在台灣語境中以英文為外語使用者之抱怨與回應抱怨策略

EFL Learners' Complaint and Complaint Response Strategies

in a Taiwanese Context

by

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in investigating the speech act of complaints. Much recent research has focused on cross-cultural studies in the differences between English and another language, while there are limited studies on interlanguage transfer in an Asian context. Interlanguage transfer plays a significant role to determine the extent to which language learners may communicate appropriately in target languages. To fill the literature gap, the purpose of this study is to investigate the interlanguage transfer of First language (L1) Mandarin Chinese and Second language (L2) English through examining the significant differences, if any, of complaint strategies and complaint response strategies employed by EFL learners. Furthermore, this study also investigates whether there are any significant differences in Taiwanese EFL learners' frequency of opting out making or responding to a complaint in L1 and L2, and what their reasons for employing this strategy are.

The participants of this study were forty-nine English majors in a Taiwanese university. Data were collected through two Written Discourse Completion Tasks (an English and a Chinese version) with identical scenarios each. The resulting data were coded and analyzed using the framework from previous researchers for complaint strategies as well as complaint response strategies. The data were analyzed using the designated coding scheme, chi-square test and frequency analysis. Data analysis showed both positive and negative pragmatic transfer in the participants' complaint and complaint response strategies. Furthermore, the participants displayed a sensitivity to social status and varied their complaints and complaint responses accordingly. Additionally, they displayed a larger repertoire of complaint response strategies in English.

Finally, the participants not only displayed a higher frequency of opting out in Mandarin Chinese, but also presented various social and personal reasons for applying this strategy.

This study sheds light on theoretical and pedagogical implications for further interlanguage pragmatic research. Theoretical implications include the identification of additional complaint strategies and the importance of opting out as a complaint and complaint response strategy. Furthermore, Taiwanese EFL learners displayed both positive and negative transfer in their complaint and complaint response strategies. Pedagogical implications include the importance of emphasizing socio-cultural norms and the differences between the target English-speaking culture and the EFL culture in the classroom. Additionally, the emphasis on the cultural differences should include the appropriacy of remaining silent in both cultures. Finally, to create a more well-rounded curriculum on complaints, complaint response strategies should be taught alongside complaint strategies in the classroom.

在台灣語境中以英文為外語使用者之抱怨與回應抱怨策略

摘要

近幾年來，對於如何使用抱怨用語的研究熱度不斷攀升。近期許多相關的研究著重在英文以及其他語言差異的跨文化研究上，然而關於在亞洲語境中的中介語移轉研究卻非常有限。中介語移轉扮演著一個非常重要的角色，作為決定目標語言學習者如何使用該語言進行適當溝通以達到不同的程度。為了要填補文獻的不足之處，這研究的目的為探究第一語言為中文、英文為外語的學習者之中介語移轉，透過仔細檢視這些英文為外語學生們的抱怨與回應抱怨的不同策略。除此之外，這項研究也探討在台灣英文為外語學習者，是否在選擇保持緘默以及分別使用中文和英文來抱怨的方面有什麼顯著的不同，以及他們使用此策略的緣由。

參加這本研究的受試者為四十九位在一所台灣大學主修英文的學生。研究資料的收集是透過讓受試者完成二個有著相同場景的書面『手寫用語完成任務』（一份為中文、一份為英文）。論文所搜集之資料是被編碼和分析的，透過使用先前幾位研究學者的抱怨戰術以及抱怨回應策略之框架結構 。資料全都是使用特定的編碼格式、卡方檢定以及頻率分析來剖析探討。資料分析顯示出在受試者的抱怨與回應抱怨的策略上都有正面的和負面的用語移轉。再者，參與者表現出對社會地位的敏感性，並相應地改變他們的抱怨和回應抱怨的方式。另外，相較於中文，他們用英文展示了更多豐富的回應抱怨戰略。最後，參加者不僅在中文上表現出更高的不回應頻率，他們還提出用來拒絕抱怨和回應抱怨之各種社會和個人的因素。

這項研究也為之後更進一步的中介語之用語研究揭示了理論上和教學法上的啟發。理論上的重要意涵包括有鑑別額外的抱怨戰術，以及用不回應來當作一種抱怨和回應抱怨的策略。此外，在台灣以英文為外語的學習者，在他們的抱怨與回應抱怨的策略中都展現出正向和負向的移轉。教學法上的意涵包含了強調社會文化規範的重要性，以及在課堂上以英文為母語和以英文為外語的文化彼此之間的差異。再者，在這二種文化中，對於文化差異

方面的強調，應該要有適當得體的保持沈默這一項。最後，為了要有一個能更全面理解抱怨的課程，回應抱怨的策略應該要和抱怨的戰術一起在課堂中被講述教授。

*關鍵字：*中介語之語用學、中文抱怨、英文抱怨、抱怨之策略、回應抱怨之策略、英文為外語之學習者

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This section offers a brief preview of the background of the study, the statement of the problems, and the purpose of the study. The following sections will also include the research questions, and definition of terms. It will conclude with the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Since Hymes introduced the theory of communicative competence in 1967, there has been a shift in the focus of second language learning and instruction from the accuracy of language use to communicative competence, which considers language more than an isolated set of grammatical rules (Chang, 2009; Schmitt, 2010; Yarahmadi & Fathi, 2015). As a result, a growing number of studies examining the realization of speech acts have emerged. Among these, several cross-cultural studies have compared the complaint behaviors and the appropriacy of complaints of native English speakers with non-native English speakers through linguistic factors such as length of utterance and the utilization of softeners and intensifiers (Bikmen & Marti, 2013; Moon, 2001; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987; Tanck, 2002; Trenchs, 2000). Others have examined the difference in pragmatic behaviors of native and non-native English speakers through varying social cultural scenarios (Abbass, Davood & Masoumeh, 2012; Chen, Chen & Chang, 2011; Nakle, Naghavi & Razavi, 2014; Spees, 1994; Yarahmadi & Fathi, 2015). These intercultural studies have attempted to determine the extent of pragmatic transfer from an L1 language to L2 English through either a linguistic (De Capua, 1998; Nakabachi, 1996; Tatsuki, 2000) or socio-cultural perspective (De Leon & Parina, 2016; Hong, 2015; Kakoloaki & Shahrokhi, 2016). In recent years, researchers have also attempted to identify the common complaint response strategies among several different

languages (Boxer, 1993; Eslami, 2004; Fang, 2015; Frescura, 1995). Furthermore, these studies have determined that culture can be an influencing factor in response strategies in different languages.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

As previous studies have shown, there are several research gaps that have not been investigated. Firstly, limited studies have investigated EFL learners' complaints in an Asian context, while most of the previous studies have examined non-native English speakers from European or Middle Eastern languages such as German, Spanish, Polish, and Hebrew, and Persian (Abbass *et al.*, 2012; Moon, 2001; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987; Trenchs, 2000, among others). De Leon and Parina (2016) suggest that the act of complaining is seldom studied in the Asian context is because receiving a complaint may cause a loss of face, which is not be acceptable in Asian cultures. Complaints also consist of different speech act sets that are sensitive to a lot of factors such as power, distance, and rank of imposition (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993). Secondly, most of the previous studies have been cross-cultural studies that compare the differences and similarities between two groups of different language speakers. These studies focus largely on two groups of native speakers as participants. Comparatively few studies, however, have examined the pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 through an interpragmatic study of an Asian culture such as when two languages spoken by a single individual. Another research gap that has been uncovered is that there are limited studies on the interpragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 when responding to complaints. Examining how L1 and L2 speakers respond to complaints is just as significant as making complaints. While it is often assumed that speakers' responses to complaints are answered with an apology, previous empirical studies have shown that complaint response strategies include both apology and non-apology strategies (Fang, 2015; Torsborg, 1987). Finally, few studies have

included the option of opting out of making a complaint due to the assumption that all situations require making a complaint or responding to the complaint. Complaints do not always occur even when all pre-conditions that should lead to a complaint have been met (Tatsuki, 2000). In summary, there are limited interlanguage studies in an English learning environment in the Asian contexts that examine both complaint and complaint response strategies and include the option of opting out as a viable strategy.

1.3 Purposes of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine in what manner, if any, Asian EFL learners in Taiwan change their complaint strategies and complaint response strategies in L1 Mandarin and L2 English. Through the usage of two Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCTs) with identical complaint scenarios, one in Mandarin Chinese and one in English, the researcher aims to identify whether there are significant differences in complaint and complaint response strategies by analyzing the frequency of strategy use in both languages. Furthermore, this study seeks to investigate how strategy use is influenced by the social factors through presenting scenarios with different types of social power and social distance.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint strategies in L1 Mandarin and L2 English?
2. Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint response strategies in L1 Mandarin and L2 English?
3. Are there L1 and L2 differences in opting out? If so, what are they and why?

1.4 Definition of Terms

1.4.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics

For this study, interlanguage pragmatics is the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Specifically, interlanguage pragmatics focuses on non-native speakers' acquisition of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of the second language (Boxer, 2002). In another study, Kasper and Dahl (1991) defined interlanguage pragmatics as referring to nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2 related speech act knowledge is acquired. The current study focuses on the nonnative speakers' production of a speech act, specifically, complaints in their second language.

When investigating interlanguage pragmatics among L2 learners, Baba (2010) described two categories within interlanguage pragmatics: Pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure.

1.4.1.1 Pragmalinguistic failure

According to Thomas (1983), pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the pragmatic force mapped onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language. Baba (2010) defines it as a linguistic issue.

1.4.1.2 Sociopragmatic failure

Sociopragmatic failure is the social conditions placed on language in use "caused by different beliefs about rights, 'mentionables', etc." (Thomas, 1983, p. 100). Baba (2010) clarifies

the definition of sociopragmatic failure by saying that it is a metalinguistic issue and that it refers to the usage of the language in social context.

1.4.2 Pragmatic Transfer

According to DeCapua (1998), pragmatic transfer occurs when second language learners apply the socially appropriate rules and formulas of their native language to target language situations either because they are unaware of target language norms and routines, or they are psychologically unable to do so. DeCapua (1998) determined that this is because the L2 norms and routines violate their LI internalized and culturally conditioned acceptable norms of speech behavior. As a result of such pragmatic transfer, misinterpretation of the message, the content or the intent of the message is possible. Pragmatic transfer can also be divided into two types, positive and negative pragmatic transfer. Negative pragmatic transfer is when L1-based pragmatic knowledge is applied using the target language and where such a use results in perceptions and behaviors that are different from the target language norms (Kasper, 1992). Positive pragmatic transfer occurs when L2 perceptions and behaviors are consistent with the target language norms (Kasper, 1992).

1.4.3 Speech Acts

A speech act, as defined by Austin (1962), is an utterance that serves a function in communication. Searle (1976) classifies speech acts into the five categories of commissives (promising), declarations (resigning, appointing), directives (ordering, requesting, forbidding), expressives (apologizing, complaining), and representatives (claiming, swearing). Speech acts may be verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal (Leon, 2016). In this study, only non-verbal utterances

will be investigated as the participants will be writing down their responses in situations that normally would require a verbal response.

1.4.4 Complaints

Complaints is an expressive speech act (Searle, 1976). Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) defines the act of complaining as when the "speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance – censure – as a reaction to a past or on-going action, the consequences of which are perceived by the speaker as affecting her unfavorably". The complaint is usually addressed to the hearer, whom the speaker holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action. Complaints can be divided into the two main categories of direct and indirect complaints. There are two types of complaints: direct and indirect complaints. In this study, only direct complaints will be investigated.

1.4.5 Complaint Strategies

Complaint strategies refer to the strategies employed when a speaker wishes to express his or her dissatisfaction. The strategies include *opting out* (OP), *dissatisfaction* (DS), *interrogation* (IN), *accusation* (AC), *request for repair* (RR) and *threat* (TH). These strategies are also arranged from least direct to most direct and are differentiated by the presence or absence of the subject of the complaint, the complainer, and the accused (Chen *et al.,* 2011; Trosborg, 1995). Table 1.1 shows the complaint strategies and what each means.

Table 1.1 *Complaint Strategies*

Complaint Strategy	Definition
Opting out (OP)	The speaker ignores the offense
Dissatisfaction (DS)	The speaker asserts the offense, but avoids explicit mention of the hearer
Interrogation (IN)	The speaker questions the hearer about the offense
Accusation (AC)	The hearer charges the hearer with having committed the offense
Request for repair (RR)	The speaker requests that the hearer make up for the offense or stop the offense
Threat (TH)	The speaker asserts immediate or potential sanctions against the hearer

1.4.6 Complaint Response Strategies

A complaint response refers to the strategies employed when a speaker is confronted with a complaint. Examples of complaint response strategies are *opting out* (OP) *offer of repair (*OR*)*, *confirmation (*CF*)*, *expression of apology (*APO*)*, *acknowledgement of responsibility (*AR*)*, *offer of alternatives (*ALT*)*, *denial* or *shift of responsibility without justification (*DENY*)*, *denial or shift of responsibility with justification (*DENYJ*)*, *explanation or account (*ACC*)*, and *expression concern for the hearer* (EXP) (Fang, 2015). These strategies can also be categorized as apology strategies (OR, APA, AR, ACC, EXP) and non-apology strategies (CF, ALT, DENY, DENYJ). Table 1.2 shows the complaint response strategies and what each means.

Table 1.2 *Complaint response strategies*

Complaint Response Strategy	Definition
Opting out (OP)	The hearer ignores the offense
Offer of repair (OR)	The hearer tries to make compensation for the offended speaker.
Confirmation (CF)	The hearer tries to understand the offended speaker's request or intention.
Expression of apology (APA)	The hearer shows explicit apology for his/her committed offense.
Acknowledgement of responsibility (AR)	The hearer shows implicit or explicit agreement with what the speaker complained about and then accepted responsibility.
Offer of alternatives (ALT)	The hearer attempts to provide alternatives.
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification (DENY)	The hearer does not accept responsibility or shifted the responsibility to others. The hearer justifies that his/her effort was acceptable.
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification (DENYJ)	The hearer does not accept responsibility or shifted the responsibility to others. The hearer accuses the speaker without justification.
Explanation or account (ACC)	The hearer offered explanations for his/her committed offense.
Expressing concern for the hearer (EXP)	The hearer tries to pacify the complainer in terms of his condition or wellbeing.

1.4.7 Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT)

A written discourse completion task is an instrument used to measure participants' performance of speech acts. Diverse scenarios are created so that participants may play different imaged roles in speech acts. It is often used to gather large amount of data, classify stereotypical semantic formulas and strategies, and acquire insights into the social and psychological elements which may affect speech act performances (Abbas *et.* al, 2012). In this study, the WDCT is used to gather data from a group of participants to measure and analyze the participants' performance of complaints.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to make a contribution in the field of complaint strategy research in three significant ways. Firstly, this study aims to highlight the most common complaint response strategies employed by EFL learners' in both L1 Mandarin and L2 English. The researcher of this study also hopes that the findings of this study will provide a better understanding of the pragmatic transfer in an English learning environment in Taiwanese society. Finally, the aim of this study is to increase awareness for researchers and educators of L2 learners of how the appropriacy to complain or respond to a complaint varies depending on different social situations. Specifically, the current research reveals when it is appropriate to opt out in certain Taiwanese social situations and what the reasons are for that choice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review section will further elaborate on previous theoretical and empirical studies regarding making of and responding to complaints. Firstly, a brief explanation of the communication accommodation theory, the speech act theory and the speech act of complaints will be given. Afterwards, cross-cultural studies on making complaints will be discussed followed by intercultural studies on making complaints, and concluding with empirical studies on making complaints.

2.1 Communication Accommodation Theory

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was first introduced by Howard Giles in 1973. According to Giles and Ogay (2007), CAT is a general theoretical framework for both interpersonal and intergroup communication. It seeks to explain and predict why, when, and how people adjust their communicative behavior during social interaction (including mediated contact), and what social consequences might result from such adjustments. This theory describes two main accommodation processes: Convergence and divergence. Convergence is when speakers try to approach the speech style used by interlocutors (Nakabachi, 1996). Divergence is when speakers try to dissimilate their speech from that of interlocutors (Nakabachi, 1996). This research will attempt to find out how L2 speakers may attempt to accommodate between their L1 and L2 through the examining the differences in complaint and complaint response strategies in different social situations.

2.2 Speech Act Theory

A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication (Austin, 1962). The concept of the speech act theory was first introduced by the philosopher John Austin in 1962 (Al-Kahtani, 2006). Austin's student, John Searle, later modified Austin's theory in 1969 and proposed a taxonomy of speech acts with five categories: commissives (promising), declarations (resigning, appointing), directives (ordering, requesting, forbidding), expressives (apologizing, complaining), representatives (claiming, swearing). The speech act of complaints is an expressive speech act (Searle, 1976). Brown and Levinson (1987) elaborates that expressives threaten the addressee's positive face because the addressee's desire of being respected is jeopardized when being held responsible for the offense. The term 'face' is a person's public self-image which he or she wants to claim for him or herself. Face has two aspects: positive and negative face. Positive face is the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Kakoloaki (2016) describes positive face as a persons' desire to be appreciated and liked by others. Negative face is the basic claim to territories, person preserves, and rights to non-distraction (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Currently, there are two large research areas related to speech acts: cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics. Spees (1994) defined cross-cultural pragmatics as studies that compare the usage of language in different cultures and interlanguage pragmatics are used to analyze the sociocultural competence of second language learners.

2.3 The Speech Act of Complaints

Complaints are when a speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance – censure – as a reaction to a past or on-going action, the consequences of which are perceived by the speaker as

affecting him/her unfavorably (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993). Using Brown and Levinson (1987) research, Chen *et al*. (2011) categorized complaints into three major characteristics. Firstly, it is a face-threatening act. It threatens the hearer's positive face that wants to be admired or appreciated because the speaker has a negative opinion of the hearer and passes moral judgement. It may also threaten the hearer's negative face that wants to be free from imposition, a threat that occurs mostly when a complaint is accompanied by a request for compensation. (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Secondly, it can be addressed at different directness levels of social distance (D), relative power (P), and ranking of imposition (R) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thirdly, it has no typical corresponding second part, as the perlocutionary act of a complaint is negotiable (Chen *et al.*, 2011).

Complaints can be categorized as either direct or indirect complaints. Direct complaints are a face-threatening act through which a speaker makes a complaint about someone or something that is present in the speech act scene (Murphy & Neu, 1996; Olshtain & Weibach, 1993; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006). An indirect complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about oneself or someone/something that is not present (Boxer, 1993). Indirect complaints are different from direct complaints in that the addressee is neither held responsible nor capable of remedying the perceived offense (Boxer, 1993). According to Trosborg (1995), the directness of a complaint depends on the implicit or explicit presence of three elements in a complaint, including the complainable, complainer, and complainee. In her studies, the directness levels increased when more elements were explicitly expressed in a complaint.

According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993, p. 108) there are four preconditions in which a complaint may take place.

1. The speaker accounts with "socially unacceptable act" (SUA)

2. The speaker perceives the consequences of it as offensive

3. The hearer is regarded as responsible for the SUA

4. The speaker decides to express his/her displeasure

2.4 Cross-cultural Studies on Making Complaints

Cross-cultural studies compare native speakers' and non-native speakers' complaint strategies with both an emphasis on linguistic features and social factors. Several studies have focused on linguistic factors such as length of utterance, severity of complaint, usage of softeners and intensifiers. These studies have found that while non-native speakers may not always be able to make appropriate complaints, they often make attempts to sound less offensive and less face-threatening. Other studies have examined social factors such as social power, social distance, and gender. These studies have found that social factors as well as cultural values are determining factors in complaint strategies.

2.4.1 Linguistic Factors in Cross-cultural Studies

Several studies have investigated English L2 speakers' strategies in making appropriate complaints through examining linguistic factors and their L2 linguistic abilities. Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) examined the complaints uttered by native speakers and non-native speakers of Hebrew by focusing on the variables of length of utterance, severity of complaint, and utilization of softeners and intensifiers. The researchers established the framework based on their theory on the perception of severity of the complaint. The framework consisted of five categories:

1. Below the level of reproach

2. Expression of annoyance or disapproval

3. Explicit complaint

4. Accusation and warning

5. Immediate threat

Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) observed that the non-native speakers in their study made attempts to sound less offensive and less face-threatening, so their complaint realization patterns were judged to be less severe when compared to the native speakers. Complaint realization patterns are the speech act set that is universally associated with complaints. Furthermore, the researchers noted that the non-native speakers were also found to be more verbose than the native speakers and used more softeners and intensifiers, even more than when they spoke in their own native language. The researchers concluded that the non-native speakers did this in order to negotiate the intentions of their speech acts in the new language. The non-native speakers were also less certain about how to express themselves and thus preferred to vary their choice of strategies. Additionally, the researchers reflected that when the situation was one in which social obligation was explicit either by law or convention, the non-native speakers felt more secure in their choices and were less concerned with being polite and cautious (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987).

In a later study, Moon (2001) investigated the severity of complaints used by native and non-native speakers of English. The researcher adopted Olshtain and Weinbach's (1987) scale of the severity of complaints and modified it into four categories which focus on the linguistic aspects of complaints. The categories were as follows:

1. Implicit

    a. Completely avoids explicit mention of the offensive event or person

    b. Expresses annoyance about the offensive event and person, without direct reference

2. Explicit

    a. Explicitly references to the event and person, involving "you" and "I"

    b. Accuses and threatens the person

Moon (2001) observed that the non-native speakers did not always make appropriate complaints when compared with the complaints made by the native speakers. However, it was also found that the non-native speakers who had a higher proficiency level made more appropriate complaints than those of lower proficiency level. Additionally, the non-native speakers were more inclined to use complaints in a more explicit way while the native speakers were more implicit in their complaints. Furthermore, contrary to Olshtain and Weinbach's (1987) research, the researcher observed that the non-native speakers tended to produce shorter utterances than the native speakers. The researcher concluded that this might have been due to not only the grammatical and linguistic limitations of non-native speakers, but also by the limitation of their sociopragmatic knowledge.

Tanck (2002) investigated 12 American native speakers and 13 non-native speakers of English (Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Thai) and collected data using a DCT with six scenarios (4 prompts and 2 distractors). The researcher used the native speaking subjects' responses to the DCT to formulate a speech act set for each scenario. The components of the speech act sets were then compared to the data collected from the non-native speakers' responses to the DCT. The researcher observed that although non-native speakers were generally linguistically correct in their complaint strategies, they lacked the pragmatic elements that would have allowed their utterances to be well received by the hearer. An example given was that non-native speakers tended to utilize request components or add personal details that could be considered less appropriate in the L2 culture. The researcher surmised that this was

because the questions supplied by the non-native speakers might be considered too direct and even sound confrontational in American culture. The findings of the study also identified four components of the semantic complaint formulas from the native speakers' production of complaints. The components identified were excusing self for imposition, establishing context or support, a request, and conveyance of a sense of urgency. The data from the non-native speakers showed that in general, non-native speakers only produced the first three of the four components.

Murphy and Neu (1996) investigated complaints produced by American and Korean speakers of English by identifying the semantic formula in a speech act set of complaints. Similar to Tanck (2002), the researchers used the data from native speakers as a basis for comparison with the non-native speakers. Using a scenario where the speaker was complaining to the professor about a low grade, the researchers identified the semantic formula as:

1. An explanation of purpose

2. A complaint

3. Justification

4. A candidate solution: request

Murphy and Neu (1996) also found that that native speakers tended to depersonalize the problem by incorporating politeness and hesitation markers such as the use of modals and mitigatory and used the inclusive pronoun "we". The researchers found that American native speakers could not only accept partial responsibility but could potentially negotiate with the professor when being presented with a complaint. The non-native speakers, however, tended to personalize the problem and refused to accept responsibility for the problem. Furthermore, by telling the professor what action he/she "should" take, they placed the blame on the professor. The researcher also found that

the Korean non-native speakers could not distinguish between a complaint and criticism, which could explain their responses to the scenario.

Several studies have investigated the appropriacy of L2 complaint strategies in certain situations by including the factor of remaining silent. Trenchs (2000) compared EFL Catalan speakers pragmatic transfer from their L1 Catalan to their L2 English by identifying the semantic discourse components used by Catalan speakers and how they resembled and differed from American speakers. This study had three groups of participants: English native speakers, Catalan native speakers, and EFL Catalan speaker. Unlike the previous studies mentioned, this study also gave participants the option of "opting out" rather than uttering a complaint. The researcher included this option because in some situations it may be more appropriate to remain silent rather than speak in an L2 language. In this study, the researcher discovered that while both American speakers and Catalan native speakers remained silent in some situations and made use of similar semantic formulas, the EFL speakers still showed negative pragmatic transfer (Trenchs, 2000). This was observed in the usage of vocabulary as well as the choice of certain semantic formulae.

In a similar study, Bikmen and Marti (2013) had three groups of participants: Turkish learners of English, native speakers of English, and native speakers of Turkish. The researcher adopted coding framework from Trosborg (1995):

1. Opting out

2. Hints

3. Annoyance

4. Consequences

5. Indirect

6. Modified blame

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7. Explicit blame (behavior)

8. Explicit blame (person)

9. Request for repair

10. Threat

Bikmen and Marti (2013) noted that *requests*, *hints* and *annoyance* were the most commonly-used strategies among all three groups. Furthermore, the researcher observed that the Turkish learners of English exhibited weak negative pragmatic transfer with the usage of *modified blame* and positive pragmatic transfer with the usage of *annoyance, blame (person),* and *blame (behavior).* The researcher concluded that some of the results confirm that idea that universally available pragmatic strategies are responsible for similar strategy use, and other parts of the results support the idea of cultural-specific language use.

2.4.2 Socio-cultural Factors in Cross-cultural Studies

Several studies have studied the effect of social factors (e.g. social distance and social power) on L2 learners' complaint strategies. Nakhle, Naghavi and Razavi (2014) examined Canadian native speakers, Iranian EFL learners as well as Iranian native speakers of Persian complaint strategies with a focus on complaint strategies and the frequency of complaints. This study analyzed the data using the Kuskal-Wallis Test and the Mann-Whitney Us Test. From the results of the study, the researchers concluded that social power and social distance were all determining factors in many situations. The researchers also found that Canadians and Iranians showed different pragmatic behaviors. Both groups of native speakers and advance EFL learners used an indirect complaint and a request for solution in higher frequency. However, Canadians used these strategies more frequently than the EFLs. The researchers concluded that Persian speakers prefer to control their preferred strategies according to the circumstances of the

complaint. In situations where there was a lack of warmth and attachment, Persian speakers expressed harsher and more direct complaints.

Abbass *et al.* (2012) compared complaint strategies of native speakers of Persian and American English while examining the social factors of social power, social distance and the severity of the offence. This study used a framework with seven types of complaint strategies adapted from another researcher (Chen *et al,* 2011), which are

1. Opting out
2. No explicit reproach
3. Indirect complaint
4. Indirect accusation
5. Direct complaint
6. Request for repair
7. Threat

Abbass *et al.* (2012) found that while Americans used more indirect complaints and requests for repair, the Persian speakers preferred more direct complaint and indirect accusation strategies under identical circumstances. The Persian speakers gave a greater share of respect to the higher power or status of the addressee and expressed more direct complaints that were deliberately made to be face-threatening to those of lower status or less powerful addressee. The researcher observed that the Americans preferred to apply the structure of letting the hearer off the hook first, followed by a statement of understanding and the Persian speakers tended to monitor their choice of strategies according to the status of the person they were complaint. Contrary to the conclusions from Abbass *et al.* (2012), Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) observed that the majority of the Persian

native speakers preferred to use more direct complaint strategies. Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) used a framework adapted from another researcher Prykarpatska (2008), which are:

1. Not perform a face-threatening act: opting out
2. Express annoyance and disapproval
   a. Joke
   b. Irony
   c. Hint
   d. Conventionally indirect disapproval
   e. Open disapproval/criticism
3. Explicit complaint
   a. Statement that the SUA [socially unacceptable act] took place
   b. Request that contains forbearance
   c. Mitigated request for repair
   d. Unmitigated request for repair
4. Warning
   a. Mitigated warning
   b. Unmitigated warning
5. Immediate threat

Yarahmadi and Fathi (2015) observed that the majority of the Persian speakers most frequently used indirect disapproval and criticism while the Australian native speakers used more explicit strategies, a specifically mitigated request for repair and an explicit statement. Conclusions drawn from the research shows that the Persian native speakers mostly chose more indirect complaint strategies in most of the situations to keep face. This may be because Iranian culture is regarded

as a low-context culture in which communication is coded implicitly. In a high-context culture, interpretation is derived from what is implied through the context of the moment and the cultural background of the communicators. In a low-context culture, however, since interpretation relies fully on the words used, it is very important for the speakers to be explicit in order to be fully understood. Interestingly, while the Persian speakers tended to use indirect disapproval strategies when confronting an interlocutor in a higher position, they preferred to use explicit statement where SUA took place or unmitigated warning when confronting interlocutors in unfamiliar or lower positions.

Chen *et al.* (2011) compared American and Taiwanese university students' complaint strategies using the variables of social status and social distance. This study used the framework:

1. Opting out

2. Interrogation

3. Accusation

4. Request for repair

5. Threat

The results showed that both the American and Taiwanese participants showed similarities in their overall and combined strategy use. For example, both groups preferred to make complaints rather than to choose *opting out* and preferred to use less direct complaint strategies. Specifically, both groups preferred to employ *dissatisfaction* more frequently than *interrogation*, *accusation*, and *threat*. The researchers explained that it benefits the complainer to "strike a balance between expressing annoyance and preserving social harmony by using less-direct strategies to redress the action" (Chen *et al.,*2011, p. 269). The researchers also noted that compared to Americans complaints, the Taiwanese participants were found to be more sensitive to social power and varied

their complaints based on the interlocutor's status. This is because Taiwan is a group-orientated society in which the group's best interest always comes before the individual, and the individual expects to be taken care of by the group. In other words, a person of lower-status is expected to show respect and deference as well as maintain the dignity of someone of higher-status. On the other land, the higher-status person is then entitled to the respect of the person of lower-status.

Spees (1994) compared the complaint strategies of American native speakers and Japanese learners with a focus on social status and social distance. The conclusions showed that Japanese learners are more direct than Americans in situations where the interlocutors have equal status or are of lower status. The Japanese learners also used more direct strategies when the interlocutor was a stranger or one of their family members. The researcher noted that the results could have been influenced by Japanese culture where they tend to value silence and regard eloquent speech with suspicion. They either tended to say nothing, or if they did decide to speak out, they might do so directly (Spees, 1994).

As previous studies have shown, while L2 speakers varied their complaint strategies in their attempt to make appropriate complaints, they often made attempts to accommodate their responses by either utilizing softeners, intensifiers, request components or remained silent. Additionally, social factors such as gender, social power, and social distance were found to be influencing factors in non-native speakers' complaint strategies. The previous studies have also use a varied range of research frameworks.

The current study will adopt the coding framework from Chen *et al.* (2011) with five complaint strategies to analyze the data of non-native speakers' complaints. The researcher has chosen this coding framework because it is the most recent complaint framework, and it has been used by other recent studies. Furthermore, the coding framework was developed based on the data

collected by Chen *et al.* (2011). Finally, the researcher will further develop this framework based on the data collected in this research.

2.5 Interlanguage Studies on Making Complaints

The extent of Interlanguage studies on complaints examines how different EFL speakers changed their complaint strategies depending on whether they were using their native L1 language or their L2 English as well as the factors that may have influence the changes. These studies have helped to understand the occurrence of pragmatic transfer between L1 and L2 languages. Several studies make a distinction between linguistic rules of the L1 language and the L2 language and strategies the EFL speakers use when using the L2 target language. Other studies have also focused on the effect of social factors on L2 speakers' complaint strategies (De Leon & Parina, 2016; Hong, 2015; Kakoloaki & Shahrokhi, 2016)

2.5.1 Linguistic Factors in Interlanguage Studies

Several researchers have investigated the effect of linguistic competency and linguistic differences in L2 complaint strategies. Factors such as the difference in aggression, length of utterances, and the occurrence of overaccommodation when L2 speakers attempted to accommodate socially to the L2 target language were analyzed. Tatsuki (2000) used the "Picture Frustration Test" to measure the amount of aggression needed to elicit complaints from ESL Japanese students in both Japanese and English. The researcher defined aggression as "an assertive response to a problem or frustration" (Tatsuki, 2000, p. 1005). The researcher used a scoring framework with three types of aggression (obstacle dominance, ego- or etho-defense, and need

persistence) and three types of direction of aggression (extragression, intraggression, and imaggression). The six categories were then combined to create nine factors shown below:

Table 2.1 *Direction of Aggression and Type of Aggression*

Direction of aggression	Type of Aggression		
	Obstacle-dominance	Ego-defense (etho-defense)	Need-persistence
Extragression	Extrapeditive	Extrapunitive	Extrapersistive
Intraggression	Intropeditive	Intropunitive	Intropersistive
Imaggression	Impeditive	Impunitive	Impersistive

In her study, the researcher found that while the Japanese ESL learners used the same type of *direction of aggression* to cope with their frustration in both L1 and L2, the *type of aggression* used, however, was different. The researcher determined that the participants made more severe complaints in English than they did in Japanese as the participants were found to have a tendency towards *extrapeditive* in Japanese and *extrapersistive* in English. *Extrapeditives* are similar to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) expression of annoyance or disapproval and *extrapersistives* are similar to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) accusation and warning. The researcher further concluded that while Japanese learners have little problem with complaining, they are in danger of using a force that exceeds their intentions.

In a later study, Baba (2010) examined the severity of complaints by Japanese ESL learners' complaints in English by comparing Japanese L1 and English L1 baselines. The baseline data was taken from L1 Japanese and L1 American English native speakers. Baba (2010) used a

severity scale of complaints adopted from Olshtein and Weinbach (1993) with a focus on indirect complaints. The researcher found that Japanese ESL learners showed far less aggression when expressing their annoyance, compared with the baseline data of their L1 and L2. Furthermore, the researcher identified four strategies that Japanese ESL learners used:

1. They accommodate to the L2 patterns

2. They avoid language specific features unique to L2

3. They overgeneralize L2 linguistic rules

4. They demonstrated negative transfer from L1

In another study, Nakabachi (1996) observed occurrences of overaccommodation when Japanese EFL learners spoke the target language. Nakabachi (1996) compared complaints produced by 39 Japanese L1 speakers and Japanese EFL speakers. The study used a DCT to collect data, and subjects were required to write how they would respond verbally in each situation. The subjects were also required to judge the degree of severity in each situation through the use of a three-point scale. The researcher found that 25% of the Japanese EFL speakers used severer expressions in English than in Japanese. The researcher concludes that the language differences between English and Japanese may have affected the strategies used when switching between Japanese and English. For example, Japanese used end particles as softeners while Americans used modals or subjects or some verbs such as seem, appear, etc. (Nakabachi, 1996). Furthermore, the overaccommodation may have been a result of Japanese EFL learner's attempt to adapt socially with the target language. The researcher also found that the subjects applied their socio-cultural norms in English by applying the same face-threatening patterns in English and Japanese. It was concluded that as the subjects had no experience of living in an English-speaking country they were forced to use their own socio-cultural norms when speaking English. In a similar study, Park

(2001) found that Korean EFL learners showed pragmatic transfer by their attempts to translate directly from Korean to English. Additionally, the Korean EFL learners also used softening buffers in Korean which were not present when they spoke English. Furthermore, the researcher observed that the English data was much more aggressive and placed blame on the addressee.

In a study conducted by De Capua (1998), the researcher examined German EFL learners with the purpose of investigating the phenomenon of pragmatic transfer as a possible basis for cultural stereotypes. The researcher found that the tone of German EFL speakers differed from the native Americans which led to misunderstandings. Furthermore, the German EFL speakers were also generally judged as more direct and aggressive than the native Americans in similar situations. The researcher concluded that pragmatic transfer occurs when the second language learners apply the socially appropriate rules and formulas of their native language to target language situations. This can happen if either they are unaware of the target language routines or if they are psychologically unable to do so as the L2 norms and routines violate their L1 internalized and culturally conditioned acceptable norms of speech behavior (De Capua, 1998)

2.5.2 Socio-cultural Factors in Interlanguage Studies

Several other recent studies have focused on social factors that may affect EFL speakers complaints in L2. Factors that have been examined are social status and social distance. De Leon and Parina (2016) investigated Filipinos' use of complaints in English and Tagalog by analyzing their occurrence and the relationship between likelihood to complain and relation to gender, perceived level of language proficiency and status. The results of the study showed that there was no relationship between gender and likelihood to complain as well as perceived level of language proficiency and likelihood to complain. The researcher found that Filipinos are somewhat hesitant to complain to a person of a higher status than they are. De Leon and Parina (2016) surmises that

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a probable reason has to do with politeness because complaining to a person in authority is considered impolite. The Tagalog language has a lot of honorific markers and politeness enclitics which are required when addressing an older or more powerful person. The researcher also found that when complaining to peers, Filipinos complained in the same way in English and Tagalog. When complaining to those of lower status, however, there was a significantly higher frequency of complaints no matter what language was used. Nakabachi (1996) also found that status differences affected the subjects' complaint strategies. When confronted with a stranger or someone of unequal status, either higher or lower, the complainers used more direct and unmitigated expressions in English than in Japanese. Hong (2015) observed that among low and intermediate level Taiwanese EFL learners, both groups produced significantly more supportive moves (i.e. justification, expression of politeness) and downgraders (i.e. subjectivizer, politeness marker) towards their instructor to reduce face threat. The researcher also found that the learners preferred explicit complaints rather than requests or other milder strategies despite the high severity. This is probably due to the learners' having a specific purpose to elaborate and cue the recipient about the offense in an email instead of in a face-to-face interaction where non-vocal interaction would allow for hints and silence.

As previous studies have shown, linguistic factors as well as socio factors have a significant effect on L2 speakers' complaint strategies when transferring from L1 directly to L2. The EFL speakers' L2 competency, the linguistic differences between the L1 and L2 languages as well as the L2 speakers attempts to accommodate between the two languages have been found to be influencing factors in how EFL speakers complain. Furthermore, social factors such as social status and social distance have also been found to be influencing factors. This study will be examining how the social factors of social distance, social status and gender effect pragmatic transfer from

L1 to L2 in an Asian context by analyzing complaint strategies of Taiwanese EFL high level learners.

2.6 Empirical Studies on Complaint Response Strategies

Several studies have explored native and non-native speakers' response to complaints by identifying common response strategies and examining the significance of cultural influence. Researchers have examined how cultures such as Japanese (Boxer, 1993), Iranian (Eslami, 2004), Italian (Frescura, 1995), and Taiwanese (Fang, 2015) respond to complaints, and the researchers have compared them with native English speakers. Boxer (1993) used conversational interactions to examine how Japanese ESL and native speakers responded to indirect complaints in English discourse. Six categories of responses to indirect complaints emerged in this study including:

1. Joking/teasing
2. Nonsubstantive reply
3. Question
4. Advice/lecture
5. Contradiction
6. Commiseration

Boxer (1993) found that native speakers used more commiseration when responding to non-native speakers, while non-native speakers used more nonsubstantive responses when responding to native speakers. Furthermore, Boxer also observed that a gradual building of rapport did not result in an increased frequency of indirect complaints/commiserations sequences during the later conversations. Instead, the Japanese participants became less responsive, preferring to let the

native speakers do most of the talking. The native speakers, on the other hand, complained that they had to do the most work in carrying on the conversation. This phenomenon may be a result of the different perspectives on talk in American and Japanese culture. The researcher concluded that "Japanese verbal and nonverbal backchanneling behavior attempts to avoid what is perceived as the possibility of face-threatening behavior" (Boxer, 1993, p. 294)

In a later study, Frescura (1995) examined English and Italian responses to complaints. Unlike Boxer (1993), the researcher divided the response to complaints into two super-ordinate categories of Hearer-Supportive (acceptance of the offense committed and apologizing) and Self-Supportive (denying the accusation). This study found that Italian speakers had a marked preference toward strategies that protected their own positive face, as was expected from a culture with a positive-politeness orientation. The English speakers, on the other hand displayed a negative-politeness orientation and, thus, tended more towards the Hearer-Supportive strategies.

Eslami (2004) examined Persian speakers' use of face-keeping strategies in response to complaints from American English speakers. The researcher used a DCT to collect the data and the data was coded using a coding scheme adapted and modified from previous research, including Frescura (1995). The coding scheme follows:

1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs)

   a. An expression of regret

   b. An offer of apology

   c. A request for forgiveness

2. Explanation or account

3. Acceptance of responsibility

4. Expression of appeal

5. Refusing responsibility

6. Concern for the hearer

7. Offer of repair

8. Promise of forbearance

9. Emotional exclamations

The study found that the four most preferred strategies by both groups were *apology (IFID)*, *acceptance* of *responsibility*, *offer of repair* and *explanation*. However, the most frequent strategy used by both groups were *IFIDs*. The study further found that Persian speakers varied their face-keeping strategies in relation to the amount of perceived threat to the face of the speaker or the hearer. This could be a reflection of their group-orientated culture, which puts an emphasis on the importance of society, family, solidarity and common ground. It was also found that the Persian speakers preferred strategies (e.g. request for forgiveness) that did not distance the speaker and the hearer from each other and did not threaten their "face". The researcher noted these strategies are perceived as a "natural and expected display of emotional involvement and respect for harmony and well being of the others and for withholding societal norms of appropriateness" (Eslami, 2004, p. 189). English speakers, however, who put a strong emphasis on individual rights and privacy, mostly used one apology strategy and intensified it based on contextual factors. It was also observed that English speakers preferred strategies that would not threaten "distance" between the speaker and the hearer. For example, the researcher found that since the *expression of regret* in American English is considered relatively 'weak' in its apologetic force, intensification, modification, or repetition of the IFID is often required.

Fang (2015) examined Taiwanese EFL learners' response strategies elicited in conversation. Similar to Fescura (1995), Fang (2015) divided the response strategies into two main

categories of apology strategies and non-apology strategies. Fang found that while the participants' responses were generally not affected by social distance, their responses often appeared in a fixed order of explicit apology followed by three strategies (offer of alternatives, denial or shift of responsibility with justification, and denial or shift of responsibility without justification) for responsibility denial. This strategy was employed to save both the complainer and complainee's face in order to maintain social harmony.

From the previous studies, it can be assumed culture is an influencing factor in determining response strategies utilized when responding to a complaint. In Japanese, Taiwanese, Iranian and Italian cultures, saving face and maintaining solidarity are prioritized. Often times, either avoidance or face saving strategies aimed at both the complainer and the complainee were employed. In American culture, however, while face-saving strategies were also employed, they were more focused on maintaining the face of the complainee. This study will examine how culture can be an influence in how Taiwanese university students respond to complaints in different scenarios. This study will also focus on social distance and social power.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section provides information on the participants in this study, the instruments used for data collection, and the data collection procedures. The data analysis with the adopted coding scheme will also be described in the following sections. Furthermore, this section will provide information about the pilot study conducted for this study.

3.1 The Participants

The study involved forty-nine first-year English-major students from a private university located in central Taiwan. The participants were recruited from the top four classes from the first-year English-major classes in the school year of 2017. The higher proficient students were chosen because higher level students are freer in expressing themselves and could produce more real utterances (Allami & Naeimi, 2011). Furthermore, they are able to give a clearer answer in English for the reason they choose to opt out in the scenarios when they prefer to not give a response. The proficiency level of the participants was measured using the Freshmen English Placement Test given in the beginning of the school year. The participants include 10 males and 39 females, with an age range between 18 and 19.

3.2 Instruments

This study utilized a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) to collect data. The researcher chose this instrument because of several advantages. To begin with, it is easier for researchers to control certain variables such as social status, social power, gender, age etc. in the scenarios in the WDCT. It is also easier to gather data quickly without the need to transcribe the dialogues (Golato, 2003). Furthermore, according to Chen *et al.* (2011), the data from a DCT also

makes it easier for statistical comparisons as well as formulate generalized findings based on the qualitative data. This research analyzed both the statistical data from the WDCT as well as the qualitative data to find sociopragmatic differences in complaint strategies and the reasons behind why opting out was a preference in certain situations. With the participants being able to take on different social roles in this research, it was easier to measure the differences and similarities between responses from the different participants. The designed DCT used items adapted from Chen (2011). A couple of the scenarios were also adapted from Chen *et al.* (2011) while the rest are of the researcher's own design.

An example of the researcher's English WDCT is as follows:

> You have been hired by a parent to teach their child English reading. It is obvious that the student isn't paying attention when he/she keeps on looking around the room instead of looking at the book. The student also keeps on getting lost in the reading. You decide to confront the student about his/her lack of attention.
>
> You: Are you paying attention?
>
> Student: Of course! We're at… I don't know.
>
> You: _____
>
> *I didn't respond because* _____

An example of the Chinese WDCT is as follows:

> 你受雇於一位家長教導她的小孩英文閱讀。這個學生在上課的時候明顯的不專心，不但沒看課本還四處張望。你決定反應他的缺乏注意力。
>
> 你：你有專心嗎？

學生: 當然有啊! 現在上到…嗯…我找不到…

你: _____

(我沒有回應, 因為 _____)

The Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) used in this study has a total of 18 scenarios. The first 9 scenarios elicited participants to generate complaints and the other 9 scenarios measured how participants respond to a complaint. All of the scenarios were direct complaints and most were gender neutral. No references to the gender of the listener were made in the scenarios. The WDCT was constructed based on the variables of social distance (D) and social power (P). According to Schollon and Scollon (2001), social status is how well interlocutors know each other. It is commonly measured as two dimensions (either close [-D] or distant [+D]) or with 4 dimensions: (from least intimate to most intimate) stranger, acquaintances, friends and relatives (Olshtain &Weinbach, 1987; Schollon & Schollon, 2001). This study adapted both methods by combining friends and relatives as one dimension and investigating 3 dimensions in total. The other variable that was examined was social power. Social power is the relative degree of the social dominance of each one of the interlocutors over the other (Abbass, 2012). This study used three dimensions of social power proposed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987), including 1) superior to subordinate, 2) peer to peer, and 3) subordinate to superior

The dimensions resulted in nine combinations as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 *Dimensions of the WDCT Scenarios*

Scenario	Social Power	Social Distance
1	L-H	Friend/relative (-D)
2	L-H	Acquaintance (D)
3	L-H	Stranger (+D)
4	E-E	Friend/relative (-D)
5	E-E	Acquaintance (D)
6	E-E	Stranger (+D)
7	H-L	Friend/relative (-D)
8	H-L	Acquaintance (D)
9	H-L	Stranger (+D)

The specifications of the WDCT items are presented below:

Table 3.2 *WDCT Items Specifications*

Talking to superiors	Complaining to your parent about being late depositing your monthly allowance
	Complaining to your teacher about an unfair grade
	Complaining to an old man for cutting in line
Talking to peers	Complaining to your friend for always being too busy to spend time with you
	Complaining to your classmate for being lazy

	Complaining to another student for stealing your parking spot
Talking to subordinates	Complaining to your younger sibling for taking something of yours without asking
	Complaining to your student for not paying attention
	Complaining to the waiter for serving the wrong dish
Responding to subordinates	Your child complains about your cooking
	Your student complains about homework
	A stranger complains about receiving a traffic ticket
Responding to peers	Your friend complains about the noise you are making
	A classmate complains about your complaining
	A stranger complains about your cat
Responding to superiors	Your older sibling complains about your long shower
	Your boss complains about your tardiness
	A shopper complains about the lack of attention

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

All forty-nine of the participants were provided the WDCT during two of their normal class hours in their respective four classes. The participants were given a maximum of 30 minutes to complete the English WDCT, and a maximum of 20 minutes to complete the Chinese WDCT. The

participants were also encouraged to fill in what they thought that they would say in each scenario. Since several of the participants were unable to finish the English WDCT in the allotted timeframe, the participants were asked to complete the unfinished WDCT at home. They were asked to return the completed WDCT the next time they had class.

The participants were asked to complete the Chinese WDCT between five and seven weeks after completing the English WDCT. This was to decrease the probability that the participants would remember their previous responses but still sustained a familiarity with the WDCT scenarios. The participants were given the English WDCT before the Chinese WDCT because their answers might have been influenced by the Chinese version, as was observed by Tatsuki (2000) in a previous study. However, there was minimal influence from Chinese when participants are given the survey in L2 English first.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures and Coding Scheme

Several different procedures were conducted to analyze the data from this study. Firstly, the qualitative data collected from the Chinese and English WDCT items were analyzed and coded using two different coding frameworks. The data from the making complaints scenarios were coded using the coding scheme adapted from Chen *et al.* (2011). This coding scheme included six complaint strategies: *opting out*, *interrogation*, *accusation*, *request for repair* (from the interlocutor) and *threat*. Furthermore, additional strategies were added in the coding system by the researcher. *Dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm* was added because it had been identified by previous researchers (Prykarpatska, 2008; Yarahmadi & Fathi, 2015) and was also employed by the participants in this study. Together with *dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm*, the researcher included *appeal to emotion*, which was utilized by the participants of the current study, as additional complaint strategies. Additionally, *request for repair from the speaker* and *offering a*

compromise have also been included as non-complaint strategies because they were also used by the participants of the current study. Table 3.3 shows these strategies with examples which will be revealed in the data analysis. The examples were utilized by the participants of this study.

Table 3.3. *The Coding Scheme of Complaint Strategies*

Complaint Strategy	Examples
Opting out (OP)	*Stay silent, no response*
Dissatisfaction (DS)	*"Well, this is not my order either."*
Interrogation (IN)	*"Why did I get a very low grade?"*
Accusation (AC)	*"I told you not to take my stuff without my permission!"*
Request for repair (RR)	*"Could you deposit the money as soon as possible please? Thanks."*
Threat (TH)	*"If you keep doing this, I will tell your parents!"*
Dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm (DSJ)	*"I am going to die of starvation!"*
Appeal to emotion (APE)	*"I want you to really learn something."*
Request for repair (speaker) (RRS)	*"What can I do to receive a higher grade?"*
Offering a compromise (OC)	*"If you focus on your work now, we can do something fun later."*

The data from responding to complaints scenarios were coded using the coding scheme adapted from Fang (2015). This coding scheme includes eleven response strategies. *Offer of*

repair, *expression of apology*, *acknowledgement of responsibility*, *explanation or account*, and *expressing concern for the hearer* are categorized as apology strategies (Fang, 2015). *Opting out*, *confirmation*, *offer of alternative*, *denial or shift of responsibility without justification*, and *denial or shift of responsibility with justification* are categorized as non-apology strategies (Fang, 2015). *Making a joke/sarcasm* was included as a non-apology strategy by the researcher because it was used by the participants of the current study. Table 3.4 shows these strategies with examples that were utilized by the participants in this study.

Table 3.4 *The Coding Scheme of Complaint Response Strategies*

Complaint Response Strategy	Examples
Opting out (OP)	*Stay silent, no response*
Offer of repair (OR)	*"Sorry, I will keep my voice down."*
Confirmation (CF)	*"It is my fault?"*
Expression of apology (APA)	*"Sorry, Boss."*
Acknowledgement of responsibility (AR)	*"My bad. I will shower faster next time."*
Offer of alternatives (ALT)	*"If you don't like it, then just leave it."*
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification (DENY)	*"No, you should take responsibility for your own mistake."*
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification (DENYJ)	*"Then it is your problem."*
Explanation or account (ACC)	*"I am sorry, it's really busy today."*
Expressing concern for the hearer (EXP)	*"Don't you know that you are risking your own life?"*

Complaint Response Strategy	Examples
Making a joke/sarcasm (JK)	*"Fine, then make your own dish next time. I'm just kidding!"*

The quantitative data from the two WDCTs were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. The data from the Chinese and English WDCTs were analyzed by both the researcher, another native English speaker and a native Mandarin Chinese speaker. The researcher first explained the coding scheme and then trained the native English speaker on how to code the qualitative data from the English WDCT. Then, the researcher worked together with the native English speaker to code the English WDCT. Both raters always made sure to come to a consensus on the coding given to each scenario. During the rating of the qualitative data, when none of the current strategies in the coding scheme were applicable to a scenario, both raters came to a consensus on adding a new strategy to the coding scheme. With the Chinese WDCT, the researcher also first explained the coding scheme, including the newly added criteria and trained the native Mandarin Chinese speaker how to code the qualitative data. Then, the two coders worked together to code the data. No new strategies were added during the analysis of the Chinese WDCT.

Descriptive statistics was conducted to compare the individual frequency and overall frequencies of the participants' usage of complaint strategies when complaining and responding to complaints in both English and Chinese. Chi-square was conducted to test whether there was any significant difference between the frequency of the participants' usage of complaint strategies between English and Chinese.

The qualitative data from the participant's reasons for opting out were also analyzed and the most prevalent reasons will be revealed in the data analysis.

Table 3.5 shows the data analysis method for each research question.

Table 3.5. *Data Analysis*

Research Questions	Data Analysis
1. Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' usage of L1 Mandarin and L2 English when making complaints?	Coding scheme Descriptive statistics Chi-square
2. Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' usage of L1 Mandarin and L2 English when responding to complaints?	Coding scheme Descriptive statistics Chi-square
3. Are there L1 and L2 differences in opting out? If so, what are they and why?	Descriptive statistics

3.5 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the validity of the research instrument. In order to do that, the researcher designed a WDCT with 18 scenarios that the researcher hoped to use in the real research. Then, the researcher invited several reviewers to make comments and suggestions. These included two experienced English teachers and two Taiwanese graduate students. Each was tasked to consider the fluency and clarity of the instrument as well as cultural and social influences that may affect participants' answers. Afterwards, the researcher conducted the pilot study with 20 university freshmen non-English major students. The participants of the pilot study were 20 university freshmen non-English major students, 11 of which were male and 9 were female. The proficiency levels of the participants were on average intermediate-high, which was equal to the participants who will be participating in the actual study. Further revisions were then made to the instruments based on the results of the pilot study.

The pilot test was done in two stages. In the first stage, the participants were given the pilot WDCT and were encouraged to respond to each scenario as best as they could. They were asked to underline words or concepts that they didn't understand well and to mark which scenarios they found too difficult to respond. Preliminary findings showed that most of the participants found most of the scenarios clear and easy to understand. Only a few scenarios were marked as too difficult for the participants to either give a response or give an appropriate response. For example, half of the students found scenario 9 "*someone bumps into their scooter and makes them fall*" a very difficult scenario to respond to. This scenario was instead changed to "*someone steals their spot*". It was also discovered that the wording for Scenario 12 was a little bit confusing for the students, so the scenario was simplified. It was changed from version A to version B as follows:

Version A: *You are a police officer who sees two scooters crossing a red light. You choose and catch one of the scooters and give them a ticket. This person is upset at getting caught and complains that you should have caught the other person who also crossed a red light too.*

Version B: *You are a police officer who sees a scooter running a red light. You catch the scooter and give him/her a ticket. This person is upset at getting caught and complains about the ticket.*

For the second stage of the pilot test, the participants were given the DCT again. The researcher wanted to discover whether the participants perceived each scenario as an offensive act that is socially unacceptable to the degree that a complaint is required. To find this out, the participants were asked to read through the DCT again and this time to give each scenario a score from 1 to 5 as to how offensive they find the situation in each scenario. A number 1 was scored if the scenario was not perceived as very offensive, and a 5 was scored if the scenario was perceived as very offensive.

After the participants had completed the second stage, it was found that scenario 1 (arriving late at a late appointment), scenario 11 (students complaining about too much homework) and scenario 15 (an impatient customer in a clothing store) all had very low stress scores. Scenario 1 was subsequently changed to where the parents were late in depositing money into the participants bank account for their monthly allowance and the participant is running low on money. Scenario 11 was changed so that the teacher had to respond to students complaining about a test. Scenario 15 was also changed so that it took place in a restaurant instead and a customer complains about the slow service. One of the participants did not read or listen to the instructions properly and only gave out 1 and 5 scores, so his data was removed. It was also found that scenarios 1 and 18 were

not gender neutral. In this study, all of the scenarios had to be gender neutral, so the two scenarios were edited and made gender neutral for the actual study.

Two more adjustments were made to the DCT. Firstly, most of the scenarios were shortened and simplified as a large majority of the participants were unable to complete the DCT within 25 minutes. The participants of the main study were given only 25 minutes. Secondly, the option to "opt out" was added for both making a complaint and responding to a complaint and the line "I didn't respond because…" was added so that the participants could write down what their reason was for choosing not to make a complaint or to respond to a complaint.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will report on the findings of the Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint and complaint response strategies in Mandarin Chinese and English. This chapter will first examine the frequency and significance of Taiwanese complaint strategies in Mandarin Chinese and English. Then, a comparison of the frequency and significance of Mandarin Chinese and English complaint response strategies will be conducted. Finally, the frequency of opting out in Mandarin Chinese and English as well as the reasons for opting out will be analyzed.

4.1 Complaint Strategies of Taiwanese EFL learners'

RQ 1: Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint strategies in L1 Mandarin and L2 English?

To answer research question 1, the overall frequency of complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese were examined. To obtain a further understanding of the differences and similarities between complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese, an analysis of the influence of social distance and social power on complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese was conducted. Furthermore, the complaint strategy combinations were briefly examined to observe how many complaint strategies the participants employed in one scenario. Finally, chi-square test was conducted to compare the statistical significant difference between complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese.

4.1 1 Frequency of Complaint Strategies

Table 4.1 presents a comparison of the frequency of the participants' complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese. The table also indicates the total number of complaint strategies employed by the EFL learners.

Table 4.1 *Frequency of Complaint Strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese*

Complaint Strategies	English WDCT	Chinese WDCT	Total	%
Opting out	99	120	219	22%
Dissatisfaction	57	63	120	12%
Interrogation	72	59	131	13%
Accusation	78	48	126	13%
Request for repair	109	109	218	22%
Threat	39	45	84	8%
Dissatisfaction through				
Joking/sarcasm	8	18	26	3%
Request for repair (speaker)	16	11	27	3%
Appeal to emotion	28	8	36	4%
Offering a compromise	12	6	18	2%
Total	**518**	**487**	**1005**	**100%**
Total (excluding opting out)	**419**	**367**	**786**	**78%**

Overall, the data analysis indicates that the participants utilized more complaint strategies in English than in Mandarin Chinese. There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, the

participants are used to being tested on their English in the classroom. With this research also having been conducted in a classroom setting, the participants may have thought that they were being tested on their abilities to complain and respond to complaints in English. Another possible reason is that the participants might have been more careful when using their native language because they were more afraid of offending the other person in the scenario. Consequently, they may have preferred to opt out to avoid this possible problem. When using English, they may have felt that they would be more easily forgiven and were more willing to voice a complaint than in their native language.

Table 4.1 shows that the participants used 518 coded strategies in English and 487 in Mandarin Chinese. The difference in the frequency of complaint strategies is more clearly highlighted when opting out is excluded. Without opting out, the frequency of English complaint strategies is 419 and Mandarin Chinese is 367 complaint strategies.

When examining both the English and Mandarin Chinese complaints collectively, the participants seemed to favor complaint strategies over non-complaint strategies. The non-complaint strategies are *request for repair from the speaker*, *appeal to emotion*, and *offering a compromise*. Interestingly, the most frequently used strategies were *opting out* and *request for repair*. For example, in the scenario where the parents forgot to transfer the student's allowance and the student only has 50NT\$, one participant employed a *request for repair* in English:

"Hey, Mom. I have no money to live for my lives. Could you deposit the money as soon as possible? Thanks."

In the same scenario, another participant utilized *request for repair* in Mandarin Chinese:

Bà mā ~wǒ de zhànghù méi qiánle, jìdé huì qián yō
”爸媽~ 我的 帳戶 沒 錢了，記得匯 錢 唷!”

The complaint strategies *interrogation* (coded 131 times), *accusation* (coded 126 times), *dissatisfaction* (coded 120 times), and *threat* (coded 84 times) were also employed at a relatively high frequency. The only complaint strategy utilized at a low frequency was *dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm* (coded 26 times). The other strategies employed at a low frequency were the non-complaint strategies *appeal to emotion* (coded 36 times), *request for repair from the speaker* (coded 27 times), and *offering* a *compromise* (coded 18 times).

Interestingly, the participants in this study did not show a clear preference between direct complaints, indirect complaints, or avoiding a complaint. Previous studies found that non-native speakers often preferred using indirect complaints than direct complaints (Chen *et al.* 2011; Nakhle, 2014). Firstly, as it had been previously observed, the participants preferred either using the direct strategy of *request for repair* (22%) or avoiding making a complaint by *opting out* (also 22%). This observation coincides with Spees (1994) reflection that Japanese EFL learners "either tend to not say anything, or if they do decide to speak out, they may do so directly" (p. 248). The Taiwanese EFL learners in the current study either avoided making a complaint or employed a direct complaint. Secondly, this study separated dissatisfaction into two categories: *dissatisfaction* and *dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm*. When examining the total frequency of dissatisfaction, the participants utilized dissatisfaction 15% of the time. This makes *dissatisfaction* the third preferred strategy. This is similar to Chen *et al.* (2011), who observed Taiwanese EFL learners employed *dissatisfaction* more frequently than *interrogation*, *accusation*, or *threat* in English. Interestingly, the participants in the current study employed *interrogation* at a high frequency in both English and Mandarin Chinese.

The results of this study show that Taiwanese EFL learners utilized more request strategies. Similar to a previous study conducted by Nakhle (2014), the participants of the current study not only employed *request for repair*, but also took the blame upon themselves by inquiring how they could repair the situation. This strategy was labeled as *request for repair from the speaker*. They took the blame on themselves rather than putting the blame on others. This was predominantly used in the scenario where a teacher gave a student an unfair grade:

"I'm sorry and I hope it wouldn't offend you. Can I ask you why my grad is lower than others? And what can I do to get better grade?"

In the same scenario, another participant also employed a *request for repair from the speaker* in Mandarin Chinese:

Wǒ xiǎng zhīdào guānyú zhècì de xiǎozǔ zuòyè wǒ hái yǒu shé me dìfāng kěyǐ gǎijìn de
"我 想 知道 關於 這次的小組 作業我還有 什麼 地方 可以 改進的?"

When examining the English and the Chinese WDCT separately, several differences could be seen. Firstly, there was a higher preference for *opting out* in Chinese (coded 120 times) than in English (coded 99 times). Additionally, while the preferred first and second strategies in both English and Mandarin Chinese were the same (*opting out* and *request for repair*), the third and fourth strategies differed. The third and fourth preferred strategies in English were *interrogation* (coded 72 times) and *accusation* (coded 78 times) while in Mandarin Chinese, the preferred strategies were *dissatisfaction* (coded 63 times) and *interrogation* (coded 59 times).

The frequency of English and Mandarin Chinese complaint strategies employed by the Taiwanese EFL learners suggests pragmatic transfer between their L1 and L2. Previous studies found that non-native speakers showed pragmatic transfer through their attempts to transfer

directly from their native language to their non-native language (Nakabachi, 1996; Park, 2001). They further made attempts by applying their socio-cultural norms in English by applying the same face-threatening patterns in both their L1 and L2 (Nakabachi, 1996). To some extent, this study is in agreement with the findings in the previous studies. The participants did indeed show pragmatic transfer by employing similar complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese. This could be seen by the high preference for *request for repair*, *opting out*. However, the participants also showed negative pragmatic transfer. This was observed when the participants showed a higher preference for *interrogation* and *accusation* in English than in Mandarin Chinese. Furthermore, there was a higher frequency of *dissatisfaction* in Mandarin Chinese than in English. The differences in preferred complaint strategies could also be seen more clearly through examining social power and social distance.

4.1.2 The Effect of Social Power on Complaint Strategies

Table 4.2 presents a comparison of the participant's complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese with interlocutors of various social power (superior, subordinate, and equal). To make it easier to make a comparison between the two languages, Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 depict the frequency of English and Mandarin Chinese complaint strategies separately.

Table 4.2 *Frequency of Complaint Strategies: Social Power*

	Superior	**Subordinate**	**Equal**
	English/Chinese	English/Chinese	English/Chinese
Opting out	29/32	16/30	52/58
Dissatisfaction	22/25	24/25	12/13
Interrogation	50/37	12/14	11/8

	Superior English/Chinese	Subordinate English/Chinese	Equal English/Chinese
Accusation	26/14	34/22	18/12
Request for repair	35/36	49/37	25/36
Threat	0/0	20/19	19/26
Dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm	1/7	1/4	6/7
Request for repair (speaker)	13/8	3/2	0/1
Appeal to emotion	2/0	16/6	10/2
Offering a compromise	0/0	8/4	4/2
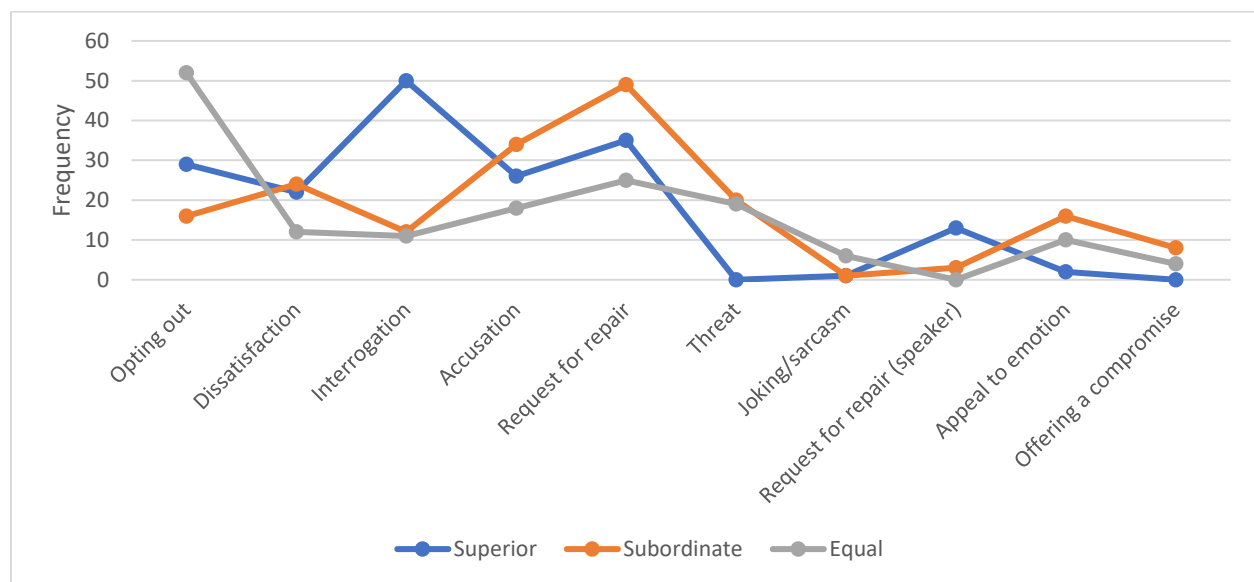
Figure 4.1 *Frequency of English Complaint Strategies: Social Power*
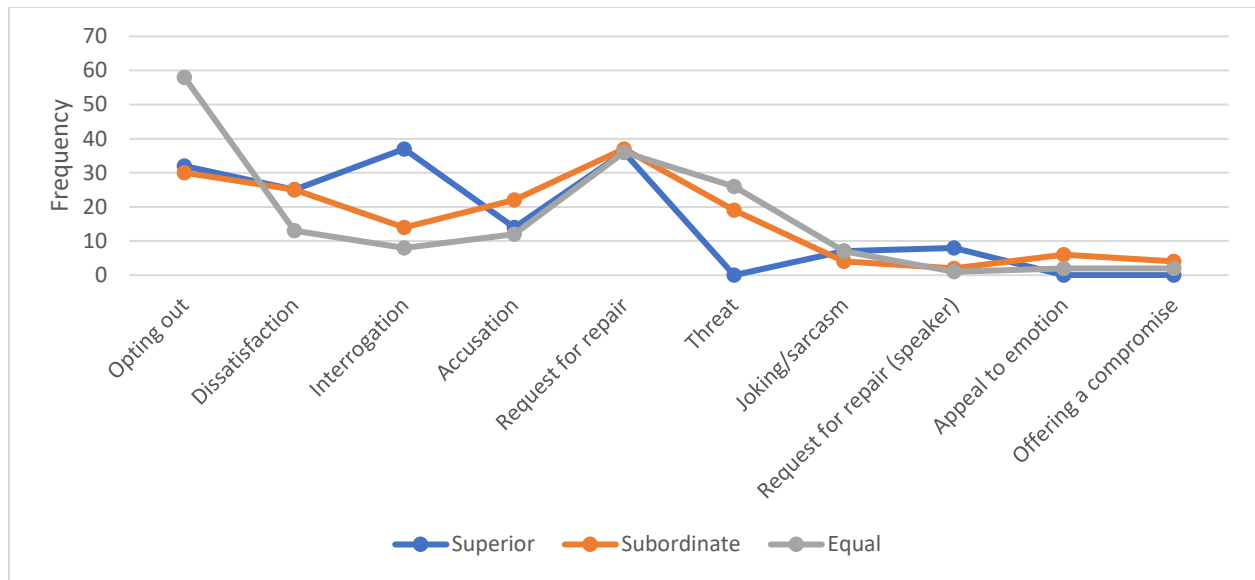
Figure 4.2 *Frequency of Chinese Complaint Strategies: Social Power*

To identify further similarities and differences between the participants' English and Mandarin Chinese complaint strategies, the current study also examined different social power (superior, subordinate, equal). Firstly, as shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1, the preferred English Complaint strategy was *interrogation¸* followed by *request for repair*, when the participant was confronted with a person who is superior. This suggests that the participants utilized politeness strategies towards someone of higher social status. For example, a participant used *interrogation* in the scenario where a teacher gave an unfair grade:

"Sorry, I think I worked hard on my homework. Why I got very low grade? Can you give me a reason?"

However, when the interlocutor was a subordinate, the participants were more direct and utilized fewer politeness strategies. The preferred strategy was *request for repair* followed by *accusation*. Interestingly, when the interlocutor was of equal status, the preferred strategy was *opting out*. This suggests an avoidance strategy because either the participants didn't know how to

complain to someone of equal status, or didn't consider it necessary to voice a complaint. Below is an example of *request for repair* that was used in the scenario where a sibling has taken their laptop without their permission:

"Return my laptop right now."

Furthermore, here is also an example of *accusation* that was used in the same scenario by another participant:

"I had been telling you many times—do not come into my room and borrow my stuff without asking me!"

When examining complaints in Mandarin Chinese (See Figure 2), it was observed that the preferred strategies were *opting out* and *request for repair* when the participants were confronted with a subordinate or an equal. For example, in the scenario where the waiter kept on delivering the wrong dish, one participant preferred to opt out because they didn't mind as it was a common mistake. They wrote:

Juédé méishénme hǎo bùmǎn de. Sòng cuò cān nánmiǎn.
"覺得沒什麼　　好　不滿　的。送　錯　餐　難免。"

In another scenario where a sibling took their laptop without asking, a participant decided to utilize *request for repair*:

Nǐ xià cì yào jiè dōngxī yào xiān wèn wǒ a.
"你下次要　借東西　要　先　　問　我啊。"

However, when the interlocutor was a superior, three strategies stood out equally: *opting out*, *interrogation*, and *request for repair*.

In summary, these results show that *opting out* and *request for repair* are the preferred strategies in Mandarin Chinese. In English, however, the strategies may vary depending on the social power of the interlocutor.

The observations in this study on social status coincide with the findings of several studies (Abbass *et al.*, 2012; Chen et al, 2011; De Leon & Parina, 2016). Similar to Chen *et al.* (2011), the findings of this study show that Taiwanese EFL learners are sensitive to social status. However, while Chen *et al.* (2011) only made the observation in Mandarin Chinese, this study found that Taiwanese EFL learners varied their strategies even more in English than in Mandarin Chinese. Abbass et al (2012) also observed that that Persian speakers gave a greater share of respect to someone (addressee) of higher power or status and expressed more direct complaints that were deliberately made to be face-threatening to those of lower status or a less powerful addressee. This was also observed in this study when the participants employed *request for repair* and *accusation* when confronted with an interlocutor of lower status. De Leon and Parina (2016) also noted that complaining to a person in authority is considered impolite in Tagalog. Furthermore, similar to the Tagalog language, Mandarin Chinese also has a lot of honorific markers and politeness enclitics which are required when addressing an older or more powerful person. For example, in the scenario where an elderly person cuts in line, one participant responded with:

Xiānshēng, nǐ bùyòng páiduì ma? Píng shénme chāduì
"先生， 你不用 排隊 嗎？憑 什麼 插隊？"

Another example shows:

Bóbo qǐng nǐ páiduì ó
"伯伯 請 你排隊哦!"

4.1 3 The Effect of Social Distance on Complaint Strategies

Table 4.3 presents the participants' frequency of complaints in English and Mandarin Chinese when the interlocutors were either someone close to the participant, an acquaintance, or a stranger. Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 divide the participants' responses in English and in Mandarin Chinese to give a clearer visual presentation of the frequency of complaint strategies.

Table 4.3 *Frequency of Complaint Strategies: Social Distance*

	Close	**Acquaintance**	**Stranger**
	English/Chinese	English/Chinese	English/Chinese
Opting out	26/28	18/20	53/72
Dissatisfaction	14/21	15/16	29/26
Interrogation	24/19	37/37	12/3
Accusation	33/17	17/12	28/19
Request for repair	38/44	36/41	35/24
Threat	20/23	15/20	4/2
Dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm	5/10	1/1	2/7
Request for repair (speaker)	8/1	4/10	4/0
Appeal to emotion	6/1	20/7	2/0
Offering a compromise	4/2	7/4	1/0
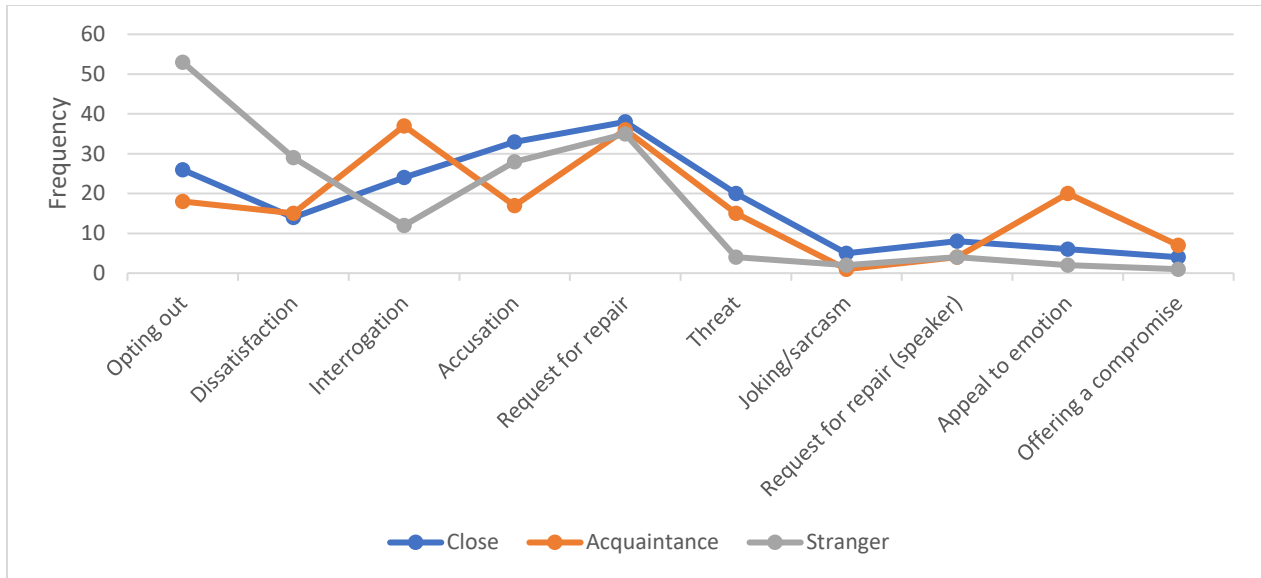
Figure 4.3 *Frequency of English Complaint Strategies: Social Distance*
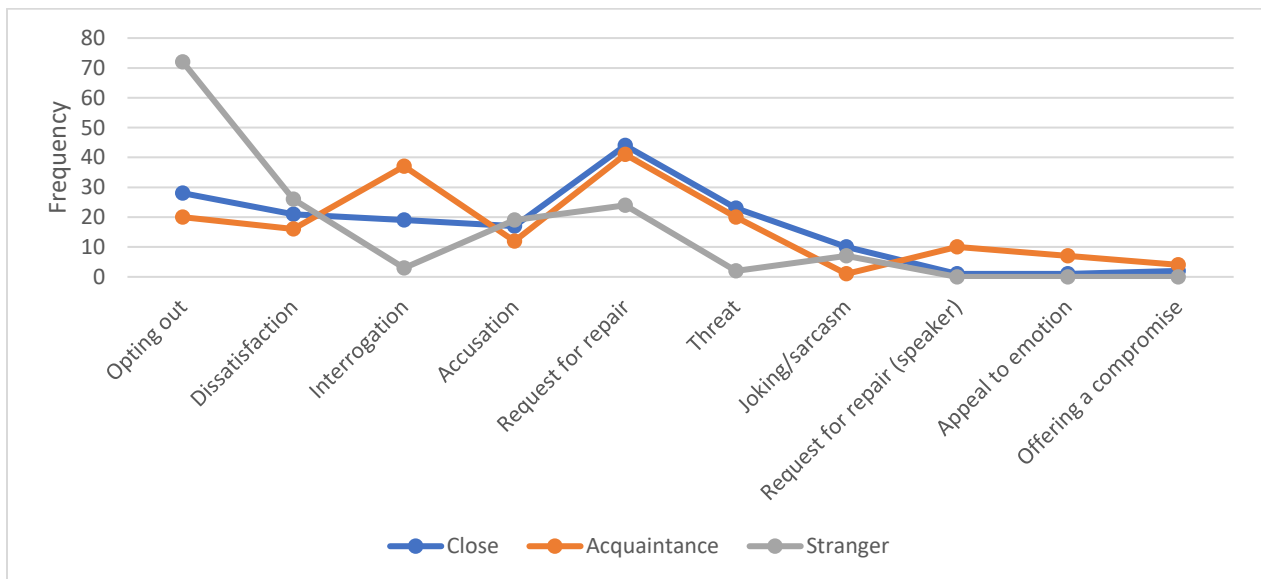
Figure 4.4 *Frequency of Chinese Complaint Strategies: Social Distance*

When examining the differences in social distance (close, acquaintance, stranger), there were few differences between the preferred complaint strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese (see Table 4.3). However, the participants did vary their strategies with interlocutors of different social distance. This can also be more clearly seen in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4. When

the interlocutor is a close friend or family member, the preferred strategy is *request for repair* in both Mandarin Chinese (coded 44 times) and in English (coded 38 times). For example, in the scenario where the participants were asked to complain to their parents because they forgot to deposit the monthly allowance into the bank account, a participant used *request for repair* to complain:

"Could you deposit the money right now? Because I don't have money for lunch. Thank you."

In the same scenario, another participant utilized *request for repair* in Mandarin Chinese:

Wǒ de hùtóu méi qiánle kěyǐ bāng wǒ huì ma?
"我的 戶頭 沒 錢了可以幫 我 匯 嗎？"

The second preferred strategy in English is *accusation* (coded 33 times) while in Mandarin Chinese it is *opting out* (coded 28 times). For example, in the scenario where a younger sibling borrowed the laptop of a participant without asking, one participant employed *accusation*:

"I told you not to take my stuff without my permission."

When the interlocutor is an acquaintance such as a classmate, the preferred strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese are *request for repair* and *interrogation*. When confronted with a stranger, there is a high preference for *opting out* in both Chinese (coded 72 times) and English (coded 53 times). Overall, the participants preferred using similar complaint strategies in both English and Mandarin Chinese and their preferred strategies varied little between interlocutors of different social distance.

These findings suggest that Taiwanese EFL leaners are sensitive to social power. It was observed that the participants felt 1) uncomfortable complaining to a stranger, 2) preferred to interrogate and request for repair from an acquaintance, and 3) used accusation and request for repair from a close friend or family member. These three observations coincide with Spees (1994) observation that Japanese learners used more direct strategies when the interlocutor was a stranger or one of their family members. Similar to what Spees (1994) noted about Japanese culture, Taiwanese culture also values silence and regards eloquent speech with suspicion. This was most clearly observed in the frequency of opting out when the participants were confronted with an unfamiliar person. This was especially observed in the scenarios where another student cut in front of the participant and took their parking spot and the scenario where an elderly person cut in front of the participant in a restaurant. However, when confronted with someone familiar, the Taiwanese participants were more direct. For example, when confronting a close family member, a sibling, who borrowed the laptop without asking, a participant employed *accusation*:

"I have told you many times not to take my stuff without asking me. That is very impolite."

Another participant utilized *request for repair* when confronting an acquaintance, a lazy classmate who wasn't contributing to the group project:

"Could you be more serious about the project? It's not only your business. It's ours."

Further, here is an example of confronting a stranger, a waiter/waitress who kept on getting the food order wrong. The participant used *dissatisfaction*:

"Well, this is not my order either, but it's fine. I think I'll just take the dish, please be careful next time, thank you."

4.1.4 Complaint Strategy Combinations in English and Mandarin Chinese

When making a complaint, participants also made use of several different complaint strategies within one scenario. The frequency of strategy combinations in both English and Mandarin Chinese are shown in Table 4.4. *Opting out* was not included because it is not possible to combine *opting out* with another complaint strategy. A total of 90 cases of *opting out* in English and 119 cases of *opting out* in Mandarin Chinese were excluded.

Table 4.4 *Frequency of Strategy Combinations in English and Mandarin Chinese*

	English	**Chinese**
One complaint strategy	275	276
Two complaint strategies	74	46
Three complaint strategies	2	0

As Table 4.4 shows, most of the participants prefer to use only one complaint strategy in both English and Mandarin Chinese. Interestingly, there was also very little difference in the frequency of using one complaint strategy between the answers given in English (used 275 times) and Mandarin Chinese (used 276 times). The participants also utilized two complaint strategies 46 times in Mandarin Chinese but never used three complaint strategies in Mandarin Chinese. In English however, the participants utilized two complaint strategies 74 times, a significantly higher number than in Mandarin Chinese, and three complaint strategies 2 times. This shows that the participants have a higher frequency of using two or three complaints in English than in Mandarin Chinese.

Further examination showed that social power and social distance had no influence on the participants' choice of complaint strategies. In Mandarin Chinese, however, the participants varied in the number of complaint strategies they used when confronted with interlocutors of different social power as well as different social distance. When the interlocutor was an equal or a superior, the participants preferred using two complaint strategies (coded 50 and 59 times) over one (coded 41 and 32 times) and three complaint strategies (coded 14 and 25 times). Furthermore, when the interlocutor was close to the participant, like a close friend, there was an equal preference for one (coded 51 times) or two complaint strategies (coded 52 times).

4.1 5 Chi-square Test on English and Mandarin Chinese Complaint Strategies

A chi-square test was conducted to calculate the statistical difference between Mandarin Chinese and English complaint strategies. The confidence level was set at .99. The test shows that there is no significant difference between Mandarin Chinese and English complaint strategies because $\chi^2(81) =90.00$, p=.231. The test showed that p>0.05. Another chi-square test was administered to see whether there would be a statistical difference when opting out wasn't included as a strategy. The results indicate that there is no significant difference with $\chi^2(64) =72.00$, p=.230. From the results of the chi-square tests we can infer that there is no significant difference between Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint strategies in English and in Chinese.

In conclusion, similarities and differences in English and Mandarin Chinese complaint strategies were observed when the frequency of complaint strategies was examined. Overall, the participants preferred the complaint strategies of *opting out* and *offer of repair*. While participants employed similar complaint strategies in both languages, they varied their strategies more often in English. This was observed both with interlocutors of different social power and social distance.

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Furthermore, social power and social distance were found to be influencing factors in participants' complaint strategy combinations in Mandarin Chinese.

4.2 Complaint Response Strategies of Taiwanese EFL leaners'

RQ 2: Are there any significant differences between Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint response strategies in L1 Mandarin and L2 English?

To answer research question 2, the participants' overall frequency of complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese was first examined. Furthermore, a comparison of how much English and Mandarin Chinese Complaint strategies were affected by different social distance and social was conducted. In addition, the complaint response strategy combinations were examined to analyze the number of complaint response strategies the participants employed to respond to a complaint. Finally, a chi-square test was also performed to discover whether there was a statistical difference in complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese.

4.2.1 Frequency of Complaint Response Strategies

Table 4.5 presents the frequency of the participants' complaint strategies in English and in Mandarin Chinese.

Table 4.5 *Frequency of Complaint Response Strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese*

Responding to complaint strategies	English WDCT	Chinese WDCT	Total	%
Opting out	83	110	193	15%
Offer of repair	125	92	217	17%
Confirmation	2	3	5	0%

Responding to complaint strategies	English WDCT	Chinese WDCT	Total	%
Expression of apology	150	140	290	23%
Acknowledgement of responsibility	57	31	88	7%
Offer of alternatives	30	31	61	5%
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification	100	61	161	13%
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification	29	70	99	8%
Explanation or account	77	58	135	11%
Expressing concern for the hearer	8	2	10	1%
Making a joke/sarcasm	6	2	8	1%
TOTAL	**667**	**600**	**1267**	**100%**
Total (excluding Opting Out)	**584**	**490**	**1074**	**82%**

The results presented in Table 4.5 indicate that the participants' overall complaint response strategies are very diverse. The most common complaint response strategy was *expression of apology* (coded 290 times), followed by *offer of repair* (coded 217 times), *opting out* (coded 193 times), *denial or shift of responsibility with justification* (coded 161 times), *explanation or account* (coded 135 times), *denial or shift of responsibility without justification* (coded 99 times), *acknowledgement of responsibility* (coded 88 times), *offer of alternatives* (coded 61 times). *Confirmation* (coded 5 times) was the least common complaint strategy, followed by *making a joke/sarcasm* (coded 8 times) and *expressing concern for the hearer* (coded 10 times). These least common strategies were also considered as non-apology strategies. While apology strategies such

as *opting out, expression of apology,* and *offer of repair* were the most common strategies when responding to complaints, non-apology strategies such as *denial or shift of responsibility with justification*, and *denial or shift of responsibility without justification* were also used at a high frequency.

Several similarities and differences between participants' Mandarin Chinese and English complaint response strategies were observed. Firstly, the most common strategy in both languages was an *expression of apology* (coded 150 times in English and 140 times in Mandarin Chinese). This was predominantly employed in the scenario where an employer is unhappy about a very tardy employee:

"Sorry, Boss. I'll be on time next time."

In the same scenario, another participant also utilized *expression of apology* in Mandarin Chinese:

Duìbùqǐ, bú huì zài chídào de
"對不起，不會再遲到的。"

Similar findings were observed in the previous study conducted by Eslami (2004) which found that both American English speakers and Persian speakers overall preferred the strategy of *apology.* In another study, Fang (2015) also found that *apology* was a common strategy among Taiwanese EFL learners in conversations. However, the other preferred strategies of the Taiwanese EFL learners in this study diverge from the findings in Eslami (2004). In the current study, the participants diverged in their other preferred strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese. In English, the second most common strategy was *offer of repair* (coded 125 times), followed by *denial or shift of responsibility with justification* (coded 100 times) and *opting out* (coded 83

63

times). In Mandarin Chinese, the second most common strategy was *opting out* (coded 110 times), followed by *offer of repair* (coded 92 times) and *denial or shift of responsibility without justification* (coded 70 times). When comparing apology strategies and non-apology strategies (*confirmation, offer of alternatives, denial or shift of responsibility with justification* and *denial or shift of responsibility without justification, expressing concern for the hearer,* and *making a joke/sarcasm*), the frequency of non-apology strategies in English (26%) and Mandarin Chinese (28%) were very similar. Similarly, there was not a big difference between the frequency of apology strategies in English (74%) and Mandarin Chinese (72%).

This difference in the frequency of complaint strategies between the two languages suggests negative pragmatic transfer between the participants' L1 and L2. The participants also showed signs of convergence when they attempted to use different strategies in English. They made attempts to use strategies that they assumed would be appropriate in English.

4.2.2 The Effect of Social Power on Complaint Response Strategies

Table 4.6 presents the participants' complaint response strategies when responding to an interlocutor of different social power (subordinate, superior, and equal). Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 present the results of the participants' complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese separately. This offers a clearer picture of the similarities and differences between the frequency of complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese.

Table 4.6 *Frequency of Complaint Response Strategies: Social Power*

	Subordinate	**Superior**	**Equal**
	English/Chinese	English/Chinese	English/Chinese
Opting out	10/21	31/39	42/50
Offer of repair	14/7	61/47	50/38
Confirmation	1/1	0/1	1/1
Expression of apology	8/2	83/75	59/63
Acknowledgement of responsibility	10/5	24/7	23/19
Offer of alternatives	19/17	8/4	3/10
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification	73/54	10/3	17/4
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification	21/48	2/15	6/7
Explanation or account	17/0	37/37	23/21
Expressing concern for the hearer	7/1	0/0	1/1
Making a joke/sarcasm	6/1	0/1	0/0
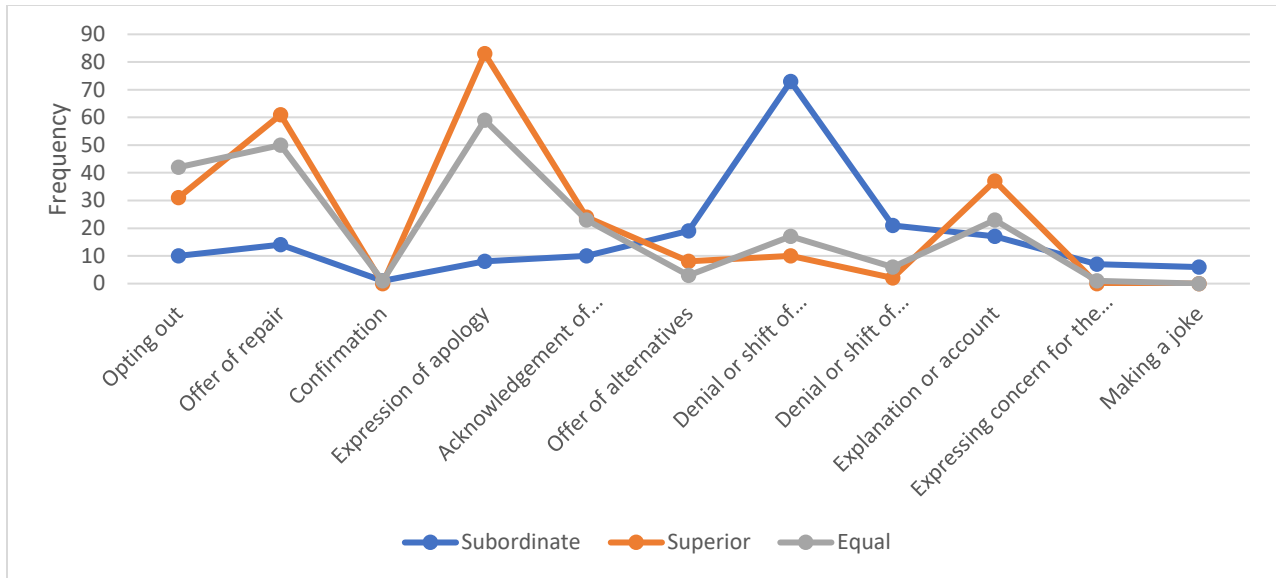
Figure 4.5. *Frequency of English Complaint Response Strategies: Social Power*
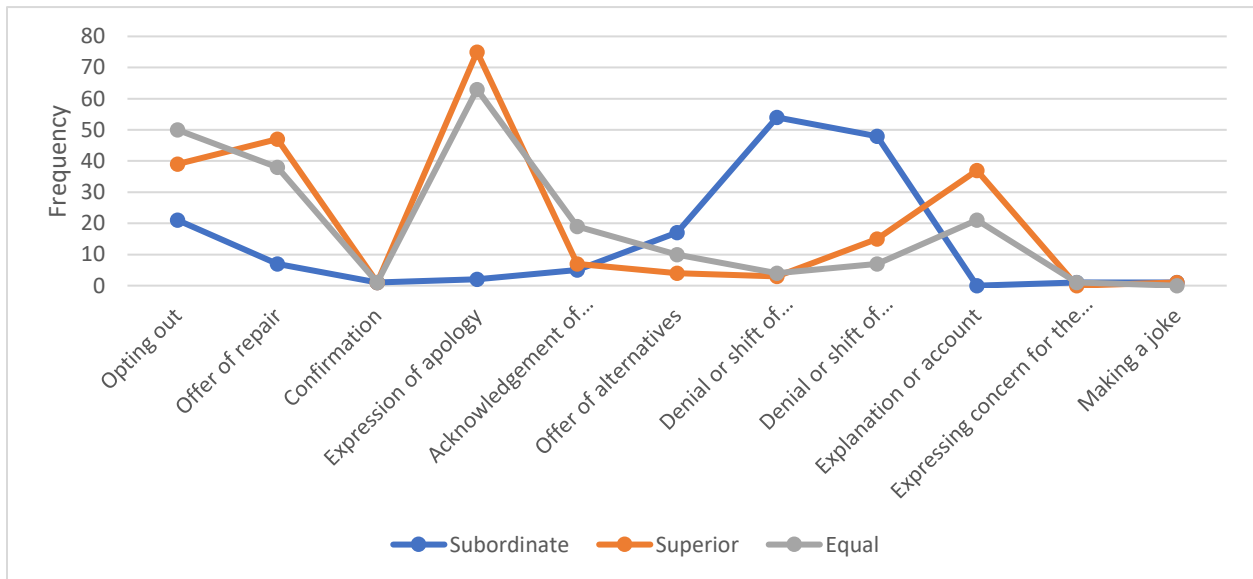
Figure 4.6. *Frequency of Chinese Complaint Response Strategies: Social Power*

When confronted with complaints from people of different social power, the participants preferred to vary their complaint response strategies. This can be seen in Table 4.6. *Denial or shift of responsibility with justification* is the preferred strategy in both English (coded 73 times) and Mandarin Chinese (coded 54 times) when the interlocutor was of subordinate status. While *denial*

or shift of responsibility without justification was the second preference in both languages, there is a stronger preference for it in Mandarin Chinese (coded 48 times) than in English (coded 21 times). *Offer of repair* and *expression of apology* were the preferred strategies in English when the interlocutor was of superior or equal status. For example, in the scenario where an employer is unhappy about an employee who always comes to work late, a participant employed both *expression of apology* and *offer of repair*:

"I'm really sorry sir, I'll come early next time."

Similarly, these two strategies were also the preferred strategies in Mandarin Chinese when confronted with an interlocutor of superior status. However, when the interlocutor was of equal status, the preferred strategies in Mandarin Chinese were *expression of apology* (coded 63 times) and *opting out* (coded 50 times).

Similar to a study conducted by Eslami (2004), the participants of this study employed the strategies of *acceptance* of *responsibility*, *offer of repair* and *explanation* at a high frequency. However, when the interlocutor was a subordinate, the preferred strategies were *denial or shift of responsibility with justification* and *denial or shift of responsibility without justification*. When the interlocutor was a superior or an equal, the participants preferred using apology strategies as face-keeping strategies. When the interlocutor was of lower status, the participants found taking responsibility for the complaint wasn't necessary. Instead, the proper face-keeping strategy was to put the responsibility on the interlocutor. For example, in the scenario where the students complain to the teacher about not telling them about the quiz on that day, one participant wrote:

"I've already put it on the schedule. And it's your responsibility to prepare for it. Now put your books away."

This coincides with Eslami's (2004) observation that non-native speakers "varied their face-keeping strategies in relation to the amount of threat to the face of the speaker or the hearer". Similar to the Persian participants in Eslami's (2004) study, Taiwanese society is also a group-orientated culture. Those of lower status are expected to show respect to those of higher status.

4.2.3 The Effect of Social Distance on Complaint Response Strategies

Table 4.7 presents the frequency of complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese when the participants are confronted by interlocutors of different social distance (close, acquaintance, stranger). Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8 show the frequency of complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese separately. This helps to reveal the similarities and differences of the participants' complaint response strategies more clearly.

Table 4.7 *Frequency of Complaint Response Strategies: Social Distance*

	Close	**Acquaintance**	**Stranger**
	English/Chinese	English/Chinese	English/Chinese
Opting out	30/38	37/51	16/21
Offer of repair	53/33	33/26	39/33
Confirmation	1/1	1/2	0/0
Expression of apology	56/47	39/33	55/60
Acknowledgement of responsibility	30/13	18/12	9/6
Offer of alternatives	13/18	8/8	9/5
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification	17/8	42/30	41/23

	Close	Acquaintance	Stranger
	English/Chinese	English/Chinese	English/Chinese
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification	9/26	6/16	14/28
Explanation or account	14/10	18/11	45/37
Expressing concern for the hearer	2/0	2/0	4/2
Making a joke/sarcasm	2/1	1/0	3/1
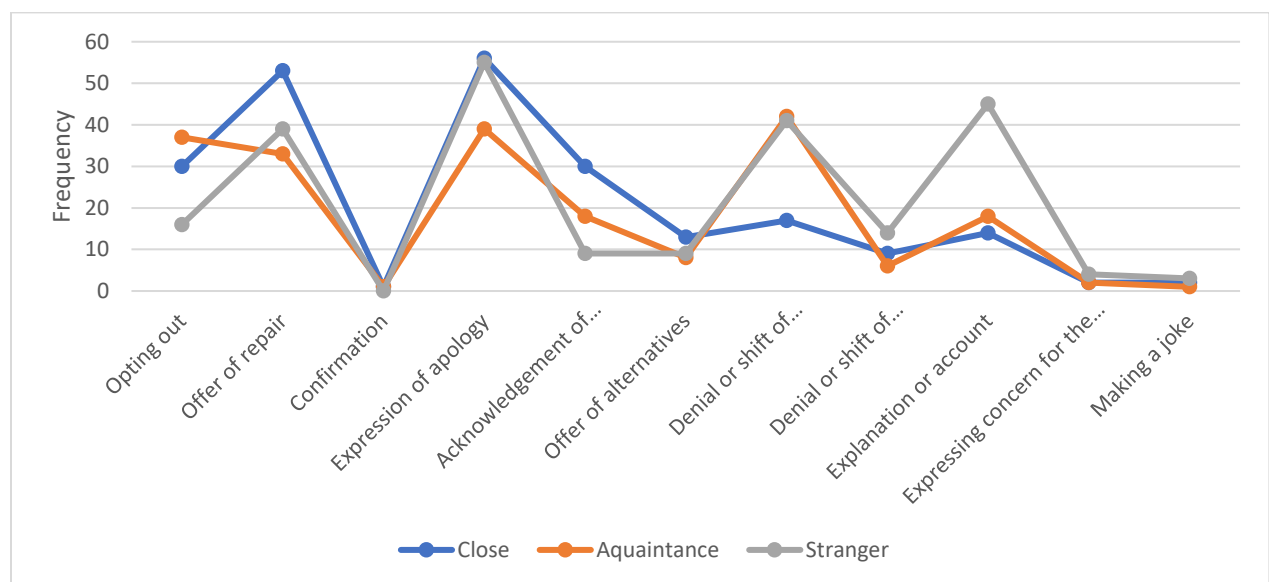
Figure 4.7 *Frequency of English Complaint Response Strategies: Social Distance*
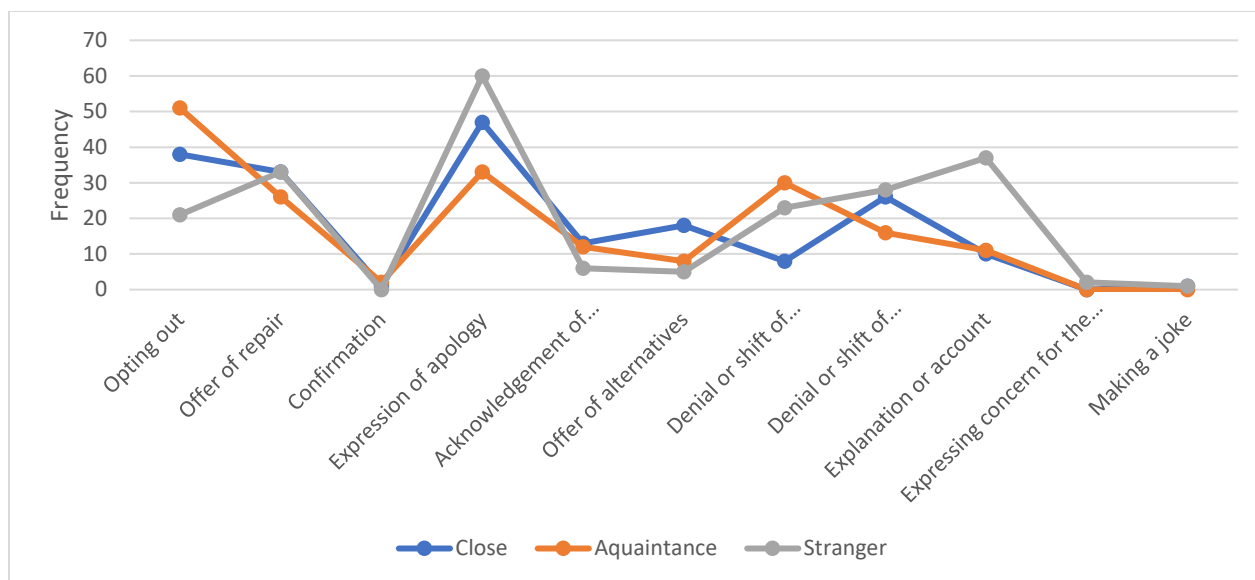
Figure 4.8 *Frequency of Chinese Response Strategies: Social Distance*

The participants' responses also indicate a difference in complaint response strategies when confronting interlocutors of different social distance. When confronted with an interlocutor who was close, the preferred strategies in English were *expression of apology* and *offer of repair*. For example, in the scenario where an older sibling complains about the younger sibling showering too long, a participant responded with an *expression of apology* followed by *offer of repair*:

"Sorry, I'll watch out the time next time."

In Mandarin Chinese, however, there was a strong preference for *expression of apology*, followed by *opting out* and *offer of repair*. In the same scenario, the same participant preferred to *opt out* in Mandarin Chinese and gave the reason that they may have bothered the other person:

Kěnéng yǐngxiǎng dào duìfāngle
"可能 影響 到 對方了。"

In the scenario where a close friend and roommate complains that their friend's loud talking is keeping them up, another participant utilized an *expression of apology* followed by *offer of repair*:

Ō zhēn de hěn bàoqiàn, wǒ huì chūqù jiǎng de.
"喔 真 的 很　抱歉，我會 出去 講 的。"

When the interlocutor was a stranger, the participants' responses revealed a clear preference for *expression of apology* in Mandarin Chinese. When responding in English, however, three strategies stand out: *expression of apology*, *explanation or account*, and *denial or shift of responsibility with justification*. The results suggest that the participants have preferences for certain complaint response strategies in Mandarin Chinese (*expression of apology, opting out, and offer of repair*) but vary between different strategies in English.

As previously observed, when responding to a complaint in English, the participants did not show a clear preference for one strategy as they did in Mandarin Chinese. There was not always a strategy that was used at a significantly higher frequency than the others. This variance of complaint strategies in English complaint response strategies suggests several possibilities.

Firstly, Moon (2001) suggests that non-native speakers may be influenced not only by grammatical and linguistic limitations, but also by limited sociopragmatic knowledge. It is clear that the participants in the current study had the sociopragmatic knowledge as to how to respond to a complaint in Mandarin Chinese. In English, however, they attempted to both use similar strategies as well as different strategies from the ones they used in Mandarin Chinese.

Secondly, as previously observed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) and Li (2017), because of the participants' limited sociopragmatic knowledge in L2, they may have tried to accommodate

the limitation through attempts of convergence. They tried to transfer their knowledge of their L1 into their L2 while attempting to approach what they assume to be the speech style and strategies of English speakers.

Thirdly, as Olshtain & Weinbach,(1987) suggested that non-native speakers may attempt to negotiate the intentions of their speech acts in the new languages as an attempt to sound less severe. The participants may have attempted to sound less severe by employing the strategies of *offer of repair* and *expression of apology*. Interestingly, the participants made more use of the option to opt out in Mandarin Chinese than in English.

When responding to complaints in Mandarin Chinese, there was less variation of different strategies within the same social distance or social power as there were in English. The preferred strategies in Mandarin Chinese were *opting out*, *offer of repair*, and *expression of apology*. The reason is suggested by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) who noted that "when situations are one in which social obligation is explicit either by law or convention, the non-native speakers feel more secure in their choice and are less concerned with being polite and cautious". When responding in Mandarin Chinese, the participants felt more confident in what to say in each scenario. In English, however, they may recognize the situation, but may not know what the social obligations are in English.

4.2 4 Complaint Response Strategy Combinations in English and Mandarin Chinese

Several participants were observed to utilize more than one complaint response strategy when responding to a complaint. The frequency of one or a combination of two or more strategies in both English and Mandarin Chinese are shown in Table 4.8. A total of 83 cases of *opting out* in English and 110 cases of *opting out* in Mandarin Chinese excluded.

Table 4.8 *Frequency of Complaint Response Strategy Combinations in English and Mandarin Chinese*

	English	Chinese
One complaint response strategy	176	192
Two complaint response strategies	138	119
Three complaint response strategies	44	20

The participants' responses show that they preferred using one or more complaint strategies in both English and Mandarin Chinese. In English, the highest preference was for one complaint response strategy, followed by two complaint response strategies and then three complaint response strategies. The same holds true in Mandarin Chinese. For example, in the scenario where a stranger complains that the fine for crossing a red light is too high, a participant utilized one complaint response strategy (*denial or shift of responsibility with justification*):

"No, you should take responsibility for your own mistake."

An example of two complaint response strategies was employed by a participant in the scenario where a close friend and roommate complains that their friend's loud talking is keeping them up. The participant responded with an *expression of apology* and *offer of repair*:

"I'm sorry. I'll keep my voice down."

The utilization of three complaint response strategies was predominantly observed in the scenario where a customer complained about waiting too long for their dish to arrive. One participant responded with an *expression of apology*, followed by *explanation or account* and *offer of repair*:

"I'm sorry. It's really busy today. Maybe I can warm up this dish for you if you want?"

However, what can also be observed is that in English, the frequency of two complaint strategies is very similar to the frequency of one complaint strategy. In Mandarin Chinese, however, there is a clearer preference for only employing one complaint strategy no matter what the situation is. This suggests that while the participants may prefer utilizing one complaint strategy in Mandarin Chinese, they vary their combinations of complaint response strategies more in English than in Mandarin Chinese.

When examining social power and social distance, all participants showed a preference for one complaint response strategy in English. When examining social power in Mandarin Chinese, however, the participants shifted between preferring one or three complaint response strategies. It was observed that when the interlocutor was a superior or a subordinate, there was a significantly higher frequency in Mandarin of using two complaint response strategies (coded 53 and 56 times) over one complaint response strategies (coded 37 and 39 times). When the interlocutor was of equal status, the preference in Mandarin was for one complaint response strategy. A preference in Mandarin Chinese to use only one complaint strategy (coded 116 times) was noted when different social distance existed. In conclusion, the participants vary their complaint strategy combinations in Chinese and with different social power.

4.2.5 Chi-square Test on English and Mandarin Chinese Complaint Response Strategies

A chi-square test was conducted to compare the significant difference between the participant's overall complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese. The confidence level was set at .99. The chi-square test shows that there is no significant difference with $\chi^2(80) = 88.00$, p=.253. Furthermore, another chi-square test was conducted to exclude opting

out and the results show that with $\chi^2(63) = 70.00$, p=.254. There is also no significant difference in complaint response strategies when opting out is excluded as a strategy. From the results, we can infer that the language used, Mandarin Chinese or English, does not have a significant effect on how Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint response strategies over all.

In conclusion, participants showed similarities and differences in complaint response strategies in English and Mandarin Chinese. Firstly, the participants preferred expressing apology strategies more than *opting out* and non-apology strategies in both languages. However, they differed in the top preferred complaint response strategies. In English, the preferred strategies were *expression of apology* and *offer of repair* and in Mandarin Chinese, the preferred strategies were *expression of apology* and *opting out*. Furthermore, the participants varied their strategies when the interlocutor was of different social power as well as social distance. Finally, the participants preferred using one complaint response strategy overall in English. In Mandarin Chinese, however, different social power and social distance caused a change in a preference for two complaint response strategies rather than only one complaint response strategy.

4.3 Opting Out of Making a Complaint and Responding to a Complaint

RQ 3: Are there L1 and L2 differences in opting out? If so, what are they and why?

This study also aimed to find out if there is a difference in Taiwanese EFL learners preference for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint in English and Mandarin Chinese. The frequency of opting out in each scenario was first calculated. Then, the average percentage of opting out with different social power (see Table 4.9 and Table 4.11) and social distance (see Table 4.10 and Table 4.12) was determined. On average, the participants opted

out of a complaint in English 20% of the time compared to 27% of the time in Chinese. Also, they opted out of responding to a complaint in English 19% of the time, and 25% of the time when it was in Chinese.

Table 4.9 *Frequency of Opting Out of Making a Complaint: Social Power*

	English	Chinese
Superior	15%	21%
Subordinate	11%	20%
Equal	35%	39%
Average	20%	27%

This study first examined the difference in social power when opting out of making a complaint. When looking at Table 4.9, the participants had the highest frequency of opting out when confronted with an interlocutor of equal status in both English (35%) and Chinese (39%). This was predominantly observed in the scenarios where a close friend is too busy playing computer games to spend time with their friend (31% rate in English and 33% rate in Mandarin Chinese) and in the scenario where another student steals a parking spot (61% rate in English and 78% rate in Mandarin Chinese). Many participants defended their choice to *opt out* by saying that the other person has the right to do whatever they want ("*It's his (her) freedom to do what he (she) want to do*"), and they can easily find another alternative ("*I will find another parking spot*"). When confronted with a superior, the participants opted out 15% of the time in English and 21% of the time in Mandarin Chinese. When it was a subordinate, the participants preferred to opt out 11% of the time in English, and 20% of the time in Mandarin Chinese. It was observed that in all

three different social power (superior, equal and subordinate), there is a higher preference to opt out in Chinese than in English.

Table 4.10 *Frequency of Opting Out of Making a Complaint: Social Distance*

	English	**Chinese**
Close	18%	19%
Acquaintance	8%	14%
Stranger	35%	48%
Average	20%	27%

When examining social power, the results from Table 4.10 show that the participants have the highest frequency of opting out when confronted with a stranger in both English (35%) and Chinese (48%). This was predominantly observed in the scenario where a student steals the participant's parking spot (61% rate in English and 78% rate in Mandarin Chinese) and in the scenario where an elderly person cuts in line in front of the participant. In the former scenario (29% rate in English and 37% rate in Mandarin Chinese), the participants justified that they could easily find another parking spot ("*That's okay. I would find another spot*"). In the latter scenario, the participants justified their answer by adding that they don't like arguing with an elderly person ("*Most of this kind of time, I won't argue with the old man*"). The second highest frequency of opting out in English and Chinese was when the participant was confronted by a close friend, with English at 18% and Chinese at 19%. The lowest frequency of opting out of responding to a complaint was when confronted with an acquaintance with English at 8% and Chinese at 14%.

Table 4.11 *Frequency of Opting Out of Responding to a Complaint: Social Power*

	English	**Chinese**
Subordinate	7%	14%
Superior	21%	27%
Equal	29%	34%
Average	19%	25%

Table 4.11 shows the difference in frequency of opting out from responding to a complaint when the interlocutor is of different social power. The results show that the highest preference for opting out is when the interlocutor is an equal, with English at 29% and Chinese at 34%. This was predominantly observed in the scenario where a student confronts a fellow classmate about their non-stop complaining (49% rate in English and 53% rate in Mandarin Chinese). Many of the participants justified opting out because they agreed with the classmate ("*I agree with classmate. I won't have to do it forever so I'll just stop complaining about it*"). When confronted with a superior, the frequency of opting out is at 21% in English and 27% in Chinese. When the interlocutor is a subordinate, there is a low frequency of opting out in both English (7%) and Chinese (14%).

Table 4.12 *Frequency of Opting out of Responding to a Complaint: Social Distance*

	English	**Chinese**
Close	20%	26%
Acquaintance	25%	35%
Stranger	11%	14%

	English	**Chinese**
Average	19%	25%

When examining social distance, Table 4.12 shows in both English and Chinese, the highest preference for opting out of responding to a complaint is when the interlocutor is an acquaintance. In English, the frequency of opting out is at 25% and in Chinese it is at 35%. This was predominantly observed in the scenarios where a student confronts a fellow classmates' non-stop complaining (49% rate in English and 53% rate in Mandarin Chinese) and the scenario where an employer complains about an employee's daily tardiness (24% rate in English and 41% rate in Mandarin Chinese). The participants justified their preference for opting out by agreeing with the classmate ("*He/she is right*") as well as the boss ("*It's my fault*"). When the interlocutor is a close friend or a family member, the frequency of opting out is 20% in English and 25% in Chinese. The lowest frequency of opting out is when confronted with a stranger, with English at 11% and Chinese at 14

In conclusion, the participants demonstrated a higher preference for opting out in Mandarin Chinese than in English, whether it was when making a complaint or responding to a complaint. This shows that the language used is an influencing factor when it comes to making or responding to a complaint. The results also shows that social power and social distance are also influencing factors. The participants exhibited the highest frequency of opting out of making a complaint when confronting stranger or a person of equal status. Furthermore, the highest frequency of opting out was when the interlocutor was an acquaintance or a person of equal status.

4.3.1 Reasons for Opting Out of a Complaint

This study also went further and examined the participants' reasons for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint. When the participants did not give an answer in a certain scenario, they were asked to provide a reason why. The reasons for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint were analyzed separately.

When opting out of making a complaint, the participants listed several reasons for opting out. Firstly, one of the most common reasons for opting out was when it was an alternative that avoided confrontation or led to the least amount of confrontation. For example, the participants preferred ignoring the interlocutor and waiting *("[I can] just wait a bit and then I can have my turn to order"*), making a compromise ("*We can make an appointment later*"), ignoring the issue altogether by giving a response that moves the topic away from the complaint situation ("*Now turn to page...*"), and giving the responsibility to deal with the complainer to a third person ("*I will go just go to the teacher and ask them to give him a zero*").

Secondly, they used opting out when the scenario was unfamiliar to the participants and, therefore, making a complaint made them feel uncomfortable (to hide their linguistic limitations). Several participants also claimed that certain scenarios would never happen to them do to them because they were very careful with money ("*I would never only have NT$50 in my bank account*"), because they have no siblings ("*I don't have any brothers or sisters*"), or simply don't know what to say ("*I can't imagine what I would do*"). The participants also preferred opting out when they used blame, whether it was self-blame ("*maybe I was careless*") or putting the blame on the other person ("*it's their problem*").

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Finally, in several cases, social distance and power were also influencing factors. When confronting an elderly person who was a stranger, almost all of the participants wrote that they preferred opting out because they wanted to either respect or be polite to the elderly person ("*Seeing he is an old man, I should have more patience/endure*", "*always respect the elderly*"), or they were too embarrassed to complain to them ("*I don't want to argue with an old person, it would be embarrassing*"). When it was a family member, several participants wanted to be considerate and share with their siblings ("*I think my stuff belongs to the whole family. I will share with my brother and sister*"), while being respectful towards their parents ("*I think that my parents work really hard, I don't want to disturb them*", "*I am using their money, I should not complain to them*"). Several participants also wanted to be considerate to a stranger who was of equal status ("*I think people aren't perfect. The waiter may be a novice*", "*He may be very busy. It's okay to receive wrong dishes, such a surprise!*"). Furthermore, when having to complain to a child, several found it a waste of time complaining to them because they thought that the child would not listen to them ("*It is hard to communicate with kids*", "*I can't do anything if he doesn't want to learn*").

4.3.2 Reasons for Opting Out of a Complaint

When opting out of responding to a complaint, the participants listed several reasons that stood out. Firstly, just as with making a complaint, the participants preferred opting out when confronted with an unfamiliar situation. Several also claimed that they would never do the things that the interlocuter complained about ("*I won't do such an impolite thing*"). This was especially prevalent when the interlocutor was a friend. Furthermore, several participants wrote that they didn't know how to respond to a scenario ("*I have no idea to such a situation*", "*I don't know how to answer*"). It made no difference whether they had to give a response in English or in Mandarin Chinese.

One of the most common reasons that the participants preferred opting out was that they agreed with the speaker ("*It's my fault*"). For them, remaining silent was a form of taking the blame and accepting responsibility ("*I shouldn't be late*"). They did not consider it necessary to give a response. One participant put themselves in the interlocutor's shoes ("*Think about one day if the roles change, I might have the same feeling*"). Other participants also said that they would consider solutions to avoid the cause of the complaint from happening again ("*Next time I can do better*", "*I can think of a way to improve my speed*").

In several cases, the participants disagreed with the interlocutor. They preferred not to respond and to shift the responsibility on to the interlocutor ("*Rules are rules*", "*If he doesn't like it, it's his own choice*"). In this way, they could end the conversation and prevent the situation from getting worse. Furthermore, they felt that the other person should be responsible to find alternatives such as leaving or stop complaining ("*If she's not happy, she can change seats*").

Several participants commented that their reason for opting out was to prevent tensions from escalating ("*I am trying to avoid quarrel*"). The participants did not show explicit agreement with the interlocutor but preferred to stop the action that caused the complaint. This could be considered as a form of avoidance strategy, a way to avert an uncomfortable situation. Several participants also stated that they felt that it was too late to do anything about it ("*I'll just walk away from him/her. It's no use arguing with them*", "*I've already taken the cat on the train, it's too late [to change seats]*").

In a previous study, Li (2017) found that in order to maintain face and group harmony, Chinese speakers tended to build up a trusting interpersonal relationship by using either small talk or opting out. This provided "the complainee with chances to justify their unfavorable behavior" (p. 71). However, as it wasn't possible for the participants of the current study to use small talk to

maintain the conversation, they choose to opt out instead. This was observed both when they made complaints as well as responded to complaints. When making complaints, the participants used the strategy of *opting out* as a form of politeness because it was not considered appropriate to complain in the situation. Interestingly, the strategy of opting out was employed more in Mandarin Chinese than in English. In English, *opting out* was predominantly used when the interlocutor was a stranger and an equal. When responding to complaints, *opting out* was used as a way of accepting responsibility of the complainable act. Furthermore, *opting out* was also employed when verbally denying or shifting responsibility wasn't considered necessary or appropriate. This was observed when the interlocutor was an equal and an acquaintance.

Spees (1994) observed that Japanese speakers may be influenced by the culture where they tend to value silence and regard eloquent speech with suspicion. They either tended to "not say anything, or if they do decide to speak out, they may do so directly" (Spees, 1994, p. 248). This was also observed by the frequency the participants of this study utilized *opting out* as a strategy in both making complaints and responding to complaints. This was also predominantly observed when the participants had to complain in Mandarin Chinese where they felt more secure in their choice of strategies.

Previous studies (Chen *et al.*, 2011; Yu, 2003) also noted that the strategy preferences of two speaker groups are "subject to a cultures ethos and its own specific way of speaking" (Yu, 2003, p. 1704). When using L2 English, the participants made attempts to apply their socio-cultural norms in English such as opting out for similar reasons in English as well as in Mandarin Chinese. For example, the participants wrote in both English and Mandarin Chinese that they would not complain to an elderly stranger who cut in line because it is considered impolite to complain to an elder. Another example is that the participants accepted responsibility by saying that it is their fault

when their boss complains that they keep arriving at work late and threatens to fire them. This coincides with Li (2017) observation that "in Chinese society, every person is prescribed a role to play in social interactions, and people at relatively low social status are expected to show great respect to their superiors" (p. 72).

As has been previously observed in both making complaints and responding to complaints strategies, the Taiwanese EFL learners were sensitive to social power. Chen *et al.* (2011) previously observed that in Taiwanese society, the group's best interest always comes before individual interest, and the individual expects to be taken care of by the group. A lower-status person is expected to show respect and difference as well as maintain the higher-status person's dignity. This was clearly seen in the scenario where an elderly person cut in line. The participants opted out at a rate of 29% in English and 37% in Chinese. A large portion of the participants wrote that their reason for opting out was because they should respect and not argue with an elder. The rest of the participants wrote that they felt uncomfortable complaining to an elderly person. One participant showed awareness of the cultural expectation of how subordinates are expected to behave towards elders, even when the elders are being disrespectful towards them:

"We should respect elders, though we confronted by them, they will still think they have the priority to do that. So I choose not to respond."

An interesting observation in the participants' responses is that when confronting a superior, they employed more direct complaint strategies. However, when opting out, they showed respect towards the superior. While their reasons for opting out varied depending on the superior's social distance, their reasons still conveyed a desire to show respect towards the interlocutor.

Spees (1994) made the observation that non-native speakers are more direct towards interlocutors of equal or lower status. This was indeed also the case with the participants in this study. However, it was interesting to observe that while the participants showed a relatively high frequency of opting out (31% in English and 33% in Mandarin Chinese) when the interlocutor was a close friend, their reason for opting out expressed a sense of directness. When a close friend was playing computer games and completely ignoring the participant, many of the participants wrote either that they didn't care, or stated that they would end the friendship. For example, one participant wrote:

"A real friend won't ignore you for computer games. So I think he/she is not worth being friends."

Another participant wrote:

"It doesn't matter whether he/she wants to go or not. I can ask somebody else."

In conclusion, the participants' reasons for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint varied The participants preferred opting out when there was an alternative to avoid confrontation, if the situation was unfamiliar, when they blamed themselves or wanted to put the blame on someone else, or if the interlocutor was a family member or an elderly person. When addressing a complaint, the participants preferred opting out because the situation was unfamiliar, or it was their way of acknowledging responsibility as a way of acknowledging responsibility. Furthermore, they also opted out because they disagreed with the interlocutor and didn't want to acknowledge responsibility which was a means of preventing an escalation of tension.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the results and discussion of this study. This will then be followed by a description of the relevant implications and limitations, and concluded with suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The current study investigated Taiwanese EFL learners' complaint strategies and complaint response strategies by examining the frequency of their occurrence. Furthermore, this study compared the frequency of complaint and complaint response strategies Taiwanese EFL learners employed in English and Mandarin Chinese with regard to different social distance and social power. Finally, this study explored the reasons for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint. The following section will give a brief summary of the researchers' findings.

5.1.1 Complaint Strategies

Overall, Taiwanese EFL learners either preferred not saying anything at all, or they preferred employing direct complaint strategies such as *request for repair* when they chose to respond with a complaint. Additionally, the participants demonstrated pragmatic transfer in their complaint strategies in English and in Mandarin Chinese by employing similar complaint strategies in both languages. However, the participants also displayed negative pragmatic transfer through having a higher preference for *interrogation* and *accusation* in English and *dissatisfaction* in Mandarin Chinese. Furthermore, the participants preferred simplifying their complaints by only employing one complaint strategy over using a combination of several strategies in one situation.

Similar to the findings from previous studies, Taiwanese EFL learners are sensitive to social power and social distance. While the participants employed politeness strategies towards a person in authority, they were more direct and utilized fewer politeness strategies towards a person of lower status. They also preferred *opting out* when confronted with a person of equal status. This suggests an avoidance strategy because either they did not know how to complain, or they didn't consider it necessary to voice a complaint. While the participants showed clear preference in Chinese for different complaint strategies depending on the social power of the interlocutor, they did not show this same preference in English. This suggests that they were either unsure how to complain in English or were attempting to conform to the appropriate politeness strategies in the target language. However, it is interesting to note that there were some similarities between their complaint strategies in both languages. The participants were uncomfortable complaining to a stranger, preferred to *interrogate* and *request for repair* from an acquaintance, and employed *accusation* and *request for repair* from a close friend or family member.

5.1.2 Complaint Response Strategies

This study found that overall Taiwanese EFL learners employed apology strategies as well as non-apology strategies when responding to a complaint. However, their preferred strategies diverged between English and Mandarin Chinese. In English, the participants preferred either the strategies *offer of repair* or *denial or shift of responsibility with justification* while the preferred strategy was *opting out* in Mandarin Chinese. This suggests that the participants made attempts to use strategies that they assumed would be appropriate in the English target culture.

Taiwanese EFL learners showed sensitivity towards social power and social distance and varied their complaint response strategies in both English and Mandarin Chinese. When confronted with a person in authority or an equal, the participants preferred using apology strategies as face-

keeping strategies. When confronted with a person of lower status, however, the participants preferred to shift the responsibility onto the interlocutor. When confronting a person of different social distance, the participants also varied their complaint response strategies. In Mandarin Chinese, the participants preferred to apologize when confronted with a stranger, a close friend, or a family member. When confronted with an acquaintance, however, the participants preferred to avoid an apology by remaining silent. In English, the participants displayed a larger repertoire of strategies that did not seem to depend on the social distance of the interlocutor. This suggests that the participants may be limited by their socio-pragmatic knowledge of how to respond to complaints in English. To accommodate the limitation, participants either made attempts to assume the speech style and strategies of English speakers or made attempts to negotiate their limitations by utilizing strategies that they hoped would sound less severe. Interestingly, the participants displayed a greater preference to remain silent in Mandarin Chinese than in English. It was also noted that while the participants preferred employing only one complaint response strategy per scenario, they made more attempts to employ two strategies in Mandarin Chinese when confronted with a superior or a subordinate. This suggests that they consider it important to stress and clarify their apologies as a face-keeping strategy in Mandarin Chinese.

5.1.3 Opting Out

Regardless of social distance or social power, Taiwanese EFL learners displayed a higher frequency of *opting out* of making a complaint and responding to a complaint in Mandarin Chinese than in English. The participants gave different reasons for opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint. Instead of making a complaint, the participants preferred to find an alternative that would avoid further confrontation. Furthermore, when a scenario is unfamiliar, the participants justified their silence by explaining that it would never happen to them. They also

either placed the blame on themselves or on the other person. The participants were also aware of the social status of the interlocutor. They did not feel comfortable making complaints towards the elderly, family members, children, and strangers of equal status. The participants wanted to show respect towards the elderly, consideration of the feelings of family members and strangers, and found it a waste of time complaining to children. When confronted with a complaint, the participants often avoided responding because either they recognized and accepted their part in causing unfortunate situation, or they disagreed with the interlocutor. By staying silent, they hoped to prevent bad feelings. Furthermore, the participants preferred remaining silent because they didn't know how to give a response, or they did not believe the situation would happen to them.

5.2 Implications

This study revealed several theoretical implications. Firstly, this study identified both positive and negative pragmatic transfer when Taiwanese EFL learners complained and responded to complaints in their Mandarin Chinese L1 and English L2 (Bikmen & Marti, 2013; De Capua, 1998; Park, 2001; Trenchs, 2000). The learners exhibited negative pragmatic transfer when they complained, and both positive and negative transfer when they responded to complaints. Further research should explore why there is this difference in pragmatic transfer between complaints and responding to complaints, and what factors may influence these differences.

Secondly, while Chen *et al.* (2011) only identified six complaint strategies, this study identified three additional complaint strategies that Taiwanese EFL learners utilized. The current study also identified *dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm* which was documented by previous studies (Prykarpatska, 2008; Yarahmadi & Fathi, 2015). The three additional strategies that this study identified were: *request for repair from the speaker*, *appeal to emotion*, and *offering a*

compromise. Further investigation could examine whether native English speakers also employ these newly identified strategies and if so, to what extent.

Thirdly, while previous studies highlighted the importance of *opting out* as a complaint strategy (Chen et al., 2011; Trenchs, 2000), this study further identified it as an important strategy for responding to complaints as well. The findings of study indicated that Taiwanese EFL learners opted out more frequently in Mandarin Chinese than in English. This was observed both in situations where learners were asked to make a complaint as well as when they were confronted with a complaint. Additionally, through the participants' brief responses, this study was only able to gain a brief glimpse into when and why Taiwanese EFL learners would prefer to opt out when confronted with disagreeable situation. This study currently documented several personal as well as social reasons why Taiwanese EFL prefer to opt out of making a compliant or responding to a complaint. It is suggested that researchers should further investigate why Taiwanese EFL learners prefer to opt out in their L1 more than in their L2. Additionally, further research into silence as a complaint and complaint response strategy is recommended, especially in cultures where silence is an acceptable strategy. Furthermore, researchers should further examine and identify if there are other reasons, such as linguistic reasons, for opting out.

This study also revealed several pedagogical implications. Firstly, as previously noted, the participants displayed both positive and negative pragmatic transfer in their complaint and complaint response strategies. EFL teachers should be aware of and emphasize when EFL learners display either positive or negative pragmatic transfer in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should highlight the appropriate responses in the target English-speaking culture to encourage positive pragmatic transfer by giving examples from native speakers.

Secondly, as suggested by Nakabachi (1996), EFL teachers should emphasize socio-cultural norms of the target English-speaking culture. Teachers should emphasize appropriate responses in the target English-speaking culture by maximizing communicative activities as well as provide information about the target English-speaking culture (Vo, 2012). For example, teachers should provide short dialogues or plays for EFL learners to practice. Teachers could also encourage EFL learners to interact with native speakers and learn from them what their responses to complaints would be.

Furthermore, Vo (2012) pointed out that pragmatic transfer may be attributed to the lack of exposure to English settings. Teachers should incorporate authentic materials when introducing the socio-cultural norms of the target English-speaking culture. For example, teachers should provide material written, audio-recorded, or filmed by native speakers that introduce and explain the socio-cultural norms in their country.

Thirdly, EFL teachers should emphasize the differences between Taiwanese culture and the target English-speaking culture. Li (2017) suggested that lessons on cultural differences should be introduced to improve L2 ability to complain in English. Additionally, becoming familiar with cultural differences would also help avoid possible miscommunication between the EFL learner and the native English speaker (Baba, 2010). Furthermore, EFL learners should be exposed to authentic interaction to enhance awareness of the appropriate responses in the target English-speaking culture.

Fourthly, this study observed that while Taiwanese EFL learners had no problem complaining in English, they did not know how to respond to complaints. It is suggested that EFL teachers teach EFL learners how to respond to complaints together with making complaints. For example, complaint responses should be included in sample complaint dialogues and student

dialogue exercises. Furthermore, when EFL learners are exposed to authentic interaction, the interaction should include how native speakers respond to complaints.

Finally, EFL teachers should also emphasize the appropriacy of remaining silent in the target English-speaking culture. As the current study revealed, Taiwanese EFL learners had a high frequency of opting out of making a complaint and responding to a complaint. However, in other cultures, it may not always be considered appropriate to remain silent in certain situations. As shown in Trenchs (2000), silent behavior may be considered rude to native English speakers. In generating awareness of the appropriacy of remaining silent, this could prevent possible conflict with the native speaker.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While this study was conducted to the best of the researcher's abilities, there are several limitations and suggestions for future research that will be addressed. Firstly, written discourse completion tasks may not simulate real conversation. As noted by Tanck (2002), complaints require more social interaction as well as face-saving moves. It is suggested that future researchers consider having the participants provide other types of reports, such as giving their responses verbally or acting out the dialogue with another participant (Bikmen & Marti, 2013; Vo, 2018). Participants may give different responses when they are facing a real person.

Additionally, several of the scenarios in the WDCT caused participants to choose to opt out because these scenarios would not happen to them in real life. For example, several participants do not have a sibling and did not know how to respond to the scenarios where they were confronted by an older or younger sibling. Future research should only include scenarios that would happen to all the participants. Background information on the participants should be collected before the

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start of the research as well as an additional pilot test to see whether the scenarios are situations that all the participants could be confronted with in real life.

Furthermore, this study asked the participants to write their reasons for opting out. It is recommended that the participants be interviewed to gain further insight into why the students gave the responses they did as well as other factors that may have influenced their reason for opting out. Abdolrezapour (2012) pointed out that qualitative data could provide more insightful data. For example, future research could examine how participants' perceptions of their relationship with the other person and their perception of the seriousness of the situation could influence how they would respond to a situation.

Finally, while this study compared the social power and social distance, there are other variables that can be examined such as age, proficiency level and gender. These variables have not been studied in connection with complaint response strategies. Future research could explore these variables to see whether they are influencing factors in EFL learners' complaint response strategies.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Consent Form

You have been invited to take part in Stephanie Cothran's study entitled Taiwanese students' Complaint and Complaint Response Strategy Use in English and in Chinese. The study involves completing two open-ended questionnaires by you, one in English and one in Chinese, and your answers will then be analyzed by the researcher. Taking part in this study is voluntarily. The information you supply will only be used for the purposes of this research. The research data that will be collected may be published and your name will not be disclosed as a participant of the research.

Researcher: Stephanie Cothran

Consent statement:

□ I agree to participate in this research

□ I do not wish to participate in this research

Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix B. English Complaints Discourse Completion Task

For scenarios 1-9, please write on the blank spaces given how you would <u>complain</u> to the other person in the scenario. Don't worry, there is no correct answer. You may leave an answer blank. However, if you do so, please write the reason on the line provided below each scenario.

1. Your parents give you a monthly allowance. This month, they are one week late in depositing the money in your bank account. You only have NT$50 left in your bank account and you still need to buy lunch. You decide to call your mom/dad.

    Parent: Hello?

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

2. You worked very hard on a group project with your classmates. You expect to receive a high grade for your work. When you receive your grade however, it is a very low grade. You ask your classmates about their grades and they have all received very high grades. You decide to complain to your teacher about the unfairness of the grades.

    You: Hi teacher, can I talk to you for a minute?

    Teacher: Sure, what would you like to talk about?

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

3. You are waiting in line at a restaurant. You are very hungry after spending two hours playing badminton with your friends. There is a very long waiting line because the cafeteria is very busy. When it is finally your turn to order, an old man suddenly pushes you aside and orders his food. You decide to confront the old man.

    Old man: I would like to have fried rice with pork please!

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

4. Your younger sibling (brother/sister) likes to come into your room and borrow your stuff without asking you. You have told him/her not to do that. One day you come into your room and you find out that your sibling has taken your laptop this time. You decide to go and find your sibling and tell them how you feel.

Sibling: What do you want?

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

5. You have been hired by a parent to teach their child English reading. It is obvious that the student isn't paying attention when he/she keeps on looking around the room instead of looking at the book. The student also keeps on getting lost in the reading. You decide to confront the student about his/her lack of attention.

You: Are you paying attention?

Student: Of course! We're at… I don't know.

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

6. You are on a date with a boy/girl you really like. It is your first date and you are at a very fancy restaurant that you had specially picked out. When your food arrives, it turns out that the waiter had written down the wrong dish. When the waiter comes back with a new dish, it is still the wrong dish. You express your displeasure to the waiter.

Waiter: Here you go!

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

7. You want to spend some time with a good friend of yours but every time you ask, he/she is always busy playing computer games with other friends. You want to invite him/her to go to watch a movie tonight but as you had expected, he/she is busy playing another computer game. You decide to tell your friend how you feel.

You: Hey! We haven't hung out in a while. Let's go watch a movie tonight!

Friend: Sorry, I'm kind of busy with this game right now.

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

8. In your English class, you have to work on a big group project. The teacher has reminded everyone that you will be graded as a group. Most people in your group are very hard working. There is one person in the group however, who is very lazy and makes everyone else do all the work. You decide to complain to the lazy student about not helping the group enough.

    You: Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?

    Classmate: Sure.

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

9. You have found the perfect parking spot near your classroom. But as you are approaching the parking spot, another student suddenly cuts in front of you and steals the spot. You are very upset that the student stole your spot.

    Student: Yes! What a great parking spot!

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

Instructions: For scenarios 10-18, please write on the blank space given how you would _respond_ when the other person in the scenario _complains to you_. Again, there is no correct answer.

10. You are a parent. You decide to make your child's favorite dish for dinner. You spent several hours preparing it. When you serve it during dinner, your child complains that you made it too spicy.

    You: Guess what? I made your favorite dish!

Child: This is way too spicy! I don't want to eat it.

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

11. You are a teacher. You are giving your students a quiz today. None of your students are prepared. You remind them that it was on the schedule.

You: Ok class, put your books away. It is time for your quiz!

Student: What?! We have a quiz today? You never told us!

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

12. You are a police officer who sees a scooter running a red light. You catch the scooter and give him/her a ticket. This person is upset at getting caught and complains about the ticket.

You: That'll be NT$2,000 for running a red light.

Person: What?! That's way too much! Can't you just let me go?

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

13. There is only one shower in the house. Your older sibling also wants to take a shower and he/she continues knocking on your door while you are showering. When you finally open the door, your older sibling is still standing outside the door with an angry look on his/her face.

You: I was taking a shower!

Older sibling: Stop showering so long! You were in the bathroom for more than half an hour.

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

14. You are an employee at a company. One day, your boss calls you into her/his office and complains that you are always late for work.

    You: You wanted to talk to me?

    Boss: Yes. Arriving late to work is not unacceptable and you've been late every day this week!

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

15. You are a waiter/waitress in a restaurant. The restaurant is very busy today so it takes a bit longer than usual to serve the customers their food. One customer decides to complain to you about the slow service.

    You: Hi! Sorry for the delay. Here is your food!

    Customer: Why did it take so long? This food you have given me is already cold!

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

16. You and a close friend are roommates. It is late at night and you are having a good time catching up with some friends on Skype. You haven't talked with those friends in a while. Your close friend approaches you and complains about you being too loud and ignoring him/her when he/she asked you to be quieter.

    You: Hey! What's up?

    Close friend: I've asked you several times already to please be quieter. I have a final exam tomorrow. I've been trying to sleep but your loud talking has kept me up!

    You: _____

    I didn't respond because: _____

17. You are a freshman student and you don't like how you are required to get up early in the morning to clean the school campus. You have complained about this several times to your classmates. One of them is tired of hearing your complaint and makes a comment about it.

Classmate: Will you stop complaining already? It's not like you have to do it forever!

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

18. You are taking the train. Your cat is inside a cat carrier next to you. You find a seat next to a person around your age. The person looks at the cat and suddenly starts complaining about your cat and says that he/she is very allergic to cats.

You: Hi!

Person: Cats shouldn't be allowed on trains. It's very dangerous for people who are allergic, like me!

You: _____

I didn't respond because: _____

Thank you!

Appendix C. Chinese Complaints Discourse Completion Task

請仔細閱讀情境並在空格中依據個人反應作答。1-9題請完成你對他人的不滿抱怨，請注意答題並無標準答案。

1. 你的父母親每個月都匯零用錢給你，但是這個月已經晚了一個禮拜還沒轉帳到你的戶頭，你的戶頭只剩下 50 元，而且你還需要去買午餐呢!你決定打電話給爸媽。

    父母親：喂!

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    （我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

2. 你和你的同學很努力完成小組作業，你預期能拿到高分；但是你卻拿到很低分的成績。甚至於你還問了其他同學得知他們都拿到非常高出的分數，因此你決定去找老師抱怨給分的不公平。

    你：老師您好!可以跟您聊聊嗎?

    老師：當然!什麼事情呢?

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    （我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

3. 你正在餐廳排隊。剛和你的朋友剛打完兩小時的羽毛球，肚子超餓的。這家餐廳生意很好，排隊人龍很長。終於輪到你點餐時突然有位老先生把你推擠到一邊自己先點餐，你決定要面對這個老人。

    老人：請給我一份豬肉炒飯。

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    （我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

4. 你的弟弟/妹妹喜歡到你的房間跟你借東西卻又沒有事先徵詢你的同意；你已經告訴過他不可以那樣做。這天你一進房間就發現筆電被拿走了，而你決定要跟他說你的感受。

弟/妹: 你要幹嘛?

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

5. 你受雇於一位家長教導她的小孩英文閱讀。這個學生在上課的時候明顯的不專心，不但沒看課本還四處張望。你決定反應他的缺乏注意力。

你: 你有專心嗎?

學生: 當然有啊! 現在上到…嗯…我找不到…

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

6. 你正在和一個你心儀的對象約會。這是你們第一次約會，地點是一個你精選過的高級餐廳。但服務生送餐時你發現服務生填錯點餐單了，沒想到服務生重新上菜時又送錯餐點。這時你表達了對服務生的不滿。

服務生: 你的餐點來了!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

7. 你想約你的一位好朋友出去共度美好時光，但每次你問他時，他都忙著跟其他朋友玩電動；今晚去你要找他去看電影，但是如同你預料的，他正忙著玩另一個電腦遊戲。你決定跟他表達你的感受。

你: 嘿!我們很久沒一起出去了，今天晚上一起去看電影好嗎?

朋友: 抱歉哦，恩…我有點…正忙著玩遊戲。

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

8. 上英文課時你們必須努力完成一個很大的分組作業，老師也提醒你們成績是依團體評分。你這組大部分的組員都很認真，但是有一位組員偷懶把工作都推給別人!你決定要跟這位同學抱怨他的偷懶不盡責幫忙團體作業。

    你：嘿！可以和你討論一下嗎?

    同學：好啊!

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    (我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿)

9. 你找到一個離教室很近的超完美停車位，但當你接近停車格時，突然有位學生攔截在你正前方搶走了車位。這令你感到非常沮喪。

    學生：耶!真棒的停車位!

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    (我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿)

請仔細閱讀情境並在空格中依據個人反應作答。10-18 題請完成他人的不滿抱怨時，你的反應。請注意答題並無標準答案。

10. 你是一位家長，今天你花了好幾個鐘頭準備你的小孩最喜歡的一道佳餚。晚餐時，你的小孩竟然抱怨那道菜太辣了!

    你: 你猜怎麼了?我做了你最愛吃的一道菜呢！

    小孩: 這也太辣了吧!我一點都不想吃!

    你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

    (我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿)

11. 你是一位老師，今天你要給學生小考，但卻沒有任何一個學生有準備，你則提醒他們考試時間早都在列在行事曆上。

    你：好的，同學們!把書收起來，考試時間到了。

學生：什麼！今天要考試!你從來沒提過阿?!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

12. 身為警察的你看到一台摩托車闖紅燈，你把騎士攔下來開罰單。騎士很沮喪並抱怨被攔下開罰單!

你：闖紅燈開罰兩千元。

騎士：甚麼?!那也太貴了吧!可以放過我嗎?

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

13. 家裡只有一間浴室你的哥哥/姊姊也要洗澡，而你正在洗澡他/她卻一直敲浴室門；當你洗完開門後發現他/她一直站在門外生氣的等著。

你: 我剛剛在洗澡啊!

兄/姊: 不要洗那麼久好嗎?!你已經在裡面待了超過半小時了!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

14. 你是某公司的員工。有一天你的老闆把你叫進去他辦公室，抱怨你老是遲到。

你有事找我嗎?

老闆: 對啊!晚到是不行的，尤其你這禮拜天天遲到!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

15. 你是餐廳服務生。今天店裡超忙的，所以服務客人供餐時花了比平常更久的時間。有一位顧客決定要 跟你抱怨服務太慢。

你: 不好意思，今天送餐比較慢，您的餐點來了!

顧客：怎麼等這麼久!你給我的餐點都冷掉了!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

16. 你的室友也是你的密友。這一天已經很晚了，你仍然跟你的朋友們在 Skype 上聊得不亦樂乎；你們已經很久沒這樣聊天了。你的室友靠近你跟你抱怨他已經請你小聲一點很久了，你卻不理他，依然那麼大聲。

你：嘿!怎麼了?

密友：我已經提醒你很多次，請你小聲一點了!我明天要期末考，要睡了， 但你這麼大聲聊天害得我睡不著!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

17. 身為一個新生，你不喜歡被要求早起打掃校園，而你已經多次跟你的同學們抱怨過這件事了，有位同學聽膩了你的抱怨對這事做出批評。

同學：你可以不要再抱怨了嗎!又不是永遠都這樣!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

18. 你帶著一隻裝在貓籠裡的貓搭乘火車，你找到了跟你差不多同年齡的女孩旁有個空位；但這個女孩看著你的貓並開始抱怨她對貓有多敏感!

你：嗨!

女孩：火車上不應該准許帶貓的，這對於像我這樣對貓過敏的人來說是非 常危險的!

你：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（我沒有回應，因為＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

謝謝您的作答!

Appendix D. Definitions and examples of complaint strategies

Complaint Strategy	Definition	Examples
Opting out (OP)	The speaker ignores the offense	*Stay silent, no response*
Dissatisfaction (DS)	The speaker asserts the offense, but avoids explicit mention of the hearer	*"Well, this is not my order either."*
Interrogation (IN)	The speaker questions the hearer about the offense	*"Why did I get a very low grade?"*
Accusation (AC)	The hearer charges the hearer with having committed the offense	*"I told you not to take my stuff without my permission!"*
Request for repair (RR)	The speaker requests that the hearer make up for the offense or stop the offense	*"Could you deposit the money as soon as possible please? Thanks."*
Threat (TH)	The speaker asserts immediate or potential sanctions against the hearer	*"If you keep doing this, I will tell your parents!"*
Dissatisfaction through joking/sarcasm (DSJ)	The speaker asserts the offense through a joking or sarcastic tone.	*"I am going to die of starvation!"*
Appeal to emotion (APE)	The speaker appeals to the hearer's emotions	*"I want you to really learn something."*

Complaint Strategy	Definition	Examples
Request for repair (speaker) (RRS)	The speaker asks the hearer how he or she can repair the situation	*"What can I do to receive a higher grade?"*
Offering a compromise (OC)	The speaker offers the hearer a compromise	*"If you focus on your work now, we can do something fun later."*

Appendix E. Definitions and examples of complaint response strategies

Complaint Response Strategy	Definition	Examples
Opting out (OP)	The hearer ignores the offense	*Stay silent, no response*
Offer of repair (OR)	The hearer tries to make compensation for the offended speaker.	*"Sorry, I will keep my voice down."*
Confirmation (CF)	The hearer tries to understand the offended speaker's request or intention.	*"It is my fault?"*
Expression of apology (APA)	The hearer shows explicit apology for his/her committed offense.	*"Sorry, Boss."*
Acknowledgement of responsibility (AR)	The hearer shows implicit or explicit agreement with what the speaker complained about and then accepted responsibility.	*"My bad. I will shower faster next time."*
Offer of alternatives (ALT)	The hearer attempts to provide alternatives.	*"If you don't like it, then just leave it."*
Denial or shift of responsibility with justification (DENY)	The hearer does not accept responsibility or shifted the responsibility to others. The hearer justifies that his/her effort was acceptable.	*"No, you should take responsibility for your own mistake."*

Complaint Response Strategy	Definition	Examples
Denial or shift of responsibility without justification (DENYJ)	The hearer does not accept responsibility or shifted the responsibility to others. The hearer accuses the speaker without justification.	*"Then it is your problem."*
Explanation or account (ACC)	The hearer offered explanations for his/her committed offense.	*"I am sorry, it's really busy today."*
Expressing concern for the hearer (EXP)	The hearer tries to pacify the complainer in terms of his condition or wellbeing.	*"Don't you know that you are risking your own life?"*
Making a joke/sarcasm (JK)	The hearer denies responsibility by using sarcasm or making a joke	*"Fine, then make your own dish next time. I'm just kidding!"*