Study of pragmatic transfer in persuasion strategies by Chinese learners of English

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Abstract

This study investigates pragmatic transfer in persuasion strategies by Chinese learners of English. The subjects of the study include ten native English speakers, ten Chinese learners of English and ten native Chinese speakers. All of them are university students. The classification of persuasion strategies is mainly based on Hardin's classification of lexical and pragmatic realization of persuading speech act. The data is collected by means of a discourse complete test questionnaire The Chi-square test is used to compare frequencies of use of persuasion strategies by the Chinese learner of English group, the native English group and the native Chinese group. Results indicate that although all three groups use complaint strategy most frequently and opting out strategy least frequently, the Chinese learner of English group displays advice/suggestion/recommendation strategy more frequently than the native English group. The Chinese learner of English group also uses opinion-proving strategy less frequently than the native English group and never uses consolation/ condolence strategy. Such pragmatic transfer is transferred from Chinese culture and Chinese thinking pattern, which provides pedagogical implication for language teachers to develop Chinese students' English pragmatic competence.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics; pragmatic transfer; persuasion strategy; Chinese learner of English

Introduction

Pragmatics can be defined as the study of the relationship between language, its communication, and its contextualized use (Koike 1996). Interlanguage is referred to as the learners' language system that is not consistent with the native speakers' language

system (Selinker, 1972). Kasper (1998:184) combines the study of the two areas of pragmatics and interlanguage, and defines interlanguage pragmatics as the study of nonnative speaker's comprehension, production, and acquisition of linguistic action in second language or nonnative speakers' how to do things with words in second language (Austin 1962).

Pragmatic transfer is a research branch of interlanguage pragmatics. Pragmatic transfer refers to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than second language on their comprehension, production and learning of second language pragmatic information" (Kasper,1992:207). Here pragmatic knowledge can be understood as " a particular component of language users' general communicative knowledge, viz. knowledge of how verbal acts are understood and performed in accordance with a speaker's intention under contextual and discoursal constraints" (Faerch & Kasper, 1984:214). When people from different cultures communicate with each other without perceiving their different pragmatic knowledge, miscommunication may happen. Such phenomenon is due to transfer of native pragmatic knowledge in situations of intercultural communication (Zegarac and Pennington, 2000).

As noted by Leech, there are two perspectives on pragmatic transfer. One is sociopragmatic transfer, the other is pragmalinguistic transfer. According to Kasper (1992), sociopragmatic transfer operates when the social perceptions underlying language users' interpretation and performance of linguistic action in second language are influenced by their assessment of their subjectively equivalent first language context. On the other hand, pragmalinguistic transfer designates the process whereby illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to particular linguistic material in first language influences learners' perception and performance of form-function mappings in second language (Kasper 1992: 209).

One pragmatic transfer which can possibly occur in Chinese learners of English language production is the speech act of persuasion. Persuasion is defined by Lakoff (1982) as the nonreciprocal attempt or intention of one party to change the behavior,

feelings, intentions, or viewpoint of another by communicative means. Advertising, propaganda, political rhetoric, court language and religious sermons are obvious examples of persuasive discourse; however, persuasion may also occur in conversation. Persuasion is recognized as a directive speech act which, according to Searle (1969), is that in which the speaker's purpose is to get the hearer to commit him/herself to some course of action. In other words, persuasion is an attempt to make the world match the words.

Although persuasion is made in the best interest of the hearer, according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this speech act is regarded as a face threatening act (FTA) since the speaker is in some way intruding into the hearer's world by performing an act that concerns what the latter should do. In this sense persuasion is regarded as an imposition upon the hearer by affronting his/her negative face (Banerjee and Carrell 1988). Since Chinese and English speakers have different perceptions of how persuading speech act should be conducted, it is more likely that pragmatic transfer of Chinese will occur in intercultural communication between Chinese learners of English and native English speakers.

Since pragmatic transfer in persuading speech act by Chinese learners of English can cause breakdown in intercultural communication, it is necessary to investigate Chinese learners' pragmatic transfer in persuasion in order to know how learners' culture-specific backgrounds affect their persuasion strategy use in English. In so doing, the pedagogical implications can be brought forth and help inspire both language teachers and language learners.

Literature Review of Previous Research on Persuasion

Previous pragmatic research on persuasion has been conducted in different fields. One of these fields is pragmatic analysis of persuasion strategies in advertising and courtrooms. Since the function of advertisement and court language is to make people do something by giving them good reasons for doing it, advertisement and court language have

persuasive characteristics and can be used as language material for analysis of persuasion strategies.

Based on Cicero's classical oration and Aristotle's ethos, Rank (1988:10) suggests a basic persuasive formula for advertisements. His five components are attention-getting, confidence-building, desire-stimulating, urgency-stressing, and response-seeking. Combining both Rank's (1988) and Leech's (1966) findings, Hardin (2001) examines persuasive discourse in Spanish language advertising and finds that memorability (making the audience remember the message), force (emotional and logical appeals and the strength of a message), and participation (the desire for a response or audience/hearer involvement) are primary persuasive goals. Barkley and Anderson (2008) studied persuasion techniques in the courtroom and found that the persuasive effect of arguments is related not only to what is said, but also to how they are said and when they are said.

In other words, the more reputable the source of the arguments, the more persuasive the arguments will be. The arguments delivered with confidence, persistence and clarity will be more persuasive. This study also suggests a cyclical relationship – by resisting persuasion the hearer will become fatigued which will make the hearer more vulnerable to future persuasive influences. Therefore the speaker should follow the "wear the hearer down" principle in pursuing persuasion in the courtroom.

Research has also been done to investigate the process of persuasive communication from the perspective of pragmatics and social psychology. Taillard (2002) shows how pragmatics and social psychology interact in persuasion, and sketches the outline of a model integrating pragmatics and social psychology. He (2004) also discusses how persuasive communication takes advantage of the functions of communication and adapts to an evolving communicative environment.

Several pragmatic research has also been done on the use of directives in persuasive discourse. In his study, Hardin finds that directives are commonly used in Spanish persuasive discourse and directives may be either direct or indirect in force (Hardin, 2001)). The illocutionary force of a directive may be softened through mitigation and

pragmatic strategies that delocalize the speaker from his/her deictic centre (Haverkate 1984, Koike 1992). Indirectness requires the addressee to infer meaning and rely on shared knowledge between the speaker and him/herself. Moreover, since persuasion may involve Face Threatening Acts (Brown and Levinson 1987), the speaker must use appropriate politeness strategies to achieve the desired message. Certain forms or constructions are conventionalized; that is, they are customarily used to perform specific speech acts.

From a pragmatic perspective, Ora-Ong Chakorn (2006) makes a comparative analysis of persuasion strategies in letters of request written in English by Thai speakers and by native English speakers in the Thai business context. The letters of request written by the native English speakers tend to be more direct, often involving a bald - on - record strategy. In contrast, in a similarly formal context, the letters of request written by Thai speakers typically use more negative politeness in that they include more indirect, deferential and self-effacing strategies. According to the Aristotelian concept of persuasive rhetoric, the letters of request written by the Thai speakers generally use a combination of logos, ethos and pathos whereas the letters of request written by the native English speakers tend to predominantly use a strong logos. These three rhetorical appeals can be regarded as persuasion strategies; this finding reveals some culture-specific differences in the persuasion strategies used in letters of request written by Thai speakers and native English speakers.

In the Chinese context, Tang Xia (2009) analyzes persuading speech act from the perspective of the theory of Chinese face and indicates that Chinese persuasion strategies are human relation-based strategies. Zhai Lingzhi (2010) investigates persuasion strategies commonly used by Chinese from the perspective of pragmatics. These strategies include the combination of reason and emotion, analogy, encouragement, irony, praise and metaphor.

The above studies have provided valuable insights into persuasion strategies of persuasive discourses, the process of persuasive communication, directives in persuasive

discourse, comparative analysis of persuasion strategies in letters of request and persuasion strategies in the Chinese context. These studies provide a basis for this research because they give a picture of what constitutes persuasive discourse, what characterizes persuading speech acts, how persuasive communication is performed, how a comparative analysis of persuasion strategies is conduced, and what research has been done in the area of Chinese persuasion strategies. These studies also have implications for date-collection and analysis methods, based on which this research is conducted.

From the above discussion, we can see that there is little research literature on persuasion strategies used by Chinese, and there is even less research literature about pragmatic transfer in persuasion strategies by Chinese learners of English. For this reason, this paper aims to contribute to the literature of interlanguage pragmatics about persuasion in English by Chinese learners of English. This research will give a better understanding of what persuasion strategies are like for Chinese learners of English, and will help language teachers develop Chinese students' English pragmatic competence.

Methodology

Research questions

This paper aims to answer the following two questions:

1. Is there pragmatic transfer in persuasion strategies by Chinese learners of English in their intercultural communication?

2. If there is a transfer, what is transferred?

The first research question is answered through the investigation of the following three assumptions:

1. There are significant differences in strategy use in persuasion by the Chinese learner of English group and by the native English group.

2. These differences can be explained by the similarities in strategy use between the Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group if the former uses

persuasion strategies with a similar frequency to the latter and more frequently than the native English group.

3. These differences can be explained by the overgeneralization of English pragmatic rules by the Chinese learner of English group as a foreign language if this group employs persuasion strategies more frequently than both the native English group and the native Chinese group.

If these three assumptions are confirmed, an affirmative answer can be offered to the first research question. Because it is impossible to answer the question: "Is there pragmatic transfer?" without knowing "What is transferred?," these questions are considered and answered simultaneously in data analysis (Jiemin Bu, 2010).

Subjects

The subjects are composed of three groups, the Chinese learner of English group, the native English group and the native Chinese group. Each group consists of ten subjects. They are university studentsranging in age from nineteen to twenty years old. So they show homogeneity in terms of age, education and status. All subjects gave consent for their data to be used for this research purpose by signing the consent form prior to data collection.

Instrument

In light of the investigation of persuading speech act realization features of Chinese learners of English in intercultural communication, this study considers linguistic behaviours of persuading speech act by the Chinese learner of English group, the native English group and the native Chinese group to ascertain how Chinese learners of English may communicate to change someone else's behaviors, feelings, intentions, or viewpoints. A discourse complete test (DCT) questionnaire is used to elicit the required data in this study. Three situations are included in the questionnaire (see Appendix).

Modifications are made in the situation designing process for the situations to be

more plausible in both Chinese culture and English culture. In interlanguage pragmatics study, it is necessary to make sure that the situations in the DCT are equivalent cross-culturally. Therefore, in this study, after the situations are designed, the researcher consults several native Chinese speakers and native English speakers to confirm whether these situations are feasible in their daily life. And then, these situations are further modified to achieve cultural equivalence. In order to avoid native Chinese speakers' misunderstanding of what they are required to do in the DCT questionnaire, the questionnaire given to them is translated into Chinese. In order to achieve the equivalence in the questionnaire translation, back translation technique is employed so as to reduce threat to the reliability and validity of the research.

Classification of persuasion strategies

Table 1 gives some principal learner strategies in realizing speech acts. These strategies reflect various principles proposed in second language acquisition research. Specifically, Andersen's (1984) "One to One Principle" represents learners' selection of just one explicit verb to express a given speech act. Simplification accounts for learners' reliance upon formulas. Simplification and substitution show the less specific vocabulary evident in non-native speakers' speech. Substitution or avoidance of particular speech is due to the learners' lack of skill or explicit training, for example, in the way to form appropriate advice, or indirect commands. Moreover, learners tend to avoid or substitute for the level of directness appropriate for each context, either because they are unaware or because they lack the necessary skills to do so (Koike 1994). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1986) "waffle phenomenon" is one explanation for the longer, and often rambling speech acts of non-native speakers.

Table 1. Learners' overall pragmatic strategies

Strategies	Pragmatic Features	Examples
One to one principle	selection of explicit speech act	I <u>recommend</u> that you look for a new girlfriend.
Simplification	reliance on formulas, less specific vocabulary	When a person doesn't produce much , <u>this person isn't good in the world</u>
Substitution	selection of more/less illocutionary force	You <u>need to</u> dress <u>better</u>.
Avoidance	omission of speech acts whose formulas are unfamiliar	Your clothing is very old- <u>old and everything.</u>
Waffle phenomenon	longer and often rambling expression of a particular act	If you can't do more things for the classroom— <u>for the classroom like sweeping the floor , cleaning the blackboard, taking out the garbage—little things like that to have a clean classroom</u> , I'm going to have to do something different with you.

Based on Hardin's classification of lexical and pragmatic realization of persuading speech act, I develop my own classification system of linguistic forms for persuasion strategies in this paper. Linguistic forms which are used in the performance of persuasion strategies can be divided into linguistic forms of attention-getting strategy and persuasion strategy. Linguistic forms of attention-getting strategy are those linguistic forms which can be used to get the speaker's attention to start the persuading act. There are three kinds

of such strategy - complaint, reaction and request. Linguistic forms of persuasion strategy are those linguistic forms which can be employed to realize persuading speech act. They are ultimatum, order, recommendation, suggestion, advice, consolation, condolence and opting out as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of linguistic forms of persuasion strategies

Strategies	Pragmatic Features	Examples
Complaint	negative mood awareness	<u>You are always watching</u> your favorite sport games and doing nothing about your classroom.
Reaction	mood awareness	Oh, <u>what a</u> pity!
Request	confirmation for information about what has happened	What? I mean, what happened?'
Ultimatum	impolite command	You <u>must</u> change your behaviour.
Order	explicit command	You <u>have to</u> spend a lot of money on her..
Opinion-proving	increase of persuasive force of an opinion	We must have water because water is the most essential for survival in a desert
Advice	mood awareness	<u>I advise</u> you not to stay in the house for a long time.
Suggestion	mood awareness	<u>I suggest</u> you change your appearance in the way
Recommendation	assertion/indirect command/mitigation/mood awareness	I <u>recommend</u> you wear a black suit.

Consolation	expression of the act of consoling	<u>Don't be</u> sad. You <u>will</u> find a beautiful girl friend.
Condolence	expression of sympathy	<u>I am sorry to</u> hear that.
Opting out	No response	

Data Analysis

This study involves a questionnaire survey of thirty subjects. Ten copies of the English version of the questionnaire were administered to the native English group, ten copies of the English version of the questionnaire were presented to the Chinese learner of English group, and ten copies of the Chinese version of the questionnaire were given to the native Chinese group. All the distributed questionnaire copies were duly completed and returned. The total number of data collected comprised thirty persuasions in English by the native English group, thirty persuasions in English by the Chinese learner of English group and thirty persuasions in Chinese by the native Chinese group. The native Chinese subjects' thirty persuasions were translated into English.

According to Tables 1 and 2, the data were coded according to their classification. The frequency data derived from the coding scheme in this study were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS 11. The Chi-square test is used because it is an appropriate statistical instrument for frequency data (Brown, 1988). For the analysis of linguistic forms, the descriptive statistics were employed to count the frequency and percentage of each strategy for each group.

Served as a supplement to the quantitative study, the *post hoc* interview was conducted on the Chinese learner of English group, the native English group and the native Chinese group in order to explore their ideas about reasons they chose a certain persuasion strategy and a particular persuasion formula. This can make this study more accurate and give a true picture of the distribution of persuasion strategy use and persuasion formula use among the Chinese learner of English group, the native English group and the native Chinese group.

Results and Discussion

Situation 1 requires a minimum of at least two acts to persuade the hearer to improve bad behaviour: a complaint and an order or an advice/suggestion/recommendation. Since elaboration is allowed and encouraged, the subjects' words understandably tend to be longer and more creative than those of situation 2. Furthermore, unlike situation 2, situation 1 is worded in such a way that it evokes negative feelings toward the hearer.

Situation 2 is designed to evoke sympathy toward the hearer and required a minimum of at least two acts of a reaction and a recommendation /suggestion/ advice or a consolation/condolence. Since advice, suggestion, and recommendation may overlap in meaning, it is difficult in some cases to distinguish between the three. Searle (1969) calls the group of advice, suggestion, and recommendation advisories and notes that advice is considered to be of benefit to the hearer rather than speaker and that it tells what is best for the hearer. The speaker may hope for a future act on the part of the hearer. Some synonyms for advice that do not apply to suggest or recommend include admonish, offer an opinion, encourage, caution, and warn.

On the other hand, suggestion and recommendation do not generally include a negative connotation and may be of benefit to both the hearer and speaker. A suggestion involves the expectation of a future act on the part of the hearer, and it may be tentative. Meanings unique to suggest (rather than recommend or advise) include propose, move, submit, and advance. So the three speech acts differ slightly in degree of intensity. Recommendations require the least action of the three speech acts, advice has the possibility of strongest negative connotations, and suggestions may be less assertive/forceful than advice. Based on Searle's note and some synonymous meanings, advice, suggestions, and recommendations are classified according to the criteria in Table 3. As previously mentioned, the three acts overlap in function, and therefore the classification is tentative.

Table 3. Criteria for three directives – Advice, Suggestion & Recommendation

Advice	Suggestion	Recommendation
Speaker must have right to give advice		
closest to requiring hearer action		furthest from requiring action
of benefit to hearer	of benefit to hear/speaker	primarily benefit hearer but may also benefit speaker
strongest illocutionary force	may be tentative	
may include negative connation		

Situation 3 is used to create working consensus condition in which a desert survival task is performed. It requires a minimum of at least one act of opinion-proving to persuade the hearers to accept the speaker's opinion. In the process of opinion-proving, various linguistic forms have been used by the native English group, the Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group. Frequencies and percentages of each strategy by these three groups for the three situations are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages of each strategy by three groups

Group/Strategy	Native English Group	Chinese Learner of English Group	Native Chinese Group
Complaint	10 (23.80%)	10 (21.28%)	10(20.40%)
Reaction	2 (4.76%)	7 (14.89%)	9 (18.37%)
Request	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0(0.00%)
Ultimatum	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2(4.08%)

Order	0 (0.00%)	1(2.13%)	0(0.00%)
Opinion-proving	10 (23.80%)	6 (12.77%)	4(8.16%)
Advice	3(7.14%)	8(17.02%)	8(16.33%)
Suggestion	4 (9.52%)	8(17.02%)	8(16.33%)
Recommendation	3 (7.14%)	7(14.89%)	8(16.33%)
Consolation	5 (11.90%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Condolence	5 (11.90%)	0 (0.00%)	0(0.00%)
Opting out	0 (0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)
Total	42 (100%)	47 (100%)	49 (100%)

Pearson Chi-Square value =6.000   *df*=4   Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) =0.199

Note: The percentage of each strategy in the performance of persuading speech act is provided in parentheses after the frequency. The percentage numbers are rounded to two decimal, so the sum of the percentages may be more or less than 100%.

According to Table 4, all three groups use complaint strategy most frequently and opting out strategy least frequently. This phenomenon can be explained by the facts that in situation 1 all the subjects express their complaints about their imaginary classmates' doing nothing around the classroom, and that it is impossible for all the subjects to keep silent when they are faced with an annoying situation like situation 1. The second frequently used strategies by the native Chinese group and the Chinese learner of English group are advice and suggestion when they perform their persuading act. This is due to their use of "one to one principle" because "jian-yi" [建议] in Chinese is equivalent to "advice" or "suggestion" in English, which results in Chinese speakers' and Chinese learners of English' highly frequent employment of advice or suggestion to persuade the hearer to improve bad behaviour or mitigate sadness. It is opinion-proving strategy that is the second frequently used by the native English group when the speaker persuades hearers that his/her ranking is reasonable. The third frequently used strategy by the native English group is consolation/ condolence when they deal with a sad situation while the

Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group never use them. It can be seen from the Chi-square test that persuasion strategies used by the three groups are independent from each other because the asymp. significant value (2-sided) of 0.199 is larger than 0.05. It is also shown that there a certain degree of differences in strategy use between the native English group and the Chinese learner of English group since the Person Chi-Square value of 6.000 is bigger than 0.000.

Differences in the Frequency of Persuasion Strategies Used Between the Chinese Learner of English Group and Native English Group

The quantitative analysis shows that the Chinese learner of English group uses reaction and advice/ suggestion/ recommendation more frequently than the native English group, which means that subjects in the Chinese learner of English group have a tendency of expressing their sympathetic feeling about their hearer's sadness (situation 2) and they prefer to use advice /suggestion /recommendation to improve their hearer's bad behaviours (situation 1) and to comfort their hearer's sad heart (situation 2). On the contrary, the subjects in the native English group prefer to use advice/ suggestion/ recommendation to make the hearer change bad behaviour (situation 1) and like to use consolation/ condolence to simply express their sympathy for their hearer's sadness (situation 2).

Such differences may result from their different perceptions of these two situations. In the Chinese culture, making advice/ suggestion/ recommendation is regarded as rapport-building strategy (Hinkel, 1994: 73) that can be a token of solidarity (Du, 1995; Lii Shih, 1994) . In Chinese society with collectivism value, group harmony is highly valued (Hofstede, 1991; Kim, 1993). Advice/ suggestion/ recommendation after expression of complaint for bad behaviour or sympathy for unlucky things are a way of keeping the society harmonious and a way of caring about people. Although advice/ suggestion/ recommendation after the expression of complaint for bad behaviour is available in English culture, advice/ suggestion/ recommendation after the expression of

sympathy is seldom used by native English speakers. This is not surprising because English society is one of typical individualism society (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Chua, 1988; Hofstede, 1991).

In societies where individualism is held, individual autonomy and personal territory are sensitive and are not allowed to intrude (Hofstede, 1991; Hsu, 1981; Miller, 1984). Finding a girlfriend is people's privacy. Therefore, in situation 2 the subjects in the native English group need to be cautious about an unsolicited advice/ suggestion/ recommendation about how to find a girlfriend so as not to impose on the hearer and not to be considered rude. As for situation 3, all the subjects in the native English group use opinion-proving strategy to make their hearers believe that their ranking is reasonable, while six subjects in the Chinese learner of English group use such strategy, four subjects in the Chinese learner of English group use other strategies, for example, advice/ suggestion/ recommendation.

This phenomenon results from the differences in their thinking pattern. English people's thinking pattern is linear in which an opinion must be proved by evidence, while Chinese people's thinking pattern is spiral in which an argument is explained in a spiral way from its beginning, development, transition to climax. English linear thinking pattern is reflective of individualism, equality-oriented culture that emphasizes that opinion-proving strategy is an effective way of persuasion, while Chinese spiral thinking pattern is expression of collectivism-orientated culture which highlights advice/ suggestion / recommendation is suitable way of persuasion. Four subjects in the Chinese learner of English group who do not use opinion-proving strategy are influenced by Chinese linear thinking pattern. As found in Table 4, the native English group uses eight kinds of strategies, and the Chinese learner of English group employs seven types of strategies.

Similarities in the Frequency of Persuasion Strategies Used between the Chinese Learner of English Group and the Native Chinese Group

Table 4 indicates that frequency of strategy use by the Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group is similar in the use of advice/suggestion/recommendation. This phenomenon is due to the fact that Chinese society is considered to be a collectivist society. In this kind of the society, harmonious social relationship is highly valued. Advice-making/ Suggestion- making/ Recommendation-making is not only a method of keeping harmonious relations among people, but also a duty of benefiting the society. This positive culture orientation of such strategy results in the tendency that Chinese learner of English group displays similar frequencies to the native Chinese group and more frequencies than the native English group in the use of advice/ suggestion/ recommendation. The similarity between the Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group in the use of advice/ suggestion/ recommendation can statistically significantly explain the difference in the use of advice/ suggestion/ recommendation between the Chinese learner of English group and the native English group.

As opinion-proving strategy is concerned, the Chinese learner of English group uses this strategy less frequently than the native English group and more frequently than the native Chinese group. From the Chinese learner of English subjects group, six are influenced by English linear thinking pattern and four are still influenced by Chinese spiral thinking pattern when they persuade their hearers that their ranking for items is reasonable in situation 3.

No evidence of the application of consolation/ condolence strategy is found in both the Chinese leaner of English group and the native Chinese group when they comfort their hearer's sad heart. This is due to the reason that, as discussed in the previous section, in Chinese culture caring is a good virtue and consolation/ condolence without any help or any advice is considered as indifference. In situation 2, the speaker's imaginary classmate has lost his girlfriend and he feels very sad. For native Chinese speakers and Chinese learners of English, just consoling/condoling is not enough to

comfort the hearer's sadness, advice/ suggestion/ recommendation is encouraged to use when such situation is dealt with according to Chinese culture.

It is shown from the *post hoc* interview that Chinese learner of English subjects use certain pragmatic strategies to perform their persuading speech act. When asked about the use of advice/ suggestion/ recommendation, eight out of ten Chinese learners of English subjects say that it is a duty for the speaker to give useful suggestions to change the hearer's bad behaviour or to mitigate the hearer's sadness. When interviewed why they use a certain formula, seven out of ten Chinese learners of English subjects admit that they use "one to one principle" pragmatic strategy. For example, one learner subject says:

> When I see my classmate is sad because of losing a girlfriend, I want to comfort him by giving a suggestion. I will say: I suggest you improve your appearance to attract another girl. Here suggest is equivalent to jian-yi in Chinese. It expresses an explicit speech act of making a proposal.

In terms of Waffle phenomenon, one learner subject says:

> When I persuade my classmate that "zhi-nan-zhen" ［指南针］ is the most important for the guidance of direction in a desert, I don't know how to say "zhi-nan-zhen"［指南针］ in English, I can only say an instrument which can be used to lead the direction.

The above discussions have demonstrated that there are not only differences in persuasion strategies between the Chinese learner of English group and the native English group, but also the similarities in persuasion strategy between the Chinese learner of English group and the native Chinese group. These research results provide an affirmative answer to the first question. There is pragmatic transfer in the use of persuasion strategies by Chinese learners of English as a foreign language.

With reference to the second research question of what is transferred, the answer has been integrated into the answer to the first question of whether there is pragmatic transfer because it is impossible to provide evidence of pragmatic transfer without simultaneously describing what is transferred. As discussed above, the persuasion strategies that are

pragmatically transferred from Chinese into English are "reaction", "opinion-proving", "advice", "suggestion" and "recommendation". The Chinese learner of English group also displays some features of their pragmatic strategies of "one to one principle" and "Waffle phenomenon" when they conduct a certain type of speech act.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to cross-cultural understanding in that it identifies the cross-cultural and linguistic differences between the Chinese learner of English group and the native English group in the persuading speech act. The Chinese learner of English group in their performance of the persuading speech act is assumed to maintain some of their native culture features and have different perceptions of strategy use for the same situations from the native English group. This study shows that there is pragmatic transfer, to some extent, in persuading speech act by Chinese learners of English. It is found that although all three groups use complaint strategy most frequently and opting out strategy least frequently, the Chinese learner of English group uses "reaction", "advice", "suggestion" and "recommendation" more frequently than the native English group as shown in Table 4, which can be explained by Chinese culture that caring about and sympathy for people are considered to be good virtues in Chinese society and is prevailing in dealing with the situation 1 and situation 2 as indicated in Appendix. As for "opinion-proving", there are several Chinese learners of English subjects whose thinking patterns are still influenced by Chinese spiral thinking pattern.

It is necessary to note that this study focuses on university students whose social variables of status and distance are equal. Further research may investigate other situations in which social variables such as status, distance, gender, and level of formality are different. In addition, the present study uses DCTs as a research tool which might yield data different from naturally occurring data. Future studies may collect data from a corpus of natural spoken language or employ ethnographic methodology so as to broaden our understanding of persuasion behaviour in natural settings. A longitudinal approach

may be applied for a better understanding of the development of English pragmatic competence in persuasion speech act by Chinese learners of English.

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Appendix

Discourse Completion Test Questionnaire

Instruction: In the following situations, if you would like to say something to your classmate, please write down the exact words you have said. Thank you for your corporation.

Situation 1

Imagine that one of your classmates does nothing around the classroom and is your basic "couch potato". Complain freely, tell your classmate that what you want him to do differently and give him suggestions for change.

Situation 2

Imagine that your classmate has told you that his girlfriend has left him. Talk to him about his situation, including: (1) appropriate expressions of surprise, doubt and anger. (2) two or more recommendations on where to find a new girlfriend. (3) advice on changes in his behaviour or appearance.

Situation 3

Imagine your class performs a survival task in a desert. You are given a list of items which you have to rank according to item's importance to your survival (e.g. a cosmetic mirror, a raincoat, a compress kit, a compass, a bottle of water, a tent , A box of biscuits etc.). Tell your class your ranking and the reasons that your ranking is reasonable.