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Courtney Price Bodily
Brigham Young University - Provo

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Among Chinese ESL LDS Missionaries

Courtney Price Bodily

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Master of Arts

William G. Eggington, Chair
Wendy Baker-Smemoe
Dallin D. Oaks

Department of Linguistics and English Language

Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatic Transfer of Compliment Responses
Among Chinese ESL LDS Missionaries

Courtney Price Bodily
Department of Linguistics and English Language BYU
Master of Arts

This study investigates the pragmatic transfer Chinese Latter-day Saint (LDS) missionaries speaking English display when responding to compliments in English conversations. Previous studies have shown that native American English speakers have a higher rate of compliment acceptance in their compliment response (CR) strategies. While, native Chinese speakers have a higher rate of denial in their CRs (. A common research question is whether or not CR strategies transfer from a Chinese English speaker's first language (L1) into their English conversations. To measure this, 40 missionaries from the LDS church participated in naturalized role plays. Half were native Chinese (10 male, 10 female), and the other half were native American (10 male and 10 female). Each missionary participated in two role play situations, once with a male researcher and once with a female researcher. These role plays were conducted in English. In each role play the researcher complimented the participant in four areas: 1) ability, 2) native culture/hometown, 3) the LDS church, 4) a small possession (e.g. watch, tie, skirt, etc). CRs were recorded then organized on a CR continuum. A series of univariate and related measures ANOVAs was used to measure significance. Results suggest that Chinese missionaries tend to downgrade and disagree with compliments more than American missionaries. Additionally, female Chinese missionaries tend to overgeneralize using the appreciation token when responding to compliments. Other significant findings include the effect of gender and compliment topic on the missionaries' CR strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

INDEX OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

China's recent rise into global superpower status is becoming more and more evident (Hu, 2011). Moreover, the gaps between the economic and social relations of America and China are becoming smaller. As such, there is increasing opportunities for conflict between the two countries (Friedberg, 2005). In his article, Friedberg asks if the relationship between these two countries will "be marked by convergence toward deepening cooperation, stability, and peace or by deterioration that leads to increasingly open competition and perhaps even war?" ((p. 7). While this thesis will not answer questions on economics or politics, it will explore opportunities to improve communication between the two emerging cultures as well as suggest ways to prevent misunderstanding in Chinese-American conversations. When founded in understanding and respect, relationships have a better chance at becoming cooperative, stable, and peaceful.

Interestingly, one of the most difficult parts of understanding another culture is often not covered in classrooms. For example, as English language learners develop primary language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—many of them still face moments of misunderstanding and language breakdown. Take, for example, a Latter-day Saint (LDS) missionary from China assigned to proselytize in the United States using English. After several visits with a role-playing "investigator" at the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo, the missionary expressed frustration with the lack of progress the "investigator" was making. In a follow up interview, the "investigator" shared that they felt like they couldn't connect with the missionary. Interaction seemed flat and cold. When asked, the investigator stated that the missionary had excellent English and at no point was it difficult to understand what the missionary was saying. There did seem to exist, however, a "wall" between the two people that

words were failing to break down. One explanation for this "wall" could be the existence of a cultural differences that transfer from the Chinese missionary's culture into their English interactions; known as *pragmatic transfer* (Kasper, 1992; Thomas, 1983) (Kasper, 1992)..

PRAGMATIC TRANSFER

Pragmatic transfer is described as the way a learner's pragmatic knowledge of their own native language and culture influences their understanding, use, and learning of L2 pragmatic information (Kasper, 1992; Thomas, 1983) (Kasper, 1992). Through the language acquisition process, compliments have displayed a large amount of pragmatic transfer from first (L1) to second (L2) languages (Holmes & Brown, 1987). While some transfer is conducive to L2 acquisition, some transfer is not conducive and is instead confusing (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Holmes, 1988). The latter form of pragmatic transfer results in what would be termed *pragmatic failure* and is described by Thomas, one of the foremost researchers of pragmatics, as "an area of cross-cultural communication breakdown which has received very little attention from language teachers" (1983, p. 22).. As English learners master writing, reading, speaking and listening, many still struggle with communicative competence because of pragmatic failure. An item of specific interest in pragmatic transfer research is the use of compliment responses among ESL learners (Bu, 2010) (Bu, 2010). This study is aimed at collecting empirical data that will allow us to (1) observe compliment response strategies used by Chinese ESL learners in English and compare them to a native English speaking control group, (2) classify the most common areas of pragmatic transfer in compliment responses, and (3) observe the effect gender has on CRs across the two cultural and gender groups.

It is important to note that my goal is not to suggest that every English learner needs to adopt Anglo-Saxon methods of pragmatic competence or usage. Instead, I hope to equip English language learners (ELLs) with the appropriate tools they might need to accurately represent themselves and their intentions in a conversation. To illustrate, a learner from a culture A wants to travel to and communicate with people from culture B. Culture A values humility in social interactions and encourages rejecting a compliment to display modesty in conversations. Culture B values agreement in social interaction and encourages speakers to agree with each other in order to display politeness. If the learner has the intention to maintain social appropriateness in a conversation with a native from culture B, their original methods of disagreeing with a compliment would be misunderstood and come across as impolite. In other words, Thomas (1983) points out that while grammatical errors are "apparent in the surface structure," pragmatic errors are "rarely recognized as such by non-linguists." Because of this, a native speaker "is likely to attribute [the ESL speaker]'s apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to boorishness or ill-will" (29) the learner would need pragmatic understanding of culture B to successfully represent their intentions in a conversation.

MISSIONARIES

I focused my study on native Chinese and English speakers because, as Yu (2003) points out "when it comes to responding to compliments, studies have indicated that there seem to be substantial differences between native Chinese and American English speakers" (pg. 1694). Generally, native Chinese speakers tend to use more non-acceptance response strategies and English speakers tend to use more acceptance response strategies (Bu, 2010; Yu, 2003). When these compliment response strategies cross cultures, pragmatic failure can occur.

To introduce the group observed in this study I will provide a brief history and explanation of who they are and what they do. LDS missionaries have been in existence for almost 200 years. Over this time span, missionary age requirements and responsibilities have changed and adapted. Today, young men older than 18 and young women older than 19 who practice the LDS religion are allowed to apply to serve a mission. These men and women come from all over the world, including countries like: Jordan, China, the Philippines, Greece, Italy, Germany, Canada, Kazakhstan, etc. The men serve as missionaries for two years and the women serve for 18 months. Participation in a mission is voluntary and self-financed. Missionaries do not receive compensation for their work.

After submitting an application, the missionary awaits a letter that contains their "mission call." This letter provides information on where they will serve, what language they will speak, and where they will receive training. Provo, Utah is the flagship training center. More explanation on the nature of this facility is provided later in this chapter.

It is important to introduce why LDS missionaries were chosen for this study. A growing population in the second language acquisition world is that of religious missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Thousands of young men and women from this population volunteer to proselytize. Many of these volunteers are assigned to serve in foreign countries speaking a foreign language. I chose to focus on missionaries because their responsibilities necessitate a certain level of politeness and pragmatic competence. It is important that they display a standard of professionalism and understanding when they teach and interact with others because they are a representation of their religion to the world. The missionary training manual, called *Preach My Gospel* (2004) has a chapter on language learning. A section on cultural awareness states:

"Culture and language are closely related. Understanding the culture will help explain why language is used the way it is. Strive to understand the culture of the people so that you can communicate the unique aspects of the message of the Restoration in a way that will be clear to them.

One of the greatest things you can do to gain people's trust and love is to embrace their culture in appropriate ways. Many great missionaries have done so (see 1 Corinthians 9:20–23). Seek to have the people feel comfortable with you and your language." (pg. 132)

According to this passage, missionaries are encouraged by their leaders to "understand" and "embrace [their mission] culture in appropriate ways" in order to better understands the way their mission language functions. Because of the contrasting views of politeness between Chinese and American culture (Yu, 2003) I chose to contrast these two cultures in this study. I recognize that the missionary population is small, and therefore not directly applicable to most ELLs. However, because of the professional nature of missionary responsibilities, and the implications that can thus be applied to other more common ELL groups (e.g., businessmen, students, politicians, etc.) I found this group to be appropriate for my study.

MISSIONARY TRAINING CENTER

I want to take a moment to introduce the Provo Missionary Training Center (MTC). This facility has been in operation for over 45 years. It houses LDS missionaries year-round. In addition to providing living arrangements, the training center does what its name suggests—train. Hundreds of teachers are employed and trained on how to train missionaries in areas including second language usage and acquisition, and training. These teachers are recently returned missionaries, most of them college students at local universities.

When missionaries are assigned to serve in a second language some of them already speak that language, while others may have never uttered a word in that language before. Those who already have experience in that language take an oral proficiency test. If they score high in the proficiency test, those missionaries are assigned to an advanced language (ADL) classroom.

A typical day spent by a missionary in the MTC consists of two blocks of three-hour classes with a teacher, study time, meals, gym time, and teaching lessons. The people who missionaries teach consist of other missionaries, teachers, and paid actors. All of them take on a role of a person interested in investigating the LDS church. Missionaries have a tight schedule with very little flexibility. For this reason, and several others, conducting research with missionaries can be difficult. We were fortunate to have the cooperation of the missionaries, teachers, and coordinators at the MTC to operate the research conducted in this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do native Chinese and American missionaries differ in the degree to which they accept or avoid compliments?
2. Does the compliment topic affect the degree to which each cultural group accepts or avoids the compliment?
3. Does gender affect the degree to which each cultural group accepts or avoids the compliment?

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature will analyze the previous research relevant to the current study. A significant amount of research has already been conducted on native Chinese learners' of English language strategies (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Tran, 2007; Yu, 2003). This review will look at the most prevalent as well as the most recent findings in this area. The aims of this literature review are to define in greater detail what pragmatic transfer is, the nature of compliment responses (hereafter called "CRs"), differences between Chinese and American culture regarding politeness and CRs, and finally review previous studies done on the CR transfer of Chinese learners of English. As far as I know, no reported data has yet been collected on LDS Chinese missionary CR strategies. Because of this, my study will add a unique perspective to the current conversation on Chinese ELLs and compliment responses. First, we will review the research that has already been collected.

PRAGMATIC FAILURE

Thomas (1983) defines this as "the inability to understand 'what is meant by what is said'" (p. 22). Thomas argues that there are two types of pragmatic failure: 1) *pragmalinguistic failure* meaning when speech act strategies transfer from L1 to L2 inappropriately, and 2) *sociopragmatic failure* which refers to the social conditions that exist within a language. Examples of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures are illustrated in an article by Lucía Fernández Amaya (2008). Pragmalinguistic failure is what happens when an ELL is asked "can you pass the salt?" and interprets it as the speaker questioning their physical ability to lift and pass a salt shaker across a table (13). Sociopragmatic failure is what happened to Amaya when

she was living in London with an Algerian landlord and Italian tenant. When the Italian man cursed in front of Amaya one day, the Algerian landlord demanded that he apologize for swearing in front of a woman. Both Amaya and the Italian were surprised by the request because swearing with a woman present was not as socially offensive in their native cultures as it was to the Algerian (14). Amaya continues to describe the awkward nature of her stay because of the sociopragmatic failure that took place in that short exchange. These examples provide essential insight into the difficulty ELLs face in achieving communicative competence because pragmatic failure occurs without their knowledge of how it happened or how it can be avoided. Sometimes they are not even aware of the problem to begin with.

Thomas emphasizes the complexity of teaching sociopragmatic competence stating that "sociopragmatic decisions are social before they are linguistic," (Thomas, 1983, p. 38) meaning that a student needs to have social competence of their L2 culture in order to develop communicative competence in their L2 conversations. A student can produce a language script that is grammatically acceptable, but still fail to represent their meaning through that script. For example, if the Italian man mentioned in the example above had used expletives in front of a woman with the same cultural background as the Algerian landlord, instead of Amaya, the meaning the Italian was trying to express with his language would have been masked by his "inappropriate" language choices in that conversational context. As students become more culturally aware, they are able to have better pragmatic and communicative competence.

Thomas' article takes an analytic approach to understanding and defining the complications that lie behind pragmatic teaching in the classroom. Thomas has had extensive experience teaching in ESL settings and her article called "Cross-cultural pragmatic failure" has

been cited over sixteen-hundred times in peer-reviewed journals. In many respects, she is the foremost leader in the study of pragmatic failure.

While Thomas conducted no empirical research in this article, she poses several valid qualitative points such as the importance of teachers not only diagnosing pragmatic failure in their students, but discovering the causes and finding a long term solution. Moreover, Thomas argues that pragmatic competence can't be achieved simply by absorption; rather, a student needs explicit formalization both early on and frequently throughout their language learning experience. As far as explicit formulization is concerned, the article does not supply material to educate teachers on how to formulate pragmatic teaching in a classroom setting. Instead, it provides a springboard of information a teacher could use to create his/her own materials. The current study deals with both the potential pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure that can take place when a Chinese ELL responds to a compliment while adhering to the Chinese idea of politeness with a non-Chinese English speaker. The study aims to also provide educational data for teachers involved with Native Chinese learners of English and help these learners increase their communicative competence.

POLITENESS: DIFFERENCES ACROSS CULTURES

The research reviewed in this section revolves heavily around Brown and Levinson's (1987) discussion on politeness. That is, speakers use politeness by attempting to help those they communicate with save face when confronted by a face-threatening act. The "face" referred to in this work is essentially the social image one carries. Face-threatening acts (FTAs) refers to positive FTAs, or something that might threaten the hearer's self-image (e.g. criticisms or

disagreements) and negative FTAs, meaning the speaker restricting the personal freedom of the hearer through saying something that demands a response (e.g. requests, threats, compliments, etc.). A compliment is a type of positive face threatening act because it requires a response, often one that is anticipated to be positive (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, someone says they like another's shoes. When this happens, the hearer has restricted freedom in how they should respond if they want to maintain politeness in the conversation. In extending the compliment, the speaker expresses a positive emotion toward the hearer and anticipates similar emotion to be reciprocated through the response to the compliment. If the hearer fails to match the same emotion, they act impolitely. Brown and Levinson treat their politeness theories as universal. While their article is arguably the most cited work on the topic, current researchers suggest that their theories on politeness favor an Anglo-Saxon culture and, therefore, are not universal standards (Bargiella-Chiappini, 2003; Chen, 2013; Gu, 1990).

Gu notes the importance of investigating culture-specific politeness (Gu, 1990), proposing four Chinese-specific politeness maxims. These maxims are discussed and defined by Song (2012).The maxims include the Self-denigrating Maxim, which involves putting one's-self down and elevating another. Next is the Address Maxim, or the terms one uses to address the one they are speaking to/about regarinf their relationship and the hearer's status in society, Third is the Tact Maxim, which focuses on minimalization of cost to self and maximization of benefit to others. Finally, the Generosity Maxim, which maximizes cost to self, minimizes benefit (Song, 2012, p. 25). The Self-denigrating Maxim explains the more common reactions native Chinese speakers give to compliments in previous research (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Wolfson, 1981; Yu, 2003). An example is:

A: You have excellent English

B: No, my English is not so good. I am a poor student.

On the other hand, American English speakers tend to follow a different set of politeness Maxims when responding to compliments. One of the most prevelant is Leech's Agreement Maxim (Cutting, 2002). This maxim suggests that the hearer tends to agree with the speaker to maximize agreement and minimize disagreement. For example:

A: You have excellent Chinese.

B: Yeah, well, I'm still wokring on it.

Because American speakers view disagreeing with the opinion of another speaker as impolite (Brown & Levinson, 1987), responses to compliments tend to support the claim of the compliment (Nelson, 1996). From this we see that politeness is a relevant term that hinges on differences of cultural opinion. What is acceptable in one culture can be unacceptable, impolite, or uncommon in another. American culture strives to minimize disagreement in CRs. Chinese culture strives to maintin modesty through self-denegration. When complimented by an American who anticipates and emotionally postive response equal to their ocmpliment, Chinese English speakers run into the potential of vioating that expectation in an attempt to save face through adhering to the politeness strategy of self-denegration. These two politeness strategies contradict wach other, making CRs a a popular point of study when used between native Chinese and native American English speakers (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Holmes, 1988; Wang, 2003; Yu, 2003).

Compliments are used in many different ways during social exchanges, such as breaking ice, changing topics, flattering, and building rapport (Cheng, 2011; Holmes, 1987; Tran, 2007). Holmes and Brown (1987) suggest that paying and identifying and paying compliments appropriately is an important element to a student's communicative competence (p. 523). By "communicative competence" I mean the social knowledge a speaker applies when using language tools (grammar, vocabulary, syntax, etc.) to communicate. Holmes and Brown perform theorize that the role compliments and their responses play in a student's ability to achieve communicative competence is important. The authors provide examples throughout the article displaying the ways misunderstandings can arise in compliment exchanges between parties from different cultural groups. One such example is a compliment exchange between a New Zealander of European descent (complimenter) and a Samoan friend (recipient).

Complimenter: What an unusual necklace. It's beautiful.

Recipient: Please take it.

(Holmes & Brown, Teacher and students learning about compliments, 1987, p. 526)

In this example the recipient of the compliment is from a culture where a compliment on an item communicates a desire to obtain that item. The complimenter, on the other hand, is from a culture where a compliment on an item is simply a way to break ice or create a stronger bond in a relationship. This example is insightful into how pragmatic failure can manifest in conversation. Because of the complexity of compliments and the many meanings that can be drawn from them, Holmes suggests that it is the teacher's responsibility to identify potential sources of misunderstandings and apply them in teaching situations (p. 527). Holmes provides no

experimental research, but expresses the need for experimental data regarding compliments and their role in communicative competence. Since the publication of this article, ample research has surfaced that analyzes what is happening when ELLs are faced with situations where they must either compliment or respond to compliments in an appropriate way or foster misunderstanding (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Tran, 2007; Yu, 2003). The current study aims to add to the already growing conversation on this matter.

In order to understand the nature of CRs, it is essential to have a method of organization. To do this, I will to refer to an article by Tran (2007). Table 1 and Table 2 consist of the continua Tran uses to categorize the potential responses that can be given to a compliment. These continua are a useful measuring stick for CRs and will be used in organizing and analyzing the results of this study. The first continuum is called the "acceptance" continuum. The responses in this continuum involve the receiver acknowledging the compliment and the response correlates with the item complimented. This acknowledgement happens when the receiver agrees or disagrees with the compliment (or something between the two). For example:

Complimenter: I like your shoes.

Receiver: Thanks! I like them too!

The "them" in this response refers to the shoes, and the receiver is showing agreement with what the complimenter has said about them. The second continuum is the avoidance continuum—this includes responses that do not directly address the compliment. For example:

Complimenter: I like your shoes.

Receiver: What do you like about them?

Here the receiver addresses the shoes, but does not agree or disagree with the notion that they are likable.

In his article, Tran suggests that there is a movement happening in CRs. In Table 1 this movement is a gradient of most accepting (upgrade) to least accepting (downgrade). In table 2 the movement is from least avoiding (express gladness) to most avoiding (opt out).The table uses arrows to display this movement from positive responses to negative responses. These continua allow for easy organization of CRs and will be used as a foundation to the data collected in the current study.

TABLE 1: *Tran's (2007) Acceptance to Denial Continuum*

Upgrade → Agreement → Appreciation Token→ Return → Explanation → Reassignment → Non-idiomatic Response → Disagreement → Downgrade

Table 2: *Tran's (2007) Avoidance Continuum*

Express Gladness → Follow-Up Question→ Doubting Question → Opt Out

To better understand what each point of the continua refers to, the researcher of the current study composed a list of CR examples to match each category listed in *Table 1*. This list is in Table 3.

Table 3: *CR Continua Example Sentences*

Compliment: I like your shoes

ACCEPTANCE TO DENIAL CONTINUUM

1. Compliment Upgrade
   They were really expensive!
2. Agreement
   I like them too.
3. Appreciation Token
   Thank you!
4. Return
   I like yours too!
5. Explanation
   I needed white shoes, so I got them.
6. Reassignment
   My mom got them for me.
7. Non-idiomatic response
   Oh!
8. Disagreement
   I don't like them.
9. Compliment Downgrade
   Really? They are very old.

THE AVOIDANCE CONTINUUM

1. Expressing gladness
   I'm glad you do!
2. Follow-up question
   What do you like about them?
3. Doubting question
   Why do you like *these* old things?
4. Opting out
   Did we have any homework today?

These continua will be used in this study primarily to make comparison to previous research possible (Bu, 2010).

TRANSFER FROM EAST TO WEST

A dominant force that motivates Chinese CRs is the idea of saving face (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Yu, 2003). According to Chinese author Lin YuTang, Chinese face refers not to "a face that can be washed or shaved, but a face that can be 'granted' and 'lost' and 'fought for' and 'presented as a gift.' Here we arrive at the most curious point of Chinese social psychology. Abstract and intangible, it is yet the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated" (1935, pp.199-200). The way face is lost when something diminishes the social image of a person. These can include speech acts, like responding to a compliment (Yu, 2003).

Yu suggests that fear of losing face motivates parties from Chinese cultural backgrounds to avoid individualization and instead blend in with the group. Standing out from the crowd, in Chinese culture, suggests arrogance and pride. Modesty and humility help save face. Yu explains this further saying, "modesty is one of the most critical constituents of their self-image. Accordingly, in their eyes, lowering themselves helps to maintain or even enhance their image, and more importantly, doing so attends to others' face needs and in turn protects their own, so that their behavior may be regarded as polite (p. 1700).

American culture, on the other hand, encourages celebration of the individual and opportunities to succeed independently (Fox-Genovese, 1990). A book on the social element of Americans by Bellah and other authors states that in childhood most Americans were taught that independence and self reliance were admirable traits. Moreover, was important to establish yourself apart from others, or gain individuality (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2008). Due to these differences, transfer of face-saving strategies between the cultures can create opportunities for communicative breakdown when peoples of these cultures interact.

To illustrate: an American who is trying to build rapport by accepting and upgrading compliments may be viewed as arrogant and self-centered by a Chinese culture group. A Chinese speaker, conversely, may be viewed as insecure or unfriendly as they reject, downgrade, and even disagree with a compliment in an attempt to appear humble and avoid standing out. Referring back to the missionary mentioned earlier, a common reaction he gave to personal compliments was a disagreement and quick change of subject. Unfamiliar with the Chinese culture, the American investigator felt uncomfortable with these responses. Having anticipated a response with similar positive emotion, the investigator assumed the Chinese missionary was unfriendly and a little rude. Also, instead of recognizing the communication breakdown as

cultural in nature, the investigator began to question if the missionary disliked them. The missionary slowly began to sense distance from the investigator and assumed a lack of interest in the message and doubted his abilities to speak clearly in English. Both parties sensed the consequences of the problem but misunderstood where it stemmed from.

Another article that shares valuable insights into cross-cultural compliment issues is written by Nessa Wolfson (1981). This article, and many others of Wolfson's, is a foundational piece on compliments in ESL settings. In the article Wolfson points out that a common problem in cross cultural complimenting is that what may resemble a compliment in one culture does not have the same effect in another (117). Therefore, a pragmatic transfer that may take place is not only the way one responds to a compliment, but also their ability to recognize a compliment altogether. In this article, Wolfson uses a series of compliment exchanges collected from different cultures including American, Indonesian, Japanese, and others. Wolfson then dissects the pragmatics behind the compliments and shows where misunderstanding can take place in recognizing the compliment, thus interfering with an appropriate response to the compliment in a different culture.

This article also takes the opportunity to observe specific features compliments have in American English. One of these features is that they lack originality. In observing a large corpus the researcher noticed that American compliments use repetitive lexical items in describing the complimented object. Because of this, Wolfson suggests that compliments in American English are very formulaic, especially when it comes to adjectives. The most common adjectives used in compliments are *nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty*, and *great* (120). Further work on this topic was explored in another article by Wolfson and Manes (1981). Because of this formulaic nature,

Wolfson's opinions seem to agree with Thomas' (1983); that is, formalized instruction is the most effective way to teach pragmatic competence to ELLs.

Overall Wolfson's articles provide some interesting insights into the formulization in compliment-based interaction. Pragmatic transfer doesn't only manifest itself in the form of a CR, but also in understanding the meaning of the compliments as well as recognizing the compliment as a compliment. If an ELL does not understand or recognize the compliment, they will not be able to respond appropriately. This will be taken into consideration when reviewing the data for my study.

COMPLIMENT RESPONSES

CRs and their use among Chinese ELLs have become a popular topic of research (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Tran, 2006; Yu, 2004). These studies all show a common pattern in Chinese CR strategies, that being the common use of disagreement. This portion of the literature review will look at previous studies in CRs and the additional patterns across the studies conducted

First, a study conducted by Jie Min Bu (2010) was created to measure the differences in CRs between native Chinese speakers, Chinese English language learners, and Native English speakers. Bu's aim was to look for what patterns transferred into the Chinese ELL's English interactions. Like researchers before him, Bu suggests through this study that Chinese English students do undergo a transfer in CR strategies. To measure this, Bu created a series of naturalized role plays to extract data. One participant was paired with one researcher in each role play. Two role plays were performed by each participant.

The participants consisted of 10 native English speakers, 10 Chinese ELLs, and 10 native Chinese speakers unassociated with English. Each person involved was given a card outlining the scenario and objectives of the role play. The researcher's card had additional information regarding the compliments that were to be planted as naturally as possible in the role play conversation. These compliments were directed toward English ability, appearance, a bike, and an accessory. As the participants were complimented, their responses were documented and placed on one of two CR continuum (acceptance to denial continuum and avoidance continuum) created by Tran (2008). The data was charted and compared. *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* illustrate the results seen in these studies.

FIGURE 1: Bu (2010) Acceptance to Denial Results
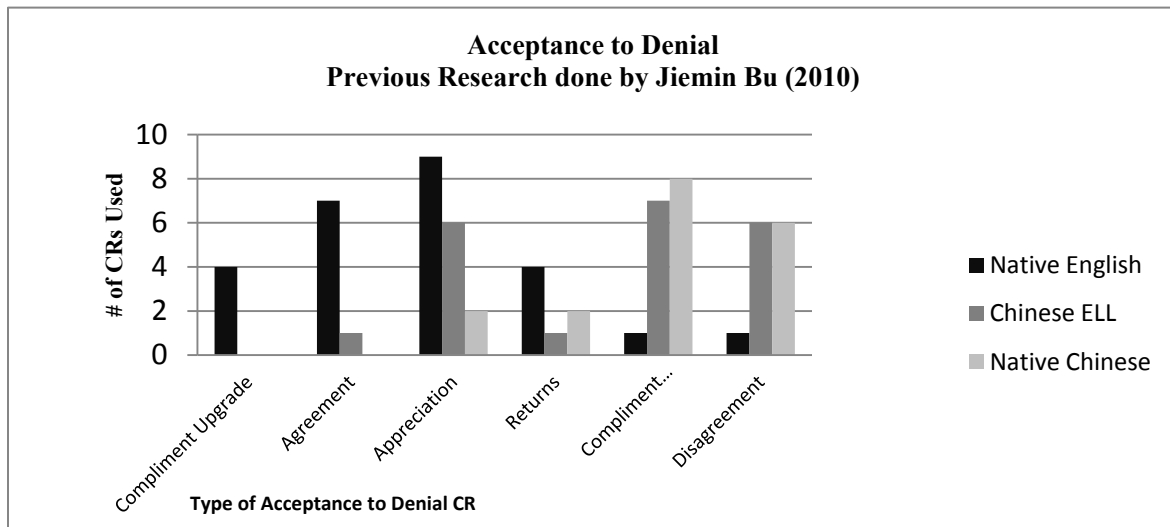
FIGURE 2: Bu (2010) Avoidance Results
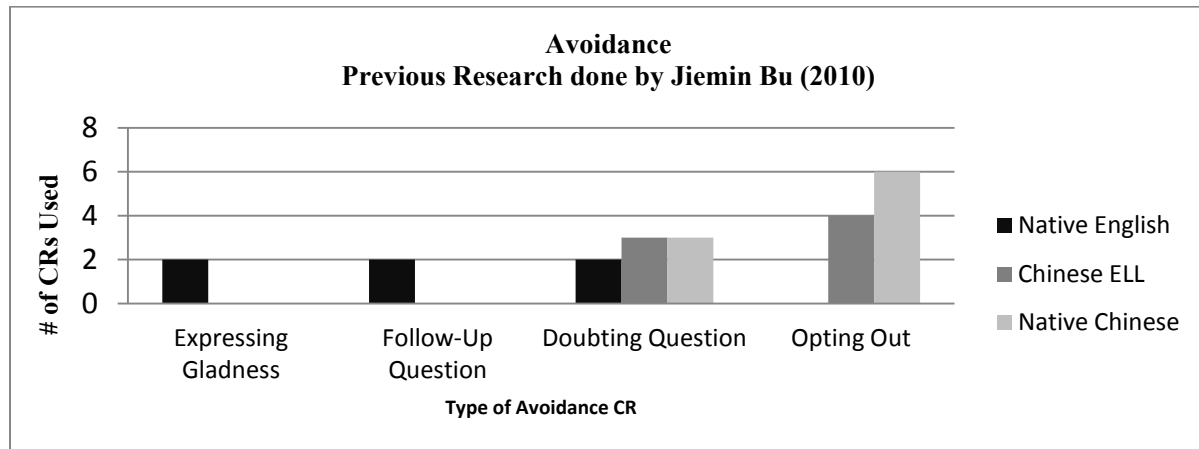
Overall, Bu's research provides an interesting perspective into this idea of CR transfer. A large concern I have relating to this research is the lack of attention given to the gender of the participants. The gender of the interviewer was also not acknowledged, which may have influence on the way the participants responded to the compliment. Another concern is the recruitment of the participants; it is not clear where or how they were recruited. Since this is a project aimed at reviewing cultural transfer, it seems important to understand the cultural background of the participants, such as where they were from and how much exposure they had had to native English speakers. Finally, the number of participants is small. Ten participants in each language category do not seem to be enough to generalize an entire culture.

Aside from these concerns, the other methods in the study (role plays, continua, etc.) appear to be effective and well founded. For these reasons I will replicate this study while making some modifications to my own study.

Another form of pragmatic incompetence displayed by Chinese ELLs is the overuse of "thank you" as a CR. In a similar study to Bu's, it was found that overgeneralization was happening as Chinese students used "thank you" a majority of the time when complimented,

failing to use other strategies that may have been more native-sounding (Cheng, 2011). This study also used naturalistic role plays as a means to extract CR data from Chinese ESL, Chinese EFL, and American English speakers.

A third study on Chinese CR strategies (Yu, 2003) organizes the responses by six categories: acceptance strategies (e.g. appreciation token, agreement, pleasure, etc.), amendment strategies (e.g., return, downgrade, upgrade, question, etc.), non-acceptance strategies (e.g., disagreement, qualification, diverge, etc.), face relationship related response strategies (e.g. "I'm embarrassed), combination strategies (e.g. appreciation token + amendment), and finally no acknowledgement or silence (p. 1688). Like Tran's continuum (Tran, 2007) Yu has categories that account for acceptance, denial, and avoidance strategies. These categories are not as specific in explaining how the compliment was accepted, rejected, or avoided as Tran's. Because of this, Tran's continuum will be used to assess the data in the current study. One contribution Yu's organization will provide for the current study is the category "face relationship related response strategy" which refer to responses that show an attempt on the participant's part to address the compliment but not to accept, deny, or avoid the compliment. An example Yu gives is the response *"I'm embarrassed"* (p. 1688). Because Tran's continuum only accounts for responses that accept, deny, or avoid the compliment this category will be added into the analysis of the data from my research in order to more clearly label and assess the CRs.

Other studies have found patterns in compliment topics (Lin & Woodfield, 2012; Wang & Tsai, 2003). Wang and Tsai (2003) found that Chinese men and women tended to give more compliments on appearance than on topics like ability, possession, or personality. Manes and Wolfson (1981) found that Americans compliments can be divided into two groups: appearance/possession and ability/achievements. Wang and Tsai (2003) mention that Americans

tend to compliment on possessions like jewelry, clothing, hairstyle, children, pets, significant

others, houses, and cars (p. 6). They note that Chinese compliment exchanges tend to avoid these

topics. These findings may assist in clarifying further the components that contribute to

pragmatic failure in CRs between the two culture groups as the Chinese ELLs are not used to

receiving compliments on certain topics in their own language, let alone in English. The role that

compliment topic plays in the CR strategies is a factor that will be considered in this study.

GENDER AND CRS

An important variable to consider when conducting pragmatic research is the influence

gender plays on what is considered sociopragmatically correct. The experience given by Amaya

(2008) and her Albanian landlord is an example of how the gender can affect what is considered

appropriate in a conversation involving both male and female speakers. Indeed, the gender of the

persons involved in a compliment exchange can have a strong influence on which compliments

and which responses are used (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Nordenstam, 1992; Wang & Tsai,

2003)(Wang & Tsai, 2003) (Wang & Tsai, 2003). It is not accurate to claim that gender roles are

perfectly generalizable; however, patterns among gender conversation styles have been

characterized in studies (Nordenstam, 1992). Research by Nordenstam looks at conversational

styles of men and women in private settings, using recordings of informal conversations of

participants in their own homes. Nordenstam recognizes that it is not possible to generalize

gender conversation strategies to all people, but argues that there are some clear distinctions

evident in casual conversations. Additionally, studies show that a compliment or its response in a

cross-gender and same-gender conversation can go well beyond the literal meaning and imply

sexual interest as well as establish masculinity and femininity (Cutting, 2002; Herbert, 1990; Johnson & Roen, 1992; Rees-Miller 2011).

A corpus study on compliment responses of Taiwan Mandarin speakers found differences in the way speakers of each gender responded (Wang & Tsai, 2003). A large body of material was analyzed, 454 compliment/response exchanges, giving the results to this study high validity and authenticity. The major findings of this research indicate that both genders tended to disagree with the compliment, but in different ways. Males were more likely to outright disagree, and females tended to respond with surprise. The pattern of disagreement as a dominant CR and this study supports the results of previous studies mentioned which also show disagreement to be a common CR among Chinese speakers (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Yu, 2003).

Studies done on American English compliments have also found patterns between genders (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1988). Herbert (1990) found that men use compliments to praise while women use compliments as a tool to build unity and give support. Holmes (1988) noticed that women gave and received a greater number of compliments than did men. This will be taken into consideration for the current study.

SUMMARY

To summarize the main points made in this review of literature, I have constructed Table 4 to review the topics addressed in this review of literature, and the ways these topics may differ between American and Chinese cultures. Each of these areas assists in understanding the background of my research questions as well as the construction, methods, and analysis of my study.

TABLE 4: *Summary of Review of Literature*

Topic	Chinese	American
Pragmatic Failure	Leads to communicative breakdown and confusion for ELLs (Thomas, 1983). As a result, Chinese may be seen as cold, unfriendly, and ungrateful through their CRs by Americans.	Lack of pragmatic awareness can lead to misunderstanding and stereotyping (Thomas, 1983). Americans may be seen as arrogant, self-praising, and lacking modesty through their CRs by Chinese.
Politeness	Adhere to Gu's Self-denigrating Maxim, See modesty and humility as polite (Gu, 1990).	Adhere to Leech's Agreement Maxim (Cutting, 2002).
Compliment Responses: Acceptance to Denial	Tend to deny compliments, downgrade, disagree, or use an appreciation token in English (Bu, 2010) (Bu, 2010). Overgeneralization of "thank you" has been observed in CRs (Cheng, 2011).	Tend to upgrade, agree, return, and express appreciation (Bu, 2010).
Compliment Responses: Avoidance	Tend to use doubting question or opt out of responding to a compliment in English (Bu, 2010).	Tend to express gladness and use follow up questions (Bu, 2010).
Gender	Females tend to express surprise while males tend to disagree when given a compliment (Wang & Tsai, 2003).	Females see compliments as a tool for unity while males use them more for praise (Herbert R. K., 1990).
Topics	Tend to compliment on appearance more than possession, ability, and achievement (Wang & Tsai, 2003)	Tend to compliment possession and ability regularly in compliment exchanges (Wang & Tsai, 2003).
Value	Tend to value the group over the individual (Yu, 2003).	Tend to value the individual over the group (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2008).

INTRODUCTION

In order to answer the research questions—that is, the effects culture, gender, and compliment topic have on levels of acceptance and avoidance in the CR strategies of Chinese and American missionaries speaking English (hereafter CMSE); an experiment was conducted to collect samples of authentic compliment responses from Chinese and American missionaries in English conversations. This chapter will outline the research design, rationale, and rating methods of my study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

REPLICATION

This study was designed to elicit and review compliment responses from Chinese and American missionaries through naturalized role plays. To do this, I replicated (with modifications) a study done by Bu (2010). In his study, Bu used 30 participants. Of these 30, 10 were native English speakers, 10 were native Chinese ESL students, and the final 10 were native Chinese speakers with no English experience. Each speaker participated in two role plays with a researcher that embedded four compliments into each role play. The responses to these compliments were arranged on a compliment response (hereafter CR) continuum created by Tran (2007). The first two groups used English in the role plays. The last group used Chinese.

MISSIONARIES

For this study, 40 LDS missionaries were recruited from the Missionary Training Center located in Provo, Utah to participate. Twenty of the missionaries were Chinese (from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, and Malaysia). The other twenty were a control group of American missionaries. Ten missionaries from each culture were male, and the other ten were female. See Table **5**.

TABLE 5: *Participant Organization Chart*

	Chinese	American
Male	10	10
Female	10	10

Each missionary in this facility will train anywhere from 12 days to 9 weeks, depending on their assigned mission language and ability to speak that language. The missionaries for this study were recruited specifically from the English as a Second Language (ESL) area. The missionaries recruited for this study demonstrated high intermediate or advanced English skills in an oral entrance exam. This was done to prevent linguistic accuracy problems affecting the data. Because of their high proficiency in their mission language, the participants were in the MTC for 12-21 days. The ages of the participants ranged from 18-27. Nine of the Chinese missionaries had experience studying or working in America, while eleven learned their English in their native country dominantly with non-native speakers as teachers; to participate it was required that their experience in America was less than three years. Table **6** provides information on which country each Chinese missionary was from.

TABLE 6: *Native Countries of Chinese Participants*

Country	# of Missionaries from Country
Hong Kong	7
Taiwan	5
Mainland China	4
Singapore	3
Malaysia	1

The missionaries from Malaysia and Singapore were Chinese in origin, and were raised in a Chinese household, speaking a Chinese dialect. Since this study is focused on culture, these missionaries were used in the study because they associated themselves as Chinese. Furthermore, although they were proficient in English and were bilingually trained from birth in English and Chinese, the English they learned was Singapore-English and Malaysian-English. Moreover, they were never instructed by a native Western English speaker in their native countries. Their English teachers were all native to Singapore or Malaysia, and American cultural pragmatics were not taught in their classrooms or observed by interacting with a native American teacher.

This study does not take into account the effect that the native country of the Chinese missionaries has on the missionaries' CRs. This is because we could not control for where the missionaries came from during our allotted time to collect data. To control for gender and Chinese country would have limited the population size greatly. This would have complicated the ability to produce significant data. For these reasons, native country of Chinese missionaries was not taken into consideration for this study.

The American missionaries' age range was the same as the Chinese missionaries', 18-27. They all spoke second languages including: French, Mandarin, Italian, Finnish, German, and Danish. These missionaries were assigned to proselytize outside of the United States speaking

these second languages. The states these missionaries were from include: California, Utah, Oregon, Iowa, Idaho, Kentucky, Arizona, Michigan, and Florida. Most were from Utah and Idaho.

.There are LDS missionary training centers throughout the world, which means that Chinese missionaries who have not learned English and will be serving in native Mandarin or Cantonese speaking countries (the two Chinese dialects currently used for LDS missionary work) do not come to Provo to train. Instead they train in the Philippines. Because of this, the portion of Bu's (2010) study involving non-English speaking Chinese participants was not replicated in this study but should be considered for future research.

TEACHERS

Teachers at the Missionary Training Center were selected and trained to participate in the role plays as "investigators" (someone who wants to talk to missionaries about their religion) for the missionaries to teach. The rationale behind choosing teachers included the following: 1- The training center has high security clearance and for safety and security reasons would not allow unauthorized persons to enter and interact with the missionaries.2- Teachers are trained to take on a "role" to be taught by the missionaries and play that role daily. Because of this, missionaries are accustomed to role playing with teachers. For these reasons, training center teachers made the most practical choice for the role play scenarios. Each missionary participated in a role play with one male and one female teacher. These teachers were not the missionaries' direct teachers. Because of this, most missionaries had never interacted with the teacher before the role play.

The teachers at the MTC have all served LDS missions. Among those who participated in this study, two were female and five were male. The teachers had learned second languages as

missionaries that include: Spanish, Mandarin, German, Portuguese, and French. The teachers did not participate in role plays with missionaries they were directly teaching.

COMPLIMENT TOPICS

The compliments focused on four different topics: a possession worn by the participant; an ability the participant has; an aspect of the native culture/home of the participant; and the LDS church. The first two compliment topics—possession and ability—were selected because they draw attention to the individual and are not commonly complimented in Chinese culture but are in American culture (Wang & Tsai, 2003). The second pair of compliment topics—culture and church—were selected because they complimented a group the missionaries are affiliated with. Generally, Chinese culture encourages group association over individualization (Yu, 2003). These will be referred to in the results section as "individual-directed compliments" and "group affiliation-directed compliments".

ROLE PLAYS

Each missionary participated in two role plays —one with a male, and one with a female researcher. These role plays were done one-on-one with each teacher. In total, 80 role plays were performed and recorded. During the role plays, four compliments were planted on each compliment topic mentioned above. The two role plays used for my study were designed to create a scenario familiar to the missionaries: a teaching appointment. In the training center, missionaries participate frequently in role play situations where they teach an "investigator" that is usually played by a teacher or volunteer from the community. For this study, the missionaries were audio-recorded teaching their teachers as "investigators". Each role play lasted 8-12 minutes. The role play scripts can be found in *appendix A*.

Because some of the participating missionaries were relatively new, they were invited to not worry about teaching one of their missionary lessons to the "investigator", but rather focus on a teaching skill from a section that *Preach My Gospel* (2004) calls "How to Begin Teaching," which encourages missionaries to "ask a few simple questions to help [the missionary] understand [the investigator's] religious background and their expectations regarding [the] visit." (pg. 176). In addition, the missionaries were given two goals for the role play: set up another appointment and invite the investigator to church. This was done to give the missionaries a focus for their time in the role play, better masking the compliments planted in the exchange.

As each missionary participated in one role play with either a male or female teacher (depending on the availability of the teachers) then waited at least an hour before they participated in the next role play. By waiting at least an hour, the missionaries had a chance to forget small details from the exchange, like being complimented on their shoes. In doing this they would not suspect that compliments were a part of the study and would be better able to respond naturally to the compliments.

ANALYSIS METHODS

COMPLIMENT RESPONSE CONTINUA

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I arranged the results of the role play CRs on a compliment response continua created by Tran (2007). In his article, Tran arranges and defines the different types of responses on these continua. Table **7** is a rubric created from those definitions. This rubric was used to label the CRs collected from the participants of this study. The first half of the rubric includes the acceptance continuum and the bottom half in cludes the

avoidance continuum. These were combined onto one one chart for the convinience of the raters, allowing them to look at only one sheet of paper while listening to the role plays and identifying the correct CR label from the provided list and examples.

TABLE 7: *Compliment Response Rubric Based on Tran's (2007) CR Continua*

Responses	Definition (Tran, 2007, pg. 8-10)	Examples
Compliment Upgrade	"The complimentee agrees with and increases the complimentary force/praise force/compliment assertion" (pg.8)	• Thanks! They are brand new. • Yeah, it's a tough language.
Agreement	The complimentee agrees with the complimentary force/praise force/compliment assertion by providing a response which is 'semantically fitted to the compliment' (Herbert, 1989, p.12)" (pg.8)	• I agree • Yeah, it is. • Yes.
Appreciation Token	"The complimentee recognizes the status of the other speaker's previous utterance as a compliment and shows appreciation for it. The agreement token itself is not 'semantically fitted to the specifics of that compliment' (Pmerants, 1978, p.83" (pg. 8)	• Thank you. • Thanks! • I appreciate that.
Return	"The complimentee reciprocates the act of complimenting by paying back the compliment to the complimenter." (pg. 8)	• I like your shoes too! • I think you look nice. • I bet your Chinese is really good.
Explanation/ Comment History	"The complimentee impersonalizes the complimentary force/compliment assertion by giving further information, which may frequently be irrelevant, about the object of the compliment." (pg. 8)	• I bought them on vacation. • My mom bought it. She likes to buy me clothes every once and a while.
Reassignment	"The complimentee redirects the praise offered by the complimenter to some third person or something else (redirect/credit shift)." (pg. 8)	• My mom gave it to me. • I've had lots of help
Non-Idiomatic Response	"The complimentee implies or would like to express that he/she does not agree with the compliment assertion. But this is done through the use of non-target-like responses." (pg. 9)	• Oh. • It's alright.
Disagreement/ Disagreement Token	"The complimentee directly disagrees with the praise force/compliment assertion. He/she asserts that the praise within the compliment is overdone or undue." (pg. 9)	• No, it's bad. • I don't like it.
Compliment Downgrade	"The complimentee qualifies the praise force/compliment assertions, or downplays the object of the compliment." (pg. 9)	• My English is okay. • It could be worse (better)
Expressing Gladness	"The complimentee does not address the compliment assertion itself, which makes the response a type of avoidance, but expresses his/her gladness that the complimenter likes the object of the compliment." (pg. 10)	• I'm glad you think so! • I'm happy to hear it! • Great!
Follow-Up Question	"The complimentee responds to a compliment with a question which elaborates the compliment assertion. It is equivocal whether this question is meant to fish for more compliments, or to gain specific information about the worthiness of the object being complimented." (pg. 10)	• Have you been to China before? • Do you like ties? • Why do you like it?
(Doubting) Question	The complimentee response to the compliment with a question which corresponds to the request for repetition and/or expansion of the compliment assertion. The question is ambiguous in terms of whether the complimentee intends to provide repetition/expansion of the original assertion or to question the sincerity/motive of the complimenter." (pg. 10)	• Really? You do? • You think so? • Are you sure?
Opting Out	*"Opting out with laughter:* The complimentee responds with to the compliment with mere laughter" "*Opting out with filler(s):* The complimentee just utters (some) filler(s) in response to the compliment." "*Opting out without anything/No Acknowledgement:* The complimentee does not respond to the compliment at all verbally or nonverbally probably because he/she did not hear the speaker's utterance or is occupied with something else." "*Opting out with topic change:* The complimentee provides a response which cannot be understood as being linked to the compliment. He/She does not respond to the compliment itself but changes the topic to something else.*" (pg. 10)	• He-he-he • Hmmmm. • (Silence) • What are your hobbies? (compliment was on shoes)

The methods of rating the CRs given in the role plays involved several steps. First, after the role plays were recorded, I listened through each recording then transcribed the areas where a compliment was given and responded to. After each compliment exchange was transcribed I used the rubric in Table 3 to label the missionaries' CRs and recorded the findings.

To test the reliability of using this rubric, a sample of thirty randomly selected responses was labeled by another rater. Correlation was tested using Pearson correlation coefficient. The ratings between the two raters had 97% correlation, suggesting that the use of this rubric and the ratings administered to the data are reliable.

Next, I had to give numerical value to the CRs. To quantify the data, numeric value was given to each of the compliment response options from the two continua. Rankings for the Acceptance→Denial continuum ranged from nine to one, following Tran's continuum of most acceptance (upgrade) to most denial (downgrade). The avoidance continuum responses were ranked from zero (when no avoidance strategy was used) to four for opting out (or most avoidance). Table **8** illustrates the point values assigned to the compliment responses. It is important to note that there are two different continua. Because of this, the responses within each continuum were calculated separately from the other. For example, a response to a compliment on shoes could be "Oh! I'm glad you like them. Thanks." would score a 1 in avoidance and a 7 in acceptance. Meaning, the missionary began to slightly avoid the compliment, then concluded with accepting it. In Chapter 4 the data is organized and analyzed dividing acceptance CRs from the avoidance CRs.

TABLE 8: *Point Value of Compliment Responses*

Acceptance → Denial	Avoidance
9—Upgrade	0—No avoidance
8—Agreement	1—Expressing Gladness
7—Appreciation Token	2—Follow-Up Question
6—Return	3—Doubting Question
5—Explanation	4—Opt Out
4—Reassignment	
3—Non-idiomatic Response	
2—Disagreement	
1—Downgrade	

During the naturalized role plays, some of the missionaries responded with "hybrid-responses," meaning more than one type of response was evident. For example, when complimented on his language ability, one missionary responded saying "Oh no! No, my parents spoke it to me growing up. Just because of my parents, that's why I can speak it." This response includes a disagreement (2), a reassignment (4), and an explanation (5). The average of the three different responses was taken to quantify this response (2 + 4 + 5 = 11; 11 ÷ 3 = 3.66). This CR had a value of 3.66 on the Acceptance to Denial scale.

Another example is when a missionary was complimented on her dress:

Complimenter: "I like your dress. It's very cute."

Receiver: "Oh thanks! I like it too. I think it's my prettiest dress. "

Here the receiver expressed appreciation (7), agreed (8), and upgraded (9). This response would receive an 8 on the acceptance scale. Some missionaries used both agreement and avoidance responses. These were calculated separately, giving the response a score for acceptance and one for avoidance. For example:

Complimenter: "So you're from California? I love California."

Receiver: "Yeah, it's great. Do you travel there a lot?"

This CR would be labeled as agreement in the acceptance sale (8 points) and a follow-up question in the avoidance scale (2 points). While it is arguable to say someone can accept and avoid a compliment in the same response, we chose to calculate it this way to

VARIABLES

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependant variable of this study is the responses to the compliments planted within the role plays. These responses will be further examined in the next chapters as the results are discussed.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables of this study include the gender and ethnicity of the participants, as well as the topic of the compliments planted in the role plays. Equal numbers of male/female and Chinese/American missionaries participated in the role plays (see *Table 5)*. Furthermore, each missionary participated in a role play with a male and female researcher to control for cross-gender and inter-gender compliment response differences. Each topic was complimented for every participant. The ramifications of these variables will also be discussed in the following chapters.

OTHER VARIABLES

Additional variables include the age of the participants, their exposure to American culture, and testing conditions. These variables were controlled for in the following ways: The ages of the missionaries allowed to serve missions are set from 18 to 27 years of age. Most

missionaries are between 18-22 years old. The youngest participant in this study was 18 and the oldest was 25. Most were 19 or 21 years old. To control for exposure to American culture, the Chinese missionaries were not invited to participate if they lived in the United States for over three years. Testing always took place on the training center campus in a secluded location. Most participants were tested within their first three weeks at the training center.

This chapter will review the results of the data collected in response to each research question. In order to answer each research question the raw data, descriptive statistical data, and inferential statistical data from this study will be reported. To provide descriptive statistical data, the participants' CRs were recorded and coded from 1 (least accepting) to 9 (most accepting) on the acceptance scale or 0 (no avoidance) to 4 (most avoidance) on the avoidance scale and then averaged within cultural and/or gender groups. To provide inferential statistical data, a series of both repeated measure ANOVAs and one-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted to compare the effect of gender, cultural group (Chinese or American), and compliment topic (ability, possession, church, and native culture/home) on responses used by Chinese and American missionaries in English conversations.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Do native English and Chinese speakers differ in the degree to which they accept (or avoid) compliments?

To answer this question, the native Chinese and English participants received compliments from both a male and female interviewer four times. We first examined whether the two groups differed in their responses to these compliments by averaging all responses within cultural groups (gender and topic are not taken into consideration at this point) across the acceptance and avoidance continua seen in Table **9** (Tran, 2007). The CRs on the acceptance and avoidance continua is recorded in Table **9**.

Table 9: *Acceptance and Avoidance Results between Cultural Groups*

	Type of Acceptance CR:	**American Missionary: number of CRs used**	**Chinese Missionary: number of CRs used**
Most Agree	*Upgrade*	36	13
	Agreement	88	38
	Appreciation Token	48	59
	Reassign	7	6
	Return	10	3
	Explanation	45	26
	Non-Idiomatic Response	4	9
	Disagreement	1	14
Most Disagree	*Downgrade*	3	22
	Type of Avoidance CR:		
Least Avoid	*Express Gladness*	11	4
	Follow-up Question	19	20
	Doubting Question	0	4
Most Avoid	*Opting Out*	5	19

As Table 9 demonstrates, when American missionaries accepted the compliment they tended to use more CRs that agreed with the compliment, and very few that disagreed. Of the more central CRs, *explanation* was also often used by the American missionaries. Conversely, when the Chinese missionaries accepted a compliment they used more disagreeing CRs than the American missionaries. With that said, Chinese missionaries used the most *appreciation token* CRs of the two cultural groups. When avoiding compliments, American missionaries used more *express gladness* CRs, and Chinese used CRs with higher avoidance. Both cultures used approximately the same amount of *follow-up question* CRs.

The participants' responses to these compliments were coded with the numerical values explained previously. The averages of these scores are recorded in Table **10**. From this we see that the American missionaries (hereafter AMs) had a higher degree of agreement, and a lower degree of avoidance than the Chinese missionaries (hereafter CMs).

TABLE 10: *Coded CRs Averaged across Cultural Groups*

	American Missionaries	Chinese Missionaries
Acceptance	7.0	5.5
Avoidance	0.4	0.7

For inferential statistics, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted among acceptance CRs to compare the effects of culture on missionary CRs. Results show significant difference of culture on the CRs [$F(1,36) = 38.71$, $p = .000$ $(.497)$]. There was no significant difference in the avoidance scale between the cultures (all F's < 2.33, all p's > .05). From this we see that the American missionaries tended to use significantly higher agreement when accepting a compliment than the Chinese missionaries did.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Does the compliment topic affect the degree to which each cultural group accepts or avoids the compliment?

To answer this question, the effect of compliment topics was taken into consideration in the type of CRs used by the missionaries. The four compliment topics (possession-directed, ability-directed, church-directed, and home-directed) are also divided into two compliment groups (individual-directed, group affiliation-directed) to test for significant difference in the way missionaries responded to compliments that emphasized individuality vs. a group.

ACCEPTANCE CRS ACROSS COMPLIMENT TOPICS

The acceptance CRs used by the AMs to respond to each topic are shown in *Figure 3*.
From this figure we see that AMs tended to use the *agreement* CR most with church- and home-
directed compliments, and the *appreciation token* CR most with possession-directed
compliments. The only time *disagreement* and *downgrade* CRs were used within this culture
group was in response to ability-directed CRs. Home-directed compliments were most likely to
receive higher agreement CRs. AMs rarely used *appreciation token* CRs for home- or church-
directed compliments.

FIGURE 3: Effect of Compliment Topic on AMs' Acceptance CRs
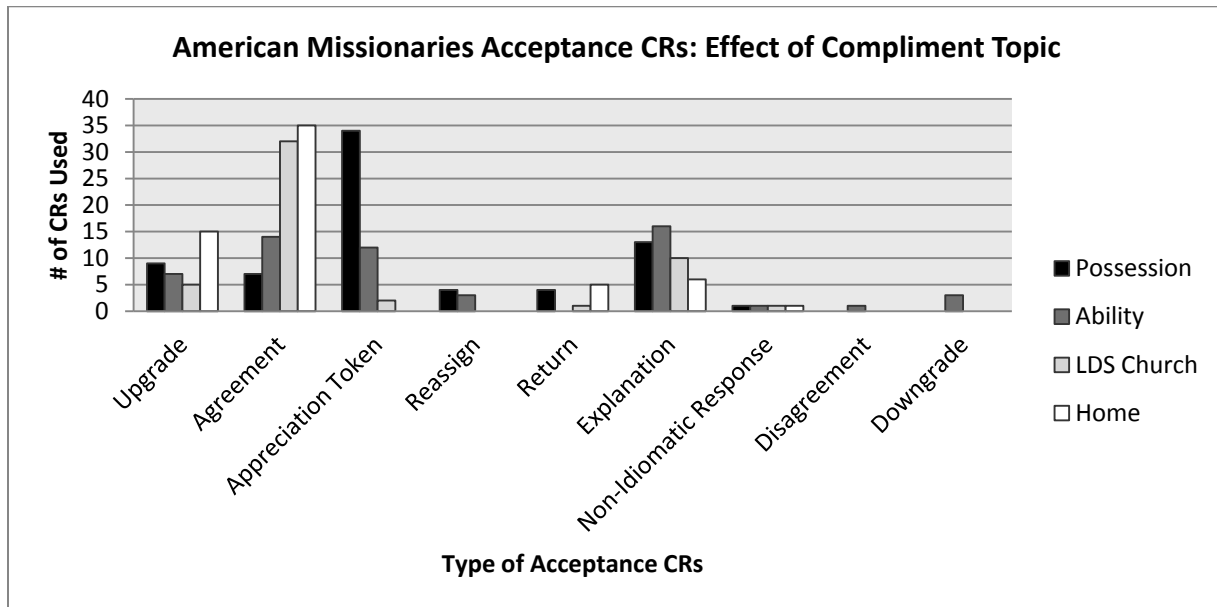
Data on the type of acceptance CRs used by CMs is on *Figure 4*. As the graph
demonstrates, CMs rarely used *upgrade* or *agreement* CRs when complimented on possession or
ability. An *appreciation token* was used most to respond to possession compliments. Ability
tended to receive the most *disagreement* and *downgrade* responses. *Appreciation token* CRs
were used for all compliment-topics.

FIGURE 4: Effect of Topic on CMs' Acceptance CRs
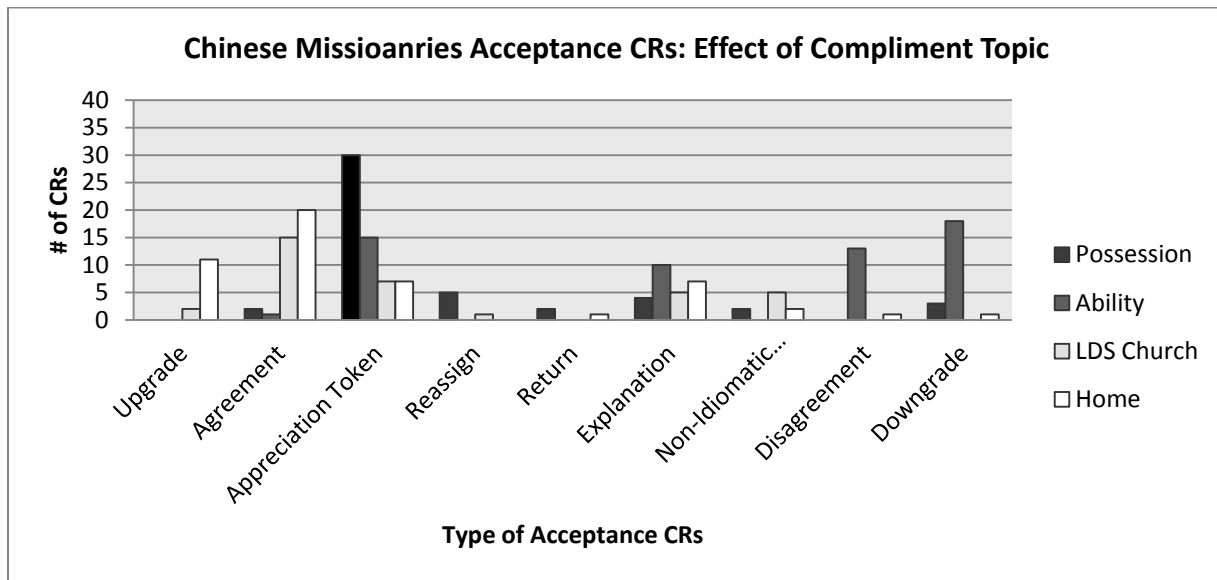
The responses were coded into numeric value, as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**4. This table demonstrates that the AMs had higher acceptance scores on all compliment topics, especially ability-directed compliments.

TABLE 11: *Coded Acceptance CRs across Cultural Groups and Compliment Topics*

Acceptance CRs	American Missionaries	Chinese Missionaries
Possession	6.7	6.2
Ability	6.1	3.4
Home	7.1	6.5
Church	7.5	6.8
Individual-directed	6.4	4.8
Group Affiliation-directed	7.3	6.7

To determine whether these patterns were statistically significant, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted among acceptance CRs to compare the effects of the cultural group on CRs in the four compliment topics ($p < .05$).

There was a significant effect of cultural group in all categories *except* possession-directed compliments [F (1, 36) =.105, p=.748 (r=.026)]. The effect of cultural group was significant on CRs to compliments in multiple topics:

- Ability-directed compliments [F (1,36) = 17.45, p =.000 (r = .290)];

- Church-directed compliments [F(1,36) = 6.253, p = 0.17(r = .080)];

- Home-directed compliments [F(1,36) = 5.91, p = .020 9r = .083]];

- Individual-directed compliments [F(1,36) = 12.11, p = .001 (.235)]; and

- Group affiliation-directed compliments [F (1, 36) = 9.88, p = .003(r = .153)].

These results suggest that in a conversation where the genders of the interviewer and missionary are not taken into consideration, the CMs use significantly more disagreement in their CRs than do AMs when responding to compliments across all topics except possession-directed compliments.

EFFECT OF CULTURAL GROUP AND COMPLIMENT TOPIC ON AVOIDANCE CRs

In regards to avoidance in AMs CRs, AMs tended to *express gladness* with church-directed CRs and use *follow-up question* CRs with ability-, church-, and home-directed compliments. They never used *opt-out* for church-directed compliments.

CMs tended to use more *opting out* CRs than the AMs in responding to compliments of all topics except for home-directed compliments. Additionally, they never used *follow-up question* CRs to ability-directed compliments.

These responses were coded into numeric value, as shown in Table 12. This table demonstrates that the AMs had lower avoidance scores on all compliment topics, except ability-directed compliments.

TABLE 12: CODED *Avoidance CRs across Cultural Groups and Compliment Topics*

Avoidance CRs	American Missionaries	Chinese Missionaries
Possession	0.3	0.7
Ability	0.4	0.4
Home	0.5	1.2
Church	0.4	0.7
Average	0.4	0.7
Individual-directed	0.35	0.6
Group Affiliation-directed	0.45	1.0

To determine whether these patterns were statistically significant, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted among avoidance CRs to compare the effects of cultural group on CRs in the four compliment topics ($p < .05$).

Results from these scores suggest that there was a significant effect of cultural group on CRs to home-directed [$F (1, 36) = 6.235$, $p = .017$ ($r = .082$)] and group affiliation-directed [$F (1, 36) = 6.235$, $p = .017$ ($r = .061$)] compliments. All other comparisons were non-significant (all F's < 2.33, all p's $> .05$). These results suggest that CMs tended to use significantly higher avoidance CRs than AMs when complimented on group affiliation-directed CRs and home-directed CRs.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Does the combination of compliment topic and gender affect the missionaries' compliment responses?

To answer the third research question, the effect of gender was also taken into consideration in addition to compliment topic and cultural group. Differences in responses to

compliments from male and female interviewers were considered, as well as the gender of the missionary responding to the compliments.

EFFECTS OF MISSIONARY GENDER AND COMPLIMENT TOPIC ON ACCEPTANCE CRs

This section will review the way each gender within the cultural groups used acceptance CRs for each compliment topic. A few patterns in the participants' responses to possession-directed compliments include:

- Male CMs use less *appreciation token* CRs than any other group;

- Female CMs never used *explanation* CRs;

- Male AMs used the most *agreement* CRs of any group;

- Females in both groups used the least number of *agreement* CRs;

- Male CMs were the only group to use the *downgrade* CR

CRs to ability-directed compliments include patterns such as:

- Female CMs use the most number of *appreciation token* CRs;

- Female AMs used the most *upgrade* CRs

- Male CMs used the most *disagreement* CRs of all the groups

- Male and Female CMs used the same number of *downgrade* CRs

Participants' CRs to church-directed compliments show that:

- Female CMs use the highest number of *appreciation token* CRs than any other group;

- Males tended to use *explanation* CRs more than females within their cultural groups.

Finally, acceptance CRs to home-directed compliments show that:

- Males use more *upgrade* and *agreement* CRs within their cultural group;

- Female CMs use more *appreciation token* CRs than any other group;

- Male AMs use *return* more than any other cultural group;

- Although it is rare, female CMs are the only group to have used *disagreement* or *downgrade* CRs.

Collectively, this data shows a pattern in female CMs use of *appreciation token* CRs for all four compliment topics. These responses were coded into numeric value, as shown in Table 13. This table shows that there isn't much difference in CRs to each compliment topic between genders within the same cultural groups. One exception is that the male CMs responded with less agreement to possession-directed compliments than the other groups. Overall, female participants tended to respond with greater agreement than males, except for church-directed compliment CRs from the Chinese group.

TABLE 13: *Coded Acceptance CRs Across Cultural and Gender Groups and Compliment Topics*

Acceptance CRs	American Male	American Female
Possession	6.7	6.7
Ability	6.1	6.4
Home	7.1	7.5
Church	7.5	7.6
Average	6.8	7.0
Individual	6.4	6.6
Group Affiliation	7.3	7.6
	Chinese Male	**Chinese Female**
Possession	5.6	6.7
Ability	3.1	3.7
Home	6.4	6.5
Church	7.1	6.5
Average	5.2	5.8
Individual	4.4	5.2
Group Affiliation	6.8	6.5

To determine whether these patterns were statistically significant, a series of repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted on each compliment topic comparing the differences in responses to the female versus male interviewer for acceptance (p < .05). Two effects were identified as significant regarding compliment topic and missionary gender:

- The effect of missionary gender on responses to ability-directed compliments, Wilks' Lambda = .776, F (1,34) = 9.817, p = .004 (r = .514);

- The effect of missionary gender on responses to individual-directed compliments, Wilks' Lambda = .824, F (1, 36) = 7.677, p = .009 (r = .284).

No other significant effects were identified by this series of ANOVAs in relation to missionary gender (all F's < 2.33, all p's > .05).

In addition, a one-way between-subject ANOVA was conducted among agreement CRs to compare the effects of cultural group on CRs in the four compliment topics (p < .05). When the gender of the interviewer was not taken into consideration, there was no significant difference in the effect of missionary gender on the CRs (all F's < 2.33, all p's > .05).

EFFECTS OF MISSIONARY GENDER AND COMPLIMENT TOPIC ON AVOIDANCE CRS

The data set in this section reports the avoidance CR patterns of the participants in consideration to the gender of the missionary and the compliment topic. show the type of avoidance CRs used across groups in response to each compliment topic. From this data we see differences such as:

- Female CMs used *opt out* CRs to every compliment topic except home-directed;

- Conversely, Female AMs never used *opt out* to any compliment except for one instance with a home-directed compliment;

- Female AMs tended to use *express gladness* CRs the most of any group;

- Female AMs used *follow-up question* CRs more than female CMs across topics;

- Conversely, male CMs used *Follow-up question* CRs more than male AMs in every topic but ability-directed compliments.

These responses were coded into numeric value and averaged within culture/gender groups, as shown in Table 14. In this numeric system 0 = no avoidance and 4 = most avoidance. From this we see that:

- Male AMs used no avoidance in church-directed compliments, and male CMs used most avoidance in the topic;

- Conversely, Male CMs used more avoidance in church-directed compliments than female CMs;

- Females used more avoidance in home-directed compliments than males;

- Males used more avoidance in possession-directed compliments than females;

- Female AMs tended to use more avoidance in group affiliation-directed compliments than male AMs.

TABLE 14: *Coded Avoidance CRs across Culture, Gender, and Compliment Topics*

Avoidance CRs	American Male	American Female
Possession	0.6	0.1
Ability	0.4	0.5
Home	0.3	0.7
Church	0	0.8
Individual	0.5	0.3
Group Affiliation	0.2	0.8
Average	0.3	0.5
	Chinese Male	**Chinese Female**
Possession	0.9	0.4
Ability	0.2	0.6
Home	1.0	1.3
Church	1.0	0.5
Individual	0.6	0.5
Group Affiliation	1.0	0.9
Average	0.8	0.7

To determine whether these patterns were statistically significant, a series of repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted on each compliment topic comparing the differences in responses to the female versus male interviewer for acceptance ($p < .05$). No significance difference was found through these tests (all F's < 2.33, all p's > .05).

In addition, a series of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs was conducted among avoidance CRs to compare the effects of cultural group on CRs in the four compliment topics ($p < .05$). There were significant effects of group x gender on the average of CRs across all compliment topics, [$F_{(1, 36)} = 8.66$, $p = .006$ ($r = .172$)].

This data suggests that there was significant difference between gender and cultural groups when compliment topic was not taken into consideration.

This section looks at the effect of the gender of the interviewer on CRs within the gender and cultural groups of the participants. The research reported in this section will show if there is a difference in the way a missionary responded to an interviewer of the same or opposite gender. First we will report the data collected with a male interviewer, then the female interviewer.

MALE INTERVIEWER

When complimented by a male interviewer, the gender of the missionaries had significant effects in the acceptance CRs the missionaries used towards ability-directed compliments [$F(1,34)$ = 5.66, p = .023 (r = .514)] and individual-directed compliments [$F(1,36)$ = 7.56, p = .009 (r = .284)]. TABLE 15illustrates these differences, specifically in the bolded sections.

TABLE 15: *Coded Acceptance CRs with a Male Interviewer*

Acceptance CRs with a Male Interviewer	**American Male**	**American Female**
Possession	6.5	6.5
Ability	**6.1**	**7.1**
Home	7.0	7.1
Church	7.5	7.5
Individual	**6.3**	**6.8**
Group Affiliation	7.3	7.3
Average	6.8	7.1
	Chinese Male	**Chinese Female**
Possession	5.8	6.7
Ability	**2.5**	**4.2**
Home	6.1	5.4
Church	7.5	6.7
Individual	**4.2**	**5.5**
Group Affiliation	6.8	6.1
Average	5.2	5.6

From this we see that the male missionaries used less agreement than the female missionaries when given ability- and individual-directed compliments by a male interviewer.

In regards to the effect of missionary culture on CRs given to compliments from a male researcher, there was significant effect on:

- Ability-directed compliments [$F(1, 34) = 34.46$, $p = .000$ ($r = .514$)];

- Church-directed compliments [$F(1,32) = 13.20$, $p = .029$ ($r = .086$)];

- Individual-directed compliments [$F(1,36) = 9.98$, $p = .003$($r = .284$)];

- Group affiliation-directed compliments [$F(1,36) = 6.43$, $p = .016$ ($r = .095$)]; and

- Average across compliment topics [$F (1, 36) = 32.09$, $p = .000$ ($r = .445$)].

Referring back to Table 15 we can see that the American missionaries had a significantly higher acceptance rate across all of the mentioned topic areas.

In regards to avoidance CRs, the ANOVA found significant effects of the missionary culture on home-directed compliments [$F(1,36) = 5.17$, $p = .029$ ($r = .082$)] and group affiliation-directed compliments [$F (1, 36) = 4.68$, $p = .037$ ($r = .061$)]. There was also significance in effect of group x gender on the average of topics complimented by a male interviewer [$F (1, 36) = 10.16$, $p = .003$ ($.173$)]. Table 16 shows the quantified results from the role plays. This table illustrates that the significant differences between the cultures was that the AMs used less avoidance than the CMs in the areas with significant differences.

All other areas did not have significant effects on the CRs (all F's < 2.33, all p's $> .05$).

TABLE 16: *Coded Avoidance CRs with a Male Interviewer*

Avoidance CRs with a Male Interviewer	American Male	American Female
Possession	0.4	0
Ability	0.4	0.7
Home	0.6	0.4
Church	0	1.1
Individual	0.4	0.4
Group Affiliation	0.3	0.8
Average	0.4	0.6
	Chinese Male	**Chinese Female**
Possession	0.8	0.4
Ability	0.4	0.8
Home	1.0	1.6
Church	1.3	0.4
Individual	0.6	0.6
Group Affiliation	1.2	1.0
Average	0.9	0.8

FEMALE INTERVIEWER

When complimented by a female researcher in the role plays, the only are gender had a significant effect on was possession-directed compliments [F (1, 33) = 4.59, p =.039 (r = .225)]. In Table 17 we see that the male CMs used much less acceptance to possession-directed complimented from a female researcher than any other gender-culture group.

TABLE 17: *Coded Acceptance CRs to a Female Interviewer*

Acceptance CRs with a Female Interviewer	American Male	American Female
Possession	6.8	6.9
Ability	6.1	5.6
Home	7.3	8.0
Church	7.5	7.8
Individual	6.5	6.3
Group Affiliation	7.4	7.9
Average	7.0	7.0
	Chinese Male	**Chinese Female**
Possession	5.3	6.9
Ability	3.7	3.2
Home	6.8	7.6
Church	6.7	6.5
Individual	4.5	5.1
Group Affiliation	6.8	7.1
Average	5.3	5.9

Table 17 also illustrates the significant effect of cultural-group on CRs given to compliments from a female researcher. These significant differences were identified from the ANOVA as:

- Ability-directed compliments [$F(1,36) = 10.94$, $p = .002$ ($r = .177$)] ;

- The average across compliment topics suggested [$F(1,36) = 21.62$, $p = .000$ ($r = .345$)];

- Individual-directed compliments [$F(1,36) = 8.84$, $p = .005$ ($r = .135$)]; and

- Group-directed compliments [$F(1, 36) = 6.96$, $p = .012$ ($r = .121$)].

From the table we see that AMs used more acceptance strategies across topics than did the CMs.

All other areas, including avoidance strategies, did not have significant effects on the CRs (all F's < 2.33, all p's > .05) given to compliments from a female researcher.

SUMMARY

A summary of the ANOVAs results across all cultural- and gender-groups, and compliment topics can be found in avoidance CRs. Neither did the univariate ANOVA when the missionaries were complimented by a female interviewer. The areas where we see the most significance are:

- The effect of interviewer gender on church-directed compliments in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of missionary gender on ability- and individual-directed complements in acceptance CRs

- The effect of culture across all compliment topics except possession in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of gender on individual-directed compliments (and not group affiliation-directed compliments) in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of missionary gender in ability- and individual-directed compliments from a male interviewer in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of culture in home- and group affiliation-directed compliments in avoidance CRs; and

- The effect of missionary gender across compliment topics when complimented by a male researcher in avoidance CRs.

Table **18**. Here we see that possession-directed compliments did not have much significant effect on the difference of CRs between gender or cultural groups One exception is found in the univariate ANOVA results when missionaries used acceptance CRs when complimented by a female interviewer. The repeated measures found no significance in culture, gender, or compliment topic in the avoidance CRs. Neither did the univariate ANOVA when the missionaries were complimented by a female interviewer. The areas where we see the most significance are:

- The effect of interviewer gender on church-directed compliments in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of missionary gender on ability- and individual-directed complements in acceptance CRs

- The effect of culture across all compliment topics except possession in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of gender on individual-directed compliments (and not group affiliation-directed compliments) in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of missionary gender in ability- and individual-directed compliments from a male interviewer in acceptance CRs;

- The effect of culture in home- and group affiliation-directed compliments in avoidance CRs; and

- The effect of missionary gender across compliment topics when complimented by a male researcher in avoidance CRs.

TABLE 18: *Table of Significant Effects on Missionary CRs from ANOVA Tests*

	Possession	Ability	Church	Home	Total	Individual	Group-Affiliated
Repeated Measures ANOVAs							
Acceptance CRs	*ns*	Gender of Missionary	Gender of Interviewer	*ns*	*ns*	Gender of Missionary	*ns*
Avoidance CRs	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Univariate ANOVAs: Acceptance							
Male Interviewer	*ns*	Culture/ Gender	Culture	*ns*	Culture	Culture/ Gender	Culture
Female Interviewer	Gender	Culture	*ns*	*ns*	Culture	Culture	Culture
Male/Female Interviewer	*ns*	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture
Univariate ANOVAs: Avoidance							
Male Interviewer	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	Culture	Culture x Gender	*ns*	Culture
Female Interviewer	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Male/Female Interviewer	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	Culture	Culture x Gender	*ns*	Culture

Significant Effects on Missionary CRs (p < .05); *ns* =No Significant Difference

This section will discuss the limitations of this study, implications of the results to the research questions, and implications for future research.

RESULT DISCUSSION

The first research question asks if Chinese missionaries (CMs) in English conversations differ in their compliment responses from American missionaries (AMs). The results of this study support results from previous studies arguing that pragmatic differences between Chinese English language learners' CRs and American English speakers' CRs do exist (Bu, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Holmes, 1988; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Lin *et. al*, 2012; Tran, 2007; Wang, 2003; Yu, 2003).

As argued in previous studies using the same continua (Bu, 2010; Tran, 2007), Americans tend to use more agreement and upgrade CRs, and Chinese tend to use more disagreement and downgrade CRs.

Figure 5 is a graph showing the difference between the two cultural groups. Clearly, the data support the results of these previous studies.

FIGURE 5: Agreement vs. Disagreement CRs

Agreement vs. Disagreement

# of CRs used	Upgrade	Agree	Disagree	Downgrade
■ USA TOTALS:	36	88	1	3
▢ CHINESE TOTALS:	13	38	14	22
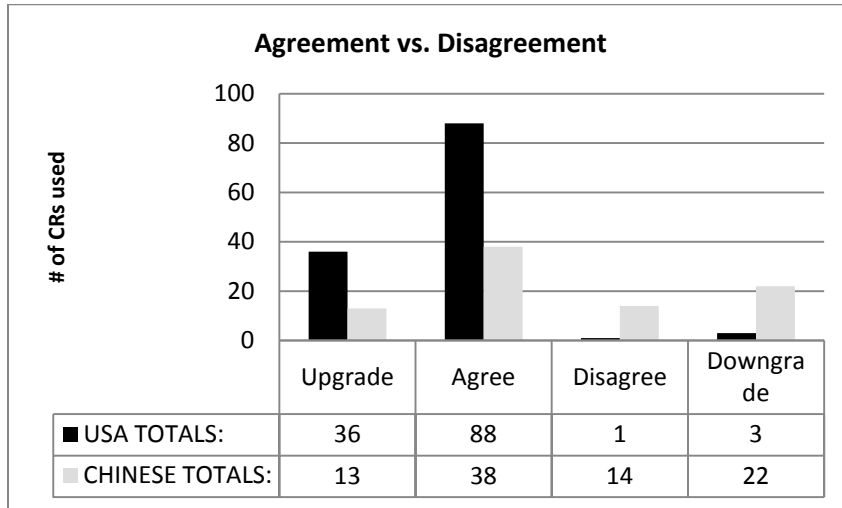
The next question asks if compliment topic has an effect on missionary CRs. Results show how different compliment topics significantly prompted different responses between the culture groups. As seen in multiple results from this study, compliment topics can affect CRs, as suggested by Lin (2012). We found that CMs were likely to accept group affiliation-directed compliments more than individual-directed compliments.

Regarding individual-directed compliments, when missionaries were complimented on their English (ability-directed compliment) by a male and/or female interviewer, CMs tended to downgrade and/or disagree with the compliment. A common response was along the lines of *No, no, no. It is not good. It is very bad*—(Disagreement + downgrade CR). On the other hand, AMs used slightly more modest (or less accepting) CRs in ability-directed compliments than toward other compliment topics; however, instead of disagreeing with or downgrading the compliment like CMs, they provide an explanation to why they had that ability and/or reassign their ability to someone else.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with a few of the participating missionaries. When asked why they responded with disagreement and/or downgraded the compliment, their replies were in harmony with Gu's proposed self-denigrating maxim in Chinese culture (1990). That is, it was important to the CMs to show modesty and humility as a means of being polite. They expressed concern in coming across as arrogant or self-important to the interviewer. Fewer expressed that they sincerely thought that their English wasn't good.

AMs used agreement CRs the most across interviewer gender and compliment topic totals. This supports Leech's agreement maxim (Cutting, 2002) which suggests that people tend to agree with what another says to appear polite. Even when AMs downgraded compliments, it was to a lesser degree than the CMs. For example, when complimented on their L2 ability, a common downgrade from AMs was *Well, it's okay.* The continuum used in this study did not provide means to show different degrees within a CR.

CMs used appreciation token CRs the most across interviewer gender and compliment topic totals. This could support Cheng's argument that, because it is usually taught in the classroom, Chinese ELLs are most likely to learn to use the appreciation token as a CR and often over-generalize its use (2011). The data suggests that CMs might be over-generalizing the appreciation token in using it in group-directed compliments (in this study, compliments on church and native home/culture). AMs never used it when their home was complimented, and only once used it when their church was complimented. CMs used it several times in both cases (see

Table 16). When I took this into consideration, it made sense. It is odd to say "thank you" if someone compliments hamburgers when finding out I am from the USA. Some reasons for this could be that Americans don't seem to associate themselves personally with their native culture the way Chinese do, or Chinese learn to respond with "thank you" to any compliment and over generalize it.

The interviewers were also consulted after the role plays. Many mentioned that the insistence with which the missionaries denied their compliments came across a bit abrasive. Some interviewers even mentioned feeling guilty for giving the compliment because it prompted the missionary to degrade themselves. This is a good example of pragmatic failure. The Chinese missionaries were participating in culturally-acceptable acts of politeness as they knew them. However, their attempts did not translate as polite to the native English speaker, but instead as cold or even rude. This is an area where explicit instruction could help enable these Chinese learners to be more pragmatically competent. If they were aware of the different CR options available, they could prevent these awkward exchanges from happening.

Finally, gender was also taken into consideration in the third research question. Findings suggest that gender of the missionary and gender between speakers can affect CR strategies used by native and non-native speakers (see Table 9-

TABLE 17).

One way that gender affected the CRs was that female CM used appreciation tokens significantly more than any other culture/gender group (see *Figure 3*). They used them the most out of the culture/gender groups with both male/female interviewers, but even more so with male interviewers. In fact, the male CMs used the least number of appreciation token responses across both gender and cultural groups. This suggests that the problem with overgeneralization mentioned in Cheng's research (2011) could be isolated to female Native Chinese learners of English. More research needs to be done in this area to verify these results.

In conversations with male interviewers, compliments on ability elicited more agreement or disagreement CRs from male missionaries in both cultures, and more appreciation tokens from female participants in both cultures (see Table 11). When the interviewer was female and complimented a possession, the male missionaries often gave an explanation or told a story about their possession.

When looking at these results, it is important to consider the role compliments play in each culture. Throughout the role plays, it was evident that the compliments across the topics usually aided in the flow of the conversation with AMs. While no empirical data was collected on this topic, pausing and awkward silence did not take place nearly as often with the American participants when a compliment was planted. Instead, they tended to respond to them as icebreakers, conversational cues, and chances to ask questions about the interviewer.

While some compliment topics cued similar approaches from the CMs, responses to ability-directed and possession-directed compliments often prompted what I will term as

conversation "stalls"; in observing the role plays some missionaries were caught off guard by a compliment and "stalled" the way a new driver behind a stick-shift might. Many of these "stalls" are represented in the results as *disagreement*, *downgrade*, and especially *opt out* CRs. As mentioned in the limitations, the CR continua are not able to paint a perfect picture of what CR strategies the participants used. Two *downgrade* CRs to ability-directed compliments can vary greatly; e.g. *It's still a work in progress* vs. *My English is terrible* (both examples from the data collected). The first response had little, if any "stalling" effect. The second seemed to "kill the engine" of the conversation immediately and it took a while for the flow to return.

Let me demonstrate what these "stalls" look like by transcribing some examples. Example 1 is a conversation between a male interviewer with a male missionary. In this example the missionary uses downgrade and disagreement to respond to an ability-directed compliment.

Interviewer: "How long have you been studying English?"

Missionary: "Uh, about three years."

Interviewer: "Really? Cuz' it's really good."

Missionary: "Uh, Oh. No. No it isn't. My English is very poor. It is not good."

(about a 2.5 second pause)

Missionary and Interviewer simultaneously: "Uh…. so…" "Well..."

Interviewer: "Sorry…"

(about a 2 second pause)

Missionary; "Um… Have you been to church before?"

61

The "stalls" that take place here are evident in the pauses as well as the false-start attempt to revive the conversation that happens between the pauses. Listening to this moment in the conversation felt awkward. The interviewer mentioned that if he were a real investigator for this missionary he would not have interest in having another conversation with the missionary because of that awkward exchange.

My second example is from a female CM talking to a female interviewer. In this exchange a stall takes place after the missionary uses an appreciation token to respond to a home-directed compliment.

Interviewer: "I'm sorry, where did you say you were from again?"

Missionary: "Oh, Hong Kong. Do you know it?"

Interviewer: "Yeah! Is that were they have dim sum?"

*Missionary: "*Yes."

Interviewer: "Oh! I love dim sum. I tried it with my uncle once. I thought it was really good"

*Missionary: "*Thank you."

(pause for about 2 seconds)

Interviewer: "Um… do you like it?"

In this sample we see that there was a stall after the missionary said "thank you" and nothing else. The next comment from the interviewer suggests that she was anticipating a conversation on dim sum to ensue. The single "thank you" response seems to have violated that

expectation. Moreover, our data shows that the American group never used appreciation tokens to respond to home-directed compliments. The missionaries' overgeneralization of "thank you" in this context created a conversation "stall." When asked about the incident after, the interviewer felt like the missionary was "polite" but "hard to get to know."

RESULT IMPLICATIONS

Implications from this research that are discussed in this section are divided into three categories: (1) theoretical implications;(2) implications for ELLs; and (3) implications for the ESL teachers.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Several theoretical implications can be drawn from the results of this study. These implications support the previous claims and present some new perspectives to consider.

- We need to be careful to not overgeneralize pragmatic items in conversations. Doing so can have adverse effects in pragmatic competence.

- Chinese show higher agreement in CRs for group affiliation-directed compliments than individual-directed compliments. This is likely because accepting a compliment that is not personally directed allows them to maintain face through humility/modesty (Gu, 1990). In correlation, Chinese use less agreement in CRs for individual-directed compliments than Americans do, showing that their ideas of politeness transfer into their English conversations.

- Americans use more agreement in CRs to individual-directed compliments than Chinese. This shows that they are adhering to Leech's agreement maxim by trying

to reduce the amount of disagreement with the speaker (Cutting, 2002). This implies that Chinese missionaries are not absorbing these maxims by simple immersion in American culture.

- In general, pragmatic competence in compliment responses of Chinese missionaries need more attention in order to help them adjust the "wall" that exists between them and those they interact with.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ESL TEACHERS

Considering that the Chinese missionaries in this study were placed in the advanced classrooms at the MTC shows that they were able to test with high oral proficiency in the English language. Moreover, all of them had explicit English instruction in classroom settings before reporting to the MTC. When asked about whether or not they had specific lessons in the classroom on the difference of politeness between American and Chinese culture, all of the missionaries responded "no" or "I don't remember". Taking these results into consideration, it can be implied that adjustments in the classroom could be made to improve pragmatic understanding. These adjustments include:

- Become familiar with some of the polite CR strategies of your students' native cultures. This could be achieved by simply asking "In your culture, what is a polite way to respond to a compliment like…" and discuss the differences.
- Explicitly instruct students on the differences between Chinese and American views of politeness. Referencing the agreement maxim (Cutting, 2002) and the self-denigrating maxim (Gu, 1990) could be used as a springboard for this conversation.

- Introduce students to the various CR options from Tran's continua (2007) available when given a compliment.

- Instruct students on appropriate ways to use the various responses.

  o For example, a teacher could explain that disagreeing with and downgrading compliments on English ability can come across unfriendly. If the student wants to express modesty while being polite, they could try something like "thank you, I'm still working on it."

  o Using appreciation token towards compliments on your home or culture is not common. Instead agree and ask a follow up question.

- Show students clips from movies with compliment exchanges and have them identify the types of responses the compliment prompts.

By making a few adjustments to an English class curriculum, teachers could help their students develop the tools needed for great pragmatic competence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ELLS

It is important to note that LDS missionaries make up a small portion of the ELL population. The goals and requirements of missionaries, however, are in harmony with much of the ELL population. First of all, they are trained to professionally communicate with native speakers. A large motivation driving the ELL population is that of professional success. This includes employment, scholastic achievement, and political relations. Because of this, the results from this study can and should be applied to learners outside of religious context.

In addition, compliment responses are a just one of many ways pragmatic failure can take place. If differences as significant as those found in this study exist in one area between two

culture groups, they likely to exist elsewhere. Becoming familiar with your L2 culture may be challenging, especially if teachers do not cover pragmatic competence in the classroom. Ways to overcome this challenge include:

- Paying attention to moments that feel awkward in conversations, and then locating the source. No teacher could identify every possible moment of pragmatic failure a student could have. Learning to recognize and identify moments of pragmatic failure would be a critical skill in language acquisition.

- Compliment natives and pay attention to how they respond. Practice responding the same way when someone compliments you on a similar topic.

- Become familiar with a variety of ways to respond to compliments. Don't learn one way and use it for every compliment you receive.

LIMITATIONS

With only 40 missionaries participating in this study, the generalizability and conclusions of the nature of pragmatic transfer in Chinese CRs is limited. Nevertheless, I feel that this study enhances the research accumulating on this topic and can provide further guidance on how English language learners can more fully acquire pragmatic fluency in their English conversations.

In addition, the two continua used in this study were well organized and useful in organizing and analyzing the CRs. However, it is possible for CRs with the same label to have variation. For example, two *appreciation token* CRs can have differing degrees of acceptance. Responses like *Thank you so much* and *Thanks, I guess* do not display equal levels of acceptance,

but they are represented as equal in the agreement→disagreement continuum used in this study. Each CR could arguably be represented in their varieties through separate continua. However, in order to allow for this study to be comparable to previous studies, Tran's two continua (2007) were used despite this limitation.

Another limitation includes our research tool—naturalized role plays. This tool was effective in creating opportunities for spontaneous CR production; however, it was not a perfect medium for creating authentic 'real-life' conversation. A few participants struggled to stay in character the entire time (e.g. asking the researcher if they were done yet in the middle of the role play). A corpus was another consideration, but it would have been difficult to control for the variables this study required. Because of this, I felt that naturalized role plays would be the best tool to use in order to control for our independent variables (compliment topics, gender, and cultural-group).

Using teachers as the interviewers was also not ideal, as there were pre-existing student-teacher roles that may have affected the way the missionaries behaved in the role play. Some missionaries were distracted with the idea that the teacher was mentally critiquing their teaching ability. Moreover, female teachers were in limited supply, and I had to participate as the researcher in several role plays. Nonetheless, tests for reliability in rating the CRs were high and the results of this study were consistent with previous research on this topic. We feel that in spite of these limitations, this study still makes a valid contribution to its associated field of research.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Many options arise for future research from this study. First, similar methods could be used on an increased participant size. Replication with great participation would assist in opportunities for better generalization of the results. Second, the missionaries' country of origin could be controlled. This study allowed for looser boundaries for what qualified as a "Chinese missionary." Taking from just one area (e.g. Hong Kong or Singapore) could also assist in generalizabilty. Next, studies on pragmatic transfer of Chinese ELLs in responses to jokes, sarcasm, or other topics would lead to insightful research.

An interesting phenomenon was meeting missionaries who were bilingual/bicultural. They grew up in a home with one American parent and one Chinese parent. These missionaries were not able to be used for the study, but out of curiosity I had them participate in the naturalized role plays. While there were not enough participants to yield significant or generalizable data, each bicultural missionary's CRs were neither consistent with the AMs' or the CMs' responses. Further research into bicultural speakers CRs would be fascinating.

Finally, creating and testing pedagogical materials and methods for pragmatic competence in ESL and EFL classrooms would be fascinating. Teachers in the Missionary Training Center expressed concern for not knowing how to begin teaching pragmatics in the classroom. Many wished they had something to use and to teach with. Their concern is not isolated to that teaching facility alone. The results from this research should help teachers recognize where the pragmatic confusion is stemming from. For instance, denying and downgrading compliments to an uncomfortable level and help them better navigate the obstacles their students face as they strive to develop communicative competence in the English language.

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Scenario for Naturalized Role Play 1

To the role play informant:

- You are missionary knocking doors in a neighborhood. You come to a house where a young man answers and lets you into his home. He has heard a lot about your church and is interested in talking with you.
- To get started, take 10 minutes to ask questions and get to know this person's background.
- Please ask why they are willing to talk with you.
- Please introduce yourself and let the young man know what you do as a missionary.
- Invite him to come with you to church on Sunday

To the role play researcher:

- You are sitting at home reading when there is a knock at your door. You open it up and see a young Chinese missionary from the Mormon Church. You've been hearing a lot about the Mormon Church in the news and feel curious to learn more about it from this missionary. You invite the missionary in and start to get to know each other.
- Please answer the missionaries questions about yourself
- Please ask questions about the missionary (where are you from? why are you here?
- When it is most natural during the talk, compliment him/her on:
  1. his / her excellent English abilities
  2. his / her watch (if not wearing a watch, earrings, tie, glasses, or other small item will suffice)
  3. how beautiful Chinese characters are/ how delicious Chinese food is/ how beautiful the missionary's home town is.

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life. It is very important that you compliment naturally and make your compliments a part of the normal social talk. Do not make it obvious that the compliments are among the tasks listed in the card for you.

Scenario for Naturalized Role Play 2

To the role play informant:

- You are a missionary in a new area. A member in your ward has given you the name and address of a part member family. The youngest sister was never baptized and has expressed interest in meeting with the missionaries. You arrive at her house to meet her for the first time in person.
- For about 10 minutes ask her questions to get to know: her needs, questions about your church, and religious background.
- Invite her to come to church on Sunday

To the role play researcher:

- You are a young woman who has some family members that are members of the LDS faith. When you were young, you went to church with them and met with missionaries. Over time, you family members and you stopped going. Recently you ran into an old friend from that church who asked if you would meet with missionaries again. The missionaries are coming to your house this afternoon.
- Please invite them to come in and take some time to introduce yourself and get to know them
- Please ask them questions about God and what their church teaches
- When it is most natural during the talk, compliment him/her on:
    1. his / her English ability
    2. his / her watch (if not wearing a watch, earrings, tie, glasses, or other small item will suffice)
    3. how beautiful Chinese characters are/ how delicious Chinese food is/ how beautiful the missionary's home town is.

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life. It is very important that you compliment naturally and make your compliments a part of the normal social talk. Do not make it obvious that the compliments are among the tasks listed in the card for you.

M/F Interviewer Acceptance	Upgrade	Agreement	Appreciation Token	Reassign	Return	Explanation	Non-Idiomatic Response	Disagreement	Downgrade
USA TOTALS:	**36**	**88**	**48**	**7**	**10**	**45**	**4**	**1**	**3**
USA Male:	**17**	**48**	**25**	**3**	**7**	**24**	**2**	**1**	**2**
Possession	4	6	17	2	3	8	0	0	0
Ability	2	7	7	1	0	8	0	1	2
LDS Church	3	16	1	0	0	6	1	0	0
Home	8	19	0	0	4	2	1	0	0
USA Female:	**19**	**40**	**23**	**4**	**3**	**21**	**2**	**0**	**1**
Possession	5	1	17	2	1	5	1	0	0
Ability	5	7	5	2	0	8	1	0	1
LDS Church	2	16	1	0	1	4	0	0	0
Home	7	16	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
CHINESE TOTALS:	**13**	**38**	**59**	**6**	**3**	**26**	**9**	**14**	**22**
Chinese Male:	**8**	**22**	**19**	**3**	**2**	**16**	**6**	**9**	**12**
Possession	0	2	11	3	1	4	2	0	3
Ability	0	1	6	0	0	4	0	9	9
LDS Church	2	8	1	0	0	3	3	0	0
Home	6	11	1	0	1	5	1	0	0
Chinese Female:	**5**	**16**	**40**	**3**	**1**	**10**	**3**	**5**	**10**
Possession	0	0	19	2	1	0	0	0	0
Ability	0	0	9	0	0	6	0	4	9
LDS Church	0	7	6	1	0	2	2	0	0
Home	5	9	6	0	0	2	1	1	1

M/F Interviewer Avoidance	Expressing Gladness	Follow-Up Question	Doubting Question	Opting Out
USA TOTALS	**11**	**19**	**0**	**5**
USA Male:	**3**	**4**	**0**	**4**
Possession	0	0	0	3
Ability	0	2	0	1
LDS Church	3	2	0	0
Home	0	0	0	0
USA Female:	**8**	**15**	**0**	**1**
Possession	1	1	0	0
Ability	1	3	0	0
LDS Church	5	5	0	0
Home	1	6	0	1
CHINESE TOTALS	**4**	**20**	**4**	**19**
Chinese Male:	**1**	**12**	**2**	**9**
Possession	0	1	0	4
Ability	0	0	0	1
LDS Church	1	5	1	3
Home	0	6	1	1
Chinese Female:	**3**	**8**	**2**	**10**
Possession	0	0	0	2
Ability	0	0	0	3
LDS Church	3	5	1	5
Home	0	3	1	0

APPENDIX D

MALE Interviewer TOTALS:

Acceptance	Upgrade	Agreement	Appreciation Token	Reassign	Return	Explanation	Non-Idiomatic Response	Disagreement	Downgrade
TOTALS:	**27**	**64**	**60**	**7**	**8**	**46**	**6**	**7**	**10**
USA Male:	**11**	**23**	**13**	**1**	**5**	**17**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Possession	2	2	9	1	2	5	0	0	0
Ability	2	3	4	0	0	5	0	0	1
LDS Church	2	8	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Home	5	10	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
USA Female:	**11**	**23**	**12**	**1**	**1**	**14**	**2**	**0**	**0**
Possession	3	1	8	1	0	4	1	0	0
Ability	4	4	4	0	0	3	1	0	0
LDS Church	0	9	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
Home	4	9	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Chinese Male:	**2**	**13**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**9**	**1**	**5**	**5**
Possession	0	1	6	2	1	1	0	0	1
Ability	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	5	4
LDS Church	1	4	1	0	0	3	1	0	0
Home	1	7	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
Chinese Female:	**3**	**5**	**25**	**3**	**0**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**4**
Possession	0	0	10	2	0	0	0	0	0
Ability	0	0	7	0	0	3	0	2	4
LDS Church	0	2	4	1	0	2	2	0	0
Home	3	3	4	0	0	1	1	0	0

APPENDIX E

MALE Interviewer

TOTALS:	6	23	2	13
Avoidance	Express Gladness	Follow-Up Question	Doubting Question	Opting Out
USA Male:	**2**	**2**	**0**	**2**
Possession	0	0	0	1
Ability	0	1	0	1
LDS Church	2	1	0	0
Home	0	0	0	0
USA Female:	**2**	**10**	**0**	**0**
Possession	0	1	0	0
Ability	1	2	0	0
LDS Church	1	2	0	0
Home	0	5	0	0
Chinese Male:	**0**	**6**	**2**	**5**
Possession	0	0	0	2
Ability	0	0	0	1
LDS Church	0	3	1	1
Home	0	3	1	1
Chinese Female:	**2**	**5**	**0**	**6**
Possession	0	0	0	1
Ability	0	0	0	2
LDS Church	2	3	0	3
Home	0	2	0	0

Female Interviewer Acceptance	Upgrade	Agreement	Appreciation Token	Reassign	Return	Explanation	Non-Idiomatic Response	Disagreement	Downgrade
USA TOTALS:	**33**	**69**	**38**	**3**	**11**	**48**	**2**	**0**	**2**
USA Male:	**22**	**46**	**26**	**2**	**10**	**34**	**0**	**0**	**2**
Possession	2	2	9	1	2	5	0	0	0
Ability	2	3	4	0	0	5	0	0	1
LDS Church	2	8	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Home	5	10	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
USA Female:	**11**	**23**	**12**	**1**	**1**	**14**	**2**	**0**	**0**
Possession	3	1	8	1	0	4	1	0	0
Ability	4	4	4	0	0	3	1	0	0
LDS Church	0	9	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
Home	4	9	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
CHINESE TOTALS:	**6**	**18**	**35**	**5**	**2**	**15**	**4**	**7**	**9**
Chinese Male:	**3**	**13**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**9**	**1**	**5**	**5**
Possession	0	1	6	2	1	1	0	0	1
Ability	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	5	4
LDS Church	1	4	1	0	0	3	1	0	0
Home	2	7	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
Chinese Female:	**3**	**5**	**25**	**3**	**0**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**4**
Possession	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ability	0	0	7	1	0	3	0	2	4
LDS Church	0	1	5	0	0	1	2	0	0
Home	2	3	4	1	0	1	1	0	0

Female Interviewer Avoidance	Expressing Gladness	Follow-Up Question	Doubting Question	Opting Out
USA TOTALS:	**6**	**14**	**0**	**4**
USA Male:	**4**	**4**	**0**	**4**
Possession	0	0	0	1
Ability	0	1	0	1
LDS Church	2	1	0	0
Home	0	0	0	0
USA Female:	**2**	**10**	**0**	**0**
Possession	0	1	0	0
Ability	1	2	0	0
LDS Church	1	2	0	0
Home	0	5	0	0
CHINESE TOTALS:	**2**	**11**	**2**	**11**
Chinese Male:	**0**	**6**	**2**	**5**
Possession	0	0	0	2
Ability	0	0	0	1
LDS Church	0	3	1	1
Home	0	3	1	1
Chinese Female:	**2**	**5**	**0**	**6**
Possession	0	0	0	1
Ability	0	0	0	2
LDS Church	2	3	0	3
Home	0	2	0	0