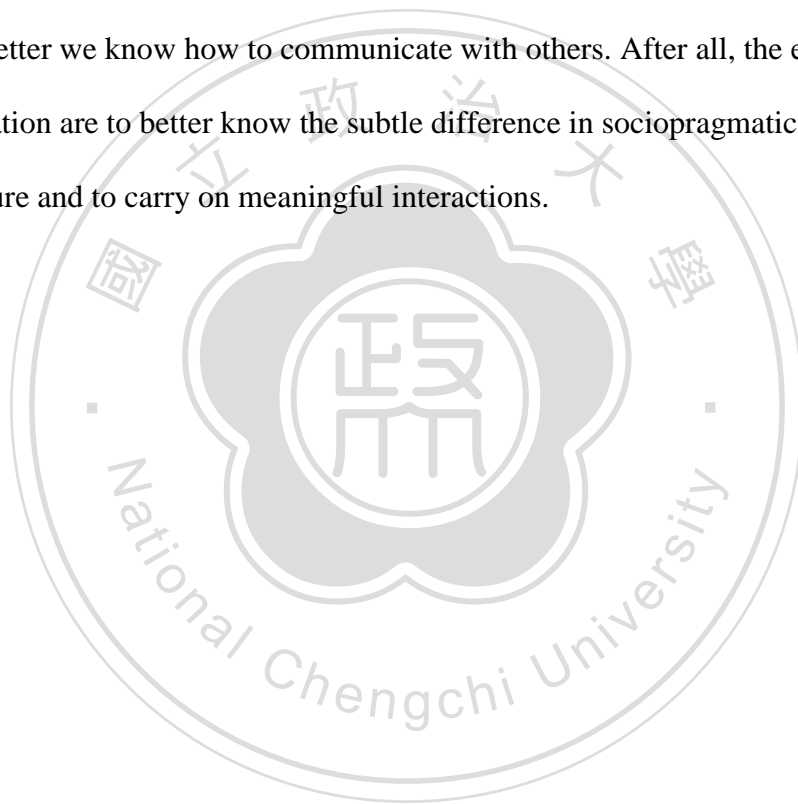
The original plan for the Taiwanese group was students with least English influences. However, with the homogeneity consideration in education background, our participants in Taiwanese group were students with least English contacts in curricula and self-declaring personal lives but they were still students with an English proficiency good enough to pass the entrance exam for universities.

The study employed discourse completion task to elicit responses, although the responses representing responding stereotype. The responses were inefficient to reflect

participants' pragmatic knowledge and competence in naturally occurring conversation (Huth & Taleghani-Nikzam, 2006). They were still imaginary one-turn interactions.

Recommendations for Future Study

Due to the limitation, future studies are suggested to have interviews to make up for the shortage of discourse completion task. The findings of the present research though informative, but can only work as reference. Language is a living asset; it changes through time and by the people who are using it. But a definitely truth is that the more we know the better we know how to communicate with others. After all, the ends of communication are to better know the subtle difference in sociopragmatic principles across culture and to carry on meaningful interactions.



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Appendix A
Language Behavior Questionnaire
for Native Chinese living in Taiwan (Taiwanese)

語言行為問卷

填寫問卷之注意事項

親愛的參與者,

這是一份有關大學生語言行為的問卷。請你針對下頁起的情境自然回應：你只要想像自己正處於一個敘述的情境中，寫下你會如何回答說話的人。如果某一個情境讓你不知道該如何回答，你也可以選擇不回應，但是請你在所附的格線中註明不回應的原因。如果在某種情境下，你還會採取某些行為，也請你記錄下來，提供我們作研究參考。我們很感謝你的參與我們這個語言行為的調查。

這裡提供一個範例供你作參考，

**有一個女生經過你家的花園，摘了一朵漂亮的花。你從屋裡看到了，於是
你走了出來，她對你說，「不好意思，但是這朵花實在太漂亮了。」**

你會說

以上的情形

你可能會說,「你這個小偷.怎麼可以到別人的花園隨便摘花呢?」



或者你會說,「**你不可以沒有我的許可就隨便亂摘花.**」

或者你會說,「**沒關係.大自然就是這麼神奇,明天的花可能更漂亮.你可以來參觀我的花園.**」

或者你會選擇什麼都不說但是說明不說話的原因.

反正.你要做的,就是像你真正與這個人面對面說話的時候那樣,自然應答就對了.

請提供你的一些基本資料

1. 性別 男 女 2. 年齡 _____
3. 母語 國語 其他方言, 請說明 _____
 其他語言, 請說明 _____
4. 父母的教育程度
 父親 中學(國/高中) 專科/大學 研究所 其他 _____
 母親 中學(國/高中) 專科/大學 研究所 其他 _____
5. 是否有機會與外國人交談溝通 是 否 (如果你勾‘否’, 請逕行回答第6題)

請問你們交談頻繁嗎?

- 很少, 不可預期 不是很頻繁 (每 _ _ 一次)
 算頻繁 (每 _ _ 一次) 其他, 請說明 _____

請問你們會用什麼語言交談? _____

請問你們交談的內容大概屬於那一種？

(可複選, 並請以 1.很少 2.常常 3.大部分的時候, 表示一下那種狀況發生的頻率)

- 打招呼, 關心一下 意見交換 介紹台灣的文化
 了解外國文化 追求新知 傳達自己的想法 其他 _____

請問你在交談中大多數時候擔任的角色是那一種？

- 說話者 聽眾 聽話.說話各半 不一定, 視情況而定

6. 請問你現在是 _____ 學院 _____ 年級的學生

7. 如果有需要進行一個電話或面對面的訪問, 什麼時間最方便？

一天之間的什麼時候? _____

一週之間的什麼時候? _____

即時通 MSN 或 SKYPE 帳號? _____

電郵地址 _____

電話號碼 _____

如果有需要, 是不是可以直接與你連絡? 可 否

完成對話 問卷測試

1. 有人在戲院節目開始前大聲談話聊天. 這時候有一個女子, 湊到你身邊, 她說, 「你知道那個關掉這些噪音的開關在哪裡嗎?」看來她不想破壞氣氛, 但卻足夠了這噪音的打擾.

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

2. 在一個異地舉辦的學生會議上, 一個你不認識的男生遲到了. 你抬頭看他, 他跟你解釋說, 「我記錯時間了, 現在進來真是太尷尬了, 但是我不想錯失這個會議。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

3. 在學校的餐館裡, 電視正播報令人傷心的社會新聞, 一個坐在你隔壁的女子跟你說, 「邊吃午餐, 邊看新聞真糟糕! 這些負面的新聞真把人的胃口跟心情全部搞砸了。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

4. 一個去你們班旁聽的女生遲到了, 你看著她進來, 她發現了, 一直跟你說, 「不好意思, 我應該要早點來的. 不要讓我打攪你上課. 真的很對不起!」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

5. 在學院的大堂, 一個男的工友對開放空間沙發上的一包垃圾很不高興, 他跟你說, 「怎麼可能會有人沒看到, 他丟的垃圾是這裡唯一的垃圾? 現在的讀書人都不注重日常生活禮節了。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

6. 在排隊買音樂會的入場券的時候, 有一個男生跟你說, 「我都出門了, 結果車子塞死在路上, 動也動不了. 要不是這樣, 我現在應該在咖啡廳喝飲料, 而不是待在這討人厭的隊伍裡。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

7. 你隔壁桌的女生正在吃一盤看起來不美味的餐點, 而你的餐點也沒有比較好, 她對你說, 「這家餐廳的食物實在很糟! 這裡的主廚是外星人, 還是什麼的? 我想你應該不會再來吧!」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

8. 研討會問題討論時段, 有一個人作了一個與主題不太相關的超長論述, 你隔壁的男生對你說, 「我覺得這個人根本不知道他在說什麼。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

9. 早上上課前, 一個住男生宿舍的朋友跟你說, 「昨天晚上宿舍外面鞭炮聲劈哩啪啦的, 叫人怎麼睡得著?

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

10. 在圖書館的網路瀏覽室, 你的一個男性朋友很生氣的跟你說, 「怎麼回事啊!? 我才去倒個水就有人來用我的電腦! 就算我沒註明『使用中』, 難道他沒看到電腦不是在『待機』狀態嗎?」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

11. 一個女同學很生氣的跟你說, 「你知道嗎!? 他從來沒有告訴我他對我有什麼不滿. 他到處跟別人說我怎樣又怎樣, 但是他從來沒有跟我說過我那裡做錯了。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

12. 在電腦教室裡, 你旁邊坐的一個男性同學的電腦連線超級龜速. 他跟你說, 「嘿! 你的電腦好像沒事, 我的電腦聽不懂我的指令, 都二十分鐘了, 我連一個完整的網頁都沒開成。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

13. 你們班的一個女同學因為找不到她的眼鏡而看不到黑板上的字. 她很沮喪的告訴你說, 「真不知道怎麼了! 我到處找不到我的眼鏡; 昨天我找不到家裡的鑰匙, 找了一個小時以後才發現... 鑰匙在我的口袋裡。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

14. 你的一個女性朋友從廁所出來, 表情難看. 她跟你說, 「這個廁所真的有夠髒! 在這裡上廁所真是活受罪。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

15. 你們班的一個男同學跟你一樣早到校, 他面帶愁容低聲說, 「天啊, 我真的算錯了, 才半個月, 我已經把這個月的生活費都花的差不多了。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

16. 你的一個女同學跟你說, 「學校宿舍的設備什麼時候才能跟得上教室的科技啊? 宿舍裡外真是兩個世界。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

17. 你最好的一個男性好朋友進了教室跟你說, 「我死定了! 昨兒晚上沒唸書就睡著了. 今天考試一定過不了。」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

18. 你一個超要好的男性朋友對於你們倆都認識的某個男生的體味很過敏; 他說, 「我真受不了他的體味. 他整個人聞起來就像跳到下水溝游過泳一樣臭. 他到底有沒有替人家著想過呀!」也許因為你們很熟了, 所以他告訴你, 而沒有直接告訴那個男生.

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

19. 你的一個交情很好的女朋友拍著她的肥肚臍, 很沮喪的告訴你, 「我知道我要趕快把這一身肥油甩掉, 免得健康亮紅燈. 但是只要我一開始吃, 我就完全控制不了了...」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

20. 溫度計要破 40 度了! 你的一個交情很好的男性朋友跟你說, 「我要熱爆了, 你看所有的東西都快乾死了..」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

21. 你的一個很好的女朋友跟你說, 「我真的受夠她了. 她什麼事都來告訴我. 我實在不想太小氣, 但是這樣真的佔了我很多時間. 我告訴過她我的困擾, 但是她好像還是一樣沒改變..」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

22. 大家都知道要節能減碳.你的一個交情不錯的男性朋友跟你一起經過一間燈火通明, 而且好像暫時沒人要用的教室, 他跟你說, 「我真不知道要怎麼幫幫地球. 我的意思是說, 我一定隨手關燈的; 但是如果別人不做, 我要怎麼救地球?」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

23. 你的一個交情很好的女朋友出去五分鐘, 回來發現她的筆不見了. 她跟你說, 「喔! 那是我最喜歡的筆, 我都用了五年了. 剛才還用的好好的, 現在居然不見了, 真的太可怕了..」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

24. 你的一個很要好的女朋友對最近討人厭的天氣很不滿意, 她跟你說, 「這種天氣真讓我沒辦法打扮的漂漂亮亮的. 再這樣穿下去, 我都要悶出病了..」

你會說

或者, 你選擇什麼都不說, 因為 _____

Appendix B
Language Behavior Questionnaire
for English as a Foreign Language learner (EFL)

Language Behavior Survey

Instruction before filling the questionnaire

Dear participant,

This is a research to investigate the language behavior of college students of native English speakers and learners of English as a foreign language. You are invited to respond to the following situations naturally. Please put yourself in the context and write down what you may say as if you are in the situation. You are allowed to opt out if you don't know what to do. In that case, please state the reason in the shaded area provided. If you will act in certain way, please also note that down for our records. Your efforts are highly appreciated. Thank you for your kind participation in our research of human language behavior.

Here is an example for your reference,

“A girl passed by your garden and picked a beautiful flower. You saw it and came out of the house. She said to you, “I’m sorry but the flower is so beautiful.”

What will you say?

You may say,

“You are a thief. How can you pick flowers from other’s garden?”

or, *“You cannot pick flowers without my permission.”*

or, *“That’s OK. Nature is full of wonders. You can come and visit as you want.”*

Or, you may choose not to say anything, and please explain why.

Just do the talking as you would normally say in a face-to-face conversation.

Note

If “Security Warning” is shown, click Option, then “Enable this Content.”
All shaded areas are self-expandable. Please feel free to type in as much as you wish.

Please advise your personal background

1. Sex _____ and age _____

2. Enrolled as freshman sophomore junior senior

other, please specify _____

in College of Law Commerce Social Science Communication

Liberal Arts Science International Affairs

Education Foreign Languages and Literature

3. Mother tongue

Mandarin Chinese

other dialects, please specify _____

4. Can you speak in other dialects? Yes. No.

What are the dialects you are proficient in?

Taiwanese Hakka Cantonese Other, please specify _____

5. In-school English learning background

Location of school

Does it offer English as a subject?

Kindergarten _____ (county/ city) Yes. No.

Primary school _____ (county/ city) Yes. No.

Junior high school _____ (county/ city) Yes. No.

Senior high school _____ (county/ city) Yes. No.

Have you taken any English class in this university? Yes. No.

What are the titles of the courses?

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

6. Out-of-school English learning history

<u>Name of the language institute</u>	<u>For how long?</u>	<u>Do you still attend the class?</u>
1. _____	_____ years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. <input type="checkbox"/> No.
2. _____	_____ years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. <input type="checkbox"/> No.
3. _____	_____ years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. <input type="checkbox"/> No.
4. _____	_____ years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. <input type="checkbox"/> No.

7. Parents' education background

Father no formal education primary school junior/senior high school
 college/university graduate school

Mother no formal education primary school junior/senior high school
 college/university graduate school

8. Have you ever taken any of the following tests? Yes. No.

If yes, what're the results? (Please check applicable **ones**)

- GEPT**, level of pass _____ **TOEFL**, score _____
 TOEIC, score _____ **IELTS**, score _____
 other, please specify _____ score _____

9. Do you have regular opportunities in contact with English-speaking friends/associates?

Yes. No (if 'No', go directly to question **12.**)

10. How often do you contact your most contacted English speaking friend/associate?

Once every _____

11. What is the nationality of your most contacted English speaking friend/associate?

12. Have you ever lived in/visited an English-speaking country for more than 3 weeks?

Yes. No. (If 'No', please go directly to question **14.**)

13. What is the reason for your stay? (Please check and advise the duration of all stays.)

sightseeing with tourist groups, for how long? _____

self-guided trips, for how long? _____

exchange student program, for how long? _____

working holidays, for how long? _____

other, please specify _____, for how long? _____

14. Have you taken any foreign language courses other than English?

Yes, they are _____, _____. No.

15. Do you enjoy learning foreign languages? Yes. No.

16. Generally speaking, when you get a chance to expose yourself to foreigners or foreign culture, will you actively get involved? Yes. No.

17. In case of the need for a phone or face-to-face interview, will you be available?

Yes. No.

When is the best time of the day and in the week to contact you? _____

If you prefer online communication, please advise your instant message ID or

preferred e-mail address _____

Skype/MSN/Yahoo ID _____

E-mail address _____

Discourse Completion Questionnaire

(Please provide answer in the shaded area, a total of 24 questions.)

Q1 . Some people are making loud conversation in a theater before the show starts. A girl approaches you and says, "Do you know where the switch is to turn off all the noise?" Apparently, she does not want to spoil the atmosphere but is quite fed up with the noise.

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q2 . In a student conference out of town, a male that you do not know comes in late. As you look at him, he says, "I had a wrong time written down in my schedule. It's so embarrassing but I don't want to miss it."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q3 . In the school cafeteria, the TV is broadcasting some tragedies and a girl sitting next to you, who you have never met, says, "It's terrible to watch the news and have lunch. The sad stories ruin your appetite and your mood altogether."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q4 . A female auditing in your class comes in late. As you watched her, she said to you, "Sorry. I should have been here earlier. Don't let me disturb this class. I'm so sorry."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q5 . In the hallway of the Business School, a male janitor is not happy with a snack wrapper left on the sofa in the open area. "How is it possible that someone didn't see this is the ONLY garbage in the hallway? The educated don't care about basic manners anymore now."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q6 . In a line for concert tickets, a man says, "I was all prepared but the traffic was jam-packed and my car simply could not move. If it wasn't for the traffic, I should be drinking coffee in a café instead of standing in this bloody line."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q7. *A girl next to your table is eating something unappetizing and your choice is no better. She says, "The serving is terrible. The cook is an alien or what? I don't think you'd like to come again."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q8. *In a Q&A section of a seminar, somebody just made an extremely long statement that barely had any relationship with the topic. The boy next to you says, "I think the man doesn't have any idea what he is talking about."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q9. *Your friend who lives in an all-boy's dorm says in your morning class, "How could I sleep with firecrackers banging outside of the building?"*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q10. In the browsing room at the library, your classmate is angry because someone used his computer when he left for some water. "What the hell? Didn't he see the computer is not in standby mode? Can he not figure it out if there is no OCCUPIED sign?"

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q11. A female friend is expressing her anger by saying, "You know, he never comes to me and tells me why he is so upset with me. He tells Angie, Charles and many others. But he never comes to me at all."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q12. In a computer room, a friend by your side obviously encounters a lag in the Internet connection. He says, "Yours seems OK. But mine doesn't understand my commands. For twenty minutes, I haven't even got one complete page."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q13 . *A friend in class cannot find her glasses and thus cannot read the words from the board. She is upset and she says, "I don't know what happened. I cannot find my glasses anywhere. Yesterday, I searched for an hour only to find my house key in my pocket..."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q14 . *Your girl friend comes out of the restroom with a very ugly expression. She says, "The toilet is so dirty. What torture to have to use the restroom in this damn place!"*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q15 . *A classmate you know comes in early to class. He looks worried and he is murmuring, "Oh. My. I've miscalculated my budget for this month and it's only half way through the month."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q16. A girl friend says, "When will the old facilities in the dorm meet the high-tech ones in our classroom? It's like two different worlds, in and out of the dorm."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q17. Your best male friend comes in and says, "I am a dead man. I fell asleep last night and I will definitely fail this test."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q18. Your super good friend tells you that he is allergic to the smell of a person whom you both know. "I'm so sick of his smell. He comes in smelling like he's been swimming in sewage. Does he ever think about others?" He says this to you and not to the person maybe because you're close friends.

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q19 . A very good girl friend of yours is patting her fat tummy. She is upset and she says, "I know that I need to get rid of it before it gets rid of me. But when I start eating, I am totally out of control..."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q20 . The temperature is 105°F. Your best male friend says, "I'm so fed up with the heat. Everything is drying up and dying."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q21 . A very close girl friend told you, "I've had enough of her. She comes to me with everything. I don't want to be mean but it has taken a lot of my time. I think that I've told her about my annoyance but maybe she just can't help it."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q22 . *Everybody is told to save energy and save the earth. You and a good male friend walking pass a classroom with all lights lit up, nobody inside, and no sign of a coming event. Your friend says, "I just don't know how I can help. I mean, I switch off everything after I use it. But how can I save the world if all others are not helping?"*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q23 . *Your very close girl friend comes back from a 5-minute class break and sees her pen is gone. She says, "Oh. That's my favorite pen that I've used for 5 years. I was using it and now IT'S GONE. It's awful."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Q24 . *Your very good girl friend is upset about the nasty weather, she says, "The weather has kept me from dressing up. I'll be sick if I keep on wearing these clothes."*

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

Appendix C
Language Behavior Questionnaire
for Native English Speakers Living in USA (Americans)

Language Behavior Survey

Instruction before filling the questionnaire

Dear participant,

This is a research to investigate the language behavior of college students of native English speakers and learners of English as a foreign language. You are invited to respond to the following situations naturally. Please put yourself in the context and write down what you may say as if you are in the situation. You are allowed to opt out if you don't know what to do. In that case, please state the reason in the space provided. If you will act in some way, please also note that down for our records. Your efforts are highly appreciated. Thank you for your kind participation in our investigation of human language behavior.

Here is an example for your reference,

A girl passed by your garden and picked a beautiful flower. You saw it and came out of the house. She said, "I'm sorry but the flower is so beautiful."

What will you say?

You may say, ***"You are a thief. How can you pick flowers from other's garden?"***

Or, ***"That's OK. Nature is full of wonders. You can come and visit as you want."***

Or, you may choose to not say anything and explain why.

Just do the talking as you would normally do in a face to face interaction.

Please advise your personal information

1. Sex male female
2. Age under 20 between 21 and 30 between 31 and 40 over 40
3. Native language English Chinese other, please specify _____

If English is not your native language, please advise your English learning experience in and out of school.

In school _____ years in junior high school

_____ years in senior high school

_____ years in college

Additional information _____

Out of school _____ years, in cram schools or tutoring

Name of institute _____

4. Major in Business Administration Banking Accounting
 Financing Other, please specify _____
5. Currently enrolled as Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
 Other, please specify _____

6. In case of the need for a phone or face-to-face interview, please advise your best availability.

Best availability of the day? _____

Best availability of the week? _____

Contact MSN or SKYPE? _____

And if need be, can you be reached in person? yes no

Discourse Completion Questionnaire

1. Some people are making a loud conversation in a theater before the show starts. A girl approaches you and says, "Do you know where the switch is to turn off all the noise?" Apparently, she does not want to spoil the atmosphere but is quite fed up with the group of people.

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

2. In a student conference out of town, a male that you do not know comes in late. As you look at him, he says, "I had a wrong time written down in my schedule. It's so embarrassing but I don't want to miss it."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

3. In the school cafeteria, the TV is broadcasting some tragedies and a girl sitting next to you, who you have never met, says, "It's terrible to watch the news and have lunch. The sad stories ruin your appetite and your mood altogether."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

4. A female auditing in your class comes in late. She keeps saying, “Sorry. I should have been here earlier. Don’t let me disturb this class. I’m so sorry.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

5. In the hallway of the Business School, the janitor is not happy with a snack wrapper left on the sofa in the open area. “How is it possible that someone didn’t see this is the ONLY garbage in the hallway? How can someone educated not know basic manners in everyday life?”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

6. In a line for concert tickets, a man says, “I was all prepared but the traffic was jam-packed and my car simply could not move. If it wasn’t for the traffic, I should be drinking coffee in a café instead of standing in this bloody line.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

7. A girl next to your table is eating something unappetizing and your choice is no better. She says, "You know what? I think this place is perfect when you want to lose weight. It just ruins your appetite. Not a thing is enjoyable."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

8. In the cafeteria, a boy that you saw in the expensive seminar you are taking is not happy with the price and the choice of food. He says, "Look at the price! You'd have to rob me before I would pay for this food. I mean, the seminar is not free and should include lunch with a charge so high."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

9. In the browsing room at the library, your classmate is angry because someone used his computer when he left for some water. "What the hell? Didn't he see the computer is not in standby mode? Can he not figure it out if there is no OCCUPIED sign?"

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

10. A female friend is expressing her anger by saying, “You know, he never comes to me and tells me why he is so upset with me. He tells Angie, Charles and many others. But he never comes to me at all.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

11. In a computer room, a friend by your side obviously encounters a lag in the Internet connection. He says, “Yours seems OK. But mine doesn’t understand my commands. For twenty minutes, I haven’t even got one complete page.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

12. A friend in class cannot find her glasses and thus cannot read the words from the board. She is upset and she says, “I don’t know what happened. I cannot find my glasses anywhere. Yesterday, I searched for an hour only to find my house key in my pocket...”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

13. Your friend who lives in an all-boy's dorm says in your morning class, "How could I sleep with firecrackers banging outside of the building?"

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

14. Your girlfriend comes out of the restroom with a very ugly expression. She says, "The toilet is so dirty. What torture to have to use the restroom in this damn place!"

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

15. A classmate you know comes in early to class. He looks worried and he is murmuring, "Oh. My. I've miscalculated my budget for this month and it's only half way through the month."

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

16. A girl friend says, “When will the old facilities in the dorm meet the high-tech ones in our classroom? It’s like two different worlds, in and out of the dorm.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

17. Your best male friend comes in and says, “I am a dead man. I felt asleep last night and I will definitely fail this test.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

18. Your super good friend tells you that he is allergic to the smell of a person whom you both know. “I’m so sick of his smell. He comes in smelling like he’s been swimming in sewage. Does he ever think about others?” He says this to you and not to the person maybe because you’re close friends.

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

19. A very good girl friend of yours is patting her fat tummy. She is upset and she says, “I know that I need to get rid of it before it gets rid of me. But when I start eating, I am totally out of control...”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

20. The temperature is 105°F. Your best male friend says, “I’m so fed up with the heat. Everything is drying up and dying.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

21. A very close girl friend told you, “I’ve had enough of her. She comes to me with everything. I don’t want to be mean but it has taken a lot of my time. I think that I’ve told her about my annoyance but maybe she just can’t help it.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

22. Everybody is told to save energy and save the earth. You and a good male friend walking pass a classroom with all lights lit up, nobody inside, and no sign of a coming event. Your friend says, “I just don’t know how I can help. I mean, I switch off everything after I use it. But how can I save the world if all others are not helping?”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

23. Your very close girlfriend comes back from a 5-minute class break and sees her pen is gone. She says, “Oh. That’s my favorite pen that I’ve used for 5 years. I was using it and now IT’S GONE. It’s awful.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

24. Your very good girl friend is upset about the nasty weather, she says, “The weather has kept me from dressing up. I’ll be sick if I keep on wearing these clothes.”

What will you say?

Or, you would not say anything about it. Why?

