

**A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMPLIMENTS AND
RESPONSES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

ZHAO JIAN XIANG

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2013

**A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN
COMPLIMENTS AND RESPONSES OF CHINESE
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

ZHAO JIAN XIANG

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND
LINGUISTICS UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

2013

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: **Zhao Jianxiang**

(I.C/Passport No: **G30851993**)

Registration/Matric No: **TGB100026**

Name of Degree: **Master of English as a Second Language**

Title of ~~Project Paper~~/ Research Report/ ~~Dissertation~~/Thesis (“this work”):

A Study of Gender Differences in Compliments and Responses of Chinese International Students

Field of Study: **Sociolinguistics**

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work;
- (2) This Work is original;
- (3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
- (4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
- (5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya (“UM”), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
- (6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate’s Signature

Date:

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness’s Signature

Date:

Name: **Dr. Wang Xiaomei**

Designation: **Supervisor**

ABSTRACT

As a positive speech act, compliments and compliment responses play an important role as a polite speech act in activities of daily verbal communication. Incorporating the questionnaires survey and theories in pragmatics and sociolinguistic views of gender differences in language, this study investigated the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses. Twelve situations were set in the questionnaire to investigate the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses used by Chinese international male and female students in University of Malaya (UM). Among them, six situations are about compliments, and six situations are about compliment responses.

The study was carried out through the use of questionnaire which was adapted from Lorenzo-Dus' (2001). This study obtained 269 compliments and 360 compliment responses which were given by 60 Chinese international students (30 males and 30 females) who were selected from different faculties in University of Malaya (UM). The findings are as follows: (1) In terms of making compliments, Chinese international students tend to give compliment to others and females use more explicit compliments than males, while males use more implicit, non-compliment and no response strategy. (2) In terms of responding compliments from the others, Chinese international students prefer acceptance strategy to rejection strategy. Females use acceptance and combination strategy more than males, while males use more non-acceptance, acceptance with amendment, and no response strategy than females. Under the guidance of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, compliment and compliment response strategies are discussed in terms of Politeness Principle, Face

Theory, and Sociolinguistic views of gender differences in language. It is concluded that the western culture influences Chinese international students' employment of pragmatic strategies, which are mostly a compromise under the guidance by Universal Politeness Theories and Chinese socio-cultural context.

The gender differences in compliments and compliment responses among Chinese international students not only reflect Chinese traditional culture and different roles males and females play in the societies, but also show the different viewpoints about the function of compliment behavior.

ABSTRAK

Sebagai lakuan bahasa yang positif, pujian dan tindak balas pujian memainkan peranan yang penting sebagai lakuan bahasa yang sopan dalam aktiviti komunikasi verbal seharian. Dengan menggunakan tinjauan soal selidik, teori pragmatik dan pandangan sosiolinguistik tentang perbezaan gender dalam penggunaan bahasa, kajian ini meninjau perbezaan gender dalam penggunaan pujian dan tindak balas pujian. Sebanyak 12 situasi telah ditetapkan dalam borang soal selidik untuk meninjau perbezaan gender dalam penggunaan pujian dan tindak balas pujian dalam kalangan pelajar antarabangsa lelaki dan perempuan dari China di Universiti Malaya(UM). Di antara institusi tersebut, enam institusi adalah berkaitan dengan pujian, dan enam institusi berkaitan dengan tindakbalas pujian.

Kajian ini telah dijalankan dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik yang diadaptasikan daripada Lorenzo-Dus'(2001). Kajian ini telah mengumpulkan 269 pujian dan 360 tindak balas pujian daripada 60 orang pelajar antarabangsa dari China (30 lelaki dan 30 perempuan) yang dipilih daripada fakulti yang berbeza di Universiti Malaya(UM). Dapatan kajian adalah seperti berikut: (1) Daripada segi memberi pujian, pelajar antarabangsa dari China berkecenderungan memberi pujian kepada orang lain; pelajar perempuan menggunakan lebih banyak pujian eksplisit berbanding pelajar lelaki sementara pelajar lelaki menggunakan lebih banyak strategi implisit, strategi bukan pujian dan strategi tiada tindak balas. (2) Daripada segi tindak balas kepada pujian, pelajar antarabangsa dari China lebih suka strategi penerimaan berbanding strategi penolakan. Pelajar perempuan menggunakan lebih banyak strategi penerimaan dan strategi kombinasi berbanding pelajar

lelaki sementara pelajar lelaki menggunakan lebih banyak strategi bukan penerimaan, strategi penerimaan dengan pembetulan, dan strategi tiada tindak balas berbanding pelajar perempuan. Berpandukan bidang pragmatik dan sociolinguistik, strategi pujian dan strategi tindak balas pujian dibincangkan daripada segi Prinsip Kesopanan, Teori Muka, dan pandangan sociolinguistik tentang perbezaan gender dalam penggunaan bahasa. Dapat disimpulkan bahawa budaya barat telah mempengaruhi penggunaan strategi pragmatik dalam kalangan pelajar antarabangsa dari China, ia merupakan satu kompromi berpandukan teori-teori kesopanan universal dan konteks sosiobudaya orang Cina.

Perbezaan gender dalam penggunaan pujian dan tindak balas pujian dalam kalangan pelajar antarabangsa dari China bukan saja menggambarkan budaya tradisional orang Cina dan perbezaan peranan yang dimainkan orang lelaki dan perempuan dalam masyarakat, ia juga menunjukkan perbezaan pandangan tentang fungsi penggunaan pujian.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes first and foremost to my respectable supervisor Dr. Wang Xiaomei, for her judicious guidance, insightful suggestions, kind patience and unfailing encouragement. During the process of writing this paper, it is she who provided me immeasurable help on all the matters, such as modifying my research report carefully, spending time discussing paper issues together, lending me useful references, etc. Her comments, as always, have been invaluable, and any remaining errors and shortcomings are entirely mine.

Secondly, I am sincerely grateful to my beloved family members for their consistent encouragement and various support during my postgraduate phase in University of Malaya (UM), Malaysia. Studying abroad for two years would attribute to their trust and open mind, which is also a paramount and unforgettable experience in my whole life.

Thirdly, I appreciate those Chinese international students participating in the study and help me to collect data.

Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all my best friends and classmates for their selfless help and lasting support. They are Den Yun, Li Yongqing and Ng Peifang.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ABSTRAK.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background.....	1
1.2 Objectives of the Study	3
1.3 Research Questions	3
1.4 Hypothesis.....	4
1.5 Significance of the Study	4
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	5
1.7 The Main Structure of the Study.....	6
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Intrduction.....	8
2.1.1 Speech Act Theory	8
2.1.2 Face Theory and Politeness Principle.....	11
2.1.3 Sociolinguistic Views on Gender Differences in Language.....	15
2.2 Previous Studies on Compliments and Compliment Responses.....	17

2.2.1 The Definition of Compliment and Compliment Response	17
2.2.2 Compliment Functions	18
2.2.3 Compliment Formulas	20
2.2.4 Compliment Topics	22
2.2.5 Previous Studies on Gender Differences in Compliments and Compliment Responses	23
CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	30
3.1 Theoretical Framework	30
3.1.1 Ye's (1995) Classification of Compliment Strategies	30
3.1.2 The Classification of Compliment Response Strategies.....	31
3.2 Subjects	34
3.3 Instrument.....	37
3.4 Pilot Study.....	39
3.5 Data Collection.....	40
3.6 Data Analysis	40
CHAPTER FOUR GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLIMENT RESPONSES.....	42
4.1 Gender Differences in Compliments	42
4.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Formulas	44
4.2.1 Gender Differences in Lexical Patterns	44
4.2.2 Gender Differences in Syntactic Patterns	47
4.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies.....	49
4.3.1 Compliment Strategies in Overall Situations.....	54
4.3.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies.....	52
4.3.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies by Topic.....	53
4.4 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies	55
4.4.1 Compliment Response Strategies in Overall Situations	55
4.4.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies.....	58

4.4.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies by Topic	59
4.5 Discussion of Findings.....	61
4.5.1 Social-structural Perspective	61
4.5.2 Social-psychological Perspective	62
4.5.3 Social-cultural Perspective	64
4.5.4 Traditional Chinese Culture Perspective	67
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION	70
5.1 Major Findings of the Study	70
5.2 Implications of the Study	73
5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies	74
REFERENCES.....	79
APPENDIX.....	83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Basic Personal Information of the Subjects.....	42
Table 3.2: Summary of Situations on Compliments.....	44
Table 3.3: Summary of Situations on Compliment Responses.....	44
Table 4.1: Gender-based Distribution of Compliments.....	48
Tabel 4.2: Distribution of Positive Lexical Carriers in Overall Situations.....	51
Tabel 4.3: Distribution of Positive Lexical Carriers in Compliments by Gender.....	53
Tabel 4.4: Distribution of Syntactic Patterns in Compliments by Gender	54
Tabel 4.5: Distribution of Compliment Strategies.....	55
Tabel 4.6: Distribution of Compliment Strategies by Gender.....	58
Tabel 4.7: Distribution of Topics for Compliment Strategies by Gender.....	59
Tabel 4.8: Distribution of Compliment Response Strategies.....	61
Tabel 4.9: Distribution of Compliment Response Strategies by Gender.....	64
Tabel 4.10: Distribution of Topics for Compliment Response Strategies by Gender...	65

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Adj.	Adjectives
Adv.	Adverb
N	Noun
V	Verb
UM	University of Malaya

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Speech act is an important research field in pragmatics. Since the 1970s, linguists and pragmatists have paid more attention to the study of speech act behaviors, such as, apology, request, recommendation, compliment and compliment response, and so on. Compliment behavior is a worthwhile subject for sociolinguistic research which occurs frequently in our daily life. It plays a significant communicative role and serves to establish, consolidate and promote interpersonal relationships (Holmes, 1988). A proper complimenting behavior can make people feel closer. Compliment behavior often occurs with compliment response as a pair. In other words, the recipient has to respond to other people's compliment whether he/she would like to accept or reject the compliment. The uses and responses to a certain compliment vary due to the social elements and individual characters. Different cultural customs, communicative topics, social power and gender will affect the use and response to compliment. There are a great variety of studies on compliments and compliment responses in western countries in the last two to three decades (Pomerantz, 1978; Wolfson, 1981; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1990), most of which are about native English speakers. There are only a few studies on compliment behaviors in other languages, such as Chinese, German and Japanese. (Zuo, 1988; Chen, 1993; Ye, 1995; Guo, 1996; Yoko, 2003; Golota, 2002)

In 1980s, a new branch of pragmatics which called inter-language pragmatics appeared. The word “inter-language” was proposed by Selinker (1972), and it referred to the target language that a second language learner had learnt during the second language learning. Kasper (1989) defined the research on the usage and acquisition of linguistic action patterns by non-native speakers in a second language as the concept of inter-language pragmatics. The study of inter-language pragmatics is a sub-field in inter-language studies.

Many scholars have done many works on inter-language pragmatics, and most of them investigate the differences between native speakers and the second language learners, especially on the usage and understanding of speech act behaviors and their level of politeness (Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Ellis, 1997). Few researches have been conducted to explore the differences of compliments and compliment responses between males and females and to find out the reasons for such differences amongst the second language learners, especially for Chinese English learners who are studying aboard. Moreover, few researches have been conducted to investigate the formation of the second language learners’ pragmatics ability and how those second language learners can improve their pragmatics ability, especially for Chinese English learners.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Synthesizing the strength of the previous studies, the purposes of the current study are as follows:

- 1) To explore the differences in compliments and compliment responses between the Chinese international male and female students in University of Malaya (UM).
- 2) To find out and explain the reason of such differences in compliments and compliment responses between the Chinese international male and female students within the theoretical framework of Speech Act Theory, Face Theory, Politeness Principle and Sociolinguistic views of gender differences in language.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the researcher formulates two research questions as follows:

- 1) What are the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses amongst the Chinese international students in University of Malaya (UM)?
- 2) Why are there such differences in compliments and compliment responses between Chinese international male and female students?
- 3) How to interpret these gender differences from the sociolinguistic perspective?

1.4 Hypothesis

Based on the previous literature, the hypothesis of this study is that the Chinese international students have different compliment and compliment response patterns. Gender does affect the adoption of compliments and compliment responses. The hypothesis is shown as follows:

- 1) Female students have greater tendency to give and accept compliments than male students.
- 2) Gender differences of the interlocutors affect the adoption of compliment and compliment response strategies.
- 3) The Face Theory, Politeness Principle, Sociolinguistic views of gender differences in language and Chinese traditional culture can be the explanation of gender differences in compliments and compliment responses among Chinese international students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study shows its significance in the following aspects. Firstly, this study fills the research gap in the field of compliments and compliment responses by investigating Chinese second language learners in Malaysia. Secondly, the studies which have done before shown that compliments and compliment responses were influenced by both sociolinguistic and linguistic norms of behavior. As a positive speech act behavior,

compliments and compliment responses play an important role in daily verbal communications.

This study widens the application scope of current sociolinguistic and linguistic theory. It suggests that gender-based linguistic variations exist not only at the lexical and syntactic level, but also at the pragmatic level. Thirdly, this study provides a valuable insight into speakers' reaction by paying attention to compliments and compliment responses. It aims to explore external evaluations of their social and personal identity. Last but not least, it is very crucial for second language learners to give appropriate compliment and respond to people's compliments properly. So, the research on compliments and compliment responses behaviors can help teachers know how to teach students and make second language learners know how to learn and use them in their daily life. Therefore, it can facilitate the teaching process as well as improve students' communicative competence and prevent misunderstanding.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study is to investigate the differences in compliments and compliment responses between the Chinese international male and female students in University of Malaya (UM). The subjects in this study are from mainland China, all of them are students of University of Malaya (UM). The topics in the questionnaire focus on two types, clothing/appearance and ability/accomplishment. The topics on

clothing/appearance refer to the person's facial features or looks, including haircuts, clothing and hairstyle and the topics on ability/accomplishment refer to "the addressee's skill or achievement such as: a skillfully played game, a good meal and a well-done job" (Manes, 1983, p. 101).

There are only 60 subjects in this study. All subjects are college students who are from mainland China. This sample is relatively small. Therefore, they cannot reflect the attitudes of all Chinese international students towards compliments and compliment responses. The focus of the current study is to investigate the relationship between two variables, namely, gender and compliments and compliment responses. There is no attempt to investigate the effect of other variables on compliments and compliment responses, such as status, age, the length of staying in Malaysia, English proficiency, and academic level, educational and cultural background.

1.7 The Main Structure of the Study

This study is composed of five chapters. Chapter One starts with a general introduction of the whole study. This chapter contains six sections: research background, objectives, research questions, scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study and the main structure of the study. In Chapter Two, firstly, the researcher reviews the theoretical basis which is used in this study, such as Speech Act Theory, Face Theory, Politeness Principle and Sociolinguistic views of gender difference in language. Secondly, the researcher reviews the studies which have been done by researchers on

compliments and compliment responses earlier. The researcher provides a detailed review of previous studies which are done by researchers on gender differences of compliments and compliment responses in the past few decades. In Chapter Three, the researcher introduces the research design of the study which includes the theoretical framework, subjects, instrument, pilot study, data collection and data analysis. In Chapter Four, the researcher reports the findings of the research and divides the findings into compliment aspect and compliment response aspect; it aims to give a more detailed discussion of compliments and compliment responses through data analysis. The researcher discusses the results with some relevant theories and explains the reasons for differences between Chinese international male and female students in compliments and compliment responses from the sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspective. The last chapter summarizes the current study, the findings of the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses amongst Chinese international students in University of Malaya (UM). Implications of the study and some suggestions for future research are provided in the end.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, firstly, the researcher reviews some important theories related to the study, such as Speech Act Theory, Face Theory and Politeness Principle, Sociolinguistic Views of Gender Differences in Language. All these theories are the theoretical basis of this study. Then the researcher provides a detailed review of previous studies on gender differences of compliments and compliment responses in the past few decades.

2.1.1 Speech Act Theory

Speech act refers to all things we do with words when we speak to others (Austin, 1962). Speech act theory is a theory which analyzes the role of utterances in relation to the behavior of the interlocutors in verbal communication. It is the first major theory in pragmatics. It has a philosophical origin with J. Austin who suggests that people not only use words to say things, they use word to do things as well. According to Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962), people are performing various kinds of acts when they are speaking with the utterances. They may apologize, suggest, order, compliment, request and so forth.

The speakers perform three acts in most cases when they are making an utterance: 1) an illocutionary act 2) a perlocutionary act 3) a locutionary act. Among them, the illocutionary act becomes the central issue of most concern. It is an act performed in saying something and identified by the explicit performance via the communicative force of an utterance. The basic utterance is the locutionary act; it produces a meaningful linguistic expression. It is the act of saying something in the full sense of “say”. The perlocutionary act is the act concerning the result of saying and involving many psychological and social factors.

Austin (1962) proposed the three acts mode: illocutionary act, locutionary act and perlocutionary act. Among them, the illocutionary act is recognized as a kind of behavior implement through speaking to others. People can do many things through speaking to achieve purposes, such as transmit information, give commands, threaten, greetings. ‘Compliment’ is a kind of behavior which refer to expressing one’s praise or admire towards something.

For developing and perfecting the speech act theory, Searle (1975) proposed indirect speech act. Indirect speech act is an alternative through the implementation of indirect speech acts to implement a certain kind of illocutionary act. Searle (1975) divided indirect speech act into two aspects, namely non-conventional indirect speech act and conventional indirect speech act. Then he pointed out that the basis of speakers and

listeners to express or understand indirect speech act can be classified into four principles: the common background (including verbal and non-language); listener's understanding and reasoning capabilities; speech act theory and general principles of cooperation session. Searle's theory of indirect speech act develops Austin's speech act theory, and combines the speech acts theory with Grice's theory of conversational implicature, which closely links with the principle of appropriateness, especially the politeness principle.

Searle (1976), based on the criticism of Austin's (1962) classification, tried to classify speech acts. Searle identified the twelve sides of mutual differences among different speech acts. The three most important three differences were: 1) direction of fit 2) illocutionary point 3) expressed psychological state. With these three sides as the main foundation, Searle divided the illocutionary act into the following five categories: 1) Expressives 2) Declarations 3) Representatives 4) Directives 5) Commissives.

Compliments belong to the category of "Expressives" since they are used to express positive meaning to create or maintain rapport and to please the hearers. The speech act theory has been influential not only in linguistic and philosophical field, but also in cross-cultural research and foreign language teaching and learning.

2.1.2 Face Theory and Politeness Principle

Face theory is the continuation and development of the politeness theory. It combines sociology and psychology together which has a more convincing force of explanation. Politeness has its own relativity in different cultures, thus we should analysis the phenomenon of the politeness behavior under a particular cultural context.

Brown & Levinson (1978) showed that politeness is a variety of rational behaviors which the model person takes to meet the face. Modern people regard the “face” as a public self-image which every citizen wants to maintain a good impression for himself in the society. “Face” can be classified into two aspects: negative face and positive face. The freedom of autonomy that people do not want others to impose on them is called negative face; they do not want to lose face by compromise with others or the interference and obstruction of others. Positive face refers to the hope that people can get other people’s recognition, be liked by others hold the same position with others.

Brown & Levinson (1978) showed that many speech acts are essentially the threat of face, the use of politeness strategies in speech communication is to alleviate the threats of losing face by some behaviors. Moreover, in order to achieve better communication purpose, speaker should not only respect the listener’s positive face but also take care of the negative face, thus people can give each other some face and earn some face for themselves to meet each other’s demand of face. They also considered the severity of

face threatening acts related to three elements: relative power, social distance and absolute ranking of imposition. They proposed five redressing strategies to mitigate the severity of face threatening acts: bald on record without redressing actions, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record and do not do the face threatening acts.

According to Brown & Levinson (1978), complimenting as a kind of positive politeness strategy, it aims to address the hearer's positive face, to signal the compliment giver's noticing and to attend to the compliment receiver's interests and needs. When you compliment a Western person, he/she may respond happily with "*thank you very much*" to satisfy your positive face. For example, when you say "*I love your dress*" to your female colleague, you want to improve her appearance and to share her values of what constitutes a beautiful "*dress*". By doing so, you make her "feel good and happy". Your compliment saves her positive face on appearance. Although appearance is a crucial component in female's self-image all over the world, sometimes, the compliment giver will feel that threat their positive face. Under this situation, to decline or answer it indirectly may save one's faces. E.g. A: *You did a good job.* B: *It is nothing.*

However, when people want to satisfy others' negative face, they often request with apologies to satisfy other's negative face. For example, "*I am very sorry to disturb you, but I do not know how to use this printer. Could you help me to print my homework?*"

Here, an apology which makes it easier for the addressee to accept the request. It can be seen as a negative politeness strategy.

Gu (1992) showed the concept of 'li' and he believed that 'li' can explain the phenomenon of Chinese politeness in modern China. The traditional meaning of 'li' in Chinese, is to emphasize the respect for others and modesty for oneself. In Gu's (1992) point of view 'limao', which contains four elements can explain the Chinese concept of 'limao': refinement, modesty, attitudinal warmth and respectfulness. 'Refinement' refers to behavior of oneself to others which meets certain standards. "Modesty" is the way of saying 'self-denigration'; 'attitudinal warmth' refers to self's demonstration of consideration, hospitality and kindness to others. Finally, 'Respectfulness' refers to positive appreciation to others and self's admiration. In Gu's (1992) point of view, the four elements which mentioned above is not necessary co-occur to constitute 'limao'. Any behavior, which highlights one of them, will be regarded as polite behavior.

Gu (1990) explained the five politeness maxims respectively. These maxims are 1) the self-denigration Maxim 2) the Address Maxim 3) the Tact Maxim 4) the Refinement Maxim 5) the Generosity Maxim. To criticize oneself and respect the other is the center of the modern concept of 'limao'. Here the self-denigration maxim will state in the following way: two sub-maxims belong to the self-denigration maxim; (a) denigrate oneself and (b) elevate the other. It includes the idea of modesty and respectfulness. The

breach of sub-maxim--denigrating other is considered as being rude or impolite. The breach of sub maxim--elevating oneself is regarded as being boasting or arrogant.

Gu (1990) also found that there are some differences between the concept of negative face which was defined by Brown & Levinson and the Chinese concept of negative face. For instance, a Chinese speaker would persist in inviting a hearer to have lunch even though that the hearer has already clearly says his/her desire that he/she does not need it. The speaker who does this kind of acts will be considered as not intrinsically impeding, but showing politeness. The speaker's persistence in the hearer's accepting the invitation functions as good evidence of the speaker's sincerity. However, this kind of invitations is threatening the hearer's negative face.

Gu (1996) showed that the use of politeness norms in Chinese have changed to some extent. For instance, when people accept compliments from others, they will not respond with extra self-denigration, nor accept it immediately. However, they will turn down indirectly or directly or accept on the basis of the compliment content or the specific situation. Gu (1996) made a comparison of Brown & Levinson's, Leech's politeness theories and Gu's Chinese politeness principles and drew the conclusions 1) Respecting others and denigrating self in China is regarded as the modesty and politeness acts, while western people would like to accept the compliments directly with 'thanks'. 2) One feature of Chinese politeness is addressing Maxim. 3) Refinement is

shared both in English and Chinese with various expressions. It can be seen as a type of politeness phenomenon. 4) Politeness is closely related to ‘face’, while there is a certain disparate expressing and understanding on the basis of different cultural backgrounds. 5) The relation between privacy and politeness is different in both English and Chinese. 6) The relation between individualism and politeness is different in both English and Chinese.

So far, Gu’s Politeness Principle and Brown & Levinson’s Face Theory have been reviewed, while there are some different points on whether these theories are adequate enough to elaborate on Chinese Politeness. Finally, they provide the fundamental framework of the study for observing compliments and compliment responses in the English context and for explaining and depicting the reasons for the use of linguistic strategies in compliments and compliment responses amongst the Chinese international students.

2.1.3 Sociolinguistic Views on Gender Differences in Language

The subject of gender differences research is very common all around the world. Many scholars have discussed the reasons of the existence of gender differences from different disciplines (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Crawford, 1995). Some of them focus on the relationship between language and gender. For years sociolinguists have done various efforts to find a reasonable explanation for the behavior differences between men and

women. Many articles put forward reasonable explanation of the various views, such as male domination view, cultural differences view and social structure view.

Scholars (Maltz & Booker, 1982; Crawford, 1995) who hold the concept of male domination considered the male domination as the reason for the language and behavior differences between men and women, and in turn, the language and behavior differences would guarantee the male domination in society. Maltz & Borker (1982) hold the concept of cultural differences and considered the gender differences as a kind of cultural differences, the communication between men and women as a kind of intercultural communication. These two views have their own disadvantages: male dominance view only emphasized the male domination, without noticing the fact that the social status of women will affect women's language use; cultural differences view only emphasized the cultural differences between men and women, but totally ignored the influence of men and women's language use towards their social status.

Crawford (1995) first proposed social structure view. It is a new perspective to explain the relationship between languages and gender. He considered that a complete understanding of language differences between men and women must be placed in specific social culture environment. That is to say, the differences between male and female language behavior can only be understood in specific social cultured environment. The female affiliate, the male domination and cultural differences can

only be explained in certain social environment. Language and cultural differences are actually the reflection of social cultural differences.

2.2 Previous Studies on Compliments and Compliment Responses

Since 1970s, western linguists and scholars have done a lot of researches on compliments and compliment responses. They have achieved a lot of research findings, such as articles, books, journals and so on (Pomerantz, 1978; Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1983; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1989; Herbert, 1990). These scholars and researchers have collected a mass of compliment cases from people's daily lives, and then analyzed those linguistic data into two aspects: qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. These researches of compliments can be divided into several aspects: compliment functions, compliment formulas, compliment topics and gender differences in compliments and compliment responses. In this section, the researcher will review the researches in the light of compliment functions, compliment formulas, compliment topics and gender differences in compliments and compliment responses briefly.

2.2.1 The Definition of Compliment and Compliment Response

As a kind of polite speech acts in daily verbal communication, compliment includes two parts: compliment giving and compliment response.

According to Holmes (1988, p. 446),“A compliment can be seen as a behavior of speech acts which directly or indirectly shows person credit to someone except the interlocutor, in general the reaction of the person for some attribute (characteristic, possession, skill, etc) praised by the addressor and addressee.”

The definition of compliments response was given by Nelson (1996). “A compliment response is as a kind of verbal acknowledgement, the compliment receiver was heard and reacted to the compliment giver.” The compliment receiver has to respond to other people’s compliment whether he/she would like to accept or decline the compliment.

2.2.2 Compliment Functions

A great number of scholars and researches have claimed that compliments can establish solidarity between compliment giver and compliment receiver (Manes, 1983; Wolfson, 1983; Holmes, 1986; Herbert, 1989). That is the main function of the compliments. The function of compliments is showed in Manes (1983) that is to establish and reinforce solidarity between compliment giver and compliment receiver. Wolfson (1983) did the same line as Manes and proved that the compliment giver compliments others, the speaker expresses admiration approval toward the hearer, and thereby solidarity between interlocutors is established or created. Moreover, Wolfson put forward that compliments could serve other functions. For instance, compliments could be employed to strengthen the desired behavior in specific contexts, such as the field of teaching.

Compliments can be applied to reinforce or take place of other speech acts, like greeting, apologizing, and gratitude, or to decline speech acts, such as criticism, or even to function as acts like conversation opener or sarcasm (Wolfson, 1983, p. 86-93).

Compliments can be positive speech acts which can satisfy the compliment receiver's positive face requirements; they can be defined as face-threatening acts. The compliments giver can express desire or envy for the compliment receiver's possessions. In this aspect, Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 213) suggested that compliments could be considered as face-threatening acts to the certain extent in order that they indicate the compliment receiver is jealous of the addressee in certain way or would like the addressee to possess something. Furthermore, Holmes (1995) concluded a type of compliments as verbal harassment.

The functions of compliments mentioned earlier are from researches about the speakers who speak American English. Like all variations in linguistic behavior, cultural factors are the factors which probably affect the variations in speech act behaviors. Researches demonstrated that compliment function in one specified culture could be completely different from one in another. Herbert & Straight (1989) showed that they apply American compliments to negotiate social solidarity. South African once functioned "non-negotiatively" as a way to confirm such solidarity. Thus on the one hand, both

Wolfson and Manes show that the function of compliments in a specified culture could be found within its specific linguistic and socio-cultural context; on the other hand.

Herbert and Straight's research states that we could perceive the distinctive characteristics of compliment functions by contrastive analysis. Cross-cultural studies are comparatively few amongst the studies on compliments in present literature. It is a fact that only by carrying out a study of compliments to compare different cultural backgrounds, especially those with distinctive value systems, such as Chinese and Western societies, we can probably study something more about the characteristics of speech act in global or cultural society.

2.2.3 Compliment Formulas

The studies on compliments revealed that compliments such as, using some words with positive meaning and using limited syntactic patterns are formulaic (Wolfson & Manes, 1981; Holmes, 1986; Herbert, 1990).

Manes & Wolfson (1981) collected 686 American English compliment cases through people's daily lives. They found that compliments of American English are highly modeling as formulas. In the whole linguistic data, there are nine syntactic patterns. The first three syntactic patterns account for about 85% of the data

- (1) NP looks/is (really) ADJ. (*E.g. Your dress looks really beautiful.*) (53.6%)
- (2) I (really) love/like NP. (*E.g. I really like your earrings.*) (16.1%)
- (3) PRO is (really) a ADJ NP. (*E.g. It's a cool hair-style.*) (14.9%)
- (4) You V a (really) ADJ NP. (*E.g. You did a really good job.*)
- (5) You V NP (really) ADV. (*E.g. You really did this job well.*)
- (6) You have a ADJ NP. (*E.g. You have a nice voice.*)
- (7) What a ADJ NP! (*E.g. What a lovely baby you have!*)
- (8) ADJ NP! (*E.g. Good job!*)
- (9) Isn't NP ADJ. (*E.g. Isn't your skirt lovely?*)

In fact, in addition to the limited syntactic patterns, 96 percent of English compliment presentations rely on those semantically positive adjectives and verbs. Moreover, the compliment-givers tend to use five adjectives (nice, good, pretty, great, beautiful) or two verbs (like, love) to present the positive estimate, for example: *You did a good job* or *I love your glasses*. Furthermore, the analysis of the syntax of compliment utterances in Manes and Wolfson's research results in three most generally occurring syntactic patterns.

Herbert (1990) also discovers similar formulas in his Polish data. Herbert's study displays that adverbial compliments (E.g. adverbs used as positive semantic carriers) occur with a high percentage of 27% in the Polish corpus by contrast the low frequency of adverbs in other English studies. Herbert considers this diversity to be a result of syntactic differences between English and Polish, because verbs, such as "like" and "taste" "regularly take adverbial modifiers in Polish and adjectival ones in English" (Herbert, 1990, p. 388).

The results from above studies on compliment formulas showed that it is easy to recognize compliments in discourse. This legibility facilitates interaction. As such, the possibility of misunderstanding between the interlocutors is reduced.

2.2.4 Compliment Topics

Compliment topic is also an important aspect in compliment research. A lot of studies on compliment topics demonstrated that most of compliment topics focus on a few general life topics, (Wolfson, 1989; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1989) such as, personality, possessions, child, pet, appearance, accomplishments, and so on. But the most popular compliment topics in English are accomplishments and appearance. Furthermore, Wolfson (1989) indicated that anybody could compliment female's appearance without considering age, status and job of the female in the United States of America. Manes (1983) found that the topics on personal appearance and

accomplishments is most frequently use in American English compliments. Holmes' (1988) data on compliments in New Zealand also displayed agreement with Manes' (1983) findings; these two topics are uniformly distributed in New Zealand's everyday interaction.

Although previous studies used different terms for compliment topics, such as possessions, skill, work, appearance, ability, performance, friendship, personality, and so on. These topics can be clustered into two wide categories: ability/accomplishment and clothing/appearance.

2.2.5 Previous Studies on Gender Differences in Compliments and Compliment Responses

With the development of researches on compliments and compliment responses, more and more researchers pay attention to the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses. Many researchers, based on the investigations of English compliments and compliment responses in Britain, New Zealand and the United States of America, found that female native speakers tend to praise other person and accept other person's compliment. Holmes (1988) and Herbert (1990) are the main researchers on gender differences in compliments and compliment responses.

Holmes (1988) collected 484 cases of compliments and compliment responses as linguistic data. She found that (1) Syntactic formulas, in her research women used “I like NP” and “What (a) (ADJ) NP!” patterns more, while men made use of “ADJ NP!” pattern more. (2) Women used more personalized compliment forms than men. (3) the most frequently used topic for women is compliments on appearance, while men used compliment on possessions more. (4) Men used avoidance strategy more often than women. (Holmes, 1988, p. 462-463). Holmes showed that women prefer to use compliments in order to express the positive politeness and solidarity, while men use compliments less than women. Because men think that compliment to others is a face-threatening act.

Herbert (1990), based on his studies in the United States of America, found that there are some conspicuous syntactic differences between men and women in compliment use and response. According to his research, this kind of gender differences was reflected in different choices of men and women among three classes of personal pronouns in complimenting. Women preferred to use the first and second person as the sentence subject in complimenting, especially the first person “I/we”, for example: “*I like your style of dressing.*” However, men preferred to use non-personal sentence in complimenting, for example: “*Nice shoot?*” Based on the analysis of response to compliments, Herbert concluded that females will most likely not be accepted, whereas compliments from males will, especially by female recipients. (1990, p. 217).

According to the research, he considered that different conversational roles of men and women were reflected in different strategies that men and women use in complimenting and compliment responding. In general, women compliment other person more than men do.

In China, studies on gender differences in compliments and compliment responses have not started until 1980s. Many Chinese scholars and researchers have done a lot of research on compliment and compliment response since then (Ye, 1995; Feng, 2003; Quan, 2004). From 1990s, some researchers have begun to study Chinese compliments from a gender perspective. Among these researchers, the influence of Ye's study is the largest; his research model has been used by the subsequent researchers widely. Ye (1995) adopted a questionnaire survey to collect data; the questionnaire used the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) dialogue complete method which is widely used in cross-cultural pragmatics and inter-language pragmatic studies to investigate the male and female compliment use on "appearance" and "ability".

Ye's (1995) study confirmed the difference between explicit and implicit compliments in Chinese. This difference could be confirmed by the presence of commendatory words, such as "*You are so beautiful!*" as an explicit compliment, but "*I want to worship you as a teacher*" as an implicit compliment. He pointed out that most people will choose to give compliment in the same context when they are facing the same compliment object.

While few people will choose to respond part of compliments or they will not do any reaction. His research shows that 1) in the use of positive semantic carriers in adverbs and nouns, females use less often than males, while males use less adverbs 2) compliments strategies could be divided into four sub-types: implicit compliment, explicit compliment, no response, and non-compliment 3) in the use of the compliment strategies on gender differences, findings of the research stated that both females and males prefer to use compliment strategies. Statistical analysis of the research showed that there was an obvious difference between males and females applying these four compliment strategies. Males give more non-compliments and implicit compliments than females. Meanwhile, his study concluded that males and females adopt different strategies. 4) in the use of compliment response strategies, women used more accepting or “accepting & supplementing” strategies, but men prefer to use non-accept the compliment or non-response to the compliment. His finding is consistent with other studies (Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1990). The findings showed that men tend to decline compliment force, while women may tend to accept compliment force with showing agreement to the previous utterances.

After Ye (1995), a number of scholars have studied in Chinese compliments from a gender perspective (Li, 2001; Feng, 2003; Quan, 2004). Li (2001) used participant observation method to study Chinese compliments. His research showed that males and females differences are mainly displaying on topic in the use of compliments, men are

mainly concentrating on the topic of achievement, while women are mainly concentrating on the topic of appearance. Therefore, men and women did not show any differences in compliment syntactic form.

Feng (2003) and Quan (2004) have adopted Ye's research model, using the DCT questionnaire to conduct a survey of the use of Chinese compliments among college students. Feng (2003) showed that there were no significant differences between the male and female in choosing the sentence structure, the topic of compliment and the compliment response strategy. Differences refer to that women prefer to compliment others and accept compliments from others. While men prefer to ignore the compliment without any responses, women prefer to use frequently response more than men. Quan's (2004) research findings showed that there were significant differences in the use and response of compliments between men and women. Women like to use more direct compliment than men do, while men prefer to use more non-compliments, indirect compliments and no response. Women prefer to accept compliments more than men do, but men mainly choose not to respond or refuse compliments.

Wang & Xu (2005), based on their cross-cultural contrastive study of compliments and compliment responses, pointed out that there are 41.30% Chinese compliment responses which can be classified into Herbert's six compliment response strategies of agreement; 27.50% Chinese compliment responses can be classified into the compliment response

strategy of disagreement; 31.30% Chinese compliment responses belong to compliment with amendment. They divided these 31.30% unique Chinese compliment responses into three categories. (1) Acceptance with amendment that refers to someone accepts other person's compliment but explains the reason why she/he accepts it at the same time. (2) Compliment with decline. It means that someone rejects other person's compliment to show their humility. However, this kind of compliment responses will often be understood as didn't accept the compliment. (3) False question that refers to the compliment response like "Really?" This question needn't to answer, and often accompanies satisfied and joyful facial expressions, or the consent statement.

In response strategies, the researchers, conclusion is not consistent, and yet there is certain regularity. Traditional Chinese way of responding a compliment is "refuse" (Ye, 1995), but over the past 20 years the situation has changed, the percentage of refusal strategies showed a declining trend, while the percentage of accepting strategies showed an upward trend. This kind of phenomenon appears for two reasons: on one hand, Feng (2006) pointed out that the previous studies defined compliment response strategies in different ways, such as "refusal". On the other hand, it also explained that the use of Chinese compliment response strategy in East-West cultural communications has changed with the development of society.

Although previous research (Ye, 1995; Li, 2001; Feng, 2003; Quan, 2004) do not agree on the differences between male's and female's compliment, it seems that they agree that men prefer to use less polite language forms than women do in their speech. Austin's and Searle's Speech Act Theory, Brown and Levinson's Politeness and Face Theory, Gu's view on Chinese Politeness Principle, is provide a concrete theoretical framework for this study. These above-mentioned theories are beneficial for the compliments' analysis as and the explanation of gender differences in speech behavior.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to provide a clear description of the present research, firstly, this chapter starts with theoretical framework , and then introduces the participants involved in this research, the instruments used for data collection, data collection procedure as well as data analysis in details.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Based mainly on the previous studies, the theoretical and analytical methodology used in this study was adopted by Ye's (1995) classification of compliment strategies and the new formed classification of compliment response strategies by Ye's (1995) and Herbert's (1989, 1990).

3.1.1 Ye's (1995) Classification of Compliment Strategies

Ye (1995) divided compliment strategies into four categories: 1) implicit Compliment 2) explicit Compliment 3) no responses 4) non-compliment.

1) Explicit Compliment is also called direct compliment, and it refers to the compliment giver who can express praise or admiration to someone without any context. (*E.g. You are very beautiful today!*)

2) Implicit Compliment is also called indirect compliment, and it refers to the compliment giver who cannot express praise or admiration to someone directly.

(E.g. Could you tell me where you bought this T-shirt?)

3) No Response means ('zero realization'), where the compliment giver chooses "You would not say anything" strategy. This can be the way to respond to the compliment and it is not necessary to offer a compliment in some situations when you accept a compliment from others.

4) Non-Compliment is related to but differs from ('No Response'), which the compliment giver gives verbal responses to the given situations, but the rejoinders they give can hardly be regarded as compliments. *(E.g. How much is the bicycle?)*

3.1.2 The Classification of Compliment Response Strategies

Based on the categories of compliments and compliment responses by Ye (1995) and Herbert (1989, 1990), this study proposed a new classification.

Ye (1995) divided the compliment responses into five categories: 1) acceptance 2) acceptance with amendment 3) non-acceptance 4) no responses 5) combination.

Herbert (1989, 1990) divided the compliment responses into 12 categories: 1) Appreciation token 2) Comment acceptance 3) Praise upgrade 4) Comment history 5) Reassignment 6) Return 7) Scale down 8) Question 9) Disagreement 10) Qualification 11) No acknowledgment 12) Request interpretation

In this study, the compliment response strategy is categorized into five sub-categories: 1) acceptance 2) acceptance with amendment 3) non-acceptance 4) no response and 5) combination. Under each category there are sub-categories given as follows:

1) Acceptance:

- a) Appreciation token: utterances to show gratitude to previous utterance. (*E.g. Thanks.*)
- b) Agreement: utterances to agree with the compliment giver. (*E.g. I like it, too.*)
- c) Pleasure: utterances to show the compliment receiver's pleasure. (*E.g. I am very happy to hear that.*)
- d) Smile: utterances to recognize the compliment by smiling.

2) Acceptance with Amendment:

- a) Return: utterances to scale down the admire of a compliment by giving praise to the speaker. (*E.g. So is yours.*)
- b) Downgrade: utterances to decline the praise of a compliment to a previous utterance. (*E.g. Just so so.*)
- c) Upgrade: utterances to increase the complimentary force to a previous utterance. (*E.g. Yes, it is beautiful, too.*)
- d) Confirmation: utterance to reassure and confirm the previous utterance. (*E.g. Is that true? Do you really think so?*)
- e) Transfer: utterances to switch the concern of the compliments. (*E.g. Have more if you like it.*)
- f) Comment: utterances to impersonalize the complimentary force by giving personal details. (*E.g. My mother bought this dress for me as a birthday present.*)

3). **Non-Acceptance:**

- a) Denial: utterances to reject the content of the compliment. (*E.g. No, No.*)
- b) Qualification: utterances to deny the quality of compliment. (*E.g. It's far from it.*)
- c) Idiom: utterances to show compliment receiver's embarrassed or abashed feelings by using composed of idiomatic expressions. (*E.g. I am embarrassed.*)

d) Diverge: utterances to reduce the complimentary force by giving direct acts to others.

(E.g. No kidding./Don't make fun of me.)

e). Avoidance: utterances to avoid respond to the complimenting content.

(E.g. You are being too polite.)

4). **No Response:** It means 'zero realization', where the compliment giver chooses "You would not say anything" strategy.

5). **Combination:** The compliment giver may use two or more sub-categories strategy mentioned above to respond to compliments.

a). Confirmation appreciation token. *(E.g. Really? Thank you.)*

b). Appreciation token scale down *(E.g. Thanks a lot. Just so so.)*

3.2 Subjects

A total of 60 Chinese international students (30 males and 30 females) who are studying in UM took part in this study. The subjects involved are from mainland China and have already studied in different faculties of University of Malaya (UM) for at least one year. Before they had come to Malaysia, they have learned English in China more than three years, and they have similar cultural and educational background. To avoid the

influence of western culture in employment of pragmatics strategies, all the subjects are non-English majors. They range in age from 21 to 26 years old.

There are several criteria for choosing the subjects: firstly, all subjects must study in University of Malaya (UM) for at least one year. Because most of them use more standard English and their English proficiency is comparatively higher than freshmen, they can express themselves in English appropriately; secondly, their English language proficiency is at a good level. Some of them have obtained IELTS 6 or above which is a compulsory requirement for admission to University of University (UM). Some others who do not have IELTS or TOEFL grade reports would take the English proficiency test of UM and obtain at least B in English academic writhing class before enrolment. Thirdly, students chosen for this study are from mainland China only in order to make sure they have similar cultural and educational background. It aims to avoid the cultural and educational background influencing the use of the compliments and compliment responses. The detailed personal information about the subjects is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Basic Personal Information of the Subjects

Variables	Classification	Male	Female	Total
Age	21-23	25	15	60
	24-26	5	15	
The Length of Staying in Malaysia	1-2 years	21	23	60
	2-3 years	6	4	
	>3 years	3	3	
Faculty	Education	7	8	60
	Economics and Administration	8	5	
	Business and Accountancy	4	4	
	Science	3	4	
	Computer Science	0	1	
	Medicine	0	1	
	Engineering	8	3	
	Arts and Social Science	0	3	
Law	0	1		
Level of Study	Undergraduate	22	16	60
	Master	8	14	
Hometown in China	Beijing	3	4	60
	Hebei	6	5	
	Yunnan	2	1	
	Henan	3	3	
	Guangdong	2	3	
	Guangxi	1	1	
	Hunan	1	1	
	Anhui	1	1	
	HeiLongjiang	1	2	
	Shanxi	1	2	
	Sichuan	2	3	
	Hubei	4	1	
	Inner Mongolia	2	2	
Chongqing	1	1		
English Proficiency	IELTS >5.0	21	9	60
	English Proficiency Test of UM >B	9	20	
	CET 4	0	1	

3.3 Instrument

The main instrument in this study is questionnaire survey. Questionnaire can control the variables, such as status, social distance, gender and so on. It is also convenient to collect the data. The questionnaire adopted in this study was adapted from Lorenzo-Dus' study (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001).

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) consists of three parts: (1) an introduction of the study (2) basic information of the subjects, such as gender, age, faculty, English proficiency, length of stay in Malaysia and hometown in China (3) twelve situations of compliment giving and compliment response, including six situations for compliment giving (Table 3.2) and six for compliment response (Table 3.3). The twelve situations (S) such as clothing/appearance (S1, S2, S6, S7, S8, and S11), ability/accomplishment (S3, S4, S5, S9, S10, and S12) are familiar to Chinese international students. Meanwhile, these twelve situations take place in different occasions and places, for example, S1, S2, S6, and S10 occur on campus; S4 occurs in an internet bar; S5 occurs in a KTV, S9 occurs at home. The interlocutors are friends or classmates without any status differences. The detailed information about the 12 situations is shown in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3.

Table 3.2 Summary of Situations on Compliments

Situation	Gender of Compliment Receiver	Compliment Topic	The Relationship Between the Interlocutors
S1 Dress	Female	Clothing/Appearance	Classmate
S2 Glasses	Female	Clothing/Appearance	Classmate
S3 Scholarship	Male	Ability/Accomplishment	Friend
S4 Game	Male	Ability/Accomplishment	Friend
S5 Singing	Female	Ability/Accomplishment	Classmate
S6 Hair Color	Male	Clothing/Appearance	Friend

Table 3.2 shows that there are six situations about compliments. S1, S2 and S6 are about clothing/appearance; S3, S4 and S5 are about ability/accomplishment. The compliment receivers are three males and three females. The interlocutors are friends and classmates.

Table 3.3 Summary of Situations on Compliment Responses

Situation	Gender of Compliment Giver	Compliment Topic	The Relationship Between the Interlocutors
S7 Shoes	Female	Clothing/Appearance	Friend
S8 Hairstyle	Female	Clothing/Appearance	Classmate
S9 Cooking	Female	Ability/Accomplishment	Friend
S10 Oral English	Male	Ability/Accomplishment	Friend
S11 Scarf	Male	Clothing/Appearance	Classmate
S12 Exam	Male	Ability/Accomplishment	Classmate

Table 3.3 shows that there are six situations about compliment responses. S7, S8 and S11 are about clothing/appearance; S9, S10 and S12 are about ability/accomplishment. The compliment receivers are three males and three females. The interlocutors are friends and classmates.

3.4 Pilot Study

In order to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire and establish the contextual appropriateness of the items in the speech act of the compliments, the researcher conducted a small scale pilot study. The questionnaire consists of ten open-ended questions. Twelve Chinese international students (six males and six females) from different faculties of University of Malaya (UM) were selected.

The results of the pilot study showed that there were no significant differences between males and females in syntactic patterns. But there searcher found that there were differences between male students and female students in compliment formulas, compliment strategies and compliment response strategies. The result gave the researcher confidence to go on with the research. The questionnaire used in the pilot study was revised and adopted in the main study.

3.5 Data Collection

60 questionnaires were distributed to the subjects by the researcher in main library and international house from 17th May to 24th May. The main library was chosen because because most of Chinese international students study there. The other venue for questionnaire survey was the International House because most Chinese international students living there. After identifying the subjects who are in accord with the requirements mentioned in Table 3.1, each questionnaire was distributed to the subjects face-to-face to ensure that subjects were suitable informants and help them with questionnaires. What is more, once the questionnaire was given, the researcher would tell them to read the content of each situation in the questionnaire very carefully and let them do their best to give their responses. The subjects were given enough time to fill the questionnaires and then the researcher collected them. Therefore, the questionnaires were well controlled. After the researcher checked those questionnaires, the researcher numbered for the 60 questionnaires, Questionnaire 1 to 30 were for female subjects, questionnaire 31 to 60 were written for male subjects, all of them are valid for analysis.

3.6 Data analysis

After sorting the 60 questionnaires, data analysis started with the categorizing the data which were collected from the questionnaires. The data were analyzed from 4 perspectives gender differences in overall situations, compliment formulas, compliment strategies, compliment responses strategies. In the part of data analysis, compliments

are dissected into compliment formulas and compliment strategies. Compliment formulas are analyzed in terms of lexical patterns and syntactic patterns. According to Ye (1995), the compliment strategies can be divided into four categories: implicit compliments, explicit compliments, non-compliments and no response. While compliment responses are analyzed mainly in terms of strategies by respondents. According to Ye (1995) and Herbert (1989, 1990), compliment responses strategies were divided into five categories: acceptance, acceptance with amendment, non-acceptance, no response and combination. Following the above categorizing, the data were examined from the four perspectives respectively. For each perspective, the gender of the interlocutor in each situation is examined to check if gender is an important variable in determining the use of compliments and compliment responses. At last, the study explained the results of the research from both quantitative and qualitative perspective. For quantitative analysis, the data obtained in the questionnaires are categorized and calculated, then presented by tables; percentages are used in statistical calculation. For qualitative analysis, the examples which are collected in the questionnaire will be categorized according to the new classification scheme which is mentioned in 3.1.2.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLIMENT RESPONSES

This chapter presents the gender-based distributions of compliments and compliment responses among Chinese international students and provides explanation of the gender differences from the viewpoint of socio-psychological, socio-structural, socio-cultural perspective, besides traditional Chinese cultural perspective.

4.1 Gender Differences in Compliments

The research has obtained 269 compliments from the valid 60 questionnaires. According to the descriptions of compliments, non-compliment and no response do not belong to the category of compliments; therefore, the research mainly analyzes the comparison of the gender differences of compliments in this part. The frequency of gender-based distribution of compliments is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Gender-based distribution of Compliments

	Frequency of Compliments	Percentage of Compliments
Male	128	47.58%
Female	141	52.42%
Total	269	100%

Table 4.1 shows most of the Chinese international students prefer to compliment others. The research obtained 269 compliments from the 60 questionnaires. Female subjects complimented more frequently than males in terms of compliments. The compliments obtained from the male subjects account for 47.58%, and the compliments obtained from the female subjects account for 52.48%. The gender-based distributions of compliments are mainly due to the different understanding of the function of making compliments between men and women. Mary Crawford (1995) explained the reasons for the distribution differences of compliments by gender from three aspects: (1) the social structural aspect (2) interpersonal aspect (3) individual aspect. Females use compliments more frequently than males because they consider giving compliments to others as a kind of positive social speech acts. They prefer to show politeness and positive side of themselves through complimenting others. In contrast, males compliment people less than females do because they consider giving compliments to others as a kind of face threatening acts. Therefore, females prefer to compliment others compliments in order to express their kindness and build up positive relationships with other people.

Because men and women play different roles in the society and the social expectations of men and women are different men and women should achieve different social expectations on verbal communication skills. In order to meet the particular expectation of the society, women are susceptible to compliment others and use polite manners

more frequently than men do. Even if the same behavior occurs to a man and a woman at the same time, their behavior would be interpreted differently.

4.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Formulas

Manes & Wolfson (1980, p. 118) found that compliments are remarkably formulaic speech acts: “Compliments, as a kind of expression of linguistic communication, are generally formulaic in its structure”. The limited range of lexical items shows the formulaic nature. The limited range of lexical items is the positive semantic carriers of compliments and some of them are frequently used for syntactic patterns and structures, which convey the compliments. In this part, the researcher analyses the distributions of the lexical and syntactical patterns in compliments between the Chinese international male and female students.

4.2.1 Gender Differences in Lexical Patterns

In the current study, the researcher focuses on the positive lexical carriers in compliments: firstly, the researcher shows the distributions of the positive lexical carriers in compliments in overall frequency. Then the researcher illustrates the comparison of the gender differences among those positive lexical carriers in compliments, especially in the explicit compliments. The most-frequently used positive lexical carriers are adjectives, nouns and verbs. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of positive lexical carrier in overall situations.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Positive Lexical Carriers in Overall Situations

Lexical Carrier	Frequency	Percentage
Adjective	226	84.01%
Verb	25	9.29%
Noun	18	6.7%
Total	269	100%

Table 4.2 shows the percentage of positive lexical carriers' distribution in all situations. Among all the positive lexical carriers in compliments, adjectives account for 84.01%, which is the most compared to others. Verbs account for 9.29%, and nouns account for 6.7%. Eight common adjectives that both male and female subjects mostly use are "great, nice, pretty, cute, cool, beautiful, and wonderful". For example:

(1) *Your new dress is very beautiful. (Questionnaire 1, Situation 1)*

(2) *What a pair of cool glasses! (Questionnaire 13, Situation 2)*

(3) *Your voice is so nice. (Questionnaire 31, Situation 4)*

(4) *Your skills are so great. (Questionnaire 16, Situation 4)*

(5) *This dress is very pretty. (Questionnaire 16, Situation 1)*

(6) *You are so cute. (Questionnaire 19, Situation 3)*

(7) *You did a wonderful job! (Questionnaire 26, Situation 3)*

The verbs that both male and female subjects mostly use are “like, admire, love, suit”.

For example:

(1) I admire you very much. (Questionnaire 25, Situation 3)

(2) I like your voice. (Questionnaire 36, Situation 5)

(3) The dress suits you very much. (Questionnaire 6, Situation 1)

(4) I love this glass. (Questionnaire 16, Situation 2)

The four nouns that both male and female subjects mostly use are “talent, idol, and genius”. For example:

(1) You are a talent. (Questionnaire 16, Situation 4)

(2) What a genius you are! (Questionnaire 47, Situation 4)

(3) You are my idol. (Questionnaire 54, Situation 4)

Both male and female subjects use the three types of positive lexical carriers of compliments which mentioned in 4.2.1. Table 4.3 shows the distributions of positive lexical carriers in compliments by gender.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Positive Lexical Carriers in Compliments by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Adjective	110	84.61%	116	83.45%
Verb	9	6.92%	16	11.51%
Noun	11	8.47%	7	5.04%
Total	130	100%	139	100%

According to Table 4.3, gender differences in using positive lexical carriers in compliments are found. There are three types of positive lexical carriers mostly used in making compliments. They are adjective, verb and noun. Both male and female subjects mostly use is adjective (male 84.61%, female 83.45%). The percentage of using adjective is higher than the percentage of using verb and noun. And both male and female subjects use adjective are almost the same. However, females use verb (11.51%) more than males (6.92%) in making compliments and responding to the compliments.

4.2.2 Gender Differences in Syntactic Patterns

In the present study, the following syntactic patterns were generalized from the questionnaires.

Table 4.4 Distribution of Syntactic Patterns in Compliments by Gender

No.	Structure	Female		Male	
		Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
1	NP {be/look} (intensifier)Adj.;	51	36.17%	53	41.40%
2	I (intensifier) {like/love} NP;	35	24.82%	21	16.41%
3	Pro is a (Intensifier) Adj. NP.;	22	15.6%	21	16.41%
4	You + V + (a) + (really) + Adj.+ NP;	10	7.09%	11	8.59%
5	You + V + NP + (really) Adv.;	2	1.41%	5	3.92%
6	You + have + (a) + (really) + Adj. + NP	6	4.26%	6	4.68%
7	What + (a) + Adj. + NP	13	9.22%	4	3.12%
8	Adj. +NP	0	0%	6	4.68%
9	other patterns	2	1.41%	1	0.79%
	Total	141	100%	128	100%

(Note: NP = noun phrase; Adj. = adjective; Pron. = pronoun; Adv. = adverb; Freq.= Frequency)

Among the patterns which are used by male and female subjects, three mostly used patterns are No.1, No.2 and No.3. The first pattern “NP {be/look} (intensifier) Adj.” is the most pattern used by both males and females. However, female subjects tend to follow the second pattern: “I (really) like/ love NP.” Furthermore, compared to other formulas, the seventh pattern “What + (a) + Adj. + NP” and the eighth pattern “Adj. + NP” deserve special attention.

Females prefer to use the seventh pattern, such as “What a lovely dress” and males tend to use the eighth pattern, such as “good job”. The present study shows that in general, females are more likely to express their internal emotions more than males (E.g. I like your dress.), while males are more inclined to employ impersonalized forms than females.

4.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies

According to Ye (1995), compliment strategies can be classified into four categories: explicit compliments, implicit compliments, non-compliments and no response. The following part will adopt this classification to find the differences in the use of compliment strategies by Chinese international male and female students.

4.3.1 Compliment Strategies in Overall Situations

This classification of compliment strategies by Ye (1995) is adopted in the present study; the use of different compliment strategies is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Distribution of Compliment Strategies

Compliment Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit Compliment	241	66.94%
Implicit Compliment	28	7.78%
Non-compliment	54	15.00%
No Response	37	10.28%
Total	360	100%

Table 4.5 shows that 66.9 percent of the subjects prefer to use explicit compliment when they are complimenting others. This result indicates that the Chinese international students in University of Malaya (UM) prefer to compliment others directly. They express their own opinions and praise others generously. For example:

(1)What a beautiful dress! (Questionnaire 23, Situation 1)

(2)Dane, you sing very well. (Questionnaire 45, Situation 5)

(3)How handsome you are, Tom! (Questionnaire 56, Situation 6)

(4)What a pair of nice glasses. (Questionnaire33, Situation 2)

Implicit compliment used by Chinese international students account for 7.78%, For example:

(1) When did you learn it? (Questionnaire 15, Situation 4)

(2) I hope I would sing like you. (Questionnaire 26, Situation 5)

(3) Could you tell me how to play that game?(Questionnaire 21, Situation 4)

These compliments are conveyed in the form of requesting or questioning. However, they are not true requests or questions inquiry. For instance, a relevant second pair-part to “Could you tell me how to play that game?” would be “I don’t know how to play” or “I can’t play very well.” Instead of “come here and study from me”. In addition, a relevant response to “When did you learn it?” would not inform about a specific time in response to “when”. These utterances are interpreted as implicit compliment because their second pair-parts of adjacency pairs operate on different response priorities from requests. If the above examples were true requests, the first priority of a response should be specific information; however, the typical response from native speakers is a downgrade or a ritual denial, which is a priority of Chinese compliment responses.

Non-compliment strategy is the third important strategy used by Chinese international students. Non-compliment strategy was used by Chinese international students account for 15%. For example:

(1) Perhaps we can hold a band together. (Questionnaire 39, Situation 5)

(2) Congratulations. You should treat. (Questionnaire 8, Situation 3)

(3) How much is your dress? (Questionnaire 35, Situation 1)

In example (3), the respondent did not compliment the new dress when he/she saw someone wearing a new dress, instead started a new conversation. Therefore, the respondent give verbal rejoinders to the given situation, its function is to start a conversation topic, it is not really to compliment others and the listener will provide specific information relating to the previous utterance.

No response strategy is the fourth important strategy used by Chinese international students. Sometime, Chinese international students do not respond when they receive compliments from others. Such cases account for 10.28%.

4.3.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies

In this section, the gender differences in compliment strategies will be reported. Table 4.6 shows the distribution of the compliment strategies.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Compliment Strategies by Gender

Compliment Strategies	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit Compliment	113	62.78%	128	71.11%
Implicit Compliment	15	8.33%	13	7.22%
Non-compliment	31	17.22%	23	12.78%
No Response	21	11.67%	16	8.89%
Total	180	100%	180	100%

Table 4.6 indicates that female subjects use more explicit compliment than males. Male subjects use more implicit compliments, non-compliments and no response than females. This result shows female subjects are more polite than males when they make compliments. To be specific, the female subjects are more likely to use the direct and positive speech act in order to maintain and strengthen the relationship between friends and acquaintances. This is to achieve the harmonious development of interpersonal relationships in their life. From a social point of view, this behaviour of female subjects will not only meet the definition of women in society, but also meet the social expectations of female speech acts.

4.3.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Strategies by Topic

There are two types of topics in the questionnaire, (1) clothing and appearance (2) ability and accomplishment. The distribution of topics for compliment strategies by gender is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Distribution of Topics for Compliment Strategies by Gender

	Clothing/Appearance					Ability/Accomplishment				
	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total
Compliment Strategies	F	%	F	%	F	F	%	F	%	F
Explicit Compliment	65	72.21	70	77.78	135	48	53.33	58	64.44	106
Implicit Compliment	7	7.78	6	6.66	13	8	8.89	7	7.78	15
Non-compliment	8	8.89	4	4.44	12	23	25.56	19	21.11	42
No response	10	11.11	10	12.22	20	11	12.22	6	6.67	17
Total	90	100	90	100	180	90	100	90	100	180

(Note: F=Frequency)

Table 4.7 shows the differences in preference of using the compliment strategies for different topics by gender. Both male and female subjects tend to use explicit compliments for both topics. However, for the topic of clothing and appearance, male subjects use more non-compliment than females, while female subjects use more explicit compliment than males. For the topic of ability and accomplishment, male subjects use more non-compliment and no response strategy than females, while females use more explicit compliment than males. Both males and female use more

non-compliment strategy on ability and accomplishment than on clothing and appearance, which shows that the younger generations would feel more embarrassed and uncomfortable by making compliments on others' ability and accomplishment than on clothing and appearance.

4.4 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies

In this section, differences in the use of compliment response strategies in overall situations, gender differences in the use of compliment response strategies and gender differences in the use of compliment response strategies by topic are reported in details.

4.4.1 Compliment Response Strategies in Overall Situations

In order to find the differences in the use of compliment response strategies by Chinese international students in overall situations, the study adopt the Herbert's (1990) and Ye's (1995) classification of compliment response strategies. Table 4.8 shows the distribution of compliment response strategies

Table 4.8 Distribution of Compliment Response Strategies

Compliment Response Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Acceptance	185	51.39%
Acceptance with Amendment	67	18.61%
Non-acceptance	19	5.28%
No Response	18	5.00%
Combination	71	19.72%
Total	360	100%

Table 4.8 shows over 50% subjects use acceptance to respond compliments. This indicates that the Chinese international students prefer to accept compliments from the others. For example:

(1) I think so, too. (Questionnaire 24, Situation 10)

(2) Thank you! (Questionnaire 57, Situation 12)

(3) I am glad to hear that. (Questionnaire 37, Situation 11)

Acceptance with amendment strategy accounts for 18.61%. For example:

(1) Really? (Questionnaire 15, Situation 9)

(2) Yes, my brother bought them for me. (Questionnaire 18, Situation 11)

(3) Your English is good, too. (Questionnaire 28, Situation 10)

(4) Just so so. (Questionnaire 60, Situation 7)

For acceptance with amendment strategy, the respondents did not accept compliment directly. They use “really?” (Confirmation), “Your English is good, too.” (Return) and “Just so so.” (Downgrade) response strategy to show their attitudes when they receive compliments. Examples of non-acceptance response strategy are shown as follows:

(1) Oh, no, no. (Questionnaire 30, Situation 9)

(2) No, I do not think so. (Questionnaire 20, Situation 10)

(3) You are too praised me. (Questionnaire 17, Situation 10)

(4) I am embarrassed! (Questionnaire 9, Situation 12)

For non-acceptance strategy, the respondents did not accept compliments. They use “Oh, No, No” (Denial), “You are too praised me” (quality) and “I am embarrassed” (Idiom) response strategy to reject, deny the quality of compliments and show the receiver’s embarrassed or abashed feelings.

The least used strategy is no response, which account for 5%. 19.72 percent of the responses employ more than one strategy, such as the combination of acceptance and acceptance with amendment. For example:

(1) Really? Thank you! (Questionnaire 8, Situation 9)

(2) Thank you! Your English is also pretty good. (Questionnaire 4, Situation 10)

(3) Thank you very much! Help yourself. (Questionnaire 54, Situation 9)

(4) *Thanks. Just so so. (Questionnaire 23, Situation 12)*

Example (1): “Really? Thank you!” is the combination of acceptance with amendment and acceptance strategies. “Really?” indicates that the compliment receiver wants to reconfirm the previous utterance. “Thank you!” implies that the compliment receiver shows gratitude to compliment giver.

4.4.2 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies

Gender differences in compliment response strategies are investigated. The result is shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Distribution of Compliment Response Strategies by Gender

Compliment Responses Strategy	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Acceptance	79	43.89%	106	58.89%
Acceptance with Amendment	43	23.89%	24	13.33%
Non-acceptance	12	6.11%	7	3.89%
No Response	14	7.78%	4	2.22%
Combination	32	18.33%	39	21.67%
Total	180	100%	180	100%

Table 4.9 shows the distribution of compliment response strategies by gender. Both males and females tend to use acceptance response strategy when they receive

compliments. However, there are significant differences between males and females regarding the use of compliment response strategies. Specifically speaking, male subjects use more strategies like acceptance with amendment, non-acceptance and no response than females, while female subjects use more strategies like acceptance and combination than males.

4.4.3 Gender Differences in Compliment Response Strategies by Topic

The distribution of compliment response strategies in two types of topics has been analyzed in Table 4.9. The two types of topics are: (1) Clothing and Appearance (2) Ability and Accomplishment. Table 4.10 shows the distribution of topics for compliment response strategies by gender.

Table 4.10 Distribution of Topics for Compliment Response Strategies by Gender

	Clothing/Appearance					Ability/Accomplishment				
	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total
Compliment Response Strategies	F	%	F	%	F	F	%	F	%	F
Acceptance	53	58.89%	64	71.11%	117	26	28.89%	42	46.66%	68
Acceptance with Amendment	12	13.33%	8	8.89%	20	31	34.44%	16	17.78%	47
Non-acceptance	1	1.11%	1	1.11%	2	11	12.22%	6	6.67%	17
No Response	6	6.67%	2	2.22%	8	8	8.89%	2	2.11%	10
Combination	18	20%	15	16.67%	33	14	15.56%	24	26.67%	38
Total	90	100%	90	100%	180	90	100%	90	100%	180

(Note: F=Frequency)

Table 4.10 shows most of male and female subjects prefer to accept compliments from others for both topics. However, there are some differences for different topics by gender. For topics on clothing and appearance, female subjects use more acceptance strategy than males, while male subjects use more acceptance with amendment, non-response and combination than females. For topics on ability and accomplishment, male subjects use more acceptance with amendment, non-acceptance and no response than females, while female subjects use more acceptance and combination than males.

Furthermore, both males and females use less acceptance with amendment strategy for topic on clothing and appearance than for topics on ability and accomplishment. This shows that Chinese younger generation is more confident and willing to accept compliments from others on their personal clothing and appearance. Besides, both males and females use more non-acceptance strategy for topics on ability and accomplishment than on clothing and appearance. This shows that some of the Chinese younger generations feel embarrassed when others give compliments on their ability and accomplishment.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The results clearly show that female students give and receive more compliments than males. The following shown that women are more inclined to use more polite compliment strategies and markers. In the following part, explanations for the gender differences in compliments and compliment responses will be given from socio-psychological, socio-structural, socio-cultural perspective besides the traditional Chinese cultural point of view.

4.5.1 Social-structural Perspective

Gender as an important social variable has received many sociolinguists' attention to explore the internal relation between language and gender. For a long time, sociolinguists have been trying to find a reasonable explanation for the gender

differences of speech acts between men and women. They put forward different viewpoints, including male dominant viewpoint and socio-structural view point which have the most influential effect on explaining the gender differences in language. Those scholars holding the concept of male dominance consider that the dominance of males is the reason for the gender differences in language behaviour. Consequently, the gender differences in language behaviour will enforce the domination of males in society. Mary Crawford (1995) proposed the viewpoint of socio-structuralism. She considers that the gender differences of males and females in speech acts can help people to understand the specific socio-cultural environment. Only in certain socio-cultural environment, the subordination of women, the dominance of men and cultural differences can be explained. Crawford (1995) mentioned that cultural differences in language are actually the reflection of the socio-cultural differences. Therefore, if people want to understand the meaning of the gender differences in language, they must combine these differences in specific socio-cultural environment.

4.5.2 Social-psychological Perspective

Men and women have different psychological characteristics in perception, emotion, interest, temperament, character, ability. These differences are be reflected in verbal communication and make a decisive impact on language use of the males and females. Traditional psychological research shows that in post-puberty, men tend to take risks, like trying to be brave, well known as a hero, firm and decisive, being straightforward,

and tend to be more careless and pay less attention to details. While women are quiet, gentle, delicate, polite and friendly. They tend to pay more attention to the details, think more, have stronger aesthetic ability, and have a strong desire to be supported by the opposite sex, but they hesitate more and they are timid. These psychological characteristics are directly reflected in language behaviour, which shows that women are more emotional in content of speech and focus on the function of speech to maintain their emotions. While men's words are more direct, frank, less emotional, focus on the function of verbal transmission of information. However, with the development of the society and the change of the social norms, men and women have had the varying degrees of changes in the psychological characteristic aspect. The young people are liable to be neutral; men become more and more gentle and delicate, while women have a propensity for being more and more brave and independent.

Riger (2000) indicated that the different psychological characteristics of men and women are reflected in the use of compliment speech act. Men give fewer compliments. In spite of that males and females focus on different topics in verbal communication. The data obtained in the present research shows that women prefer to compliment others on clothing and appearance. At the same time, women receive more compliments on clothing and appearance from others. From female perspective, this is because of the aesthetic practical activity. Women are generally able to get a lot of information on the aesthetic objects from subtle observations. Long-term aesthetic observation practice

makes women hold a strong interest in the others' clothing and appearance and can keenly feel about the change in the appearance of the same-sex and the opposite sex, and judge them. From the male perspective, they have a stronger response to the beauty of the opposite sex, but have a weaker response to the beauty of the same-sex. So, most of the compliments on clothing and appearance, have been given by women. With the development of the society and the financial independence of the females, more and more young women are paying attention to the ability and accomplishment. Therefore, they would like to give more compliments on others' abilities and accomplishments. Moreover, they are more likely to receive others' compliments on their abilities and accomplishments. This kind of phenomenon reflects female's desire of independence and self-reliance.

4.5.3 Social-cultural Perspective

Maltz & Borker (1982, p. 196) propose that difficulties in cross-sex and cross-ethnic communication are "two examples of the same larger phenomenon: culture difference and misunderstanding". They acknowledge the agreement that American women and men interact with each other far too much to be characterized as living in different subcultures. In the process of growing, each child learns hundreds of culturally patterned details of behavior that become incorporated into its gender identity. Some learning takes place directly. In other words, the child is told by others how to act in an appropriately feminine or masculine way.

Relying on studies on children's interaction through play in same-gender peer groups, Maltz & Borker (1982) conclude that girls learn to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, to criticize others in acceptable ways, whereas boys learn to assert one's position of dominance, to attract and maintain an audience and to assert oneself when others have the floor. Therefore, since human beings have developed the concept of society, the division of labor in the society has bounded women in the family, which makes the socio-economical status of men more and more important. Therefore, men have been in a dominant position in the society, while women have a subordinate position and become dependent on men, as women have been in a disadvantaged situation for a long time. The society has gradually recognized to use the standard of men to judge the right or wrong. Furthermore, the society demands women with the socio-moral standards, which are in accordance with the expectation of men from women. Thus stereotypical gender roles have been gradually formed. The socio-stereotypical role of men is a dominator, who plays the role of a protector. Therefore, the society has higher expectations on the abilities and accomplishments of men.

Therefore, for men, personal ability is an important factor which can help them to realize self-worth and guarantee their social status. Because men play such a gender role in the society, the society relatively gives them more freedom. They can freely express various views, take the initiative to provoke a topic and control the process in the conversation. They can express themselves directly without thinking about the social

norms. They do not need to praise other people to show politeness. They can object to different views immediately and directly reject the compliments that they do not like.

However, the socio-stereotypical role of women is that women are weak and need to be protected. They should be responsible for the education of their children, the task of maintaining the family. So they should always pay attention to their clothing, appearance, and behavior in order to conform to social norms, and even their morality should conform to the traditional virtues. It is the only way to get social recognition. Because of playing such a gender role in the society for a long time, woman consciously or unconsciously should pay attention to their clothing, appearance and behavior. They try to use standard language and body language, which comply with the etiquette. They speak as softly as possible, try to tactfully make use of implied requests even if rejected. Thus, these form the unique features of feminine language, such as being gentle, polite, tactful, modest and emotional.

A compliment is a polite speech act, which is part of social communication. The society inevitably would make a specific standard for the performance of men and women in the speech act. For this reason, men and women must follow the stereotype of gender in using the compliments that make a great difference between two genders. Women should give more compliments to show their politeness, while men do not need to use compliments frequently or think about being more polite. Women should keep the

opinions consistent with other people as far as possible and avoid rejecting others' explicit compliments, while men can choose what to say and react according to their own opinions. The most typical gender difference between male and female is the different compliment topics, which is caused by gender stereotype. The gender stereotype of women let them do not only focus on clothing and appearance, but also focus on ability and accomplishment. In contrast, the gender stereotype of men let them pay more attention to a person's ability and accomplishment. This is because of the fact that man's personal ability is a way to realize self-worth and guarantee their social status which is the affirmation of their achievements. However, with social development and change in the requirements of men and women, the gender differences is gradually disappearing.

4.5. 4 Traditional Chinese Culture Perspective

In China, the traditional concept and gender-inequality, which have been practices in China for thousands of years, are powerfully influential. They penetrate into people's minds slowly and profoundly. Men are in the controlling position and have been playing important roles in the society either in economy or political field, women are categorized as inferior to men. This is also reflected in traditional Chinese culture. Some Chinese proverb simply that women are talkative, passive, powerless, deficient, trivial and irrational, etc. For example, “三个女人一台戏”(which is equivalent to English proverb“ Three women and a goose make a market”); “夫唱妇随”(If a husband sings,

the wife must follow in tune); “郎才女貌”(A man’s value is in his ability, a woman’s in her beauty)and“水性杨花”(Women’s minds flow as water and fly as poplar flower).

Nowadays, with the development of science and technology, women’s social status has been improving. Women make up nearly half of the labor force in all social labor activities. Women enjoy equal rights as men in employment, education, politics and health. It seems that gender differences in society have diminished, so do gender differences in language. However, this is partially a misconception. The influence of old ideology still affects the usage of language. Because of women's subordinate position in social order, they are still expected to speak in a more “proper”, polite and delicate way than men. All these are reflected in the language they use. Thus, it is not surprising to see that women tend to give and accept more compliments than men in the compliment and compliment response realization patterns.

Besides, Chinese men are found to give few compliments and employ more Non-acceptance and No response strategies than women. According to Gu (1996), the higher a person’s social position is, the greater pressure he/she may have to endure to display modesty if he/she wants to have his/her face and self-image maintained or enhanced. Therefore, men in a higher position have to frequently use Acceptance with Amendment and Non-acceptance strategies in order to follow the traditional norm of being modesty.

However, it is worth considering that women’s polite talk does not arise by chance, but

stem directly from their experience as a subordinate group. It is one of the keys to survival for members of less powerful groups in society. When they are in a group with power, women have to develop extraordinary interpersonal sensitivity, to anticipate the needs of more powerful men. According to Tannen (1990), feminine socialization emphasizes relationship and sensitivity, while masculine socialization stresses independence and power. So women's talk is "rapport talk", men's talk is "report talk". Women use talk to create symmetry or equality between people, men use talk to establish status and power. Men's greatest conversational interests seemed to be business and money, followed by sports. Women's leading topics were men and clothes. Men talk of their position of powerfulness; women talk of their position of relative powerlessness both in the society and in the context of particular relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, the researcher has demonstrated the research design, interpreted the results and further discussed gender differences in compliments and compliment responses. In this chapter, the researcher summarizes the major findings and implications of the present study and gives suggestions for further study.

5.1 Major Findings of the Study

This study investigated the gender-based differences in the use of compliments and compliment responses by Chinese international male and female students of University of Malaya (UM). Gender differences of compliments and compliment responses were discussed from social-psychological perspective, social-structure perspective, social-cultural perspective and traditional Chinese culture perspective. The result shows that there are significant differences in the use of compliments and compliment responses between males and females. The major findings are as follows:

Gender differences are observed in making compliments: (1) the most popular compliment strategy that male and female subjects mostly use is explicit compliment. Females use more explicit compliment strategy than males, while males use more

implicit compliment, non-compliment and no response than females. (2) Three types of lexical carriers are mostly used by both male and female subjects. They are: adjectives, verbs and nouns. (3) The mostly frequently used compliment strategy by male and female subjects for different topics is explicit compliment. For topics on clothing and appearance, male subjects use more implicit compliment and non-compliment strategy than females; while female subjects use more explicit compliment and no response strategy than males. However, for topics on ability and accomplishment, male subjects use more implicit compliment, non-compliment and no response strategy than females. And females use more explicit compliment strategy than males. (4) Both male and female subjects prefer to give more explicit compliment for clothing and appearance than for ability and accomplishment. Besides, they use more non-compliment strategy for ability and accomplishment than for clothing and appearance.

Gender differences are observed in using compliment response strategies: (1) the most popular compliment response strategy that males and females mostly use is acceptance, which females use more than males. However, males use more acceptance with amendment, non-acceptance, and no response strategy than females. (2) The mostly used compliment response strategy by male and female subjects for different topics is acceptance. For topic on clothing and appearance, both males and females prefer to accept compliments from others directly with the strategy of acceptance. However, for topic on ability and accomplishment, males mostly use acceptance with amendment, while females mostly use acceptance. Moreover, males use no response strategy for

ability and accomplishment more frequently than for clothing and appearance, while females use combination strategy for ability and accomplishment more frequently than for clothing and appearance.

Previous studies show that there are some differences and similarities in compliments and compliment responses within or across cultures. (Pomerantz, 1978; Herbert, 1988; Holmes, 1988; Chen, 1993) The use of compliment strategies and compliment response strategies in this study is consistent with New Zealand English speakers (Holmes, 1988) and American English speakers (Herbert, 1988).

It is concluded that gender differences in compliments and compliment responses by Chinese international students are mostly a compromise under the guidance by Politeness Principles and Sociolinguistic views in language. This paper reports a real picture of Chinese international students against the long-rooted traditional Chinese compliment and compliment response patterns. The use of compliment and compliment response strategies has changed a lot and is much different with the traditional patterns. Furthermore, the gender differences also reflect the influence of social development on the language behavior of males and females.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The present research provides a new perspective for the analysis of compliment behavior in English by Chinese international students. This study contributes to cross-cultural communication studies of speech act. It can complement the previous research and launch another research agenda. The study of compliments and compliment responses strategies about Chinese international students can help teachers know how to teach students using them and make second language learners know how to use them in their daily life. It also helps to strengthen the language learners' pragmatic consciousness in language use.

The information regarding the patterns and lexical carriers of compliments and compliment responses in this study, together with the examples taken from the questionnaires, can provide a useful tool for a teacher of English to raise students' awareness of cultural similarities and differences in compliments and compliment responses. Chinese international students are expected to respond to others' compliment in English when they were studying abroad, the communication would break down if they keep silence or no response when they are receiving compliment from others. Therefore, students should learn how to make compliments, as it is a simple way to create friendship, receive help, or reach a business goal.

In the pedagogical field, the study suggests that language and culture should not be taught separately. Compliments and compliment responses have many functions in English, thus, EFL teachers should show the learners how to respond to an English compliment appropriately.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Study

Despite some valuable empirical findings, the demographic background of the subjects needs to be more carefully controlled. It should be further clarified according to their origin in China.

The interlocutors in each situation are equal in terms of status in this study and the topics of compliments are focused on personal appearance, ability or performance. Further studies shall explore whether interlocutors' status or topics will affect strategy choice in compliment behaviors.

Finally, other social variables such as familiarity of the interlocutors, the relationship of the interlocutors were not controlled in the present study, which can be considered in future studies.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In Goody, E.N. (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, R. (1993). Responding to Compliments: A Contrastive Study of Politeness Strategies between American English and Chinese Speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 20, 49-75.
- Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking Difference: on Gender and Language*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press.
- Feng, J.H. (2003). A Contrastive Study of Gender-differentiated Paired Words between English and Chinese. *Journal of Foreign Language Study*, 18-24. Nanjin: Foreign Language Study Press.
- Feng, Y. (2006). The Differences in Chinese and English Compliments Explains by Optimality Policy Theory. *Journal of Shaihai Foreign Language Research*, 4, 5-12.
- Guo, A.X. (1996). Do Chinese Like to Deny Compliments? *Journal of Beijin University*, 145-149.
- Golato, A. (2002). German Compliment Responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 547-571.
- Gu, Y. G. (1990). Politeness Phenomena in Modem Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics*14, 237-257.
- Gu, Y. G. (1992). Politeness, Pragmatics and Culture. *Foreign Language Teaching and Studying*, 4, 12-19. Beijing:Beijin Foreign Language Teaching and Studying Press.

- Gu, Y. G. (1996). Doctor-patient Interaction as Goal-directed Discourse. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 7, 156-176.
- Herbert, R. K. (1989). The Ethnography of English Compliments and Compliment Responses: A Contrastive Sketch. In Olesky, W. (Ed.), *Contrastive Pragmatics*, Amsterdam: John Benjamin.
- Herbert, R.K., & Straight, H, S, (1989). Compliment-rejection versus Compliment-Avoidance: Listener-based versus Speaker-based Pragmatic Strategies. *Language and Communication*, 9, 35-47.
- Herbert, R.K. (1990). Sex-based Differences in Compliments Behavior. *Language in Society*, 19, 201-224.
- Holmes, J. (1986). Compliments and Compliment Responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28, 85-508.
- Holmes, J., & Brown, D. F. (1987). Teachers and Students Learning about Compliments. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 523-546.
- Holmes, J. (1988). Paying Compliments: A Sex-preferential Positive Politeness Strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12, 445-465.
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men and Politeness*. London: Longman Press.
- Kasper, G. (1989). Variation in Inter-language Speech Act Realization. In Gass, S., Madden, C., Preston, D., & Selinker, L. (Eds.), *Variation in Second Language Acquisition: Discourse and Pragmatics*, 12, 37-58, Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Kasper, G., & Dahl, M. (1991). *Research Methods in Inter-language Pragmatics*. University of Hawai'i at Manoa: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). *Inter-language Pragmatics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2001). Compliment Responses among British and Spanish University Students: A Contrastive Study. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 107-127.
- Li, J. W. (2001). A Study of Western Language and Gender. *Journal of PLA Foreign Language College*, 1, 11-15.

- Manes, J., & Wolfson, N. (1981). *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Pre-patterned Speech*. The Hague, the Netherlands: Mouton Publishers.
- Manes, J. (1983). Compliments: A Mirror of Cultural Value. In Wolfson, N., & Judd, E. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*, 9, 96-102, Rowley, MA: Newsbury House.
- Maltz, D.N., & Booker, R. A. (1982). A Cultural Approach to Male-female Miscommunication. *Language and social identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, G. L., Al-batal, M., & Echols, E. (1996). Arabic and English compliment Responses: Potential for Pragmatic Failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 17, 411-432.
- Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment Responses: Notes on the Co-operation of Multiple Constraints. *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*, 79-112, New York: Academic Press.
- Quan, L.H. (2004). Gender Differences in the Use of Compliments and Compliment Responses of Chinese. *Journal of Modern Foreign Language*, 27, 62-69.
- Riger, S. (2000) *Transforming Psychology: Gender in Theory and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Searle, J.R. (1975). *Indirect Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Searle, J.R. (1976). A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society*, 5, 1-23.
- Selinker, L. (1972). "Inter-language", *IRAL, International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 10, 209-241.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wei, Y. Z. (2001). A Study of Gender Differences in Compliments. *Journal of Xi'an Foreign Language College*, 1, 1-5.
- Wang, J.J., & Xu, Z.H. (2005). A Cross-culture Contrastive Study in Compliments and Compliment Responses. *Journal of Tianjin University*, 7, 3-12.
- Wolfson, N. (1981). Compliments in Cross-cultural Perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15, 117-123.

- Wolfson, N. (1983). An Empirically based Analysis of Complimenting in American English. In Wolfson, N., & Judd, E. (Eds.). *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*, 82-95, Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers
- Wolfson, N. (1989). The Social Dynamics of Native and Non-native Variation in Complimentary Behaviors. In Eisentein, M. (Ed.), *the Dynamic Inter-language*, 219-236, New York: Plenum.
- Ye, L. (1995). Complimenting in Mandarin Chinese. In Kasper, G. (Ed.), *Pragmatics of Chinese as a Native and Target Language*, Manoa, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Yoko, U. (2003). Japanese Compliment Responses: A Comparison to American English Norms. *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, 2, 116-128.
- Zuo, H.Q. (1990). Verbal Interactions of Compliment in American English and Chinese. In Hu, W.Z. (Ed.), *Intercultural Communication -- What it Means to Chinese Learners of English*, 117-136, Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.

APPENDIX

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a master student at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics of University of Malaya. I am currently undertaking my master research report. This questionnaire is part of the study. Your input is valuable for the researcher.

The information you provide here will be used only for academic purpose. None of this information will be disclosed to any individual or organization. Your cooperation in completing the attached survey instrument is highly appreciated.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

Zhao Jianxiang

Postgraduate Candidate

Master of English as a Second Language

Faculty of Language and Linguistics

University of Malaya

Personal Information

Please provide information in the blank provided.

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
 2. Age: 18 -20 _____ 21-23 _____ 24-26 _____ above 26 _____
 3. The length of staying years in Malaysia:
2 months — 1 year _____ 1 year — 2 years _____
2 years — 3 years _____ more than 3 years _____
 4. Nationality: _____
 5. Level of Study: Undergraduate _____ Postgraduate _____ PhD _____
 6. Faculty: _____
 7. Hometown in China: _____
 8. The type of your English achievement
IELTS _____ The English proficiency test of UM _____
TOEFL _____ CET 4 _____ CET 6 _____
-

Please answer the following questions regarding your feelings during the following situations.

1. The first day of school after summer holiday, you notice your classmate Lucy is wearing a beautiful new dress.
A. You would say to her: _____
B. You would say nothing about it.

2. You go to your classmate Ann's dormitory and invite her to go shopping with you.

You notice she is wearing a new pair of glasses.

A. You would say to her: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

3. Your friend Tom studies very hard and wins the scholarship.

A. You would say to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

4. You are playing Cross Fire (CF) with your friend Alex. You notice that he plays the game very well and shoots down a lot of enemies accurately in short time.

A. You would say to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

5. Your classmates and you are singing in KTV. You notice one of your classmates Jane sings very well.

A. You would say to her: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

6. On your way to dormitory, you meet your friend LiMing who dyed his hair yellow.

A. You would say to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

7. You are wearing a new pair of shoes. You meet your friend Marry and after you greet each other, she says: “New shoes? Cool!”

A. You would reply to her: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

8. In order to attend the welcoming party for freshmen, you have dressed up. You meet the classmate Lily on your way to the party, she says: “A new hairstyle? It makes you look very fashionable.”

A. You would reply to her: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

9. You invite some friends to your home. When you are busy at cooking, one of your friends Anna say to you: “You are really good at cooking. I admire you greatly.”

A. You would reply to her: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

10. After you finish your presentation in spoken English class, one of your classmates, LinTao says to you: “You really did an excellent job. Your spoken English is very good.”

A. You would reply to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

11. You are wearing a scarf. You meet a friend Linli and after you greet each other, he says: "How beautiful the scarf is!"

A. You would reply to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.

12. You get high score in your final exam. Your classmate Tim congratulates you: "Wow, you are so brilliant, and you are my idol!"

A. You would reply to him: _____

B. You would say nothing about it.