The Effect of Instruction on Chinese EFL Learners’ Compliment Responses

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Abstract
This study used a pretest-posttest design to compare the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction on Chinese EFL learners’ (N=41) production of compliment responses (CRs). A video of naturalistic conversations containing CRs by native English speakers was shown to both instruction groups, along with 180 minutes of in-class instruction. The instruction differed in that the explicit group received metapragmatic information on the target feature while the implicit group did not. The tests consisted of naturalistic role-plays and conversations with a native English speaking interlocutor. Participants’ CRs were rated using an analytic rubric containing three criteria: semantic strategies, grammar and vocabulary, as well as pronunciation and intonation. The results showed that both types of instruction were equally effective in facilitating participants’ production of CRs. Implications for the use of performance-based assessments in interlanguage pragmatic research and suggestions for L2 instruction are provided.

Keywords: compliment responses; speech acts; Chinese; instruction

Introduction
Second language pragmatics instruction has received sustained interest from researchers who have generally reached a consensus on the effectiveness of instruction on L2 speech acts acquisition (Billmyer, 1990a, 1990b; Bouton, 1994; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Vellenga, 2008; Yoshimi, 2001). According to Rose’s (2005) overview on the effect of instruction in second language pragmatics, sufficient evidence has indicated that L2 pragmatic instruction, if conducted properly, assists learners’ acquisition of various pragmatic features and is more effective than simple exposure to the target language. Due to their close connection to the social preferences and cultural values of the target language, compliment responses (CRs) were among the first speech acts to be included in L2 pragmatic teaching (Holmes & Brown, 1987) and interventional research (Billmyer, 1990a, 1990b). They were regarded as one speech act particularly worth teaching because of the rich evidence shown by research on the dramatic differences in the behaviors of this speech act between English and other languages (e.g., Al Falasi, 2007; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Golato, 2002, 2005; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Nelson, Al-Batal, & Echols, 1996; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Yu, 2003, 2004).

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The effects of two instructional approaches with different degrees of explicitness/implicitness were widely examined in previous studies, which revealed conflicting findings: While a majority of researchers found that explicit instruction, with metapragmatic knowledge provided by the instructor, better facilitated L2 pragmatic acquisition (House, 1996; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Nguyen, Pham, & Pham, 2012; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001; Soler, 2005; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001), a few studies showed little or no difference between the long term effects of these two approaches (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005) or even the opposite result (Kubota, 1995). The present study examines the effectiveness of these two instructional approaches on CRs by adopting two performance-based assessments—naturalistic role-plays (Tran, 2006) and conversations (Baba, 1996)—in order to test the learners’ CRs in naturalistic settings.

Compliment Responses in Naturalistic Settings

Compliment responses (CRs) are complicated speech acts because they are closely connected to the cultural values of human societies. In responding to compliments, native speakers from Asian regions such as China, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam have been impacted by different cultural values compared to native speakers of English (Chen, 1993; Baba, 1996; Tran, 2006; Yu, 2004). According to Chen (1993), Leech’s Agreement Maxim offered good interpretations for the CRs produced by native speakers from the U.S., who predominantly adopted acceptance strategies, while his Modesty Maxim offered fair justifications for the rejection strategies preferred by native speakers of Mandarin Chinese in responding to compliments. However, since English has been gaining a global language status in China, the differences between Chinese and English CRs are diminishing, exemplified by Chinese speakers’ adoption of more acceptance strategies and fewer rejections and self-denigrations (Chen & Yang, 2010). Moreover, CRs are also shown to be closely relevant to different contextual variables, such as gender (e.g., Herbert, 1990) and social distances (e.g., Gajaseni, 1995). These variables, together with cultural differences, have added complexity to the study of CRs.

Although intricate speech acts like compliment responses are prevalent in daily conversations, they are difficult to collect. Despite the efforts made by researchers in collecting natural samples of CRs (e.g., Wolfson, 1983), such a data collection task is extremely time-consuming and is often not practical for classroom-based instructional studies. On the other hand, traditional methods in collecting speech act samples (i.e., written or oral discourse completion tasks/DCTs) save the researchers time in obtaining large quantities of data; however, the DCT data only represents participants’ knowledge of speech acts, not production. Keeping the balance between research control and authenticity in speech act production, therefore, is a challenge that many researchers are faced with.

Baba (1996) elicited learners’ compliment responses via naturalistic conversations. Participants (English as a second language and Japanese as a second language learners) were recruited to carry out conversations with a native speaker of the target language. However, the real research focus (i.e., CRs) was not revealed to the participants. Similarly, in exploring compliment responses made by Vietnamese learners of English, Tran (2006) designed a naturalistic role-play task, which obtained learners’ CR productions under the disguise of a series of communicative tasks (e.g., giving directions) without their being aware that CRs were the research focus. These thoughtful research designs ensured the quantity of the target speech acts because the interlocutors were trained to insert compliments in the middle of the conversations, and participants’ corresponding responses were thus recorded. Also, since the participants did not know that CRs were the research focus, their responses were spontaneous, which mirrored CR productions in real-life settings.

Cheng (2011) adapted Tran’s (2006) role-play task and used it to compare compliment responses produced by Chinese ESL and EFL learners and native English speakers. The results showed L2 speakers’, especially EFL speakers, difficulties in utilizing a variety of response strategies other than saying “thank you/thanks” in all complimenting situations, especially on personal traits (e.g., It’s really thoughtful of you to bring a dish.), whereas native speakers were skillful in using a range of strategies, such as credit-shifting (e.g., My pleasure/Thanks for having me over). EFL learners often have little exposure to authentic language environments, and this can make target
speech act instruction difficult, which often requires authentic input. Thus, it is worthwhile to discover an efficient way via classroom instruction to help learners improve their speech act performance.

**Two Instructional Approaches with Different Degrees of Explicitness/Implicitness**

Following the suggestions by Jeon and Kaya (2006) and Nguyen et al. (2012), the current study treats the distinction between explicit and implicit instruction as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Previous interventional studies on interlanguage pragmatics mostly compared the effectiveness of two different teaching approaches, with different degrees of explicitness/implicitness. Explicit pragmatic instruction usually refers to different ‘focus on forms’ techniques (Nguyen et al., 2012), including meta-pragmatic explanations, structural exercises, and direct corrective feedback from the instructor. Implicit pragmatic instruction, on the other hand, has not been well operationalized in previous studies and has often just been described as pure linguistic exposure without the instructor's supply of target language forms and metapragmatic explanations (Jeon & Kaya, 2006). It often has its ‘focus on form’ (Nguyen et al., 2012) and emphasizes learners’ self-discovery of target pragmatic features.

In most interventional studies of speech acts with a comparison group design, the explicit group outperformed the implicit group after the intervention (e.g., House, 1996; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001; Soler, 2005; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001). Soler (2005) discovered that after 30 hours of instruction time, explicit instruction (i.e., focus on forms instruction) was more helpful than implicit instruction (i.e., focus on form instruction) in promoting written production of requests in dialogue forms by Spanish EFL learners. Takahashi (2001) compared the written DCT results on requests by Japanese EFL learners under four instructional approaches with different degrees of input enhancement, each lasting for 6 hours. Results again revealed that an explicit instructional approach, with the provision of metapragmatic instruction, enhanced input to a higher degree when compared to the three implicit approaches, and thus promoted a more positive learning effect. Studies like the above two, by only incorporating written outcome measures, revealed the learners’ competency in or perception of the target pragmatic features but failed to document their performance in real communicative contexts.

More studies examined the effectiveness of different instructional approaches by means of oral, or a combination of oral and written measurements (e.g., House, 1996; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Nguyen et al., 2012; Tateyama, 2001; Yoshimi, 2001). These studies, by adopting oral data collection methods, moved one step further in describing learners’ pragmatic performance after instruction.

House (1996) examined the acquisition of conversational routines by advanced EFL learners at a German university. After 14 weeks of instruction, results showed that the explicit group outperformed the implicit group in using more types of routine formulae and discourse strategies in conversational tasks. Liddicoat and Crozet (2001) focused on an interactional norm, “Did you have a good weekend?”, and taught it to a group of beginning level French students in Australia. After a series of consciousness-raising activities containing both explicit and implicit instruction, learners in their study were shown to be capable of maintaining the French-like content in their role-plays in a delayed posttest after one year. Nguyen et al. (2012) investigated the use of criticism realization strategies by high-intermediate college level EFL learners in Vietnam. After 10 weeks of instruction, results also showed that the explicit group performed significantly better than the implicit groups in all measures, including a written DCT; an oral role-play; and oral peer feedback. In a study on teaching the Japanese formulaic expression *sumimases*, Tateyama (2001) found that beginning level Japanese-as-a-foreign-language learners who received explicit instruction outperformed those who received implicit instruction. Both types of treatment lasted for 50 minutes, and the learners were tested in a multiple-choice test and a structured role-play test rated by native speakers of Japanese. In another study focusing on Japanese pragmatics, Yoshimi (2001) discovered that after 24 hours of explicit instruction, a group of 3rd-year college-level Japanese learners made significant progress in their overall frequency and accuracy in their use of interactional markers in story-telling tasks. The adoption of conversational tasks and role-plays, as illustrated in the above studies, again moved one step further in helping to describe learners’ pragmatic performance.
Despite the fact that a majority of interventional studies have demonstrated support for explicit instruction as more effective in enhancing better pragmatic performance, there have been some exceptions. Koike and Pearson’s (2005) study on teaching Spanish suggestions to American students (novice-high/intermediate-low proficiency level in Spanish) yielded different results. In this study, the groups receiving explicit instruction and feedback performed better in the multiple-choice test, while those who received implicit instruction and feedback performed better in the dialogue completion task. For both groups, there was no obvious treatment effect after six weeks (or in the delayed posttest). These results indicated that explicit and implicit instruction might contribute to learners’ acquisition of different areas of the target pragmatic feature. The authors attributed the main reason for the implicit treatment effect to the use of question recasts, which might have pushed the learners to elaborate and moderate their suggestions and suggestion responses.

House (1996) discovered that both instructional types failed to assist advanced German learners of English in uttering fluent and target-like responses to conversational routines. This finding indicated that explicit instruction was not a panacea for all pragmatic deficiencies. Similar persistent pragmatic problems were evidenced by Yoshimi (2001), whose learners made little progress in managing structural transitions and using interactional discourse markers in story-telling despite the fact that metapragmatic information was provided. Likewise, in Liddicoat and Crozet’s (2001) study, after a combination of explicit and implicit consciousness-raising activities, micro-elements of the targeted pragmatic feature, such as those related to language form, were not successfully acquired by French learners.

Another exception is shown in Kubota (1995) on teaching conversational implicature to Japanese EFL learners. Results showed that after 20 minutes of instruction, the implicit instruction group outperformed the explicit instruction group in a multiple-choice and a sentence-composing test, although the differences disappeared by the time of the delayed posttest. Moreover, Tateyama (2001) cautioned the downside of explicit instruction, which might result in the learners’ overemphasis and overuse of the instructed features while ignoring other appropriate features in different settings. The teacher-dominated nature of most explicit instruction methods made them less appealing than more inductive instructional methods, in which learners were given opportunities to discover the forms and usages by themselves.

A combination of explicit and implicit instruction was suggested by Martínez-Flor and Fukuya (2005), who found that after 12 hours of instruction, both explicit and implicit groups of intermediate-level Spanish learners of English were able to make great improvement in producing target-like suggestions with no statistically significant difference in the interventional effect.

The only comparison-group interventional study on compliment responses was conducted by Rose and Kwai-fun (2001), who adopted inductive (similar to implicit) and deductive (similar to explicit) instruction and compared results from two experimental groups of English learners in Hong Kong. Results from three different written questionnaire measures, including a self-assessment questionnaire, a DCT, and a metalinguistic assessment questionnaire revealed that the deductive group demonstrated a distinctive advantage over the inductive group in producing target-like forms and usages. These findings were not a surprise since the advantage of explicit instruction was to provide metalinguistic knowledge, which was just what was accessed in the questionnaire tasks. The central issues of how learners’ use compliment responses in real communicative settings and which instructional type is more effective to help them realize more target-like pragmatic performance were unfortunately still left unanswered.

The results from previous studies indicate that it was perhaps too early to conclude that explicit instruction was the best approach in facilitating target language pragmatic acquisition. Multiple factors should be considered while making comparisons of different instructional approaches, such as the target pragmatic feature, duration of the instruction, learners’ proficiency levels, as well as the test selection and possible test effects.

In short, compliment responses, as a complex speech act involving rich social-cultural elements, deserve more emphasis in current pragmatic research, especially in the acquisition of second language pragmatics. Although pragmatic instruction is considered helpful, previous interventional studies have not provided a
conclusive answer in terms of whether more explicit instruction can better facilitate second language learners’ interlanguage pragmatic development.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of instruction with two varying degrees of explicitness/implicitness on Chinese EFL learners’ compliment responses in naturalistic contexts. With relatively less exposure to target-language features, EFL learners often have more difficulties in acquiring L2 pragmatic knowledge compared to ESL learners (Cheng, 2011; Yu, 2004). These difficulties faced by EFL learners highlight the importance of examining the effectiveness of classroom pragmatic instruction. The present study is designed to answer the following two research questions:

1. Does pragmatic instruction with different degrees of explicitness/implicitness facilitate Chinese EFL learners’ compliment response production?
2. Do the two types of instruction impact learners’ production of compliment responses differently?

Methodology

Participants
The initial participant pool included 54 sophomores from a large public university in northern China. Since 13 students did not participate in some parts of the study, the final number of participants was 41, which included 19 females and 22 males. They ranged in age from 19 to 22 years, with a mean of 20.02 (SD=0.82). All participants were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, recruited from a public, university-level English listening and speaking course for non-English majors. The two-credit course was offered every semester, and the class met for 90 minutes once per week. A quick survey of the course syllabi and textbooks used by the participants revealed no trace of information on pragmatics in general, nor is the target pragmatic feature, compliment responses addressed in any of the existing course materials. The participants reported a mean of 9.56 years of previous English instruction (SD=1.37) and majored in 17 different subject areas across four academic disciplines, including language and arts, social and behavioral science, business, and science. Their previous English learning experiences were mostly exam-driven, and communicative activities were rarely emphasized in their classrooms. Out of the 41 participants in total, 38 reported that they were preparing for study-abroad exams such as TOEFL, GRE, or IELTS.

Two classes taught by the same instructor were randomly assigned to receive either explicit or implicit treatment, and only students who volunteered to participate in the tests were included in the actual data collection process. The explicit group contained 22 participants (Male=13, Female=9), while the implicit group had 19 participants (Male=9, Female=10). The general oral proficiency of the participating EFL students was assessed using the Test of Spoken English (TSE) Scoring Guide. The participants scored in three different levels, intermediate (TSE=40), higher-intermediate (TSE=50), and high (TSE=60). The explicit group had a mean score of 49.62 (SD=7.74) and the implicit group had a mean score of 51.07 (SD=6.85).

A female native speaker of American English volunteered to be the interlocutor in this study. She had a Bachelor’s degree in Public Relations in the U.S. and had one-year English teaching experience at the same university where this study took place. The interlocutor was invited to the EFL participants’ classes to meet and talk with the participants during the week before the pretest.

Design
Prior to this study, a small-scale pilot test was conducted with a group of Chinese EFL learners (N=10) from two non-participating classes taught by the same instructor. The pilot test results showed that the naturalistic conversation and role-play tasks were identical in terms of providing the same amount of compliments and eliciting corresponding responses from the participants.

The current study adopted a pretest-treatment-posttest design to examine the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on Chinese EFL learners’ compliment responses. The dependent variable was the learners’ CRs, which were assessed by the two researchers following an analytic rubric (See Table 1 on p. 17-18). The
The independent variable was instruction, which had two levels: explicit and implicit instruction. Both groups watched an instructional video on compliments and compliment responses among friends and classmates on a U.S. campus. Explicit instruction involved the supply of metalinguistic information regarding the target pragmatic features revealed in the video (i.e., a total of 8 types of common compliment responses) and direct corrective feedback from the instructor (see handout in Appendix A). Implicit instruction consisted of communicative activities, which placed the students at the center of the classroom: The students were asked to work in groups and to generate and categorize the different types of compliment responses and their usages after watching the video. The instructor only served as a facilitator to the classroom discussion and provided recasts or clarification requests as implicit feedback (see handout in Appendix B). For both groups, the total treatment time lasted for 180 minutes of two class periods over two weeks.

**Materials**

**Background Survey**
Each participant completed a background survey in Chinese, which gathered both personal information and information related to their English language learning experiences. Specific questions regarding the students’ contact with ‘authentic’ English language culture (e.g., “Have you learned about how to carry out different language functions in an English-speaking country, such as making a request or apology?”) were also included due to their close relevance to the focus of this study.

**Treatment Materials**
A video created by the first author was used as the main instructional material in this study. The video consisted of seven naturalistic conversations by native English speakers in their daily lives in the U.S. Each conversation happened in a different setting on a university campus, and the speakers demonstrated giving and responding to compliments with their friends and colleagues as part of informal dialogues. To ensure the naturalness of these dialogues, minimum instruction was provided to the speakers, except for the fact that each pair should include one compliment in one of the four most common situations for people to pay compliments in English and Chinese (i.e., appearance/clothing, ability/work, possessions, and personality) (Holmes & Brown, 1987; Chen, 1993). The video lasted for about 20 minutes and covered a range of topics, such as conference presentations, school life, sports playing, dressing up for a job interview, and personal belongings (e.g., a new car). The speakers were all graduate teaching assistants, who spoke clearly in Standard English at an average speed. Each video clip was shot at least twice, and only the versions with the best sound and picture quality were included in the treatment.

Two different sets of handouts were provided to the explicit and implicit group respectively (see Appendix A and B). For the explicit group, a list of all compliment response types illustrated in the video was provided along with examples (different from the ones in the video). The participants were encouraged to match the responses shown in the video to the types listed on their handout, and the most common types of Chinese compliment responses (as cited in Chen, 1993) were listed along with examples in Chinese. Cultural differences and preferences in compliment responses were discussed in class through these examples. The implicit group was asked to generate the types of compliment responses shown in the video on their own through small group work. A transcript of the video was provided to the implicit group for the participants to check and complete their notes. A similar cultural comparison was carried out in the implicit group; however, rather than providing the participants with explicit examples, they were asked to think of their own examples and to compare them with the examples shown in the video. For both groups, an open role-play practice, including four different scenarios, which corresponded with the four most common complimenting situations shown in the video were assigned to each pair as homework (see Appendix C).

**Test Materials**
Two sets of tasks, including one naturalistic role-play and one conversation were designed for the pretest and the
posttest respectively. The role-play task used in the pretest adopted the same version as in Cheng (2011), and the one used in the posttest is included in Appendix D. The conversational task is displayed in Appendix E.

A naturalistic role-play task was designed to elicit spontaneous production in controlled settings. As Tran (2006) has explained, a naturalistic role-play allows the researcher to implement the targeted pragmatic feature into communicative tasks that closely resemble real life situations and to take easy control of the data collection process. The two naturalistic role-play tasks used in this study were adapted versions of the original one designed by Tran (2006). Each role-play was divided into two situations, in which the participant was asked to carry on communicative tasks with the native-English-speaking interlocutor, such as greetings, giving directions, asking for and offering help, and describing a place, a thing, and a procedure. These multiple tasks served as distractions to keep the participant’s attention away from the research focus. Two different sets of instructions were given to each role-play participant and interlocutor. No information was provided to the participants indicating that they would receive compliments; however, the interlocutors were made aware of the fact that they needed to pay four compliments (corresponding to the four most common complimenting situations) at different points during the role-play and that they needed to do so naturally by integrating the compliments into their conversations.

A conversation task was also carried out in conjunction with the role-play. Following Baba’s (1996) design, the conversation task in this study used an open-ended framework, in which there was minimum content requirement. The only requirement for the student participant was to bring one favorite object to the research site; the interlocutor was asked to start the conversation and to naturally insert four compliments (corresponding to the four common complimenting situations) during the conversation.

The two sequenced naturalistic tasks generated a total of eight compliments with two compliments in each of the four most common complimenting situations. This provided a more accurate depiction of the participants' compliment response behaviors compared to the use of a single task.

Procedure
This study was carried out over a six-week period. In the preparation stage, the research details, including the test scheduling, materials, and teaching approaches were discussed between the two authors over the phone and via email on a weekly basis for one month before the study. The first author came up with the research design and created all the materials. The second author (also the EFL instructor) provided training to the interlocutor and instruction to the participants. In preparation for each test, the interlocutor was first provided with an instructional manual, including the goal of the task, their assigned role, the settings, and detailed steps from initiating to finalizing the task. Then the interlocutor was asked to go over the tasks together with the second author, who role-played an EFL participant’s role and answered all questions and concerns from the interlocutor. The interlocutor was also asked to put a checkmark on each item listed on the instructional manual after covering it and to return the manual to the second author after completing each test in the data collection. It was made clear to the interlocutor that each person-to-person conversation should be no longer than 20 minutes. Technical support on how to operate the audio-recording equipment was also provided in the training sessions.

During the first week of the study, the EFL participants were recruited, and their background information was obtained. The pretest started immediately after collecting the participants’ information and lasted until the end of the second week. Instruction was provided to both groups over the following two weeks, followed by a posttest.

An informed consent form was provided to the participants at the beginning of this study. After agreeing to participate, each participant completed a background survey. The EFL instructor put an audio-recorder in the classroom while the participants were doing regular in-class role-play activities to familiarize them with the presence of an audio-recorder.

Before the pretest, instruction handouts were provided to both the participants and the interlocutor during the first week. The EFL instructor went through pretest instructions in detail during class time and answered all questions and concerns from the participants. A separate meeting was held with the interlocutor, who was provided with the written information as well as oral explanations regarding the pretest. A pretest sign-up sheet
was created based on the detailed daily schedules provided by the interlocutor. Each participant was asked to find one 20-minute time slot which worked best for him or her in the following two weeks and to show up in the designated meeting place with the instructional sheet and the one object they were required to bring. The posttest followed the same preparation procedure as the one in the pretest.

In each test, each participant met with the interlocutor separately for a maximum of 20 minutes at the prescheduled time in the instructor’s office. Half of the participants did the role-play first and then the conversation, while the other half did the two tasks in the reverse order. All tasks were audio-recorded with the participants’ permission.

Instructional treatment was provided in two class periods for a total of 180 minutes. For both groups, the first 30 minutes of instructional time was used for the EFL instructor to provide background knowledge on compliments and compliment responses. First, the social functions and frequency of usage related to the targeted speech acts in both American and Chinese culture were discussed. Then, a handout on how to give compliments was distributed to all students. A complimenting formula and steps for giving compliments were introduced to both groups of students. The purpose of this introduction was to ensure that every participant had access to the same background knowledge and basic complimenting expressions in preparation for the follow-up class activities.

The rest of the 150 minutes were targeted at instructing students on how to respond to compliments. The self-made video was shown to both groups first. Then, a handout was provided to the explicit and implicit group respectively. The explicit instruction was dominated by the instructor’s explanations, with reference to and playback of specific video clips. The implicit instruction was more student-centered. The instructor facilitated the students’ self-discovery and class discussion by playing the video multiple times and providing a video-transcript to the class at the end. Both groups were assigned with the same homework, including four role-plays related with giving and responding to compliments in the four most common complimenting situations. The second class period was used as a practicum for students to act out the role-plays in their pairs. The instructor provided feedback to the explicit group by pointing out the inappropriate compliment responses and discussing possible improvements with the pairs. In contrast, either recasts or clarification requests were given to the pairs in the implicit group as indirect feedback. The pairs were asked to reflect on their own performance and on self-improvements without explicit knowledge provided by the instructor.

Analysis
To assess the students’ compliment responses, an analytic grading rubric was developed, following an example given by Ishihara (2010). Three criteria were considered to be crucial in realizing a successful compliment response: semantic strategies, grammar and vocabulary, as well as pronunciation and intonation. Table 1 displays this grading rubric.

The two researchers first experimented with this rubric in a norming session, assessing the compliment responses that emerged from a set of 10 naturalistic role-plays and conversations collected from participants who only showed up in the pretest. Concrete examples were drawn from the coding results of this norming session to facilitate the actual data analysis, as illustrated in Table 2.

Paired sample t-tests were used to examine participants’ change from pretest to posttest in producing appropriate compliment responses. An ANCOVA test was used to compare the two groups’ compliment response behaviors in the posttest. All data were separately coded and scored by the two authors. Inter-rater reliability obtained by Pearson Correlations was .83 for the pretest and .86 for the posttest. The mean rating scores between the two raters were used in the final analyses.

Effect sizes were calculated to measure the magnitude of effects of each instruction type in regards to time difference (i.e., from pretest to posttest). Cohen’s $d$ was selected as the measurement, following the standards in Second Language Acquisition for effect sizes recommended by Oswald and Plonsky (2011), “with $d = .40$ representing a small effect, $d = .70$ medium, and $d = 1.00$ a large effect” (p. 99).
### Table 1

Analytic Grading Rubric on Compliment Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The student utilizes appropriate and adequate number of semantic strategies in responding to a compliment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The student utilizes appropriate but inadequate number of semantic strategies in responding to a compliment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The student utilizes some inappropriate semantic strategies or lacks important semantic strategies in responding to a compliment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The student utilizes inappropriate semantic strategies in responding to a compliment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The student does not produce any utterance.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The student uses accurate grammatical structures and word choices in a compliment response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The student has an average use of grammatical structures and word choices with some errors that do not usually cause confusion/misinterpretations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The student has some problematic use of grammatical structures and word choices that often cause confusion/misinterpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The student has serious trouble using grammatical structures and makes word choices that often do not make sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The student does not produce any utterance.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The student has comprehensible pronunciation and appropriate intonation in responding to a compliment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The student has generally comprehensible pronunciation and moderately appropriate intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The student’s pronunciation is sometimes incomprehensible and/or contains somewhat inappropriate intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The student has largely incomprehensible pronunciation and/or inappropriate intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The student does not produce any utterance.</td>
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## Table 2

**Examples and Rationales of Rating Scores on Compliment Responses**

### a. Semantic strategies: 4 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| 4     | Interlocutor: I love your MP4 player! It’s very cool!  
Student: Thank you. My father bought it for me. It’s a new style.  
(Rationale: The student appropriately responded using more than two semantic strategies, including an appreciation token, “thank you” and an explanation, “My father bought it for me. It’s a new style.”) |
| 3     | Interlocutor: I heard you got an essay published in the school newspaper!  
Congratulations!  
Student: Thanks.  
(Rationale: Although the student appropriately responded to the compliment using an appreciation token, “thanks”, the conversation ended abruptly due to the short response, which distanced the student from the interlocutor.) |
| 2     | Interlocutor: I saw your article published in the newspaper! Your writing is great!  
Student: Maybe just so so ba.  
(Rationale: The student’s compliment response is a direct translation from Chinese, which is a simple downgrade of the compliment (ended by a particle “ba”, transferred from Mandarin Chinese). Although downgrading is acceptable in English compliment responses, it is often used together with an appreciation token, like “thank you” or “thanks”. Missing this important semantic strategy makes the response somewhat inappropriate and reflects little awareness of the sociocultural norms in the target community.) |
| 1     | Interlocutor: I saw you walking in the door, and I saw your glasses. I love them!  
Student: Why?  
(Rationale: This is a rather awkward compliment response. It may be considered inappropriate or even rude here because the student is normally not expected to ask a question, which may show a lack of attention or inadequate sociopragmatic comprehension skills.) |

### b. Grammar and vocabulary: 4 points

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<th>Score</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| 4     | Interlocutor: I read it in the newspaper last week. And you did such a great job writing it. It was a lot of fun to read. And it made me laugh so hard.  
Student: Thank you. It’s my honor.  
(Rationale: This compliment response is correctly formed in terms of grammatical structures and word choices.) |
| 3     | Interlocutor: I have to say that I love the jacket that you’re wearing.  
Student: It’s one of my friends bought from New York City.  
(Rationale: This compliment response contains an inaccurate grammatical structure, but it does not usually cause confusion/misinterpretations.) |
| 2     | Interlocutor: You are a very hard-working student.  
Student: Em [pause] not so hard. |
Interlocutor: You must be a very hard-working student.
Student: Yeah, but it pays.
Interlocutor: It what?
Student: It pays.
Interlocutor: It pays? What do you mean by that?

(Rationale: This compliment response is a sentence fragment without a clear subject reference. It is somewhat difficult to interpret what the student meant by “not so hard”.)

(Rationale: The student’s word choices, “it pays”, may not make sense to the listener and created difficulty for understanding.)

Results
Preliminary analysis of the pretest data was carried out to check if the two groups were comparable at the pretests, as well as if the gender and oral proficiency of the learners in the two groups were similar. Gender has been shown to be a variable which can influence learners’ production of compliment responses (Cedar, 2006; Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001); therefore, an independent sample t-test was first conducted to check if male and female participants performed differently in the pretest or posttest. Results showed no significant difference in the performance of compliment responses between the two gender groups (M= 22, F= 19) in either the pretest ($t_{(39)} =1.20$, $p=.24$) or the posttest ($t_{(39)} = .63$, $p = .54$). Differences in target-language proficiency levels have also been shown to impact the production of compliment responses (Yu, 1999), so a simple ANOVA was used to check if the three proficiency groups (intermediate n=11; higher-intermediate n=23; and high n=7) performed differently in the pretest. Results showed that the participants’ compliment response production was not significantly different among the three proficiency groups ($F_{(2)} = .17$, $p=.85$). Finally, an independent sample t-test was conducted to examine if there was a pre-existing difference in the compliment response production between the two instruction groups. The two groups did not significantly differ from each other in compliment response performance in the pretest ($t_{(39)} =1.71$, $p=.10$). In summary, the preliminary analyses indicated that gender, general oral proficiency, and pretest scores were not significant factors in the learners’ performance of compliment responses.

The first research question asked whether instruction facilitated Chinese EFL learners’ production of compliment responses. Descriptive statistics showed that the explicit group generated more appropriate compliment responses at the posttest (M=9.93, SD=1.31) than the pretest (M=7.98, SD=1.29). A similar pattern was also shown for the implicit group, with better performance of compliment responses at the posttest (M=10.48, SD=1.09) than the pretest (M=8.80; SD=1.76). This positive trend is illustrated in Figure 1.

To answer the first research question, a paired-sample t-test was conducted for each instruction group separately. Findings showed that there was a significant increase from the pretest to the posttest scores for the explicit group ($t_{(21)} =4.75$, $p=.00$) and for the implicit group ($t_{(18)} =3.60$, $p=.00$). Cohen’s $d$ was computed based on the descriptive statistics, and a large effect size was shown for both the explicit ($d= 1.50$) and the implicit group ($d= 1.15$). Therefore, both types of instruction were considered to have a positive impact on the participants’ performance of compliment responses.
The second research question asked whether the two instruction types had a different impact on the participants’ compliment response behaviors. As previously illustrated in Figure 1, an increased score for compliment responses was observed for both the explicit group and the implicit group. In order to compare the effects of the two instruction types, an ANCOVA test was used with pretest scores included as a covariate. The results showed that there was no significant difference on the post-test scores between the explicit and the implicit group ($F_{(1)} = 2.06, p = .16$).

**Discussion**

This study explored the effectiveness of instruction and compared the impact of two types of instruction on Chinese EFL learners’ production of target-like compliment responses. The results showed that learners had significant improvement in their compliment response performance after instruction and that there was no significant difference between the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction. The fact that the explicit group significantly improved after the instruction came as no surprise, being consistent with previous findings (House, 1996; Nguyen et al., 2012; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001; Soler, 2005; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001). The similar positive effect of implicit instruction was in line with the findings by Martínez-Flor and Fukuya (2005), whose study also showed the usefulness of implicit instruction in facilitating L2 learners’ pragmatic performance. The different findings on the effectiveness of implicit instruction between the current study and many previous studies may be attributed to many factors, such as the different operationalization of implicit instruction, the different target pragmatic features, as well as the differences in students’ level of proficiency of the target language. In the present study, the implicit group had more exposure to the target language in a textual form than the explicit group by having the entire video transcript. This might, to a large extent, have compensated for the lack of metapragmatic information provided by the instructor. In addition, given sufficient consciousness-raising activities provided by both types of instruction, the pragmalinguistic forms of compliment responses, compared to those of many other speech acts (e.g., requests, criticisms, and implicatures), might be easier to acquire for the participants in this study, with all of them having an intermediate-advanced oral proficiency based on their TSE scores.

In contrast to the findings in the majority of previous studies, this study showed no significant difference between the effectiveness of the two instruction types, which resembled the results from Martínez-Flor and
Fukuya (2005), despite the fact that a different learner group and pragmatic feature were focused on in the current study. This result indicates that both explicit and implicit instruction positively contribute to learners’ pragmatic production by raising their awareness in producing target-like compliment responses. Compared with the average effect sizes reported in Jeon and Kaya’s (2006) meta-analysis, the explicit instruction in the current study generated a smaller effect size ($d=1.50$) in comparison to the average effect size for explicit pragmatic instruction ($d=1.91$), while the implicit instruction had only a slightly larger effect size ($d=1.15$) compared to the average ($d=1.01$).

The learners’ awareness was illustrated in the posttest dialogues of several participants from both groups, who indicated that they were not only aware of the fact that they were given a compliment, but also understood the differences between the typical American ways and the traditional Chinese ways to respond to a compliment. One participant from the explicit group, for example, said to the interlocutor after receiving multiple compliments in the conversation:

I think foreigners always like to praise people. You’re giving me too much praise and sometimes I feel that I almost cannot manage them. We Chinese do not like to praise others too often, because others may think you want something from them if you always say good things.

This excerpt shows that the participant recognized that the interlocutor had paid them compliments, although such awareness was not shown in the pretest data. It is also noteworthy to highlight that the participant was comparing the two cultures on the frequency of giving compliments and the social thoughts as well as expressing their own feelings towards receiving compliments. Such detailed reaction and analysis might be influenced by the activities the students did during the in-class instruction, when they were encouraged to think of typical compliment responses in their home culture and to compare them with the most commonly occurring American compliment responses in the instructional video.

Surprisingly, even without explicit knowledge being provided, participants in the implicit group also demonstrated the same awareness of the compliments they had received in the conversation and the role-play. In the posttest, one participant from the implicit group commented after receiving a compliment from the interlocutor that “you always like the things that I showed to you” and expressed their happiness that they both had similar preferences. Again, this type of response was not shown in the pretest data.

In terms of the typical response types produced by the participants, both groups were able to provide more detailed explanations after receiving compliments, just like what was shown by the native English speakers in naturalistic settings (Cheng, 2011). Frequent use of explanations as a compliment response strategy was a more advanced step for the learners to approach target-like performance because providing relevant explanations regarding the complimenting objects or subjects was more cognitively demanding for L2 learners, compared to a simple reaction using formulaic appreciation token forms (i.e., Thank you). The following are two excerpts from the naturalistic role-play task in the pretest and posttest from the same participant, who demonstrated a typical change in the use of explanations.

1) Excerpt from the pretest role-play task:
Interlocutor: Wow, it is such a cool bike! It’s so pretty. I like the color.
Participant: Thank you.

2) Excerpt from the post-test role-play task:
Interlocutor: Yours (referring to the MP4 player) looks really cool. It looks like it is made very well, has good technology and I really like the color of it.
Participant: Thanks. I got this from my father as a birthday gift. I also really love the white color. Not so many are like this in the market.
In both excerpts, compliments were paid to the participant’s personal belongings. In the pretest, a typical response that most participants adopted was a simple thank you, just like the participant in the first excerpt. Although this response was not wrong or impolite, the conversation usually came to a stop whenever more information was not provided after saying thank you. This discontinuation of the talk could potentially weaken the communication forces between the two speakers. Since the conversation and role-play tasks in this study closely resembled real-life communication between friends, a lack of words from one speaker could lead to silence and frustration from the other speaker. The analysis of the interlocutor’s conversation scripts showed that they were able to come up with more information and be more engaged in the tasks when the participants produced more explanations in response to their compliments. This improvement in compliment response production was shown in the second excerpt from the posttest, which demonstrated the participant’s ability to keep the conversation going by providing explanations after showing appreciation for the compliment.

This study has implications for both interlanguage pragmatic research and classroom pragmatic instruction. The use of two innovative performance-based assessments, naturalistic conversation (Baba, 1996) and naturalistic role-play (Tran, 2006) successfully captured the near-authentic compliment response productions of the participants. Since the content of the conversations and the role-plays was also common in the participants’ daily lives, they could easily make connections to real life settings and appreciate the relevance of the tasks to their own goals of producing increasingly target-like English. The fact that a majority of the participants in this study were preparing to study abroad in an English-speaking country after graduation provided more evidence on the potentially motivating influence of adopting these naturalistic tasks in interlanguage pragmatic studies with similar learner groups.

Besides its contribution to research methodology, this study has made useful suggestions on classroom pragmatic instruction, especially for EFL contexts, where class size is usually large and the students have typically gone through years of English training yet have rarely had access to an ‘authentic’ language environment. The fact that a significant positive effect was observed for both the explicit and implicit group after a relatively short period of instruction indicates that the instruction provided in this study was effective in terms of heightening the learners’ awareness of the target pragmatic feature and offering them choices for producing it more appropriately.

The use of authentic video as a major source of input was beneficial in two ways: First, it covered daily conversation topics that were common in the participants’ own lives. Secondly, it showed snapshots of real life situations and casual conversations between friends in the U.S. These snapshots were distinct from the movies or TV shows the students often watched. There is usually a difference between the speech styles presented in media and the ways average people talk in real life. Thus, the self-made video in this study was particularly valuable in terms of providing the participants with a short-cut to see and hear authentic complimenting and responding behaviors demonstrated by native English speakers without stepping outside their classrooms.

Furthermore, the activity of comparing the learners’ home cultural values and preferences to those in the target culture was effective in raising their awareness of cultural differences, understanding why people in the target culture prefer certain types of compliment responses and learning to accept and appreciate the different responses, which might not be present in their home culture. The fact that the implicit group also improved significantly in the posttest showed that the learners had the ability to identify the most appropriate ways of responding to compliments and realizing the cultural differences on their own, from the same instructional material. This result is particularly exciting because it gives instructors the option to form a student-centered classroom and to give the students more control over their own learning. Either instruction type or a combination of both might be implemented at any time while introducing a new pragmatic feature, especially on certain speech acts which have similar characteristics to the one examined in this study.

**Limitations and Further Research**
The use of naturalistic tasks in this study helped to generate more authentic responses from participants; however, this authenticity necessarily results in a lack of control. Sometimes the interlocutor failed to provide a
compliment or provided more than one compliment in a particular situation. This might also be due to the heavy work load and tight research schedule of the interlocutor in this study, who had to conduct hours of tasks with all participants over two weekends for both the pretest and the posttest. In future studies adopting similar assessment tools, more careful and detailed instruction as well as sufficient time needs to be provided to the interlocutor.

The lack of research control is particularly reflected in the naturalistic role-play tasks. Since no exemplary forms of compliments were provided for the interlocutor in the instructional manual, they could produce different forms of compliments for different participants, which could potentially lead to different types of responses.

In addition, the sample size in this study is relatively small (N=41). All participants were native Chinese speakers in a specific EFL context, and only one pragmatic feature was examined. These facts limit the generalizability of the results to larger populations, to other L2 learners in different instructional settings, and for the use of different pragmatic features. Also, a lack of control group in a quasi-experimental study like this is another drawback, because without comparison to a control group that received no pragmatic instruction, it is impossible for us to know “the absolute effectiveness of the instruction” (Jeon & Kaya, 2006, p. 183). Therefore, future research should consider using a larger sample and a control group as well as examining different pragmatic features.

**Conclusion**

This study found that both explicit and implicit pragmatic instruction successfully facilitated Chinese EFL learners’ production of appropriate compliment responses and that these two instruction types did not differ significantly in terms of impact. These results suggest the potential benefits of combining explicit and implicit instruction in teaching second language pragmatics (Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005). The successful implementation of a self-made video as an instructional material provided insights for lesson plans in teaching speech acts and set up a model for making pragmatic instruction more lively and authentic. This study also showed the benefits of introducing cultural comparisons in the process of pragmatic instruction. Learners understood the authentic language input more thoroughly by examining contrasting examples from their first language culture. Finally, examining learners’ production of pragmatic features in real communicative contexts via naturalistic conversations and/or role-plays is recommended for other studies exploring the use of speech acts other than compliment responses (see another example in Nguyen, 2014). This continuous pursuit in task design will surely benefit pragmatic research methodology in general and help in depicting a more accurate and complete picture for learners’ development in acquiring other speech acts.

**Endnotes**

1. Tran (2006) used the term “Naturalized role-play (NRP”).
2. Liddicoat and Grozet (2001) did not specify the duration of their instruction/consciousness-raising activities.

**References**


Appendix A
Handout Provided for the Explicit Instructional Group

There are multiple ways to respond to compliments in English. Some of them are more acceptable than others in English-speaking countries:

1. Appreciation token: The complimentee recognizes the compliment and shows appreciation for it. Appreciation token usually does not fit into the meaning of the compliment.
   A: What a lovely dress!
   B: Oh, Thank you. This is one of my favorite.

2. Explanation/Comment History: The complimentee impersonalizes the compliment assertion by giving further information, which may frequently be irrelevant about the object of the compliment.
   A: I like your tie. It suits you well.
   B: Thanks. Mom bought it for me. She likes to buy me nice ties now and again.

3. Compliment upgrade: The complimentee agrees with and increases the compliment assertion.
   A: Nice car!
   B: Thanks. Brand new.

4. Return: The complimentee reciprocates the act of the complimenting by paying back the compliment to the complimenter.
   A: You’re looking good.
   B: Thanks. So are you.
   Or
   A: You’re looking good today.
   B: Thank you very much. Not too bad yourself.

5. Disagreement: The complimentee directly disagrees with the praise force/compliment assertion. They assert that the praise within the compliment is overdone or undue.
   A: You’re such a talented writer. I’ve learned so much from you.
   B: No, I’m not. In fact I got a lot of help from my advisor.

6. Agreement: The complimentee agrees with the compliment assertion by providing a response which fit meaningfully to the compliment.
   A: Hey you look really nice today.
   B: Yeah I’m happy to say that that’s correct. Heh heh heh.
   An agreement can be scaled down to minimize the force of the compliment.
   A: I like your car. It’s very good.
   B: Oh, Yeah. Thanks. It’s not bad.

7. Compliment downgrade: The complimentee qualifies the praise force/compliment assertion, or downplays the object of the compliment.
   A: It’s a really nice car.
   B: Oh no. It looks like that but actually it has a lot of problems.
   Or
   A: It’s a nice car. I really like it.
   B: Oh well. It’s just a normal and not very reliable car.

8. Expressing Gladness: The complimentee does not address the compliment assertion itself, which makes the response a type of avoidance, but expresses their gladness that the complimenter likes the object of the compliment.
   A: By the way, I read your article that you published last week. It was very good.
   B: Oh, that’s good. Thank you.
   Or
   A: I read your article you published last week. It was very good.
   B: Well, it’s great you say that.
To Compare: Chinese Compliment Responses

- Rejecting (96%)
  1. Disagreeing and denigrating 51%


  2. Expressing embarrassment 26%

  A: 你的歌唱得真不错！B: 夸得我都不好意思了...

  3. Explaining 19%

  A: 这件毛衣很好看呀！B: 哦，都穿了好几年了.

- Thanking and denigrating
  1. Thanking and denigrating 3%

  A: 你刚才的表演真是太精彩了！B: 谢谢啦。过奖过奖。

- Accepting
  1. Thanking only 1%

  A: 这道菜做得真好吃！B: 谢谢。
Appendix B
Handout Provided for the Implicit Instructional Group

I. While watching the video, please write down the complimenting topic(s) in each scenario:

II. How did the speaker in the video respond to the compliment? Write down the compliment responses in each scenario:

III. Take a look at the above compliment responses (check with the video transcript and generalize how native English speakers of American English respond to compliments in different situations)
   1) Appearance/clothing:
   2) Possession:
   3) Ability/work:
   4) Personality:

IV. Compare this to what you would say in Chinese: Make your own Chinese role-plays under the above four complimenting categories. Think about what you would actually say in your daily life and make your-role-play as authentic as possible.
Appendix C
Open Role-Play Practice

With a partner, practice paying and responding to compliments in the following four settings:

I. Your friend has just won first place in the English speaking contest. You two meet and start talking. Your talk should include at least the following three things:
   1. Greetings; asking about school/life
   2. Complimenting & responses to compliment (on winning the 1st place in the contest)
   3. Shifting to another topic (anything that you like to talk about; make sure that you have a smooth transition from the compliment to the new topic; e.g., going to lunch/dinner; inviting to a weekend party; inviting to go to the English corner, etc.)

II. Your friend dressed very formally/pretty today. You two meet and start talking. Your talk should include at least the following three things:
   1. Greetings; asking about school/life
   2. Complimenting & responses to compliment (on the formal/beautiful clothes or any other special feature of your friend's appearance/clothing)
   3. Shifting to another topic (anything that you like to talk about; make sure that you have a smooth transition from the compliment to the new topic)

III. Your friend has just bought a new bag/cellphone/MP4 player (or any object that you like to use). You two meet and start talking. Your talk should include at least the following three things:
   1. Greetings, asking about school/life
   2. Complimenting & responses to compliment (on the new object bought by your friend)
   3. Shifting to another topic (anything that you like to talk about; make sure that you have a smooth transition from the compliment to the new topic)

IV. Your friend has just come back from Wenchuan as a volunteer to help with reconstruction. You two meet and start talking. Your talk should include at least the following three things:
   1. Greetings, asking about school/life
   2. Complimenting & responses to compliment (on your friend's good personality trait—warm-heartedness & devotion)
   3. Shifting to another topic (anything that you like to talk about; make sure that you have a smooth transition from the compliment to the new topic)
Appendix D
Naturalistic Role-Play Instructional Manual for Interlocutors

It is your task to lead the conversation in a flexible and natural way. Please read the description of the following two situations and identify yourself with the character “you” in it. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. The whole role-play should not exceed 10 minutes.

Situation One:
You are enthusiastic about learning Chinese popular songs. One of your new friends, _______ is a good singer and has won the first place in the university singing contest. You two know each other’s names and have said hello to each other on occasion, but you have not yet had a chance to talk much.

It’s now around 4pm and you are leaving school. You want to stop by a bookshop and have heard that there is one named “Foreign Language Bookstore” not far from school, but you do not know where it is. You are passing by the library and see your new classmate. You approach them to offer greetings. You talk while walking together. The talk should include, but may not be limited to the following points:

- Please start the conversation by greeting your friend (your friend is listening to their MP4 player, so you need to shout loudly for them to notice you). Ask your friend about their classes. When it is most natural during the talk, compliment on their singing skills by referring to their winning in the recent singing contest.
- Please ask for directions to get to the Foreign Language Bookstore by bus.
- Please ask what time the bookstore is closed today.
- Please accept their company of taking the bus together to the bookstore. When it is most natural during the talk, compliment on their new MP4 player. You should pick a specific feature of the MP4 player to give your compliment.
- While you are both riding the bus, please talk about each other’s hometown (e.g., compare the weather/food/population, etc.
- Before leaving the bookstore, please invite your new friend to a Karaoke party you organized in the Karaoke House next week. Your party will start at 6:00 p.m. next Friday, and you need to tell them the address and show them how to get there.

Situation Two:
Today is the day of the Karaoke party. Now you are in the lobby of the Karaoke House chatting with friends and waiting for more to come, when you receive a call from ___________ asking for directions. Your talk should include but may not be limited to the following points:

- Mimic your cell-phone rings, pick it up. Listen to what your friend says first. (They will tell you about getting lost and ask for directions again).
- Ask your friend where they are and tell them how to get to the Karaoke House.
- (When your friend shows up at your doorstep) Greet them and invite them to come in. When it is most natural during the talk, compliment your friend on their appearance/clothing.
- Please respond to your friend’s question expressing concern about your health (which is asked because they heard from their English teacher that you were sick).
- One of your colleagues brings their young daughter to the party. While the mother goes outside to pick up a phone call, the little girl starts to cry. Your friend goes up, talks and plays with the little girl until they stop crying. Please mimic the little girl crying (do it for fun!) and wait for your friend’s “comforting”. When it is most natural during the talk, compliment your friend on their being patient and loving towards the child.
- Ends the role-play by inviting your friend to sing a song.
Appendix E
Conversational Instructional Manual for Interlocutors

Your main task is to be as sociable and friendly as possible while giving positive comments when you feel it is most natural. Be a good listener and attentive. Show concern to your friend. Find out as much information as possible about your friend. Please follow the instruction below. Your conversation should not exceed 10 minutes. Put a checkmark on each item after you have completed it.

1. (First do a brief introduction for each other if you haven’t done so before). Start your conversation in a causal way by greeting the student at the very beginning, followed by one positive comment on the student’s appearance/clothing.

2. Ask the student about their study/school work/life/future plans. When it is most natural during your talk, give one positive comment on the student’s ability/work. (i.e., asking how school is going or how they did on a test/paper that was turned in recently or a presentation in another class or their future goals and what they are doing right now to achieve that goal: e.g., preparing to pass the GRE/TOEFL. An example compliment can be like the following: It does sound like to me that you are an excellent/diligent student! or You must be really good at organizing your time. I can see that you are surely managing your work and play in a balanced way. or So are you planning on studying abroad? You surely have thought through all this! That’s so impressive!)

3. Ask the student to show you the object that they own and is proud to show and ask questions about it. When it is most natural during your talk, give one positive comment on this object. (e.g., This does look like a really interesting book to me. or Is this a new model? It looks like a really cool cell phone to have.)

4. While you’re talking, try to identify one good personality trait of the student and compliment on it (e.g., perseverant/patient /humorous/responsible). Remember to keep chatting by asking follow-up questions based on the student’s previous responses. If you are having a hard time identifying one specific personality trait to compliment on, you can ask the student to talk more about themselves to you. For example, you can ask probing questions such as “What is most important in your life? Why?” If the student came up with an answer such as “family/friends/career” You can ask further about their opinion on why this is viewed as the most important. After hearing the explanation, you can see the personality trait of the student and you can pay the compliment. Another way is to ask the student to share with you, one good deed they have done. When it is most natural during the conversation, give one positive comment on the student’s personality traits (e.g., being warm-hearted/kind/patient, etc.)

5. End the conversation by thanking them for sharing with you.