Studies in Second Language Acquisition of Chinese

Edited by ZhaoHong Han
2 Pragmatic Development: An Exploratory Study of Requests by Learners of Chinese

Xiaohong Wen

Requests have been one of the most frequently examined speech acts in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research (Schauer, 2009). Early studies on the ILP of requests tended to focus on first language transfer, comparison between native speakers (NSs) and nonnative speakers (NNSs), and cross-cultural contrastive analysis (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987). This tradition has continued to the present day (e.g. Puetz & Neff van Arteselaar, 2008) and, as a result, only marginal attention has thus far been given to pragmatic development of the speech act of request in second language (L2) learners. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) underscored the need to investigate the pragmatic development of L2 learners and to strengthen connections between ILP and L2 acquisition research. Although recent years have seen more research on the acquisition of speech acts (e.g. Barron, 2003; Rose, 2000, 2009; Schauer, 2004), pragmatic development, as opposed to pragmatic performance and contrastive analysis, has in general remained under-researched, especially with Chinese as the target language (Horg, 1997; Sun & Zhang, 2008). The study reported in this chapter represents an attempt to fill the gap.

We begin by briefly reviewing politeness theory in relation to the speech act of request and ILP development studies. We then present the study which aims at exploring developmental features and contextual variations in the written requests produced by English-speaking learners of Chinese at two proficiency levels, and the learners’ use of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic strategies.

Background

According to Searle (1975) and House and Kasper (1987), requests are defined as directives: Speaker (S) wants Hearer (H) to do x at the expense of H. Therefore, S attempts to persuade H to do x. Several variables may potentially make this speech act easy, with a low degree of imposition or difficult, with a high degree of imposition. If S and H share equal social status, the request is considered socially small, and S is able to decide which linguistic forms to use in the context. This type of request is likely to be successful. However, if any of these conditions are not met, the request is likely to be a frustrating endeavor. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) requests are face-threatening by definition because hearers can interpret requests as intrusive impingements on freedom of action, or even as an exercise of power.

Drawing on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, the present study examined Chinese-as-a-foreign-language (CFL) learners’ requests in various sociopragmatic situations. Politeness is a basic notion of pragmatic function and a fundamental principle that people abide by in social communication. Although this notion is shared across cultures, each culture may adopt its own politeness principles. Diverse politeness strategies in making requests can be observed in various languages. For example, imperatives and Want Statements are perceived to be direct and often impolite in English (Blum-Kulka, 1987). In Chinese, however, imperatives with a polite word such as 請 Qing ‘please’ and Want Statement + a soft tag question such as 想 Xǐng ‘thinking of’, 行 Xíngmài ‘OK’ convey politeness and soft tones. Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize communication strategies based on their politeness theory, among which avoidance of face-threatening acts (FTAs) is one of the most frequently used. Social distance and power relations between interlocutors as well as the degree of imposition that the request represents may strongly affect the requester’s choice of strategies and pragmalinguistic expressions. Sociopragmatics is, therefore, the basis for expressing politeness.

Research on ILP development of requests

Studies of pragmatic development include longitudinal studies (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Schmidt, 1985) and cross-sectional studies (e.g., Hendriks, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000, 2009; Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1995).

The longitudinal studies of Ellis (1992) and Achiba (2003) focused on the acquisition of ILP by younger learners. Participants in the Ellis (1992) study were two immigrant boys in England, aged 10 and 11. The study found a clear progression from direct to conventionally indirect request strategies over time. At the early stage, the learners used verbs, which were followed by imperatives with verbs. The two younger learners were then observed to use formulaic permission such as ‘Can I have...?’, the ability question ‘Can you...?’, and the permission strategy with other verbs, such as ‘Can I take...?’ Both learners showed infrequent use of internal or external modifiers, although they frequently employed the politeness marker please.
Achiba (2003) observed a seven-year-old girl who was visiting Australia from another country with her family. Achiba's findings were consistent with those of Ellis (1992): the learner started with direct strategies, such as imperatives, moved to the suggestive formula ‘Let’s . . .’, and continued with conventionally indirect permission and ability questions. At a later stage, the learner further expanded her repertoire to include other strategies such as willingness: ‘Will you . . .?’ and past tense modals as in ‘Could you . . .?’ or ‘Would you . . .?’

Rose (2000, 2009) conducted cross-sectional studies with Chinese-speaking learners of English in Hong Kong. In his first study, Rose found a number of developmental patterns in the choice of request strategy, with conventional indirectness the most frequent strategy overall. Participants in the study were classified into three proficiency levels. The two higher proficiency groups showed the most frequent use of conventional indirectness (96.8% and 85.7% with the P-6 and P-4 groups, respectively). The lowest proficiency group also used conventional indirectness, although less frequently (85.4% with the P-2 group). The findings of Rose's (2009) study are consistent with the previous and later studies (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Hendriks, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2009; Trosborg, 1995). It should be noted, however, that the low proficiency group in Hill's (1997) study relied heavily on direct strategies. Hill speculated that these learners were still struggling with the complexities of producing grammatically correct sentences. The use of direct strategies decreased as the learners' proficiency level increased (see also Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Hendriks, 2008; Rose, 2009; Trosborg, 1995).

Rose (2000, 2009) elicited data respectively through a cartoon oral production task (COPPT) and a discourse completion test (DCT). In addition to yielding results consistent with those of his (2000) study, Rose (2009) revealed: (1) the mean frequency of alerters increased with proficiency level; (2) that the occurrence of please decreased slightly with the increasing level of proficiency; and (3) the frequency of external modifications more than doubled at each advancing level. In terms of sociopragmatics, learners exhibited some variation in their requests to reflect changes in dominance relations. For example, all learners evidenced some awareness of dominance relations in their use of alerters, with learners at the highest level of proficiency supplying more supportive moves in nearer-dominant situations.

In summary, previous studies of ILP development of requests share some findings. First, the request strategies of NNSs gradually approximate those of the NSs. Second, as the requesters' proficiency level advances, the frequency of their use of direct strategies decreases, while that of conventional indirectness increases (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000, 2009; Schauer, 2004; Trosborg, 1995). Third, the frequency of using external modifications positively correlates with the proficiency level (Hendriks, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000, 2009; Trosborg, 1995). Fourth, the developmental patterns of internal modification seem to be more varied than those of supportive moves. Fifth, the occurrence of politeness markers (e.g. please) decreases as the requesters' proficiency level increases (Hendriks, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2009). Last but not least, individual variations exist in the use of internal modification (Hill, 1997; Schauer, 2009; Trosborg, 1995).

**Request strategies and modifications**

Drawing on the work of Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a) categorized request strategies in terms of degrees of directness from mood derivable (imperative to mild hint) (non-conventional indirectness). They concluded that requests in English usually adopt conventionally indirect strategies such as suggestory formulae and query preparatories, both of which are in question form. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) also developed schemes for requests in the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) that contain internal and external modifications. Internal modification refers to a set of linguistic devices that modify the illocutionary force of the head act, the request itself. External modifiers consist of upgraders and downgraders that increase or decrease the illocutionary force of requests. These modifiers are realized through syntactic and lexical/phrasal means. External modification (or supportive move) appears before or after the head act and helps minimize the face-threatening effect. Whether or not to include alerters and supportive moves depends on the desired imposition, and the social/psychological relationships of the interlocutors.

The classification scheme used in the present study was based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989b) CCSARP Coding Manual and on Zhang (1995), who used the same manual. Zhang’s data comprised requests produced by Chinese NSs. Her classification was adapted for use in the present data analysis. This study additionally drew on Thomas' (1983) two types of judgment of a pragmatically successful utterance to determine the accessibility and acceptability of participants' requests. Type 1, the pragmalinguistic assessment, means that the illocutionary intent should be clear and the sentence should be grammatical; type 2, the sociopragmatic judgment, refers to language use that should be acceptable in the context. The study focused on CFL learners' pragmatic development in relation to requests, guided by the following questions:

1. Is there evidence of pragmalinguistic development in lower level versus advanced learners?
2. Is there evidence of sociopragmatic development in lower level versus advanced learners?
Method

Participants

Eighty-nine CFL students enrolled in Chinese classes at a university in the US participated in the study. However, 41 of them, who were Chinese heritage learners, were excluded from data analysis on the assumption that their language background would influence their pragmatic performance. The remaining 48 participants, who were non-heritage language learners and whose data were analyzed and reported below, came from four classes at two levels, lower and advanced. Among them, 24 students (15 females, 9 males, average age 21.5) were at the lower level and 24 (15 females, 11 males, average age 23) at the advanced level. At the time of data collection, the lower level group had studied Chinese for 19 months, and the advanced group 31 months. Nine of the advanced students had been to China and stayed for varying lengths of time, from one month to 12 months. Their proficiency levels were based on their performance on an oral and a written Chinese proficiency test conducted by course instructors at the beginning of the semester. Twenty-four Chinese NSs (18 females, 11 males, average age 31), all from the People's Republic of China, were recruited. Their data served as the baseline for the comparison of learners’ Chinese language use. Most of them were undergraduate and graduate students from the same university as the CFL learners.

Instrument

A two-part questionnaire was used. The first part focused on biographic details such as age, gender, ethnic background, first language and exposure to the L2 in the home environment. The second part was a DCT. As Rose (2009: 2347) posits, the DCT provides researchers with information on respondents’ knowledge and attitudes, and ‘as such can be used as a measure of changes in knowledge and attitudes across groups that might be indicative of development’. Considering the likelihood, relevance and context variables of the participants’ requests (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Rose, 2009), the present study selected five scenarios: (1) borrowing a pen from a classmate, (2) asking to postpone an essay submission, (3) asking a professor for an appointment, (4) asking a roommate to return a library book and (5) asking a stranger for directions – four of them adapted from previous studies (Hong, 1997; Shafer, 2009). Each scenario came with a detailed description, explaining the relationship between the interlocutors. The interlocutors were assigned Chinese names such as 张明 (Zhang Ming), 李小丽 (Li Xiaoli), etc. so that participants would use contextual information to avoid imagining their own contexts while completing the task. The questionnaire was written in English. The five scenarios were subsequently presented to 10 CFL learners, who were not participants in the study, for their metapragmatic assessment focusing on estimating: (1) how often the requests would occur (very frequently, relatively frequently, not frequently); (2) how sociopragmatically difficult the request would be (easy, moderately difficult, difficult); and (3) judging the ratings. The results showed that the raters agreed on all scenarios in terms of the degree of imposition, with scenarios 2 and 3 considered ‘difficult’ and ‘moderately difficult’, respectively, and scenarios 1, 4 and 5 ‘easy’. All scenarios were deemed ‘very frequent’ or ‘relatively frequent’ except for scenario 5 (asking a stranger for directions), which was rated as ‘not frequent’ by five student raters, ‘relatively frequent’ by four raters, and ‘very frequent’ by one rater. Due to the lack of consistency, scenario 5 was dropped.

The DCT questionnaire was then piloted on five CFL learners and five NSs who were not otherwise involved in the study. Based on their responses, the wording of the questionnaire was adjusted. Table 2.1 shows the categorization of the four request scenarios according to two variables: social status and request imposition. The final questionnaire is presented in the Appendix.

Procedure

The data were collected in two consecutive spring semesters. In spring 2010 students from two lower-level and one advanced Chinese classes participated in the data collection. However, after sorting students by heritage background, only a limited number of questionnaires were usable for the study. In spring 2011 data were again collected from participants in one lower-level and one advanced Chinese class. In both instances of data collection, copies of the questionnaire were handed out to the instructors, who asked their students to complete it in class. The instructors told students that this survey was a study on language use and that they could write their responses in characters or Pinyin. Copies of the questionnaire for NSs were sent via email to the Chinese Students Association at the same university where the CFL data were collected. Due to the limited number of responses from NSs, 30 additional copies were sent out to NSs originally from Mainland China who were similar in age to the NS participants.

Table 2.1 Four scenarios with two levels of social status and request: imposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status (student to student)</th>
<th>Social Status (student to professor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low imposition</td>
<td>Relatively high imposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1: Borrowing a pen from a classmate</td>
<td>Scenario 2: Asking a professor to postpone an essay submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4: Asking a roommate to return a book since he/she is going to the library</td>
<td>Scenario 3: Asking a professor for an appointment because you have lots of questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coding

First, six questionnaires, three from each level, were independently coded by the researcher and a colleague, with the interrater agreement 0.81. Then another six questionnaires, three from each level, were coded independently, with the interrater agreement 0.92. Any disagreements were resolved item by item through consensus coding. The remaining portions of the data were coded by the researcher alone.

The requests were coded for the level of directness (direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect) for the head act (e.g. the request of ‘Can I borrow a pen?’ was coded as conventionally indirect), for internal modification at the syntactic and lexical/phrasal levels (e.g. ‘是你去图书馆，顺便把我的书也还了吧。’ Yìdǐ nǐ qù tūshūguǎn, shuìduàn bā wǒde shū yě huànbā ba. ‘If you go to the library, (what about) returning my book while you are there?’), for use of alerters (e.g. 李小华 Li xiǎohuá ‘a person’s name’) and supportive moves (e.g. ‘这个星期的作业太多了，中文作文我交不了了。’ Zhègè xīngqī de zuòyè tàiduō le, zhōngwén zuòwén wǒ jiào bùjiāo le ‘I have too much homework this week. I am not able to submit the Chinese composition’).

Analysis and Results

Request perspectives

A request can be hearer or speaker dominant, or can assume an implicit perspective, as when the subject of the sentence is omitted in the context (Zhang, 1995). Examples 1–3 illustrate the hearer, speaker and implicit perspective, respectively. Table 2.2 shows that the request perspectives changed along with the sociopragmatic situation, and that the use of zero pronouns in the subject position increased with advancing proficiency level, aligning more with the usage of the N5s.

Example 1

Xiao you, 你可不可以给我一支笔吗? (Adv #36, S1)
Xiaoyou, nǐ kěyǐ jiègāi wǒ yǐzhī bǐ ma?
‘Xiaoyou, you may lend me a pen QM?’

Example 2

Xīngqī wǒ xǐ zài sīgān, hǎobā? (Adv #35, S3)
‘Thursday I again give you, OK?’

Example 3

Xiaoyou, kěyǐ jiègāi nǐ de bǐ ma?
‘Xiaoyou, may borrow a little bit your pen QM?’

Request strategies

The requests produced by the participants were classified into two major categories: the direct and the conventionally indirect. The direct category included ‘imperative/plain statements’, ‘hedged performatives’ and ‘want statements’. The most direct forms in the data were imperatives (Example 4) and plain statements (Example 5). The plain statement, as shown in Example 5, presented no requestive intent but called the interlocutor’s attention, in which case it appeared that the speaker did not have to persuade the professor.

Example 4

Xiaoyou, qǐng (jiè) gěi wǒ yǐzhī bǐ bi. (Lower level #74, 78, Adv #45, S1)
‘Xiaoyou, please (lend) give me a pen.’

Example 5

Xīngqī wǒ gěi xiàrén si mǎi, yíngwēi bìduì bào dàduì dǎdā dà gǎngkè. (Lower level #68, S2)
‘Tuesday I not possible submit composition, because other classes all have lots of homework.’

The data showed frequent occurrences of ‘hedged performatives’; that is, ‘the illocutionary verb denoting the requestive intent is modified, e.g. by modal verbs or verbs expressing intention’ (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b: 279). This is illustrated in Example 6, where the illocutionary intent is explicitly stated and the illocutionary force softened by hedging expressions. Examples 7–9
show that the illocutionary force is modified by downgraders. In Example 9, the learner used a promise statement.

Example 6

李小龙,你可以（也）把我的书还给图书馆。(Adv #36, 45, S4)
Li xiǎo lóng, nǐ kěyǐ (yě) bǎ wǒ de shū huán guì tū shū guǎn.
‘Li Xiaojing, you may (also) return my book to the library.’

Example 7

即使你要到图书馆去还书，请你也拿我借的书还给他们，好吗? (Adv #33, S4)
Jiànsì nǐ yào dào tūshūguǎn qù huán shū, qǐng nǐ yě ná wǒ jiè de shū huán guì tāmen, hǎomɑ?
‘Since you will go library return book, please also take I borrowed book return to them, OK?’

Example 8

小妖, 给我借———借给吧。(Adv #35, S1)
Xiǎojiāo, gěi wǒ jiè—jiè bā ba.
‘Xiaoyu, please lend me a pen SM.’

Example 9

老师, 我有另一作业在别课, 我能不能星期四我一定得交给你.(Lower level #56, S2)
Lǎoshī, wǒ yǒu yí líng yī zuò yè zài bié kè, wǒ néng bīnguāng xiàng zī wǒ yǐ tíng déi jiāo gěi nǐ.
‘Teacher, I have other homework in other course. I can not can Thursday I definitely must submit to you.’

Yet another category at the level of directness is the want statement, which was mainly found in the NSs’ data for scenario 3 involving requesting an appointment with a professor. Although such a statement is perceived to be direct and impolite in English, it is quite downtoned in Chinese with a soft intonation, as illustrated in Example 10. On the other hand, a ‘want statement’ in Chinese can be impolite if a particular verb, such as 要 Yào ‘want’ instead of 想 Xiǎng ‘want/intend’, is used with little modification. The two want statements produced by the lower level group both used a statement form, as seen in Example 11.

Example 10

李老师, 我想看看你什么时候有空? 我问问你书本里的几个问题。（NS #12, S3)
Li lǎoshī, wǒ xiǎng kàn kàn nǐ shěnme shíhou yǒuxiǎng? Wǒ xiǎng wèn wèn nǐ shū běn lǐ de jǐ gè wèntí.
‘Teacher Li, I intend find out a bit you what time have free time? I intend ask a bit you (honoraty you) book a few questions.’

Example 11

老师，我有课的问题所以我要和你定时间。(Lower level #62, S3)
Lǎoshī, wǒ yǒu kèwèn de wèntí suǒyì wǒ yào hé nǐ dìng shíjiān.
‘Teacher, I have lessons question therefore I want with you make appointment.’

A number of utterances contained grammatical errors that interfered with communication (cf. Thomas, 1983), and were therefore pragmalinguistically inaccessible. As discussed previously, a basic condition for an utterance to be communicatively effective is that it is semantically clear and grammatically correct. Utterances such as Example 12 were not amenable to categorization. They were treated as uninterruptable in this study. They frequently had an interrogatory form. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of the request strategies in all four scenarios.

Example 12

小妖, 请问, 你有——借给我吗? (Lower level #55)
Xiǎojiāo, qǐng wèn, nǐ yǒu jiè gěi wǒ ma?
‘Xiaoyu, please ask, you have a pen I borrow QM?’

Conventionally indirect requests in the data were classified into two categories: (1) query preparatory with modal auxiliaries such as 能 Néng indicating ability/possibility, or 可以 Kěyǐ indicating possibility/permission; and (2) time availability, as used in scenario 3: 您星期什么时候有时间? Nín xīngqī shènmé shíhou yǒu shíjī? ‘When will you have time next week?’ To the extent that a reason (i.e. lack of time) was given here for rejecting the request, this strategy shows consideration towards the hearer (Schauer, 2009).

Although the conventionally indirect strategy is a polite means of realizing a request in English, it may not necessarily be so in Chinese unless downgraders are used. Conventional indirectness in Chinese does not have as many syntactic modifications as in English (e.g. a variety of tenses and modalities). In the present study, conventional indirectness was predominantly used by both groups of NSs and CFL learners (Table 2.3) although the degree of politeness varied to a large extent due to the different use of internal and external modifications. Examples 13–15 illustrate utterances containing few internal and external downgraders, thereby sounding direct and impolite.

Example 13

我现在那么忙, 没有时间做作业。星期四可以给我你的文章吗? (Adv #32, S2)
Xīnlǐ zhāi wǒ méi yǒu shíjiān zuò zuòyè. Xīngqī sì kěyǐ gěi wǒ yīng yīng mei yǒu zuòzuò yì ma?
‘Now I that busy, not have time to do homework. Thursday may give you my composition QM’
It should be noted that the lower level group produced two want statements, whereas the advanced group produced none. A close examination revealed that the NS' group exclusively used the verb 想 Xiang ‘want/intend’, whereas the lower level group used 想 Yao ‘want’ in one instance that made the request impolite, and 想 Xiang in another. It is possible that the production data used in this study may not adequately reflect what the learners at a given level were capable of, and that the advanced group may have used the avoidance strategy, since the advanced group did use 想 Xiang and 想 Yao in their supportive moves. It may be that the advanced learners were aware that the want statement in Chinese could be polite if a correct verb was used. For them, choosing the correct form was not easy due to the fact that both verbs, 想 Xiang and 想 Yao, often share similar meanings, but function differently depending on the sociopragmatic context.

Internal modification

Internal modification is classified at the syntactic and lexical/phrasal levels. The syntactic modifiers produced by the participants included (1) adverbial clauses for: condition, time and reason, (2) tag questions and (3) modal auxiliaries. An adverbial clause provides an opt-out option for the hearer, thus allowing him or her to keep a distance from the speaker. In this way, both interlocutors can comfortably avoid FTAs, as in Example 16.

Example 16

你去图书馆的时候可不可以也拿我的书还我? (Adv #50, S4)

Ni qu túshūguǎn shí hou kě kè néi ná wǒ de shū huí wǒ?

‘You go library time may not may also take my book return?’

When a question-tag is added to a declarative sentence, the tone of the utterance is softened and encodes politeness. As Zhang (1995) pointed out, if request intention is specified in the main clause, maximum clarity and a degree of politeness are achieved all at once in a tag-question. The choice of appealer, however, can mitigate or aggravate the illocutionary force. For example, ‘好不好 Hào bù hào? ’ ‘OK?’ would be appropriate if used by an interlocutor of a higher social status addressing someone of a lower social status, but would otherwise be impolite if it were the reverse (Examples 17–18). None of the NSs used it in their utterances (Table 2.4). The data revealed that three CFL learners at the advanced level and five at the lower level used the tag-question appealer 好不好 Hào bù hào? ‘OK?’, although two of them also used alternative forms such as 可以吗 Kě yì ma? ‘OK?’ or 好吗 Hǎomá? ‘OK?’. The data therefore suggested that the participants may have treated appeals as interchangeable across different contexts, without realizing that the question-tag appeals in Chinese may perform different functions, and thus are sociopragmatically sensitive. For example, in the
at the advanced level consistently used 能 Néng in the formula 麻烦你能不能 V Máfán nǐ néng bùnéng V... ‘bother you if you can V...’. This student reported having studied in China for a year, which may explain his formulaic usage. In a study abroad context (see Chapters 4 and 5, this volume), learners tend to receive large amounts of target language input, including formulaic expressions, and have opportunities to use their L2 in a variety of contexts involving different interlocutors. This can have an impact on their communicative and cross-cultural competence (Barron, 2003; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2013).

In addition to syntactic modifiers, lexical/phrasal expressions can also modify the head act. Participants produced three types of lexical/phrasal modifiers: (1) politeness markers that included downgraders such as 麻烦帮我 Máfán bāngwǒ ‘bother you to help me’ or upgraders such as 为我 Gěiwǒ ‘for me’; (2) downtoners, i.e. sentential adverbials used to mitigate the request; and (3) understutters, i.e. adverbial modifiers used to decrease the imposition by under-representing the proposition of the request.

Moreover, participants’ use of the honorific form of the second person pronoun 您 Nín increased with proficiency. In contrast, their use of the politeness marker 请 Qǐng ‘please’ decreased with proficiency. In general, please Qǐng ‘please’ is not a preferred marker of politeness in Chinese. If a request is pragmalinguistically or sociopragmatically inappropriate, please Qǐng helps little, as illustrated in Examples 19 and 20.

Example 19

去图书馆吗？请把我的书拿去。（Lower level #57, S4）
Ni qù tǔshùguǎn ma? Qǐng bā wǒ de shū ná qù.
‘You go library QM? Please BA my book take to (there).’

Example 20

请你让我星期四交作文。（Lower level #60, S2）
Qǐng nǐ ràng wǒ xīqīng sì jiāo zhènzuòwén.
‘Please you let me Thursday turn in composition.’

The formulaic expression with a politeness marker and a downtoner 麻烦/帮我顺便 VO5 Máfán/bāngwǒ shùnbuenv VO ‘bother you/help me VO’ was absent in the learners’ data, but most of the NSs (87.5%) used it in scenario 4 when asking a roommate to return a book. The learners mostly used 为我 Gěiwǒ ‘for me’ or 为我 Gěiwǒ ‘for me’ to realize the request (see Examples 21–22), when 为我 Gěiwǒ ‘help me’ should have been the pragmatically appropriate expression. Although semantically it was true that the hearer was the sole agent who would return the book, pragmatically giving 麻烦 ‘for me’ or 为我 Gěiwǒ ‘for me’ sounded aggressive and impolite (Example 21). The previously mentioned advanced learner consistently used the polite formulaic expression 麻烦你能不能... Máfán nǐ néngbùnéng... ‘to bother you if...”

### Table 2.4 Frequency of syntactic modification by group (number and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Adverbial clause</th>
<th>Tag question ok?</th>
<th>Modal auxiliary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>要是... If...</td>
<td>... 行吗/行不</td>
<td>... 好不好?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... 的时候, when</td>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Synt., Syntactic Modif., Modification; Adv, Advanced.
you can...’ (Example 22), although the sentence still sounds slightly impolite because of the use of ‘for me’ Wěntó ‘for me’.

Example 21
你可不可以huan这本书给我ma? (Lower level #59, S4)
Nǐ kěnéǐ yě huàn zhèběnshū gèwō ma?
‘You can not return this book for me QM?’

Example 22
小京, mafei你能不能为我把这本书还给图书馆? (Adv H #48, S4)
Xiǎojīng, màfěi nǐ néngbùnéng wèntó bā zhèběnshū huàntō guān?
‘Xiaojing, bother you can not return for me a book this book return to library?’

Table 2.5 shows a small discrepancy in the production of the upgraders giving Gěi wǒ, 为我 Wěntó ‘for me’. The lower level group produced one fewer upgrader than the advanced group, while the NSs group produced none. Yet, the advanced group’s overuse of the upgrader may not necessarily be interpreted as their acquisition of polite expressions being behind that of the lower level group, because it is possible that the advanced group may have attempted to elaborate on their meaning more than the lower level group, and that the lower level group may have resorted to avoidance upon finding the expressions difficult. Notice also that none of the learners used the downtoner 顺便 Shùnbàn ‘simultaneously’. A number of them instead used the adverb 也 Yě ‘also’ (Example 23). 也 Yě has a similar meaning to 顺便 Shùnbàn ‘simultaneously’, but the latter makes the utterance more polite and face-saving for both interlocutors (Example 24).

Example 23
你们也可以把我的书/这本书给我ma? (Lower level #64, Adv #41, S4)
Nǐ men yě kěnéǐ bā wǒde shū/zhèběnshū gèwō ma?
‘You can also return my book/this book QM?’

Example 24
你可以顺便帮我把这本书还了么? (NS #2, S4)
Nǐ kěnéǐ shùnbàn bā zhèběnshū huàntō wǒ?
‘You can simultaneously help me return this book QM?’

The downtoners used by learners were limited. In comparison, the NSs used a large variety of them, as shown in Table 2.5.

The advanced group produced a total of three utterance containing the understaters 用一用 Yòngyīyòng ‘use a bit’ and 说 - 说 Shuō - shuō ‘speak a bit’, while the lower level group used none. In comparison, the NSs’ group predominantly used the phrase V一下 such as 用 - 用 Yòngyīyí ‘use a bit’, 还一下 Huánhéyí ‘return (the book) a bit’, or 请教一下 Qǐjiào yíjiào ‘consult a bit’ (Example 3).
These downgraders used by the NSs' group share at least one distinctive feature. The relationships between the downgraders' form and function are opaque, and their meaning is frequently lost in translation. Additional downgraders include the particle 吧 as a suggestion marker, the VP 帮我 'help me' meaning 'for me', and the adverb 順便 'simultaneously'. Semantically, these expressions are not transparent, and pragmatically they are highly functional, making utterances less coercive and consequently more polite. The only modifier used by both learner groups is the downtoner 也 'also', whose meaning is concrete and whose form and meaning mapping is straightforward.

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 display internal modifications at the syntactic and lexical/phrasal levels, respectively. The data provided evidence of the CFL learners' pragmalinguistic development. First, as the proficiency level increased, they produced more syntactic modifiers, such as adverbial clauses and the modal auxiliary 能 'can', and lexical/phrasal modifiers, such as politeness markers and the downtoner 也 'also'. Second, as the proficiency level increased, the use of 请 'please' decreased. Nonetheless, there was a persistent underuse of a number of highly functional phrases. This may have to do with the fact that the meaning of these phrases is not literal. For instance, the formulaic expression 順便帮我 V 'help me simultaneously' V is merely a polite way of saying 'do it for me'. Thus, the complexity of meaning and function may pose mapping difficulties for CFL learners.

Tables 2.6 and 2.7 compare internal modifications across two different sociopragmatic scenarios. Both lower level and advanced groups used more lexical downgraders such as the politeness marker 但 Nin in scenarios 2 and 3, suggesting that they were aware that politeness markers could be strategically used to help make a successful request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal modifier</th>
<th>Syntactic modifier</th>
<th>Syntactic modifier</th>
<th>Lexical/phrasal modifier</th>
<th>Phrasal modifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>UPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Adv C Tag Q</td>
<td>好不好? OK?</td>
<td>PM DT Please</td>
<td>给我 For me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>7 4 US</td>
<td>3 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.6 8.3</td>
<td>6.3 14.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>8 3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7 6.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>11 0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.9 135.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: DG, Downgrader; UPG, Upgrader; Adv C, Adverbial clause; Tag Q, Tag-question; PM, Politeness marker; DT, Downtoner; US, Understater; Adv, Advanced.

Table 2.7 Internal modifications by group in scenarios 2 and 3 (number and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal modifier</th>
<th>Syntactic modifier</th>
<th>Syntactic modifier</th>
<th>Lexical/phrasal modifier</th>
<th>Phrasal modifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>DG UPG</td>
<td>UPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Adv C Tag Q</td>
<td>好不好? OK?</td>
<td>PM DT Please</td>
<td>给我 For me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>5 1 US</td>
<td>7 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.4 2.1</td>
<td>14.6 2.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>7 3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.6 6.3</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>8 0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7 104.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: DG, Downgrader; UPG, Upgrader; Adv C, Adverbial clause; Tag Q, Tag-question; PM, Politeness marker; DT, Downtoner; US, Understater; Adv, Advanced.

Table 2.8 Comparison of frequency of alerters across scenarios (number and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios 1, 4</th>
<th>Scenarios 2, 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>名字/朋友/兄弟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/friend/brother</td>
<td>May I ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>8 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.6 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.6 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>19 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>40 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Adv, Advanced; N, Name; T, teacher.
2 and 3) across proficiency levels. The lower level group did not show a significant difference between the two sociopragmatic situations, t (23) = -1.86, p = 0.076. In contrast, the advanced group revealed a significant difference between the two sociopragmatic situations, t (23) = -3.24, p = 0.00 (Scenarios 1 and 4, M = 0.79, SD = 0.833; Scenarios 2 and 3, M = 1.46, SD = 0.833). Therefore, sociopragmatic development in terms of interlocutor addresses was observed with increasing proficiency level.

Although the function of the phrase 请问 Qingwén ‘may I ask/ excuse me’ is to convey politeness, learners’ usage did not seem to be sociopragmatically appropriate in four out of six occurrences produced by both groups. For example, they used the phrase in a context between friends, making their requests over-polite and thus inappropriate (Example 25). Although the utterance shown in Example 26 happened between a student and a professor, it still sounded unnatural due to a lack of supportive moves in the discourse. Example 27 illustrates the use by an advanced learner and several NSs of 请问 Qingwén ‘may I ask’ in the middle of the discourse after giving reasons or explanations for the request and before the head act to politely highlight the request. Such strategies make the illocutionary intent clear and the utterances sufficiently polite. As Examples 25–27 show, language forms such as ‘may I ask/excuse me’ function differently according to their discourse context.

Example 25
请问, 你可以给我一个bizi? (Lower level #63, S1)
Qingwén, nǐ kěyǐ gěi wǒ yī gè bizi?
‘Please ask, you may give me a pen?’

Example 26
请问, 可以不可以给你我的作文星期四? (Adv #53, S2)
Qingwén, kěyǐ bùkěyǐ gěnǐ wǒde zuòwén xīngqīrì?
‘Please ask, may not may give you my composition Thursday?’

Example 27
bashih, 这个星期我有很多的功课, 考试. 请问我可以星期四给你我的作文好吗? (Adv #41, S2)
Wáng liǎoshí, zhège xīngqī wǒ yǒu hěnduō de gǎnkè, kǎoshì. Qingwén wǒ kěyǐ xīngqīrì gěnǐ wǒde zuòwén ma?
‘Wang teacher, this week I have lots of homework, tests. Please ask I may Thursday give you my composition?’

Supportive moves
Supportive moves are used by a speaker to persuade a hearer to perform a desired act. The supportive moves produced by the participants included grounders, which provide explanations or justifications for the request, prerequisites, which prepare the hearer for a request, apologizing, promises and thanking. Table 2.9 shows the frequency of supportive moves by group. An independent-samples t-test was used to detect if the lower level group differed significantly from the advanced group in terms of the supportive moves they produced. The results revealed that t (46) = 3.381, p = 0.001 (lower level group, M = 1.67, SD = 1.31; advanced group, M = 3.17, SD = 1.74). Therefore, a significant difference was observed with the advanced group more approximating the NSs’ norms.

Among the six identified supportive moves, the grounder was the most used strategy by all participants, suggesting that in human communication, reasons and justifications for a request are cognitively primary. The preparatory supportive move is the second most frequently used strategy. A close examination of the data revealed that 66.7% of the learners used both grounder and preparatory strategies, and 33.3% used the preparatory move only.

Some supportive moves are sociopragmatically specific, closely tied to certain scenarios. Two sets of data are presented in Tables 2.10 and 2.11 to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.9 Frequency of supportive moves by group (number and percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Adv, Advanced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.10 Frequency of supportive moves in scenarios 2 and 3 (number and percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Adv, Advanced.
Table 2.11 Frequency of supportive moves in scenarios 1 and 4 (number and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Grounder</th>
<th>Preparatory</th>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Thanking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Adv, Advanced.

Illustrate differences between two types of sociopragmatic scenarios. As shown, both learner groups produced more and varied supportive moves in the situations where the degree of imposition was high than when the situation was otherwise. Moreover, their production of supportive moves and alerters showed that, as their proficiency increased, they were more aware of various sociopragmatic situations, and were generally able to alter their means of external modification accordingly, such as providing more reasons and apologies for requests of high imposition.

Discussion

With regard to the first research question, ‘Is there evidence of pragmalinguistic development in lower level versus advanced learners?’, the present study consistently found evidence of pragmalinguistic development in the CFL learners (see Tables 2.2–2.7 and the independent-samples t-tests). Like the NSs, the learners at both proficiency levels predominantly relied on the query preparatory form. Their use of the conventionally indirect and hedged performative strategies increased, and their use of the bare imperative with little modification decreased with increasing proficiency. It is important to point out, however, that the use of a query preparatory form such as ‘Can you/...?’ in Chinese does not guarantee that the request will come across as polite. Internal downgraders and supportive moves are still essential to softening the illocutionary force. Although limited, learners’ use of downgraders increased; these included adverbial clauses, politeness markers such as 恐怕 ‘not sure’; 想 ‘want/expect’, and the downtoner 也 ‘already’. The overuse of the politeness marker 请 ‘please’ decreased with the advanced group. This result is consistent with previous findings (Barron, 2003; Hendriks, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2009).

With regard to the second research question, ‘Is there evidence of sociopragmatic development in lower level versus advanced learners?’, we also found consistent evidence of sociopragmatic development throughout the data (see Tables 2.2, 2.6–2.8, 2.10–2.11, and the paired-samples t-tests). First, the use of request perspectives increasingly varied with the sociopragmatic situation. The learners’ use of an implicit perspective generally progressed toward that of the NSs. Second, the advanced group outperformed the lower level group, using more lexical/phraseal downgraders in scenarios 2 and 3 than in 1 and 4. Third, the advanced group employed more alerters and supportive moves than the lower level group in scenarios 2 and 3 than in 1 and 4, exhibiting increasing variation corresponding to differing sociopragmatic situations.

In summary, the data revealed that the CFL learners seemed to be not only increasingly aware of the sociopragmatic differences embodied in various request situations, but also able to use a progressively greater variety of strategies appropriate to the context. The ample evidence of learners’ pragmalinguistic development included increasing use of conventionally indirect strategies, internal modifications at syntactic and lexical/phraseal levels, alerters, supportive moves, and zero pronouns in the subject position. The findings also provided evidence of learners’ sociopragmatic development across different proficiency levels. This development was seen in particular in their use of a variety of downgraders, alerters and supportive moves to accommodate the degree of imposition and the social status between the interlocutors. The overextension of 请 ‘please’ and upgraders decreased in different contexts as the proficiency level increased. The findings suggest that the increase in proficiency from lower level to advanced correlates with more accurate use of NS-like strategies.

This study, however, revealed a large discrepancy between the CFL learners and the NSs, particularly in the use of pragmatically functional particles and phrases such as: 吧, a sentential particle for suggestion; 行吗 ‘Xingma’, a tag-question appeal for permission; a downtoner, 顺便 ‘Shànbù’; a politeness marker, 麻烦 ‘Máfán’; a polite expression for acknowledging help, 帮忙 ‘bāngmáng’. It is unlikely that these modifiers were lacking in the learners’ instructional input, since all the expressions appeared in their lower level course materials and had been practiced both in class and in their home assignments. Interestingly (but not surprisingly), the learners’ underuse of the expressions seems to have been selectively confined to those that do not provide clear form-meaning/function connections. The meanings of some of the expressions are opaque. For example, 吧 ‘ba’ is devoid of referential meaning, but pragmatically has a suggestive function. Similarly, V 下 yixiǎ ‘understand’ and 顺便 ‘Shànbù’ has no concrete meaning, but can function as a pragmatic downtoner. Furthermore, the meanings of some expressions are non-literal. For example, 帮忙 ‘bāngmáng’ literally translates as ‘help-
me' but figuratively means 'for me'. Similarly, the literal translation of 麻烦 Máfàn is 'to bother', but the expression serves as a politeness marker. Still other expressions, such as 行 Xíng 'OK!' and 想 Xiǎng 'want/intend', are not always interchangeable with 好不好 Hǎobù hǎo? 'OK?' and 要 Yào 'want', respectively, each conveying a different level of politeness. The use of these expressions is context-sensitive, depending on socio-pragmatic factors. They may be optional or necessary in a particular situation. For example, 下 yiē 'a bit' in V—下 V yiē can be optional. The verb itself has inherent semantic value, but the complement 下 yiē is semantically redundant, though pragmatically preferred sometimes (cf. VanPatten, 2002). The learners may not have realized that these opaque and non-literal expressions were not just 'regular words' needed for correct grammar usage, but could be essential and functional devices for producing polite requests. DeKeyser (2005) posits that the redundancy and optionality of a form-meaning relation may result in its lack of transparency and pose learning difficulties. Findings from the present study lend support to this claim. Among other things, the learners appear to have acquired the expressions that convey concrete meanings and are transparent in their form-meaning mapping, e.g. 也 Yě 'also', while the more abstract expressions such as 用 Yòng 'use', 说 Shuō 'speak' or Hē 'help me' or 替 me Tiē (polite form of) 'for me' remained a persistent challenge.

Further Inquiry

The results of this study should be regarded as tentative due to the small number of scenarios and participants employed. These limitations may affect conclusions to a certain extent. In addition, since the focus of the study was on the pragmatic development of CFL learners, it would have been desirable that a longitudinal perspective be incorporated in its design, which would have led to a more complete picture of CFL IFLP. Despite these limitations, the study did yield several important findings as reported and discussed in the previous sections.

The few extant studies of requests in CFL learners (Hong, 1997; Sun & Zhang, 2008) have focused almost exclusively on analyzing request strategies and supportive moves, with little attention paid to the internal modification and pragmatic function of particles, such as syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders. However, it is in this latter area that the present study revealed large discrepancies across the learner groups and between the CFL learners and the NSs. Further research is warranted on these discrepancies, particularly in relation to those linguistic elements that are inherently low in semantic value (see VanPatten, 2002) but high in socio-pragmatic value.

Appendix: Discourse Completion Test

Thank you for participating in this ‘test’! The questionnaire is designed to identify your Chinese language ability to communicate properly in pre-designed contexts. Proper communication means that you are able to use linguistically and pragmatically appropriate language and devices in various social situations. Please respond to the four items in the second part of the questionnaire in the manner of natural conversation.

Your name: 
(1) Your gender: M; F
(2) Your age: 
(3) Check your ethnic background: Caucasian; African-American; Hispanic; Chinese; Asian (please specify your nationality); Other (Specify) 
(4) What is your first language? 
(5) Are you somewhat bilingual with Chinese as one of the languages? Yes; No 
(6) What is/are the languages that you speak or hear from your parents or relatives? (You may check more than one) English; Chinese; Asian language; Spanish; Others, specify 
(7) Your birth place: 
(8) At what age did you move to the US if you were not born in the US? 
(9) The Chinese language course you are currently enrolled on: First year; Second year; Third year; Fourth year 
(10) Number of years of Chinese language study in high school: 0; 1; 2; 3; 4+ 
(11) Number of years of Chinese language study in Chinese School: 0; 1; 2; 3; 4+ 
(12) Have you studied in Chinese-speaking countries after high school? Yes; No. If 'yes', how long? 

I. Complete the dialogue in Chinese characters or Pinyin

(1) (Between two classmates, 张明 and 李小友) 张明 was about to write a Chinese dictation and realized that he forgot to bring pens. 张明 wants to borrow a pen from 李小友, his classmate sitting next to him.

张明: 

李小友: 好啊, 在这儿, 你拿去用吧。
(2) 张明 and his Chinese literature professor, 王老师, was supposed to turn in his composition on Tuesday. But he cannot do so because of massive assignments from other classes. 张明 explains the situation and makes a request to 王老师 to see if he can turn it in on Thursday.

王老师：好吧，星期四你一定得交啊！

(3) 张明 and his Chinese language teacher, 李老师, wants to make an appointment with 李老师 to consult with her about a few questions in the textbook. He also wants to speak Chinese with 李老师. He wonders when 李老师 has time for the appointment.

李老师：下星期四我都有时间。

(4) 张明 and his roommate, 李小京, is going to the school library to return a book. 张明 also has a book that needs to be returned. 张明 wants to ask 李小京 to return the book for him, too.

李小京：好，没问题。

Notes
(1) Internal modifiers consist of linguistic devices within the request itself that modify the illocutionary force, whereas external modifiers are external to the request, occurring either before or after it.
(2) Alters are used to get the interlocutor’s attention.
(3) QM, question marker.
(4) SM, suggestion marker.
(5) VO, verb and object.

References
3 Peer/Group Interaction in a Mandarin Chinese Study Abroad Context

Li Jin

It has been assumed that study abroad provides an ideal environment for foreign language learners to receive various types of language input, which leads to effortless and osmotic linguistic and cultural development. Many educators and researchers believe students should be completely immersed in the target language context, interacting with native speakers in the target language as much as possible from the moment they set foot in the host country, regardless of their prior language learning experience (Lafford, 1995; Lapkin et al., 1995). However, there are serious inconsistencies among research studies as to what results in students’ successful linguistic and cultural development in study abroad. One line of research that has gained much attention in recent years focuses on the formal and informal social interaction students have within local communities (e.g. Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Levin, 2001; Magrant & Back, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998). Some second language (L2) researchers (e.g. Kinginger, 2008, 2009; Ochs, 2002) propose viewing L2 development in study abroad as a language socialization process, similar to how children engage in their first language (L1) environment. In other words, students in study abroad contexts are assumed to strive to be socialized into the target culture by learning the socially acceptable language behaviors through interactions with local residents. Questions such as whether these students are ready to be socialized into the target culture and whether native speakers of the target language are willing to provide appropriate linguistic and cultural assistance to help socialize the learners remain open to debate.

In recent years, a growing number of American students have been studying abroad in China. Many of them go with the assumption that their language proficiency will inevitably improve once they live in China and are surrounded by Chinese-speaking people. On the other hand, it is still unclear whether the historically monocultural Chinese people, particularly those with whom American study abroad students interact on a daily basis, are