

# Backward Pragmatic Transfer: An Empirical Study on Compliment Responses among Chinese EFL Learners

Min Cao

School of Foreign Language Studies, Henan Polytechnic University, Jiaozuo, Henan, China;

School of Languages, University of Portsmouth, UK

**Abstract**— This present study aims at investigating compliment response strategies used by different groups of Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in order to find out the evidence of the existence of backward transfer from foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) English to their first language (L1) Chinese at pragmatic level. The data is collected through a written Discourse Complete Task (DCT) among four levels of EFL learners in a university in China. The data suggests that backward transfer occurs in their L1 Chinese compliment response. Moreover, backward pragmatic transfer is enhanced by EFL learners' L2 proficiency. The results of this study are compared with those of Qu & Wang (2005) to see the great changes in the past ten years. The results of this study point to the complexity of language transfer and its interaction with L2 proficiency.

**Index Terms**— backward transfer, pragmatic, compliment response, speech act

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic transfer or sociolinguistic transfer, as defined by Kasper (1992), describes “the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information” (p.207). From its definition, pragmatic transfer mainly concerns how language learners’ pragmatic knowledge of language and culture in their L1 influences their pragmatic knowledge or behavior in L2, the pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2, also called forward pragmatic transfer.

Since the introduction of multi-competence by Cook (1991), the pragmatic transfer from the learners’ newly learned language to the previously mastered language or from L2 to L1 and the bi-directionality of pragmatic transfer has aroused attraction. For instance, Cenoz (2003) examined the fluent Spanish-English bilinguals’ request behavior, the results show that they adopted the same way of request making in their L1 and L2. Su (2004, 2010, and 2012) investigated the bidirectional pragmatic transfer (from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1) on the speech act of request and apologizing behavior among intermediate and advanced L2 learners. On the speech act of request, both the two levels used indirect strategies less often than English native speakers in making English request but more often than Chinese native speakers did when requesting in Chinese; On the speech act of apologizing behavior, effects of L1 on L2 are obvious for the intermediate EFL learners, the effect of L2 on L1 are more noticeable on the advanced EFL learners. The results show that cross-linguistic influence occur bi-directionally at the pragmatic level in foreign language learners.

While in the previous studies, all of their researches on backward pragmatic transfer have been done in a L2 environment or bilingual environment. What about the pragmatic transfer in the EFL learners’ L1 environment? In mainland China, most of the students study English as a foreign language for the examination, they only study it in the instructed classroom learning environment without using it in their daily life. This study tries to test the following issue:

Could backward pragmatic transfer occur in Chinese EFL learners’ compliment response in Mainland China?

Is the backward pragmatic transfer influenced by the EFL learners’ L2 proficiency?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Compliment Responses

Complimenting and compliment responses (CR) have been a central issue in the speech act for decades. Compliment functions as a negotiation of solidarity with the addressee (Wolfson and Manes, 1980) (cited in Herbert, 1986), the compliments offered by the speakers are part of a general conversational postulate make hearer feel good (Goody 1978; Lakoff, 1975) (cited in Herbert, 1986). CRs vary with people’s cultural and social values (Chen, 1993; Chen, 2003; Gu, 1990; Holmes, 1988; Mao, 1994; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Pomerantz, 1978; Yu, 2003; Wu, 2006). The major difference between the Chinese people and the English people is that the former tend to reject the compliment while the latter are inclined to accept the compliment. In CR research, a wide variety of taxonomies have been used for categorizing its utterances, such as Pomerantz (1978) identified two constraints about the CRs: Agree with the speaker and avoid self-praise. The former expresses one’s acceptance of the compliments, while the latter objects the

compliment by downgrading. Herbert (1986) redefined these two categories into three principles: Agreement, Non-Agreement, and Other Interpretations. The detailed categorization and examples are shown in Table.1.

TABLE 1:  
HERBERT'S TAXONOMY OF COMPLIMENT RESPONSE TYPES

A. Agreement I. Acceptances 1.Appreciation Token 2.Comment Acceptance 3.Praise Upgrade II. Comment History III. Transfers 1.Reassignment 2. Return	Thanks; Thank you[smile] Thanks, it's my favorite too. Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn't it? I bought it for the trip to Arizona.  My brother gave it to me. So's yours.
B. Nonagreement I. Scale Down II. Question III. Nonacceptances 1. Disagreement 2. Qualification IV. No Acknowledgment	It's really quite old. Do you really think so?  I hate it. It's all right, but Len's nicer. [silence]
C. Other Interpretations I. Request	You wanna borrow this one too?

While this classification has been popular, there are more different systems of labels for CRs. Holmes (1988) classified twelve types of CRs into three categories: Acceptance, Deflection/Evasion, and Rejection. Yu (2004) groups the CRs used by the Taiwanese into six types. Yuan (2002) adopts another way of labeling the data collected from her Kunming Chinese data, two new ones: invitation and suggestion.

#### B. Researches on Chinese EFL Learners' Compliment Response

##### (1). Forward pragmatic transfer

As regard to the Chinese EFL learners' compliment response, a lot of contrastive research between English native speakers and Chinese ESL/EFL learners have been investigated, for example Chen (1993) (English questionnaire) carried out a contrastive study between American English speakers and Chinese speakers. The results show that the subjects rejected 95.73% compliments, accepted 1.03% compliments and deflected 3.41% compliments. Seventeen years later, Chen and Yang(2010) report a longitudinal study of CRs in Chinese by adopting the same instrument among the similar subjects population, and the data conveys that 62.60% accept the compliments, 9.13% reject the compliment and 28.27% deflected compliment. They attribute the great change to the influx of Western culture influences that has occurred in the city of Xi'an since the early 1990s.

Liu (1995) showed clear evidence of pragmatic transfer from Chinese in the participants' production of CRs. Although the participants possessed high English proficiency and with well master of the ways of responding to compliments, they still employed their native Chinese pattern in their response.

Yu (1999) revealed that Chinese speakers use non-acceptance CRs more often than English speakers who tend to choose acceptance strategies. Yu (2003) attributed Chinese speakers' choice of non-acceptance strategies to the social value on modesty and humility.

Qu and Wang (2005) compared the CRs used by American English speaker and Chinese learners of English, revealing the similarities and differences and providing evidence of pragmatic transfer from Chinese. The study shows no significant relationship between the CRs produced by the English major and non-English major Chinese English learners.

Evidence of forward pragmatic transfer could also been shown in Cheng's (2011) study. It compared the CRs produced by American English native speakers and Chinese ESL and EFL speakers through a naturalistic role-play task. The results showed both the Chinese English speaking groups respond differently to compliments from the native English speakers. Although all Chinese English learners know how to say "thank you/thanks" to respond to others' compliments, the EFL speakers cannot do as well as the ESL speakers in using different response strategies. Two major factors: L1 culture and low L2 linguistic proficiency are noticeable in their CR strategies.

Chen, W. (2012) carried out a contrastive research between English native speakers in the United States and Chinese speaking English learners. The results show that the sixteen Chinese ESL learners use similar strategies with those of native speakers. One difference lies in the Chinese ESL learners use "really?" or "oh really?" the Chinese way of CR in their English CR.

##### (2). Backward pragmatic transfer

All of the above studies are examined about forward pragmatic transfer, they tempt to find out the influence from L1 Chinese to L2 English at pragmatic level. Very few researches have touched the issue of pragmatic transfer from the reverse direction, the influence of the L2 on the L1, or backward pragmatic transfer. Liu (2010) distributed 92 DCT questionnaires in Chinese to non-English majors and English majors, the results showed that English majors were more

inclined to adopt acceptance strategies than non-English majors. The paper attributes it to the longer history of L2 learning and higher L2 proficiency, it shows the existence of pragmatic “borrowing transfer” in the L2 learning process.

### III. THE CURRENT STUDY

#### A. Participants

This study is designed to four different levels of English learners in the university. The questionnaires are distributed among 50 freshman at junior college, 52 English level A freshman in the university, 50 English majors at grade two, 53 English teachers in the university. They are at different phases of English learning, they can represent four different levels of Chinese EFL learners. For the 50 freshman at junior college, data collected from their questionnaires show that their English score at the National College Entrance Examination are around 75-105 in 150, and they just reach the intermediate English level for high school students. For English level A freshman, they are the English A level students in the university, most of them have passed the National College English Test Band 4 (CET4), they have very good English speaking and writing. The English majors at grade two mostly have passed the national English test Band 4 for English majors, they have higher level of English proficiency in reading, writing and other language skills. For the English teachers, all of them have passed the national English test Band 8, that is the highest level they English majors could reach in their language learning.

#### B. Instrument & Procedure

The present study adopts discourse completion task (DCT), one of the most frequent forms employed in interlanguage studies (Yu, 2004) to collect the data. At the very beginning of the questionnaire, participants are required to tick out their personal information such as gender, age and major, and provide more information about their English proficiency and their score in the corresponding examination. In the DCT questionnaire, the participants are introduced to write down their response to the compliment in the situation in Chinese. If they have nothing to say in some situation they could tick the corresponding item. So the participants could take down their real response to the corresponding compliments, and the data collected will be more realistic. In the four groups of participants, one group is university English teachers, the other three are all students, and so two versions of questionnaire are used with trifle changes. In the two questionnaire, the compliment topics involved are ability, performing quite well in something, appearance, new possessions (new watch or new phone).

#### C. Data Analysis

Herbert (1989)'s coding scheme is adopted to categorize the compliment response strategies. There are three main strategies: Agreement, non-agreement and other interpretation. Under the agreement strategy, there are six sub-strategies: appreciation token, comment acceptance, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment and return. For example, when the complimentee is praised for having a pretty new hairstyle, he/she may respond with “Thank you” or “Thanks”, the strategy used here is appreciation token. If the complimentee responds as “I have it done in the barber shop around the corner.” he uses comment history strategy in his response. For the nonagreement strategy, there are five substrategies under it, they are: scale down, question, disagreement, qualification and no acknowledgment. Table. 1 gives example of each strategy.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data and figuring out the strategies used in the questionnaire by each participant, a quantitative method is adopted to analyze the data, the tokens and frequencies of compliment responses. One-Way ANOVA test is used to test the significant difference among the four groups for their strategies used in their responses.

From the above Table. 2, the participants' compliment responses are clearly shown. It seems that the four groups adopted quite similar strategies when they are complimented, the data shows that the two English major groups (English majors and English teachers) tend to take more agreement strategies than the non-English major groups (freshman in Junior college and freshman in university) when they respond to compliment. As shown in Table. 2, the percentage of agreement strategies used by the freshman in junior college are 59.3%, by the English Level A freshman are 59.8%. The percentage of agreement strategies adopted by English majors is comparatively higher than the non-English majors (the previous two groups), 67.3% by the English major students and 71.7% by the English teacher group. It is likely that this pattern could be explained by the concept of backward pragmatic transfer, while the English native speakers tend to use agreement strategies in their response to compliment, Chinese like to adopt non-agreement strategies to show their humble. If backward pragmatic transfer exists in Chinese English learners' mind, they tend to choose more agreement strategies in their speech act. The data suggests that backward pragmatic transfer is more noticeable if the Chinese EFL learners have a higher L2 proficiency. For the different four groups the English teacher group possess the highest L2 English proficiency, all of them have passed the national test for English majors band 8, they respond to the compliments in the situations by adopting more agreement strategies than the other three groups. In order to find out whether there is significant difference among the four groups, especially the English majors and non-English majors, One-Way ANOVA test is taken.

TABLE 2:  
TOKENS AND PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS' COMPLIMENT RESPONSES

CR Strategy	Freshman in Junior college 12*50=600		English Level A Freshman CET 4 12*52=624		English Majors Sophomore EMT 4 12*50=600		English Teachers EMT 8 10*53=530	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>A. Agreement</b>								
Appreciation Token	164	27.3	137	22	215	35.8	242	45.7
Comment Acceptance	65	10.8	81	12.9	74	12.3	70	13.2
Praise Upgrade	42	7	48	7.7	14	2.3	2	0.4
Comment History	7	1.2	1	0.2	9	1.5	15	2.8
Reassignment	28	4.7	17	2.7	18	3	9	1.7
Return	36	6	25	4	22	3.7	5	0.9
Combination	14	2.3	64	10.3	52	8.7	37	7
Total	356	59.3	373	59.8	404	67.3	380	71.7
<b>B. Nonagreement</b>								
Scale Down	51	8.5	32	5.1	34	5.7	44	8.3
Question	7	1.2	16	2.6	30	5	20	3.8
Disagreement	39	6.5	103	16.5	56	9.3	47	8.8
Qualification	4	0.7	3	0.5	3	0.5	0	0
No Acknowledgment	129	21.5	60	9.6	62	10.33	27	5.1
Combination	5	0.8	22	3.5	10	1.7	12	2.3
Total	235	39.2	236	37.8	195	32.53	150	28.3
<b>C. Other Interpretations</b>								
	9	1.5	15	2.4	1	0.17	0	0

TABLE 3:  
THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE AMONG THE FOUR GROUPS

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Score

LSD

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-4.03085	3.66713	.273	-11.2618	3.2001
	3	-12.46400*	3.70291	.001	-19.7655	-5.1625
	4	-18.04728*	3.65013	.000	-25.2447	-10.8498
2	1	4.03085	3.66713	.273	-3.2001	11.2618
	3	-8.43315*	3.66713	.022	-15.6641	-1.2022
	4	-14.01644*	3.61383	.000	-21.1423	-6.8906
3	1	12.46400*	3.70291	.001	5.1625	19.7655
	2	8.43315*	3.66713	.022	1.2022	15.6641
	4	-5.58328	3.65013	.128	-12.7807	1.6142
4	1	18.04728*	3.65013	.000	10.8498	25.2447
	2	14.01644*	3.61383	.000	6.8906	21.1423
	3	5.58328	3.65013	.128	-1.6142	12.7807

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference between group 1 and group3, group1 and group4, the significance  $<0.05$ , but not between group1 and group2, the significance  $0.273 > 0.05$ . It shows that there is no significant difference between the freshman in Junior college and English A level freshman in university. Although their L2 proficiency are different, there is no significant difference in their performance of the questionnaire. The data in Table 3 conveys that no significant difference exists between group 3 English majors and group 4 English teachers. Table 3 describes the significant difference between English majors and non-English majors. There is great difference between English majors and non-English majors in their production of compliment responses. The English majors tend to use more English-like acceptance strategies when they respond to compliments in their L1 Chinese than their counterparts. In other words, the backward pragmatic transfer is enhanced by the EFL learners' L2 proficiency.

V. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PRESENT STUDY AND QU & WANG (2005)

Compared to Qu & Wang's (2005) study, a dramatic change can be seen in the past ten years in university students' compliment response. Table 4 shows the CR types used by the participants in his study and the results of the present study. In terms of appreciation token, the subjects in the present study pick more than double the number of the participants did. Another great difference lies in that the participants in the present study adopt more combination strategies than the students in Qu & Wang's study.

TABLE 4  
COMPLIMENT RESPONSES IN CHINESE

CR Types		Qu & Wang(2005)	Freshman in college	English Level A	English Majors	English Teachers
Agreement	Appreciation token	10.41	27.3	22	35.8	45.7
	Comment acceptance	11.76	10.8	12.9	12.3	13.2
	Praise upgrade	0.45	7	7.7	2.3	0.4
	Comment history	3.17	1.2	0.2	1.5	2.8
	Reassignment	5.88	4.7	2.7	3	1.7
	Return	3.62	6	4	3.7	0.9
	Combination		2.3	10.3	8.7	7
	Total	35.29	59.3	59.8	67.3	71.7
Nonagreement	Scale down	18.10	8.5	5.1	5.7	8.3
	Question	4.98	1.2	2.6	5	3.8
	Nonacceptance	30.77	7.2	17	9.8	8.8
	No acknowledgement		21.5	9.6	10.33	5.1
	Express embarrassment	0.90				
	Combination		0.8	3.5	1.7	2.3
	Total	54.75	39.2	37.8	32.53	28.3
Other interpretations		9.96	1.5	2.4	0.17	0

(Based on Qu & Wang 2005 and the present study)

For the combination strategies in agreement and nonagreement part. The Chinese EFL learners' response are different from the native English speakers. For Situation one: Recently you have changed your hairstyle, one day you come across a friend in the street, he/she says "That's a nice hairstyle, it suits you." In the questionnaire, subjects respond like "Thank you, I have it done in the barber shop near our university", "Thanks, it brings out my elegance." "Thank you, really?" When the Chinese EFL learners try to respond to compliments, they adopt appreciation token and some other strategies, they use quite a lot of combination strategies in their questionnaires. It provides evidence of Cook (1991)'s multi-competence theory, for the foreign language learners, they have more than one language in their mind, each language they speak are connected. When they speak their L1 and L2 will naturally show hints of the other language.

In the after interview about the questionnaire, the participants explains the reason for ticking "No acknowledgement", first reason is that they do not know how to respond to the complimentary words, the second reason is that they totally agree with the complimenter's words, and accept their compliment silently without showing any verbal response.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the possible existence of backward pragmatic transfer in Chinese L1 environment through the investigation of four groups of EFL learners' compliment response in a DCT questionnaire. The collected statistics display that all four groups of participants tend to choose more agreement strategies than non-agreement strategies, they prefer accepting the compliments instead of rejecting the compliments. It is shown that there is significant difference between English majors and non-English majors in their responses, the backward pragmatic transfer is enhanced by the EFL learners' L2 proficiency, and English majors use more acceptance strategies than the non-English majors.

As the present study did consider the topics of gender, social status, and age in the complimentary conversation, there should be enormous difference in compliment responses once given social status difference. Limitations of the current study also promise some opportunities for future researches. The issue of this present study is the existence of backward pragmatic transfer from EFL learners' compliment responses and its correlation with L2 proficiency. It is hoped that more findings may be potentially applicable to backward transfer, especially the influential factors which have not deeply discussed.

## APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

请根据您的实际情况在下列相应的方框中划“√”。

您的性别: 男  / 女

您的年龄: 17-20岁  20-24岁  24-28岁  28以上

您的专业是: 非英语专业文科  理科  工科  英语

您的(请至少提供一项):

1) 英语高考成绩: 30%-60%  60%-80%  80%-100%  分数为 \_\_\_\_\_

2) 大学英语四级考试成绩: 通过  未通过  四级成绩: 通过  未通过

3) 英语专业四级考试成绩: 通过  未通过  四级成绩: 通过  未通过

您是从什么时候开始学习英语的? 幼儿园  小学  初中  高中

您有出国的经历吗? 没有  有, 但呆了不到一年 。有, 呆的时间超过1年

填写说明：请仔细阅读以下十个生活场景，如果您遇到此种情形，您会作何回应。请用中文写下您的真实回答，尽可能地写得详尽、逼真，表情或是肢体语言可用括号注明。如果您觉得在某些场景什么也不愿意说的话，请在 B 选项上划√。

场景一

您刚换了个新发型，突然碰到一个朋友，互相致意后，他/她说：“新发型么？不错不错。很适合你。”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景二

当您的老师发作业时他对您说：“做的不错！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景三

您戴着一只新手表，一个朋友看见了，他/她说：“新手表吗？好漂亮！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景四

您的老师看到您在打球并注意到您打的很好，他对您说：“你打的挺不错的！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景五

您班上开圣诞晚会，您注意打扮了一番，在您到达晚会现场的时候，碰到班上一个女生/男生，她说：“哎呀~好靓啊！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景六

运动会，您刚赢得跳高冠军，班上一个男生/女生过来，说：“恭喜恭喜！比赛很精彩！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景七

聚餐时老师尝了您做的一道菜后，她对您说“你的手艺不错！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景八

您刚买了个新手机，班上一个男生/女生看见了，说：“新手机么？不错不错”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景十

寒假您邀请了几个朋友到您家，并亲手做了一桌子菜，其中一个女孩尝了一口后，笑笑对您说：“手艺真不赖！可以当大厨了哦！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

场景十一

您和朋友去听一个学术讲座，之后他/她对您说：“我觉得你提的问题提的很好！”

A. 您会说：\_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。

## 场景十二

一次考试您考得很好, 下课后您老师对您说: “考得不错!”

您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

您什么也不说.

非常感谢您抽取宝贵的时间参与本次问卷调查!

## APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

尊敬的老师: 您好! 请根据您的实际情况在下列相应的方框中划“√”。

您的性别: 男  女

您的年龄: 24-28岁  28-35岁  35岁以上

您的(请至少提供一项):

您的英语水平: 英语专业四级  英语专业八级  其它

您是从什么时候开始学习英语的? 幼儿园  小学  初中  高中

您有出国的经历吗? 没有  有, 但呆了不到一年。  有, 呆的时间超过1年

填写说明: 请仔细阅读以下十个生活场景, 如果您遇到此种情形, 您会作何回应. 请用中文写下您的真实回答, 尽可能地写得详尽、逼真, 表情或是肢体语言可用括号注明. 如果您觉得在某些场景什么也不愿意说的话, 请在 B 选项上划√.

## 场景一

您刚换了个新发型, 突然碰到一个朋友, 互相致意后, 他/她说: “新发型么? 不错不错. 很适合你.”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景二

当您的领导看到您年终科研成果时他/她说: “今年做的不错!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景三

您戴着一只新手表. 一个同事看见了, 他/她说: “新手表吗? 好漂亮!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景四

您的领导看到您在打球并注意到您打的很好, 他/她说: “你打的挺不错的!”

您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景五

今天上新学期的第一节课. 您注意打扮了一番. 在您到达教师休息室的时候, 碰到教研室的一个同事(异性), 她/他说: “哎呀~好漂亮啊!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景六

运动会上, 您刚赢得跳远冠军. 一个同事过来, 说: “恭喜恭喜! 比赛很精彩!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说.

## 场景七

您刚买了个新手机. 一个同事看见了, 说: “新手机么? 不错不错”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。□

场景八

寒假您邀请了几个同事到您家, 并亲手做了一桌子菜。其中一个同事尝了一口后, 笑笑对您说: “手艺真不赖! 可以当大厨了哦!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。□

场景九

您和同事去听一个学术讲座, 之后他/她对您说: “我觉得你提的问题提的很好!”

A. 您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

B 您什么也不说。□

场景十

一次教学竞赛您讲得很好, 赛后您领导对您说: “讲得不错!”

您会说: \_\_\_\_\_

您什么也不说。□

非常感谢您抽取宝贵的时间参与本次问卷调查!

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by the China Scholarship Council; Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation in the Education Department of Henan Province (2016-qn-165); The 12th Five-years Plan of Henan Science of Education (2015-JKGHYB-0063); The College Teaching Reform Project in Henan Polytechnic University (2015JG007; 2015JG086).

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Aijuan, Liu. (2010). On Pragmatic “Borrowing Transfer”: Evidence from Chinese EFL Learner's Compliment Response Behavior, *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(4), 26-44.
- [2] Cenoz, J. (2003). The Intercultural Style Hypothesis: L1 and L2 interaction in requesting behavior. In V. Cook (ed.), *Effects of the Second Language on the First*, 62-80. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- [3] Chen, R. (1993). Responding to compliments: A contrastive study of politeness strategies between American English and Chinese speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 20 (1), 49-75. doi:10.1016/0378-2166(93)90106-Y.
- [4] Chen, R., & Yang, Dafu. (2010). Responding to compliments in Chinese: has it changed? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42 (7), 1951-1963. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2009.12.006.
- [5] Chen, S. H. (2003). Compliments responses strategies in Mandarin Chinese: Politeness phenomenon revisited. *Concentric: Studies in English Literature and Linguistics*, 29 (2), 157-184.
- [6] Chen, W. (2012). Differences in English compliment responses between native English speakers and Chinese English learners. MSU Working Papers in SLS 2012, 3, 18-29. Retrieved September 14, 2012, from <http://sls.msu.edu/soslap/journal/index.php/sls/article/view/17> (accessed 20/6/2016).
- [7] Cheng, D. (2011). New insights on compliment responses: A comparison between native English speakers and Chinese L2 speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(8), 2204-2214. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2011.02.003.
- [8] Cook, V. J. (1991). The Poverty-of-the-stimulus argument and multi-competence. *Second Language Research*, 7(2), 103-117. doi: 10.1177/026765839100700203.
- [9] Goody, Esther N. (1978). “Toward a Theory of Questions.” *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in social interaction*. Ed. Esther N. Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 17-43.
- [10] Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 14(2), 237-257. doi:10.1016/0378-2166(90)90082-O.
- [11] Herbert, Robert K. (1986). Say “Thank You”- or something, *American Speech*, 61 (1): 76-88. doi: 10.2307/454710.
- [12] Herbert, Robert K. (1989). The ethnography of English compliment responses: a contrastive sketch. In Wieslaw, Oleksy (Ed.), *Contrastive Pragmatics*. Benjamins, Amsterdam, 3-35. doi: 10.1075/pbns.3.05her.
- [13] Holmes, J. (1988). Paying Compliments: A sex-preferential politeness strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12(4), 445-465. doi:10.1016/0378-2166(88)90005-7.
- [14] Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic transfer. *Second Language Research*, 8(3), 203-231. doi: 10.1177/026765839200800303.
- [15] Lakoff, Robin. (1973). Language and Woman's Place. *Language in Society*, 2(01), 45-79. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500000051>.
- [16] Liu, D. (1995). Sociocultural transfer and its effect on second language speakers' communication. *International Journal of Intercultural Relation*, 19(2), 253-265. doi:10.1016/0147-1767(94)00008-L.
- [17] Manes, J., & Wolfson, N. (1981). The compliment formula. In F. Coulmas (Eds.), *Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication situations and prepatterned speech*, 115-132. The Hague: Mouton. doi:10.1515/9783110809145.115.

- [18] Mao, L. R. (1994). Beyond politeness theory: 'face' revisited and revised. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 21(5), 451-486. doi:10.1016/0378-2166(94)90025-6.
- [19] Pomerantz, Anita. (1978). Compliment responses: notes on the cooperation of multiple constraints. In: Jim, Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the organization of Conversational Interaction*. Academic Press, New York, pp.79-112. doi:10.1016/B978-0-12-623550-0.50010-0.
- [20] Qu, J. & Wang, L. (2005). Pragmatic transfer in compliment responses by Chinese learners of English. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 2(12), 66-75.
- [21] Su, I-Ru. (2012). Bi-directional transfer in Chinese EFL learners' apologizing behavior. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics*, 38 (2): 237-267.
- [22] Su, I-Ru. (2004). Bi-directional transfer in EFL users' requesting behavior. *English Teaching and Learning* 29 (2): 79-98.
- [23] Su, I-Ru. (2010). Transfer of pragmatic competences: A bi-directional perspective. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94 (1): 87-102. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00985.x.
- [24] Wu, S. (2006). A Study of Compliment Responses Uttered by Senior High School Students in Taiwan. Master's Thesis: Providence University.
- [25] Yu, M. (1999). Cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics: Developing communicative competence in second language. Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation. Harvard University, Massachusetts.
- [26] Yu, M. (2004). Interlinguistic variation and similarity in second language speech act behavior. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88(1), 102-119. doi: 10.1111/j.0026-7902.2004.00220.x.
- [27] Yu, Ming-chung. (2003). On the universality of face: evidence from Chinese compliment response behavior. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 35 (10-11), 1679-1710. doi:10.1016/S0378-2166(03)00074-2.
- [28] Yuan, Y. (2002). Compliments and compliment responses in Kunming Chinese. *Pragmatics*, 12(2):183-226. International Pragmatic Association. doi: 10.1075/prag.12.2.04yua.

**Min Cao** was born in Anyang, Henan province, China in 1981. She received her Master Degree of Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from Southwest University, China in 2009.

She is currently a lecturer in Henan Polytechnic University, Jiaozuo, Henan Province, China. Her research interests include Second language Acquisition, English Language Teaching, and Intercultural Communication.