

An Empirical Study on Pragmatic Transfer in Refusal Speech Act Produced by Chinese High School EFL Learners

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence plays a very significant role in cross-cultural communication. In Chinese high school, many English teachers focus more on lexical and syntactic aspects of English. The aspect of pragmatics, however, is relatively neglected by high school English teachers. The aim of this research is to investigate pragmatic transfer in refusal speech act made by Chinese high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Written DCT (Discourse Completion Test) was used for data collection. Research subjects included three groups: native Chinese speakers (NC), Chinese English learners (CE), and native English speakers (NE). The performance of three groups were compared to find out the differences of refusals made by Chinese and Americans, the characteristics of pragmatic transfer in EFL learners as well as the relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency. Results show that 1) In terms of the frequency of semantic formulas, American speakers liked to use more direct refusal strategies and positive feelings than Chinese speakers. 2) Apparent pragmatic transfer could be found in CE1 and CE3 groups as regards to the frequency of semantic formulas. For instance, both Chinese speakers and EFL learners used address forms while no one in NE group use them. 3) A large amount of pragmatic transfer could be found in the content of refusal strategy of excuse. Statistics show that both NCs and CEs used the similar content as an excuse when giving a rejection. 4) In terms of pragmatic transfer and L2 linguistic ability, results indicate that the overall tendency of the co-relationship is negative. More pragmatic transfer happened in CE1 group than CE3 group.

Keywords: Chinese high school students, L2 proficiency, pragmatic transfer, refusal, speech acts

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is one of the most significant domains in second language studies. It studies second language learners' pragmatic competence. According to Kasper and Rose, in the area of second language use, ILP studies how L2 learners comprehend and perform in second language while in the aspect of second language learning, ILP investigates how L2 learners develop their abilities to understand and produce action in second language (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Nowadays, as a new domain, Interlanguage pragmatics attracts more and more researchers' interests in L2 learners' pragmatic competence. In ILP, speech act, "the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" (Seale, 1969), is the focus of pragmatic research. In comparison with other speech acts, refusal, as "a response to another act such as a request, an offer, an invitation and a suggestion" (Brown & Levinson, 1978), requires higher level of speakers' pragmatic competence (Ellis, 2008). In communication with people from other cultures, one's proficiency of pragmatic competence is of vital importance. If the speaker doesn't know about the customs and culture of the listener, he or she may easily transfer some pragmatic knowledge from her first language into L2 communication.

Pragmatic transfer is the impact of the learners' L1 linguistic and cultural knowledge on the understanding, performance and acquisition of the L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992). Beebe et al. (1990) investigated Japanese learners' pragmatic transfer. Result showed that negative pragmatic transfer existed in three areas, namely the order of semantic formula, the content of semantic formula and the frequency of semantic formula. In 1987, Takahashi and Beebe put forward a hypothesis that there is positive correlation between pragmatic transfer

and learners' linguistic proficiency. They said as the learners reach a higher level of L2 linguistic competence, pragmatic transfer occurs more. However, they failed to prove this hypothesis. Other researches on pragmatic transfer suggested that inappropriate pragmatic transfer of first language to the target language may have much more serious consequences than errors at the level of syntax or pronunciation. Linguistic errors just indicate that speakers are less proficient in language. They may not result in some serious misunderstandings. But pragmatic failure is likely to cause misunderstanding. The speaker may be considered as rude, dishonest or unfriendly if the listener who comes from another culture cannot understand some certain culture norms from the speaker (Thomas, 1983). Therefore, studies in L2 learners' pragmatic abilities are necessary. Researchers and teachers are supposed to give attention not only to L2 learners' linguistic competence but also to their pragmatic competence.

1.2 Research Significance

Nowadays, China is a typical test-driven country. In this case, the ultimate goal of students' English learning is passing all the English exams. As a result, for teachers, they usually put more focuses of their teaching on lexical and syntactical aspects of English while the aspect pragmatics doesn't receive much attention. Many of our teachers do not realize the necessity of developing students' pragmatic abilities. In general, pragmatic competence of Chinese EFL learners is not quite satisfactory. It is a common phenomenon that when Chinese students communicate with others in English, they tend to communicate in a typical way of Chinese expression. Many of them even do not know how to communicate in an appropriate way. As Liu (2004) pointed out that:

In China, it is not uncommon phenomenon that an English learner can get over 600 points in Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and over 2000 in Graduate Record Examination (GRE) but does not know how to make a simple request in English in real communication situation or understand common indirect speech acts (p.4).

Fortunately, more and more researchers realize the necessity of developing students' communicative competence. Studies start to focus on the development of students' pragmatic competence. The desire to comprehend the culture differences and the desire to develop students' cross-cultural communication in English classroom have triggered great interests of scholars in comparing preferred patterns of speech acts strategies between native languages and target languages.

This study aims to investigate Chinese high school EFL learners' pragmatic transfer in refusal. There are 165 participants, who are divided into three groups: NC, NE and CE. DCT is used for data collection. This research mainly discusses three questions as follows:

- 1) What are the characteristics and differences of refusals made by Chinese speakers and English speakers?
- 2) In what aspect does apparent pragmatic transfer occur in refusal speech act made by Chinese high school EFL learners?
- 3) What is the relationship between pragmatic transfer and Chinese high school students' L2 proficiency?

From this study, hopefully we can figure out the overall level of students' pragmatic abilities and some distinctive features of pragmatic transfer made by Chinese high school students. The results of this study are beneficial for high school English teachers in pragmatic instructions. Hopefully, this study can raise learners and teachers' awareness of pragmatic competence and draw some pedagogical implications for an improvement in high school pragmatic learning and teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Refusal

The speech act of refusal has been widely studied by scholars in cross-cultural communication. Many studies focused on different refusal strategies using by people from different cultures, aiming to find out the differences so as to foster cross-cultural communication.

This section gives a review on refusal speech act, aiming at offering a basis for analyzing the patterns of refusal strategies in the following part. The definition of refusal is firstly given. Then an introduction of relevant theories on refusals is presented. Finally, a comparison of American and Chinese' refusal strategies are made.

2.1.1 Definition of Refusal

There are many types of definitions on refusal from different perspectives. As regards to "face", according to Brown and Levinson (1978), refusal is a response to a suggestion, an offer, an invitation or a request. It is a face-threatening act which means inappropriate refusals may easily threaten one's "face". In respect to

interaction between speakers, refusals can be defined in another way. According to Beebe et al. (1990), refusal involves interpersonal negotiation. It refers to the utterances that the listeners do not want to hear, which require the speakers to offer support to help the listeners keep away from embarrassment (Beebe et al., 1990). Other researchers like Chen, Ye, and Zhang consider refusal as a speech act which functions as a tool for communication. It “denies to be engaged in an action proposed by interlocutor” (Chen, Ye, & Zhang, 1995). In 1999, Gass and Houck give a more concrete definition of refusal which I prefer to adopt in my study. They consider refusal as “one of a relatively small number of speech acts which can be characterized as a response to another’s act (e.g., a request, invitation, offer, suggestion), rather than as an act initiated by the speaker.

2.1.2 Relevant Theories on Refusal

Speech act theory and politeness theory are two major theories which provide the theoretical basis for refusal. The following part will further illustrate these two theories.

2.1.2.1 Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is put forward by John Austin in the late 1950s. A speech act is an utterance that has performative function in language and communication (Austin, 1962). Speech acts can be divided into three categories: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act. A locutionary act is the act of uttering something containing literal meanings from syntactic, lexical, and phonological aspect. An illocutionary act is the act performed in saying something, which means we say something when we do it. A perlocutionary act is the effect or the consequence of saying something (Austin, 1962).

Above all the three acts, the illocutionary act is the key component of speech act theory. John Searle further consummated Austin’s speech act theory. He introduced the concept of “indirect speech acts”. To be more specific, it refers to the “indirect illocutionary act”, which means in consideration of the background and the general power of rationality and interference of the part of the hearer, the speaker does not say what he really wants to say, instead, he utters in an indirect way. Indirect illocutionary speech acts can be divided into five categories, which are assertives (e.g., stating, claiming, announcing, etc.), commissives (e.g., refusing, swearing, offering, etc.), expressives (e.g., thanking, apologizing, congratulating, etc.), directives (e.g., requesting, ordering, demanding, etc.), and declarations (e.g., resigning, sentencing, dismissing, etc.). Refusal speech act is a typical commissive speech act. The following part will review some studies related to refusal in different cultures.

2.1.2.2 Politeness Theory

The central part of Politeness theory is “face”. Face is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Face can be further classified into positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the speakers’ desire to be accepted and appreciated by others. It puts more emphasis on the speaker’s self-esteem. One’s face would be threatened if he or she is ignored by others. Negative face refers to one’s free choice of actions and his desire not to be imposed on by others. It put stress on the freedom of action.

Those speech acts which are likely to threaten one’s positive and negative face are called “Face-Threatening Acts” (FTAs). In order to avoid the bad effect of FTAs, four politeness strategies are recommended, which are bold on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and not performing the FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The issue of “face” protection always draws attention in cross-cultural communication. Politeness is culture-specific. What one culture considers polite is usually considered not very polite or even rude in another culture. Knowing another country’s culture can prevent people from losing face.

2.1.3 Research on American and Chinese Refusal

Liao and Bresnahan (1996) made a comparison of refusal strategies used by American and Chinese people. Their findings suggested that: 1) Chinese people were more economical in their choice of refusal strategies. They conformed to the principle of “*dian dao wei zhi*” which means “marginally touching the point” because Chinese people hoped to maintain an agreeable relationship between people; 2) Americans tended to give various reasons in refusals and even did not hesitate to give a lesson to others if they were right; 3) Chinese people advocated collectivism while Americans cherished individualism. As a result, Chinese people always felt reluctant to refuse others. They considered their relationship with others was more important than their own accomplishment. On the contrary, Americans felt that it was not a problem to speak up in a group. They enjoyed being unique in a community; 4) One common model of politeness in Chinese refusal was address form (if the refuse is from higher status), apology and reasons; 5) Native speakers of America tended to use positive feelings, e.g., “I’d like to”, more frequently than Chinese subjects. But not all Americans would like to say “I’d like to” first. There were only 40% of Americans who used these semantic formulas.

Liao and Bresnahan (1996) also provided a list of 24 strategies of refusals commonly used by Chinese. They are

offered as followed:

1) silence, hesitation, lack of enthusiasm; 2) offering an alternative; 3) postponement; 4) putting the blame on a third party or something over which you have no control; 5) avoidance; 6) general acceptance without giving details; 7) divert and distract the addressee; 8) general acceptance with excuse; 9) saying what is offered or requested is inappropriate; 10) external yes, internal no; 11) statement of philosophy; 12) direct no; 13) excuse or explanation; 14) complaining or appealing to feeling; 15) rationale; 16) joke; 17) criticism; 18) conditional yes; 19) questioning the justification of the request; 20) threat; 21) external no, internal yes; 22) statement of principle; 23) saying I'm sorry; 24) code-switching (p. 706).

Another study on Chinese refusals was carried on by Chen et al. (1995). They investigated the distribution of refusal strategies used by Chinese people, which included the order and frequency of refusal strategies. In terms of the order, when the initiating acts were different, the order varied. As to refusing a request, the order was reason, alternative and regret, direct refusal; as the refusing a suggestion, the order was reason, alternative and avoidance; as to refusing an invitation, the order was reason, direction refusal and regret; as to refusing an offer, the order was dissuade interlocutor, direct refusal, reason and others. With regards to the refuser's social status, the order of refusal strategies was different. The order of higher status was reason, dissuade interlocutor and others; the order for the equal status was reason, regret and alternative; the order of lower status was reason, alternative and direct refusal. In terms of the frequency, "reason, explanation, excuse" was the most frequently used refusal strategy among Chinese people. The most frequently used refusal strategies were as follows: as to refusing a request, they were reason, alternatives and regret; as to refusing a suggestion, they were reason, alternative and avoidance, as to refusing an invitation, they were reason, direct refusal and regret; as to refusing an offer, they were dissuade interlocutor, direct refusal and reason. When it comes to refuser's status, the most frequently used refusal strategy was still reason (explanation or excuse), then the second and the third most popular strategies were varied. Chen et al. (1995) stated that a fundamental principle for social interaction was that it be based on reciprocity, which means the speaker's own *mianzi* (which means "face") and the other person's *mianzi* should be maintained at the same time. In order to preserve each other's *mianzi*, few Chinese tended to refuse others directly.

Qu jing (2007) analyzed the cultural factors behind Chinese and American refusal. In American culture, people preferred to say something frankly and made thing clearly without any vagueness. However, Chinese people advocated Confucianism for thousands of years. Therefore, they preferred taking things moderately rather than aggressively. When refusing others, Chinese people preferred more indirect refusal strategies such as avoidance and postponement.

Gao bo (2015) studied the use of Politeness Theory in Chinese refusal speech act. Apart from direct and indirect refusal, he also mentioned fake refusal and vague refusal. Fake refusal is a typical Chinese expression. It is not a real refusal. It is used to show politeness in some certain situations. For example, when someone asks Chinese to have dinner at his home, Chinese people tend to say "*wo hai shi bie qu le, tai ma fan ni le.* (I'd better not go. I may trouble you a lot.)" But usually, it is not a real rejection. Vague refusal reveals uncertainty in refuser's words. When someone cannot response directly and doesn't want to refuse immediately, he will refuse in a vague way. For example, when we refuse an invitation of party from friends, "*dao shi hou zai shuo ba* (Well, it depends on my schedule)" is often used if we don't want to go. We can avoid embarrassment and protect others' face in this way.

2.2 Pragmatic Transfer

The study of pragmatic transfer is one of the hottest issues in ILP. This section begins with the definition and classification of pragmatic transfer. Then, a review on pragmatic transfer in speech acts is presented.

2.2.1 Definition of Pragmatic Transfer

When defining pragmatic transfer, different people hold different opinions. In 1989, Odlin defined transfer as the influence of the language that has been previously acquired (or not completely acquired) on the target language because of similarities and differences between them. This definition covers all kinds of transfer, which is a definition of transfer in general. Another scholar Wolfson defined pragmatic transfer as the use of rules and norms from one's own native speech community when interacting with people from the other community or simply when speaking or writing in the target language (Wolfson, 1989). The most widely accepted definition of pragmatic transfer is from Kasper, who defined pragmatic transfer as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (Kasper, 1992), which I prefer in my research.

Kasper then classified pragmatic transfer into two types, namely positive transfer and negative transfer. Positive transfer happens when conventions and rules of language use are shared between L1 and L2. Negative transfer happens when L1 pragmatic knowledge is different from L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992). However, since there are difficulties to identify positive pragmatic transfer for two reasons—methodology difficulty and a concern with miscommunication (Kasper, 1992), most studies about pragmatic transfer focus on negative transfer.

Pragmatic transfer can be also classified into pragmalinguistic transfer and sociopragmatic transfer. Pragmalinguistic transfer refers to inappropriate transfer of utterances, which is equivalent at semantical or syntactical level, from one language to another (Thomas, 1983). Sociopragmatic transfer occurs when the social norms and customs of learners' first language influence learners' interpretation and performance of the target language (Kasper, 1992).

2.2.2 Research on Pragmatic Transfer in Refusals

Beebe and his partners (Beebe & Cummings, 1985; Beebe & Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987) carried out a number of studies on refusals. In 1990 and 1987, Beebe and his partners compared refusals of Japanese ESL learners with those of native English speakers and with those of native Japanese speakers. Participants needed to fill in a DCT in which they were required to give rejections in four kinds of situations, namely requests, invitations, offers and suggestions. In order to analyze data, Beebe et al. developed a taxonomy to classify refusals, which is presented in Appendix C.

The data of the study were analyzed from three perspectives: the frequency of semantic formulas, the order of semantic formulas and the content of semantic formulas. Results showed that in terms of the above three aspects, native Japanese speakers and Japanese ESL learners performed differently in using refusal strategies from the native American speakers which indicated the occurrence of pragmatic transfer.

As regards to the order of semantic formulas, results suggested that both the ESL learners and native speakers of Japanese differed from native speakers of English in the order of semantic formulas. When refusing requests, the native English speakers preferred expressing positive feelings (e.g., "I'd like to") first, then regret, finally refusing with a reason. Participants from the other groups tended to apologize first and then give rejections to requests. On the other hand, when refusing a request from a lower-status speaker, most Japanese people left out apology or regret.

As regards to different social status between refuser and refusee, performance of two Japanese groups differed from American group. When refusing an invitation and a request from someone from a lower status, participants of two Japanese groups generally left out the expressions of regret and apology. However, Americans often began with positive feelings (e.g., I'd love to go) followed by regret and explanation. They also tended to add gratitude (e.g., Thank you) at the end of their words.

In terms of the content of excuse, Beebe et al. found that most Americans preferred using more specific excuses while both native Japanese and ESL learners tended to use quite vague excuses. Other researches also revealed similar results. Wang and Li (2007) investigated Chinese students' performance of refusal speech act and found out that Americans used more specific excuses like "I'm going to the theatre with my boyfriend in an hour" or "I'll have to have dinner with my mum on Sunday" while native Chinese and Chinese EFL students avoided giving specific excuses. The native Chinese gave excuses like "*wo you dian ji shi*" (I have some other things to deal with) or "*wo hen mang*" (I am busy), and 60% of Chinese EFL students replied like "I've something important to do", "I have an appointment", etc. That is to say, when it comes to the content of refusal strategies, Chinese EFL learners were more likely to transfer their native expressions to the target language.

2.2.3 Research on the Relationship between Pragmatic Transfer and L2 Proficiency

The relationship between pragmatic transfer and learner's L2 proficiency has been studied recently. However, the findings of different studies are quite controversial. For many scholars, they believe that pragmatic transfer decreases as L2 learners' proficiency increases. But some scholars hold totally different opinions. Takahashi and Beebe put forward a hypothesis that there is positive correlation between pragmatic transfer and learners' second language proficiency. They said as the learners reach a higher level of L2 linguistic competence, pragmatic transfer occurs more. They believed that advanced learners have acquired enough knowledge to control what they really want to express in the target languages while less advanced learners are not competent enough to express what they would like to say. Therefore, more proficient learners are more likely to transfer pragmatic rules of their first language into second language.

A number of researchers carried out their studies to testify this hypothesis. Some results supported this

hypothesis while others found evidence for the contrary view. Olshtain and Cohen (1989) reported that the Hebrew learners failed to transfer their L1 apology strategies to Hebrew because of their incomplete knowledge of Hebrew. They stated that although speakers knew the sociopragmatic norms in apologizing, yet because of their incomplete knowledge of target language, their utterances were full of errors which resulted in pragmatic failure (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989).

Trosborg (1987) examined the performance of apologies made by native English speakers, native Danish speakers and L2 Danish learners who were at different L2 proficiency levels. Results revealed that there was no distinctive correlation between pragmatic transfer and learners' L2 linguistic competence in performing apologies.

In 1996, Maeshiba chose different levels of Japanese L2 English learners to investigate their performance in apologies. Maeshiba et al. found that the intermediate level of the learners were more likely to transfer their native language apology strategies to the target language than high level of learners. They also stated that high level of learners were more closed to native English speakers because they used more direct apologies (e.g., I'm sorry but I can't...), more intensifying words (e.g., really, truly) and more sympathetic utterances (e.g., I hope I didn't worry you.). Their findings indicated that the pragmatic competence of high level of L2 learners was developing all the time. They adopted more native-like apology strategies than low level learners. The results of this study didn't testify the positive correlation hypothesis proposed by Takahashi and Beebe.

Wannaruk (2008) studied pragmatic transfer in Thai EFL learners and found out that EFL learners who were at lower L2 proficiency transferred more from L1 to L2 because they lacked in L2 pragmatic knowledge. This finding also failed to testify the positive correlation hypothesis proposed by Takahashi and Beebe.

Chinese scholars also investigated the relationship between pragmatic transfer and learners' L2 proficiency. Yang and Hu (2008) examined pragmatic transfer in Chinese ESL learners of three L2 linguistic proficiency levels. The findings offered evidence that pragmatic transfer exists in learners of different proficiency levels. Pragmatic transfer increases as learners' proficiency level increases.

Cao (2011) did an empirical study about pragmatic transfer in refusals performed by Chinese ESL learners. The result was not consistent with Yang and Hu. Instead, it offered evidence for negative correlation between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency. Nowadays, the relationship between pragmatic transfer and one's linguistic proficiency is still under discussion.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Subjects

There were altogether 165 participants in this study, who could be divided into three groups: native Chinese speakers (NC), native English speakers (NE) and the Chinese English learners (CE). NC included 38 native Chinese ranging from 32 years old to 50 years old and they work in a technology company. Participants of NC were examined that they had no knowledge of English and they could only speak Chinese, which could make sure that their answers were not influenced by other languages and cultures. NE included 40 students and teachers from a University in America, aging from 20 to 40 who had no knowledge of Chinese. They provided us with native responses to this study. CE consisted of 87 students from a senior high school in Jiangsu Province. They were further divided into two groups according to different proficiency levels: 45 Chinese learners of English in senior 1 (CE1) and 42 Chinese learners of English in senior 3 (CE3). The results of daily English exams revealed that the proficiency level between CE1 and CE3 was apparent. It is reasonable for CE1 and CE3 to be chosen for the investigation of the relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency.

3.2 Instrument

This study used Discourse Completion Test (DCT) for data collection, a widely-used data collection instrument for speech acts. DCTs refer to "written questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialog with an empty slot for the speech act under study" (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). In this study, two versions of DCT were provided, which were English version for native English speakers and L2 learners and Chinese version for native Chinese speakers. A major advantage of DCT is that it allows researchers to collect a large amount of data during a very short period. It is also easily controlled by researchers. Inevitably, compared with other research methods, it has some disadvantages. A major disadvantage is that the speech collected from DCT is not natural speech. DCTs don't elicit real speech. Instead, they elicit prototypical response in a particular situation.

There were altogether four situation offered in this test. Participants were asked to give rejections to a request, an offer, an invitation and a suggestion. The variations in four situations are P (social status), D (social distance) and

R (the rating of imposition). The interlocutors in these situations were from different social status. Therefore, participants needed to use different refusal strategies to different people. Here is an example in DCT which elicits a refusal:

(You are the owner of a company. One of your favorite workers asks to talk to you).

Worker: As you know, I have been here for two years. I love my job and I really enjoy working here. But to be honest, I really need an increase in pay.

You:

Worker: Then I guess I have to look for another job.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data that collected from both Chinese and English versions of DCTs were further analyzed on the basis of semantic formulas of refusals proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). A semantic formula refers to “a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy; any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question” (Cohen, 1996). Each of the responses from the participants was analyzed into semantic formulas. For example, here is a refusal from a promotion: “I’m really happy to hear that. Thank you for your promotion. But I think I prefer to work here as I have formed a good relationship with my colleagues here.” This sentence could be coded as: [statement of positive feeling] + [gratitude and appreciation] + [statement of preference] + [excuse, reason, explanation].

When all the responses of the participants were coded, we further analyzed the differences of responses between NC, NE and CE groups in terms of the frequency and content of the semantic formulas in order to figure out what the differences are among the groups and whether there is pragmatic transfer in CE group. The frequency of semantic formulas means the times that one particular semantic formula occurs in each situation in each of the group while the content of the semantic formulas means the specific content of each semantic formula in each response. An adaptation of the semantic formulas of refusals formulated by Beebe et al. (1990) is provided in Appendix C.

The data in the tables in Chapter four were calculated by using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{The number of participants who use one specific strategy in one situation}}{\text{The number of participants in each group}} * 100\% \quad (1)$$

For example, in situation 1, 7 participants in NC group used direct refusal. The number of participants in NC group was 38. Therefore, the frequency of direct refusal used by NC group was “ $7/38 * 100\% = 18.42\%$ ”.

Pragmatic transfer is likely to happen when the data of the frequency of semantic formulas reflect any of the situations below:

- 1) The frequency of one strategy used by NC group is the highest, and the frequency of the responses by CE group is also higher than that of NE group. (i.e., $NC > CE > NE$)
- 2) The frequency of one strategy used by NC group is the lowest, and the frequency of the responses by CE group is also lower than that of NE group. (i.e., $NC < CE < NE$)
- 3) The frequency of one strategy used by NC group and CE group are equal or almost equal while the frequency of the responses by NE group is higher or lower than NC and CE groups. (i.e., $NC \approx CE > NE$ or $NC \approx CE < NE$)
- 4) Both NC and CE groups use one strategy that NE group never use.
- 5) NE group use one strategy that neither NC group nor CE group use.

As regards to the analysis of the relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency, I will study the data from CE group, which consists of CE1 and CE3 groups. The data of the two groups will be compared with the data of the NE group to see the degree of pragmatic transfer.

- 1) If $NC > NE$ and $CE1 > CE3$ or $NC < NE$ and $CE1 < CE3$, then the relationship is negative.
- 2) If $NC > NE$ and $CE1 < CE3$, or $NC < NE$ and $CE1 > CE3$, then the relationship is positive.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Frequency of Semantic Formulas

In this part, the frequency of semantic formulas in each situation will be presented to examine the differences in

using refusal strategies among NC, CE and NE groups. By comparing the statistics of each situation among different groups, hopefully, we can find out some evidence of pragmatic transfer in CE groups.

4.1.1 Refusing a Request

Situation 1 required participants to refuse a request from an employee. In this situation, participants were from higher status. The results of situation 1 are offered in Table 1. Several findings are revealed as follows:

Table 1. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 1

Semantic Formulas	Frequency of semantic formulas			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Direct refusal (P)	18.42%	44.44%	21.43% *	40.00%
Regret (P)	2.63%	13.33% *	11.90% *	27.50%
Excuse,reason,explanation (P)	68.42%	73.33% *	73.81% *	30.00%
Principle	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%
Negative feelings,opinion (N)	2.63%	8.89% *	0.00%	0.00%
Criticism (N)	10.53%	17.78% *	2.38%	2.50%
Self-defense	10.53%	0.00%	2.38%	5.00%
Topic switching	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	2.50%
Joking (N)	0.00%	0.00% *	4.76%	2.50%
Hedging	0.00%	2.22%	0.00%	0.00%
Postponement (N)	52.63%	22.22% *	11.90%	20.00%
Positive opinion,agreement	23.68%	33.33%	57.14%	32.50%
Pause-fillers	0.00%	11.11%	9.52%	2.50%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

NEs (40.00%) used more direct refusals than NCs (18.42%). Among all the groups, the percentage of direct refusal in NCs was the lowest. Since the figure of CE3s was more closed to NCs, pragmatic transfer was revealed in CE3 group. Meanwhile, CE3s used direct refusal more frequently than CE1s and NEs, thus indicating evidence of the positive correlation between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic transfer.

Among all the semantic formulas, excuse (reason, explanation) was the most frequently used semantic formula by NCs (68.42%) and CEs (73.33%, 73.81%) while NEs (40.00%) used direct refusals most frequently. But NEs (30.00%) also used excuses a lot. We can see that when facing an interlocutor from a lower status, NEs were not willing to explain much. But NCs and CEs preferred more soft ways to reject the interlocutor. Distinctive pragmatic transfer happened here. Compared to NCs and CEs, NEs chose more types of semantic formulas when refusing others. For example, they used topic switching and joking that NCs and NEs never or seldom used.

In using regret, NCs (2.63%) gave expressions of regret much less than NEs (27.5%). The frequency of regret of CE1 (13.33%) and CE2 (11.90%) was still much less than NEs (27.5%), which indicated apparent pragmatic transfer.

Another finding is that NCs preferred refusal strategies of avoidance, such as postponement. Over half of the NCs (52.63%) adopted postponement while only 20% of NEs use it. The results also reveal that NCs preferred indirect ways of refusals more. Since the results of CE1s (22.22%) and CE2s (11.90%) were more closed to NEs (20.00%), distinctive pragmatic transfer didn't happen.

In using positive feelings, NEs (32.50%) liked to express more positive opinion (e.g. I'd like to) before turning down a request than NCs (23.68%). An interesting finding is that both CE1s and CE3s used positive feelings more than NEs. To some extent, they were more "native-like" than native speakers.

4.1.2 Refusing an Offer

Situation 2 required participants refusing an offer from an interlocutor of higher status. The results of 13 cases of semantic formulas are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 2

Semantic Formulas	Frequency of semantic formulas			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Direct refusal	18.42%	73.33%	40.48%	28.75%
Regret (P)	13.16%	26.67% *	30.95% *	8.75%
Excuse,reason,explanation (N)	81.58%	97.78% *	90.48% *	53.75%
Alternative	2.63%	8.89%	14.29%	3.75%
Preference	10.53%	4.44%	28.57%	10.00%
Topic switching	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	2.50%
Joking	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	2.50%
Hedging	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	6.25%
Postponement	13.16%	2.22%	4.76%	12.50%
Positive opinion,agreement (N)	10.53%	15.56% *	35.71%	18.75%
Gratitude, appreciation	26.32%	62.22%	61.90%	36.25%
Pause-fillers	0.00%	6.67%	4.76%	2.50%
Address forms (N)	13.16%	13.33% *	11.90% *	0.00%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

NEs (28.75%) refused more directly than NCs (18.42%). But since the interlocutor was from higher status, the percentage of direct refusals in situation 2 was lower than that in situation 1. Both CE1s (73.33%) and CE3s (40.48%) used large amount of direct refusals, which revealed that students in CE1 and CE3 might not be aware of the status of the interlocutor they were talking with. The percentage direct refusal of CE1 reached to 73.33%. We can infer that it may result from the limitation of linguistic proficiency of CE1s. They may consider saying “no” was the easiest way of refusing others.

Excuse (reason, explanation) was the most frequently used semantic formula in all groups. But NEs (53.75%) used less than CEs (97.78%, 90.48%) and NCs (81.58%). Therefore, compared with Chinese, it seems that Americans don’t want to explain a lot when refusing others.

NEs (18.75%) gave more positive opinions than NCs (10.53%). Similar to situation 1, CE3s (35.71%) gave more positive opinions than CE1s (15.56%). We can infer from the figures that both learners in CE1 and CE3 group had basically mastered how to use positive opinion strategies appropriately like native speakers in refusals in this situation.

In using the strategy of gratitude, NEs (36.25%) expressed thanks and appreciation than CEs (26.32%), which may indicate that NCs were more likely to give thanks to the interlocutor when refusing an offer from a higher status. The figure of using gratitude in CEs (62.22%, 61.90%) was unbelievably much higher than NEs (36.25%). Similar to using positive feelings in situation 1, students in CE1 and CE3 group was over “native-like”.

NCs never used pause-fillers while NEs never used address forms. NEs and CEs occasionally used words like “well” “eh”, etc. Some of NCs and CEs used address forms like “boss” “sir” while it never occurred in NEs. Results indicate typical cultural differences between Chinese and Americans. Apparent pragmatic transfer was displayed in address forms.

4.1.3 Refusing an Invitation

Situation 3 was an invitation to a professor about giving a lecture. Participants were asked to give a rejection to this invitation. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 3

Semantic Formulas	Frequency of semantic formulas			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Direct refusal (P)	15.79%	48.89%	30.95% *	35.00%
Regret (P)	68.42%	57.78% *	69.05% *	32.50%
Excuse,reason,explanation (P)	97.37%	86.67% *	97.62% *	50.00%
Alternative (P)	5.26%	13.33%	9.52% *	12.50%
Future acceptance	31.58%	8.89%	11.90%	17.50%
Repetition (P)	5.26%	0.00%	4.76% *	0.00%
Hedging	0.00%	2.22%	0.00%	0.00%
Positive opinion,agreement	0.00%	46.67%	40.48%	15.00%
Gratitude, appreciation (N)	13.16%	13.33% *	54.76%	25.00%
Pause-fillers	0.00%	4.44%	0.00%	0.00%
Address forms (N)	2.63%	2.22% *	0.00%	0.00%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

Similar to situation 1 and situation 2, NEs (35.00%) used direct refusals distinctively more frequently than NCs (15.79%), and CE1s (48.89%) used more than CE3s (30.95%). The percentage of direct refusals used by NCs, CE1s, CE3s were all higher than that of NEs. Besides, excuse (reason, explanation) was still the most frequently used refusal strategy among all the groups. And NEs (50.00%) used less frequently than the other groups.

Regret used by NCs (68.42%) was much more frequently than NEs (32.50%). In situation 1, the interlocutor had lower status and NCs (2.63%) used regret less frequently while in this situation, the status of speakers in this situation was equal but the relationship between the two speakers was relatively remote. In this situation, NCs (68.42%) used more regret. We can infer that NCs tended to express regret more frequently if the interlocutor's status was equal or higher, or if their relationship was not so closed. According to the performance of CE1 (57.78%) and CE3 (69.05%) in using regret, distinctive pragmatic transfer happened.

In terms of alternative and future acceptance, Less NEs (17.50%) used future acceptance than CE1s (31.58%) and more NEs (12.50%) used alternative than CE1s (5.26%), which indicates that more NCs preferred giving a future promise rather than alternatives when refusing an invitation while NEs tended to give both alternatives and future acceptance.

NCs did not express positive opinion in this situation while all the other groups expressed it. CE1s (46.67%) and CE3s (40.48%) used positive far more frequently than NEs (15.00%). Pragmatic transfer did not appear. On the other hand, NEs (25.00%) expressed gratitude much more frequently than NCs (13.16%). CE1s (13.33%) was similar in using strategy of gratitude, thus, pragmatic transfer happened in CE1s. In addition, no NEs added address forms in their responses while both NCs (2.63%) and CE1s (2.22%) contained address forms in their answers. Pragmatic transfer existed in CE1.

4.1.4 Refusing a Suggestion

In situation 4, refusal was elicited when a friend suggested the participant to try a new diet. The relationship between the two speakers was quite close and they were in equal status. Table 4 shows the statistics of the result.

Table 4. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 4

Semantic Formulas	Frequency of semantic formulas			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Direct refusal	34.21%	35.56%	26.19%	32.50%
Regret	0.00%	17.78%	14.29%	0.00%
Excuse,reason,explanation (N)	42.11%	62.22% *	54.76% *	37.50%
Future acceptance (N)	2.63%	6.67% *	12.50% *	17.50%
preference	28.95%	2.22%	11.90%	12.50%
principle	0.00%	2.22%	7.14%	0.00%
negative feelings or opinions (P)	28.95%	8.89%	19.05% *	10.00%
criticism (N)	0.00%	2.22% *	14.29%	12.50%
off the hook	0.00%	2.22%	2.38%	0.00%
self-defense	0.00%	13.33%	16.67%	7.50%
topic switching	0.00%	0.00%	2.38%	0.00%
repetition of part of request	7.89%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
hedging (N)	0.00%	0.00% *	9.52%	2.50%
postponement (N)	2.63%	2.22% *	2.38% *	5.00%
positive opinion,feeling or agreement	0.00%	8.89%	9.52%	5.00%
gratitude,appreciation	2.63%	11.11%	9.52%	10.00%
pause fillers	0.00%	6.67%	2.38%	2.50%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

There were 17 cases of semantic formulas used in this situation, which was much more than the number of the cases in the above situation. Among all the 18 cases, excuse was still the most often used refusal strategy. Since the relationship between the two speakers was friend, the participants did not need to think much of politeness or formality. A variety of refusal strategies were available.

Unlike other situations, there was little difference of the frequency of using direct refusal strategy in all groups. All groups preferred direct refusal in refusing a suggestion from a friend (NC: 34.21%; CE1: 35.56%; CE3: 26.19%; NE: 32.50%). This may result from the close relationship, which made participants feel that it was acceptable to reject in a direct way.

In terms of future acceptance, NEs (17.50%) used it much more than NCs (2.63%). CE1 was 6.67% while CE3 was 12.50%. Results gave evidence to pragmatic transfer in CE1s and CE3s while CE3s were more native-like, which testified the negative correlation hypothesis.

All the groups used the indirect strategies to attempt to dissuade the interlocutor, namely negative feelings or opinions, criticism, off the hook, self-defense. The NCs only expressed negative feelings or opinions while the other groups used nearly all of them. NEs (12.50%) expressed criticism which overwhelmed NCs (0.00%). The cause of this result may be that Chinese people tended to protect one's face when giving a rejection so they tried to avoid using criticism. Pragmatic transfer happened in CE1 in terms of criticism here. And the correlation between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency was negative.

As to Adjuncts to refusals, which were the last three cases (positive opinions, gratitude, pause fillers) in Table 4, both CE1s and NEs used more adjuncts to refusals than NCs. The performance of L2 learners was quite native-like, showing their appropriate use of some refusal strategies.

4.2 Content of the Semantic Formulas

4.2.1 Degree of Specificity in Excuse

Excuse (reason, explanation) was the most widely used semantic formula in all the situations. Although both Chinese groups and American group liked to use it, they differed in specificity. Here is a table about the degree

of specificity in excuse used by participants when refusing an invitation. Statistics show that Chinese groups liked to use excuse in refusing others more. In those participants who used excuses, Chinese groups tended to use more specific excuses than American group. CE groups even used more specific excuses. For example, some NCs used excuses like “have another lecture in Peking University” “have to go abroad this Thursday” “have to do research with other people”; some CEs used excuses like “have to go to see a dentist” “need to attend a meeting in Suzhou” etc. Most NEs just gave vague excuses like “my schedule is full” “has a prior engagement” “has another commitment for the date” etc. Hence, we can find distinctive pragmatic transfer here, which reflects the cultural differences between Chinese and American cultures. One’s own privacy is very important for American people. Therefore, for most of the time, they are not willing to give very specific excuses when refusing others.

Table 5. Degree of specificity in excuse in situation 3

Degree of specificity in excuse	Group			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Unspecific: busy, have other plans (N)	60.53%	53.33% *	50.00% *	42.50%
Specific: have lessons; doing research, etc. (P)	39.47%	37.78% *	47.62% *	10.00%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

4.2.2 Content of Excuse

In situation 1, a refusal was elicited when an employee asked for a raise in pay. Participants were in higher status. In the table below, there were mainly 8 cases of content in excuse. The Chinese groups obviously used more excuses than American group. Previous analysis had shown that Americans preferred to refuse the interlocutor who was from lower or equal status in a more direct way rather than giving lengthy excuses. But there were still nearly 30% participants of NE group gave excuses. Statistics displayed that “financial problem” was the most frequently used content in excuse. Chinese groups preferred the content “company has its own regulations” “look at your performance in the future”. These two reasons were obviously more indirect and more objective. “look at your performance in the future” was a typical response of avoidance, which in Chinese was “*kan ni yi hou biao xian*”. NCs, CE1s and CE3s all expressed this content much more than NEs, indicating apparent pragmatic transfer in CE groups.

Table 6. Content of excuse, explanation, reason in situation 1

Content	Group			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Unfair to others	0.00%	13.33%	7.14%	0.00%
Have to work harder (N)	7.89%	17.78% *	7.14% *	0.00%
Have got what you deserve (N)	21.05%	17.78% *	7.14% *	5.00%
Company has its own regulations (P)	23.68%	2.22%	7.14% *	2.50%
Financial problem (P)	28.95%	13.33%	45.24% *	15.00%
Need to give some convincing reasons	0.00%	6.67%	0.00%	0.00%
Look at your performance in the future (N)	23.68%	13.33% *	11.90% *	5.00%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

When refusing an offer from boss in situation 2, almost all the participants from NC, CE1, CE3 groups gave excuse while only nearly half of the participants from NE group gave them, NEs still liked to refuse in a direct way even when facing an interlocutor from higher status. “Have to take care of my family” and “like it here” were the most often expressed contents of excuse. However, there were some differences between Chinese groups and American groups. Most Chinese participants used “have to take care of my family” as an excuse

while most American participants preferred “like it here”. This difference reflected the culture difference between China and America. Chinese people advocate “collectivism” so that to some extents they care more about their families, and friends. They enjoy being part of a community. But American people cherish “individualism” more which means sometimes they care more about themselves, their own feelings. Thus, more NEs used “like it here” to express their own feelings as an excuse to refuse others.

Another finding is that, when refusing an offer, some participants from NC, CE1, and CE3 groups explained that they “are not capable enough for the new job” while this content never occurred in NE group. This response indicated the typical characteristic of Chinese people, which is “to be humble”. When Chinese people receive compliment or their abilities are accepted by others, they tend to be modest, and in many cases, they will deny it. But in American culture, they generally accept this kind of compliment without hesitation. According to the performance of CE1s, and CE3s, pragmatic transfer occurred in terms of this aspect.

Table 7. Content of excuse, explanation, reason in situation 2

Content	Group			
	NC (N = 38)	CE1 (N = 45)	CE3 (N = 42)	NE (N = 40)
Have to take care of my family (P)	71.05%	46.67% *	57.14% *	17.50%
Like it here	15.79%	24.44%	26.19%	20.00%
Not capable enough for the new job (N)	5.26%	4.44% *	2.38% *	0.00%
Wife or husband disagrees	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	2.50%
Not the right time	0.00%	0.00% *	0.00% *	5.00%

Note. * = pragmatic transfer; P = positive correlation; N = negative correlation.

4.3 The Relationship between Pragmatic Transfer and L2 Proficiency

During these years, the relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency level is controversial. This study tried to examine the relationship, aiming to find out a tentative answer. The data of the frequency of semantic formulas produced by all the participants were used for the relationship analysis.

The following chart is the result of the total number of pragmatic transfer in CE1 group and CE3 group. Statistics show that CE1 group (23) produced more pragmatic transfer than CE3 group (19). Moreover, the quantity of pragmatic transfer per person in CE1 group was 51.11% while the number was 45.24% in CE3 group. As a result, in this study, as the proficiency level gets higher, pragmatic transfer is less likely to occur.

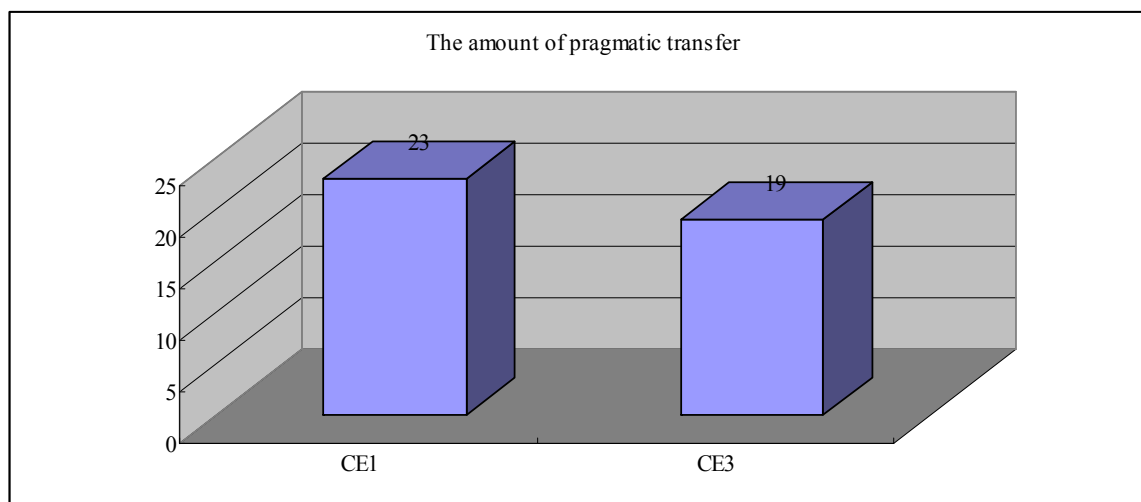


Figure 1. The amount of pragmatic transfer

Table 8 is a comparison between the number of positive correlation and negative correlation in these four situations, in terms of the frequency of the semantic formulas. There were altogether 9 cases of positive correlation and 14 cases of negative correlation. Among all the four situations, only situation 3, in which the eliciting factor is invitation, showing more positive correlation than negative correlation. For example, the frequency of direct refusals, regret, alternatives, explanation and repetition all reflected positive correlation. However, in situation 1, 2 and 4, more negative relationships were shown than positive relationships in terms of frequency of semantic formulas.

Table 8. Comparisons between the numbers of positive correlation and negative correlation

	S1: Request	S2: Offer	S3: Invitation	S4: Suggestion
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
Positive correlation	3	1	4	1
Negative correlation	4	3	2	5

As regards to negative correlation, CE3s performed more native-like than CE1s in the strategies of postponement, positive opinion, gratitude and self-defense, etc. For example, when refusing a request of raising payment from an employee, more than half of the NCs used postponement (e.g. *zhe ge yi hou zai shuo ba*) while only 20% of NEs used this strategy. We can find out negative relationship existed in this strategy because much less CE3s (11.90%) used postponement than CE1s (22.22%).

A typical example of positive correlation lied in direct refusal. CE1s liked to use direct refusals more than CE3s. The reason for this phenomenon may be that students from Senior 1 were much less proficient than students from Senior 3. When refusing others, they were not capable enough in their L2 linguistic abilities to express what they wanted to say. Therefore, they chose the easiest expression, rejecting others directly. In this aspect, positive correlation was shown more apparently.

Statistics also indicate that compared with other situations, such as request, offer and suggestion, the situation of refusing an invitation may be likely to elicit more pragmatic transfer from advanced EFL learners. That is to say, EFL learners with higher language proficiency may be more likely to transfer their native linguistic or social norms into the target language when refusing an invitation. However, since there was only one situation of refusing an invitation, this conclusion needs to be further testified.

In conclusion, the overall tendency of the relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency is negative. As there are only 4 situations in this DCT, the answer to this question may not be very reliable. Further studies need to be carried out to explore this area.

5. Conclusion

This research examined the differences between Chinese and American in the speech act of refusal, aiming to investigate pragmatic transfer of Chinese high school EFL learners. From the frequency of semantic formulas used by participants, we find out that American English speakers used more direct refusals than Chinese speakers. Americans preferred to give rejection in a more direct way while Chinese tended to be more indirect in refusing others. Moreover, American English speakers liked to express their positive feelings much more than native Chinese speakers. For example, they preferred expressing “I’d like to” before refusing others. This expression is typical American rather than a traditional Chinese expression. Thirdly, Chinese speakers used more address forms like “boss” “sir” while Americans seldom used them.

In terms of the content of semantic formulas, both NCs and CEs gave quite similar content of excuse when refusing others. Both CE1s and CE3s were inclined to transfer their Chinese social norms into the content of excuses. Pragmatic transfer was very distinctive here. In addition, Chinese speakers tended to give more specific excuses than American English speakers. It is probably due to the reason that American people advocate the importance of privacy. In addition, results indicate the culture differences between China and America that Chinese people prefer “collectivism” while Americans uphold “individualism”.

According to the performance of the CE groups, pragmatic transfer displayed in some aspects. For example, most of the participants in both NC and CE groups liked to give an excuse or explanation when refusing others while NEs gave much less than NCs and CEs. In situation 3, more than half of NCs and CEs expressed regret while only about 30% NEs used this semantic formula. NCs and CEs gave more specific excuses while NEs

gave more vague excuses.

A very interesting finding that I didn't expect is that in terms of some certain semantic formulas, CEs appeared to be more "native-like" than real native English speakers. For example, positive opinion is a typical American expression in refusing others. Usually, native Chinese speakers seldom use this expression for declining. However, statistics reveal that many of the participants of high school students were aware of using this semantic formula. They used it even more frequently than native English speakers. This phenomenon may be the result of pedagogical instruction in class, which implies that classroom instruction on pragmatic competence is necessary and effective. Students can reduce more pragmatic transfer and become more native-like in communicative competence when giving them appropriate pedagogical instruction.

In this study, in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas, the overall correlation between the amount of pragmatic transfer and high school learners' L2 proficiency level was negative, which did not testify Beebe et al.'s positive correlation hypothesis. However, it is not an absolutely right conclusion. The relationship between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency is so complex and it has been controversial for a long time. In addition there are still some limitations in this study. Firstly, only four situations were included in this DCT. Thus, collection of data may be not large enough to draw a conclusion on this issue. Besides, this study only covered two proficiency levels rather than all the levels of High School EFL learners. So in order to further explore the relationship between pragmatic transfer and linguistic proficiency, researchers need to choose more participants who come from various proficiency levels. Moreover, analysis on the statistics needs to focus more on other aspects of the performance of the participants rather than the frequency, order or content of the semantic formulas.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Discourse Completion Test

Your gender:

Your age:

Instruction: please read the following situations and write a response to each situation in the blank after “You”. Try to imagine that you were in such situation. Pay attention to the relationship between you and the person who is talking to you in each situation.

1) You are the owner of a company. One of your favorite workers asks to talk to you.

Worker: As you know, I have been here for two years. I love my job and I really enjoy working here. But to be honest, I really need an increase in pay.

You:

Worker: Then I guess I have to look for another job.

2) You are working in a company in LA. Your boss offers you a raise and promotion in San Francisco. However, you don't want to move there.

Boss: I'd like to offer you a new position in San Francisco. It is not far from LA and a raise comes with the position.

You:

Boss: Well, maybe you should think about it for some time before you turned it down.

3) You are a professor in UCLA. One day, a representative from USC calls you and invites you to give a lecture to the students in USC. But you are not willing to go.

Representative: Hello, Professor Li, this is Jack White, a representative of USC, I was wondering if you would like to be our guest to give a lecture to our students this Friday. It is our great honor if you will come.

You:

Representative: Perhaps another time.

4) You are at your friend's house watching TV. Your friend offers you a snack.

You: Thanks but no thanks. I have been eating too much and I feel terrible because I have put on too much weight recently.

Friend: Hey. Why don't you try the new diet I told you last time?

You:

Friend: You should try it anyway.

Thanks for your help!

Appendix B

语篇完成测试（中文版）

您的性别:

您的年龄:

您好，十分感谢您能抽出宝贵时间完成我的调查问卷。请尽量想象下列情境，注意每个情境中人物之间的关系，按照可能出现的真实情况填写。请不要花太多时间考虑。谢谢您的合作！

1) 你是某公司的老板，有一天，你的一名员工私下找你。

员工：老板，你也知道我在您这已经工作两年了。我很喜欢我的工作也很享受我的工作。但是，老实说，我的工资您看能不能再高点？

你：

员工：那我想我得找别的工作了。

2) 你在扬州的一家公司工作。你的老板想要给你升职，但是必须到苏州。你不想去。

老板：我想把你调到苏州的分公司当销售部经理。你看苏州也不远，而且待遇也更好。

你:

老板: 好吧, 你可以再考虑一下。

3) 你是南京大学的一名教授。有天, 你被邀请去扬州大学给学生做一场讲座。但你不想去。

扬大代表: 您好, 李教授, 我是扬州大学外国语学院, 我想代表我们学院邀请您本周五来给我们的学生做一场讲座。您看你是否方便?

你:

扬大代表: 没关系, 那以后有机会再邀请你吧。

4) 你在你朋友家一起看电视。你的朋友递给你一份零食。

你: 谢谢啦, 但是我还是不吃。我最近吃的太多了, 感觉自己胖了好多。

朋友: 对了, 你怎么不试试我上次推荐给你的减肥食谱呢?

你:

朋友: 好吧, 我觉得你应该试一下的。

谢谢您的合作!

Appendix C

Classification of semantic formulas used in refusals

(Modified from Beebe et al. 1990)

I) Direct

A) Performative (“I refuse”)

B) Non-performative

1) “No”

2) Negative willingness/ability (“I can’t” “I won’t” “I don’t think so”)

II) Indirect

A) Statement of regret (“I’m sorry” “unfortunately”)

B) Excuse, reason, explanation (“I have other plans”)

C) Alternative (“Why don’t you choose another person for the job”)

D) Promise of future acceptance (“I will do it next time”)

E) Statement of preference (“I’d rather...” “I’d prefer...”)

F) Statement of principle (“I never do business with my friends”)

G) Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

1) Statement of negative feelings or opinions (“That’s a terrible idea”)

2) Criticism (“Who do you think you are?”)

3) Let interlocutor off the hook (“That’s ok” “You don’t have to”)

4) Self-defense (“I’m trying my best” “I’m doing all I can do”)

H) Acceptance that functions as a refusal

1) Unspecific or indefinite reply (“Forget it”)

I) Avoidance

1) Topic switching

2) Joke

3) Repetition of part of request (“Today?”)

4) Hedging (“I’m not sure”)

5) Postponement (“I’ll think about it”)

Adjuncts to refusals

- 1) Statement of positive opinion, feeling or agreement (I'd like to")
- 2) Gratitude, appreciation ("Thank you for your proposal")
- 3) Pause fillers ("Well" "Uhh")
- 4) Address forms ("Boss" "Sir")

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