An Empirical Research on Chinese-English Bilinguals' Compliment Responses—A Cross-cultural Perspective[*]

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Abstract—**Compliments and compliment responses (CRs) are decided by linguistic and sociocultural norms, and further reflect cultural values and social norms. The study of CRs has generated a great number of studies in pragmatics. Previous studies, including Chinese as participants, have investigated Chinese CRs and compared Chinese CRs with people of other languages. According to Holmes' (1988) taxonomy, CRs can be classified into three categories: Agreeing, Deflecting/Evading and Rejecting. Looking from a cross-cultural perspective, Chinese tend to use less Accepting strategies and more Rejecting strategies than Australians do (Tang and Zhang, 2009). Within the same language community, CR strategies might also change over time, as has been suggested in Chen and Yang's (2010). However, research on Chinese English-knowing bilinguals' CRs in the two languages is rare. The present study, focuses on a group of Chinese English-knowing bilinguals' CR speech act. It aims at finding out whether Chinese English bilinguals will respond to compliments differently, when they are exposed to different media—Chinese language and English language, which might shed new light on how language influences and shapes people's social and cultural norms. Written discourse completion task (DCT) is used to elicit the participants' responses to compliments on one's look, ability, character, possession. The survey was conducted on a cohort of 31 Chinese English teachers, during the period when they were in Singapore. Results show that there are differences in CR strategies employed in Chinese DCT and English DCT.**

Index Terms—**compliment, compliment response, bilinguals, DCT, Cross-culture**

I. INTRODUCTION

Compliments and compliment responses are decided by linguistic and sociocultural norms, and further reflect cultural values and social norms. Compliments and CRs studies offer great insight into interlocutors' expressions of appraisals and reactions to external appraisals, which further reflect interlocutors' cultural and social values. Yuan also highlighted the importance of the study by commenting that "The compliment event is worth studying because, like all speech acts, it can show us the rules of language use in a speech community" (Yuan, 2001, p. 273). The interest in the study of compliments and CRs, beginning from Pomerantz (1978), has generated a number of relevant studies. Previous research included quite a number of cross-cultural studies, aiming to probe into different speeches in different speech community, including: Spanish and English (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001), German and American English (Golato, 2002), Australian English and Manderin Chinese (Tang & Zhang, 2009), et al. This study, however, intends to find out whether English knowing bilingual Chinese would respond differently to compliments, when they are exposed to Chinese and English, using written DCT to collect data.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Previous Studies

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory offers insightful account of how politeness is conveyed and face is saved or threatened. A compliment may serve as both face saving and face threatening act (FTA), because evaluation, either positive or negative, may affect one interlocutor's face wants. There have been numerous studies on compliments and CRs in different languages, including German, Polish, Nigerian English, Turkish, Persian, Jordanian Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic, Syrian Arabic, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Chinese (Chen & Yang, 2010). These studies have revealed both similarities and differences among the rich diversity of languages (Chen & Yang, 2010). Chinese is almost "the second most studied language in CR research, next only to the different varieties of English" (Chen, 2010, p.3). Tang and Zhang (2009) investigated CRs among Australian English and Mandarin Chinese speakers, which suggested that compared with Australian participants, Chinese participants used fewer *Accepting* strategies, but more *Evading* and *Rejecting* strategies. They also found that fewer combination strategies were used by Chinese than Australians (Tang & Zhang, 2009). Beside cross-cultural studies, there is also evidence of different CR strategies within

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the same language community, as suggested in Chen (1993) and Chen & Yang (2010). Chen and Yang (2010) adopted a quasi-longitudinal study of CRs in Chinese, which replicated Chen's own study in 1993, examining whether there are differences in responding to compliments over 17 years' time. These two studies, using the same instrument to collect data—written DCT, working with a similar subject population in the same city Xi'an, found that people are now using more *Accepting* strategies but less *Rejecting* strategies than they did previously in 1993. Chen and Yang (2010) claimed that the influx of Western cultural influences attributed to the changes in people's responses to compliments.

B. Definition

The compliment is defined as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1988, p. 446; 1995, p. 117). CR is a response to a compliment. Compliments and CRs are regulated by social and cultural conventions of a certain speech community. Based on Holmes' definition, compliments can be explicit and implicit, but this study solely addresses CRs to explicit compliments.

C. Taxonomy

Taxonomies of CRs utterances in previous research have been ever-evolving. Pomerantz (1978) identified two categories: (1) Agree with the complimenter, (2) Avoid self-praise. Herbert's (1986) three categories, *Agreement, None-agreement* and *Other interpretations*, enjoy great popularity and wide acceptance. Under the first category *Agreement*, there are subtypes: appreciation token comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment, and return. *Non-agreement* is the second category, including subtypes: scale down, question, disagreement, qualification, and no acknowledgment. The third category is *Other interpretations*, including only subtype: request interpretation. However, in the present study Holmes' (1988) taxonomy is adopted, following Chen's (1993) and Chen and Yang's (2010) practices. Holmes' categorization is different from Herbert's, in that she categorized the subtypes into three categories: *Accepting, Deflecting/Evading*, and *Rejecting*. This taxonomy is based on great insight gained from Pomerantz's (1978) model, where Holmes strikes a balance between two extremes of either "Agreeing" or "Rejecting", by proposing a compromising category—*Deflecting/Evading* compliments. Therefore, Holmes' (1988) taxonomy is gaining popularity and acceptance (Chen, 1993, Tang & Zhang 2009, Chen & Yang, 2010).

Research on CRs has been conducted extensively. How do people respond to compliments is an interesting question. Accepting the compliment might suggest immodesty, whereas declining the compliment might sound impolite. Is it really true that "You look lovely today" will "make a Chinese woman uncomfortable and even somewhat resentful"? (Tang & Zhang, 2009, p. 326)

Previous studies with Chinese as participants investigated CRs in Chinese language. This study, however, aims to see whether the different language media will produce different results with Chinese English knowing bilinguals as participants. Also this study will make comparisons between the present study and previous research with Chinese as participants, with the aim of identifying any features or trend in them. Specifically, this paper deals with the following research questions (RQs):

RQ 1 Will the English-knowing Chinese bilinguals respond differently when they are exposed to different language media?

RQ 2 What features and trend can be identified from the comparison between results of the present study and results from previous study on Chinese CR strategies?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants in this study are 31 English teachers, aging 27 to 35, from different areas of China, including Beijing, Hebei, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Shanxi, Guangdong, Guizhou, Anhui, Henan etc. They have taught English in China for 2 to 10 years. These participants have been involved in a program offered by NIE, sponsored by MOE Singapore. The data were collected during this program. Participants were given around 15 minutes to fill the questionnaires in the classroom.

B. Data Collection Method and Instrument

Written DCT is used in the present study, though the disadvantages of it have been widely discussed and criticized by Trosborg (1994), Beebe and Cummings (1996), Yuan (2001), and Golato (2003). Yuan's (2001) study on Kunming Chinese CRs showed that oral DCT and written DCT did produce responses varying in lengths of responses, numbers of exclamation particles, repetitions and omissions. However, Yuan's study did not show different data collection methods will cause different CR strategies. As Chen and Yang (2010) argued that method of data collection might not be the only reason for variation in the study of CR. CRs tend to be consistent whatever the methods are used by the researchers (Chen and Yang (2010). However, the advantages of written DCT are quite obvious, allowing researcher control, and making efficient data elicitation possible. Therefore, what this study tries to find out among the group of participants "what they will respond" rather than "what they really say" in specific situations, aiming to see whether the participants' responses will vary in CR taxonomy identified when DCT of different languages are used to elicit CRs.

The questionnaires adopted in the present study follow Chen's study in 1993 and Chen and Yang in 2010, eliciting responses to compliments on one's *look*, *ability*, *character* and *possession*. A Chinese version of questionnaire (hereafter CQ for short) was distributed to the participants first. In order to minimize the effect caused by the original Chinese version, ten days later, an English version of questionnaire (hereafter EQ for short), with slight adaptations, was administered. First of all, the sequence is rearranged. CQ consists of four situations, where compliments on look, character, ability and possession, whereas EQ follows the sequence of look, ability, possession and character. Secondly, since Chinese is the participants' mother tongue, only one, and therefore most preferred response for each situation is elicited. However, in EQ more space is provided for participants to reply to certain compliments, though it is not compulsory to fill out all three possibilities. Therefore, the numbers of responses collected from the two questionnaires are quite different, as will be discussed in the following section. Thirdly, in the English version, the situations are changed slightly to make the situations appear more likely happen in Singapore, instead of China, so as to elicit more natural responses in the target language. Of all questionnaires collected from the 31 respondents, 25 CQs and 29 EQs were considered valid for the present study.

IV. RESULTS

Altogether there are 100 Chinese responses and 179 responses collected from CQ and EQ respectively. The frequency of the use of each subtype under three broad categories identified by Holmes (1988) is calculated. Under *Accepting* strategies, there are subtypes of *Agreeing, Thanking, Expressing gladness, Encouraging, Accepting-explaining*, etc. Under *Deflecting/Evading* strategies, there are *Offering, Using humor, Seeking confirmation, Doubting, Deflecting, Deflecting/ Evading-explaining,* etc. Under *Rejecting* strategies, there are *disagreeing, denigrating, expressing embarrassment, Rejecting-explaining*, etc. The each category is coded under "combination". However, strategies employing several subtypes crossing the three broad categories are coded under "cross-category combination". This is different from Chen and Yang (2010), who did not identify any cross-category combination strategies. The frequencies of CR strategies are reported in Table 1, which offers a clearer picture of the percentage of three-category strategy uses in different situations in CQ and EQ. The researcher coded the data twice with an interval of two weeks' time between the first and second coding, resulting in an intra-coder reliability coefficient of 95% for CQ and 89% for EQ. Furthermore, a portion of data and the ambiguous responses found by the researcher were handed over to a second coder, yielding inter-coder reliability coefficient of 90% for CQ and 83% for EQ.

TABLE 1
CR STRATEGIES IN CQ AND EQ

		Chinese Questionnaire			
		look	character	ability	possession
Accepting	thanking	40%	0	0	20%
	agreeing	0	0	0	16%
	returning	8%	12%	16%	0
	expressing gladness	0	28%	0	0
	encouraging	0%	0	0	4%
	A-explaining	0	12%	0	0
	combination	28%	24%	8%	24%
	total	76%	76%	24%	64%
Deflecting /Evading	offering	0	0%	4%	4%
	using humor	0	12%	0	0
	seeking confirmation	0	0%	0	0
	doubting	0	0%	0	0
	deflecting	0	0%	0	0
	D/E-explaining	0	0%	0	4%
	combination	0	0%	0	0
	total	0	12%	4%	8%
Rejecting	disagreeing	4%	0%	12%	0
	denigrating	0	4%	16%	8%
	expressing embarrassment	0	0%	0	0
	R-explanation	0	0%	0	0
	combination	4%	4%	20%	4%
	total	8%	8%	48%	12%
Cross category combination		16%	4%	24%	16%
		English Questionnaire			
		look	character	ability	possession
Accepting	thanking	34%	0	36%	12%
	agreeing	0	0	2%	0
	returning	2%	19%	2%	10%
	expressing gladness	0	31%	2%	0
	encouraging	0	0	0	5%
	A-explaining	5%	10%	7%	12%
	combination	44%	38%	25%	31%
	total	85%	98%	75%	69%
Deflecting /Evading	offering	0	0	0	2%
	using humor	0	0	0	0
	seeking confirmation	0	0	2%	2%
	doubting	0	0	0	0
	deflecting	0	0	0	0
	D/E-explaining	0	0	0	14%
	combination	0	0	9%	5%
	total	0	0	11%	24%
Rejecting	disagreeing	0	0	0	0
	denigrating	0	0	0	0
	expressing embarrassment	0	0	0	0
	R-explanation	0	0	0	2%
	combination	0	0	0	0
	total	0	0	0	2%
Cross category combination		15%	2%	14%	5%

A. CRs in Four Situations

CRs with some examples for each broad category are presented, which are listed in CCR1-22 from CQ, and ECR1-14 from EQ. The subtype strategies under the three broad categories, *Accepting, Deflecting/Evading, and Rejecting*, are reported in brackets.

1. CR strategies in compliment on *look*

In CQ, *Accepting* strategies are featured by expressing thanks (40%), accepting combination (28%), and returning (8%). In EQ, accepting combination (44%) and expressing thanks (34%) also dominate. CCR 1-4 and ECR 1-2 are some examples. *Deflecting/Evading* strategies find no places in responding to compliment on one's look in both CQ and EQ. *Rejecting* strategies are only found in CQ. The respondents employ disagreeing strategies (4%) and rejecting combination (4%) in CQ (eg. CCR 5-6), which forms a contrast to no rejecting strategy use in EQ.

CCR1: 谢谢！ [thanking]
    Xiexie!
    Thanks!
CCR2: 谢谢，你也是啊 [thanking+returning]
    Xiexie, ni ye shi a

> Thanks, you too!

CCR3: 谢谢！还要继续向你看齐，向你学习啊！[thanking+A-explaining]
>> Xiexie! Haiyao jixu xiangni kanqi, xiangni xuexi a!
>> Thanks! Still need to take you as an example and learn from you!

CCR4: 你也不错嘛！[returning]
>> Ni ye bucuo ma!
>> You also look nice!

CCR 5: 呵呵，老了！[denigrating]
>> Hehe, lao le!
>> Haha (laughing)! Old already!

CCR 6: 哪有！越来越老了吧！[disagreeing+denigrating]
>> Nayou! Yuelaiyue lao le ba!
>> Not really. I am getting older and older!

ECR 1: Thank you. I am so glad you like it. [thanking+expressing gladness]

ECR 2: It takes me a lot of time to be cleaned up. [A-explaining]

Generally, the participants adopt more *Accepting* strategies than *Deflecting/Evading* and *Rejecting* strategies. Furthermore, they use several *Rejecting* strategies in Chinese (8%), but not in English.

2. CR strategies in compliment on *character*

Respondents' CRs on compliments on character vary quite a lot. In CQ, 76% use *Accepting* strategies, 12% *Deflecting/Evading* strategies, 8% *Rejecting* strategies and 4% cross-category combination strategies. In contrast, 98% use *Accepting* strategies, and 2% cross-category combination strategies. Because the situation is set to thank the hearer for looking after the speaker's kid, quite a number of responses are returning the compliment by speaking highly of the kid (eg. CCR 7-8, ECR 3-4). So the responses are most featured by returning strategies and accepting combination strategies. Another difference is, using humor strategy under the *Deflecting/Evading* strategies is used in Chinese (eg. CCR 9-10), but not used in English.

CCR 7: 你家宝宝太可爱了，可好看了。[returning+A-explaining]
>> Nijia baobao tai ke'ai le, ke haokan le.
>> Your baby is very lovely, and easy to take care of.

CCR 8: 您太客气了！您的孩子很可爱，我很喜欢陪他玩。[expressing gladness+returning]
>> Nin tai keqi le! Ninde haizi hen keai, wo hen xihuan pei ta wan.
>> You're welcome! You kid is so cute that I enjoy playing with him.

CCR 9: 你才发现啊？呵呵 [using humor]
>> Ni cai faxian a? hehe
>> Did you just get to know it just now? haha (laughing)

CCR 10: 真累呀，以后不要再找我了。[using humor]
>> Zhen lei ya, yihou buyao zai zhaowo le.
>> Too tiring! In the future, don't ask me to do that later.

ECR 3: Glad I can help. By the way, your child is lovely. [expressing gladness+returning]

ECR 4: You are welcome. My daughter played very well together with your son. [expressing gladness+A-explaining]

3. CR strategies in compliment on *ability*

The responses to compliments on one's ability in CQ and EQ also show great contrasts. In CQ only 24% responses use *Accepting* strategies (CCR 11), 4% *Deflecting/Evading* strategies (CCR 12), and almost half (48%) use *Rejecting* strategies (CCR 13-14). However, in EQ, a majority of (75%) respondents accept the compliments (ECR 5-6), 11% chooses to evade, 14% combines different strategies (ECR 7), but no respondent rejects the compliment.

CCR 11: 你也会做得很好的。[returning]
>> Ni yehui zuode henhao de.
>> You will also do very well.

CCR 12: 没事，回头我教你。[offering]
>> Meishi, huitou wo jiao ni.
>> No big deal. I will tell you how to do it.

CCR 13: 过奖了，还有很多需要完善的地方。[denigrating+R-explaining]
>> Guojiang le, haiyou henduo xuyao wanshan de difang.
>> You over praised me. There still leaves much room for improvement.

CCR 14: 乱弄的，其实自己也糊里糊涂的。[denigrating+R-explaining]
>> Luannong de, qishi ziji ye hulihutu de.
>> I'm poorly prepared. Actually I am still rather confused about it.

ECR 5: Thanks. I am so glad to know it is enjoyable. [thanking+expressing gladness]

ECR 6: I really put a lot of efforts into it. [A-explaining]

ECR 7: Really? I hope it won't bore you. [seeking confirmation+denigrating]

4.   CR strategies in compliment on *possession*

Responses to compliments on possession do not vary much. 64% and 69% of responses are accepting the compliments in CQ (CCR 15-16) and EQ (ECR 8) respectively. CQ manifests more *Rejecting* but less *Deflecting/Evading* strategies than those in EQ.

CCR 15: 谢谢你的夸奖！你将来的车肯定比这更好。[thanking+encouraging]

　　　　Xiexie nide kuajiang! Ni jianglai de che kending bi zhe genghao.

　　　　Thank you for your compliment! Your car will be better than this one.

CCR 16: 这车真是不错，不然我也不会选它呀！[agreeing+A-explanation]

　　　　Zhe che zhenshi bucuo, buran wo ye buhui xuan ta ya!

　　　　This car is really not bad. Otherwise I wouldn't have bought it.

ECR 8: Thank you! This phone is very inexpensive, indeed. [thanking+A-explaining]

ECR 9: Well, you know. I only use part of them. I still cannot figure out all of them. [D-explaining]

B.   Combination Strategies

Combination strategies are also tabulated in Table 1. They can be combinations within categories of *Accepting*, *Deflecting/Evading*, and *Rejecting* strategies. However, different from Chen's (1993) and Chen and Yang (2010), combination strategies crossing categories are also found in responses.

1.   Combination strategies within category

According to Table 1 and Table 2, both CQ and EQ exhibit combination strategies within Accepting strategies. Fig. 1 shows the contrasting features between data elicited from two DCT tasks. Generally, the participants employ more *Accepting* combination strategies in English than in Chinese.
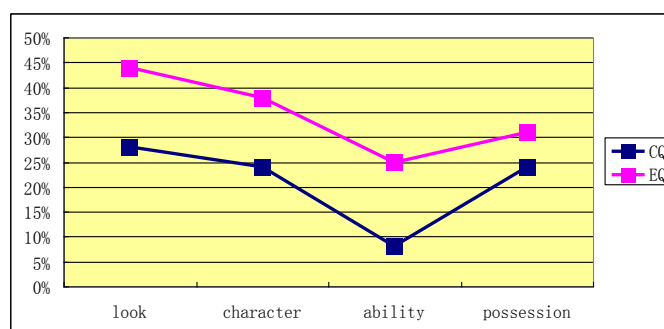

Fig. 1 Accepting combination strategies in CQ and EQ

According to Fig. 2, combination strategies within *Deflecting/Evading* strategies are adopted moderately in EQ, but not found in CQ. In contrast, Fig. 3 shows that there are no *Rejecting* combination strategies in EQ, but some are found in CQ.
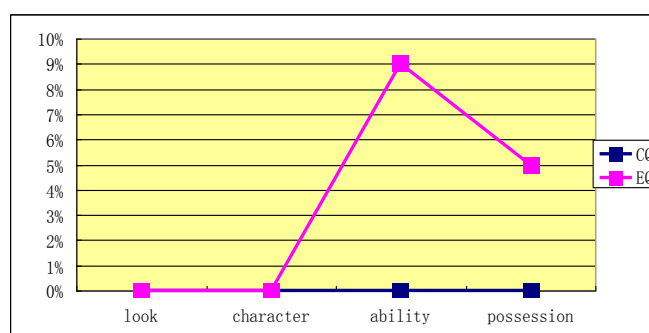

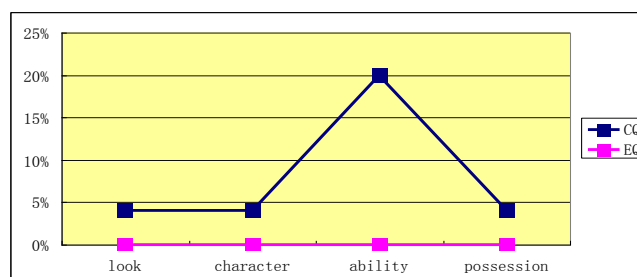Fig. 2 Deflecting/Evading combination strategies in CQ and EQ

Fig. 3 Rejecting combination strategies in CQ and EQ

2. Cross-category combination strategies

Besides combination strategies within categories, cross-category strategies are commonly employed in different settings. From Fig. 4, it can be inferred that the participants use more cross-category strategies in CQ than in EQ. Several combinations are found: *Seeking Confirmation + Returning*, *Thanking + Seeking Confirmation*, *Thanking + Denigrating*, *Thanking+ R-explaining*, *Deflecting + Agreeing*, etc. Some examples (CCR 17-22 and ECR 10-14) are listed below, which due to space constraint are not exhaustive.
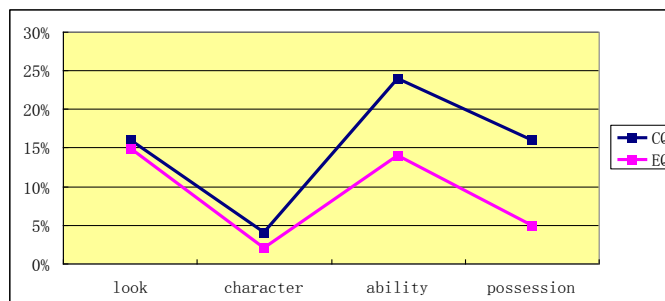

Fig. 4 Cross-category combination strategies in CQ and EQ

CCR 17: 啊，真的啊？谢谢。你也气色相当好呢。[seeking confirmation+thanking+returning]
A, zhende a? xiexie. Ni ye qise xiangdang hao ne.
Oh, really? Thank you. You also look great.

CCR 18: 真的呀？你也更漂亮了。[seeking confirmation+returning]
Zhende ya? Ni ye geng piaoliang le.
Really? You also look more beautiful.

CCR 19: 是吗？谢谢。你也行的。[seeking confirmation+thanking+returning]
Shi ma? Xiexie. Ni ye xing de.
Really? Thanks. You can also do an excellent job.

CCR 20: 哪里！你就是没做，你做的话比我做得好多了！[denigrating+returning]
Nali! Ni jiushi mei zuo, ni zuo de hua bi wo zuode hao duo le!
No! You did not do it. If you had, you would have done much better than me.

CCR 21: 谢谢！我这也是被逼出来的呀！在这种情况下，你也会像我一样，甚至比我做得更好的。[thanking+D-explaining+returning]
Xiexie! Wo zhe yeshi bei bi chulai de ya! Zai zhezhong qingkuang xia, ni yehui xiang wo yiyang, shenzhi bi wo zuo de genghao de.
Thank you! This is merely result under pressure. If you were in the same situation, you could also do as well as I do, if no better than me.

CCR 22: 谢谢，也不是什么好车。[thanking+denigrating]
Xiexie, ye bushi shenme hao che.
Thanks, but it's not that good car.

ECR 10: Thanks, actually I'd prefer to be more casual. [thanking+R-explaining]

ECR 11: Really? I didn't like it the first time I saw it. [seeking confirmation+R-explaining]

ECR 12: Really? I didn't like it the first time I saw it. [seeking confirmation+denigrating]

ECR 13: I was a little nervous. Did I speak clearly? [D-explaining+seeking confirmation]

ECR 14: Really? Oh, thank you. I like your dress. You're gorgeous today. [seeking confirmation+thanking+returning]

V. DISCUSSION

A. Comparison between CQ and EQ in Four Situations

Man-Whitney *U* procedure is run to compare participants' means of CRs and decide whether CQ and EQ display significantly different CRs in four settings. The result shows that there are significant differences between CQ and EQ in responding to compliments on *character* ($SD=.668$, $t=.008<.05$) and *ability* ($SD=1.196$, $t=.000<.05$), but there are no significant differences in CRs in *look* and *possession*, which is show in Fig. 6.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Sig. (2-tailed)
Look	66	1.52	1.113	1	4	.407
	n1=25	1.64				
	n2=41	1.44				
Character	79	1.20	.668	1	4	.008
	n1=25	1.40				
	n2=54	1.11				
Ability	72	1.92	1.196	1	4	.000
	n1=25	2.72				
	n2=47	1.49				
Possession	67	1.57	.957	1	4	.370
	n1=25	1.80				
	n2=42	1.43				

Fig. 6 Different strategies used in four situations CQ & EQ

Note: n1= number of responses from Chinese version questionnaire

n2= number of responses from English version questionnaire

1=accepting strategy 2=deflecting strategy 3=rejecting strategy 4=cross category strategy

The result can be explained by Leech's Agreement Maxim and Modesty Maxim (Leech, 1983) and *Accepting* strategies are considered to observe Agreement Maxim, while *Rejecting* strategies observe Modesty Maxim. Explained this way, modesty is manifested by lowering oneself, and thus elevating the other party. Chen and Yang (2010) claimed a different interpretation of modesty based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Complimenter's linguistic behavior needs to protect and enhance his or her own face as much as the complimentee's. Modesty is exhibited in a manner which protects one's socially recognized self-image. Following this line, rejecting compliments can be considered as protecting complimentee's own face (Chen and Yang, 2010).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face wants are a person's expectations that his/her public self-image is respected by others. Looked in this light, a complimenter wants to satisfy one's face wants by complimenting on the complimentee. Furthermore, Agreeing strategies are seen as enhancing the complimenter's positive face—the want to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others. Therefore, complimentee's agreeing with the complimenter is much motivated by the desire to save complimenter's positive face. In this study, good look and possession of nice things are viewed as desired aspects of one's face. However, when responding to compliments on one's *character* and *ability*, respondents employ quite different strategies. Deflecting/Evading strategies (12% and 4% in CQ, 0% and 11% in EQ) and Rejecting strategies (8% and 48% in CQ, 0% in EQ) are more employed in CQ than in EQ. This can be explained by deeply rooted modesty ideology in Chinese. When responding in Chinese, the participants use more symbolic Chinese way of showing modesty (e.g., 哪里 nail, 哪里 nali; 过奖了 guojiang le), which they find no appropriate counterparts in English speech community. Simply replying "No" may threaten the complimenter's positive face. Therefore, the typical Rejecting strategies find their good places in Chinese, but not observed in English. Nice character and competence are also aspects of positive face, but responses in Chinese manifest a tendency of employing significantly more Deflecting/Evading strategies and Rejecting strategies than in English, which suggests that modesty is highly valued aspect of positive face.

B. A Longitudinal Comparison

There has been extensive research on Chinese compliments and CRs. Here, a comparison is made between the present study and several previous studies with Chinese participants involved. It is worthwhile to note that the all the previous four studies are conducted in Chinese among Chinese participants. The present research investigates CRs in both Chinese and English. In order to facilitate comparison chronologically, the results are all presented in Fig. 5.
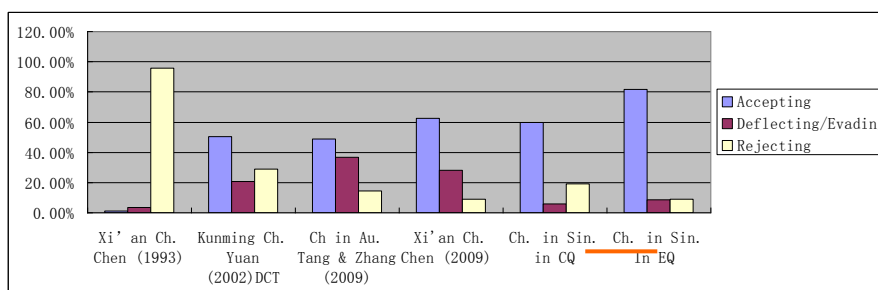
Fig. 5. Comparison of Chinese CR strategies in previous studies and present study

Note

Ch.=Chinese, Au=Australia, Sin=Singapore

*To make the comparison possible and the result clear, the cross-category strategies are not calculated herein.

The changes observed in several studies, spanning 17 years, are featured by a general trend of increase in the use of *Accepting* strategies, and a decrease in *Rejecting* strategies; *Deflecting/Evading* strategies display an increase from Chen (1993) to Tang and Zhang (2009) and a decrease in Chen and Yang (2010) and the present study. Compliments and CRs act as a "mirror of cultural values" (Manes, 1983, p. 96; cf. Lorenzo-Dus, 2001, p. 108), then the changes in CRs during the past 17 years among different Chinese groups in different parts in the world reflect a certain shift in cultural values.

Chen and Yang (2010) have attributed the change to the influx of western culture coupled with business, tourism, and technology. Though in Tang and Zhang's (2009) study, compared with Australians, Chinese tend to employ *Deflecting/Evading* strategies rather than Accepting strategies, their study, however, is also in line with the general tendency observed in the studies chronologically.

It is noteworthy that in the previous studies Chinese—the participants' mother tongue—is used in DCT, whereas, in the present study, Chinese and English are used in two DCTs among the same group of participants. The different languages also elicit different responses among them. This is not surprising, because while collecting the EQ, the researcher was told by several participants that when responding in English, they tended to think in English, which explains the divergence in result among the same group of people.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aims at finding out whether the Chinese-English bilinguals will respond to compliments on look, character, ability, and possession differently in Chinese and English, using DCT as data collection method. Results show that different language media do result in different strategies employed in CRs in the four situations. Furthermore, a longitudinal comparison is made among the present study and previous studies involving Chinese respondents. The general tendency in the studies can be attributed to changes in people's values.

The study demonstrates that in Chinese CRs, there is a growing use of *Agreeing* strategies over a 17-year period, which is motivated to protect the complimenter's positive face. This tendency is observed from studies carried out since 1993 by Chen till present day. However, compared with people of other speech communities (e.g., Australians in Tang & Zhang, 2009), Chinese still value modesty as good virtue, by adopting *Rejecting* strategies and *Deflecting/Evading* strategies. The present study serves as a good comparison, on the same group of participants, between different language communities.

However, there are several limitations in the present study. First of all, the number of participants is small, resulting in a relatively less varied data. Thus generalization should be exercised with caution. Secondly, DCT data collection method is still controversial. This study is only an attempt to add a further dimension in the study of CRs among Chinese participants.

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