

國立交通大學
英語教學研究所碩士論文

A Master Thesis
Presented to
Institute of TESOL,
National Chiao Tung University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

台灣大學生拒絕行為之中介語研究
An Interlanguage Pragmatic Study of Refusals by
Chinese Learners of English in Taiwan

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中華民國九十五年六月

June, 2006

ABSTRACT

This study investigates interlanguage and its motivating factors within the speech act of refusals by Chinese learners of English. Defined as an acquisitional interim between the native and target languages (Odlin, 1989), interlanguage has been proven distinctive in the act of refusals in terms of the frequency, order, and content of meaning patterns (e.g. Beebe et al. 1990; Gass & Houck 1999). Nevertheless little is known about the pragmatic and sociocultural performances of interlanguage in English refusals made by Chinese students. Questionnaires of Discourse Completion Test were designed to elicit imaginary noncompliance toward two demanding part-time jobs. 266 English refusals were solicited from English majors in three Taiwan universities. A qualitative analysis shows that the interlanguage refusals produced by Chinese students exhibit interlanguage distinctiveness in aspects of quantity, order, and length of refusal semantic formulas. The most frequently adopted formulas are **Excuse**, **Regret**, and **Conventional nonperformative**, forming the prevalent orders of **Excuse - Regret** and **Excuse - Conventional nonperformative - Regret**. Indulgence in **External modification** leads to lengthy responses and was used to compensate for the ossified operation of **Epistemic** and **Dynamic** modalities as **Internal modification**. These interlanguage features converge onto the first language and the learning context as contributing factors arising from positive and negative transfer and instructional effects in an EFL context. A proposal of developing communicative competence in foreign language learning is thus suggested by equipping Chinese students with the pragmatic and sociocultural knowledge. In doing this, this thesis brings both EFL learners and instructors' attention further to the interpersonal meanings in the speech act communication.

中文摘要

本論文研究台灣學生以英語回應之拒絕行為，主要探討台灣學生的英語中介語及其背後可能的形成原因。中介語指語言習得過程中一過渡階段 (Odlin, 1989)，在以英語拒絕的中介語實證研究中，文獻指出學習者在表達拒絕意涵時，其頻率、語序與內容上皆顯現獨特性 (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Gass & Houck, 1999)。然而，在中介語的實證研究中，卻少有以漢語為母語的英語學習對象，探究其行使拒絕此言語行為時的語用與社會文化表現。本論文因此以問卷的形式，設計「篇章完成測驗」以引出實驗參與者在拒絕請求時的英語回應。實驗參與者來自台灣三所大學的 134 位大學生。問卷設計包含兩個情境，要求參與實驗的大學生，想像一位研究助理打電話詢問他們是否願意接受兩份工讀的工作，但在得知其繁重的工作內容後，想予以拒絕。

根據質性的分析，台灣學生的拒絕行為中介語，在拒絕語意公式的數量、語序與長度三方面，皆顯現獨特的語用與社會文化特徵。數量上使用最多的語意公式為「藉口」、「道歉」、「傳統非使願詞」，也因此造成語序排列上的偏好，如「藉口 -- 道歉 -- 傳統非使願詞」。回應的長度明顯偏長，主要原因在於學生過度使用具有非核心拒絕意涵的語意公式當作「外部修飾」。反而其「內部修飾」的使用較為僵化，多出現認知情態詞，如“可能”、“我想”、“也許”，與動力情態詞，如“不行”、“沒辦法”等。

本論文探討其兩大可能影響因素：學習者的母語與學習環境，發現此兩因素對學習者的中介語語用與社會文化表現有極大的影響。母語可能帶來正向與負向的移轉作用。正向移轉發生在學習者的母語與目標語有相同性時，如國語與英語的拒絕行為皆常使用「藉口」、「道歉」與認知、動力情態詞；負向移轉則可能發生在兩語言的差異處，如台灣學生傾向以迴避或給予其他選擇為拒絕的語用策略，但這些卻非英語母語人士習慣的回應方式。其次，學習的環境並非著重溝通的第二外語環境，而是重視機械化練習文法結構與單字的外語填壓教育，因此可能誤導學生在以英語拒絕時，只能僵化地使用部分語用策略，並過度以語意公式的增加減緩拒絕的強度，卻反而造成語用失當或語意不清的反效果。本論文因此藉以提出實際可行的教學建議，分為四項教學四步驟：提升學生的語用策略與文化差異知覺、使學生自然習得慣用的語用策略、練習溝通式的產出、給學生機會互相分享心得。本文的研究結果，期能讓台灣的英語教學工作者更注重學生語用與社會文化溝通能力的發展，著重設計具有溝通目標的語言課程，讓學生在英語的溝通能力上更上一層樓。

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude is extended to my advisor, Dr. Chia-Ling Hsieh who has always been a motivator, an instructor, and a good friend throughout my Master research. She motivated me in times of despair, guided me in times of confusion, and offered guidance in times of chaos. Without her support and enlightenment, it would not have been possible for me to complete this interlanguage study, especially when the analysis of the results and the construction of the ideas baffled me.

My thanks also go to my committee members: Dr. Posen Liao from National Taipei University and Dr. Stephanie W Cheng from National Chiao Tung University who both gave me invaluable comments on this study and helpful suggestions throughout the development of the research.

I am also indebted to all the excellent professors in the Institute of TESOL in National Chiao Tung University for the training of my academic acuteness and the discovery of my research interest. A very special note of appreciation is directed toward the lecturer, Linda Wu from the Language Teaching and Research Center for helping me collecting my data.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude toward my sincere families and friends for their encouragement and support. The love of my parents equips me with power and confidence to face all the difficulties, particularly when I need to worry about my part-time job and on-going research at the same time. I am also thankful to Dawson for his understanding and help; to my dear classmates, Clarence, Sandra, Claire, Livia, and Eric for their valuable opinions and ceaseless encouragement. I dedicate this work to all of them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATIONS

Communication competence is regarded significant in the second language learning process. Without this competence second language speakers are unable to accomplish successful second language communication. A number of studies have verified that pragmatic and sociocultural competence¹ constitute two essential elements in learners' communicative capabilities (e.g., Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Hassall, 2001; Nelson, Carson, Batal & Bakary, 2002; Byon, 2004). With pragmatic competence, second language speakers can manipulate pragmatic strategies such as indirectness, routines, and plenty of linguistic forms to achieve the intended pragmatic end and politeness values (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). For example, one says "The kitchen seems to be in a bit of a mess." to his roommate as a pragmatic convention as a request for cleaning the kitchen (for the conventionality in indirectness, see Blum-Kulka, 1989). With regard to sociocultural competence, it enables speakers to conform to certain social principles governing the interpretation and performance of the communicative action by speakers of the target language (Leech, 1983). This can be evident in Igbo culture that people all learn to utter a direct request such as "I want to work with your cutlass/hoe today" within a social system of mutual sharing, which however could be regarded rude and impolite in other cultures. The significance of the two abilities in second language learning was therefore proposed by Wolfson (1989).

¹ For ease of exposition, the 'pragmatic' and 'sociocultural' perspectives mentioned in this thesis corresponds to the distinction between 'pragmalinguistic' and 'sociopragmatic' transfer termed by Kasper (1992).

She addressed that better control of the pragmatic and sociocultural parameters can make second language speakers effective in second language interpersonal interaction.

Speech act communication requires speakers to comprehend or produce three levels of meaning to complete the negotiating process. The three levels include the 'locutionary act' (i.e., the literal meaning conveyed by the actual words), 'illocutionary act' (i.e., the intended meaning related to the utterance explicitly or implicitly), and 'perlocutionary act' (i.e., the effect that the illocutionary act imposes on the hearer) (Austin, 1962). For instance, if the locutionary sentence "It's hot in here!" carries the illocutionary meaning "I want some fresh air!", the perlocutionary result might be that the hearer opens the window (For more examples, see Thomas, 1995). To put it differently, the speech act communication succeeds only when the speaker's intention is comprehensively understood and attained by the listener in the interaction flow. Previous studies have demonstrated that successful performance of speech acts is anchored upon sufficient pragmatic competence (e.g., Paulston, 1974; Canale and Swain, 1980). However the pragmatic operation may be specific to different cultures. It is to this end that this study attaches itself to examine the pragmatic performance in interlanguage under the English context.

The study of interlanguage pragmatics as defined in a narrow sense refers to nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their second-language-related speech act knowledge is acquired (Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Invariably focusing on the nonnative speakers, it pays much attention to second language learners' pragmatic and sociocultural performance with reference to various speech acts (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, for review), especially those face-threatening acts (FTA) (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65). Brown and Levinson

proposed that when speakers have to conduct face-threatening speech acts such as requests, compliments, guarantees, oppositions and criticism (pp. 65-68), they would opt for strategies for *positive* or *negative politeness* to alleviate the damage to the interlocutor's face. *Positive politeness* tends toward the protection of the listener's positive self-image (i.e., *positive face*) while *negative politeness* toward the satisfactory of his basic need of free will (i.e., *negative face*) (p. 70). Faced with the concomitant needs of reaching the intended illocutionary force and of obeying the social norm of politeness, nonnative performers of such FTAs would very likely encounter great challenges on their pragmatic and sociocultural competence. Considering this latent obstacles for foreign language learners, the bulk of interlanguage pragmatics research dedicates itself to learners' performance on divergent FTAs, such as refusals (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Gass & Houck, 1999; Nelson, Carson, Batal & Bakary, 2002; Al-Issa, 2003), requests (e.g., Schmidt, 1983; Trogsborg, 1995; Yu, 1999; Rose, 2000), compliments (e.g., Yu, 2004), and suggestions (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1990). These studies all give prominence to both the pragmatic and sociocultural abilities with regard to the speech act behaviors.

The speech act to be examined in this study, refusals in response to requests, also belongs to what Brown and Levinson (1978) termed 'face-threatening acts' for its performance potentially clashes with the face wants of the requester. A number of scholars (e.g., Shih, 1986; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Turnbull & Saxton, 1997; Nelson, Carson & Bakary, 2002; Hsieh, Chen & Hu, 2004) have confirmed that refusals embody an effort on the part of the refuser to apply socially approvable strategies for restoration of his or the requester's face. Accordingly, the pragmatic tactics in aligned to the social and cultural expectation are the key factors to foreign language communication.

PURPOSES

In order to assist Chinese learners of English in acquiring the pragmatic and sociocultural abilities and English teachers in developing effective instruction for speech act communication, second language scholars need to grasp the course of learners' speech act development as to how they apply linguistic maneuvers to convey interpersonal meanings. Among the work of refusals, few were aimed at learners who speak Mandarin Chinese as their native language. Therefore, this thesis will qualitatively explore the interlanguage refusals produced by Chinese learners of English in particular on the pragmatic and sociocultural perspectives. The purposes of the thesis are three-fold:

- (1) To uncover the pragmatic characteristics of the interlanguage refusals by Chinese learners of English in response to a request?
- (2) To explore how the influential factors of learners' native language and learning contexts motivate their pragmatic use in the act of refusal, and to scrutinize to what extent the two factors are responsible for learners' nonnative pragmatic use.
- (3) To apply the interlanguage findings to the speech act pedagogy by proposing a teaching approach.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is believed that the actual performance of language learners serve as the foundation for TESOL theory and practice. The interlanguage data can not only be used to test the truth of the interlanguage hypothesis, but also aid English instructors in accurately predicting possible bottlenecks that Chinese learners may be faced with. In addition, the application of the empirical data also paves the pedagogical way for

TESOL colleagues in that they can be familiarized with where in sociocultural forests Chinese learners may lose their direction.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis includes six chapters. The first chapter sketches out the background of this research. The second chapter reviews the literature of speech act theory and interlanguage pragmatics, both of which bring out the necessity to empirically investigate Chinese learners' interlanguage refusals as well as its motivating factors. In the third chapter, we put forward the design of the experiment by describing the participants, instrument and data analysis. The fourth chapter outlines the qualitative results of interlanguage analysis with reference to the units of semantic formulas and the use of modal mitigators. For a comprehensive understanding, the factors that mainly contribute to the Chinese students' interlanguage performance are advocated in chapter five. Finally, the practical applications and conclusion remarks are presented in chapter six.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

SPEECH ACT THEORY

Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1995) has been developed extensively in recent years and has given rise to various studies in a wide spectrum of disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to studying speech acts among these disciplines especially arouse great interest in the second language acquisition profession. Pragmatic research has made a major contribution in viewing language as action (i.e., defined as the level of illocutionary force) and has explained language through actual use. The sociolinguistic approach has pursued the question of whether a language action is realized in terms of social appropriateness. Pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of speech act studies will be briefly introduced in the foregoing sections.

Issue 1: Pragmatic Aspect.

As a widely-discussed domain in second language research, studies on speech act with respect to pragmatic aspects can be divided into three components: within one specific language (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987; Koike, 1989b; Turnbull & Saxton, 1997), between two or more languages (e.g., Chen, 1993; Lee-Wong, 1994; Fukushima, 1996; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Pair, 1996; Nelson, Carson, Batal & Bakary, 2002), and between languages produced by native and non-native speakers (e.g., Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Yu, 1999, 2004; Hassall, 2001, 2003; Byon, 2004). No matter within what language scope, these studies have disclosed diversified manipulations of strategies in favor of the perlocutionary effect of

facework in the type of speech acts that intrinsically threaten interlocutors' face.

Studies on speech acts within one specific language mostly investigate how the use of linguistic strategies or devices is called for assisting the completion of speech acts. Koike (1989b) examined two request strategies produced by native Portuguese speakers from Brazil: the conditional mood and second-person reference. Results showed that the greater the distance from the deictic center is, in temporal or personal dimensions, the greater degree of politeness and the lesser degree of illocutionary force are. To put it in detail, the use of conditional forms in polite requests expresses the time frame farthest from the speakers' present moment of speaking. By the same token, second-person reference or hearer-oriented utterances (e.g., "Would you/Could you do X?") are more polite than speaker-oriented ones with first-person reference (e.g., "I would like you to do X."). This is because the framing of the request shifts from the point of view of the speaker to that of the hearer, giving greater control to the hearer in the interaction process and making one step closer to the end of politeness. Hong (1996) analyzed Chinese native speakers' request behavior under three imaginary situations in an open-ended questionnaire: (1) a patient wanted to have the prescription refilled because it worked very well previously; (2) one borrowed money from his/her office-mate to buy snack at a nearby store; (3) a police officer asked the civilian on the street to remove his/her car. Results presented the influence of the parameters of dominance and social distance on the choice of request strategies. For instance, when interacting with authority figures speakers would apply supportive moves (e.g., *yisheng, qing nin zai gei wo kai yi zhang yaofang, shangci de yao heng hao yong* "Doctor, could you please write me another prescription, because it worked very well last time."), make requests longer, and use addresses denoting respect and politeness (e.g., use of *nin* "you"). As to social distance, speakers tend to deposit

pregrounders, such as compliments on the interlocutor or the reason why this request has been made, in order to alleviate the threatening force of the act.

Some other studies compare speech acts between distinct languages, discovering similarities and variation in how the illocutionary force is expressed. Tseng (1999) used the open role play technique to elicit invitational conversations from 40 Chinese undergraduates in Taiwan and 40 American undergraduates in the U.S. Dissimilar to the stereotype that Chinese preferred tripartite structures and American favored a single structure in invitational conversations, Tseng's study demonstrated that the Chi-square test of independence did not show significant difference in the occurrence of both structures in the two languages at issue. The only cross-linguistic contrast found was that under the situation of less familiarity between interlocutors, Chinese had the preference for the tripartite structure whereas Americans for the single one.

On the assumption that cultural variations such as the discrepancies of mechanisms in speech acts may pose formidable obstacles for language learners, studies observing native and non-native speakers' production constitute another research area. As a recent discussion of the speech act of request, Byon (2004) compared the utterances of requests produced by Korean and American English native speakers as well as English speakers of Korean, illustrating evident cultural effects. A salient one was that the native English speakers and American learners of Korean differed from native Korean speakers in the use of apology within requests. They adopted expressions of apology in their requesting utterances to implore forgiveness for one's faults, yet native Korean speakers simply convey the sense of being polite. Another salient cultural effect was concerned with the Korean learners' preference for 'indirect requesting head act' formula, which may derive from politeness in western cultures and relate to 'negative politeness' (Brown and Levinson, 1978, pp. 129-227).

In the three types of speech act studies mentioned above, pragmatic aspect is given a prominent role as a necessity that facilitates meaningful, cohesive and effective interaction with others. More work in this aspect of speech acts is thus worth-pursuing.

Issue 2: Sociolinguistic Aspect

When it comes to socio-cultural aspects of speech act studies, the issue of universality versus culture-specificity has been the central concern. The notion of universality was advocated by Brown and Levinson (1978), addressing that almost all languages and cultures operate along the line of protecting one's positive and negative face. In other words, speakers need to protect listeners' negative face (i.e., 'the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others') as well as to defend his positive face (i.e., 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others') (p. 62).

However, a large number of opposing views have been constantly advocated to reveal the invalidity of Brown and Levinson's assumption of universality (see Gu, 1990; Nwoye, 1992). It has even been argued that the presumption of any universality is no more than subjective, ethnocentric Anglo-Saxon perspectives (Wierzbicka, 1991). For example, Gu (1990) found this universal model unsuitable for Chinese culture. He critiqued that Chinese realization of negative face want is different from what Brown and Levinson depicts. In addition, Chinese more frequently realize the notion of politeness in terms of a normative view, thinking highly of a communal harmony in interaction. Another evidence for anti-universality is Ma's (1996) proposal of 'contrary-to-face-value communication', by which Chinese exhibit their rules of saying "yes" for "no" and "no" for "yes". For example, to avoid conflicts,

Chinese would abandon a direct rejection but resort to an ambiguous “yes” such as “I understand your position.” and “I am listening to you.” In another situation that the guests complimented the host for the food prepared, the Chinese host would adopt a saying “no” for “yes” rule since a response of accepting the compliment may imply that the guest should recognize the time the host had spent in preparing the food. As noted by Ma, Chinese interact with others in an attempt to ‘avoid direct confrontation and maintain social harmony’. Also opposed to Brown and Levinson’s universal politeness, Nwoye’s (1992) study on linguistic politeness and socio-cultural variations of the notion of face expounded the imposition in Igbo society in Nigeria. In fact, few speech acts would be regarded impolite in Igbo society, where collectivism or group orientation is the norm and everyone within the society may need others’ assistance some day. Request was an act inherently not face-threatening at all in Igbo society in that this community was built on people’s sharing of food or goods. Offering did not constitute a face-threatening speech act, either, due to the collaborative principle executed in Igbo society. Reflecting that linguistic politeness is closely woven within the fabric of social values, Nwoye’s (1992) study again addressed the uniqueness of linguistic behaviors to a specific culture.

The following discussion will turn to speech act studies that also throw light onto the socio-cultural aspect. Lee-Wong’s (1994) and Fukushima’s (1996) studies both verified that the influence of culture on the act of request is self-evident when impositives are considered socially appropriate in some cultures and societies. Lee-Wong’s (1994) came to the conclusion that ‘bald-on-record direct strategy’ (Brown and Levinson, 1978, pp. 94-101) such as imperatives containing action verbs (e.g., *Qing ba xiangzi dakai, women yao jiancha* “Please open the suitcase, we want to check.”) is the most preferred strategy in Chinese act of request. Identically,

Fukushima's (1996) discovered plenty of imperative uses and direct requests in Japanese act of request. It is cultural values that tolerate the use of imposition in both Chinese and Japanese cultures. In Chinese, the concepts of sincerity and solidarity make the speaker believes that the listener would not mind doing anything for him, while in Japanese, the in-group unity and identification foster their belief that requests imply closeness and intimacy. Still another one addressing socio-cultural implications was conducted by Pair (1996), studying the speech act of request made by native Spanish speakers and Dutch speakers speaking Spanish. This study revealed that the conventionally indirect strategy in Dutch sounds like an implication of anger or unhappiness when it is used to query about why the addressee did not want to do the requested act. Therefore, the nonnative speakers of Spanish from Holland were prone to inhibit such inquiry use. This again gave proof that nonnative speakers have the inclination to rely on the pragmatic principles in their native language. These anti-universality studies provide a theoretical framework for more cross-cultural analyses concerning speech acts.

INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS

Second language learners normally spend quite a period of time to reach target-language-like fluency. Regardless of any formal instruction, they generally undergo the process of making attempts to test the hypothesis of the target language. They may employ the knowledge of their first language or start with their realization about language in general, from which bit by bit a mental frame of the target language will be established to achieve communicative competency. This interim phase of language learning is identified as the 'interlanguage continuum' (Selinker, 1972), where differences from the target language use are not considered as serious errors or

interference of the mother tongue (Hamilton, 2001). In effect, learners' interlanguage can be detected in various cores of language, such as syntax, phonology, morphology, and semantics (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Some characteristics of learning pragmatics are partly on par with learning other compartments of languages (for detail, please refer to Gass and Houck, 1999) and it is these characteristics of interlanguage pragmatics will be focused in the remainder of this section.

Types of Studies on Interlanguage Pragmatics

As far as research development, work on learning development has been the most arresting researching area in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) since second language use and learning have received much attention among scholars. However, its focal object has long been given to pragmatic performance rather than the development of interlanguage (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Rose, 2000; Kasper & Rose, 2002). A brief introduction of second language performance as well as development studies up to date will be outlined in order.

First, treatises on second language use or performance approach how non-native speakers produce and comprehend language action in L2. In effect, most of these studies cast emphasis upon the production part though there is a modicum of work examining learners' judgment and comprehension (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Two famous studies on the investigation of second language learners' production were carried out by Takahashi and Beebe (1987) and Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990). The former recruited four groups of participants: Japanese speaking Japanese in Japan (JJJ), Japanese learners of English in Japan (JEJ), Japanese speakers of English in the U.S. (JEA), and American native speakers of English (AEA) to take part in a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), a test that solicited refusals in response to

requests, invitations, offers and suggestions. Results showed that JEJ resembled JJJ in the sequence of refusal semantic formula. For instance, all Japanese learners of English would begin with an empathy or expression of regret/apologies, followed by a statement of philosophy (e.g., *Things with shapes eventually break. To err is human.*) and an attempt to make the interlocutor off the hook (e.g., *You can forget about it.*). A sequential resemblance found by Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990) was that both Japanese speaking Japanese and Japanese speaking English frequently used expressions of regret/apologies as a starter especially with higher-status interlocutors. A conclusion of L1 transfer was consequently drawn to explicate the above L2 production akin to speakers' L1.

Less as work on learners' second language comprehension is, there are indeed some contributive studies demonstrating the dissimilarities between non-native and native speakers' judgment and perception (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2001 for reference). Bergman and Kasper (1993) directed a study on L2 learners' perception of English apologies. An assessment task was performed by 423 Thai graduate students and 30 native American English students to rate four context-internal factors (i.e., severity of offense, obligation to apologize, likelihood of acceptance of apology, and offenders' loss of face). It was reported that Thai learners and native American English speakers differed in their ratings of the obligation to apologize. Native speakers rated this factor even higher. On the whole, two groups of speakers were shown to establish a high correlation between (1) obligation to apologize and severity of offense, (2) between severity and likelihood of acceptance, (3) between severity and face-loss, and (4) obligation and face-loss. Rather than a pure perception study of certain speech acts, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) investigated the extent to which EFL as well as their teachers and ESL learners of English showed awareness of pragmatic and

grammatical errors. Results indicated that ESL learners rated pragmatic errors more serious than EFL learners and teachers did. Learners and instructors under an EFL context tend to be more alert to grammatical errors and to give more serious rating in grammatically aberrant performance. Research into pragmatic comprehension and judgment competence convincingly demonstrate that the importance of such ability should be recognized.

The second type of ILP literature concerning second language development also contains the dimensions of production as well as comprehension, in particular associating with L2 learners' developmental continuum rather than L2 use only (e.g., Carrell, 1981; Bouton, 1988, 1994; Koike 1996). The research that will be discussed here includes Carrell's (1981) early attempt to discern the difficulties in learners' comprehension of English requests, and Koike's (1996) study on the comprehension competence in the Spanish act of suggestion. The former study inspected whether there were any comprehension difficulties in a hierarchical manner in English indirect requests. Subjects of this study involved university students of four levels: low-intermediate, intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced, who were all able to interpret request forms such as "Please color the circle blue." and "I would love to see the circle colored blue." However, those with more complex syntactical structures such as interrogatives forms (e.g., "Must you make the circle blue?") and negatives (e.g., "You shouldn't color the circle blue.") imposed more difficulties especially upon the lower-proficiency learners. Turning the target language from English to Spanish as a second language, the study conducted by Koike (1996) inquired into how university students (i.e., first, second, and third year students) comprehended Spanish suggestions. Students were asked to watch a monologue video tape recorded by native Spanish speakers and tried to recognize the illocutionary act under examination.

Certain phrases denoting speech acts, such as *por favor* “please” and *no tengo dinero* “I don’t have any money”, were adopted by third-year students. This detection insinuated that learners of a higher level started to possess the form-function mapping ability in the process of interpreting speech acts.

From the literature cited in this section, a full view of interlanguage pragmatics contributes to our understanding of this complicated yet significant research area. In the proceeding sections, the issues of use and developmental transfer as well as influential factors in interlanguage will be elaborated respectively.

Use and Developmental Transfer

As for the definition of pragmatic transfer, there still seems no common consensus among scholars owing to the perplexed relationship between pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Kasper, 1992). Odlin (1989) began with what transfer is *not* in light of second language acquisition research in the past. First, ‘transfer is not simply a consequence of habit formation’, as he asserted that language transferring is more a cognitive psychological process than a behavioral act. Second, ‘transfer is not simply interference’ since not all influences of the native language cause critical mistakes, specifically when there are relatively few differences between the two languages. Third, ‘transfer is not simply a falling back on the native language’. Forth, ‘transfer is not always native language influence’ when speakers are capable of speaking more than two languages. Combining these viewpoints, Odlin (1989, p. 27) outlined a definition for substratum transfer:

Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.

In other words, if speakers' linguistic repertoire includes more than two languages, influences of all languages that speakers know may exist. Referring to pragmatics interchangeably with sociolinguistics, Wolson (1989) framed a definition of interlanguage as such: 'The use of rules of speaking from one's own native speech community when interacting with members of the host community or simply when speaking or writing in a second language is known as sociolinguistic or pragmatic transfer' (p. 141). Located in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, Kasper's (1992) claim was that pragmatic transfer should be understood as 'the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information' (p. 207). In this study, pragmatic and sociolinguistic types of transfer are separated apart as two perspectives and will both receive examination.

The issue of pragmatic transfer has been testified in a substantial quantity of single moment interlanguage pragmatics studies comparing interlanguage with corresponding first and second language (Takahashi, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002). As seen in the line of the tangled relation of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, pragmatic and socio-cultural transfer are the most conspicuous researching areas, though L1 transfer also occurs in other sub-levels of language systems, including phonetics, morphology, syntax, and lexical semantics (see Odlin, 1989 for detail). The pragmatic part probed into how L1 influences the production or comprehension of form-function correspondence in L2 (see Blum-Kulka, 1982; Olshtain, 1983; Trosborg, 1987; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Rose, 1996; Pair, 1996; Byon, 2004). The sociolinguistic one delved into speakers' L1 transfer in association with whether their communicative and discourse style are appropriate in the social context (see Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1983; Beebe, Takahashi &

Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Takahashi & Beebe, 1993; Yu, 1999, 2004).

The following discussion will be centered on the shift of socio-cultural norms to second language output. Yu (1999), on the basis of the requesting behavior of native Chinese and American English speakers as well as Chinese ESL learners of English, discovered transfer in the sociolinguistic fashion in that the concept of directness and indirectness differs between Chinese and western cultures. For Chinese, the conventionally indirect strategy such as *'Could you take it for me?'* was not the main linguistic device to alleviate the face-threatening force in making a request. Rather, Chinese denote their sincere and polite attitudes by considerable use of imperatives (e.g., *'Please take it for me.'*), corresponding as well to the communal image that Chinese adhere to in mutual interaction. Such diverse concepts about the strategic use of directness and indirectness often results in learners' sociolinguistic transfer. Followed by an analogous researching method, Yu (2004) further examined the compliment responses by native Chinese and English speakers as well as EFL and ESL speakers. Again with the influence of L1 socio-cultural norms, native Chinese speakers and EFL speakers in Taiwan manifested more rejections than acceptance when receiving others' compliments. Nevertheless, this may be coded as impoliteness in native English and for ESL speakers since in western culture non-acceptance implies the addressees' disagreement with the compliment. Reminiscent of the revealed socio-pragmatic transfer in interlanguage, other studies referred the nature of socio-pragmatic transfer to learners' perception of the target language as specificity or universality (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1982; Olshtain, 1983; House & Kasper, 1987). That is, learners normally do not transfer their L1 pragmatic rules to L2 settings if they consider the L2 language-specific. Conversely, perceiving the L2 language as universal is more likely to lead learners to the case of pragmatic transfer.

The above literature indeed lends empirical support to transfer from the first language or its culture in the interlanguage and provides the conceptual source of language specificity/universality as explanatory basis. However, the relationship between transfer and development is far less addressed in the literature. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) advanced a hypothesis of positive correlation between learners' language proficiency and pragmatic transfer. They predicted that higher-proficiency learners are prone to transfer more pragmatic principles from L1 to L2 because of more linguistic sources available for higher-level learners. Another study drawing contradictory results was launched by Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper and Ross (1996), who inspected intermediate and advanced Japanese-speaking ESL learners' metapragmatic assessment of English apology. By distributing a questionnaire containing seven contextual factors, positive pragmatic transfer was found in those highly-agreed factors in both Japanese and English (i.e., status, obligation to apologize, and likelihood of acceptance) while negative transfer occurred in those with less agreement between the two languages at issue (i.e., offender's face loss, offended party's face loss, and social distance). With respect to the issue of development, advanced learner group demonstrated more positive and less negative transfer than the intermediate one, which did not echo the positive correlation hypothesis either.

In addition to the product-oriented studies in pragmatic transfer mentioned above, Takahashi (1996) insisted to look on the process-oriented side. Her study of Japanese indirect request strategies in English was a comprehensive one dealing with the process dimension. Appealing to the 'contextual appropriateness of an L1 pragmatic strategy' and the 'equivalence of the L1 and L2 strategies', she examined how the two parameters relate to pragmatic transferability by computing possible pragmatic

transferability rate. A result was found that the rate of conventional equivalence (e.g., *would you please* and *would you*) was higher than that of their pragmatic functions. This partly expounded that Japanese learners of English had difficulties identifying equivalent functional strategies for requests but depended heavily on their first language in the choice of request strategies or conventions. On the whole, exploration of both product and process ends certainly acknowledge the decisive character of pragmatic transfer in the scope of interlanguage pragmatics.

The Factor of Language Proficiency

Some ILP work, (e.g., Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1987, 1995; Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 1996), has been proven fruitful in illuminating influential factors in second language learners' ILP development. One of the most momentous factors lies in learners' language proficiency.

Previous work on the factor of learners' language proficiency has excited much controversy as to how the pragmatic ability relates to the grammatical ability. Owing to learners' 'universal pragmatic principles' (see Walters, 1980; Schmidt, 1983; Koike, 1989a; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993), also depicted as an 'implicitly and proceduralized type of knowledge' (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 164), pragmatic ability has been addressed to precede grammar competence. Unable to be consciously inspected, this pragmatic universality is formed when learners acquire their mother tongue or their generalization about languages. Examples of such universal pragmatic competence can be demonstrated in various communicative speech acts and politeness strategies (see Brown and Levinson, 1987). It has been argued that without this prior pragmatic knowledge, L2 learners cannot involve themselves in a collaborative interaction and further absorb new pragmatic knowledge in L2.

Empirical evidence of this universality of pragmatic ability can be well represented by the following work. In Schmidt's (1983) study, the participant Wes manifested greater improvement in pragmatic competence than in grammatical competence during the four-year observation. This further lends support to the hypothesis that a limited repertoire of grammatical knowledge does not hinder from the development of the pragmatic and discourse abilities. More impressive findings were later revealed by Koike (1989a), who proposed that learner's grammar was unlikely to be constructed as quickly as the pragmatic knowledge they had already built up in L1. However, learners could still express their existing pragmatic concepts through their restricted language proficiency. Moving toward Eisenstein and Bodman's (1993) observation of advanced learners' gratitude expressions, we can clearly identify various types of grammatical errors such as in the use of intensifiers, tenses, word orders, idioms, prepositions, and word choices yet with accurate illocutionary force. It was therefore argued by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) that, no matter in what level, learners are all capable of operating their previously-acquired pragmatic knowledge and their L2 linguistic resources to practice illocutionary acts with politeness effects.

The opposite position toward the relationship between pragmatics and grammar, however, held that the development of grammar ability was prior to that of pragmatic competence. In this stance, learners were shown to adopt correct grammar yet carry inappropriate pragmatic and socio-cultural meanings in a L2 communicative setting. In the following discussion, there will be three instances in this grammar-preceding-pragmatics case: (1) 'grammatical knowledge does not enable pragmatic use'; (2) 'grammatical knowledge enables non-target-like pragmatic use'; (3) 'grammatical and pragmatic knowledge enable non-target-like sociopragmatic

use' (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 175).

A representative study of the first instance was conducted by Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000), who elicited the progressive use of modality from beginning ESL learners in disagreement performance through oral interviews. A steady progress in the acquisition of modality was sketched as such: 'maybe > think > can > will > would > could'. In spite of this linear acquisition pattern, most illocutionary force of disagreement was actually bounded with semantically marked lexicons. The second instance known as non-target-like pragmatic use, yet manifesting grammatical knowledge in certain degree, could be illustrated by Takahashi and Beebe's (1987). They found greater pragmatic transfer at the higher grammatical level among Japanese speakers of English. Namely, they demonstrated intensive honor in the act of receiving an invitation when speaking the foreign language, English. A possible explanation of advanced learners' frequent transfer was advanced toward their superior control of the target language. That is, the skilled manipulation made them effortless express whatever they intended to. The last instance put its focal concern in the non-target-like socio-cultural use. Yu's (2004) compliment study discovered that Chinese learners of English were more likely to react to compliments with rejections, completely different from American native speakers who tend to accept compliments with an agreement. This was due to Chinese speakers' first attention to modesty and relative power attached to the behavioral values of their indigenous culture.

In spite of the seemingly contradictory tendencies in learners' development of pragmatic and grammatical knowledge, the pragmatics-grammar nexus discussed above at least uncovers a weighty role that learners' language proficiency has in the developmental continuum of interlanguage pragmatics.

The Factor of Learning Context

In addition to the factor of language proficiency, the role of learning context has also been a great concern in the field of interlanguage pragmatic development. Two widely-debated variables in the factor of learning context are the second/foreign learning environment and instructed/uninstructed settings. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) indicated that pragmatic transfer occurs in both ESL and EFL contexts, especially in the former environment. This could be illustrated by their finding that ESL learners' refusal production converge more with their refusal utterances in the target language. Moreover, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) compared the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of ESL learners at an U.S. university and of EFL learners in Hungary. Results showed that ESL students hold better pragmatic consciousness than EFL ones do, which can be inferred from the finding that ESL speakers take pragmatic errors more seriously than grammatical ones in interaction. A possible explanation may relate to the speaker's residency since one key factor to learners' pragmatic competence development is the opportunity for learners to interact with native speakers in daily life. In an ESL environment, learners cannot but struggle for coding and decoding the exchanged information in the course of communication to maintain the relationship with native speakers. Facing more challenging interaction with native speakers in their daily social situations, ESL learners would tend to prompt their focus on socio-pragmatic dimensions. Conversely, in an EFL learning context, known as a test-guided situation, EFL learners may be led to stress 'microlevel grammatical accuracy' rather than 'macrolevel pragmatic appropriateness' due to the washback of frequent assessment. Such great difference in the motivational stimuli was proved significant in learners' development of interlanguage, which is also true in Schmidt (1993).

Another variable in the learning context discussed in most work is the instructed/uninstructed setting. Different findings of instructional effects on interlanguage development have been revealed in some research (see Billmyer, 1990; House, 1996), among which there were considerable ones affirming the positive effects of pragmatic instruction. Especially in those suspecting negative transfer from L1 to L2 due to the innate equivalence of language forms and functions, pragmatic instruction in the target language is considered necessary to purposely immerse learners in a simulated social setting and to explicitly provide them with the appropriate pragmatic use in L2. This is exactly what Takahashi (1996) attempted to verify in terms of the request forms and functions between Japanese and English. This was also true in Odlin (1989) that instructional setting results in positive transfer since teaching fosters learner's awareness of pragmatic rules. Another study on instructional effects but focusing on a beginning level was conducted by Wildner-Bassett (1994), who inspected the conversational routines produced by 19 American learners of German, who had received one-year instruction in German. An inspiring finding arose that even learners of German in a beginning level acquires some conversational routines, so she advanced early instruction of these pragmatic and social routines.

There are still more unexploited influencing factor variables in second language learners' interlanguage development (e.g., length of residence, input and interaction in noninstructional settings, etc.) (see Kasper & Rose, 2002 for more review). However, the two factors reviewed here, language proficiency and learning context, adequately indicates a strong connection between interlanguage development and pedagogical practice. Therefore, more empirical studies should be conducted to further explore how these two factors interact with each other in the second language acquisition process.

INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS OF THE SPEECH ACT OF REFUSALS

As shown in interlanguage pragmatics research, second language learners make major efforts in using their limited set of linguistic resources to convey a wide range of meaningful and affective cues of messages. Such task done by learners also account for what they would do in the act of refusals. Therefore, refusal studies concerning the speech act and interlanguage aspects are indeed necessary for discussion. In the following sections, refusal studies will be introduced first along the line of speech act aspect, followed by that of the interlanguage one.

Issue 1: Speech Act Aspect

In the similar vein in earlier sections, the speech act aspect of refusals can be distributed into those within one specific language as well as two languages for comparison.

As for the act of refusal within one language, the impediment of compliance in essence makes it highly face-threatening, leading scholars to explore the use of face-saving maneuvers in terms of the politeness goal. A significant one was conducted by Turnbull and Saxton (1997), who induced phone interviewees to reject a research assistant's request to participate in psychological experiments. They contended that in refusals English speakers engage themselves in interpersonal work with modal structures. Three modal structures, 'epistemic probability/possibility' (e.g., *I don't think so*), 'root necessity/probability' (e.g., *I have to work*), and a combination of both (e.g., *I don't think I can*) used by the interviewees extensively appear in five types of refusing strategies: 'negate request', 'negated ability', 'indicate unwillingness', 'performative refusals', and 'identify external impeding factors'. This modal logic denotes the speaker's reluctance and/or obligation to decline, thereby

taking on a critical role in repairing the interlocutors' face and accomplishing the conversation.

As a socio-culture-specific speech, refusals done by Chinese and westerners are actually in divergent fashion (See Gu, 1990; Ma, 1996). Two studies conducted between English and Chinese are presented as follows. Shih (1986) proposed that 'off-record' strategies (see Brown and Levinson, 1978, pp. 211-227) are most familiar in refusals among Chinese, for whom saying 'no' is more difficult than not answering at all. Liao and Bresnahan (1996), inspecting how American and Taiwanese university students gave refusals in response to six hypothetical scenarios of requests, advanced the *dian-dao-wei-zhi* "point-to-is-end—marginally touch the point" theory as an interpretation of Chinese 'off-record' politeness realization. These comparison studies indeed provide a better understanding of speech act manifestation across languages.

Issue 2: Interlanguage Aspect

Regarding the interlanguage aspect in the existing refusal studies, the most frequently-adopted research method should be the comparison of refusal production produced by native and non-native speakers. Three important studies adopting this methodology will be presented as follows.

Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) presented an in-depth analysis on refusals produced by learners and native speakers of English from questionnaires. It was reported that Japanese learners of English prefer vague excuses—vague as to the detailed time and place involved with their excuses, as opposed to Americans' specific way of telling others their plans. This difference, probably attributed to transfer of L1 socio-cultural principles, suggests the potential learning difficulty that L2 learners may encounter in developing their pragmatic ability. Focusing on

academic advising session, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991) compared the semantic formulas used by native speakers and non-native speakers of English in refusing an advisor's suggestion. By examining the tape recordings of actual advising sessions and by using Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) taxonomy, they indicated that the semantic formulas used by native and nonnative speakers to reject their advisors' suggestions differ quantitatively and qualitatively. For instance, the most frequently used semantic formula by both native speakers and nonnative speakers are reasons/explanations. While the second most common strategy among native speakers are alternatives, that among nonnative speakers is avoidance. Furthermore, the range of content of nonnative speakers' reasons is broader and often more unacceptable. However, there still exist some similarities in refusals between languages. For instance, Nelson, Carson, Batal and Bakary (2002) drew a conclusion that many more similarities than differences were revealed among Americans and Egyptians in making refusals. They further indicated that pragmatic similarities are more likely to result in pragmatic success.

The literature presented in this paper provides a window onto the intensive interaction of speech act theory and interlanguage pragmatics. At the outset of this chapter, much research has directly informed the intricate nature of pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects of speech act theory. As appeals have been considerably made to these two aspects in setting the targets for analysis, second language learners' interlanguage in speech acts should also be invoked in terms of both pragmatic and socio-cultural perspectives. It is to this end that the research focus of this thesis will be concentrated on the pragmatic and socio-cultural manifestations of the speech act of refusal in Chinese students' English interlanguage.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study were 134 Chinese undergraduates majoring in English in three universities in Taiwan. Among them, 31 were from National Chiao Tung University; 28 from National Taipei University; 75 from National Taipei University of Technology. There were 110 females and 24 males ranging in age from 18 to 25 years old. The participants were all university-level students, who have passed the Joint College Entrance Examination (also called JCEE) in Taiwan. In addition, they as English majors must have taken English courses for at least one year. With these requirements that an English major must have reached, the participants in this study were at least in a proficiency level of having no difficulty in constructing simple and complete English sentences to express themselves. In doing this, the extremely low-language-level learners who did not have proficient ability to freely convey themselves can be excluded since language proficiency may be an influential factor in exploring pragmatic and sociocultural competence (e.g., Yu, 1999).

INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used to collect data in this thesis was a written questionnaire in the form of Discourse Completion Task (DCT), a popular method of data collection in speech act studies (for reviews of interlanguage methods see Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Rose & Ono, 1995; Hinkel, 1997). DCT normally consists of a number of situational descriptions, followed by a dialogue initiation with an empty slot for elicitation of the speech act at issue. Although DCT has the drawback of not representing the naturally

occurring speech (Beebe & Cummings, 1996), it is still known for its utility for collecting large amounts of data and for conducting in-depth quantitative analysis. Henceforth, DCT was adopted as a tool in soliciting Chinese undergraduates' interlanguage refusals in this study.

The DCT questionnaire in this study was designed to uncover the exploratory results in Chinese learners' interlanguage refusals in response to requests. It consisted of scripted situations, which represented socially differentiated contexts with different requesting contexts. In order to avoid biasing the participants' response choices, the word *refusal* was not used in the descriptions (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

The designed situations involved two types of jobs that respectively needed the applicants' labor and mental contribution. One was labor work that required them to clean classrooms in a school building from seven to ten o'clock every Saturday and Sunday morning during the whole semester. The other one was in want of their mental efforts in reading over two hundred websites on English writing and grammar, for each of which a Chinese introduction as a guide to users needed to be completed. This job also demanded them to finish at least eight websites per hour. These two jobs were so constructed to appear demanding but reasonable so that the participants could be easily engaged in the imagination of the request-refusal situation. Moreover, these jobs required distinct types of ability that characterized them individually as labor work and brain work. The reason for such design was to ensure that students fond of different part-time jobs would all find either job reasonably to be declined. Examples of Job 1 and Job 2 are illustrated as follows.

Example: Job 1

You are required to clean classrooms in a school building from 7 to 10 every

Saturday and Sunday morning during the whole semester. If you do not want to take this position after knowing its demanding workload, what would you say to the teaching assistant?

TA: *Would you like to take this job?*

You:

Example: Job 2

You are required to **read and write introductions** to over 200 English learning websites. Eight websites need to be finished within one hour. If you do not want to take this position after knowing its demanding workload, what would you say to the teaching assistant?

TA: *Would you like to take this job?*

You:



It should be noted that the constructed situations need to be intellectually and culturally plausible for the participants so that their responses would not hamper the validity of the results. Considering the suitability of the given context, the depicted situations in the DCT were rather specifically close to the university life. The part-time job recruitment was chosen according to the fact that taking part-time jobs is common to university students, also having been used in previous studies (see Hsieh & Chen, 2004; 2005a; 2005b) to collect the refusal data from undergraduates in Taiwan universities in their native language, Mandarin Chinese. Results showed that this social context was not unfamiliar to them since they could give proper responses

in Mandarin Chinese tallying with the requested inquiry (for results in Chinese refusals see Hsieh and Chen, 2004; 2005a; 2005b).

In an attempt to investigate learners' oral rejection, the DCT was composed in its ultimate endeavor to create oral scenarios. To this end, refusal responses were not provided in the form of multiple choices. In the view of some researchers (Rintel & Mitchell, 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990), providing participants potential responses would limit the elicited speech acts and bias the results, though Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993, p.159) indicated that DCT supplying possible hearer responses were better suited to nonnative speakers who were not linguistically and culturally competent in realizing and reacting to the given requests. However, in the case of this study, the data collection would not be stained with the participants' language competence and with the designed situations due to the selection of English majors from universities as participants and the launch of the previous refusal studies in Chinese (i.e., Hsieh and Chen, 2004; 2005a; 2005b). Blank lines for refusal responses were given after the imagined (*Can you take this job for me?*) Inclusion of such prompts was particularly preferable for studies of speech acts that were responses (such as rejections) instead of initiations (such as requests) (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993).

Stated as in the beginning of the questionnaire, participants should picture themselves in the action of refusing the requester. In spite of this, still two participants indicated acceptance or the choice of opting out as their response to the described requests, which should be excluded from the refusal analysis and therefore resulted in 266 pieces of response by 134 undergraduates.

PROCEDURES

The Discourse Completion Test was distributed to English majors of three universities. They were undergraduates from the courses of Multimedia English Workshop and Communicative Skills Workshop in National Chaio Tung University; Second Language Acquisition in National Taipei University; Phonetics and Technical Reading and Writing in National Taipei University of Technology. The researcher first explained how to answer the designed questions, reminding the participants of giving intuitional responses. After the data collection, two inter-raters assisted analyzing the participants' responses to ascertain the reliability of the coding scheme.

DATA ANALYSIS

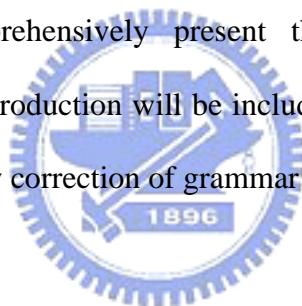
In order to identify interlanguage features, a classification of refusal responses were needed. However, there has been little consensus among different accounts as to within what standard criteria the categorizations of the act of refusals are to apply. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) categorization model is probably the best-known and most frequently cited taxonomy for analyzing refusals (Gass & Houck, 1999). In line with their coding principle, refusals of each participant in this study were analyzed as a sequence of formulas coded in terms of their semantic content. Here is an example which was encoded in light of the semantic formulas, such as "I'm sorry (**Regret**), I'm not so a writer (**Excuse**), I don't think I could write good introductions (**Excuse**). So why don't you try on someone who is batter on writing? (**Proposal of alternative**)" New categories of semantic formulas were identified based on the corpus of this study. This remodeled categorization for the act of refusal was used for further qualitative analysis.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE USE OF SEMANTIC FORMULA

The refusal data elicited from Chinese learners speaking English exhibit ample interlanguage features. The first section in Chapter 4 will delve into these interlanguage refusals in terms of the quantity, the order, and the length aspects of semantic formulas produced by Chinese students. Considering how students incorporate these formulas and other pragmatic indicators in the act of refusing, the second section in Chapter 4 will investigate the use of modification and of modal devices. In order to comprehensively present the refusal data, the original transcription of the solicited production will be included in the following discussions as given examples without any correction of grammar or spelling.



The Quantity Aspect

The Chinese participants speaking English as a foreign language provided a total of 266 responses, in which 768 semantic formulas were found. Table 1 shows the raw frequencies and percentage of each type of formula in learners' data.

As Table 1 indicates, of the total 768 formula produced by learners, learners adopted **Excuse** formula (**F1**) most often, which makes up 43.4% of the total semantic formulas (333 out of 768). Moreover, **Regret** (**F2**), **Adjunct** (**F3**), and **Conventional nonperformative** (henceforth called **Nonperformative**) (**F4**) formulas comprise respectively 18.6% (143 out of 768), 14.2% (109 out of 768), and 13.3% (102 out of 768) of all the formulaic use by Chinese students in performing English refusal. It should be noted that the **Adjunct** formula (**F3**) attaining such a high rank (14.2%) is

due to its multiple subcategories (i.e., **Appreciation, Statement of positive opinion, Pause filler, Repetition, and Emotional expressions**), which will be introduced in detail in the following.

Table 1: Occurring frequency and percentage semantic formula used by Chinese students

<i>No.</i>	<i>Semantic Formula</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
F1	Excuse	333	43.4%
F2	Regret	143	18.6%
F3	Adjunts	109	14.2%
F4	Conventional nonperformative	102	13.3%
F5	Proposals of alternative	31	4.0%
F6	Direct “No”	25	3.3%
F7	Avoidance	8	1.0%
F8	Performative	7	0.9%
F9	Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	6	0.8%
F10	Future acceptance	4	0.5%
	Totals	768	100%

Note. F=Semantic Formula; each number was rounded to one decimal.

The semantic formula will be expounded following the quantitative sequence listed in Table 1 in terms of its pragmatic function. Sample responses produced by learners will also be provided for demonstration.

Excuse (F1): Excuses are situational-oriented in the sense that the type of reasons learners bring up varies with the nature of the requested events devised in this

study. For those in response to the event of editing introduction for English websites, reasons normally pertain to the speaker's internal impeding factors which encompass such personal traits as ability, intelligence, physical strength, and psychological conditions of the refuser. Hence, by pointing out the impediment of internal factors, refusers refer their declination to absence of certain necessary characteristics in association with themselves to justify their denial. An indication of this is presented in (1), (2), and (3). In order to be specific, some learners even point out their incompetence either in language or in computer skills.

- (1) *Maybe I don't think I have ability to take this job, You can find other people to take.*
- (2) *Sorry, I'm not really good at designing the website, maybe you can find another person.*
- (3) *Sorry, my English is not good enough to do it.*



On the other hand, impeding factors external to the speaker mostly correlate to the request of cleaning public areas. They refer to those reasons for rejection that arise from considerations for factors out of the range of capacities refusers are equipped with. Reasons of this type occur more often in situations where refusers respond to requests to participate in the cleaning job than in those where they reply to the writing task. A principal cause is that cleaning classrooms requires job-takers no particular capabilities as what are expected in the case of writing introductions to English websites. Almost every university student with normal physical conditions as well as available working hours is able to carry out the duty of cleaning. Along such line of reasoning, external impeding factors can satisfy the validity of their declination. This

can be seen from (4) to (7), where the latter two give specific reasons as to what and when the impeding events happen.

- (4) Sorry, *I don't have time on Saturday and Sunday to do the work*. Maybe I can find someone else to do that.
- (5) *I have no time*. Sorry!
- (6) I'm sorry. I can't take this job. *Because I have to go home almost every week*.
- (7) I'm sorry that I can't. *I still have another job on Sunday* so that I'm afraid I can't apply for it.

Regret (F2): The semantic formula constituting the second largest proportion of all learners' data is to express regret. Chinese students may apologize for the act of rejection as in (9) and (10), or for the reasons stated as hindrance in (8) and (11). In (8) and (9), the apologetic expressions follow or precede the refusal while in (10) and (11) they are embedded within the refusal. By doing this, learners act as if they owe the requester for his/her kind offer, which also helps to save the requester's face. The apologetic markers help reduce the negative force brought about by refusals and serve a vital function in facework, which just accounts for their frequent occurrences.

- (8) *Sorry*, I don't have time to take the job.
- (9) It is so demanding! I am afraid that I can't do it well. *Sorry*.
- (10) No, *I'm really sorry* but I can't get this job.
- (11) *I'm sorry* that this job is too difficult to me. Maybe you can ask someone who is good at reading and writing.

Adjunct (F3): This semantic formula plays an assistant role in the act of refusing. It contains five main subcategories: **Appreciation** (22 out of 768); **Statement of positive opinion** (henceforth called **Positive opinion**) (6 out of 768); **Pause filler** (26 out of 768); **Repetition** (1 out of 768); **Emotional expression** (8 out of 768). Distant from the core of declination, the first four types of the **Adjunct** formula function as a kind of buffer that releases the sense of indirectness in the cases of **Appreciation** and **Positive opinion** and enable refusers to strive for more time for refusal construction in the cases of **Pause filler** and **Repetition**. Markers of **Appreciation** indicate learners' gratitude to the requester's effort and time spent in explaining the job as in (12) and (13); **Positive opinion** represents the goodwill and kindness the refuser attempts to convey, as in (14) and (15). Moreover, learners adopt **Pause fillers** such as *umm* in (16) and *oh, well* in (17) as well as repetition of the request in (18) to create a longer process of the request-refusal negotiation. Similar to the function of delaying the outburst of direct denial, the last subtype of **Adjunct** named **Emotional expression** does not appear in Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) but occurs exclusively in the data elicited in this study. This subtype typically contains expressions implying apparent dislike or impatience, such as *What the hell* and *Are you crazy?* in (19) and (20). However these do not seem to be proper in downgrading the impoliteness in the act of refusal. The potential cause of this use by learners will be discussed in Chapter 5.

(12) I'm sorry. I think this job is not suit for me. *Thanks for your time.*

(13) I'm sorry that maybe I can't do this job. Because I have something else need to do. *Thank you very much for telling me about this job.*

(14) *I would like to take the job.* But actually that I have other work to do in the

same time. So, I'm sorry about that.

- (15) *I would like to*, but I think I am not suitable for the job.
- (16) *Umm...* I think that I can't get up so early on Saturday and Sunday.
- (17) *Oh, well...* I don't think I am that good to cover all of this, Plus, I really don't think that I have much time for it.
- (18) *You mean I have to go to school every Saturday and Sunday?* I'm afraid I couldn't take this job. My mom and I always go to the church on Saturdays and Sundays.
- (19) *What the hell.* I don't have enough time to do this job.
- (20) *Are you crazy?* It's impossible for me to finish this job in one hour!

Conventional nonperformative (F4): Conventional nonperformative use comprises the fourth largest group of semantic formula in learners' data. The linguistic realizations of this formula involve conventional modal use denoting negative ability or negated willingness. Exemplification of this realization is illustrated in (21) to (23). The **Conventional nonperformative**, negative ability and negated willingness in this case, may occur with less accompanying formulas due to the sense of politeness conventionally suggested by the modal devices *can't* in (21) and *I think I won't* in (22). Only few instances include the modal realizations with a pragmatically clear "no" as shown in (23), to lower the unyielding force in the rejection. The detailed exploration of how these modal conventions mitigate the directness of refusal will be offered in later sections.

- (21) Sorry, my English and Chinese is poor, so *I can't take this job*.
- (22) *I think I won't* accept it.

(23) *No, I think I wouldn't.* I'm afraid that I'm not a qualified assistant.

Proposal of alternative (F5): A fifth semantic formula that appears quite often in learners' data is the proposal of alternatives. The **Alternative** formulas here are marked by the refuser's showing goodwill in giving suggestions or promises to the requester as in (24), (25) and (26), or in proffering others the opportunity to undertake the requested action as in (27).

(24) I'm sorry. I can't accept this job. I got to do a lot of homework and other things. *Maybe you can ask somebody else to do this.*

(25) No, thanks. I think I'm not that hard-working person. *Maybe there is someone who can do this better than me.*

(26) Well, I've already had part-time job every Saturday and Sunday. I'm sorry. *Maybe I can ask my friends if they want to take the job.*

(27) Ohh...I think the workload is too heavy for me, and it's really harmful to my eyes. *I would like to give this chance to somebody else.*

By replacing a rejection with an offer of a suggestion or help, the refuser may impress the interlocutor as being kind and sincere. This friendly and helpful attitude directed toward the refuser may project a favorable image of the refuser to make up for the impoliteness following from the noncompliance.

Direct "No" (F6): This is the bald "no" without any other linguistic support. Negators such as *not* or *never* are not regarded as this formula since they can't be syntactically singled out as a complete formula in our data but are always embedded within various types of semantic formulas. Examples containing the use of bald "no"

are listed as follows:

(28) *No*, thanks. I don't think I am available for this job.

(29) *No*, thanks. I want to relax on weekends.

Avoidance (F7): This semantic formula embraces two subtypes: **Topic switch** (8 out of 768) and **Postponement** (6 out of 768) where their ultimate purpose is to avoid directly pinpointing the intention to refuse. Refusers switch topics in order to divert the listener's attention from the ongoing topic of conversation to another, which is however related to the original topic to the extent that the listener may well figure it out. As illustrated by (30) and (31), the speaker manifests an inclination toward another job or time without commenting on the one under discussion. This is indicative of a rejection, but in a less face-damaging manner since being refused is a conclusion derived by the requester and facework is then done. Similar in creating the avoidance effect, refusers may postpone giving an explicit answer as to what he thinks about the requested job. Rather, they indicate uncertainty by suggesting that for the time being he cannot make the decision, which is neither an acceptance nor a rejection. As the requester can tell from (32) and (33), the postponement can be a denial since it is against reason to keep a positive answer back. The most probable motive for giving such an equivocal response is that the speaker is reluctant to grant the request on one hand, and reluctant to disappoint the listener on the other hand. As a consequence, though these speakers did promise to reply later, they never answered the notifier's phone call again. This silent response also implies a noncompliance response.

(30) Sorry, I think maybe this is not the job. I've been searching for. *I'll be glad*

that if you get me another one more academic field.

- (31) I'm sorry but I already have part-time job on the weekend. *The ideal time for me is on the week day, so do you have any job on the particular time? If so, would you please inform me or I'll call back sooner or later.* Thank you for your great help.
- (32) Hum, well, I didn't realize the workload is much heavy and the working time is in the weekend morning. *I think I'll think about it twice and I'll give you a call after full thought, OK?* Thank you very much! Bye!
- (33) Thank you for your telling me this. *I would like to think about it twice before I make a decision. If I would like to take this job, I will call you later.*

Performative (F8), Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (F9), and Future acceptance (F10): A rather small number of types of semantic formulas can be seen in these semantic formulas. Expressions of **Performative (F8)** (0.9%) (7 out of 768) allow the speaker to perform the illocutionary act of refusing by uttering a performative verb with the identical meaning of refusing. Examples of such are revealed in (34) and (35) where the rejection is carried out by the verbal use of *refuse* and *give up*. Another minor use of formulas is the speaker's **Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (F9)** (0.8%) (6 out of 768). In doing this, the speaker explains the potential negative consequences if they are responsible for the requested job. The most salient feature in this formula is that learners mention the poor quality of their working performance, which can be found in (36) and (37).

- (34) I'm sorry. I've got another work opportunity. *So I'm going to refuse this job.*
- (35) Well, I am sorry but I won't be at school then. *So I have to give up.*

- (36) I think the quantity is too heavy for me. *In this way, my work's quality may decrease.*
- (37) I'm sorry. The workload is too much. I cannot finish it so soon, *unless you want a poor output.*

The last marginal use of semantic formula in learners' data, **Future acceptance (F10)** (0.5%) (4 out of 768), relates to the future away from the present time when the request is made. The use of **Future acceptance** is characterized by a future grant of the requests in the linguistic realization containing subjunctive mood. As demonstrated in (38) to (40), the speaker conveys his/her consideration of taking the job on the basis of certain conditions, such as the reduction of working hours or personal available time. However, known by both of the interlocutors, the hypothetical acceptance will hardly come true in a predictable future. The temporal shift away from the deictic moment creates a time framework outside of the reality of the present refusal, making the response more indirect and polite.

- (38) I am sorry that I can't afford this job because it is too tired to me. *But if you can reduce some works, I'll think of it.*
- (39) *If I had lot of time, I would do it.*
- (40) *I wish I could,* but I didn't have much time. So I am not sure if I could well-done it.

In sum, we have uncovered the features of a variety of semantic formulas that are noticeably attested in learners' refusal behavior. In substance, the expedition in this section has revealed the pragmatic messages that learners attempt to deliver in order

to reach the illocutionary act of refusing and to protect the face want of both sides. Although the emotional use in the cases of (19) and (20) is not properly aligned with the face-saving end, they yet remain a distinctive interlanguage feature and will receive further discussion of its occurrence in Chapter 5.

The Order Aspect

If the **Adjunct** formula (**F3**) is excluded considering its complex and multiple subcategories mentioned in the first section in Chapter 4, the three most frequently selected formulaic strategies for refusal are **Excuse (F1)**, **Regret (F2)** and **Nonperformative (F4)** formulas. In Table 2, all consecutive occurrences of the three formulas are calculated. It should be noted that independent formulas belonging to one formulaic category are coded once. Of the total 266 responses, those sequences where the **Regret** formula serves as the initiative (see **O1** to **O4** in Table 2) occur most frequently, with the percentage of 36.8% (98 out of 266). With relatively fewer instances, the linear structures beginning with **Excuse (O5** to **O8)** or **Nonperformative (O9** to **O12)** formulas respectively account for 8.3% (22 out of 266) and 8.0% (21 out of 266) of the total responses.

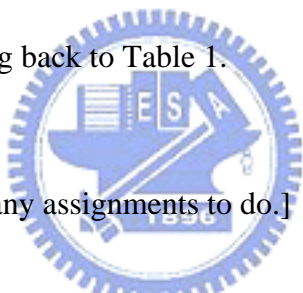
Table 2 : Occurring Frequency of formulaic orders used by Chinese students

<i>No. Formulaic Order</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
O1 Regret – Excuse	57	21.4%
O2 Regret - Conventional nonperformative	7	2.6%
O3 Regret - Excuse - Conventional nonperformative	8	3.0%
O4 Regret - Conventional nonperformative - Excuse	26	9.8%
O5 Excuse – Regret	4	1.5%

O6	Excuse – Conventional nonperformative	13	4.9%
O7	Excuse – Regret - Conventional nonperformative	3	1.1%
O8	Excuse – Conventional nonperformative - Regret	2	0.8%
O9	Conventional nonperformative – Regret	1	0.4%
O10	Conventional nonperformative – Excuse	16	6.0%
O11	Conventional nonperformative – Regret - Excuse	1	0.4%
O12	Conventional nonperformative – Excuse - Regret	3	1.1%

Note. O=Formulaic Order; each number was rounded to one decimal.

Examples of each occurring sequence listed in Table 2 are presented as follows. Index for every occurrence of the semantic formula is marked within the parentheses for the convenience of referring back to Table 1.

- 
- (41) [F₂ Sorry,] [F₁ I have many assignments to do.]
(Regret – Excuse)
- (42) [F₂ Sorry!] [F₄ Actually I don't want to take this job whether you introduce it to me.]
(Regret - Conventional nonperformative)
- (43) [F₂Sorry,] [F₁ I have to go home on weekends] so that [F₄ I cannot take the job.]
(Regret - Excuse - Conventional nonperformative)
- (44) [F₂ I 'm sorry] that [F₄ I can not do the job] [F₁ because I have to go home on holidays.]
(Regret - Conventional nonperformative– Excuse)
- (45) Well, [F₁ usually I have some certain important routines on weekends,] [F₂ so I'm sincerely sorry.]

(Excuse - Regret)

- (46) [F1 I just have some plans on Saturday and Sunday.] [F4 So I can't take this job.]

(Excuse - Conventional nonperformative)

- (47) [F1 It's too heavy for me to take this job.] [F2 Sorry] [F4 I am afraid I can't do it.]

(Excuse - Regret - Conventional nonperformative)

- (48) Thanking for the hire me to do that job. [F1 Because I have to take class in the everyday morning.] [F4 I can't do the job.] [F2 Sorry.]

(Excuse - Conventional nonperformative - Regret)

- (49) [F4 I wouldn't take it] because... [F2 I'm terribly sorry.]

(Conventional nonperformative – Regret)

- (50) No, [F4 I can't] [F1 because I'm not good at dealing with such things.]

(Conventional nonperformative – Excuse)

- (51) [F4 I'm afraid not.] [F2 I'm sorry] [F1 because I think this job is not suitable for me.] Thank you for calling me.

(Conventional nonperformative - Regret – Excuse)

- (52) [F4 I don't think so.] [F1 It seems to be too difficult for me.] [F2 Sorry,] but thanks for your calling.

(Conventional nonperformative - Excuse – Regret)

In generalizing the typical order of the semantic formulas by learners, only the most two salient sequences are discussed here. First, the sequence of **Regret – Excuse (O1)** gains 21.4% (57 out of 266), illustration of which can be seen in (53) and (54):

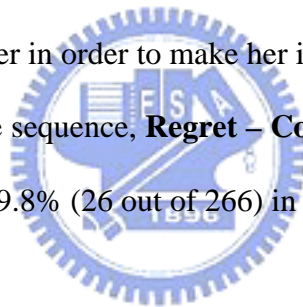
(53) [F2 I'm sorry about] [F1 that I'm not familiar with internet-working.]

(Regret - Excuse)

(54) [F2 I'm very so sorry.] [F1 I don't have any time at my after school.] And [F1 I have a lot of homework and part-time job need to do.] So could you find another to help you the mission?

(Regret - Excuse)

Learners may embed their excuse in the apologetic expression as in (53), or may single the impeding reasons out of the preceding apology as in (54). In (54) the learner seems to be uncertain about whether the reason she offered is justifiable enough or not, so she follows her first burst of excuse with a more specific one regarding what events block her in order to make her intention clear to the interlocutor. Moreover, an expansion of the sequence, **Regret – Conventional nonperformative – Excuse (O4)**, also constitutes 9.8% (26 out of 266) in learners' data.



The addition of a conventional indirect denial is typically manifested in the modal form denoting negated ability (i.e., the use of *can't*), as shown in (55) and (56). Once again, such conventional indirect expressions can be embraced within the apologetic starter, or exist as another single complete sentence (cf. (55) and (56)). However learners seem to worry about the force of politeness, so an explanatory statement usually follows for the sake of facework enhancement.

(55) [F2 I am so sorry] [F4 that I can't take this job for cleaning the classroom at Saturday and Sunday morning] [F1 because I have no free time at that time.]

(Regret – Conventional nonperformative - Excuse)

(56) [F₂ Sorry], [F₄ I can't take this job.] [F₁ Because I have courses in my weekend.]

(Regret – Conventional nonperformative - Excuse)

In summary, the way learners prefer to start with regrets and to complete the response with defensible excuses contributes to the much more prominent sequential evidence in interlanguage data. Such regular occurrence of regrets and excuses at both ends of the refusal response displays the sequential uniqueness of Chinese students' interlanguage.

The Length Aspect

Another interlanguage characteristic concerns the length of learners' response. In their utterances, a tendency of lengthy or verbose elicitation is proportionally discovered. This is mainly caused by the use of **Excuse** formula (**F1**) on one hand, and by the diverse combination of multiple semantic formulas on the other hand.

As the most favored semantic formula by Chinese students, the **Excuse** formula (**F1**) normally associates with the potential impediments pertaining to the related time, places, events, self-ability, and logical inference due to its explanatory nature. It is reasonable that these explanatory elements make the overall response longer, let alone learners may provide further explanation for the given impeding reason. Examples of this are (57) to (60) below.

(57) I'm sorry, *but I think the job is not suitable for me, because in the morning I have to take care of my brother*, so, I'm very sorry.

(58) I have to consider it more *because I think it is not like what I originally thought. I have classes in the morning, so maybe it is not appropriate for me.*

- (59) *I'm English major. Actually, my computer skills are not very good. You want me to make eight websites within an hour, it's impossible to me.*
- (60) *I think can't do this job because I am not a quick typer and reader. I don't want to lie to you. To tell you the truth, I really can't finish eight websites in one hour.*

The excuse in (57) is a typical one consisting of the impeding time and event, such as *in the morning* (referring to the impeding time) and *I have to take care of my brother* (referring to the impeding event). Another representative use of excuse is as in (59) and (60), where the learners mention their deficiency in the required ability for the compliance of the requests, such as *my computer skills are not very good* in (59) and *I am not a quick typer and reader* in (60). A somewhat dissimilar use of excuses as in (58) demands the interlocutor to make logical inference when the first excuse (i.e., *I think it is not like what I originally thought*) appears. That is, the interlocutor would be able to infer the purpose of rejection when hearing the second excuse (i.e., *I have classes in the morning*) containing the impeding event and time. Clearly, the painstaking care of the stated excuse would lengthen the whole response.

The other cause of prolonged interlanguage data is the total number of semantic formula in one reply. Table 3 exhibits the percentage and raw frequencies for the number of semantic formula in one response.

Table 3 : Occurring Frequency of the number of semantic formulas in one response

<i>Number of Semantic Formula</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 semantic formula	18	6.7%
2 semantic formulas	88	33.1%

3 semantic formulas	89	33.5%
4 semantic formulas	57	21.4%
5 semantic formulas	9	3.4%
6 semantic formulas	3	1.1%
7 semantic formulas	1	0.4%
8 semantic formulas	1	0.4%
<hr/>		
Totals	266	100%

Note. Each number was rounded to one decimal.

Of all learners' responses, the most frequent combination of semantic formula in one response is represented by three semantic formulas, which can be evidenced by the percentage of 33.5% (89 out of 266) from the table above. A sizable amount of data (26.7%) (71 out of 266) is found to encompass more than three semantic formulas. The greatest number of semantic formulas in one reply amounts to eight though there is only one case (0.4%). This is somewhat surprising since it has been assumed that being a non-native speaker entails less competent in manipulating the target language in some sense. In this logic, it is rational to expect that learners would produce short and simple answers such as *No, I don't want to* in reply. However in contrast to our expectation, learners manipulate as many semantic formulas as they can, forming a recursive use of **Excuse**, **Regret**, **Adjunct** and **Nonperformative** in combination. The following are examples containing more than three semantic formulas:

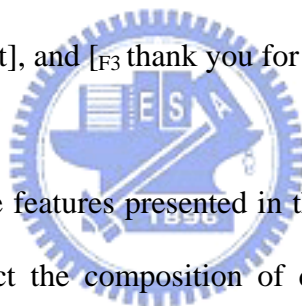
- (61) [F₁ As you know, I'm a student.] [F₁ I have to spend most of my daily life in class.] [F₁ Therefore, it is too tring for me to finish that kind of job.] [F₂ So I'm

so sorry] that [F4 I cannot take the job.] (5 formulas)

(62) [F4 Actually, I can't.] [F1 Because I have some problems with my heart.] [F1 As a result, I have to go to the doctor every Saturday.] [F2 So it's indeed a pity] that [F4 I cannot take the job.] [F2 Sorry!] (6 formulas)

(63) [F2 Sorry] [F4 I couldn't take this job.] [F1 In my weekend days I have to do things other than assignments or school work.] [F1 I think this job takes too much of my time,] [F4 so I may not be able to take it.] [F2 Sorry], and [F3 Thank you for informing me.] (7 formulas)

(64) [F3 Thank you] but [F3 Oh...] [F4 actually I don't want this kind of job.] [F1 I'm still a student] and [F1 I hope I can gain some experience from my work, even it's only a short-term.] [[F1 But I don't think I can get the thing I want in this work.] [F2 Sorry for that], and [F3 thank you for informing me.] (8 formulas)



In sum, the interlanguage features presented in this section suggest that Chinese learners of English may enact the composition of divergent semantic formulas to reach pragmatic effects in foreign language communication. In order to convey the illocutionary force of refusing, learners operate quite a few conventional nonperformative devices which play a crucial role in clarifying the intention to refuse. On the other hand, the consideration of facework for interlocutors is attended by the most frequent use of the **Excuse** and **Regret** formulas so that the offensiveness caused by rejection can be reduced. This explains why the combination of these two semantic formulas is so preferable among learners. In other words, the findings of semantic formulas in the aspects of quantity, order and length disclose apparent tendency in interlanguage refusal. A further discussion on these interlanguage characteristics will appear in Chapter 5.

THE USE OF MODIFICATION

In order to thoroughly understand how Chinese learners of English deal with the interpersonal encounter in the case of refusal, this study further makes an attempt at exploring the relationship between these semantic formulas as well as the interior linguistic manipulation. For ease of exposition, the semantic formulas found in these data are further classified as follows:

1. **Head act:** involving **Nonperformative (F4)**, **Direct “no” (F6)** and **Performative (F8)** formulas since they all express the propositional meaning of the core of refusal².
2. **External modification:** referring to those formulas that proceed or follow the **Head act** as facework devices.
3. **Internal modification:** referring to the modal markers in semantic formulas that are used to alleviate the conflicting force caused by declination.

Next, the distributional condition of both **External** and **Internal modification** will be explored first; the modal use as **Internal modification** will be explicated next in the following sections.

² In studies of the speech act of request (Fukushima, 1996; Pair, 1996; Hassall, 2001), the responses were mostly analyzed on the basis of Head Act, External and Internal Modification. Blum-Kulka (1989:275-276) termed Head Act as “the minimal unit which can realize a request; it is the core of the request sequence” while External Modification is made by Supportive Moves, “a unit external to the request, which modifies its impact by either aggravating or mitigating its force.” Internal Modification was characterized as syntactic downtoners such as interrogative or conditional structures, or lexical/phrasal downgraders such as politeness markers and modal markers (Faerch and Kasper, 1989).

External and Internal Modification

Table 4 summarizes the distribution of **External modification** and **Head act** in the total responses.

Table 4 : Occurring Frequency of distributional type of external modification and head act

<i>No.</i>	<i>Distributional Type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
D1	E	144	54.1%
D2	H	3	1.1%
D3	EH	33	12.4%
D4	HE	39	14.7%
D5	EHE	39	14.7%
D6	HEH	3	1.1%
D7	EHEH	1	0.4%
D8	HEHE	1	0.4%
D9	EHEHE	3	1.1%
Totals		266	100%

Note: E = External modification; H = Head act

As shown in this table, learners make use of the **Excuse** formula (**D1**) to the extent that 54.1% (144 out of 266) of the responses contain no **Head act**. This extensive use of the **Excuse** formula as a main refusing strategy is striking in that it implies learners' preference for non-head-act use. Even if they enact the **Head act**, they would apply **External modification** prior to (i.e., **D3**) or subsequent to (i.e., **D4**) the **Head act**, respectively making up 12.4% (33 out of 266) and 14.7% (39 out of

266) of the data. They may also place the **External medication** both before and after the **Head act** (i.e., **D5**), which also reaches 14.7% (39 out of 266). Examples of **D1** as well as **D3** to **D5** are elucidated in (65) to (68):

- (65) [E Thinking thoroughly, I do not consider myself competent at this realm.]
- (66) [E I am not diligent as you think] [H if you insist that I should do so many works I won't take it.]
- (67) [H I think I can't do it the work] [E because the work it's very hard for me, and I don't have any kind of experiment about the website job.]
- (68) [E Sorry], [H I don't want to.] [E It's too early and still the job I don't like.]

Moreover, those manifested by the single use of **Head act (D2)** or those containing more **Head acts** than **External modification (D6)** both constitute 1.1% (3 out of 266). It should be noted that, if two **Head acts** are uttered (see **D7, D8** and **D9** in Table 4), they would be interlinked with **External modification** in a consecutive manner. This interwoven use of **Head act** and **External modification** encompass 1.9% of the responses (5 out of 266). See (69), (70) and (71) for **D2, D6** and **D9**:

- (69) [H No, I wouldn't.]
- (70) [H No, I can't do so much work in just an hour.] [E I know my own ability], [H so I have to refuse to this job.]
- (71) [E Well, I would like to], [H but I'm afraid that I can't.] [E It's because I have a tutoring job on Sunday morning.] [H So, I can't take this job!] [E I'm sorry.]

On the whole, **Excuse** is operated as a kind of external modification extensively

since it provides a locus for learners to compensate for the **Head act** or the intention to deny the request.

As to **Internal modification**, Palmer's (1990) semantic trisection of modality into epistemic, deontic and dynamic subsystems serve as the baseline of the pragmatic analysis in the following investigation. Definitions of the three types of modality are presented below:

1. **Epistemic modality**: concerned with possibility or necessity of the truth of a proposition, relating to the speaker's knowledge and belief.
Examples are *may*, *will*, *probably*, and *I think*.
2. **Deontic modality**: concerned with possibility or necessity of the realization of actions or states, referring to the concept of obligation and permission. Examples are *must*, *have to*, and *need to*.
3. **Dynamic modality**: concerned with the ability or volition of the subject, relating more to the quality than to the opinion or attitude of the subject. Examples are *can* and *be able to*.

Despite the fact that the notion of modality can be realized in different grammatical categories³, this study will limit the following discussion to modal auxiliaries and adverbs.

Table 5 outlines the distribution of modal devices as **Internal modification** across all semantic formulas. As this table demonstrates, more than two-thirds of the modal expressions are distributed constantly in the **Excuse (F1)**, **Nonperformative (F4)** and **Alternative** formulas (**F5**), respectively accounting for 45.7% (192 out of

³ For English accounts of modal auxiliaries, please refer to Lyons (1977), Palmer (1979; 1990),

419), 31.3% (131 out of 419), and 10.7% (45 out of 419) of all the semantic formulas that contain **Internal modification**.

Table 5 : Occurring Frequency of internal modification across semantic formulas

<i>No.</i>	<i>Semantic Formula</i>	<i>Frequency of Modal Use</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
F1	Excuse	192	45.7%
F2	Regret	2	0.5%
F3	Adjunct	25	6.0%
F4	Conventional nonperformative	131	31.3%
F5	Proposals of alternative	45	10.7%
F6	Direct “No”	0	0%
F7	Avoidance	10	2.4%
F8	Performative	5	1.2%
F9	Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	4	1.0%
F10	Future acceptance	5	1.2%
Totals		419	100%

Detailed analysis of the modal employment as well as its pragmatic function will be introduced in the following section.

Modal Use in Internal Modification

Given that the **Excuse (F1)**, **Nonperformative (F4)** and **Alternative (F5)** formulas provide a locus for modal devices to exercise **Internal modification** in interlanguage refusal, a close look into how these modal markers achieve

interpersonal and pragmatic functions in the three semantic formulas is presented as follows.

Excuse (F1): As the semantic formula where the majority of the modal modification is exerted, it typically carries epistemic modal auxiliaries for the sake of politeness. By lowering the degree of possibility of the identified impediment, the use of **Epistemic modality** can mitigate the directness of the declination so the force of politeness can be strengthened. The phrases *I think* in (72) and (73) represent such use. In this way, the refuser ‘implies’ his refusal rather than ‘states’ it, thus alleviating the potential threat to politeness.

(72) Sorry. [_{F1} *I think* I’m not that good to take this job, it’s a challenge for me.]

(73) I would like to, [_{F1} but *I think* I am not suitable for the job.]

Due to the fact that the **Excuse** formulas are most of the time closely tied with the factors interior or exterior to the speaker, the **Epistemic** modals tend to accompany **Dynamic** ones to lessen the validity of the truth of the impediment. A greater degree of tentativeness in the dynamic modals *cannot* and *can* is designated by the support of the epistemic tokens (i.e., *I think* and *I don’t think*), as in (74) and (75).

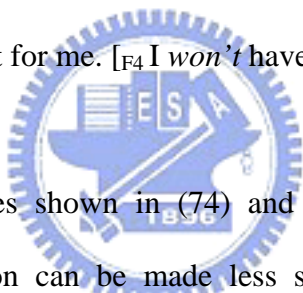
(74) Sorry, [_{F1} *I think* I *cannot* make it with the requirement.]

(75) My computer and typing ability are not good. [_{F1} *I don’t think* I *can* do that in that short time,] so I don’t want to take this job. Sorry.

Conventional nonperformative (F4): Similar to the **Excuse** formula, conventional nonperformatives are principally modified by epistemic and dynamic

modal auxiliaries as well. However, a point deserving notice in this formula is that the use of dynamic modals denoting negated ability outnumbered the use of those signaling negated willingness. As seen in (76) and (77), learners adopt the dynamic-ability indicators such as *can not* (or *can't*). A few instances of negated willingness such as *wouldn't* in (78) and *won't* in (79) also occur in learners' data.

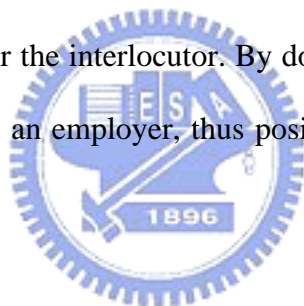
- (76) I'm sorry that [F4 I *can not* do the job] because I am not good at using computers.
- (77) You know, this is a good job, but I'm so sorry that [F4 I *can't* take this job.] It's so tired for me.
- (78) The job is too heavy so [F4 I *wouldn't* take it.]
- (79) I think that it's difficult for me. [F4 I *won't* have the desire to do it.]



Like modality in excuses shown in (74) and (75) above, both modality of dynamic capacity and volition can be made less strong when falling within the qualification of **Epistemic modality**, as in (80) and (81). Again modification of this kind expresses a weak confidence of the refuser in the truth of the negated capacity or volition, resulting in greater distance from the intention to refuse. This is how the epistemic and dynamic modals take effect here.

- (80) [F4 I'm *afraid* that I *can't* take this jog] since it's on the weekend. I have another job in my hometown. Thank you so much.
- (81) Well, I'm afraid I can not finish those jobs on time. [F4 I *don't think* I *would* take this job.]

Alternatives (F5): Though the **Alternative** formulas are also internally modulated by the **Epistemic** and **Dynamic modalities** most of the time, a point that merits mention is that it can be ambiguous in interpreting the modals in this formula. In other words, the auxiliary use of *can* may denote either the meaning of epistemic possibility or dynamic ability. In (82) and (83) where learners make an attempt to offer suggestions to the interlocutor for politeness compensation, one potential interpretation may relate to epistemic possibility, that is, the probability of resorting to other applicants. Let's not discuss whether the interlocutor would accept this suggestion or not. The double use of epistemic-oriented modals (i.e., *maybe* and *can*) designates a tactful resolution learners provide to redeem the face loss caused by the denial. Yet it can also be associated with dynamic ability which indicates that the given suggestion is feasible for the interlocutor. By doing this, the requestor may feel like being genially considered an employer, thus positively leading to politeness and face-saving effects.



- (82) Well, I'm feel sorry that I cannot do this job. Because the time is not suitable.
[F5 *Maybe* you *can* find someone else.]
- (83) Well, I am afraid that I can't do this job perfect. [F5 *Maybe* you *can* find some other suitable person.]

In addition to the three types of modal auxiliaries displayed above, it is found that the conventional modal meaning can be expressed through the form of adverbs as well. Two subtypes of modal adverbs found in this study are characterized as **Downtoners** and **Intensifiers** based on their relationship with the dictated proposition.

As can be seen from (84), the modal adverb *actually* is applied to clarify the potential non-conformability resulting from the contrast between the proposition of the speaker and the expectation of the requester. In doing this, the directness of the proposition brought by noncompliance of the request can be leveled down. Along the same line, *unfortunately* in (85) is used to signify sense of regret in the context where the proposition and the speakers' own expectation are found deviant from each other. This further implies that the speaker refuses the request under irresistible circumstances rather than his own will. As the two modal adverbs both assist in alleviating the imposition of the proposition, they are grouped as **Downtoners**.

- (84) Sorry! [_{F4} *Actually* I don't want to take this job whether you introduce it to me.]
- (85) First of all, thank you for informing me about it, [_{F1} *unfortunately* I've decided to accept another job opportunity.]
- (86) I'm afraid that I could not take this job. Because I have part time jobs every Saturday and Sunday morning. [_{F2} I'm *really* sorry.]

By contrast, the use of **Intensifiers** is to specify the degree of necessity for the speaker's being regretful about noncompliance. As the modal adverb *indeed* is inserted in the apology in (62), the validity of the regret proposition held by the speaker is thereby modalized and strengthened. Seen in this light, (86) demonstrates an identical pragmatic function by the adverbial use of *really*. Such qualification of commitment to the factuality of the regret proposition produces the effect that the speaker is making efforts to maintain facework. Due to the firm attitude transmitted by these modal **Intensifiers**, they can be further classified as alethic use within the

scope of the **Epistemic modality**⁴.

To sum up, Chinese learners of English are able to manipulate the **External** and **Internal modification** concomitantly, displaying their ability in operating pragmatic tokens to accomplish the interpersonal encounter. As for **Internal modification**, the use of modal auxiliary is coherent to the extent that across all the formulas epistemic and dynamic modalities are always the main use. Even in the adverbial category, the majority of the modal adverbs learners adopt overwhelmingly falls into the use of *actually* (**Downtoner**) and *really* (**Intensifier**). On the contrary, the application of **External modification** is more subject to variation. Learners would opt for a wide range of semantic formulas to compensate for the face loss in **Head acts**. All the interlanguage evidence in the pragmatic and social levels will be comprehensively discussed in terms of second language learning and teaching aspects in Chapter 5.



⁴ Another category identified by Lyons (1977, p. 791) with regard to modal logic is 'alethic' modality. It is explained by Kartunnen (1972, p.12) that if the speaker believes the truth of the proposition with no doubt, he does not need to illustrate his attitude toward the certainty.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims at synthesizing the interlanguage evidence presented in the previous chapter into the scope of second language learning and teaching. Factors that motivate the interlanguage performance will then be introduced. On the assumption that learners' native language and their learning context can be two influential factors in second language acquisition, the first section in Chapter 5 will probe into how their native language, Mandarin Chinese, affects the English interlanguage in refusal; the second one in Chapter 5 will evaluate the impact their learning context has on their interlanguage production.

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE

The influence of the linguistic and cultural background of nonnative language users on their linguistic performance in a second language has been noted significant in literature (e.g., Wolfson, 1989b; Byon, 2004; Yu, 2004). On account of the distinguishing features in Chinese refusals, the interlanguage characteristics in the semantic formulas as well as the interior linguistic exercise will be inspected along the line of native language transfer in this section. The viewpoint of positive transfer to learners' interlanguage behaviors will be extended first, followed by the interpretation of the nonnative use by learners on the premise of negative transfer.

Positive Transfer

The similarities between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2) of the learner may lead to positive transfer (Blum-Kulka, 1982; House & Kasper, 1987;

Faerch & Kasper, 1989). This is because learners may obtain pragmatic knowledge easily through the meaning-function correspondences between L1 and L2, and these linguistic means can be used in the corresponding L2 contexts with the corresponding effects. In terms of the speech act of refusal under study, Chinese and English indeed bear some resemblances in conducting this face-threatening interaction (Shih, 1986; Liao, 1996; Hsieh & Chen, 2005a; 2005b). When the focus shifts back to the corpus of this thesis, the considerable use of certain semantic formulas and modal forms by Chinese learners of English may derive from transfer from their native language.

In terms of the semantic formulas by Chinese students, the **Excuse (F1)** and **Regret (F2)** formulas are responsible for the mainstream application. This can be attributed to the Chinese way of refusing, where these two formulas are also widely employed. In this regard, learners manage to rely on their pragmatic knowledge of these two formulas in Chinese and directly operate them without many adjustments. Concerning the management of excuses, both the interior and exterior types are favored by Chinese and English native speakers (Hsieh & Chen, 2005b). The Chinese data cited in the following are from the corpus of Hsieh and Chen (2005b), while the English counterparts are from Turnbull and Saxton (1997)⁵. As illustrated in the authentic refusal data by Chinese native speakers in (89) and (90) and those by English native speakers in (91) and (92), the excuses, *I think I am not good enough to take this job* in (87) and *I have to go to cram school every Saturday and Sunday morning* in (88), made by learners in this study exactly fall into the interior and exterior types of excuse. The positive transfer can be inferred from the excuse interior

⁵ The English data of refusals given in this section are cited from Turnbull and Saxton (1997). Following each example, the page and serial numbers are provided in parentheses for convenience of reference. Moreover, the design of the requesting situations in Turnbull and Saxton (1997) was similar to that in this study so the English data are considered compatible. For detailed description of the experiment design, please refer back to Chapter 2.

to one's ability in (89) (i.e., *yinwei wo yingwen bushi hen hao* “because my English is not very good”) and those exterior to the speaker in (90) (i.e., *yinwei jiu keneng yao hui jia* “It's because I may have to go home then”), (91) (i.e., *I might be doin a lab of my own*), and (92) (i.e., *I like have to go pick up my parents from the airport*).

(87) Sorry, *I think I am not good enough to take this job.*

(88) No, *I have to go to cram school every Saturday and Sunday morning.* Sorry.

(89) Keshi zhege wo youkeneng meiyoubanfa,
 but this I may can't
yinwei wo yingwen bushi hen hao.
because I English Neg. very good

“But this I may not be able to do, because my English is not very good.”

(90) *Yinwei jiu keneng yao hui jia.*
because then may have to go home

“It's because I may have to go home then.”

(91) I might be doin a lab of my own at that time. (168:M71)

(92) I think um I like have to go pick up my parents from the airport. (169:M111)

Furthermore, the **Excuse** formulas have been argued to be the most frequently adopted face-saving strategy across all languages since they can function as a type of justification for the targeted speech act (Hassall, 2001). Learners are thereby confident in the use of the **Excuse** formula as a supportive move for the declining intention. This coincidentally corresponds to what Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 189) termed ‘give overwhelming reasons’, whereby learners assert the ‘compelling reasons for doing the FTA’ (viz. face-threatening speech acts such as refusal in this study).

As for the **Regret** formulas in various speech acts, they are universal in maintaining the face want as well (Byon, 2004). By apologizing, learners point out their reluctance to impose the noncompliance on the requester and thereby the imposition of the act of refusing can be eased off. Brown and Levinson (1978, p.189) termed this as ‘beg forgiveness’, by means of which ‘H (hearer) should cancel the debt implicit in the FTA’ and facework can thus be done. Even in learners’ native language, Chinese speakers do likewise in the act of refusing, which can be seen in (95) and (96) given by Hsieh and Chen (2004; 2005b).

(93) *Sorry*, I don’t like to clean the classroom.

(94) *I’m sorry about that* I didn’t take this job because the working time doesn’t suit my schedule.

(95) *Hen baoqian*, wo meiyou yiyuan.
very sorry I no willingness
 “I’m very sorry. I am not willing to (take this job).”

(96) Na wo xian gen ni shuo baoqian haole.
 then I temporarily to you say sorry then
 “Then for the moment let me say sorry to you then.”

In addition, the feasible forms in English either in the lexical level (e.g., *sorry*) or those in the phrasal level (e.g., *I’m sorry*) also account for the popular use of the **Regret** formulas by learners, as in (93) (i.e., *sorry*) and (94) (i.e., *I’m sorry about that...*). Such formal simplicity in apologies can reach the politeness end easily and thereby learners are less likely to be discouraged by considerations of formal complexity in selecting this formula.

Positive transfer also occurs in the case of modality. When it comes to modal forms, epistemic, and dynamic modalities are the most preferred types of **Internal modification**. This is in line with what was found in Hsieh and Chen (2005a) that Chinese epistemic modals were adopted to lower the probability or certainty of the unwanted proposition (i.e., the intended declination or the identified hindrance). Cases of positive transfer of this kind are extracted from the Chinese and English refusal responses in Hsieh and Chen (2005a) for comparison with learners' data in this study:

(97) Sorry, *I think* that my English ability is not good enough to read 8 websites within one hour.

(98) I'm sorry but *I'm afraid* that my writing ability *won't* enable me to do such a job.

(99) a. Jiushi... wo jiari *keneng* jiu mei banfa.
 it is I weekend may then no way
 "It's that... I may not be able to make it on weekends then."

b. I *probably wouldn't* be available, no. (169:M136)

The use of the epistemic modal *keneng* 'may' in (99a) and *probably* and *wouldn't* in (99b) convey the sense of uncertainty toward the proposition of the noncompliance. Other examples include *yinggai* 'probably', *haoxiang* 'seem', and *wo pa* 'I am afraid' in Chinese and *might*, *I'm not sure*, and *I guess* in English. Positive transfer also takes effect in learners interlanguage in the case of epistemic modality, as can be seen in *I think* (97), *I'm afraid*, and the modal auxiliary *won't* in (98).

An additional modal form both widely-adopted in Chinese and English as **Internal modification** is the **Dynamic modality**. Learners in this case most of the

time utilize the subtype that has the interpretation of capacity, which are shown as *can't* in (100). This dynamic modal use also appear in native Chinese and English speakers' data, such as *meibanfa* 'can't' in (101a) and *can't* in (101b).

(100) I'm sorry I *can't*.

(101) a. En... na wo jiu *meibanfa* lei, dui a!
 um well I then can't PART yeah PART
 "Um... well, then I can't. Yeah."
 b. I *can't* make it. (160:S41)

As can be seen from the discussion above, both use of the semantic formulas and that of the modal forms make positive contribution to the facework learners are engaged in. For one thing, they completely echo what has been advanced in the literature that positive transfer is more likely to make the foreign language communication successful (see Chapter 2 in this thesis). For another, the fact that learners substantially manipulate means similar to those in Chinese precisely reflects their attitude toward 'playing safe' (see Hassall, 2003). To put it differently, learners as foreign language communicators seem to worry about the communication breakdown or politeness insufficiency owing to their unsatisfactory language proficiency. Henceforth, they show a marked tendency to use those linguistic strategies they are confident with.

Negative Transfer

Negative transfer tends to derive from the discrepancy between learners' L1 and L2 (Byon, 2004; Yu, 1999; 2004). For the languages at issue, a major difference

between Chinese and English in the act of refusal is that Chinese speakers are prone to applying the ‘off-record’ strategies termed by Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 211-227) (Chapter 2 in this thesis). This exactly contrasts to the ‘on-record’ ones (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 94-95) by which English native speakers mostly employed. Such strategic variance is directly mapped into Chinese students’ use of **Alternative (F5)** and **Avoidance** formulas (**F7**).

In the exertion of alternative proposals, learners manage to attain the purpose of politeness by offering alternative resolutions of the disagreement between interlocutors, or by promising to shift this work opportunity to others. The two-fold operation of alternative formulas is both meant to turn a request into an offer and to make a suggestion into a help. This can bring less imposition to the refuser and thus coherent to the interpersonal harmony by nature. This is exactly what is characterized as one distinctive way of refusing in Chinese, namely, to ‘show goodwill’ in Hsieh and Chen (2005b). Such use of showing good intention also can be found in learners’ data. As in (102) and (103), both propose an alternative by means of the imperative suggestion (i.e., *you can find another potential person* and *Maybe you can find a better employer than me*). Chinese realizations of this refusing style are illustrated as in (104) and (105):

(102) Oh my god, it is too rush to write eight abstracts in an hour. Sorry about inability, *you can find another potential person*.

(103) Sorry about that. I think it’s not the suitable work for me. *Maybe you can find a better employer than me*.

(104) Na... meiguanxi, wo ba zhege jihui rang chulai haole.
Well that’s alright I cause this chance give out then

“Well... that’s alright. I give this chance to others then.”

- (105) Na... wo haishi ba nage gongdu de jihuilu gei
 well I still cause that working Poss. chance leave to
 bieren haole.
 others then

“Well... then I leave this chance of working to others then.”

Another prevalent off-record use emerging in learners’ data corresponds to the **Avoidance** formula, which is subdivided into **Topic switch** and **Postponement**. The former usually directs the hearer’s attention to an inclination toward another job without commenting on the one under discussion, while the latter suggests that for the time being the speaker cannot make the decision so he would like to delay responding to the request. Chinese equivalents of both types of **Avoidance** can be found in (107), (108), (110), and (111) drawn from Hsieh and Chen (2004; 2005b). Learners also manifest both Avoidance use, as in (106) and (109).

- (106) Sorry, I don’t want to take this job *because I want to learn something about how to teach students.*

- (107) *Qingwenyixia chule dasao gongdu hai you qita de ma?*
 excuse me besides cleaning job still there other Poss. Part.

“Excuse me. Besides the cleaning job, are there other jobs?”

(Topic switch)

- (108) *Wo bijiao xiang de shi nimen po zai bibi shangmian de*
 I than like Poss. be you post on BBS on Poss.
lingwai yige e.

another one Part.

“What I prefer is another one you posted on BBS.”

(Topic switch)

(109) *I have to consider it more* because I think it is not like what I originally thought. I have classes in the morning, so maybe it is not appropriate for me.

(110) O...na zheyangzi... keneng...bu tai... bu tai queding

oh then in this case maybe Neg. quite Neg. quite sure

ke bu keyi.

can Neg. can

“Oh...then in this case... maybe... I am not quite... not quite sure if I can.”

(Postponement)

(111) O... zheyangdehua linshi wo ye bu tai zhidao oh

in this case temporarily I also Neg. quite know Part.

yao zeme huida.

should how answer



“Oh...in this case temporarily I don’t quite know how to answer either.”

(Postponement)

Though Chinese students intend these ‘off-record’ refusing strategies as face retrievers, native English interlocutors may perceive them dissimilarly in the phatic level since these are not conventional reactions in English refusals. Misunderstanding may then occur in a conversation where Chinese native speakers speaking English to native English speakers. In the first place, Chinese students’ attempts to show goodwill, to switch topics or to postpone answering may confuse their English converser since the off-record use conflicts with the expectation that there should be a

definite response. The native English listener is probably puzzled about what Chinese students intend to convey and find their responses irrelevant and weird. After the English speaker figures out that these 'off-record' strategies are equal to a rejection, he or she might be annoyed at the thought that he or she has been fooled away quite an amount of time and efforts processing these implicit messages. Chinese students may then risk losing both the conveyance of the illocutionary force and polite intent.

On the whole, the influence of learners' native language is attested in the transfer of their perceptions about how to perform in given situations. Such transfer could affect positively to the extent that the linguistic and cultural correspondences are feasibly and successfully operated. However, negative effects may at times occur when learners choose to use the markers that are plausible at the linguistic level but deviant at a cultural one in the target language. Such cross-linguistic differences are hardly noticed by foreign language learners and thus lead to their non-native like responses or even communication barriers. Seen in this light, understanding between the similarities and variances may contribute to the learning and teaching of speech act communication.

THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING CONTEXT

The learning context has also been empirically proved influential to the interlanguage pragmatic performances (see Kasper & Rose, 200, p.191-235). As an environment for learning a second language, an EFL classroom is less beneficial for developing pragmatic ability in the target language than an ESL one. This study has found that the instruction methods used in an EFL context as in Taiwan are principally responsible for Chinese students' interlanguage faux pas. The first section below will present the pragmatic inadequacy commonly found in Chinese students'

interlanguage refusals. Other deviation including linguistic ossification and formulaic overuse will be introduced in the following two sections.

Pragmatic Inadequacy

The way Chinese students have been taught English may be responsible for the pragmatic inadequacy appearing in their refusal responses. In a traditional EFL learning context, only expressions of propositional meanings are given paramount importance, while little attention is devoted to the conversational situations where the expressions of interpersonal meanings are more crucial. For example, in a face-threatening speech act negotiation such as refusal, the interpersonal meaning should matter more considering the smooth of the communication. However, the traditional EFL instruction emphasizes only the mastery of grammar and semantics, which may make students generalize about the primacy of referential meaning over the interpersonal one. Instances of pragmatic inadequacy found in Chinese learners' data are two-fold as follows.

1. Inappropriate content or expressions for specific semantic formulas:

There are two semantic formulas found in this type of inadequacy. First, the use of the **Excuse** semantic formula is extensively adopted by learners to alleviate the threat of the rejection; however, the faulty realization in its content may be interpreted as the speaker's impatience or upset. For example, learners want to make an excuse that they have found another job, but their response turns out to be a blame for the requester's late notification:

(112) No, I already have a new job. *Your response is too late.*

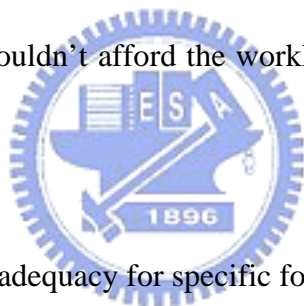
(113) No, *your response is too late for the day I called you.*

Second, the use of the conventional initiative before the refusal, namely, **Positive opinion**, is shown to be conceptually acquired by learners. However, they neglect the corresponding linguistic conventions (i.e., *I would like to*) or they may not even know such linguistic use but create their own way of expressing this concept. Examples are as follows:

(114) *I admit that I do like to do the forming of the websites, but I don't have so much time to finish it in such a short time.*

(115) Sorry. *I know it is quite a good chance for me to practice how to use English.*

But I'm afraid that I couldn't afford the workload. Because I need more time to finish it.



2. Unaware of the pragmatic adequacy for specific forms:

This type of inadequacy can be divided into use of **Want** statements and **Emotional expressions**. The heavy use of **Want** statements by Chinese learners is enacted in order to deliver their negative willingness pertaining to personal desire or needs. Partly motivated by a concern for clarity, learners then opt for the most easily recognized linguistic form pertinent to statements of willingness (i.e., *want/want to*). Illustration of the **Want** use can be found in the **Excuse** formula (e.g., *I don't want to work during weekend*), in the **Performative** formula (e.g., *I want to refuse this job*), and the **Nonperformative** formula (e.g., *actually I don't want this kind of job*). However, the achievement of clarity through the use of the direct **Want** statements here lessens the sense of indirectness, which can actually be attained by conventional

expressions in English such as modal markers.

The other inappropriate use by learners, **Emotional expressions**, may derive from the desire to relinquish their complaints against the weighty imposition of the requests. Being in the right and self-confident position under this demanding situation, learners utter words of strong emotions such as *Oh my god*, *What the hell*, and *This is ridiculous*, which then make them sound rude.

Linguistic Ossification

Traditional EFL instruction should play a decisive role in learners' ossified reaction to the requested event. In a typical EFL classroom, speech acts are introduced mostly with reference to the form-function mapping. Then complete answers combining these forms are mechanically drilled in blind pursuit of a standard answer to a given situation. In the way that speech acts are presented and practiced, learners are probably misled to form conservative formation with constrained linguistic use in every real life situation.

As to the sentential level, learners in this study respond to the request in less flexible patterns such as **Regret – Excuse** or **Regret – Conventional nonperformative – Excuse**. Examples have been represented in (41) to (44). However, native English speakers may not stick to these formulaic combinations but may rather give various types of constructions. Here are some refusal examples solicited from Americans cited in Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and Bakary (2002).

(116) I appreciate the opportunity. (consideration of interlocutor's feelings)

I would like to take it. (suggestion of willingness)

But it's not the best thing for my family right now. (reason)

I will have to turn the offer down. (direct refusal) (AM24)

(117) I can't do it. (direct refusal)

I've got, uh, I've got some o- some things I need to take care of at home.

(reason)

If/uh, it it's any consolation (consideration of interlocutor's feelings)

But I can't do it tonight. (direct refusal) (AM29)

Considering the lexical/phrasal levels, learners seek to minimize the face threat through the interior modal means. The collocation of these modal means invariably conforms to the pattern that the **Epistemic modality** (e.g., *I think*, *I'm afraid* and *maybe*) is prior to the dynamic one (e.g., *can* and *can't*). Examples reflecting this composition can be found in (74), (75), (80), (82) and (83). By contrast, native speakers of English would deploy modals as Internal modification with more capricious choices of words rather than adhere to limited use of *I think*, *maybe* and *can*. Take the examples given by in Turnbull and Saxton (1997) from (120) to (123) for comparison with learners' data as in (118) and (119).

(118) No, I think I wouldn't. *I'm afraid* that I'm not a qualified assistant.

(119) I'm sorry but *I'm afraid* that my writing ability *won't* enable me to do such a job.

(120) I *guess I'll have to* say no. (epistemic, deontic) (168:M39)

(121) I'm *probably going to have to* pass on this one. (epistemic, deontic)
(168:M153)

(122) I *don't think I'll be able* to make it. (epistemic, deontic) (169:M125)

(123) I *believe* I'm busy on that day. (epistemic) (168:M62)

Formulaic Repeatability

The mechanical training of form-function matching and complete answer giving in the EFL traditional learning context does not equip students with comprehensive ability in dealing with social encounters. In the speech act of refusal, where face is usually threatened, learners would then look for compensation strategies (e.g., **Excuse** formula or other **External modification**) for the sake of communication needs. As university-level students who are at least competent in producing complete sentences, they may call for the compensation strategies in an excessive manner to conceal their insecurity as a non-native speaker. Wherefore they show the tendency to overuse the semantic formulas.

Chinese learners in this study heavily modify their refusal with prolonged and over-explicit use of semantic formulas, in particular the use of the **Excuse**. In (111), the second grounder (i.e., *so that I'm afraid that I can do this job well*) clearly gives a justifiable effect as an **External modification**. This makes the first piece of grounder (i.e., *as you know, this semester, I've taken lots of credits*) redundant and less effective than the second one. By using multiple excuses and causing semantic repeat, an over-explicit effect is found in learners' responses. Moreover, the formulaic overuse can also be evidenced in the rather frequent use of discourse markers such as *however* in (112) and *as you know* and *so that* in (111).

- (124) [F₃ Actually, I really want to take this job for my first consideration.] Well, *however*, [F₁ *as you know*, this semester, I've taken lots of credits] [F₁ *so that* I'm afraid that I can do this job well.]
- (125) [F₃ I'd like to take this position to clear classrooms.] *However*, [F₁ my schedule on the weekend is really full.] [F₅ I'm afraid you need to find someone to

replace me.]

Another factor that may contribute to the repeat of the **Excuse** semantic formula lies in its pragmatic transparency in politeness function (Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001). The supplement of grounders as **External modification** is easier than the insertion of modal conventions, which usually requires tense and verb adjustments. A further putative explanation to the heavy use of excuses goes to learners' lack of confidence in making themselves understood, which thereby calls for lengthy **External modification** as a type of reparation (Hassall, 2001).

In effect, the repeatability and over-explicitness of semantic formulas may result in negative communicative effects. By providing more information than what is needed for the occasion, learners may face the risk of causing harm to the intended illocutionary force and to the hearers' expectation of a clear answer to the request. In other words, parts of such a reply might be perceived by the hearer as irrelevant and thus might weaken the force of the speech act. Such deviant response may then lead to pragmatic inappropriateness or even pragmatic failure in foreign language communication.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

This thesis has analyzed the interlanguage refusal produced by Chinese learners of English from Taiwan universities and has investigated the motivating factors of their interlanguage performance. The main findings are summarized as follows:

1. The use of semantic formula in learners' refusal manifests interlanguage evidence in terms of its quantity, order, and length as well as the use of external and internal modification.
2. In the quantitative aspect, the **Excuse** formula (**F1**) occurs most often, followed by the use of **Regret** (**F2**), **Adjunct** (**F3**), and **Conventional nonperformative** (**F4**). (See Table 1 in Chapter 4)
3. In the order aspect, the sequence of **Regret – Excuse** (**O1**) has the most occurrences, followed by that of **Regret – Conventional – Excuse** (**O4**). (See Table 2 in Chapter 4)
4. In the length aspect, the extensive use of excuses and the diverse combination of multiple semantic formulas are responsible for the verbosity of the interlanguage production. (See Table 3 in Chapter 4)
5. The **External modification** is considerably exercised by the use of non-head-acts, while the **Internal modification** is employed with little variation in the use of **Epistemic** and **Dynamic** modalities.
6. One motivating factor is the influence of native language, where the positive transfer of the **Excuse** and **Regret** formulas as well as the **Epistemic** and **Dynamic** modalities is more likely to lead to communication success, whereas the negative transfer of the **Alternative** and **Avoidance** formulas may lead to pragmatic failure.
7. Another factor is the influence of the learning context where the traditional teaching method emphasizes the form-function mapping. This can be responsible

for the negative pragmatic force exemplified by the inadequate use of the **Excuse**, **Positive opinion**, **Emotional expression**, and **Want statement** formula. The linguistic ossification in modal use and the formulaic repeatability in **Excuse** may also be attributed to the teaching effect.

APPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

In an attempt to provide viable applications of the interlanguage research, we provide a teaching approach and some instructional guidelines for the speech act pedagogy based on the findings in this thesis.

Though there should be pluricausal explanation for the interlanguage pragmatics phenomena (see Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996), the results in this study highlights an important role of certain potential causes, namely, the negative transfer effect of L1, the negative impact of formal instruction, and learners' social-psychological concern for their incompetence to convey meaning clearly. These influences remind the foreign language instructors of the following three types of interlanguage tendency: (1) the inclined transfer of social values in Chinese culture; (2) the ossified behaviors of certain linguistic devices; (3) the repeat of semantic formulas.

In light of these findings, one possible template for teaching the speech act of refusal is offered. The teaching approach is divided into four phases.

Phase 1: raising awareness

There are four steps in this phase. First, students are invited to share what stereotypes they hold toward the way Westerners refuse. Learners may typically identify Westerners' acts of refusal as rude and direct since Westerners are seen to express their emotions candidly in comparison with Chinese, who normally prefer

oblique reference to refusal intention. The teacher then directs this pragmatic difference to different realizations of cultural norms. Next, authentic video clips of TV series or sitcoms may be used to present the target speech act due to their abundant contextual information (Koike, 1995; Soler, 2005). By watching videos, students can observe how native English speakers cope with face-threatening social contexts. After students discuss the plot, the teacher should explain the conventional Western facework to students.

Phase 2: acquiring expressions

In order to perform the speech act of refusal more amenably, sufficient linguistic repertoire is basically needed in response to an unexpected face-damaging situation. Otherwise learners' remarkable repetitiveness in certain linguistic behaviors may not be able to deal with some abrupt social settings. One way to offer students linguistic input is to make them reconstruct the conversations they watch in the video. Another is to encourage them to learn the new and unfamiliar expressions appearing in the scripts.

Phase 3: making production

After awareness-raising and expression-acquiring tasks suggested above, the teacher could prepare role plays or other communicative activities that give learners the opportunity to practice interaction with the enactment of the newly-learned linguistic strategies in refusing a request. As students have better control of the linguistic strategies to complete the target act, the teacher could expose them to more advanced linguistic devices. In a step-by-step manner, students are encouraged to apply the acquired strategies or expressions as many as they can in the simulation

activity. As a facilitator, the teacher only monitors the students in the interaction practice and wrap up the activity by providing overall comments.

Phase 4: giving feedback

As the production phase is finished, a group discussion is held in which the class examines the speech act production to see whether there is nonnative or inappropriate force resulting from the overuse of **External modification** (since this is an identified nonnative characteristic). Students are also invited to comment on how they feel about ‘acting in an American way’. The teacher at this point suggests that students need to distinguish between what they need to know about the target culture and how they are expected to behave in that culture. The feedback discussion leads to students’ understanding that learning to speak in a foreign language is not a matter of simply adopting foreign norms of culture, but one of finding an acceptable accommodation between their first culture and the target culture.

Such instructional intervention is designed to help Chinese students in both the lexical/phrasal level as well as the social/pragmatic level of use. Due to the design that the tasks are conducted within the framework of communication, both students and the teacher can benefit at most. For students in need of communicative competence development, their awareness of cultural differences is raised so as to make students to notice the different social characteristics between L1 and L2. Their communicative competence can be further enhanced by relatively increasing variation in the manipulation of linguistic markers. For foreign language teachers, this teaching approach can provide a clear direction toward the goal of teaching communicative strategies rather than the rigid memorization of linguistic forms.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the present study, we revealed the interlanguage pragmatic evidence in the speech act of refusal in English as a second language by Chinese students. We also discussed the factors of native language and learning contexts that motivate their interlanguage use. Based on these findings, we further proposed a teaching approach that hopefully would foster the teaching of social and pragmatic abilities in an EFL context such as Taiwan. Nevertheless, there are still points worthy of further investigation in future interlanguage research.

First, the methodology employed, namely, the Discourse Completion Test, has its limitation in representing the authentic and naturally-occurring verbal reply since all the responses are in the written form. In order to capture more representative data, oral forms of elicitation technique such as role plays can be applied in further study. Next, the designed situation for the elicitation of the refusal data can be expanded. Other situational stimulus such as an invitation or an offer may also be included to help language educators gain a more comprehensive understanding of the act of refusing. Third, since factors such as distance and status between two interlocutors may be social parameters in the realization of refusal, an investigation on how these social factors affect interlanguage use should be explored. Finally, further investigation on the developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics may be worth pursuing grounded on the qualitative analysis of Chinese students' interlanguage performance in this thesis.

APPENDIX A: DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you very much for your willingness to answer this questionnaire. Your responses will only be used anonymously in my research on English refusals. Please read the following two situations and write what you would say on the space provided if you were in each of these situations. Please write your **intuitive** responses **in exactly the way you would say them in oral conversations**. Please refrain from reviewing your answer to correct grammar.

You email a teaching assistant to sign up for a position of short-term assistant. Then she phones to tell you what the job is about.



Situation 1

You are required to **clean classrooms** in a school building from 7 to 10 every Saturday and Sunday morning during the whole semester. If you do not want to take this position after knowing its demanding workload, what would you say to the teaching assistant?

TA: *Would you like to take this job?*

You: _____

Situation 2

You are required to **read and write introductions** to over 200 English learning websites. Eight websites need to be finished within one hour. If you do not want to take this position after knowing its demanding workload, what would you say to the teaching assistant?

TA: *Would you like to take this job?*

You: _____



Finally, the following information will greatly aid my comparison of different social groups. Thank you again for your kind patience in contributing these valuable data to my research.

Age:	_____ 10~20	_____ 20~30	_____ 30~40
	_____ 40~50		
Gender:	_____ Male	_____ Female	
Major:	_____		

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY TABLE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Characteristics of the Participants	School		
	NCTU	NTUT	NTU
Male	7	10	3
Female	25	59	26
Age Range	10-30	10-30	10-30



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