

(IM)POLITENESS IN CASUAL CONVERSATIONS AMONG FEMALE
MANDARIN SPEAKERS: A PRACTICE-BASED PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

(IM)POLITENESS IN CASUAL CONVERSATIONS AMONG FEMALE
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The fact that people have the choice to use different words and attitudes to convey messages of various significance has been attributed to politeness concerns. However, what constitutes politeness varies from culture to culture and person to person. Therefore, a universal definition for what politeness is does not seem plausible. Furthermore, using the term ‘politeness’ to indicate the study of all kinds of linguistic behavior is problematic because ‘politeness’ seems to exclude behavior that is inappropriate, aggressive or rude. To provide a more comprehensive account of

politeness, this research draws upon the notion of “(im)politeness” (Watts, 2003) to account for linguistic behavior that is open to negotiation between interactants.

In the scholarly field of (im)politeness studies, Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) utterance-based perspective views certain communicative acts as intrinsically face-threatening and concerns only the speaker’s utterances. Given that a conversation cannot be formulated without listeners’ responses, this research adopts a practice-based perspective, as assumed by Watts (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts (2005), which gives merit to the give-and-take features of interactional negotiations. In so doing, the practice-based perspective considers the listener’s role as essential as the speaker’s. Using naturally occurring conversations between female speakers in Taiwan, this research studies both the dynamic characteristics of (im)politeness (i.e., moment-by-moment reactions, emergent context) and also the stable features (i.e., cultural norms, existing ways of behaving) which jointly serve as the basis for the understanding and evaluation of their interpersonal relationships. Results of this research suggest, first, participants employ different participant deictics to perform and mitigate potentially face-threatening acts (e.g., using null-subject to create ambiguity); second, when one of the participants’ personal behavior conflicts with what other participants used to believe to be appropriate, they adjust their criterion of evaluation for that specific participant. This adjustment thus reconstructs the relationship between (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness such that inappropriate behavior is not necessarily evaluated as

impolite. This adjustment also demonstrates how both dynamic (i.e., newly constructed agreements) and stable (i.e., previously agreed norms) characteristics are simultaneously at work in an interaction.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem of the Term ‘Politeness’

Politeness is a linguistic phenomenon involved in daily interaction that reveals how people use languages to manage interpersonal relationships. The reason it is important to understand the nature and significance of politeness is because as soon as the interaction starts, each of the participants requires the mutual understandings of the norms of communicating to maintain relationships and interpret each other’s behavior. However, when asking lay people what politeness means, we gather many different kinds of definitions. For instance, some consider being polite as being cultured, well-mannered and well-educated; some think being polite is taking care of others’ feelings; some believe that being polite is a key to harmonious conversations.

The notions of politeness, as the scholarly literature on politeness has suggested, indicate that what constitutes polite linguistic behavior can vary between different participants and different cultures. As the responses collected from Greek and English speakers in Sifianou’s (1992) study show, people of diverse cultural backgrounds view politeness differently. For example, Greek speakers think politeness equally involves expressing intimacy, warmth and friendliness while English speakers believe that

politeness has something to do with the maintenance of social distance. Fraser (1990) examines the rejoinder of French Marshal Ferdinand Foch at a dinner to illustrate how French people – at least for Marshal Ferdinand Foch – understand politeness. One of the guests at the dinner proposed that “there is nothing but wind in French politeness.” Marshal replied, “Neither is there anything but wind in a pneumatic tire, yet it eases wonderfully the jolts along life’s highway” (p. 219). The analogy Marshal Ferdinand Foch uses suggests by inference that he believes French politeness is a social lubricant for interpersonal relations. Other western researchers have taken a different view of French politeness. For Fraser and Nolen (1981), “to be polite is to abide by the rules of the relationship” and violation of the rules leads to impoliteness (p. 96). Politeness is thus equivalent to knowing the rules. That is, there are normative rules in each culture that guide speakers to distinguish politeness from impoliteness.

Likewise, treatises on politeness found in the eastern scholarly literature display different understandings of the concept among group members, as does the western scholarly literature. For instance, Gao (1998) states that Chinese politeness is, first, to maintain “a thoughtful, mannerly, pleasant, and civil” communication and, second, to be modest and humble (p. 175). Gu (1990) also lists four qualities of a polite person in Chinese culture: respectfulness, modesty (i.e., synonymous with self-denigration), attitudinal warmth, and refinement. The qualities of being modest and humble are points of agreement between these two Chinese scholars. As for Japanese politeness, Nakane (1970) considers Japan as a vertical society. Matsumoto (1988) also states, “People are expected to act properly according to their relative position or rank with regard to other

members of the group, and it is that relative position that they want to maintain when they employ politeness strategies” (p. 423).

People speaking different varieties of the same language (e.g., Singapore English versus American English) as well as speakers of the same cultural background can view politeness differently. In Wong’s (2004) study of the way speakers of Singapore English and Anglo English make requests linguistically, Wong finds that Anglo English speakers use more direct interrogatives to show that they respect the listener’s autonomy because interrogatives allow the listener to refuse a request (p. 233). Singapore English, in contrast, is more imperative by using some particles to make casual requests, and this is because the Singapore English speakers care more about whether the listener can do the thing they requested but not whether the listener wants to do it or not (p. 239). Therefore, for the Anglo English speakers in Wong’s study, giving listeners options is the appropriate way to make requests, while for the Singapore English speakers, making imperative requests is to show intimacy with the listeners (p. 244).

Even speakers from the same cultural background are very likely to give different answers for what politeness is when the social context varies. Pan (2000) uses an example of cross-cultural communication to illustrate how people behave differently in accordance with situational variables. Between the American and Chinese speakers in Pan’s study, the Americans perceive the Chinese as being inconsistent because Chinese speakers would act politely in one situation but quite rudely in another. Pan argues that it is because politeness in Chinese is situational-based so the politeness strategies a

Chinese speaker uses vary according to formal/informal settings and superior/inferior social status (p. 144). Similarly, in Blum-Kulka's (1990) interviews of Israeli families regarding what both linguistic and non-linguistic behavior are considered to be polite in the family, informants give opposite answers. Some think that "one should be polite with strangers, not with friends and family" (p. 260); some say that politeness is important even in the family. Both Pan and Blum-Kulka's examples illustrate that what constitutes polite and impolite behavior and speakers' evaluation of polite and impolite behavior is not a fixed phenomenon.

Therefore, if we must set up a theory for politeness, it must be able to account for the various ways that people of different cultural backgrounds view politeness. This present research uses the term "culture" in a sense that it refers to the conventions agreed and passed down from generation to generation within a region (e.g., a nation, a geographical region or city). Nevertheless, with people even from the same cultural background, they abide by the rules of politeness diversely because individuals form their own small communities where they create another set of values. Therefore, a theory of politeness must be able to unfold and explain the diversity of norms constructed by each group within the uniformity of conventions agreed by multiple groups and passed on from previous generations.

1.2 (Im)politeness and the Management of Interpersonal Meaning

As examples from Greek, French, and Chinese above-mentioned suggest, finding a universal rule accounting for what constitutes polite or impolite behavior is problematic for both the lay people and scholars in academia. Watts (2003), however,

proposes that human behaviors can be described in terms of three categories: impolite, politic (i.e., appropriate) and polite behaviors. In particular, there is no universal distinction between these three categories. According to Watts, what is considered to be polite, politic or impolite primarily resides in the participants' interpretation. In this sense, the interpretative role of hearers is, therefore, essential and determinative. More specifically, the interpretation can vary from participant to participant in different settings based on their previous experiences in a similar setting, shared social norms for that setting, and the moment-by-moment reactions of each participant.

The term "politeness" itself brings another problem regarding what politeness signifies. As Spencer-Oatey (2000) points out, "'Politeness' is often interpreted as referring to the use of relatively formal and deferential language..." (p. 2). Therefore, questions about what the term "politeness" signifies include: 'Does politeness include only being polite?' or 'Is politeness twofold?' That is, 'Does politeness include both being polite and impolite?' If the answer is that politeness is twofold, then 'What is impolite?' Watts (1992) notes, for some linguistic terms that are mandatory (e.g., Title plus last name), they do not necessarily express politeness (p. 49). For example, using the proper honorifics in Japanese is linguistically required social behavior (e.g., Ide, 1989; Ide *et al.*, 1992; Matsumoto, 1988; Yoon, 2004). When a speaker of Japanese uses the appropriate honorifics, he or she would not necessarily be judged as well-behaved; however, when the speaker fails to use the appropriate honorifics, he or she is very likely to be considered as lacking in manners. In this sense, according to Watts (2003), what constitutes polite or impolite behavior is determined by the extent to which

a communicative act exceeds or falls short of the cultural standards or norms for such behavior in a particular social context.

Watts (2003) states that impolite behaviors are always associated with negative values while the value of polite behaviors can range from one extreme of being well-mannered to the other extreme of showing lack of candor or insincerity (p. 24). Watts, therefore, uses the term “(im)politeness” to characterize the fuzzy grey areas along a continuum within which language use may potentially be interpreted as polite, politic (i.e., standard or expected behavior according to cultural norms) or impolite. Watts’ use of (im)politeness thus helps scholars avoid associating the term ‘politeness’ solely with ‘positive’ behavior, excluding impolite and politic behavior, or even linguistic behavior that lies between two points along the continuum. In this research, I adopt Watts’ notion of (im)politeness to capture the notion that (im)politeness is not a fixed language phenomenon but involves participants’ interpretations along an interactional continuum. By using the term “(im)politeness,” then, I emphasize that a speaker’s behavior can simultaneously have the possibility of being interpreted as impolite, politic and polite behavior and that the bulk of interaction involves working out such interpersonal meanings that are created, reconstructed, or regenerated during interactions.

1.3 Theoretical Problems: Intrinsic Face-Threatening Acts and Role of Emergent Context

For Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), being polite involves mitigating FTAs because there are acts that are intrinsically face-threatening and that the intrinsic FTAs are universal in all cultures. For example, a promise is an intrinsic FTA which threatens the promiser’s negative face because the promiser “commits himself to a future act for

[the hearer]’s benefit” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66). The communicative acts Brown and Levinson refer to are adapted from Grice (1971), which refer to “a chunk of behavior B which is produced by S[peaker] with a specific intention, which S[peaker] intends H[earer] to recognize, this recognition being the communicative point of S[peaker]’s doing B” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 286). The quote indicates that Brown and Levinson believe that the role of recognition whether a communicative act is face-threatening or not lies in the hearer’s hands. If this is so, the idea of intrinsic FTAs is problematic because the hearers are left without space for recognition and interpretation. Thus, the present research problematizes two claims in Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. The first one is their proposal of *intrinsic* face-threatening acts (FTAs). The second one is their neglect of the indispensable role of interlocutors who collaboratively negotiate what (im)politeness is during interactions. In other words, the emergent context – constructed by the moment-by-moment reactions an interactant gives at the very moment when the conversation takes place as the discourse continues to unfold – plays an important role in the management of interpersonal relationships and the evaluations of potential FTAs in conversations.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this research does not entirely reject Brown and Levinson’s theory. More specifically, this research expands Brown and Levinson’s model by suggesting that the feature of intrinsic FTAs is not universal, i.e., what is face-threatening to a speaker may not be face-threatening to another speaker. Similarly, what is face-threatening to a culture may not have the same face-threatening effect on another culture. As Heracleous (2006) claims, discourse is *situated* in the

interaction (p. 36). That is, social variables such as gender, age, power, etc. and previous experience do not necessarily constitute pre-determined and stable meanings in an interaction. Yet, it is the emergent context that allows interlocutors to interpret what the relevant social variables are and how to interpret them. In other words, the emergent context makes each interaction unique and unpredictable, still with the boundaries of cultural norms for interaction. As the (im)politeness of any communicative act is not pre-determined, everything a speaker says can be potentially face-threatening to his or her interlocutor. Thus, I use the term “potential FTA” to point out speakers’ utterances that are potentially face-threatening within the context of the specific interaction and may need any kind of relational work of (im)politeness. The term “potential FTA” can help us avoid giving interpretations to a speaker’s utterances before considering the emergent context within which it takes place as well as giving the hearers an equally important status as the speakers. As Goffman (1967) notes:

When a face has been threatened, face-work must be done, but whether this is initiated and primarily carried through by the person whose face is threatened, or by the offender, or by a mere witness, is often of secondary importance. Lack of effort on the part of one person induces compensative effort from others; a contribution by one person relieves the others of the task. (p. 27)

Therefore, a conversation is similar to group work in that both speakers and hearers cooperatively contribute to the proceeding of an interaction.

1.4 Research Questions: Dynamic and Stable

If universal rules with regard to politeness and what constitute politeness are problematic, how do interlocutors come to interpret utterances in mutually-agreed ways? This question can be addressed because every human being shares at least some common characteristics, norms, beliefs, or ways of behaving, but the shared ways of behaving and beliefs undergo modifications and thus derive a different way of behaving from cultures to cultures, groups to groups and participants to participants of diverse interactions (Goffman, 1967). As Locher (2006) points out, “it lies in the nature of politeness to be an elusive concept since it is inherently linked to judgments on norms, and those are constantly negotiated, are renegotiated and ultimately change over time in every type of social interaction” (p. 264). The existing norms, beliefs, and ways of behaving constructed from interactants’ previous encounters and experience are considered to be the stable features of a conversation, yet they are dynamic in such a manner that existing norms can be modified or replaced by newly formed norms from recent interactions. People create new interpersonal relationships based on the old relationships through constant negotiation by relying on the discourse practices: “the different forms of activity carried out in verbal interaction” (Watts, 2003, p. 274).

Recognizing the importance and changeability of dynamic and stable characteristics in interactions, the present research adopts this practice-based perspective in the hope of filling the theoretical gap revealed in major treatises on politeness that concerns solely the stable features of an interaction by focusing only on the speaker’s single utterance and neglecting the significance of the dynamic features of

an interaction. Therefore, by studying how close female friends evaluate each other's linguistic behavior in order to maintain relationships between each other, this research demonstrates the roles of both the stable and dynamic features in contributing to the interpretation of (im)politeness. The following two research questions frame this study:

1. How do members of the community of practice formed by my participants negotiate linguistic behaviors that are potentially face-threatening?
2. What are the underlying cultural norms of interaction that contribute to participants' interpretation of (im)polite behavior of my participants' community of practice?

In order to address these questions, I draw upon a methodological foundation that assumes a practice-based perspective involving a consideration of stable and dynamic contexts. This research also makes use of two analytical tools. The first one is Gumperz's (1982) *contextualization cues* which include linguistic (e.g., the use of pronouns) and non-linguistic (e.g., features of laughter or intonation) behavior that helps to see how relational work is done. The second analytical tool involves *ethnographic interviews* with participants. Findings suggest that each participant is interdependent with each other in conversations. More specifically, while a participant can make her own decision of how to perform a communicative act, her decision somehow correlates with her interlocutors' reactions and the developing interpersonal relationship.

We often have the experience that while the conversations remain harmonious on the surface, we feel hurt or misunderstood afterwards. However, we do not know

where we went wrong during the interactions. This research thus has the ultimate goal to equip people with the ability to examine their own interactions with others and thus enhance their own interpersonal communication. By presenting how the selected speakers of the specific culture, age, and gender groups manage relational work, this research draws people's attention to individual and cross-cultural differences. By looking into the conversations 'piece by piece,' this research shows people how important it is to be cautious of every signal (i.e., contextualization cues) given by their interlocutors and to be aware of the fact that nothing should be taken for granted.

1.5 Structure of this Research

In the first half of chapter 2, I revisit Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory which is the representative model of what I call the 'utterance-based perspective,' in contrast to the 'practice-based perspective.' In the second half of chapter 2, by reviewing four studies that apply Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory to study the linguistic behavior of speakers from Hebrew, American, New Zealand and Japanese cultures, I demonstrate the applicability and the limitations of the utterance-based perspective and why the practice-based perspective is needed. Yet, I do not entirely reject Brown and Levinson's model but use the notion of potential FTA to expand on insights offered by traditional politeness theory. In chapter 3, I first explain the essence of Watts (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts' (2005) theories on relational work, which I term 'the practice-based perspective', and also why the practice-based perspective is more adequate to study conversations, particularly the dynamic unfolding of interactional work involved in politeness. While the practice-

based perspective serves as the methodological foundation on which this study is based, I also draw upon Gumperz's (1982) notion of contextualization cues as the analytical method. Last, I explain how participants in Taiwan were selected and their backgrounds, as well as how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 approaches the selected recorded conversations from both the dynamic and stable points of view. I first present and analyze five excerpts from the recorded conversations to demonstrate how a practice-based perspective works in analyzing naturally occurring conversations. In the second half of chapter 4, I discuss the representative relational work that is achieved in the five excerpts. Finally, I synthesize conversational norms and conventions found in the excerpts and elicited from participant follow-up interviews. In chapter 5, I answer the research questions regarding how participants manage interpersonal relationships through the use of contextualization cues, especially when potentially face-threatening acts arise. Furthermore, I discuss the benefits and implications of adopting the practice-based perspective to study dynamic interactions. I also share the limitations I encounter in conducting this research and offer suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two main approaches in the scholarly literature addressing politeness in discourse. One approach is represented by Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) "politeness theory" which I categorize as the *utterance-based perspective* in this research. The other approach, called the *practice-based perspective*, includes Watts' social model of politeness (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work model. While Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory has been the dominant framework for decades, I argue that the model views social interaction as a stable phenomenon, focusing on the psychological states or the calculation of strategies on the part of interlocutors before speaking. In contrast, Watts (2003), Locher (2004), and Locher and Watts (2005) take the emergent 'give-and-take' context into consideration. They are concerned about what is actually happening in an on-going interaction.

Theories in the utterance-based perspective focus on the behavior that is valued positively (e.g., polite behavior), and there is no discussion about behavior that might be valued negatively (e.g., impolite behavior). For example, in Brown and Levinson's

politeness theory, ‘politeness’ refers only to behavior that is valued positively and excludes behaviors that might be considered inappropriate for a given setting. Behaviors that are viewed as appropriate but not ‘polite’ enough to be called ‘polite’ does not concern the utterance-based perspective, either. Watt’s (2003) social model of politeness, one of the representative theories in the practice-based perspective, offers a more comprehensive angle to look at (im)politeness which includes all behaviors from very rude and inappropriate, behavior that is valued negatively by most (e.g., impolite behavior), appropriate behavior in accord with the social norms and conventions, and also behavior that is judged openly positively (e.g., polite behavior).

In this chapter, first, I discuss the utterance-based perspective in detail. Then after reviewing four studies that adopt Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, I present the pros and cons of politeness theory when it is applied to data analysis. At the end of the chapter, the focus will turn to some weaknesses and inadequacies of an utterance-based perspective, inasmuch it neglects the importance of emergent context in the dynamic unfolding of a conversation. While Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory serves as a useful tool for distinguishing where a potential FTA takes place, in the next chapter, I will propose that a practice-based perspective that examines the moment-by-moment negotiation process of a conversation is a more adequate approach in studying interactions.

2.1 Utterance-based Perspective

While Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has been the dominant and the most widely applied theory in the studying of politeness, to review the study of

politeness, it is important to explore its roots in Grice's cooperative principle and Lakoff's rules of politeness.

2.1.1 Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and Lakoff's (1973, 1975) Rules of Politeness

Based on Eelen (2001), Lakoff (1973), who could be considered as the mother of modern politeness theories, shifts attention from traditional linguistics that focuses on, for example, syntactic structure to conversation in which people use language not only to communicate but, more importantly, to strengthen or sever interpersonal relationships. However, as Watts (2003) contends, Lakoff still adopts a formal linguistic approach to the study of conversation by constructing rules of pragmatic competence (e.g., be clear and be polite). Therefore, while the purpose of politeness for Lakoff (1975) is to "reduce friction in personal interaction" (p. 64), politeness in language use is still rule-governed in her perspective. Lakoff (1973) points out that the violation of syntactic rules and rules of conversation proposed by Grice (1967) would result in two different situations. For instance, the violation of syntactic rules creates a deviant sentence and people are thus unable to understand. On the contrary, when a pragmatic rule is violated, a sentence remains interpretable. Lakoff further states that a speaker violates a pragmatic rule to satisfy another one because the rule that is 'respected' is more important, and most of the time, it is the rule of politeness that outweighs the rule of clarity. The reason is because "actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships" in informal settings (Lakoff, 1973, p. 297).

From there, Lakoff finds there is a need of rules of politeness because interpersonal relationships, which are achieved through politeness, are often more highly valued than mere information exchange in conversation. Lakoff's (1973, 1975) proposal of politeness rules are motivated by Grice's (1975) four maxims of conversation that comprise what is called the cooperative principle (CP). CP is aimed at explaining what participants will do in order to attain an efficient and cooperative conversation. Grice's CP includes the following:

- (1) The maxim of Quality: A speaker should try to make his or her contribution based on the truth—for example, only say what he or she believes to be true or what he or she has adequate evidence for.
- (2) The maxim of Quantity: A speaker should make his or her cooperation as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange but not make the contribution more informative than is required.
- (3) The maxim of Relevance: A speaker should make his or her contribution relevant.
- (4) The maxim of Manner: What a speaker says should be relevant and perspicuous. A speaker should specifically avoid obscurity and ambiguity and what he or she says should be brief and in an orderly manner (Grice, 1975, pp. 45-

58; Levinson, 1983, pp. 101-102; Watts, 2003, pp. 57-58).

In the Gricean view, these maxims may conflict very often with each other in actual interactions for communicative as well as interpersonal purposes. For example, telling a white lie violates at least the maxim of quality and quantity. Nevertheless, the reason it is called a white lie is because it involves the speaker protecting the hearer by obscuring the truth. In this case, people can still achieve an efficient and cooperative conversation. To explain the dilemma involving the fact that people can still keep the flow of conversation while conversational maxims are violated, Lakoff (1973) adds three rules of politeness based on Grice's CP (p. 298). That is to say, in order to take into account interpersonal relationships, the violation of the conversational maxims is inevitable, and in Lakoff's (1973) point of view, the management of interpersonal relationships requires the rules of politeness which are listed as follows:

- (1) *Be polite* (formal politeness).
- (2) *Give options* (informal politeness).
- (3) *Make A feel good* (intimate politeness).

Speakers do not violate maxims at will, however. The reason why a speaker violates a maxim for another maxim is because the latter is more important to satisfy under the given circumstances. However, according to Lakoff (1973), "politeness supersedes: it is considered, more important in a conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity" (pp. 297-298). For instance, even though speaker A thinks speaker B has made a terribly stupid mistake, speaker A does not dare tell speaker B that he or she

is really stupid, assuming the purpose of speaker B is to search for encouragement. In this case, speaker A violates the maxims of Relevance and Quality for the greater purpose of maintaining or even enhancing his or her friendship with speaker B.

Nevertheless, both Grice's CP and Lakoff's rules of politeness only offer guidelines to follow, but do not instruct speakers how to behave when receiving responses from their interlocutors. More specifically, CP does not show how to tell whether an addressee makes the appropriate interpretation of an implication or not. Nor does CP show how an addressee makes the appropriate interpretation. Furthermore, CP fails to show what happens to a misinterpretation (Watts, 2003, p. 208). The same argument applies as well to Lakoff's rules of politeness. Both the proposals of Grice and Lakoff neglect the addressee's response as well as the interlocutor's moment-by-moment reaction (i.e., the emergent context that is created based upon interlocutors' immediate reactions).

2.1.2 Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory

Similar to Grice and Lakoff, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is utterance-based. In other words, the emergent context and the participants' moment-by-moment reactions play very little role in Brown and Levinson's model. According to Kasper (1990), Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been the dominant model in the study of politeness for decades because it "generated a wealth of conceptual and empirical research, undertaken in the theoretical and methodological traditions of a number of social sciences" (p. 193). For Brown and Levinson (1987), the

purpose of an interaction is not only to express social relationships but it is also “crucially built out of strategic language use” (p. 56).

Central to their claim is that each speaker is regarded as a *Model Person (MP)* who is “a willful fluent speaker of a natural language, further endowed with two special properties—*rationality* and *face*” (p. 58). An MP has a *positive face* (i.e., the want to be approved of) and a *negative face* (i.e., the want to be unimpeded). As Scollon and Scollon (1995) indicate, “there is no faceless communication” (p. 38) because “[f]ace is the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event” (p. 35). That is, participants as MPs are not only affirming the initial assumptions of face but are also negotiating it in a conversation (Scollon & Scollon, 1995, pp. 34-36, p. 49). Rationality refers to the speaker’s ability at reasoning and knowing what options or strategies he or she has. Among the various strategies, the speaker chooses the best one after ‘risk analysis’ of face damage. In other words, it is a “rational or logical use of strategies” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 56). The reason the speaker would rationally and strategically choose what to say and which strategy to use before speaking is because many acts (e.g., requests, compliments, invitations, criticism, etc.) are considered as face-threatening acts (FTAs) which threaten the speaker’s or the hearer’s positive/negative face(s). Politeness, in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model, is thus understood as “redressive action” (p. 24) performed to mitigate FTAs. To illustrate the process overtly, Brown and Levinson explain that an MP determines to mitigate an FTA in a way that can satisfy the interlocutors’ positive and negative face, and they present five strategies, each of which is assigned a number

according to its level of threat. As shown in Figure 2.1 below, the possible strategies an interlocutor has before performing an act has a potentially face-threatening effect. The bigger the number is, the bigger the threat.

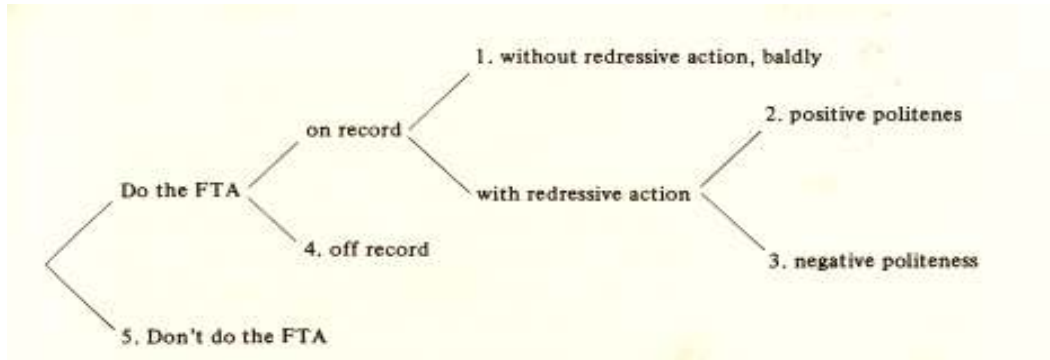


Figure 2.1 Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69)

Therefore, if strategy number 5 “Don’t do the FTA” is chosen, it means that the degree of FTA to threaten the hearer’s face(s) is so high that the speaker would choose not to perform the particular act at all. On the contrary, if the degree of FTA is almost zero – that is, when the act (e.g., a request, a favor) the speaker asks the hearer to do does not require too much sacrifice or the speaker is superior to the hearer – then the speaker would choose strategy number 1. That is, the speaker would go “on record” in doing an act with no redressive action. However, if the degree of FTA is slightly higher than going on record, the speaker could choose to do an act with redressive action and have two options between strategy numbers 2 and 3, depending on whether the speaker wants to “anoint” the addressee’s positive face (i.e., strategy number 2) or respect the addressee’s freedom of action and avoid threatening his or her negative face (i.e., strategy number 3). If the speaker decides to go “off record” (strategy number 4), that

means the seriousness of the FTA is just one degree lower than “Don’t do the FTA”. The speaker thus has to perform a communicative act in an indirect and ambiguous way. By going off record, the speaker gives the addressee the option to evaluate by himself or herself the seriousness of the FTA the speaker performs (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 68-71).

Besides the fact that the degree of FTAs influences participants’ ‘calculation,’ so do the following three social factors: distance (D), power (P) and ranking (R) of imposition. These three social factors make up the following formula: $W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$. The logical algorithm can be read as: the measures of the social distance between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) together with the measures of the power H has over S and also the degree of the “culturally and situationally defined ranking of imposition” contribute to the Weight (W) of an FTA x (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 76-77). Among the three social factors, social distance and power are assumed to be fixed elements in a conversation that are already determined before interlocutors enter a conversation. However, the ranking of imposition of an act is what leaves speakers the space to negotiate because each of them may evaluate the ranking of imposition differently, and the weight of an FTA is thus different.

Among all the FTAs, there are also acts that are characterized as *intrinsic* FTAs. A compliment is one of them. In one respect, giving a compliment threatens the hearer’s negative face because the hearer is forced to do or say something to protect the object that is complimented on by the speaker. In another respect, accepting a compliment threatens the complimentee’s positive face because he or she may feel constrained to

“denigrate” the object and thus damage his or her own positive face in order to be approved of. In addition, by accepting a prior compliment, the complimentee may be forced to give another compliment in return. Both giving and accepting compliments threaten complimentee’s faces under the criterion of intrinsic FTAs.

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the purpose of such a politeness theory is to provide a tool to describe “the quality of social relationships” having cross-cultural applicability (p. 55). However, for certain speech communities, giving compliments is not necessarily taken as a threatening act to the complimenter. One might argue that the speaker wants to compliment others simply because he or she wants the complimentee to feel good or he or she sincerely appreciates the thing or quality the complimentee possesses and that the complimentee interprets the act in this manner as well. For instance, in Chinese culture, giving compliments helps to maintain group harmony, which is an important goal Chinese participants aim to achieve, rather than to maintain individual autonomy (Yu, 2003, p. 1704). Compliments are not necessarily considered as intrinsic FTAs to individuals from Chinese culture. From this angle, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has been criticized as being culturally biased and inadequate in explaining politeness behavior in various eastern cultures (e.g., Gu, 1990; Ide, 1989; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989).

Brown and Levinson’s model, in its treatment of speakers as idealized and rational calculators of strategies, stresses speakers’ individualism and their ability to calculate the interactional facework like a person might solve a math problem. In this sense, the emphasis on rationality neglects the emergent and dynamic nature of an

interaction in which interlocutors negotiate interpersonal meanings when potential FTAs occur. In Brown and Levinson's model, we do not see and do not know how the participants of a conversation interact because all we see is the calculation and the estimation of the threat an FTA brings and the reactions of the addressee are somehow neglected. Brown and Levinson's proposal of *face want* is universal because there are FTAs in every culture, and every speaker's 'mission' in conversations is to help each other maintain or enhance face for the sake of interpersonal relationships, unless damage of one's face is performed with a specific reason. Nevertheless, what constitutes an FTA is not universal. The use of the word *intrinsic* to characterize certain FTAs restricts the illocutionary force of an act as determined a priori to the utterance itself, such that interpretation of this utterance is no longer negotiable. If we consider the emergent context and each speaker's prior experience, the intrinsic FTAs become problematic because a face-threatening act for speaker A is not necessarily face-threatening for speaker B and vice versa.

2.2 Application on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

This section reviews four studies that apply Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to present both its applicability and inadequacy in the application to linguistic data gathered from Hebrew, American, New Zealand, and Japanese cultures.

2.2.1 Universals of Linguistic Politeness

Hill, Ide, Ikuta, et al. (1986) use requests for a pan as the basis to study the linguistic politeness in Japanese and American English cultures. The starting point of the study is because they find the concept of *wakimae* in Japanese does not have an

equivalent word in English. Only the word ‘discernment’ best catches the essence of *wakimae* (pp. 347-348). Therefore, Hill, et al. use “discernment” to refer to a speaker’s passive ability to select how to behave linguistically. That is, ‘once certain factors of addressee and situation are noted, the selection of an appropriate linguistic form and/or appropriate behavior is essentially automatic” (p. 348). In opposition to discernment, Hill, et al. (1986) propose “volition” referring to the active choice a speaker has according to his or her intention (p. 348). Hill, et al. thus hypothesize that Japanese politeness centers on discernment while American politeness focuses on volition. If Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness theory, which can predict “the distribution of politeness strategies in [one] culture” (Hill, et al., 1986, p. 349), is applied to Hill, et al.’s hypothesis, Japanese politeness, with high D (distance) relations, would include a high amount of negative politeness and off-record strategies. Inversely, American politeness, with low D and P (power), is more bald-on-record and uses more positive strategies (Hill, et al., 1986, pp. 349-350).

Hill, et al. (1986) sends out questionnaires to college students at the universities in Japan and America. The questionnaires include three parts. Part I aims “to measure the relative politeness of certain request forms, using a 5-point scale” (p. 354). The bigger the number a participant chooses, the more careful he or she would be in selecting a certain request form to address. Using a 5-point scale, part II measures the relative power and distance between the speaker and the addressee in certain situations like talking to an advisor, a young professor, a stranger, a waiter, etc. (p. 354). Part III “measures the relative frequency with which specific request forms are used toward

specific categories of addressee in typical situations” (p. 354). The results confirm the hypothesis that Japanese politeness centers on discernment and American politeness on volition. The result also supports Brown and Levinson’s (1978) theory that distance and power “are two major elements operating in all sociolinguistic systems of politeness and that the weights or priorities assigned to each will vary from group to group” (Hill, et al., 1986, p. 363).

While Hill, et al.’s (1986) study is valid in supporting Brown and Levinson’s theory that power and distance are two important elements, Hill, et al.’s study seems to be over-reaching, as it applies the findings to all cultures for all situations. That is, Hill et al. (1986) only investigate the request behavior in the Japanese and American cultures. It is possible that other acts with different cultural groups or individuals would provide different results where power and distance would probably no longer be the major elements in determining a speaker’s linguistic behavior of politeness.

2.2.2 Indirectness and Politeness in Requests

Like Hill, et al. (1986), Blum-Kulka (1987) also studies the act of requests to investigate the correlation between being polite and impolite. Blum-Kulka opposes the traditional belief that the more indirect a request is, the more polite it is. Blum-Kulka asks native Hebrew and English speakers to rate the directness or politeness of nine utterances about requests in five different situations. The results show that the most indirect request strategies are not judged as the most polite because indirect requests require more interpretative effort from the hearer (p. 133). The English speakers in Blum-Kulka’s study consider hinting as a polite way of making a request, though less

polite than conventional forms, while Hebrew speakers do not find hinting very polite (p. 139). The latter gives high value to direct and straight talk (p. 145). Blum-Kulka also finds that the notion that 'being indirect equals being polite' is only applicable to "conventional indirectness," but this is not always true for "non-conventional indirectness" (p. 132). The above-mentioned findings contrast with Brown and Levinson's prediction that politeness and indirectness are highly related (Blum-Kilka, 1987, p. 139). Blum-Kulka argues that the contradiction is due to the fact that different cultures consider politeness differently in terms of face want. Some cultures may care more about the need for efficiency while another culture cares more about the need of power (p. 145). However, even though Blum-Kulka's study shows there is no direct relation between being polite and being indirect as Brown and Levinson seem to claim, Blum-Kulka agrees with Brown and Levinson (1987) that the idea of face want is universal, but the content of which face is wanted varies from culture to culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 61-62; Blum-Kulka, 1987, p. 145).

2.2.3 Paying Compliments

Holmes' (1988) study focuses on the notion of FTAs in Brown and Levinson's theory with special focus on complimenting behavior (e.g., giving and receiving) between men and women in New Zealand. According to Holmes (1988), compliments function as "solidarity signals, cementing friendships, attenuating demands, smoothing ruffled feathers and bridging gaps created by possible offences" (p. 464). In other words, compliments, for Holmes, are simultaneously positive affective for male research participants as well as potentially face-threatening acts for females. Brown and

Levinson's categorizing compliments as intrinsic FTAs can explain only the linguistic behavior of the male participants in Holmes' (1988) study. However, the positive effect of a compliment, as found from the female participants in Holmes' study, as social lubricant or friendship enhancement is neglected by Brown and Levinson's intrinsic FTA label. Furthermore, both Holmes' study and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory do not explain the situation when compliments are given to a third party that is not present in the conversation. In this case, we do not know if Brown and Levinson still consider a compliment as an FTA. Nor do we know whose face, and which face, would be threatened and need mitigation.

2.2.4 Politeness and Conversational Universals

Matsumoto (1989) uses "honorifics" in Japanese language to show how the notion of negative face fails to account for linguistic politeness in Japanese. Japanese people are very sensitive to their social relationships with others. According to Matsumoto (1989), in a culture like Japan, an individual's concern is "not to claim and preserve his/her own territory by expressing him/herself clearly, but rather to become and remain accepted by the other members of the group" (pp. 217-218). Thus, negative face as freedom of action and freedom from imposition does not apply to the linguistic politeness in Japanese (Masumoto, 1989, p. 218). The importance of interpersonal relationships and group harmony also reflects in linguistic forms; there is no linguistically neutral form in Japanese. For example, a sentence as simple as *Today is Saturday* has three versions in Japanese to mark the degree differences in politeness: plain (i.e., least polite), polite and super polite (Matsumoto, 1989, p. 208). As

Matsumoto states, “[t]he speaker’s attitude towards the referents and situation and towards the interlocutors” are required social context to fulfill in order to be viewed to speak appropriately (p. 215). Therefore, by using the correct copula, a Japanese speaker shows his or her ‘respect’ to the addressee about the interpersonal relationships.

For Brown and Levinson (1987), using honorifics is a kind of FTA because “to raise the other is to imply a lowering of the self, so a raising of the self may imply a lowering of the other” (p. 39). Nevertheless, for Japanese, using honorifics is to show politeness. It is to show that a Japanese speaker respects each participant in a particular setting. Politeness, in this sense, indicates the appropriate and expected linguistic behavior in Japanese culture. Matsumoto’s (1989) study thus shows how the universal applicability of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is problematic.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to study how close female friends collaboratively negotiate relationships with each other and how they evaluate behavior of themselves and others in causal conversation. Because each speaker's behavior is guided and controlled by the implicitly underlying social conventions and conversational norms of their community, by studying the linguistic behavior and non-verbal behavior of the participants, this research also aims to make the unseen conventions and conversational norms overt.

The following sections present first the practice-based perspective as the methodological foundation including both Watt's (2003) proposal of a social model of politeness as well as Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work. Second, I explain Gumperz's (1982) contextualization cues as the discourse analytical method I use to demonstrate how potential FTAs are performed and mitigated in conversations. I also introduce the exemplary contextualization cues I employ in data analysis, including participants deictics and non-verbal cues such as different kinds of laughter and paralinguistic cues like intonations. Besides the discourse analysis, ethnographic notes and participants interviews are not only used to confirm and enrich discourse analysis but also as an independent analysis approach to the unfolding of

cultural norms and politic behavior. From there, I introduce the approach of ethnography of communication. Third, the data collection and background information of the participants is introduced. Finally, I introduce the transcription conventions for audio-taped conversations involving participants.

3.1 Methodological Foundation: Practice-based perspective

The notion that the utterance-based perspective neglects the moment-by-moment unfolding of a conversation and focuses on a universal definition of politeness has given rise to Watts' (2003) proposal for a social model of politeness to study conversations from the participants' point of view. Watts (2003) concentrates on how participants of a conversation negotiate what (im)politeness means to them based on not only their previous experiences of a particular setting but also the emergent network participants form according to the historical network they have already built during previous encounters and the moment-by-moment reactions from each other. In order to account for the 'stable' (i.e., the historical network and experiences created during past encounters) and 'dynamic' (i.e., the moment-by-moment responses) characteristics of a conversation, Watts (2003) proposes his social model of politeness based on two theoretical foundations: Bourdieu's "theory of practice" and Watts' own idea of an emergent network (Watts, 2003, p. 143) which will be introduced later in this chapter.

This social model of politeness focuses on "how members evaluate and struggle over (im)politeness 1..." (p. 49). "(Im)politeness 1" refers to lay people's interpretation of what (im)politeness means in their own interactions. Locher and Watts (2005) also makes a distinction between "(im)politeness 1" and "(im)politeness 2." They argue that

the reason Brown and Levinson's framework fails to account for the dynamic feature of a conversation is because they focus on (im)politeness 2, which concerns how researchers in academia define (im)politeness as a theoretical concept. Watts argues that there is a gap between (im)politeness 1 and (im)politeness 2 because what lay people perceive as (im)politeness does not correspond to the definition of (im)politeness in literature (p. 15). Locher and Watts (2005) further use examples to demonstrate that even for lay people, the perception of (im)politeness changes when the settings change. Finding a universal definition for politeness is thus not so meaningful for understanding interactions as they actually unfold in everyday conversations. For example, the utterance 'lend me your pen' may be too direct and somehow rude between people in a socially distant relationship, but such might not necessarily be the case between close friends. The utterance 'Could you lend me your pen?' could be polite between people in a socially distant relationship but not necessarily considered polite between close friends because a close friend may interpret the utterance negatively and think the speaker is not respecting their close relationship.

Those two examples help to reinforce Locher and Watts' (2005) point that it is futile to propose a universal theoretical definition for politeness (pp. 15-16) because politeness is discursive in nature, such that people are constantly assessing each other's behavior and reconstructing interpersonal relationships in conversations of different settings and with different interlocutors on a moment-by-moment basis. Similar to Locher and Watts' (2005) proposal, Fraser and Nolen (1981) state, "no sentence is inherently polite or impolite. [People] often take certain expressions to be impolite, but

it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determines the judgement of politeness” (p. 96). The judgement, according to Spencer-Oatey (2002), “is a social judgement” in that it is the addressee or hearer who decides whether an utterance is polite or not (p. 533). Dimitrova-Galaczi (2002) also points out that “criticism regarding inherent level of politeness and threat also comes from the perspective that context is [*crucial*] in the assessment of politeness” (p. 16). Such scholarly observations, therefore, suggest that an utterance-based perspective is not fully adequate in accounting for the dynamic and interactional characteristics of a conversation, and that a practice-based perspective might more accurately capture the relational work involved in politeness.

3.1.1 Watts’ (2003) Social Model of Politeness

Watts (2003) provides for just such a model from a practice-based perspective. For Watts (2003), a theory of politeness should be able to account for how lay people perform the (im)polite behavior and how they evaluate it. When proposing a theory of politeness, the researchers’ job is not to take the notion of politeness out of the context of daily use and assign a pre-determined meaning to an utterance (p. 9). Watts believes that a model of politeness should be descriptive, as opposed to prescriptive in nature. That is, the model should explain how people actually use language to achieve (im)politeness rather than how they ought to use language. As Watts (2003) states, the theory of linguistic politeness should be able to “explain *how* all the interactants engaged in an ongoing verbal interaction negotiate the development of emergent

networks and evaluate their own position and the position of others within those networks” (p. 255).

In Watts’ book entitled *Politeness* (2003), he clearly states that the purpose of writing a politeness book is not to propose another politeness theory nor to provide a ‘blueprint’ for the analysis of linguistic expressions related to (im)politeness. Rather, it aims to give merit back to the naturally occurring conversation and provide a way to see how lay people react and respond. Watts lists four reasons, which are synthesized into two below, to explain why an ideal and universal concept for (im)politeness is impossible (p. 23). First, the context of talk-in-interaction is the premise for evaluating whether linguistic behaviour is polite or impolite. Therefore, it is impossible to make an evaluation without context. Context is also what research from an utterance-based perspective, such as that found in the theoretical works of Lakoff (1973, 1975) and Brown and Levinson (1987), fails to account for. Second, both of the speaker’s and hearer’s reaction are equally important since participants take turns at being speakers and hearers constantly in an on-going conversation. More importantly, the interpretation of whether an interlocutor is being polite or impolite is done throughout the moment-by-moment unfolding of the conversation. Therefore, what is predicted to be polite in a particular theory can be evaluated as impolite in a naturally occurring conversation. Watts (2003) proposes the idea of “politic behavior” which lies along a continuum between behavior that is viewed positively and negatively, as illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

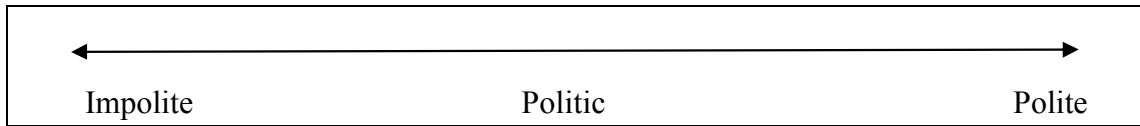


Figure 3.1 Watts' (2003) view of the distinction among impolite, politic and polite behavior

Politic behavior refers to “linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient” (Watts, 2003, p. 19). Thus, politic behavior is a context-dependent standard by which utterances are interpreted, and such behavior is open to negotiation within a given interaction based on that standard. For instance, on the one hand, whatever obviously violates politic behavior and renders a negative evaluation is considered to be impolite. On the other hand, any “observable ‘addition’ to politic behaviour” (Watts, 2003, p. 30) that has the risk of being viewed not only positively, but also negatively is considered as polite behavior. The reason why polite behavior has the risk of being viewed negatively is because being too polite sometimes connotes the image of being insincere or hypocritical. Therefore, polite and impolite behavior involves “linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be beyond what is expectable, ... depending on whether the behaviour itself tends towards the negative or positive end of the spectrum of politeness” (Watts, 2003, p. 19).

The following example of a moderator stopping a presenter illustrates how Watts' distinction of (im)politeness works. In a conference setting, the moderator would have to stop the presenter if he or she exceeds the time designated. The moderator could hold a sign with the word ‘stop’ printed on it. If the euphemistic way of telling the presenter to stop is neglected, the moderator would have to stand up and verbally ask

the presenter to stop. In Brown and Levinson's theory, the speech act of interruption would definitely be considered as an FTA because it threatens both the presenter's positive face (i.e., being perceived as someone who fails to complete his or her presentation and someone who does not control time well) and negative face (i.e., the presenter is forced to stop and his or her freedom from not being imposed upon is deprived). However, the setting of a conference and the role of a moderator gives every right for the moderator to interrupt even when the interruption has to be performed without any redressive action. The interruption, in Watt's point of view, would fit into the category of politic behavior. It would not be considered impolite within this setting. It may also be considered as appropriate behavior in the eyes of the next presenter whose time should not be taken up. However, for analysts, there is not a clear distinction between what is politic or polite of how interlocutors themselves interpret utterances within the context of the specific interaction. In the case of the interruption example, it might be that it is appropriate for the moderator to say, 'Thank you speaker A, but we have to stop here and welcome our next speaker, B.' If the moderator makes some positive comments on speaker A's presentation as a transition between his or her interruption of the previous presenter and the beginning of the next presenter, the positive comment is open to interpretation as polite behavior because it is not really required for a moderator. If the moderator says, 'I am *terribly* sorry (to interrupt)' where the adverb *terribly* is an observable addition to politic behavior, then we may be able to say that 'I am *terribly* sorry' is polite.

Even though (im)politeness “fluctuates from one social group to another, from one culture to another, and from one period of time to another” (Watts, 2003, p. 31), it does not mean that interlocutors do not know how to behave linguistically in conversations. That is, there are a set of implicit and underlying social or conversational conventions that guide interlocutors’ linguistic behavior. These implicit conventions are what constitute Bourdieu’s “theory of practice,” one of the two theoretical bases in Watts’ social model of politeness. When entering an interaction, individuals bring with them their previous experiences, ideas and understandings of a given situation (e.g., an interview, chitchat) as pre-knowledge and then act upon the immediate responses of their interaction partner(s) based on these previous experiences. The knowledge that is already internalized as pre-knowledge of a given situation is what Bourdieu calls “habitus,” which is “constructed through their own personal history and the way it has been linked in the past with objectified social structures” (Watts, 2003, p. 145). *Habitus* is at the heart of Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” in which he proposes that an ongoing social interaction includes both the *modus operatum* and *modus operandi* (Watts, 2003, pp. 148-49). *Modus operatum* refers to the objectified (social) structure, ways of behavior that individuals have acquired from their previous interactions (Watts, 2003, p. 148). The objectified structures are then internalized into the individual’s mind and help to determine the structure of their next interaction. For instance, we have some general understanding about how to act and what to expect in a job interview because we have experienced similar situations before. The reproduction and reconstruction of the structure is what Bourdieu has called *modus operandi* (Watts, 2003, p. 153).

Besides Bourdieu's "theory of practice," the second theoretical background that Watts' social model of politeness is built upon is his own theory of emergent networks. It is "a 'dynamic process' in which 'participants also form a network for the duration of the interaction'" (Watts, 2003, p. 153). As Watts points out, the social network of the "latent network" and the "emergent network" he proposes corresponds to Bourdieu's idea of *modus operatum* and *modus operandi* (Watts, 2003, p. 153). The latent network has already been built up through "historical practice" (Watts, 2003, p. 153). Though the influence of latent network on the very moment of the interaction is not explicit, it actually affects and contributes to the construction of emergent networks (Watts, 1991). Therefore, in a conversation, participants are creating new networks and linking the new ones with the old ones. That is, "the relationship between latent and emergent networks is historical, and emergent networks can only develop in social practice, i.e. in ongoing social interaction, on the basis of previously determined latent networks" (Watts, 2003, p. 153).

Both Bourdieu and Watts contend that an interaction consists of 'stable' and 'dynamic' characteristics. The 'stable' feature of an interaction refers to the habitus, the latent network or objectified social structure that is already internalized by the participants based on their past experiences. However, it is not completely stable; it is also dynamic such that a new order of the structure redefines the old one and such reconstruction occurs at every instance during the interaction. What happens during the dynamic, moment-by-moment unfolding of the interaction will later be internalized and thus become stable.

As previously introduced, the most important idea in Watts' (2003) social model of (im)politeness is that there is no pre-determined (im)polite behavior. It is highly context-dependent such that the evaluation of (im)politeness varies from groups to groups of interlocutors and depends on how individuals respond to each other in an ongoing interaction. Therefore, there are no inherently polite expressions. Similarly, Bourdieu's "theory of practice" is "neither a subjective nor an objective theory of social structure, but rather an intersubjective and historically determined theory" (Watts, 2003, p. 166). For example, based on Watts' (2003) model, potential FTAs can be found quite often in a television interview. Moreover, a television interview itself is meant to perform a certain degree of potential FTAs because an interview involves questions of personal information, such as one's religious beliefs, marital status, political preferences, etc. Whether interviewees are willing or not, they are expected to answer those potentially face-threatening questions. The sensible questions or possible confrontations during an interview could threaten interviewees' positive and negative faces. Nevertheless, even though sensible questions and confrontations are commonly believed to be FTAs, they are basically what make up a television interview. In this case, FTAs are perceived as expected polite behavior (Watts, 2003, p. 248).

3.1.2 Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts' (2005) Relational Work

Similar to Watts' (2003) social model of politeness, Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts (2005) view the evaluation of (im)politeness as ranging on a "continuum from polite and appropriate to impolite and inappropriate behavior" (Locher, 2004, p. 51). The biggest difference between Watts (2003), Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts

(2005) is the usage of the term *facework* and *relational work*. Watts (2003) derives the definition of *facework* from Goffman to refer to the “actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face” (Watts, 2003, p. 125). In other words, Watts uses the term “facework” to refer to the “efforts made by the participants in verbal interaction to preserve their own face and the face of others” (p. 274). More specifically, facework based on Watts (2003) is:

[T]he reciprocal social attribution of face to the participants in social interaction in accordance with the line or lines the participants can be assumed to be taking in the interaction. These lines constitute part of the politic behavior associated with the social activity type. (p. 131)

The line or lines which Watts intends is extracted from Goffman’s (1967) definition of line meaning “a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (p. 5). Watts (2003) states that face is a “socially attributed aspect of self that is temporarily on loan for the duration of the interaction in accordance with the line or lines that the individual has adopted” (p. 125). In other words, face is a highly changeable and dynamic entity and every interaction involves the negotiation of face. In Watts’ (2003) point of view, face consists of two parts: the institutionalization of the self (i.e., the face that coincides with one’s ritual roles) and the face that is subject to change according to the conditions of the interaction. Therefore, participants have the obligation to maintain the face of other participants involved in the same interaction (p. 125). In this sense, facework comprises the similar essence of *relational work* which participants are

constantly negotiating their relationship with others, and helping each other to maintain face.

Nevertheless, even though both facework and relational work refer to “the process of defining relationships in interaction”, Locher (2004) prefers the term relational work for it emphasizes the involvement of at least two participants (p. 51). As Goffman (1967) points out, “maintenance of face is a [*condition*] of interaction, not its objective” (p. 12). Locher and Watts (2005) further adopt the term relational work to avoid the confusion that facework connotes. That is, facework seems to concern only the mitigation of face-threat. In this way, facework includes only the performance of polite and appropriate behavior but excludes other behavior comprised in the continuum of (im)politeness, such as rude, impolite and inappropriate behavior (p. 11). Like Watts’ (2003) notion of a continuum which has the two categories of impolite and polite behavior at the two ends and politic behavior in the middle, Locher and Watts’ (2005) relational work makes the same distinction as shown in Figure 3.2. More specifically, Locher and Watts (2005) add a distinction between the unmarked politic behaviors and positively marked politic behaviors.



Figure 3.2 Continuum of relational work (Locher & Watts, 2005, p. 12)

Locher and Watts (2005) contend that polite behaviors must also be politic behavior, but politic behavior does not always qualify as polite behavior. For example, unmarked politic behavior is simply “neutral” behavior that is neither “non-polite” nor impolite. The diagram in Figure 3.2 also shows that polite behavior has the risk of being viewed negatively. On the right-most end of the diagram, it shows that when behavior is over-polite, it becomes negatively marked and also becomes non-politic, the so-called inappropriate behavior.

3.1.3 Summary of the Comparison between Utterance-based Perspective and Practice-based Perspective

Chapter 2 introduces the utterance-based perspective in which I adopt the criterion of FTAs proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the point to see where potential FTAs occur and may need relational work. In this chapter I introduce the practice-based perspective in which I use as methodological background to compensate

for the inadequacy of the utterance-based perspective. Table 3.1 below is a summary of the major characteristics of the two perspectives. For Brown and Levinson (1987), human behaviors are divided into either polite or impolite behaviors. Locher and Watts (2005) believe that the assessment of (im)politeness lies not only between interlocutors but the assessment varies from person to person and situation to situation.

Table 3.1 Summary of the Utterance-based Perspective and the Practice-based Perspective

	Utterance-based perspective (Brown and Levinson)	Practice-based perspective (Watts, and Locher and Watts)
Type of Politeness	Politeness 2	Politeness 1
Constituents of Politeness	A clear cut distinction between polite and impolite behavior (no discussion of impolite and rude behavior)	Three categories: impolite, politic, and polite behavior on a continuum
Purpose of Politeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To mitigate FTAs • Oriented to successful pursuit of egoistic goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate mutual understanding • Oriented to successful inference of meaning between individuals
Methods	Theoretical	Analytical
Importance of Context	Constant	Stable (i.e., habitus) Dynamic (i.e., emergent)
Role of Hearer	Irrelevant	A crucial partner in the negotiation of (im)politeness
State of Face	Inherent and stable positive and negative face	Negotiation of face as part of the relational work
Descriptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable • Strategic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable and Dynamic • Communicative

The role of the hearer is essential because he or she provides reaction and feedback to the speaker, and the speaker and the hearer mutually contribute to the negotiation of

(im)politeness and interpersonal relationships. During the conversation, they constantly evaluate each other's behaviors and make sense out of the behavior which might make different sense to another group of speakers for the same setting. Because the role of the hearer is not considered in an utterance-based perspective, there is also no place for the emergent context.

The participants' mission in a conversation from the utterance-based perspective is to prevent face threat to each other. If participants have to perform an FTA, they select from a list of strategies to mitigate the harm of the particular FTA. If the threat is vital, a speaker can choose not to perform an FTA at all. However, such an abandonment is problematic because there will be no interaction at all. The 'potential' hearer will never have a chance to hear what he or she originally would be told. The concern involved in FTAs is to take care of each other's positive and negative face, which are pre-determined and non-negotiable entities. On the contrary, for the practice-based perspective, face is like a mask that is loaned to each participant. In a word, the practice-based perspective views a conversation as a whole while the utterance-based perspective focuses only on the utterance level.

3.2 Analytical Methods

This research aims to study how and to what extent members of a certain community engage and negotiate communicative acts that are potentially face-threatening as well as to unveil the underlying norms of interaction that govern participants' behavior, interpretation, and evaluation of each other's linguistic behavior. In order to achieve these two research aims, I adopt a hybrid analytical methodology:

discourse analysis and qualitative analysis. Both analyses involve Gumperz's contextualization cues as an analytical unit and qualitative analysis from the fieldwork of ethnography of communication with difference on focus. That is, the discourse analysis first makes use of all sorts of contextualization cues to understand the relational work. Qualitative data from participant interview is used to confirm and enrich discourse analysis. On the other hand, to answer the second research question about cultural norms, qualitative analysis presents first the expected politic behavior and cultural norms elicited from participant interviews. Contextualization cues under the section of qualitative analysis are used to find instances where cultural norms are presented through linguistic behavior.

3.2.1 Discourse Analysis: Gumperz's (1982) Contextualization Cues

According to Schiffrin (1994), linguistic behaviors are “indicators of social, cultural, and personal meaning” (p. 407). Language reflects the implicit and covert cultural norms and “the way we communicate with each other is constrained by culture ... but it also reveals and sustains culture” (p. 139). Besides the referential meanings revealed by the linguistic forms in a stable manner, it is crucial to have the underlying shared cultural knowledge that enables us to interpret an utterance appropriately together with the situated, emergent, and dynamic process of interpretation during the interaction. Saville-Troike (2003) claims,

Interaction requires the perception, selection, and interpretation of salient features of the code used in actual communicative situations, integrating these with other

cultural knowledge and skills, and implementing appropriate strategies for achieving communicative goals. (p. 19)

The knowledge is what Gumperz (1982) calls “contextual presuppositions” (p. 131). That is, speakers rely on their knowledge and their stereotypes to understand what is going on in talk-in-interaction (p. 130). Both knowledge and stereotypes are what are generally understood as background knowledge, shared culture and similarity of “interactive experience” (p. 141) and “socio-cultural assumptions” (p. 153). In order to decode the underlying conventions and signal the contextual presuppositions, interlocutors make use of the “contextualization cues” which refer to “any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions” (p. 131). Contextualization cues comprise, first, the linguistic signals: the switch between different languages or dialects during conversations, “choice among lexical and syntactic options, formulaic expressions, conversational openings, closings and sequencing strategies” (p. 131); second, paralinguistic signals such as prosody (e.g., intonation, changes in loudness, stress, variations in vowel length, etc.) (p. 100); third, non-verbal signals including “gaze direction, proxemic distance, kinesic rhythm or timing of body motion and gestures” (p. 142). As Kotthoff (2000) points out, “laughter is the contextualization cue for humor par excellence” (p. 64).

Contextualization cues, based on Wilson (2004), “serves to activate and retrieve the necessary background knowledge base so that a contextually appropriate process of inference can take place” (p. 2). Therefore, the successful interpretation of contextualization cues depends on interlocutors’ “tacit awareness of their

meaningfulness” (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 131-132). However, misunderstanding may occur when interlocutors interpret the cues differently. Oftentimes interlocutors are even not aware that they have different interpretations or conventional expectations of a certain cue. Gumperz (1982) uses the modal ‘may’ to illustrate the possible misunderstanding between American English speakers and Indian English speakers. ‘May’ signifies both ‘permission’ and ‘possibility’ in American English while ‘may’ only means ‘permission’ in Indian English (p. 140). Therefore, a possible FTA might occur when an Indian English speaker may feel like the American English speaker is giving him or her an order while the American English speaker’s intention is to give the Indian speaker some choices.

While Brown and Levinson’s criterion of FTA helps analysts to identify the places that are open to an interpretation of (im)politeness, contextualization cues enable analysts to revert to the time the actual conversations take place and to interpret the referential meanings and relational work from the participants’ point of view. Therefore, from the perspective of discourse analysis, this research uses the linguistic form, and paralinguistic signals, as introduced below, as access to unfold what guides the way speakers choose a particular manner to talk and how such choices are interpreted. The linguistic form includes the lexical words that function as the starting point of negotiation in terms of its semantic meaning and perhaps, more importantly, the pragmatic connotation that is used and perceived by the speaker and the hearer. Syntactic structures are also linguistic forms that may be used to achieve specific relational work. For instance, the pro-drop syntactic characteristic in Chinese allows the

omission of subject which can refer to anyone. Such an ambiguous use of subject can be used when the speaker wants to alleviate the force of potential FTAs. Intensifiers are another linguistic form that play an important role in the reinforcement of performing or mitigating potential FTAs. Paralinguistic cues include different kinds of laughter as well as the quality, intonation and volume of voice which can play a determinant factor in the interpretation of one's linguistic behavior. For example, the sentence-final particle 阿/呀 *a/ya* in Chinese connotes simultaneously four meanings: "affirmation", "polite command, suggestion", "a question", "strong opinion, softening question, summoning attention, enthusiasm and mild reproach" (Chu, 1998, p. 120). Thus, the choice of the appropriate meaning relies on the intonation, either rising or falling, and the manner the particle is uttered (e.g., prolonging the final particle versus a prompt ending). The paralinguistic cue of laughter also plays an important role in the interpretation of relational work between close friends. When potential FTAs are performed and responded to along with laughter, as will shown in the next chapter, the potential face-threats are thus reconciled most of the time. For instance, the potential FTA of reprimand is performed often by participants, but laughter often comes along when a potential FTA of reprimand occurs. The paralinguistic cue of laughter, in this case, suggests that the reprimand more or less functions as what Labov (1972) has called "ritual insults," meaning that a reprimand is not meant to be taken literally but involves friends playfully fighting to build solidarity.

In order to demonstrate the negotiation, mitigation and performance of potentially FTAs, this research uses participant deictics for their important indexical

function in terms of interpersonal relationships. Participant deictics include, “personal pronouns, titles, proper names, kin terms, and combinations” (Wortham, 1996, p. 334), which are used by interlocutors to “establish what roles they are playing with respect to each other” (Wortham, 1996, p. 332). For example, the second-person pronouns *vous* and *tu* in French reveal the speakers’ closeness, status, and age differences through their selection of *vous* or *tu* to address each other. Calling the professor ‘Dr. David Miller,’ ‘Dr. Miller,’ and ‘Dr. David’ signifies different degree of distance or formality. Moreover, the use of different participant deictics signify implicitly how the speaker wants to be evaluated or judged by his or her addressees in terms of (im)politeness. In Straehle’s (1993) study, pronouns are used as one kind of linguistic cue to signal relationships among participants, and particularly do the relational work of teasing. For instance, two participants in Straehle’s study use ‘we’ to refer to themselves as a group and use the third-person pronoun ‘she’ to refer to another participant in her presence as another group (p. 215). According to Straehle (1993), such a use of third-person pronoun when the referent is present is to do relational work of insulting because the reference “ignores or denies an individual’s presence, which one might otherwise indicate with the pronoun ‘you.’ As Tannen points out¹, “third person pronominal reference of this sort is often employed by adults in the company of children or otherwise unempowered individuals” (p. 219). Therefore, the pronouns in Straehle’s study are used to mark the interpersonal boundary among participants and achieve specific relational work of teasing. Zupnik’s (1994) study on political discourse

¹ Straehle’s (1993) personal communication with Tannen.

contends that the first-person plural pronoun is likely to “encode group memberships and identifications: speakers may index different groups as included in the scope of the pronoun ‘we’ while excluding others” (p. 340). Zupnik further states that “speakers often use such pronouns in a vague manner ... That is, based on the cohesive ties among the various utterances of the discourse, there are several potential referents of the indexicals” (p. 340). In a word, the multiple functions of participant deictics enable the speakers and hearers to achieve the particular interpersonal meaning one intends.

3.2.2 Qualitative Ethnographic Analysis: Field Notes and Interviews

As contextualization cues help in the unfolding of the implicit conventions as well as the interpretation of referential and interpersonal meanings, the approach of ethnography of communication “provide[s] us with the contextual presuppositions ... as a basis for situated inferences about speakers’ meanings” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 371). Researchers in ethnography of communication distinguish several ways to study the underlying cultural knowledge and conventions, such as introspection of one’s own culture, participant-observation of the target culture, or interviews (Saville-Troike, 1989, pp. 133-135). In this research, I employ the above-mentioned methods. As an ethnographer of my own culture, I make use of my knowledge as a native Mandarin speaker in Taiwan. Saville-Troike (1989) points out, one of the advantages of being an observer of one’s own culture is the convenience to use oneself as the source of information and interpretation (p. 127). An ethnographer can better “validate, enrich, and expedite the task of ethnographic description” (p. 127). Furthermore, by being both a field observer and a participant of the target culture who can make use of self-

knowledge, the ethnographer is able to “plumb the depths and explore the subtle interconnections of meaning in ways that the outsider could attain only with great difficulty” (p. 128). For example, my target participants are friends of my mother and sister. Because they know I am from the same culture as them, they often seem to feel less embarrassed or uneasy about doing something they think an outsider would not understand or appreciate. Still, as an ethnographer, I do not entirely take my insider knowledge for granted, as I can pick up culture-specific behavior more efficiently than an outsider.

Nevertheless, being an ethnographer of one’s own culture has limitations. One of the disadvantages are related to the expectations of the participants on the ethnographer in that they may expect an ethnographer to behave in certain way. Yet, an ethnographer may deliberately be uncooperative in some settings in order to elicit the implicit conventional social norms. As Saville-Troike (1989) suggests, “the discovery of communicative norms is often most obvious in their breach” (p. 142). I must admit that during follow-up interviews, I have to explicitly ask ‘forgiveness’ from my participants when putting them in difficult situations by asking why they behave in the way they behaved in the recordings. They often have to think hard to recall the reasons that stimulate their behaviors, and sometimes they feel frustrated for not being able to answer my questions because those implicit social conventions are things they do every day and take for granted.

3.3 Participants: One Community of Practice

There are three groups of participants and such participants may be considered as part of a community of practice. The first group is made up of four young female speakers (Annie, Cindy, Michelle, and Betty) in Taiwan who are in their mid-twenties. The second group is made up of three female speakers in their fifties (Amy, Lin, and Yang) while the third group is also made up of three female speakers in their fifties (Amy, Joanne, and Lisa) in Taiwan. To make a distinction between these three groups, I will call them respectively the ‘group of mid-twenties,’ the ‘first group of fifties’ and the ‘second group of fifties’ from now on. All female speakers are close friends within their respective groups. Participants of the group of mid-twenties were high school classmates (grade 9-12). They keep frequent contact with each other through online chatrooms and personal blogs. They also meet once or twice a year. Amy and Yang from the first group of mid-fifties are former colleagues of a junior high school and Yang and Lin are sisters. Amy, Lin and Yang keep frequent contact because Yang and Lin’s children go to Amy’s house for private lessons in ancient Chinese literature. Three of them also do shopping or go out for dinners from time to time. Amy, Joanne and Lisa from the second group of mid-fifties are former colleagues as well. Amy pays a visit to Joanne and Lisa regularly for lunch.

The factors that enable these speakers to form a community of practice include their similarities in age, gender, educational background, in-group trust to share problems of their lives (e.g., problems on relationship, topics on children), gossip about others, and also in-group support. Community of practice refers to “groups of people

who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott , & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Communities of practice include three dimensions: “mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Mutual engagement refers to deep relationships that participants share, rather than simple similarity like the sharing of interests. Therefore, mutual engagement includes not only harmonious engagement as agreements, but “disagreements, conflicts and challenges are also forms of participation” (p. 77). Joint enterprise, the second dimension of a community of practice, is “the result of a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement” (p. 77). That is, through negotiation, the density of a community of practice increases. The third dimension ‘repertoire’ includes “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts” (p. 83). To be more specific, Wenger (n.d.) provides a list of activities in which a community of practice generally develops their practices together: “problem solving, requests for information, seeking experience, reusing assets, coordination and synergy [(e.g., buying things and accumulating the expenses together in order to have a discount)], discussing developments, documentation projects, visits, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps” (What do Communities of Practice Look Like section, para. 1).

While Schiffrin’s (1994) participants form their own community because they form their own circle of trust based on their similarities of being neighbors and being mothers and because of their dependence on each other (Schiffrin, 1994, pp.111-112),

my participants form their own community not only form their circle of trust, dependence, and doing things listed above together, but also, more importantly, because they share norms of interaction as well as cultural values. Though the shared norms and conventions are learned and formed because of the constant contact and mutual activities which they do together, it is the shared norms that distinguish an outsider from insiders of a specific community of practice. A community of practice forms its own unique conventions, rules or criterion which speakers employ in the negotiation of relationships and the evaluation of each other's behavior. An outsider may be able to participate in the conversation of a community of practice, but he or she will have to know the norms in order to behave appropriately. Therefore, when entering different communities of practice a speaker simultaneously belongs to, the individual speaker acts accordingly. Therefore, one of the research goals is to unfold the norms of interaction shared by each of the two groups of participants.

3.4 Data Collection

Conversational data in this research is collected by recording naturally occurring conversations. According to Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001), Labov (1966) is the first researcher recognizing “the recording of unmonitored speech as a fundamental goal of the study of language in its social context” (Cukor-Avila & Bailey, 2001, p. 254). As Golato (2003) points out, the recording of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction includes “non-elicited, audio-taped or videotaped face-to-face encounters and/or audiotaped spontaneous telephone conversations” (p. 20). In this research, I joined the meetings of my participants and recorded their conversations. The reason recording

naturally occurring conversations is adopted, rather than collecting data through such methodological means as discourse completion tasks (DCTs), questionnaires, and role-plays, is based on Golato's (2003) claim that the recording of naturally occurring data is an appropriate method to studies on actual language use. Recording can elicit authentic use of language once the participants get used to the presence of a tape recorder or a video camera. Since this study focuses mainly on the negotiation of interpersonal relationships, there will be no videotaping. Nonverbal behavior is recorded by field notes. The recording of participants' conversations took place in the summer of 2007. The total recording hours of the senior group is 3 hours and 5.5 hours for the young group.

After the recordings, I conducted follow-up interviews with the participants to see how they perceive their own behavior in the interaction. The follow-up interviews serve as another main source of material in the analysis of the recorded conversations. Some exemplary questions participants were asked are as follows: Why would you say 'this' (depending on what 'this' is) to your friend? Why would you choose such a quality (e.g., being slim) to say to your friend? Is being slim a good or bad quality in the cultural beliefs of your community? When one of your friends perform 'this' or say 'this' to others, how did you feel? Why did you accept (or reject) your friend's comment on you? Is accepting or rejecting appropriate in this context?

After interviewing and recording, I selected representative conversations and then transcribed them into Mandarin and English. During analysis, I distinguish the occurrences of potential FTAs where contextualization cues and participants'

interaction with each other signal that significant relational work takes place. I then make use of the above-mentioned linguistic and paralinguistic cues as well as qualitative data to demonstrate how relational work is achieved and how potential FTAs are negotiated in the conversations.

3.5 Transcription Conventions and Data Analysis

The layout of the transcription in this research follows Watts' (2003) HIAT style. The HIAT system is the abbreviation of "heuristic interpretative auditory transcription" proposed by Dafydd Gibbon (Ehlich, 1993, p. 125) which originally stands for *Halbinterpretative Arbeitstranskriptionen*. *Interpretative* indicates the "hermeneutic process of understanding the spoken data" and *Halbinterpretative*, equal to "semi-interpretative," reflecting a process that is "open to further analytical steps" (Ehlich, 1993, p. 125). During conversations, speakers do not always take turns one by one. It is very common to find speakers talking simultaneously. Therefore, in order to present clearly the turn-taking sequences, the selected conversations in this research are presented in the manner of what Ehlich (1993) calls "musical score." Ehlich (1993) states:

A musical score makes use of the two dimensionality of an area for representation purposes. Semiotic events arrayed horizontally on a line follow each other in time, whereas events on the same vertical axis represent simultaneous acoustic events, produced by different musical instruments, such as the violin, the trumpet, and the piano. (p. 131)

Figure 3.3 below illustrates the turn-taking situations in conversations in the manner of “musical score.”

1. Betty:	Cindy, you can come visit Shanghai if you are free.	
Michelle:		
Ann:		
Cindy:		Ok.
Annie:		
2. Betty:	Cindy, you can come visit Shanghai if you are free.	
Michelle:		Ok.
Ann:		
Cindy:		
Annie:		

Figure 3.3 Example of the “musical score” presentation style

The conversation is divided into ‘lines’ which are labeled in Arabic numbers. In each line, all of the participants’ names are listed even for those that remain silent. For example, in line 1, only Betty and Cindy speak; in line 2, only Betty and Michelle speak. Furthermore, in line 1, we can see Cindy’s ‘Ok’ is presented after Betty’s last word ‘free’ which means that Cindy speaks right after Betty’s turn finishes. However, if Michelle’s ‘Ok’ is presented in the same vertical line with Betty’s ‘Shanghai,’ as shown in line 2, it means these two speakers overlap. That is, Michelle does not wait to speak after Betty finishes speaking.

Tannen’s (1989) transcription convention is adopted with some of my modification to vividly describe the actual conversations. The complete transcription conventions are included in Appendix A. For the ease of reading, the transcription

presented in the analysis chapter includes only the free English translation and original Chinese conversation. Participants' names in the original text in Chinese are intentionally represented by their English pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The following chapter presents five excerpts from the recorded conversations of the participants. Original Mandarin Chinese and free English translations offered in this chapter are as close as possible to the colloquial American English. Complete transliteration between English and Mandarin Chinese and free English translations are provided in the appendices B-F. Each of the excerpts is of a different topic and each of them is grouped further into two different sections according to the representative types of relational work they display. The first section presents how participant deictics serve as important cues to understand the negotiation of interpersonal relationships among the participants based on cultural values. More specifically, the participant deictics I study include participants' use of vocatives, address forms, (in)definite personal pronouns, proper noun phrases, common noun phrases, (in)animate subjects, as well as subject omission (i.e., pro-drop). Each of them is employed to achieve relational work in different contexts: the creation of interpersonal boundaries as well as the performance of indirectness and ambiguity. In particular, the specific syntactic feature *pro-drop* in Chinese is employed often. Though pro-drop makes it more difficult to postulate the speaker's intention, pro-drop enables speakers to perform and mitigate potential FTAs

in an indirect fashion or achieve the relational work of indirectness and ambiguity. Other contextualization cues, such as linguistic and paralinguistic cues that signal relevant context for interpretations of relational work with regard to face threat will be examined as well.

While the first section approaches the conversation from a dynamic point view, the second part of this chapter addresses expected standard and politic behavior from a stable perspective. In the second section, I use ethnographic notes and information from participant interviews to support and enrich what has been found from discourse analysis regarding cultural norms. More specifically, I address what politic behavior is and how norms play out in the interactions of this particular linguistic community by quoting what participants commented on and shared during the interviews. Four different standards for politic behavior are presented: standard politic behavior of addressing the elder, giving and accepting compliments, and discussing politics and interrupting one's turn.

The following background information of the settings in which the interactions of participants take place could help us understand better the purpose and content of a certain interaction as well as the relational work involved. The conversations of the group of mid-twenties took place at a luncheon meeting. The first and second group of fifties met in an after dinner tea meeting and after lunch tea meeting respectively. Since in casual conversations topics can vary from politics, to fashion, to child rearing practices, or to choice of boyfriends, the purpose or goal of such interactions can vary. For example, interactions can involve the exchange of information, the asking for

favors, the consulting or seeking of suggestions or even just the emotional release of frustration. In the meantime, communicative acts such as compliments, self-effacements, (dis)agreements, arguments, inquiries, suggestions, offers, reprimands, and requests occur alternatively since the topics discussed during the meetings are widely ranged. The conversational tone and style is casual, informal, relaxed, and joyful, though the atmosphere, while casual, does not always remain cheerful. When disagreements or arguments arise, the tone can wax serious and the manner aggressive.

4.1 Participant Deictics as Part of Nominal Groups

This section presents and analyzes the conversation from a dynamic perspective by studying participants' use of participant deictics to achieve relational work. The reason participant deictics are of particular interest is they serve an *indexing function*. Participant deictics reveal how the speaker views his or her interpersonal relationship with the addressee or the referent. For instance, during the recording, Betty uses both Annie's full name and her first name together with a difference in voice quality to convey her emotion toward Annie. One instance when Betty uses Annie's full name in Chinese to address her, Betty is telling Annie, "Annie Wang, you are mean" with a falling intonation at the end of her utterance and louder volume. In comparison, at other times, when Betty addresses Annie by her first name, she speaks with a soft voice and sometimes with laughter. The non-verbal and paralinguistic cues seem to suggest that the different interpersonal meanings are conveyed by the use of different participant deictics, in this case, the addressee's full or first name. The following five excerpts

demonstrate how participant deictics play an important role in performing, mitigating and negotiating interpersonal relationships in terms of potential FTAs.

4.1.1 Nominal Groups and Shifting Interpersonal Boundaries

This section presents two excerpts demonstrating the use of different participant deictics to show interpersonal boundaries. Excerpt 1 is a conversation between Michelle, Betty, Cindy and Annie. The conversation starts with Betty's statement that nobody has visited or is planning to visit her in Shanghai. Both Annie and Michelle take turns telling Betty that if she would pay for the plane ticket, they would go visit her. This part of the excerpt shows how Betty is asked to commit to a future offer by Annie and Michelle as well as Betty's reaction to both Annie and Michelle's requests (lines 1-8). The relational work here involves negotiation of positive and negative face between Betty, Annie and Michelle. By the use of different pronouns, participants also negotiate their interpersonal boundaries between two antagonistic groups. Then the topic of visiting Betty in Shanghai switches in line 9 where Betty checks with Michelle about her work in the hospital. While the topic changes, participant deictics change from the presence of second-person pronoun 'you' to pro-drop. The antagonistic boundaries between two groups dissolve along with the change of participant deictics. In this excerpt, four potential FTAs are discussed: a complaint/request, a rejection, and two requests.

Excerpt 1: Talk about Visiting Betty in Shanghai and Michelle

1. Michelle:
Betty: 都沒有人要來上海找我。
Nobody ever comes to visit me in Shanghai.
Cindy:
Annie:

2. Michelle: 嗯?
eh?
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie: 熊出機票我們就去啊!
If Bear [Betty's nickname] springs for plane tickets then we'll go!
3. Michelle:
Betty: (笑) 機票錢? (唉) 我現在是伸手牌,
(laugh) Plane tickets? (Sigh) I am still getting handouts,
Cindy:
Annie:
4. Michelle:
Betty: 沒有辦法這麼慷慨。
No way ((I)) can afford it.
Cindy:
Annie:
5. Michelle: 所以如果以後你不伸手的話, 我們就可以...
So, if you are later not dependent, then we can...
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie:
6. Michelle: (笑)
(laugh)
Betty: (笑) 你說什麼? 你說什麼? (笑)
(laugh) What do you mean? What do you mean? (laugh)

Cindy: (笑)
(laugh)

Annie:
7. Michelle: (笑三秒) 那...
(laugh 3 secs) that...
Betty: 你怎麼知道? 你好厲害!
How do you know? You're so brilliant!
Cindy: (笑三秒)
(laugh 3 secs)
Annie:
8. Michelle:
Betty: 怎麼了? 幹嘛那樣子?
What's wrong? Why ((do you)) behave that way?
Cindy:
Annie:
9. Michelle: 昨天?
Yesterday?
10. Michelle:
Betty: (停頓兩秒) 嗯... 你昨天有吃晚飯嗎? 在醫院吃喔?

(pause 2 secs) hmm...Did you have dinner yesterday? ((you)) ate in the hospital?

Cindy:

Annie:

11. Michelle: 有吃昨天的早餐。

((I)) ate breakfast yesterday.

Betty: 啊?

Ah?

Cindy:

Annie:

12. Michelle: 就昨天的早餐沒時間吃完然後晚上就(無法辨識的句子)一起吃。

((I)) didn't have time to finish breakfast yesterday so ((I)) ate /?/ together at night.

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

13. Michelle:

Betty: (無法辨識的句子)

/????????????????/

Cindy:

Annie: 那狐狸中午吃什麼?

Then what did fox [Michelle's nickname] have for lunch?

14. Michelle: 中午的便當。中午開會所以就有便當。

A packed lunch. There's a meeting at noon so ((I)) had a packed lunch.

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

(服務生送餐打斷對話)

(Waitress comes to serve the food and thus the conversation is interrupted)

The first potential FTA occurs when Betty says, “Nobody ever comes to visit me in Shanghai” in line 1. Betty’s utterance can have three possible interpretations. First, it may be interpreted as an objective observation of the number of times her friends visit her in Shanghai. Second, it can be interpreted as a complaint (e.g., Betty is expressing disappointment with her friends’ behavior). Third, it can also be interpreted as an indirect request (e.g., Betty is hinting to her friends that it is time for them to plan a visit

to her in Shanghai). If Betty's statement is a complaint or request, then it is potentially face-threatening to her friends.

Betty's use of participant deictics helps to select the most plausible interpretation of her linguistic behavior. Betty uses the indefinite pronoun 沒有人 *méiyǒu rén* 'nobody' which does not signify whom she actually refers to as the subject of her utterance "Nobody ever comes to visit me in Shanghai" (line 1). Betty's use of an indefinite pronoun 'nobody' as the subject is thus ambiguous. The subject could refer to the participants present. If this is the case, Betty could have used other forms like 'you' (plural), 'you guys' or the proper names (e.g., first name, nickname etc.) of the participants in order to make her referent(s) explicit. The subject 'nobody' could also refer to people other than the participants present, but the use of the universal intensifying adverb 都 *dōu* 'all' to modify 'nobody' allows for the inference that she is somewhat upset by the lack of visitors. In any case, Betty's ambiguous use of referent(s) is possibly to be interpreted as her mitigation to the potential FTA for the present participants, thereby leaving multiple interpretations open to the other interlocutors.

In the next line, Annie performs another potential FTA by saying, "If Bear (Betty's nickname) springs for plane tickets then we'll go!" (line 2). Annie's utterance could be interpreted as asking explicitly and directly to Betty to make a future promise and thus is open to interpretation as a potentially bald-on-record FTA. Annie uses Betty's nickname 'Bear' to address or refer to Betty while Annie could have two other choices: using the second-person pronoun 'you' or using Betty's (full) name. In comparison with

using 'you' to address Annie, Annie's use of Betty's nickname could be Annie's mitigation of her potential FTA because by using 'you,' Annie is addressing Betty without directly employing the vocative in direct address (e.g., "Betty, you should spring for tickets"). However, Annie is behaving as if she is not talking directly to Betty by using the proper name 'Bear' which makes it seem as if Betty is not present. Annie's way of talking thus avoids directly asking Betty to pay the plane tickets forthright. However, as Straehle's (1993) study indicates, such a way of talking about the referent in her presence among close friends is not only to show her lack of power but also to tease her. Therefore, Annie's choices among using Betty's nickname, (full) name and the third-person pronoun 'she' could suggest her mitigation of potential FTA as using Betty's nickname signifies a certain degree of intimacy in her teasing. Note here that although Annie is the only person who is speaking. The fact that she is using the inclusive plural pronoun 'we' indicates she is speaking for the rest of the group. By using 'we,' Annie signals that she interprets the subject 'nobody' in Betty's utterance in line 1 as referring to the participants in this excerpt.

In lines 3 and 4, Betty states that the reason she can not pay for her friends' plane tickets is because she is still financially dependent. Betty's utterance could be interpreted as embarrassment for still being financially dependent at her age; it could also be an excuse for not wanting to pay for plane tickets for her friends. In both cases, Betty's utterance seems to be a mitigation of the potential FTA of rejecting Annie. By stating that it is because she does not have money of her own, a personal reason as a possible appeal for sympathy from her friends, Betty mitigates the rejection of a

potential FTA. Note that before Betty tells her friends that she is still financially dependent, she sighs. This non-verbal cue is a crucial signal for interpreting Betty's utterance "I am still getting handouts" as embarrassment and regret for not being financially independent.

Michelle performs the third potential FTA by saying to Betty in an unfinished sentence: "So if later you are not dependent, then we can..." (line 5). Although Michelle does not complete her sentence, we could infer what she intends to say from the three linguistic cues in her utterance: the adverb 'so,' the conditional 'if' and the first personal plural pronoun 'we'. In the first half of Michelle's utterance, she first uses the adverb 所以 *suǒyǐ* 'so', which can be translated as 'in this way, in that case,' and this adverb functions as a discourse marker to indicate that what Michelle means follows the reasoning of Betty's previous utterances. Betty then uses a conditional 如果 *rúguǒ* 'if' together with 就 *jiù* 'then' to show the relationship of condition and result between the two clauses. Therefore, the condition involves Betty becoming financially independent in the future, and the result is that the 'we,' whoever Michelle refers to, can do something. The conditional 'if' also shows the contrast between Betty's statement about her being still financially dependent in line 3 and being independent some day in the future. In the second half of Michelle's utterance "then we can...", the pronoun 'we' seems to refer to the same group of people (i.e., the participants in this excerpt) in Annie's utterance "If Betty springs for our plane tickets then *we*'ll go!" in line 4. Both Annie's utterance and Michelle's have the same 'if... then...' syntactic structure. Based on these three linguistic cues (i.e., the adverb 'so,' and both the 'if...then...' structure

and the use of ‘we’ which are identical with Annie’s previous utterance), Michelle’s unfinished sentence very likely indicates that if Betty is not dependent in the future, then the participants can use Betty’s money to visit her. If this is the case, Michelle’s utterance is a potential FTA to Betty because, similar to the potential FTA of request Annie performs (line 4), Michelle is affirming Annie’s idea that Betty will spring for the plane tickets once she becomes financially independent. However, unlike Annie’s potential FTA without mitigation, Michelle performs her potential FTA with limited mitigation by not finishing her sentence and leaving it open for Betty to interpret for herself.

Betty responds to Michelle’s potential FTA by asking Michelle “What do you mean?” twice in line 8. Betty asks the questions with a chuckle and she raises her voice, especially the second time. Betty’s repetitive questions and the manner (e.g., raising voice) when she asks those questions give cues that her questions could be interpreted as her surprise and indignation to what Michelle has said. Betty’s utterances could have two possible interpretations: first, she perceives Michelle and perhaps also Annie’s potential FTAs as requests for a future commitment of paying for the plane tickets; second, if what Michelle and Annie perform are seen as face-threatening to Betty, the degree to which Betty is threatened could be minor from her chuckle when questioning Michelle. Cindy’s laughter in line 8 might help us to understand what Betty’s questions and Michelle’s unfinished utterance suggest. Cindy’s cackling laughter overlaps Betty’s laughing and questions. Instead of performing the potential FTA of requests like Annie and Michelle do, Cindy does not say anything throughout the whole excerpt. She only

participates in this excerpt by laughing at the end while Annie and Michelle perform a duet of potential FTAs aimed at Betty (line 2 and line 5). By remaining linguistically non-committal, Cindy does not join the duet and only reveals, in line 6, possible support for the antagonistic duo contra Betty. Cindy's silence makes her more of an 'outsider' than the two overt antagonists. However, Cindy's contributions to the conversation, whether active or passive, do not really matter. What is more important is her cackling laughter, which seems to function as a concluding mark of the 'antagonistic' situation. Cindy's laughter possibly suggests that the 'antagonism' is not truly serious, at least not from her point of view.

Table 4.1 (see next page) presents the participant deictic mapping of the relational work taking place in Excerpt 1. The deictics each participant uses to address or refer to each other are listed with a hyphen to link the exact referent a participant deictic represents.

Table 4.1 Participant Deictics Mapping of Interpersonal Boundaries in Excerpt 1

Line & Speaker	Linguistic features					
	Proper Noun	Pronoun				∅
		1 st (sing)	1 st (plu.)	Indefinite	2 nd	
1. Betty		'me'-- Betty		'Nobody'-- participants		
2. Annie	'Bear' -- Betty		'We'-- participants			
3. Betty		'I'-- Betty				
4. Betty					((I))--Betty	
5. Michelle			'We'-- participants	'you'-- Betty		
6. Betty				'you' -- Michelle 'you'-- Michelle		
7. Betty				'you' -- Michelle 'you'-- Michelle		
8. Betty					((You))-- Michelle	
10. Betty				'you'-- Michelle	((you))-- Michelle	
11. Michelle					((I))-- Michelle	
12. Michelle					((I))-- Michelle ((I))-- Michelle	
13. Annie	'Fox'-- Michelle					
14. Michelle					((I))-- Michelle	

From line 1 to line 5, the referents of the participant deictics show that it is only Betty (e.g., ‘me,’ ‘Bear,’ ‘I,’ and ‘you’) and the participants (e.g., ‘we’ in the circle used by Annie and Michelle and ‘nobody’ used by Betty) that are mentioned. The participant deictics show the possible antagonism between Michelle and Annie as one group using 我們 *wǒmen* ‘we’ (lines 2 and 5) and Betty (lines 1, 3, 4 and 5) as another group. Betty’s utterance in line 1 where she uses ‘nobody’ referring to participants present seems to set up the boundary between her and the rest of the participants.

Annie interprets Betty’s use of ‘nobody’ as referring to the participants present. As the first arrow moves from Betty’s ‘nobody’ (line 1) to Annie and the ‘we’ Michelle uses (lines 2 and 5), the possible antagonism is formed because both Annie and Michelle’s utterances are addressing Betty (e.g., “If Betty/Bear springs for the plane tickets,...”) while referring to themselves (e.g., “...then we’ll go.”) as well. As the pronouns switch from the inclusive first-person pronoun ‘we’ in line 5 to second-person pronoun ‘you’ referring to Michelle four times in a row in lines 6 and 7, the possible antagonism between Betty versus Annie and Michelle becomes a possible opposing situation between only Betty and Michelle, as the second arrow indicates.

In comparison with lines 6 and 7 where the second-person pronoun 你 *nǐ* ‘you’ is explicit, Betty omits ‘you’ in lines 8 and 10. While ‘you’ between lines 6 and 10 all refer to Michelle, Betty’s use of pro-drop from line 8 is open to interpretation of a different relational work than the including of the second-person pronoun. Coincidentally, the topic changes from visiting Betty in Shanghai to Michelle’s physical situation related to her work in the hospital in line 8 where the pronoun ‘you’ begins to

be omitted. The manner in which Betty asks Michelle a question in line 8 also changes from a high tone and loud voice to soft voice. Therefore, it is possible that the omission of the second-person pronoun is used to indicate the change of topic as well as attitude. However, from lines 11 to 14, Michelle does not use the first-person pronoun 'I' in response to Betty and Annie's question about if she has eaten in the hospital and what she ate there. Instead of serving as a cue of topic or attitude change, the first-person pronoun 'I' is omitted probably because the referent is very clear due to the fact that Michelle is the only one who is answering questions at that moment.

Like Excerpt 1 presenting nominal groups and shifting interpersonal relationship, Excerpt 2 presents the similar phenomenon. However, unlike Excerpt 1 in which participants shift in their use of animate pronouns (i.e., from indefinite pronoun 'nobody' to first-person inclusive pronoun 'we' and to second-person pronoun 'you') to mark interpersonal boundaries, Excerpt 2 involves the change of animate pronouns to inanimate noun phrases to create interpersonal boundaries.

Excerpt 2 concerns the political election for the presidency of Taiwan. It is a follow-up of previous conversations in which participants first discussed the prices of the plane ticket between Shanghai and Taiwan and later Betty checked specifically with Ann about her graduation plans. The main content of this excerpt includes the explanations of reasons why Betty asks her friends to vote for Ma Ying-Jeou, one of the presidential candidates in Taiwan. At the end of Excerpt 2, by telling Cindy she could visit Shanghai if she is free, Betty brings back the topic that occurred in Excerpt 1 about one hour previously. Raising of a divisive topic of politics, non-sequiter, and a

disagreement to a third-time invitation to visit Shanghai are the three potential FTAs that will be discussed in this excerpt.

Excerpt 2: Talking about Voting for Ma Ying-Jeou

1. Betty: 姊姊妳趕快畢業然後回來投票！支持馬英九！
Big Sis you hurry up to graduate soon and come back to vote! Support Ma Ying-Jeou!
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:

(停頓兩秒)
(pause 2 secs)
2. Betty:
Michelle: (笑五秒)
(laugh 5 secs)
Ann: 好(笑) [慢 Michelle 三秒]
Ok. (laugh) [starts to laugh 3 secs later than Michelle]
Cindy:
Annie:
3. Betty: 馬英九！馬英九！支持馬英九！
Ma Ying-Jeou! Ma Ying-Jeou! Support Ma Ying-Jeou!
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:
4. Betty: 這樣我才能回來！不然我就永遠待在那裡。
This way I can come back [to Taiwan]! Otherwise I'll stay away forever.
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:
5. Betty:
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie: 真的嗎？爲什麼？他爲什麼當選你就能回來？
Really? Why? Why if he becomes the president then you can come back?
6. Betty: 因爲 2008 馬英九或許比民進黨來的對大陸方面比較友善吧！
Because in 2008 maybe Ma Ying-Jeou will be friendlier to China than the DPP!

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie: 真的嗎?
Really?

7. Betty: 大陸... 就是民進黨不可能承認，對啊。
China... DPP won't admit it, right.

Michelle:
Ann: 也對啊!
Also true!

Cindy:
Annie: 肚子好餓!
((My)) stomach is really growling!

8. Betty: 應該不是說他一定會承認，是相對的。
((I)) don't mean that he will definitely acknowledge [China], but ((it)) is relative.

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:

9. Betty:
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy: 是真的很餓！(笑)
((I)) am indeed very hungry! (laugh)
OR ((Stomach)) is indeed growling²!

Annie:

(停頓五秒)
(pause 5 secs)

10. Betty: Cindy 如果沒事也可以來上海來玩。
Cindy can also come to visit Shanghai if free.

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy: 好。
Ok.

Annie

11. Betty:
Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie: 問題是大家都有事。
But the problem is everyone is occupied.

(服務生送餐打斷對話)
(Waitress comes to serve the food and thus the conversation is interrupted)

By advocating out loud “Support Ma Ying-Jeou” in line 1, Betty initiates the conversation about politics as she performs the first potential FTA in Excerpt 2. Betty shows again her explicit and zealous advocacy for Ma Ying-Jeou in line 3, where she yells his name three times, which can be a threat to her friends who are not supporters. In line 1, Betty even explicitly exhorts Ann to graduate soon and go back to Taiwan to vote, using the second-person pronoun ‘you’ as the subject. After Betty’s call for vote in line 1, the conversation pauses for two seconds. Participants’ silence for two seconds can possibly be an indication that they do not know how to respond. The reason they do not react during those two seconds could also be that they are not supporters of Ma Ying-Jeou. If this is the case, in order not to confront Betty, participants remain silent. The pause can also possibly mean that participants are not fond of talking about politics in their lunch meeting in a public restaurant. Michelle’s five-second-long laughter with a relatively high pitch breaks the silence. Ann joins Michelle two seconds later with her brief answer 好 *hǎo* ‘yes’ to Betty’s campaigning. Even though Betty’s zealotry may be a potential threat, this excerpt shows that none of the participants oppose Betty, nor do they stop Betty from continuing the same topic right away. The topic about politics is interrupted further later in lines 7 and 8 where both Annie and Cindy state that they are hungry.

To mitigate the potential FTA of asking her friends to vote for Ma Ying-Jeou and to justify being potentially imposing, Betty indicates in line 4 that her zealotry has a

² There are two possibilities in Chinese to fill in the subject position in Cindy’s utterance.

legitimate reason. By appealing to her friends with her personal welfare, Betty alleviates the force of the potential FTA of asking friends to vote for Ma Ying-Jeou. That is, if it is for her own benefit, her enthusiasm for Ma Ying-Jeou to be the new president would probably not be seen as such a serious potential FTA for her friends who are supporters of another party. In particular, by explicitly asking Betty in line 5 why she can come back if Ma Ying-Jeou becomes president, Annie provides the floor for Betty to explain more. Annie's questions could as be seen as a cue that Annie does not oppose continuing the topic related to politics.

Nevertheless, during Betty's explanation, Annie gives a seemingly unrelated response by saying “((My)) stomach is really growling!” in line 7. Cindy echoes Annie in line 9 by saying she is also hungry while Betty is still talking about politics. Cindy's and Annie's statements about being hungry qualify as the potential FTA of a non-sequitur, suggesting that Cindy and Annie do not care about Betty's face wants (e.g., to continue her conversational floor of explanation). Note that instead of saying “I'm very hungry,” Annie uses her stomach as the subject. The inanimate subject seems to allow Annie to shirk the responsibility that it is not Annie who is hungry, but her stomach. By performing the potential FTA indirectly, Annie's use of an inanimate subject could thus be considered to be her mitigation of the potential FTA. Similarly, the omission of subjects in Cindy's utterance “Ø is indeed very hungry/ Ø is ideed growling!” could also be considered as her mitigation of the potential FTA of non-sequitur. In addition to using *pro* as subject, Cindy could have said “*I* am indeed very hungry!” or “*My stomach* is indeed growling.” Furthermore, unlike Annie, Cindy laughs after she makes her

statement. Cindy's short and mid-pitched laughter is another cue to suggest her mitigation of the potential FTA of non-sequitur.

After Cindy's turn in line 9, the whole conversation stopped for five seconds and Betty, in line 10, initiates a new topic which reprises an old topic about visiting her in Shanghai discussed an hour previously (as shown in Excerpt 1). There are three possible ways to interpret why Betty starts the conversation:

- (1) Betty is not happy that her turn of holding her topic has been cut off.
- (2) Betty starts to talk again by going back to the old topic simply because during the five seconds pause, nobody has taken a turn.
- (3) Betty wants to know if Cindy will visit her in Shanghai since Cindy does not respond when the conversation presented in Excerpt 1 take place (e.g., only Michelle and Annie respond).

Before knowing Betty's comment on this, we can make use of two linguistic cues in Betty's statement "Cindy can also come to visit Shanghai if free" which helps to suggest that interpretation (3) is the most plausible one. First, Betty uses Cindy's first name to indicate that it is Cindy and only Cindy that Betty addresses here. Second, Betty's use of 也 *yě* 'also' indicates that her mentioning of visiting Shanghai is related to the previous topic presented in Excerpt 1 where only Annie and Michelle provide their verbal responses. However, by explicitly telling Cindy to visit Shanghai, Betty performs a potential FTA because Betty's invitation somehow forces Cindy to give an answer indicating whether she is going or not. If Cindy says yes, she incurs a possible debt for herself; if she says no, she performs a potential FTA of rejection to Betty.

Unlike Annie or Michelle's responses asking Betty to pay for the plane tickets in Excerpt 1, Cindy gives a short and prompt answer "Ok." However, in comparison to Annie or Michelle's responses, Cindy's manner of response could be interpreted in two ways:

- (1) Cindy is truly agreeing to visit Betty but also is committing to a future promise.
- (2) Her short reply "ok" is perfunctory in that she does not want to draw more detailed discussion on this issue.

Because of the interruption from the waitress, there is no other linguistic data in this excerpt to show what Cindy truly believes when she says "ok." However, Annie's comment in line 11 "But the problem is everyone is busy" offers an intriguing clue to what Cindy or the rest of Betty's friends might think of Betty's offer in line 10. Annie first uses the conjunction 'but' to show the contradiction to what Betty says and the reality: Betty wants her friends to visit her but the reality is no one has money or time to do so. Annie's comment could thus be regarded as a disagreement with Betty, making it another potential FTA in this excerpt.

Similar to Annie's use of 'we' in Excerpt 1 where she tells Betty "If Bear springs for plane tickets then we'll go!", the use of 'everyone' suggests that Annie speaks for all of the participants present. However, the use of 'everyone' to refer to the participants is more indirect than the use of 'we' in Excerpt 1. If Annie's disagreement with Betty is a potential FTA, the use of 'everyone' could be regarded as mitigation of the threat to Annie's face, but not necessarily to the faces of other participants since Annie somehow is speaking for them without their explicit permission.

From the relational work involving the performance and mitigation of potential FTAs, participants seem to form two different groups: Betty as one group interested in politics and Annie and Cindy as another group focusing on their growling stomachs. The nominal groups employed in this excerpt displayed in Table 4.2 (see next page) help us understand how the relational work of interpersonal boundaries in Excerpt 2 is formed.

Table 4.2 Participant Deictics Mapping of Interpersonal Boundaries in Excerpt 2

Line & Speaker	Linguistic features						
	Proper Nouns	∅	NP	Pronoun			
				indefinite	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
1. Betty	'Big Sis'-- Ann; 'Ma Ying-Jeou' -- Presidential candidate					'you'--Ann	
3. Betty	'Ma Ying-Jeou'; 'Ma Ying-Jeou'; 'Ma Ying-Jeou';						
4. Betty					'I'--Betty 'I'--Betty		
5. Annie						'you'--Betty	'he'-- Ma Ying-Jeou
6. Betty	'Ma Ying-Jeou'						
7. Annie			'Stomach'--Annie's stomach				
8. Betty		((I))--Betty					'he'-- Ma Ying-Jeou
9. Cindy		((Stomach))-- Cindy's stomach OR ((I))-- Cindy					
10. Betty	'Cindy'						
11. Annie				'everyone'-- Annie, Cindy and Michelle			

The interpersonal boundary in Excerpt 2 involves Betty and two other participants: Annie and Cindy. I term these two groups ‘Betty’s group of politics’ and ‘Annie’s group of hunger’ based on the deictics used by Betty, Annie and Cindy. The dotted bolded squares around lines 3 and 6 and around line 8 in Table 4.2 show one side of the interpersonal boundary which includes only two participant deictics: Betty and Ma Ying-Jeou, the presidential candidate whom Betty supports. The participant deictics in boldface in lines 7 and 9 present the opposite side of interpersonal boundary formed by Annie and Cindy. The first boundary is created first by Betty’s use of Ma Ying-Jeou’s name three times (line 3) and the first-person pronoun ‘I’ (line 4). Annie’s use of the pronoun ‘he’ referring to Ma Ying-Jeou and ‘you’ referring to Betty in line 5 helps to reinforce that Betty and Ma Ying-Jeou belong to one group. In line 8 where Betty uses the implicit ‘I’ and the third-person pronoun ‘he’ referring to Ma Ying-Jeou confirms again the existence of ‘Betty’s group of politics.’ As the previous analysis shows, however, Betty’s overzealous discussion of political topics is not supported by Annie and Cindy when they interrupt Betty by stating that they are hungry. What is peculiar in Table 4.2 is not only the two interpersonal groups but also Annie’s use of inanimate participant deictics and Cindy’s ambiguous use of participant deictics. Though Annie uses the inanimate NP ‘stomach’ (shown in boldface) as the agent who does the action of being hungry, the fact that it is Annie’s growling stomach makes Annie form a group against Betty’s group. In line 9, though Cindy does not use an explicit subject to do the action of being hungry, the fact that Cindy echoes with Annie about being hungry inevitably includes Cindy in Annie’s ‘group of hunger.’ The two

groups of interpersonal boundaries seem to resolve in line 10 where Betty uses Cindy's name to address only Cindy directly. Nevertheless, Annie's use of 'everyone' to refer to all the participants except Betty seems to form another interpersonal boundary between Betty and the rest of the group.

4.1.2 Nominal Groups, Ambiguity, and Indirectness

While Excerpts 1 and 2 demonstrate the use of different kinds of pronouns to create interpersonal boundaries between speakers and how the absence of the second-person pronoun indicates the change in topic and attitude, Excerpt 3 presents an ambiguous way of performing and mitigating potentially direct face-threat through the use of indefinite pronoun (e.g., someone), inanimate subject (e.g., the appearance), and the omission of subjects. The conversation in Excerpt 3 involves Ann's questions about Yang's thin figure as well as Yang's responses to Ann. This excerpt gives an example of how cultural values are revealed through conversation. In this case, the relational work lies primarily in the negotiation between Ann and Yang over whether being thin connotes a positive or negative value for them. Similar to the association between pronoun change and topic change, the end of Excerpt 3 also shows that the introduction of a new pronoun signifies a shift in topic. This excerpt contains three potential FTAs: an inquiry into a personal affair, such as the reason for one's height and weight, a command or suggestion, and a positive evaluation (i.e., compliment).

Excerpt 3: Talking about Yang's Figure

1. Ann: 阿姨你爲什麼那麼瘦啊?
Auntie³ why are you so thin?
Yang: 我沒辦法。
I can't help it.
Amy:
2. Ann: 你幾公斤啊?
How much do you weigh?
Yang: 你這樣，你等下看 Lin 怎麼樣?
Well, you look at Lin [’s figure] later ok?
Amy:
3. Ann: 你幾公斤？ 喔？阿你幾公分？
How much do you weigh? Oh? How tall are you?
Yang: 47。 162。
47 [kilograms]. 162 [centimeters].
Amy:
4. Ann: 哇！真的太瘦了！至少要 50 呢！
Wow! Really too thin! ((You)) need at least 50 [kilograms]!
Yang: 我們家那三個姊妹，你有看到嗎？
My three sisters, have you seen?
Amy:
5. Ann: 這樣像是有生過小孩的人嗎？
Does this way/this appearance⁴ resemble someone who has had a baby already?
Yang: 阿？
Ah?
Amy:
6. Ann: 這樣像是(笑)有生過小孩的人嗎？
Does this way/this appearance resemble (laugh) someone who has had a baby already?
Yang: (笑)
(laugh)
Amy:
7. Ann:
Yang: 我我我這個樣子喔，真的喔，不太像媽對啦！
I I I the way I look, really, doesn't look like a mom indeed!
Amy:

³ The address form 阿姨 *ā yí* in Chinese can be used to address mother's younger contemporary (the sister of father's side is called 姑姑 *gūgū*) and also to address female friends, neighbors of one's parents. 'Auntie' in this excerpt is used by Ann to address her mother's female friend.

⁴ 這樣 *zhèyàng* 'this way' in Ann's utterance is a shorter phrase of 這個樣子 *zhège yàngzi* 'this appearance.' Both *zhèyàng* and *zhège yàngzi* refer to the way Yang looks. Though 'the way you look' is a better English translation than 'this way/this appearance,' I use 'this way/this appearance' to keep the speaker's original subject use in Chinese in order to present accurately the speaker's use of participant deictics in lines 5 and 6.

8. Ann: 狗狗哩?
Where is the dog?
Yang: Happy! 嘿，那樣子你媽有跟你講嗎？他 34 歲。
Happy! [Dog's name] Hey, then did your mom tell you? He's 34 years old.
Amy: 身材苗條...
A Slender figure...
9. Ann:
Yang: 那個，你媽有跟你講嗎？他 34 歲。這有講嗎？
That, did your mom tell you? He's 34. This was mentioned?
Amy: 我還沒有跟她講。
I haven't told her yet.

The first two potential FTAs occur between lines 1 and 4. These two potential FTAs contribute to the understanding of the third potential FTA of compliments which are also where the main relational work of indirectness and ambiguity take place. The first potential FTA is found in line 1 where Ann asks Yang the reason Yang is so thin. The request for personal information potentially threatens both the hearer's positive and negative faces. It is open to interpretation as a potential FTA because Ann may elicit personal information that Yang does not want others to know. For example, her being thin may be because she has an illness. Thus, Yang's negative face is potentially threatened because she is obliged to answer or she would be thought of as being uncooperative in the conversation. Yang may be considered rude if she does not complete the pair of a question and response. That is, when a speaker asks a question, his or her question requires a response. In this situation, not answering and remaining silent is an answer itself. Yang's positive face is also potentially threatened because she may think the reason Ann wants to ask about her figure is because Ann does not like the way she looks now. In Ann's question to Yang, she uses the adjective 瘦 *shòu* 'thin' to describe Yang's figure. According to the online revised Mandarin Chinese dictionary ("Ministry of Education," n.d.), 瘦 *shòu* in Mandarin Chinese connotes both the positive

meaning (e.g., slender but not fat) and negative meaning (e.g., not having enough flesh). Therefore, Ann's choice of adjective is ambiguous, but it also leaves the interpretation to Yang as to whether she perceives Ann's question positively or negatively. Ann also uses the adverb 那麼 *nàme* 'so', which means 'to such an extent' or 'very', to reinforce the degree of being thin. Whether Yang interprets Ann's utterance positively or negatively, 'so' serves as an intensifier. Yang's response in line 1 "I can't help it" does not really reveal whether she feels positively or negatively about Ann's inquiry because she gives the cause of the 'credit' (i.e., if she evaluates Ann's question as a positive one) or the cause of the 'fault' (i.e., if she evaluates Ann's question negatively) to something over which she has no control.

The second potential FTA is found in lines 2 and 3 where Ann asks twice how much Yang weighs. Ann's questions are potentially face-threatening because Ann is inquiring again about Yang's personal information. In particular, a woman's weight is often considered to be a sensitive question, just as asking a woman's age is inappropriate for some cultures and people. If this is also the case with Yang, then Ann performs a potential FTA. The first time Ann asks Yang about her weight in line 2, Yang does not answer but tells Ann to check Yang's sister who is coming to Yang's place later. It seems like Yang avoids answering Ann's question. However, the beginning part of Yang's utterance in line 2 overlaps with the end of Ann's utterance. The overlapping could explain that Yang's potential avoidance in line 2 may be because Yang has not finished her answer to Ann's question about why she is so thin in line 1, but Ann already issues her question about Yang's weight the second time in line 2.

Therefore, in line 3, Ann asks the same question about Yang's weight again. This time Yang answers right away. Yang's prompt response suggests that she does not regard Ann's inquiry as face-threatening. Otherwise, Yang might hesitate in answering or try to change the subject. Ann further goes on to ask for personal information, Yang's height in line 3. Ann's constant inquiries about Yang's weight and height as well as Yang's quick response possibly indicate that none of them consider Ann's questioning behavior face-threatening.

The third potential FTA takes place in line 4 where Ann comments on Yang's being really too thin and tells her how much she should weigh. Ann's two utterances are open to interpretation as bald-on-record face-threats because the sentence 真的太瘦 *zhēnde tài shòu le* 'Really too thin' could be viewed as a criticism by Yang. In comparison with 'so thin' in line 1 where Ann asks Yang 'why are you so thin,' Ann uses two intensifiers 真的 *zhēnde* 'really' and 太 *tài* 'too' in line 4 which strengthen the degree of a potential face-threat. Ann's utterance "((You)) need at least 50 [kilograms]" can be interpreted as a command or a suggestion to Yang. If this is the case, a direct command or suggestion potentially threatens both the hearer's positive and negative face. Offering suggestions potentially threatens Yang's positive face because it may signify that she has not done well enough. Giving a command or providing a suggestion potentially threatens Yang's negative face because she is 'forced' to do some changes following the command. In Ann's utterance 'Really too thin!', the second-person pronoun 'you' is omitted which makes the referent Ann refers to less explicit without looking back to the referent in Ann's previous utterances in line 3. Though the omission

could be because the referent or addressee is very clear, it can also possibly suggest Ann's mitigation of her command or suggestion to Yang. For example, the omission of the second-person pronoun 'you' is open more to interpretation of Ann's mitigation of her potential FTA of command or suggestion to Yang in Ann's utterance “((You)) need at least 50 [kilograms]” because the verb 要 *yào* 'need' needs an animate subject to be the agent who does the act.

Another linguistic element worthy of attention here is Ann's exclamation by using 哇 *wā* 'Wow' at the beginning of her utterances in line 4 after knowing Yang weighs 47 kilograms. In comparison with Ann's command or suggestion of 50 kilograms to Yang, Ann's 'wow' suggests her surprise of Yang's actual weight. However, whether it is a positive or negative surprise lies in Yang's responses in the following lines. In response to Ann, Yang shifts the focus from herself to her three sisters by asking Ann if she has seen Yang's three other sisters yet. Yang's shifting of attention from herself to her other sisters suggests that she does not want to confront Ann's potential FTA directly.

The last potential FTA can be found in line 5 where Ann is saying that Yang does not look like someone who already gave birth. Though Yang uses 'ah?' to respond to Ann, which could be interpreted as either Yang's surprise at what Ann says or Yang does not hear Ann's utterance clearly, the fact that Yang starts to laugh at the same time Ann repeats her question in line 6 indicates that her reaction of saying 'ah' is to show her surprise. The fact that Ann laughs in the middle of repeating her question to Yang can also be a cue that her question does not function as a question of doubting Yang.

Ann's laughter together with Yang's laughter in line 6 possibly suggests that they interpret Ann's question positively as a compliment to Yang for remaining in good shape. Amy's comment 'A slender figure' in line 8 plays a crucial role. Even though Ann and Yang already change to another topic, the word 身材 *shēncái* 'figure' indicates that Amy still continues the topic that Ann and Yang previously were talking about. What is more important is that the adjective 苗條 *miáotiao* 'slender' has a positive connotation on a person's figure in Mandarin Chinese. Amy's comment thus also serves as a compliment to Yang's figure.

However, a compliment is also a potential FTA to Yang. It may be the reason that Ann uses an inanimate subject 這樣 *zhèyàng* 'this way, this appearance' in her positive evaluation of Yang: "Does this way/this appearance resemble someone who has had a baby already?" rather than saying to Yang directly as "You don't look like a mom (who has had a baby)!" Not only does the use of an inanimate subject potentially help to mitigate the force of a potential FTA, but Ann's use of the indefinite pronoun, 人 *rén* 'someone, person,' to refer to Yang also functions as Ann's mitigation of her potential FTA. Nevertheless, does Yang feel threatened by Ann's criticism or suggestion in line 4 or compliment in line 5? Yang first responds to Ann's potential FTA of compliment in line 6 by laughing. Her agreement with Ann by saying "I I the way I look, really, doesn't look like a mom indeed!" in line 7 also suggests that she accepts Ann's compliment. Nevertheless, Yang does not seem to accept the compliment right away because she stammers when starting her sentence by repeating 'I' three times. Yang's stammer may be because she hesitates to accept Ann's compliment or she

wants to mitigate her acceptance of a compliment. Nevertheless, Yang uses two intensifiers ‘really’ and ‘indeed’ to reinforce the fact that she does not look like a mom, which, on the one hand, seems to conflict with her mitigation by hesitating to accept the compliment. On the other hand, though hesitating or mitigating her acceptance, Yang might want to show how she appreciates Ann’s compliment by intensifying her agreement with Ann. From the fact that Yang perceives Ann’s question “Do you look like someone who has given birth already?” as a compliment, we might be able to perceive Ann’s potential FTA of command or suggestion in line 4, where she says Yang is really too thin, as a compliment as well. This short excerpt reveals that both Ann and Yang consider being slim as a positive value, at least for a mother who already has had a baby. It is intriguing to see that both Ann and Yang give and accept compliments in an indirect manner, as the use of participant deictics in Table 4.3 reveal.

Table 4.3 reveals that the indirect complimenting behavior occurs between lines 4 and 8 where the use of participant deictics falls under the categories of indefinite pronoun, noun phrase, and null subjects (as shown in boldface). That is, the use of indefinite pronoun, inanimate NPs as subject, and the omission of subjects leave the referents less explicit and thus decrease the degree of directness for the potential FTA of complimenting behavior. Ann starts her indirect complimenting behavior by using ‘this way/this appearance’ to refer to Yang’s figure and then using 人 *rén* ‘someone, person’ to refer to Yang who does not look like she has had two children already (lines 5 and 6).

Table 4.3 Participant Deictics Mapping of Indirectness and Ambiguity in Excerpt 3

Line & Speaker	Linguistic features						
	Kinshi ps as Vocative	Pronoun				NP	Ø
		1 st (sing)	2 nd	3 rd	indefinite		
1. Ann	'Auntie' -- Yang		'you'-- Yang				
1. Yang		'I' -- Yang					
2. Ann			'you'-- Yang				
2. Yang			'you'-- Ann			'Lin'-- Yang's little sister	
3. Ann			'you'-- Yang 'you'-- Yang				
4. Ann							((you))-- Yang
4. Yang			'you'-- Ann			'my three sister'-- Yang's little sister	
5. Ann					'someone' --Yang	'this way/this appearance'-- Yang's look	
6. Ann					'someone' -- Yang	'this way/this appearance'-- Yang's look	
7. Yang		'I,I,I' -- Yang				'a mom'--Yang	
8. Amy							((you))-- Yang OR ((she))-- Yang OR ((Yang))
8. Yang			'you'-- Ann	'he-- the guy		'your mom' -- Ann's mom	
9. Yang				'he'-- the guy		'your mom' -- Ann's mom	

Ann's complimenting behavior in lines 5 and 6 is open to interpretation as indirect because Ann could compliment Yang directly by using the second-person

pronoun ‘you,’ and by talking to Yang, “You don’t look like you’ve had a couple of kids already!” This is similar to what Ann in lines 2 and 3 does where Ann uses ‘you’ to refer to Yang directly in Ann’s question to Yang about how tall she is and how much she weighs. Similarly, rather than saying “I’m indeed thin or slender”, Yang accepts the compliment indirectly by agreeing with Ann’s indirect compliment (line 7). The inanimate subject ‘the way I look,’ and the unspecified noun phrase ‘a mom’ Yang uses to refer to herself manifests indirectness in comparison to utterances such as “I’m indeed thin” or “I don’t look like a mom.” Furthermore, even though Amy is the only person who uses the phrase ‘a slender figure’ explicitly to describe Yang, the lack of a subject in Amy’s utterance makes the referent less salient. As shown in Table 4.2, ‘you,’ ‘she,’ and ‘Yang’ are three possible subjects to fill in Amy’s utterance “A slender figure” in line 8. Amy’s compliment is thus an indirect one as well. To make Amy’s compliment direct, Amy could say “you have a slender figure” in talking directly to Yang, “she’s slender” in talking to Ann, or “Yang has a slender figure” in talking to both Yang and Ann.

Similar to the use of inanimate NPs and the omission of participant deictics to achieve relational work of indirectness and ambiguousness in Excerpt 3, the last few lines in Excerpt 4 display more instances of how inanimate subjects and omission of participant deictics mitigate potential FTAs. The second part of Excerpt 4 (lines 10-15) presents the part where Annie takes Ann’s role as the investigator. The potential performance and mitigation of FTAs result from the ‘role change.’

Second part of Excerpt 4: Talking about Ann's Characteristics

10. Michelle:
Ann:
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie: 姊，我們來替你訪問你自己好了。請問一下當你面對這種稱讚的時候你會怎麼...
Big Sis, we should interview you for you. When you receive this kind of compliment, how'll you...
11. Michelle:
Ann: 好尷尬喔！
(I feel) So embarrassed⁵!
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie:
12. Michelle: (笑) (笑)
(laugh) (laugh)
Ann: 既開心又害羞。
(I feel) both happy and shy.
Betty: (笑) (笑)
(laugh) (laugh)
Cindy: (笑) (笑)
(laugh) (laugh)
Annie (笑) (笑)
(laugh) (laugh)
13. Michelle:
Ann:
Betty: 喔，我快笑死了！喔！喔！我快笑死了！
Oh, I'm going to laugh myself to death! Oh! Oh! I'm going to laugh myself to death!
Cindy:
Annie:
14. Michelle:
Ann: 哪有這種研究的！可以跟受訪者打成一片的呢？
What kind of research this is! ((The investigator)) can play around with participants?
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie:

⁵ It is grammatical and at times required in certain junctures of discourse to drop the subjects in Mandarin Chinese when the referent is clear. However, it might make a difference in understanding the relational work with or without the subject. Thus even though the free translation violates English grammar, I retain the violation purposefully for the analysis of participant deictics.

15. Michelle: (笑)
(laugh)
Ann:
Betty: (笑)
(laugh)
Cindy: (笑)
(laugh)
Annie: (笑)
(laugh)

The first potential FTA of this segment occurs in line 10 where the investigator's role and participants' roles are switched. Annie's proposal to switch the roles as a participant to the role as an investigator might challenge the authority of the investigator. The act of challenging is potentially an FTA. Participants and an investigator generally are supposed to be distant from each other so that the investigator can remain objective from the interactions he or she is studying. From this reasoning, Ann's negative face may be threatened because her freedom to be an objective observer or investigator has been taken away. Ann's response in lines 11, 12, and 14 provide evidence of how she perceives the potential FTA Annie performs. She explicitly uses the adjectives 尴尬 *gāngà* 'embarrassed' (line 11) and 害羞 *haixiū* 'shy' (line 12) to describe how she feels. According to *Oxford's Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, being embarrassed suggests a mental discomfort or anxiety while being shy is being timid and nervous in front of others (Cowie, 1989). Both of these two adjectives indicate some degrees of face loss of Ann's part and thus can possibly be regarded as Ann's self-downplay. Note here that Ann does not use the first-person pronoun 我 *wǒ* 'I' in her original Chinese utterances to refer to herself in lines 11 and 12 when she says she is embarrassed or shy. One of the reasons the subject is omitted in Chinese is because the referent is clear. However, the reason could also involve Ann's mitigation of the

potential FTA she performs. Looking closely at Ann's two consecutive sentences in line 14, we can find that Ann's first sentence and second sentence display different phenomena of subjects.

Sentence 14.1: What kind of research this is!

Inanimate Subject.

Sentence 14.2: ∅ can play around with participants?

Null Subject (which indicates the investigator)

Sentence 14.1 contains an inanimate subject 'what kind of research' that makes 'research' the focus of the sentence. Sentence 14.2 does not have a subject in the original Chinese utterance, but we can tell it refers to the investigator from the context as well as from the verb 'play' which requires an animate subject. However, Ann's omission of the subject in sentence 14.2 seems to be her mitigation of the potential FTA by downplaying and questioning herself about what kind of research she is doing in sentence 14.1. Moreover, the omission of the subject could also be interpreted as Ann believing it is the 'research' that can play around with participants, but not the investigator.

Even though Ann uses the inanimate subject 'what kind of research' to mitigate the potential threat of her downplay, her consecutive self-downplays (lines 11, 12, and 14) in response to Annie's challenge to her authority are categorized as another potential FTA discussed in the segment of Excerpt 4. Nevertheless, if self-downplay is considered an FTA to Ann's positive face, why does she perform it three times in lines

11, 12 and 14? What is the reason that the participants are so amused (e.g., Betty's laughing herself to death in line 13; participants' laughter in lines 12 and 15) in seeing Ann's positive face being constantly threatened? Were it not in Annie's belief that it is harmless to the face of Ann, would she still deliberately and baldly take over Ann's role as the investigator even though they are sisters? Ann's reactions in lines 11, 12, and 14 can have two possible interpretations:

- (1) She honestly states her feeling because she feels embarrassed to be questioned by one of the participants.
- (2) She does not feel embarrassed but she is cooperating with Annie in the 'role-play' Annie initiated.

Participants' laughter, Betty's statement that she is going to laugh herself to death, and Cindy's horselaugh in particular could be an important cue to help select the most plausible interpretation of Ann's performance of a potential FTA. The almost incessant laughter suggests that interpretation (2) most plausibly explains Ann's behavior of downplaying herself such that she is cooperating with the 'role-play' game her own sister Annie has initiated.

Both Excerpt 3 and the segment of Excerpt 4 include inanimate subjects (i.e., the way/the appearance, research) to perform potential FTA of compliment or self-downplay in an indirect and ambiguous fashion. The first part of Excerpt 5 (lines 1-6) provides another example of the potential FTA of compliment in an indirect fashion.

First part of Excerpt 5: Talking about vocatives

1. Amy: 嘿，阿你們家小姐懷孕了嗎？
Hey, has the miss of your family⁶ ever been pregnant?
Lisa:
Joanne: 懷孕喔？生了！
Pregnant? She already has kids!
Ann:
2. Amy: 阿！你已經作阿媽了！
Ah! You're already a grandma!
Lisa: 是阿媽了，你不知道喔？
((She)) is already a grandma, you don't know that?
Joanne: 怎麼辦？這麼...
How's that? So...
Ann:
3. Amy: Ann，你有看過這麼年輕的阿媽？
Ann, have you ever seen such a young grandma?
Lisa: (笑)
(Laugh)
Joanne:
Ann: 對呀，認不出來耶！
No, ((I)) can't tell!
4. Amy: 你真的是...
You're really...
Lisa:
Joanne: 認不出來喔？(笑) 我不願意也要當啊！
Can't tell? (laugh) I can't help being one even though I don't want to!
Ann:
5. Amy: 你黑瓶子裝醬油！
You ((are)) a black bottle loading with soy sauce?
[You impress me!]
Lisa:
Joanne: 阿？
Ah?
Ann: 爲什麼不願意？爲什麼不願意？
Why don't ((you)) want to? Why don't ((you)) want to?
6. Amy: (笑)
(Laugh)
Lisa: 她太年輕不願意當阿媽。
She's too young to be willing to be a grandma.
[‘She’ refers to Joanne]

⁶ 小姐 *xǎiojiě* ‘Miss’ in Amy’s utterance refers to Joanna’s daughter.

⁷ Amy’s utterance is a Taiwanese proverb 黑瓶子裝醬油 which literally means ‘black bottle loading with soy sauce.’ Because the bottle is already black, the soy sauce, which is also black, is thus imperceptible in the black bottle. This proverb is to describe a person who impresses people because his or her appearance only reflects part of the ability and talent he or she actually has inside. The ability and talent can be all kinds of things, such as one’s ability to eat, to do sports, to gossip about people, to make money, etc.

Joanne: 太年輕了啊！她太年輕就結婚啦！（無法辨識的句子）（一邊講一邊笑）
She's too young! She got married too young! /?/ (laugh and talk at the same time)
[‘She’ refers to Joanne’s daughter]

Ann: 阿姨幾歲啦？
Auntie is of how many years old?

Similar to Excerpt 3, the first part of Excerpt 5 involves a positive evaluation performed in an indirect fashion with the use of an inanimate item to describe the complimentee. In line 2, Amy expresses her surprise by using the exclamation word 阿 *a* ‘Ah’ in Chinese. Amy performs her first potential FTA of compliment to Joanne by asking Ann “have you ever seen such a young grandma?” Amy’s question is open to interpretation as a potential FTA of compliment because both Ann’s answer “No, I can’t tell”(line 3) to Amy’s question and Joanne’s request reassurance “Can’t tell?” (line 4) indicate that they agree with Amy that Joanne is young because they can not tell the association between Joanne’s young appearance and the fact she is already a grandmother. The Taiwanese proverb ‘黑瓶子裝醬油,’ meaning Joanne impresses Amy unexpectedly, is another potential FTA of compliment Amy performs indirectly to Joanne. Amy could say directly to Joanne that “You don’t look like a grandma” or “You’re too young to be a grandma.” However, Amy uses the inanimate item ‘black bottle loaded with soy sauce’ to describe Joanne which makes Amy’s potential FTA of compliment indirect.

4.1.3 Nominal Groups and Kinship Terms

This section continues to demonstrate how participant deictics achieve relational work with a focus on how participants use kinships terms to address or refer to their target referent(s). Similar to Excerpt 3 which presents Ann’s opinion on Yang’s figure,

Excerpt 4 presents Michelle's comments on Ann's characteristics. This excerpt starts with Michelle's commenting on Ann as being like a cunning fox and Michelle's using kinship terms to refer to Ann or Annie to mitigate potential FTAs. While the rest of the excerpt manifests how participants negotiate whether 'fox' connotes a positive or negative meaning to them, the excerpt also shows that participants constantly use the kinship term 'big Sis' whenever addressing Ann. Three potential FTAs are presented in Excerpt 4: a negative evaluation, a command, and a reprimand.

Excerpt 4: Talking about Ann's Characteristics

1. Michelle: Annie 的姊姊會...就很像那種...我覺得她比較像狡猾的狐狸。(笑)
Annie's big Sis⁸ is...is very like that kind of...I think she is more like a cunning fox.
(laugh)
Ann:
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie
2. Michelle: (笑, 和 Ann 說話同時)
(laugh at the same time when Ann is talking)
Ann: 你說人家是狡猾的狐狸?
You said person⁹ is a cunning fox?
Betty:
Cindy:
Annie:
3. Michelle: (笑五秒) 然後妹妹就一直無奈的把眼睛往上吊。
(laugh 5 secs) Then little Sis [refers to Annie] has no choice but keeps on rolling her eyes.
Ann:
Betty:
Cindy:

⁸ In English, 'Sis' is the general kinship term referring to both the elder and younger female siblings. However, in Chinese, the female siblings of age differences have different kinship terms. For instance, 姊姊 *jiě jiě* refers to the elder female sibling; 妹妹 *mèimèi* refers to the younger female sibling. To keep the original distinction between elder and younger siblings in Chinese, I use 'big sister' and 'little sister' in English translation.

⁹ The object 人家 *rénjiā* 'person' of the verb 'said' in the free English translation may be awkward. However, it is my purpose to translate 'person' as it is used in Ann's utterance in Chinese for the analysis of participant deictics, especially considering that Ann uses 'person,' not 'I' or other forms to address herself. Note that 人 *rén* 'person' or *rénjiā* in Chinese can mean 'character, personality, one's health or inner self.'

- Annie:
4. Michelle:
 Ann: (笑)
 (laugh)
 Betty: 姊姊，你可以生氣！
 Big Sis [refers to Ann], you can be angry!
 Cindy: (笑兩秒)
 (laugh 2 secs)
 Annie: (笑兩秒)
 (laugh 2 secs)
5. Michelle: 沒有啦，就很可愛，就是那種... (笑)
 No, ((it's)) very cute, it's that kind of... (laugh)
 Ann:
 Betty:
 Cindy:
 Annie:
6. Michelle: 不知道耶...
 ((I)) don't know...
 Ann:
 Betty: 你 很 沒 大 沒 小 耶！ 你！
 You are very disrespectful to the elders! You!
 Cindy: (笑)
 (laugh)
 Annie:
7. Michelle: (笑 兩秒)就是那種很聰明又很慧點的那種感覺。
 (laugh 2 secs) It's that kind of very clever and very artful impression.
 Ann:
 Betty:
 Cindy: (笑)
 (laugh)
 Annie:
8. Michelle:
 Ann: 喔！(拉長音) (笑)
 Oh! (prolonged) (laugh)
 Betty: 喔！(拉長音) (笑) 姊姊，(無法辨識的句子)
 Oh! (prolonged) (laugh) Big Sis, /????????????????/
- Cindy: 喔！(拉長音)
 Oh! (prolonged)
- Annie: 喔！(拉長音)
 Oh! (prolonged)
9. Michelle: (笑)，姊姊不要生氣！
 (laugh) Big Sis don't be angry!
 Ann: 不會。(一邊笑一邊講)
 No. (laugh and say 'No' at the same time)
 Betty:

Cindy:
Annie:

10. Michelle:

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie: 姊，那我們來替你訪問你自己好了。請問一下當你面對這種稱讚的時候你會怎麼...
Big Sis, we should interview you for you. When you receive this kind of compliment, how'll you...

11. Michelle:

Ann: 好尷尬喔！

((I feel)) So embarrassed!

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

12. Michelle: (笑) (笑)

(laugh) (laugh)

Ann: 既開心又害羞。

((I feel)) both happy and shy.

Betty: (笑) (笑)

(laugh) (laugh)

Cindy: (笑) (笑)

(laugh) (laugh)

Annie: (笑) (笑)

(laugh) (laugh)

13. Michelle:

Ann:

Betty: 喔，我快笑死了！喔！喔！我快笑死了！

Oh, I'm going to laugh myself to death! Oh! Oh! I'm going to laugh myself to death

Cindy:

Annie:

14. Michelle:

Ann: 哪有這種研究的！可以跟受訪者打成一片的呢？

What kind of research this is! ((The investigator)) can play around with participants?

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

15. Michelle: (笑)

(laugh)

Ann:

Betty: (笑)

(laugh)

Cindy: (笑)

(laugh)

Annie: (笑)

(laugh)

The first potential FTA appears in line 1. Using the statement “Annie’s big Sis is...I think she is more like a cunning fox” to describe Ann, Michelle’s comment qualifies as a potential FTA because the adjective 狡猾 *jiǎohuá* ‘cunning’ gives a negative evaluation of Ann’s personality. Michelle’s potential FTA thus threatens Ann’s positive face. In particular, Michelle uses ‘Annie’s big Sis’ to refer to Ann, rather than using the second-person pronoun ‘you’ to directly address Ann or using Ann’s full or first name to refer to her. By using ‘Annie’s big Sis,’ the degree of focus on Ann is alleviated and may suggest that Michelle avoids referring to Ann directly. Michelle’s indirect way of mentioning Ann is open to interpretation as mitigation to a potential FTA involving negative evaluation in line 1¹⁰. More mitigation can be found on the two subsequent pauses in Michelle’s speech. Michelle’s pauses could suggest that she is searching for the appropriate and correct words to describe Ann. Furthermore, after commenting on Ann’s characteristics, Michelle bursts into high-pitched and exaggerated laughter. Her laughter can be open to interpretation as her embarrassment for commenting on Ann and thus mitigation of her potential FTA. Ann’s question in line 2 “You said person is a cunning fox?” invites further opportunity for Michelle to explain her comment on Ann in line 1. Michelle’s laughter in line 2 occurs at the same time as Ann asks her the question. Her high-pitched guffaw in line 3 suggests her

¹⁰ By using ‘I think’ to compare Ann to a fox, Michelle mitigates her potential FTA to Ann. Michelle’s use of 我覺得 *wǒ juéde* ‘I think’ constitutes what House and Kasper (1981) call “committers.” In Watts (2003), committers are introduced to have the function to “lower the degree to which the speaker commits him/herself to the propositional content of the utterance” (p. 183).

positive emotional state after hearing Ann's question. Moreover, Michelle goes on to provide her evaluation on Ann in line 3 by making reference to Annie's reaction to her big Sister Ann. Michelle mitigates the potential threat to Annie, for possibly giving the wrong description of Annie's extralinguistic behavior, by using the address form 妹妹 *meimeì* 'little Sis' to refer to Annie. In comparison with using Annie's first name, Michelle's use of 'little Sis' has the same mitigating effect as using 'Annie's big Sis' to refer to Ann in line 1.

The second potential FTA occurs when Betty says to Ann "big Sis, you can be angry" in line 4. Note that Betty uses 'big Sis' to address Ann, rather than Ann's name, as a way to show Betty's respect to Ann. However, the modal verb 可以 *kěyǐ* 'can, ok' Betty uses indicates that it is Betty who gives Ann the permission to be angry. Moreover, the syntactic structure that starts with the second-person pronoun 你 *nǐ* 'you' makes Betty's utterance a command to Ann. Betty's command seems to escalate the tension, if there is any, between Michelle and Ann. However, the immediate laughter from four other participants, especially Cindy's high-pitched giggle in line 4, signifies that the participants, including Ann herself, do not find Betty's command to Ann face-threatening. Betty's direct indication to Ann that she can be angry also provides support to show that even though Michelle's use of 'cunning fox' may be face-threatening to Ann, the fact that these participants can make fun of it suggests that they do not find the phrase 'cunning fox' face-threatening. Michelle's statement in line 5 "No, it's cute" to describe Ann provides further evidence that what she says in line 1 does not mean the way it sounds. The two adjectives 聰明 *cōngmíng* 'intelligent' and 慧

黠 *huìxiá* ‘clever, artful’ connoting positive meaning with the intensifier adverb 很 *hěn* ‘very’ to modify the two adjectives in Michelle’s statement in line 6 (i.e., “It’s that kind of very clever and very artful impression.”) also helps us to interpret ‘a cunning fox’ as a positive evaluation of Ann. Further evidence that participants accept Michelle’s comments on Ann as positive can be found in Annie’s utterance in line 10 where she explicitly uses the word 稱讚 *chēngzàn* ‘compliment’ to refer to Michelle’s comment on Ann.

The third potential FTA is found in Betty’s comment on Michelle in line 6 when she says that Michelle is very disrespectful to the elders. Betty uses a ‘four-syllable elaborate expression’ in Chinese 沒大沒小 *méidà, méixiǎo* (no elder no younger) to describe Michelle, which means someone who is impolite, impertinent, or disrespectful to the elders because she disregards her own age of being younger than the addressee. My translation may create misconception that Betty is using the address form ‘the elders’ to refer to Ann. However, it is because the translation ‘you are very disrespectful to the elders’ can best describe the reprimanding effect Betty potentially performs as opposed to the translation: ‘you are impolite or impertinent.’ Though there is a limitation in the translation, Betty’s comment could still be regarded as her reprimand to Michelle not only because of the negative evaluation of showing no respect to the elders but also because of Betty’s imperative tone by starting her sentence with the second-person pronoun 你 *nǐ* ‘you.’ After saying “You are very disrespectful to the elders!” to Michelle. Betty’s potential FTA of reprimand indicates that she

considers showing no respect to the elders, even to Ann who is only four years older than Michelle and Betty, is one kind of behavior to be condemned.

Table 4.4 below displays all the nominal groups that have been employed so far in this excerpt to address or refer to Ann and Annie. In particular, Table 4.4 shows that when addressing or referring to Ann, only the kinship terms ‘big Sis,’ the noun phrase ‘the elders’ and the personal pronouns ‘you’ and ‘she’ are used. Ann’s name is never used to refer to or address to Ann. In line 1 and 3, Michelle specifically makes use of the kinship terms to mitigate her potential FTA toward Ann and Annie.

Table 4.4 Nominal Groups in Excerpt 4

Line & Speaker	Linguistic Features			
	Kinship Terms as Vocative	Kinship Terms as Nominal/Objective Case	NP	2 nd , 3 rd Person Pronoun
1. Michelle		‘Annie’s big Sis’-- Ann	‘fox’-- Ann	‘she’-- Ann
3. Michelle		‘little Sis’-- Annie		
4. Betty	‘big Sis’ -- Ann			‘you’-- Ann
6. Betty			‘the elders’-- Ann	
8. Betty	‘big Sis’ -- Ann			
9. Michelle	‘big Sis’ -- Ann			
10. Annie	‘big Sis’-- Ann			‘you’-- Ann (4 times)

4.1.4 Summary of Findings

The first section has examined five excerpts using the analytical lens of discourse analysis. The analysis reveals five kinds of nominal groups employed in the five excerpts, as listed in Figure 4.1 below.

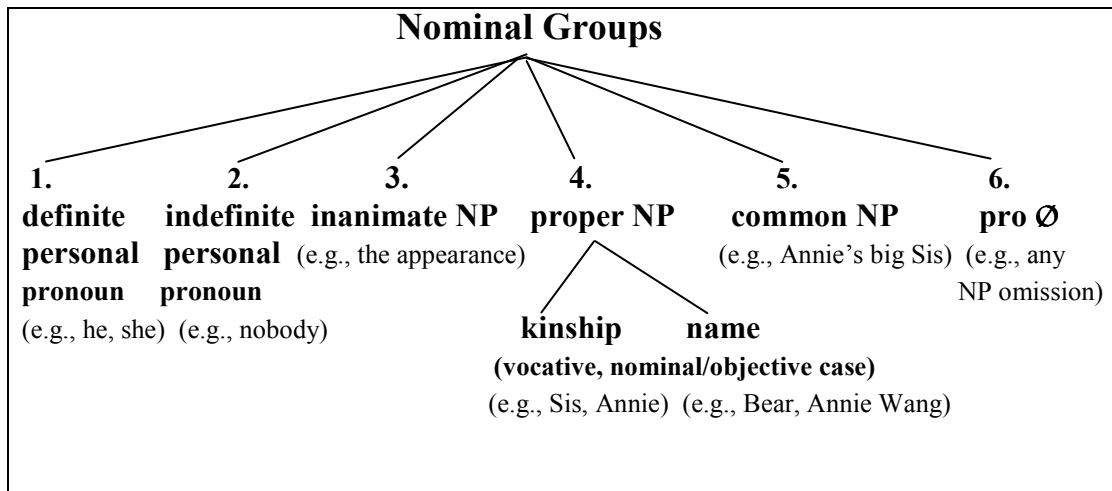


Figure 4.1 Categories and examples of nominal groups found in the data

The first nominal group, definite personal pronoun, includes pronouns such as ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘you.’ The second nominal group, indefinite personal pronoun, includes ‘nobody,’ ‘someone’ which is used when the speaker does not want the referent to be clear and wants to leave the interpretation to the listeners. The third nominal group, inanimate NP, is used when the agent doing the action is inanimate, such as ‘the appearance,’ ‘my stomach,’ and ‘what kind of research’ that are used by participants in previous excerpts. The fourth nominal group, proper NP, includes one’s full name, first name, nickname, and kinship terms. One thing interesting with proper names in this nominal group is that a proper name can not only be used in vocative case but also in nominal case in the subject position. For example, ‘Bear’ (Betty’s nickname) in the

sentence “If Bear springs for plane tickets then we’ll go!” (line 2, Excerpt 1) is functioned in nominal case. The fifth nominal group, common NP, includes all the nouns which are used as referents but do not qualify in nominal groups 1 to 3. The sixth nominal group, pro-drop, includes any pronoun, proper nouns or NP in the five other groups which have been omitted in the subject position. For instance, ‘I’ is omitted in the following sentence 是真的很餓: “((I)) am indeed very hungry.” (line 9, Excerpt 2) The possibility to omit a subject in Chinese gives Chinese speakers another way to, besides the use of indefinite personal pronoun, make their referent ambiguous.

The findings from the discourse analysis concerning the use of five different nominal groups to achieve five kinds of relational work are as following:

- (1) The use of definite personal pronouns, such as ‘you’ can function as performing potential FTA directly and creating personal boundary, such as the switch from the inclusive personal pronoun ‘we’ to the second-person pronoun ‘you’ (as shown in Excerpt 1).
- (2) In comparison with the function of definite personal pronouns, the use of indefinite personal pronouns and inanimate NPs can contribute to the mitigation of potential FTA by first, making the referents ambiguous (e.g., ‘someone’ and ‘nobody’) and thus open the interpretations to the listeners; second, making the agents of the action inanimate (e.g., ‘my stomach’ and ‘what kind of research’) (as shown in Excerpts 3, 4, and 5).

- (3) The use of kinship terms like ‘big Sis’ to address a friend’s sis (Excerpts 2 and 4) as well as the use of ‘Auntie’ or ‘Grandma’ to address elder female listeners (Excerpts 3 and 5) are two ways to show politic behavior.
- (4) Subject omission includes two extreme functions of relational work. On the one hand, subject omission can occur when the referents are very salient. On the other hand, subject omission avoids or mitigates potential FTA by making the referent to the most ambiguous and indirect degree among all the nominal groups listed in Figure 4.1.

4.2 Standard Politic Behavior

The study of Excerpts 1, 2, 3, 4 and the first part of Excerpt 5 focuses primarily on the discourse analysis to see how the participant deictics not only help to point out the places where potential FTAs occur but also to show how those features reinforce or mitigate potential FTAs. In contrast with the first section, the second half of this chapter approaches the conversations from a stable point of view by using information collected from participant interviews to investigate four kinds of politic behavior (i.e., the standard, expected behavior from the perspective of research participants) and the cultural norms that govern relational work concerning potential face threat.

4.2.1 Standard Politic Behavior of Addressing the Elders

According to Amy, “長幼有序 *zhǎng yòu yǒu xù* (senior young have order) ‘respect for the seniority’ is the fundamental principle in Chinese society.” This section thus presents how such value is revealed in participants’ use of kinship terms. Excerpts 2, 3, and 4 include data where participants use kinship terms to address other

interlocutors or to talk about referents who are not their biological relatives. For example, Ann addresses Yang as ‘Auntie Yang’ (Excerpt 3) while Annie’s friends address Ann as ‘big Sis’ (Excerpts 2 and 4). The neighbor instructs her son to address Amy as ‘Grandma’ while Amy thinks she should be called ‘Auntie’ (the second part of Excerpt 5). From this aspect, the choice of kinship terms to address people plays an important role in demonstrating (im)politeness because kinship terms implicitly indicate how the speaker views the addressee in terms of age, which is related to appearance most of the time. While the use of kinship terms to address non-familial members is considered politic behavior and can thus maintain or enhance interpersonal relationship, the choice of which kinship term is appropriate to use can be difficult because any inappropriate choice results in face-threat. For example, by addressing someone who is not one’s biological sister, the speaker signals that he or she considers him or herself close to the addressee, the interpersonal distance between two unfamiliar people is thus shortened. However, if the addressee does not think in the same way as the speaker does, a face-threat is very likely to start from here. Brown and Levinson (1987) state, a speaker may misidentify a hearer “in an offensive or embarrassing way, intentionally or accidentally” and thus threatens a hearer’s positive face (p. 67). What Brown and Levinson say refer specifically to the use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters, but the possibility of face threat can apply on the choice of kinship terms because kinship terms involves some degrees of identification as well. In Amy’s case, it is the identification of her age; in Michelle’s case, it is the identification of interpersonal distance regarding familiarity.

The second part of Excerpt 5 (lines 7-32) below presents an actual discussion between the participants of fifties about how they perceive and react when people use the inappropriate vocatives of age differences (e.g., ‘Auntie’ versus ‘old woman’) to address them. More specifically, the second part of Excerpt 5 concerns how the participants from the elder group perceive the vocatives which strangers use to call Joanne and Lisa as well as the son of Amy’s neighbor use to call Amy. Participants’ reactions suggest the importance of using the appropriate vocatives and how the inappropriate use can be a potential FTA to the addressees.

Second part of Excerpt 5: Talking about vocatives

7. Amy: 嘿，才扯，我們隔壁搬了一個那個師大的那個地理系助理教授，
Hey, it’s ridiculous, an assistant prof. from the geography dept. of teacher’s college moved in next door,
Lisa:
Joanne: 噲。
Ann: Huh.
8. Amy: 阿他們生了兩個小孩很小， 阿他太太每次看到我喔，
And they have two little kids, when his wife sees me every time,
Lisa:
Joanne: 真的喔？
Ann: Really?
9. Amy: 就叫他兒子說“叫奶奶，叫奶奶！”
((She)) tells her son to call me “Grandma, Grandma!”
Lisa:
Joanne: 叫奶奶！（一邊講一邊笑）
Ann: Call Grandma! (talk and laugh at the same time)
10. Amy: 後，我聽了以後真的... (笑)
Gosh, when I heard that ((I felt))...(laugh)
Lisa: (笑)
Joanne: (笑) 很生氣。叫奶奶！（一邊講一邊笑）
Ann: (laugh) very angry. Call Grandma! (talk and laugh at the same time)

11. Amy: 我心裡想說我的頭髮到底有多白。
I was thinking how grey my hair really was.
Lisa:
Joanne: 什麼年紀叫我奶奶?
How old do I look to be called Grandma?
Ann:
12. Amy: 爲什麼叫我奶奶呢?
Why did they call me Grandma?
Lisa: 叫你奶奶? 還有人叫我阿婆¹¹哩!
Call you Grandma? People even call me old woman!
Joanne:
Ann:
13. Amy: 嘿呀, 還好不是叫阿婆! (笑)
Right, I should feel glad they didn't call me old woman! (Laugh)
Lisa:
Joanne: 真的啊! 嘿, 有一次...
It's true! Hey, there was one time...
Ann:
14. Amy:
Lisa:
Joanne: 有一次就去朋友家, 就去那個一個朋友家, 他說叫我阿婆啦!
I went to a friend's house, I went to a friend's house, he told ((people)) to call me old woman!
Ann:
15. Amy: (笑)
(Laugh)
Lisa: (笑)
(Laugh)
Joanne: 他說叫我阿婆啦! (笑) (無法辨識的句子) (笑)
he told ((people)) to call me old woman! (Laugh) / ???? / (Laugh)
Ann: (笑)
(Laugh)
16. Amy: 真的叫你阿婆喔, Joanne?
They really call you old woman, Joanne?
Lisa:
Joanne: (笑) 對呀, 他說叫阿婆啊!
(Laugh) Yup, he told ((people)) to call me old woman!
Ann:
17. Amy:
Lisa: 有一次我去電器行啊, 阿不曉得要買什麼,

¹¹ '阿婆' *ābōr* is pronounced in Taiwanese, which can mean 'old woman.' '阿婆' *ābōr* can also mean 'Grandma' for some families. However, sometimes calling a female outside the family *ābōr* can offend the female addressee because such use signifies that the speaker perceives the listener as old. In the case of Lisa, her reaction shows that she interprets *ābōr* as 'old woman.'

- One time I went to the electric appliance store, I didn't know what I to buy,
 Joanne: (笑)
 (Laugh)
- Ann:
 18. Amy:
 Lisa: 阿進去啊，就跟他兒子講說喔你看這個阿婆要做什麼。
 As soon as I went into the store, ((The owner)) told his son to check what this old woman wants to buy.
 Joanne: 叫阿婆買...
Ask the old woman to buy...
 Ann:
19. Amy:
 Lisa: 喔我就回來跟我兒子講說我這麼老，叫我阿婆？
 Oh I went home and told my son I was so old, that they called me 'old woman'?
 Joanne: (笑)
 (Laugh)
 Ann:
20. Amy: 你可能剛好梳個慈濟頭。阿我也沒有梳啊！
 Maybe you happened to have your hair in a bun. But I didn't!
 Lisa:
 Joanne: 不買了。
 I won't buy anything.
 Ann:
21. Amy: 這樣我頭髮短短說叫奶奶。喔，我都很想跟她講說，
 That my hair was short and I were called Grandma. Oh, I wanted to tell her,
 Lisa:
 Joanne:
 Ann:
22. Amy:
 Lisa: 拜託你叫阿姨就好了好不好？叫阿姨差不多。
 Please just call me Auntie ok? The least you can do is to call me Auntie.
 Joanne: (無法辨識的句子) 我跟你講...
 /??????????????/ Let me tell you...
 Ann:
23. Amy:
 Lisa:
 Joanne: (無法辨識的句子)
 /??????????????/
- Ann: 那如果叫你們叫姊姊，那又太假了一點。
 Then if they call you big Sis, that's too hypocritical.
24. Amy:
 Lisa: 對呀，通常都會叫阿姨啊！
 Right, people often call us Auntie!
 Joanne:
 Ann: 那我這種呢？我這種就叫阿姨啦！
 How about me? I was called Auntie already!
25. Amy:
 Lisa: 喔！我們，對喔！
 Oh! We, right!
 Joanne:

- Ann: 那你們的話就不能，就不能叫阿姨啦！
Then about you, people can't call you Auntie!
26. Amy:
Lisa:
Joanne:
Ann: 我應該去測試一下那個阿姨會怎麼叫她小孩叫我。
I should go test to see how that Auntie will ask her kid to address me.
27. Amy: 其實他應該叫我奶奶應該是正確的。
In fact it's true that he should call me Grandma.
Lisa: 對啦，只是我們沒有辦法接受。
Right, it's just that we can't accept the fact.
Ann:
28. Amy:
Lisa: 嗯呀 嗯呀 (笑)
Uh-Huh Uh-Huh (Laugh)
Joanne: 對呀！沒有辦法接受。說叫我阿婆啦！我是有多老 (笑)
Yup! I can't accept it. ((People)) call me old woman! How old am I! (Laugh)
Ann:
29. Amy: Joanne 那個是比較誇張 (一邊講一邊笑)
Joanne's example is extreme. (talk and laugh at the same time)
Lisa:
Joanne: (笑) 叫我阿婆！ (一邊講一邊笑)
(Laugh) ((People)) call me old woman! (talk and laugh at the same time)
Ann:
30. Amy: 叫阿婆！
Call old woman!
Lisa: 是啦，其實我們自己應該有體認。
Right, in fact we should face the music.
Joanne: 是啦。
Right.
Ann:
31. Amy: 嘿，人，妳簿子拿來。
Hey, person, give me your bankbook.
Lisa: 因為是同輩的孫子嗎，所以叫奶奶？
Because he's a grandson of our generation, so call you Grandma?
Joanne: 嘿啦！
Yup!
Ann:
32. Amy: 簿子拿來，要拿去幫你換帳號。
Give me your bankbook, I'll help you change your account number.
Lisa:
Joanne: 阿她年紀又比我們大...
And she's older than us...
Ann:

In section 4.1.2, lines 1 and 6 were introduced and analyzed to show how Amy performs her potential FTA of compliment in an indirect way. Amy's utterance in line 7 switches the focus from complimenting Joanne to discussing about vocatives. Amy first uses the word 扯 *chě* 'ridiculous' in line 7 to describe how she feels when the neighbor asks her son to call Amy 'Grandma.' Amy's reflexive comment in line 11 "I was thinking how grey my hair really was" reinforces the listeners her feeling about being called 'Grandma.' By finishing Amy's sentence in line 10 where Amy says first "I felt..." followed by Joanne's "very angry," Joanne shows her understanding about how Amy feels. Amy's utterances display two points:

- (1) The neighbors' son needs to use kinship terms to address Amy, even though they do not have biological relationship.
- (2) The neighbor does not instruct her son to use the appropriate kinship term to address Amy because Amy thinks it is ridiculous to call her 'Grandma' and Joanne thinks Amy should feel angry to be called 'Grandma.'

Both Lisa and Joanne share their experience in lines 12 and 14 that they have been called 'old woman' by friends or people they don't know. From Amy's reaction in line 13, we know that being called 'old woman' is worse than 'Grandma.' Lisa also says in line 20 that because the store keeper uses the address form 'old woman' to call her, she thus does not want to purchase goods from that shop. Lisa indicates in line 22 that calling her 'Auntie' is the least thing people can do, which indirectly suggest that calling her 'auntie' is appropriate. However, Ann seems to challenge Lisa in line 24 that Lisa should not expect to be called 'Auntie' because Ann, being one generation younger

than Lisa, is called 'Auntie' already. Both Amy and Lisa acknowledge in lines 27 and 28 that it is true that they should be addressed 'Grandma.'

The discussion of what to be called among Amy, Lisa and Joanne as well as the negotiation between the elder generation (Amy, Lisa, and Joanne) and the young generation (Ann) demonstrate using the right vocatives of kinship terms is important because the inappropriate form will result in addressees' negative emotional reaction, such as being angry and refusing to shop. Excerpt 5 also shows that among different ages, the younger one refers to the elder one based on kinship terms such as 'Sis, Auntie, or Grandma' for female addressees.

In terms of the young generation, as shown in Table 4.4, both Betty and Michelle use either 'big Sis' or 'you' to address Ann. No instances of using Ann's name are found in Table 4.4. The second column from the left in Table 4.4 presents kinship terms that are used as nominal/objective case. That is, kinship terms are used as a kind of pronoun or name to refer to interlocutors. For instance, as shown in both Tables 4.3 and 4.4, Michelle uses the kinship terms as one way to mitigate potential FTAs. That is, Michelle uses 'Annie's big Sis' to refer to Ann, and 'little Sis' to refer to Annie while Michelle can simply use their names. Participants from the younger group provide several reasons about why they use 'big Sis' to address Ann, Annie's big sister. Both Annie and Betty indicate that addressing a friend's elder sibling as 'big Brother' or 'big Sis' is to show respect. Michelle, on the other hand, states that sometimes it is because she is not sure what the appropriate way is, so she follows her friends. Betty also points out that besides using 'big Brother' or 'big Sis,' she used her friend's last name and the

kin term to address her friend's elder sibling, such as 王姊姊 *wáng jǐejǐe* (Wang big Sister) 'the big Sister from the Wang family.' From what participants share in terms of kinship terms, we could understand that it is appropriate and politic behavior for Annie's friends to address Ann as 'big Sis.' By calling Ann 'big Sis,' the distance between participants is shortened. As Betty tells me, "because you are indeed senior than me, so I call you big Sis." On the other hand, as Betty notes, "if we call Ann by her first name, it will be open to interpretation as impolite." This is because it will potentially suggest that Annie's friends are drawing distance from Ann on purpose, or that they do not know the social norms to address people appropriately. Having no respect to the elders is negatively valued in the culture of this community, as shown in the phrase Betty uses to 'reprimand' Michelle (line 6, Excerpt 4): 沒大沒小 *méidà méixiǎo* 'someone who is impolite, impertinent, or lacks respect to the elders.'

Participants of both the younger and elder group believe that it is inappropriate and exhibits a lack of respect to address their elder family members or friends' elder family members by their first names. Michelle points out that it is politic and required to use the kinship terms to address friends' elder family members. For example, when Annie's mom picks up Betty from the train station, Betty uses 王媽媽 *wáng māmā* (Wang mother) meaning 'mother of the Wang family' to address Annie's mom. In comparison with Mrs. Wang, as is commonly used in English, Betty's use of 王媽媽 *wáng māmā* to address Annie's mom emphasizes the kin relationship even though Betty is not the daughter of the Wang family. Yang also indicates, "If my son's friends comes to my house without greeting me by saying 李媽媽好 *lǐ māmā hǎo* 'how do you do,

mother of the Lee family’ or 阿姨好 ā yí hǎo ‘how do you do, Auntie,’ I consider him lacking in manners and impolite.” Yang further states, “Calling me 李太太 lǐ tàitai ‘Mrs. Lee’ is for neighbors or storekeepers of my age to address me. It will be impolite if my son’s friends address me as Mrs. Lee.” Betty’s example of addressing Annie’s mom and Yang’s comments about the politic terms to address her illustrate it is politic behavior to use appropriate kinship terms to address the elder family members of a friend.

Furthermore, the young participants particularly point out that in addressing someone who is not only more senior in age but also more powerful in terms of social status, it is politic to address them by their rank of their occupation. Cindy says, “I have to address my colleagues who are more senior and more experienced than me in the hospital as ‘Dr. plus (his or her) family name.’ While sometimes I address colleagues of my age who started to work in the hospital the same time as I as ‘Dr. plus (his or her) family name’; it is acceptable if I address them by their first name or nicknames.” Annie also uses her previous working experience as an example. Her boss was an American who explicitly asked his employees to address him by his first name Nelson. Even so, Annie states, “Every time I addressed my boss by his name, Nelson, I felt that I was impolite and I felt very uncomfortable. However, if I called him according to his position in the company, my boss felt bizarre and corrected me.”

4.2.2 Standard Politic Behavior of Complimenting

Amy points out that modesty has been the value that is highly merited in her culture. However, it does not mean speakers in Amy’s culture do not appreciate being

complimented. Amy states, “Somehow showing modesty is more important than showing appreciation to a compliment.” Therefore, indirectly accepting a compliment, rejecting, or disagreeing with the complimenter is considered politic. Amy’s comment could possibly explain the indirectness found in the complimenting behavior in Excerpts 3, 4 and 5 which concern mainly one participant’s comment on another participant’s appearance or characteristics in an indirect manner. Though the comments are given in the form of questioning one’s being thin (Excerpt 3), an uncommon analogy (Excerpt 4), and a Taiwanese proverb (Excerpt 5), all of them turn out to be positive evaluations of the addressee. For example, Ann uses an indefinite pronoun (e.g., someone) and inanimate NP as subjects (e.g., the way/the appearance) in her positive evaluation in the form of questions to Yang (Excerpt 3); Michelle uses ‘a cunning fox’ to describe Ann as being clever and artful (Excerpt 4); Amy uses the Taiwanese proverb ‘a black bottle loading with soy sauce’ to express her impression on Joanne’s being young in appearance as a grandmother. If only looking at the indirect linguistic behavior in these excerpts, we may believe that complimenting behavior involves a high degree of face threat or that the complimenting behavior is not much embraced and appreciated. Thus the compliment is required to be performed in an indirect manner as politic behavior. However, take Yang for example; she explicitly states during the interviews that she feels good to know that her figure does not look like someone who has two children. She is happy to be complimented for her figure. This is also not the first time people do not believe she already has two children by only looking at her figure. From Yang’s statement, we could assume that she is somehow

used to receiving compliments on her figure. If this is so, what is the reason she does not directly accept the same kind of compliment?

Both Amy and Yang further state that if the compliments are given by close friends, they do not feel they lack modesty for accepting the compliments right away. This might explain when Ann gives compliments to Yang in Excerpt 3, Yang does not accept immediately and directly because they are not close friends as they only see each other from time to time. It may also be the reason that Ann's compliment is given in an indirect manner which results in Yang's being indirect in accepting the compliment as well. After all, Amy further states, "Unlike our previous generation who gives and accepts compliments less, we like to give compliments because complimenting is very encouraging to the complimentee and we have nothing to lose when making others happy." Yang uses her compliments to her children as examples. She especially likes to give compliments to her children at the presence of her friends because children gain more self-confidence when being verbally awarded in front of others. Lin adds, "I admire what my big Sister (Lin refers to Yang) does because I am still doing the old-fashioned way, such as rejecting my friends' compliments to my sons by telling my friends that they exaggerate and that my sons are not as good as they describe. This does not mean I do not believe what my friends say. It is simply a way to show I am modest and they know I appreciate their compliments through my denials."

To conclude, the elder participants believe it is politic to give and accept compliments directly among close friends, even though they do not always do so and that showing modesty by indirectly accepting a compliment is also politic. Opinions

from the young participants are in accordance with comments from the elder participants. The young participants state that it has been the general cultural norm that one should accept a compliment indirectly to show modesty. For example, Annie says “哪裡哪裡 *nǎlǐ nǎlǐ* ‘not at all’ as the politic way to respond to a compliment. In a way, the complimentee is showing modesty by rejecting the credit of compliment.” Nevertheless, as Betty indicates, “Young generation has been somehow westernized so that the young generation learns to accept a compliment by saying ‘thank you’ right away instead of saying ‘not at all.’” Therefore, the young participants believe it is politic behavior to accept a compliment directly nowadays. However, Betty and Cindy specifically point out that even though accepting a compliment directly is politic, they have difficulty in doing so sometimes because of the influence of previous cultural norms. Annie adds, “The first few months when I was studying in UIUC, it took me quite an effort to say ‘thank you’ in response to a compliment.” What Michelle says could be the best concluding mark to describe how young participants perceive complimenting behavior: “I have no problem in giving a compliment directly, but I find it difficult to accept a compliment from friends without rejecting first or giving the credit to someone else.”

4.2.3 Standard Politic Behavior of Talking about Politics and Interruption

All of the young participants’ believe that politics is one of the most sensitive topics among friends because even close friends can end up in quarrels for different political beliefs. Most of them not only avoid actively initiating politically sensitive topics but also avoid directly confronting friends. This kind of attitude of avoidance can

be found in Excerpt 2 from the fact that Betty is the one who talks the most; participants' responses consist mostly of questions (Annie in lines 5, 6) and short agreements (Ann's "ok" in line 2 and "((That's)) also true!" in line 7) to Betty's utterances rather than statements of their own opinions. During the follow-up interviews, Annie is the participant, besides Betty, who clearly expresses her idea of what a talk about politics should be. It turns out that, during the conversation, she is also the one who more actively interacts with Betty. Though Annie cuts off Betty's turn because of her disagreement and disappointment with how Betty thinks and talks of politics, Annie expresses her negative emotion in an indirect manner by changing the topic of her being hungry. The setting where the conversation takes place gives Annie a perfect alibi to change the topic.

However, though no one stops Betty from talking about supporting Ma Ying-Jeou at the moment this topic is launched, during the individual follow-up interviews, both Michelle and Annie state that Betty's behavior of political zealotry is inappropriate. Annie states, "If Betty wants to talk about politics, the politic behavior is discussing a particular political issue in a rational manner, rather than blindly canvassing with no concrete reasons to support her advocacy." Annie further adds, "One should vote for a presidential candidate based on the welfare of the country as a whole, but not based on personal benefit. Because I disagree and feel disappointed with the reason Betty wants to vote for Ma Ying-Jeou, I interrupt her on purpose." For this point, the participants of fifties do not quite agree. The participants of fifties believe that personal welfare and the welfare of a country are correlated. As Yang states, "If a

country can not bring its' people welfare, how will a country has welfare itself?" Therefore, it is appropriate to talk about politics with friends regardless of whichever reason. Michelle also agrees with the participants of fifties that is is politic to discuss politics with friends no matter what motivation the initiator has. Because Michelle believes that everyone has the freedom of speech, she can respect Betty's personal choice. Michelle also does not regard Betty's behavior of talking about politics as impolite. It is because of their deep friendship that she is not offended by Betty's non-politic behavior. Nevertheless, Michelle disagrees with the fact that Betty is talking about politics in public, especially with such a zealous attitude and loud voice. Michelle states, "Talking about politics in public such as in a restaurant is inappropriate because people from another table might hear and may feel uncomfortable." For Cindy, she confirms that she is indeed not so fond of politics and that is why she remains silent most of the time. Cindy says, "I do not like to confront with my friends when they are talking about politics because I am not really interested and not well informed. I prefer to be a passive listener than stop my friends from talking." To conclude, the majority of the young participants consider talking about politics, especially in a public place, as inappropriate. However, because of the deep friendship they share, they do not consider Betty's linguistic behavior impolite.

In terms of the standard politic behavior of interruption, Betty does not consider Annie and Cindy's behavior of interruption impolite because Betty perceives her conversation with friends relaxing and thus Annie can switch topics any time she wants. Besides, Betty states, "I can understand that the topic of politics may not interest my

friends, therefore, it is okay for them to switch topic. Besides, maybe Annie and Cindy really feel hungry because they were proposing to tell the waitress that we have waited for a long time to be served.” Similarly, Michelle also does not evaluate Annie’s change of subject as impolite. On the contrary, Michelle perceives Annie’s interruption as politic behavior for the benefit of their group as a whole because “Annie prevents Betty from making a scene in public by talking too loud about politics. Annie’s non-sequitur is an appropriate interruption because it is done in an indirect and ‘Betty-friendly’ manner,” as Michelle states. Nevertheless, Annie thinks her interruption is indeed an FTA and impolite behavior to Betty. Annie says, “If I were Betty, I would be offended because my friends do not care about my problem of not being able to come back to Taiwan.” Annie further adds, “Sometimes I take advantage of Betty’s good temper by directly rejecting or impolitely teasing her.” Thus, even though Annie believes Betty could feel offended by Annie’s deliberate interruption, she still performs her FTA of interruption which is mitigated by Anne’s use of inanimate subject as the agent in her utterance “((My)) stomach is really growling.”

4.2.4 Summary of Findings

The second half of the chapter presents participant feedback to unveil four kinds of standard politic behavior expected and evaluated by my participants:

- (1) The standard politic behavior to address one’s and friends’ elder family members is to address them according to each other’s relation in the familial hierarchy. In addressing elders in terms of social status, it is required to address them according to their professional titles. Under these two

circumstances, it is inappropriate to address the elders or seniors by their full names, first names, or nicknames.

- (2) The standard expected behavior to perform complimenting behavior, as believed by the elder participants, is to give and accept compliments directly with close friends. However, when compliments are given from a less close person, the elder participants respond in an indirect manner by accepting the compliments after they have been given more than one time. In comparison with the elder generation, the younger participants believe that though the cultural norm in the past was to accept a compliment indirectly, it is more and more commonly expected behavior to accept a compliment directly.
- (3) The standard politic behavior to talk about politics is avoiding talking it in a public setting. As for the motivation of initiating the topic of politics can be personal welfare as well as the welfare of a country. However, which motivation is politic varies from participant to participant.
- (4) Interrupting a friend's inappropriate behavior is considered to be politic because the interruption prevents that specific friend from making a scene in public. Also, the interruption is politic because a meeting with friends is supposed to be relaxing such that one can change topic at ease.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In chapter 4, this research studies both the dynamic and stable aspects of naturally occurring conversations between female friends. The conversations show that the stable elements (e.g., culture norms, beliefs) serve as the fundamental guidelines and criteria for interlocutors to behave as well as to evaluate and understand each other. The understanding and the successful decoding of the dynamic elements (e.g., emergent context consisting of recipients' reactions) rely on the stable elements. While the dynamic elements are dependent on stable elements, the former can make small "ripples" on more substantial "turbulence" on the latter. Both the ripple and turbulence here indicate a change to the already existing ways of behaving and evaluating. It is a change that does not mean good or bad but an inevitable outcome of interactions. For example, two friends never have the exactly same interactions in terms of the content of talk, interacting sequences, atmosphere, etc. One reason is because the physical and mental conditions of two friends are unique at any moment and these conditions thus influence more or less these two friends' interactional behavior. Another reason is because between their previous, present and future interactions, they gain new experience and knowledge from their interactions with others which change them, even

in the slightest way. Thus when these two friends meet again, they co-construct another new outcome of interactions. The new outcome would modify the already-existing norms.

Therefore, understanding what the norms are, how people change and how to deal with such changes is an issue every interactant has to learn. Though the norms are categorized as a stable feature in a conversation, norms are dynamic in a way that previously-formed norms have a possibility to be modified and new norms can be formed during and after each interaction. Likewise, moment-by-moment responses from participants are dynamic but not to an extreme that participants are unable to follow other participant's behavior. The stable norms do not only serve as a basis for the understanding of the going-on but also as a boundary for socially acceptable behavior. In a word, the dynamic and stable features are mutually interdependent and together they constitute the bulk of conversation.

5.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

During the interactions, participants are not only exchanging information, negotiating concrete issues, such as agreeing or disagreeing with each other for stocks of which company are a must-buy, but they are also constantly negotiating relationships with each other. The present research suggests that potential FTAs are omnipresent in the conversations. That is to say, communicative acts are not viewed as intrinsically face-threatening because the meaning of potential FTAs and interpersonal relationships are negotiable and re-negotiable. The fact that relational work is needed during the interaction suggests that everything is open for interpretation and no meanings and

forces of an FTA are pre-determined. In particular, the interpretation and negotiation rely both on the use of contextualization cues and cultural norms. Assuming this perspective on politeness in conversation, I now revisit the following two research questions:

1. How do members of the community of practice formed by my participants negotiate linguistic behaviors that are potentially face-threatening?
2. What are the underlying cultural norms of interaction that contribute to participants' interpretation of (im)polite behavior of my participants' community of practice?

Five significant results are found in the five excerpts in terms of how participant deictics serve as an important linguistic cue for the performing of potential FTAs and for revealing cultural norms which may not be always apparent. In particular, participant deictics are the key to the first research question, as presented in significant results one and two. That is, participants in this research employ and make use of different participant deictics to perform and mitigate potentially face-threatening acts as well as to do relational work.

The first significant result is found in Excerpts 1 and 2 where participants use the definite personal pronoun and the change of pronouns to set up interpersonal boundaries as well as to initiate and dissolve the potentially antagonistic situation. For example, both of the excerpts show interpersonal boundaries from the use of 'we' and 'you.' The reason participant deictics, pronouns in this case, can be considered as a useful and delicate linguistic tool to enhance or destroy interpersonal relationships is

because pronouns can be used in an equivocal way. For instance, even for the definite pronoun, such as 'we,' it can be used as an 'inclusive-we' or 'exclusive-we.' This alternative feature makes the use of pronouns delicate because the speaker and the hearer can interpret them in two different ways. The alternative feature also enables the speaker to argue afterwards what he or she said was not what he or she intended to mean.

Participants from both groups agree that performing the potential FTA of giving and receiving compliments in a direct fashion has become a trend that more and more people are doing so. However, modesty is sometimes more appreciated than directness in terms of complimenting behavior. Therefore, indirectness is still considered to be politic behavior for giving and receiving compliments. Such indirect behavior is found frequently in the excerpts. The second significant result thus concerns performing such a potential FTA in an indirect and ambiguous manner through the use of indefinite pronouns (e.g., someone), inanimate subjects (e.g., this way/this appearance, black bottle), the absence of an explicit pronoun, and the use of an inhuman object (e.g., fox) to describe the complimentee, as is revealed in Excerpts 3, 4, and 5. The ambiguous use of participant deictics is a way to negotiate the meaning and effect of a compliment. One instance of the negotiation of a compliment takes place between Ann and Yang. The inanimate subjects (this way/this appearance) Ann uses in her compliment are not commonly used in compliments. By using the same inanimate subjects, Yang not only acknowledges Ann's utterance as a compliment but also accepts Ann's compliment in the same indirect manner. Another example of giving a compliment indirectly is found

in Michelle's using 'cunning fox' to describe Ann. The negotiation occurs between Michelle and the rest of her friends. The reason a negotiation is necessary is because Michelle's friends interpret 'cunning fox' connoting negative meaning while Michelle uses it as a compliment to Ann. This instance shows that the compliment is performed in a very indirect way that only the speaker herself knows what she means, but not her complimentee, nor other listeners present. Though such indirectness may cause more 'trouble' in discussing, somehow it brings fun to interaction, as is found in Excerpt 4.

The following two significant results answer the second research questions about cultural norms. The third result concerns the cultural norm that, in casual settings (e.g., encounter with friends' family members, conversations between salespeople and customers at market places), is politic and required to address elders according to the familial hierarchy. This cultural norm is reflected in the use of the vocative and noun phrases related to kinship terms found in Excerpts 2, 3, 4, and 5. In Excerpt 3, Ann addresses Yang as 'auntie.' In Excerpt 4, participants address their friend's sister as 'big Sis.' Following the norm to call someone outside the family 'Auntie' or 'big Sis,' the speakers' behavior qualifies as politic. Otherwise, one will be considered impolite and be judged as what Betty says: “沒大沒小 *méidà, méixiǎo*, meaning someone who is impolite, impertinent, or lacks respect for the elders.”

Excerpt 5 presents the elder participants' experience of being called by the inappropriate address forms from a speaker outside their family. It is a discussion about how female speakers in their mid-fifties believe how they should be addressed. They are discussing specifically the terms 'Auntie, Grandma, and old lady.' In particular, they are

unable to accept being called ‘old woman’ because ‘old woman’ gives people the impression of someone in her sixties or seventies with a stereotypical appearance of grey hair, wrinkles all over the face, maybe a humpback, and slow movement. Amy, Lisa and Joanne go groceries shopping often in traditional markets where they often feel offended by the vendors who address female customers in a way that is not appreciated by the female customers. According to participants of mid-fifties, vendors have the following options to address female shoppers:

- (1) 小姐 *xiǎojiě* ‘lady’
- (2) 太太 *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’
- (3) 歐巴桑 *obasan* ‘old woman’
- (4) 阿婆 *ābō* ‘old woman’

The first option 小姐 *xiǎo jiě* ‘lady’ is the most frequent and safest way to address female shoppers of all ages. 太太 *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’ is another common way to address female shoppers who look like they are married, a mother or a grandmother. The last two options: 歐巴桑 *obasan* (originated from Japanese) ‘old woman’ and 阿婆 *ābō* (from Taiwanese) ‘old woman’ are dangerous to use because they connote the images of an old woman described previously (e.g., grey hair, wrinkles, and slow movement). It is also easy to offend female shoppers who do not believe they look that old yet. However, even though they are in their sixties or seventies, they would not feel so glad to be addressed as ‘old lady.’ After all, people generally feel less offended to be recognized as younger rather than older. Thus, it is understandable why Amy, Lisa and Joanne react fiercely when listening to Lisa’s experience.

The previous three paragraphs highlight the norm to address elders, whether within or outside family, based on the familial hierarchy in casual settings. The following section presents while it is acceptable to use first names to address the younger siblings, addressing elder siblings by their first names are not always politic for some families. Instead, it is politic to use the kinship terms to address elder siblings. In some families, siblings address each other based on their relationship in the family, such as in the following terms:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) 哥哥 <i>gē gē</i>
big brother big brother
'a big brother' | (4) 妹妹 <i>mèi mèi</i>
little sister little sister
'a little sister' |
| (2) 姊姊 <i>jiě jiě</i>
big sister big sister
'a big sister' | (5) 大哥 <i>dà gē</i>
big big brother
'the biggest brother' |
| (3) 弟弟 <i>dì dì</i>
little brother little brother
'a little brother' | (6) 二哥 <i>èr gē</i>
second big brother
'the second big brother' |

However, such a cultural norm of not using first names to address each other does not apply to friends of the same age. Excerpts from the young group show that addressing friends by their first name or full name indicates different degrees of possible threat. This specific linguistic phenomenon is found primarily with Betty when she is talking to Michelle and Annie. Betty uses Annie's and Michelle's first names and full names in different situations to mark Betty's change in attitudes. For example, when Betty says to Michelle, "Michelle Lin stinks" and to Annie, "Annie Wang, you are very mean!", she speaks in an angry manner with falling intonation. On the contrary,

while Betty uses Michelle's and Annie's first names to address them, Betty speaks with a soft voice. Therefore, we might say using a friend's full name is one way to perform a potential FTA while a first name is used when no potential threat is performed.

The fourth significant result is about the cultural norms for talking about politics, and interrupting friends. For the young participants, it is inappropriate to discuss politics, especially in a public place, but it is appropriate to discuss politics with friends for the participants of fifties. Therefore, though politics is not a widely favored topic, it is possible to discuss with friends. Most of the young participants state that they avoid initiating the topic of politics themselves, but they respect their friends' freedom of speech and they do not consider it as impolite behavior. As for the standard norm of interrupting friends, it is politic to interrupt, especially when a friend is about to make a scene or having inappropriate behavior (as is the case with Betty). However, without any condition, it is still politic to interrupt friends because conversations between friends are meant to be cozy.

The young participants' feedback on the issue of talking about politics and interruption gives rise to the last significant result in this research. That is, what participants believe and how they behave conflict with the claim of the continuum of relational work proposed by Locher and Watts (2005). As previously shown in Figure 3.2, non-politic or inappropriate behavior includes over-polite or impolite behavior. Though the young participants evaluate one of their friends' behavior as inappropriate, they do not consider that particular behavior as impolite. In other words, Betty's inappropriate behavior is non-impolite. According to the participants, the reason the

inappropriate behavior is not negatively marked to the extent of being impolite is because deep friendships and a good understanding of each other's personality rationalize the impolite behavior. That is, it is one's personal tendency to behave in such an inappropriate way, but not one's intention to behave impolitely. Therefore, it seems that for my young participants, when a friend's personal behavior conflicts with what they used to believe to be appropriate, they adjust their criterion of evaluation for their friend. In order to better accommodate the perception and behavior of my participants, I modify Locher and Watts' (2005) continuum of relational work, shown below in Figure 5.1.

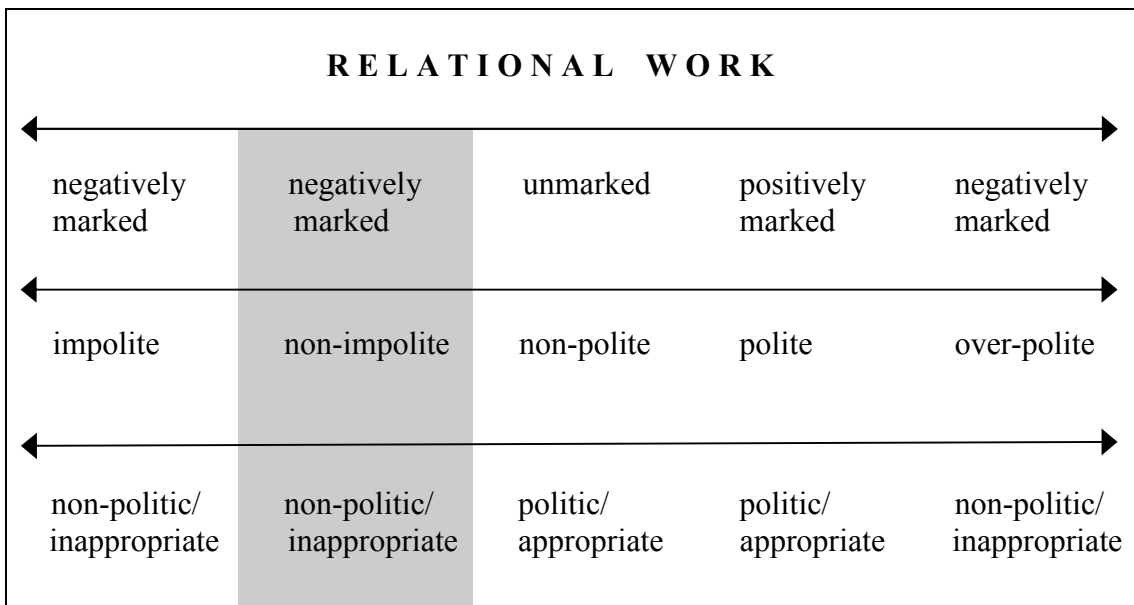


Figure 5.1 Modified continuum of relational work (adapted from Locher & Watts, 2005)

The shaded area is added based on my participants' insights that inappropriate behavior is not necessarily impolite behavior as Locher and Watts claim. In other words, inappropriateness is not directly correlated with impoliteness.

The following claim from Locher and Watts (2005) may be able to explain participants' adjustment of their evaluation. Locher and Watts (2005) point out that even though they emphasize that "no utterance is inherently polite" (p. 21), they do believe that speakers "evaluate certain utterances as polite against the background of their own habitus" (p. 21). For my participants, they evaluate Betty's behavior as appropriate although it is against the cultural norms they used to have. This adjustment could be where the "dynamic" feature of an interaction takes place: participants change their evaluation for Betty because they know Betty's personality. This change would be rooted in participants' minds so when Betty performs in a similar way in their next meeting, participants may not need to adjust because what they have adjusted in a previous meeting has become the cultural norms prior to their new meeting. This 'gap' between what each participant believes to be the norms of certain linguistic behavior before she starts the interaction with her friends and what each of them accepts to be the new norms of behaving after that particular interaction shows what this research has claimed: both dynamic (i.e., newly agreed cultural norms) and the stable (i.e., previously agreed cultural norms) characteristics are simultaneously at work in an interaction.

5.2 Contributions

The contributions of this research can be categorized into three: theoretical, methodological and practical. In terms of the theoretical contributions, the practice-based perspective adopted in this research aims to show the significance of both the dynamic and stable features in a conversation in the hope of shedding light specifically

on the dynamic characteristics. Furthermore, this research provides a methodological foundation for the study of naturally occurring conversations as well as serves a directory for those who are interested in the study of linguistic behavior in conversations by providing them the guidelines from data collection to data analysis (e.g., the use of participant deictics, contextualization cues, participants interviews, and the evaluation of behavior on the modified continuum of relational work.)

The practical contributions have implications for cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication here is not limited to people between nations or races, but includes cultures between regions, ages, genders and individuals. As Wong's (2004) states, "accumulated cultural misunderstanding can eventually give rise to cultural animosity" (p. 246). The use of the participant deictics and cultural values found from my participants' communities of practice could provide insightful information for people from different communities of practice to know in advance how the negotiation and management of interpersonal relationships work if they need to interact with people from a similar community of practice. They could also learn how to examine their own interactions by paying attention to those signals they have never noticed before. For instance, From Experts 1 and 2 we can find that almost every NP can be a subject in Chinese. That is, both the animate or inanimate NPs can function as an agent in a sentence. Moreover, even the absence of a subject is a proper syntactic structure in Chinese. Such a variety for subjects offers wider space for interpretation because it is harder for the hearer to locate the referent to whom the speaker refers. However, for people who are not familiar with this syntactic feature in Chinese, he or she may feel

puzzled or may even be offended by a Chinese speaker's 'ambiguous' language use. This research opens a door to both native and non-native speakers of Chinese to understand the art of employing different participant deictics to achieve diverse communicative goals.

However, I would like to emphasize that although one of the research goals is to reveal the implicit norms that play an essential role in the negotiation, evaluation, and determination of (im)politeness and the ways to behave appropriately in interaction, this research has no intention of claiming that what are presented and analyzed from the excerpts are the representative linguistic behavior people of the same backgrounds as my participants. As Tannen's (2005) reminder to her readers before presenting her data, each speaker has their own style of talking and behaving, even though they might be grouped in the same community of practice because of some shared linguistic behavior, interests and support. She states specifically that "there are many New Yorkers whose styles are very different from those of the speakers in [her] study, and there are many people, not from New York, whose styles are similar to that of these New Yorkers" (pp.6-7).

This research can also be beneficial to those who are interested in conducting cross-cultural studies as well as translators of Chinese and English. The previously-mentioned pro-drop syntactic features as well as the availability to use both the animate and inanimate NPs as subjects can be problematic for a language like English which requires a subject. Therefore, the task lies in how to translate Chinese into English but still keep the vivid meaning. In some cases, the translation differences would influence

the delicate analysis of relational work which relies essentially on those subtle linguistic contextualization cues. For instance, in Excerpt 2, Annie says “肚子好餓 *dùzi hǎo è* ‘My stomach is really growling!’” The translation ‘My stomach is really growling’ in English somehow fails to capture the effect the original Chinese sentence ‘stomach is very hungry’ has. The reason is because ‘stomach is really growling’ indicates that the stomach is making noises which indirectly suggests that the speaker is hungry while ‘stomach is very hungry’ directly expresses that the speaker is hungry.

Another example can be found in Excerpt 3 where Ann says to Yang “真的太瘦了 *zhēn de tài shòu le* ‘Really too thin!’” The word 瘦 *shòu* ‘thin’ simultaneously has one positive and one negative meaning in Chinese. English also has several adjectives to describe the state of ‘not being fat.’ However, to choose the right English word that best captures not only the meaning of 瘦 *shòu* ‘thin’ but also its interpersonal and communicative meaning may mean that a translator would have to go through the same analytical and postulating process as a conversation analyst. By presenting some difficulties a translator or a conversation analyst may encounter, this research offers an opportunity for people in the above-mentioned fields to re-think this issue and hopefully stimulate better solutions.

5.3 Future Research

Only by adopting the practice-based perspective and looking carefully into every tiny linguistic or non-verbal behavior can we demonstrate how much relational work each individual has to go through every moment and every day in their life as long as they interact with others. Interlocutors are involved in different kinds of relational work,

regardless of the relationships between them. From distant strangers to intimate significant others, the relational work that needs to be taken care of are equally the same because of the dynamic, discursive, changeable features of interactions. Nevertheless, the practice-based perspective may cause more trouble for the analysts than the utterance-based perspective because analysts are not able to say in a bald-on-record manner that what they found from the recorded conversations are what the interlocutors truly mean.

The best way analysts can do is to postulate every possible interpretation as painstaking detectives who do not ignore and neglect every little detail presented in the data even though those details may appear to be insignificant. This ‘indeterminacy’ can be compensated for through the field notes together with follow-up interviews with the participants. In particular, follow-up interviews with the participants provide a qualitative analysis to study the conversations as to the uncovering of speakers’ intentions as well as the cultural norms that contribute to the way interlocutors behave in front of each other.

Furthermore, interviews play an essential role in the understanding of interlocutors’ previous encounters and personal experiences, which together with the cultural norms result in the way a speaker behaves in the very moment of a conversation. However, participants interview has its limitations when the interviewee has the problem of knowing and remembering why exactly he or she performs in that manner. In this case, the analyst, as the interviewer, can help interviewee recall their memory by playing back the recorded conversations or presenting the transcriptions of

the conversations to participants. When the participants have difficulty in answering researchers' questions, the researcher should guide them as much as possible by paraphrasing the questions and explaining skillfully an interviewer's motivations for asking such a question without revealing an interviewer's supposition in the question itself. For instance, in Excerpt 4, Michelle uses 'a cunning fox' to describe Ann. Instead of asking Michelle, 'Why did you criticize/compliment Ann?', the neutral way to ask Michelle is 'Why did you say Ann is a 'cunning fox'?' If Michelle says she does not remember or does not know, the interviewer can guide her by asking 'Is a cunning fox a positive or negative image in your culture?' as well as 'When people in your culture uses a cunning fox to describe a person, what is the image of that person they have in mind?'

This research is exploratory in a way that a small number of participants were studied to examine how a practice-based perspective can be beneficial to the understanding of human interactions. While this research may present significant understandings of the specific community of practice formed by my participants, the qualitatively-oriented characteristic of this research somehow restricts the findings to be only applicable to the particular participants involved in this study. Therefore, to expand this research, the future studies can include larger numbers of participants. The criteria of the participants can also be enlarged, such as in terms of different genders, age groups, familiarity (e.g., distant friends, intimate friends, close and far family members) and even different cultures. In this way, future scholarly research could enhance our understandings of the role (im)politeness plays in human interactions and how the better

understanding of (im)politeness gives us new interpretations on those linguistic behaviors that have been generally considered 'impolite' in particular. Recognizing the significance of (im)politeness would also reconstruct the relationship between (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness such that impolite behavior is not necessarily evaluated as inappropriate by participants in every community of practice. The ultimate way that leads to such an understanding of how (im)politeness is evaluated by interlocutors is through the knowledge of the cultural norms that sway the way people talk and react. It is not the first day we realize how complicated human communication is but it can be one of the first days we excavate more norms of a community of practice that may reinforce how different or similar people of various communities of practice are. From there, hopefully, people could achieve a better way of communicating with out-groups as well as their own in-groups.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

- . indicates falling tone at the end of a sentence.
- , indicates unfinished sentence and more is to come
- ? indicates a raising tone such as a question
- ! indicates raising-falling tone typically associated with exclamation
- /?/ indicates inaudible or unintelligible utterances
- () indicates paralinguistic behavior. E.g., (laugh) represents laughing in the recorded conversation
- ... indicates unfinished sentence
- [] indicates researcher's comment to enhance comprehension from translation difference
- (()) indicates translation difference. Elements that are not required in Mandarin Chinese but are required in English

Underline words that are underlined indicate they are spoken in Taiwanese.

Number indicates the seconds paused between two sentences. E.g., (pause 5 secs) represents 5 seconds pause; (laugh 5 secs) indicates a speaker laughs for 5 seconds.

APPENDIX B

EXCERPT 1

Talk about Visiting Betty in Shanghai and Michelle¹²

1. Michelle:

Betty: 都沒有 人 要 來 上海 找 我。
dōu meiyǒu rén yào lái shànghǎi zhǎo wǒ
all neg.¹³ person want come Shanghai find I
'Nobody ever comes to visit me in Shanghai.'

Cindy:

Annie:

2. Michelle: 嗯?

ēn?
S.F.P.¹⁴
'Eh?'

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie: 熊 出 機票 我們 就 去 啊!
xióng chū jīpiao wǒmen jiù qù a
Bear pay plane ticket we aux.¹⁵ go S.F.P.

'If Bear [Betty's nickname] springs for plane tickets then we'll go!'

3. Michelle:

Betty: (笑) 機票錢? 唉 我 現在 是 伸手牌,
(xiào) jīpiaoqián? āi wǒ xianzài shì shēnshǒupái
(laugh) plane ticket fee alas I now am getting handouts
'(laugh) Plane tickets? (Sigh) I am still getting handouts.'

Cindy:

Annie:

4. Michelle:

Betty: 沒有 辦法 這麼 慷慨。
méiyǒu bànfǎ zhème kāngkǎi
neg. way so generous
'No way ((I)) can afford it.'

Cindy:

Annie:

5. Michelle:

¹² Due to the space restriction, the transcriptions in appendixes do not represent the actual turn-taking sequences in the recording conversations.

¹³ neg. stand for negation.

¹⁴ S.F.P. stands for sentence final particle.

¹⁵ aux. stands for auxiliary.

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie: 所以 如果 以後 你 不 伸手 的話， 我們 就 可以
sùoyǐ rúgǒu yǐhòu nǐ bù shēnshǒu dehùà wǒmen jiù kěyǐ
so if later you neg. getting handouts expletive(used with 'if') we aux. can
'So, if you are later not dependent, then we can...'

6. Michelle: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Betty: (笑) 你 說 什麼?
(xiào) nǐ shuō shénme?
(laugh) you say what
'(laugh) What did you say?'

Cindy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(Laugh)'

Annie:

7. Michelle:

Betty: 你 說 什麼?
nǐ shuō shénme?
you say what
'What did you say?'

Cindy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(Laugh)'

Annie:

8. Michelle: (笑三秒) 那...
(xiào sān miǎo) nà
(laugh three second) that
'(laugh 3 secs) that...'

Betty: 你 怎麼 知道? 你 好 厲害!
nǐ zěnmē zhīdào nǐ hǎo lìhài
you how know you very brilliant
'How do you know? You're so brilliant!'

Cindy: (笑三秒)
(xiào sān miǎo)

laugh three second
'(laugh 3 secs)'

Annie:

9. Michelle:

Betty: 怎麼了? 幹嘛那樣子?
zěnme le gānmá nà yàngzi
How expletive why that manner
'What's wrong? Why ((do you)) behave that way?'

Cindy:

Annie:

10. Michelle: 昨天?

zúotīan
yesterday
'Yesterday?'

11. Michelle:

Betty: (停頓兩秒) 嗯... 你昨天有吃晚飯嗎?
(tíngdùn liǎng miǎo) ēn nǐ zúotīan yǒu chī wǎnfàn mā
(pause two second) expletive you yesterday have eat dinner S.F.P
'(pause 2 secs) hmm... Did you have dinner yesterday?'

在醫院吃喔?
zài yīyuàn chī o
at hospital eat S.F.P
'((you)) ate in the hospital?'

Cindy:

Annie:

12. Michelle: 有吃昨天的早餐。

yǒu chī zúotīan de zǎocān
have eat yesterday of breakfast
'((I)) ate breakfast yesterday.'

Betty: 啊?

a
S.F.P
'Ah?'

Cindy:

Annie:

13. Michelle: 就昨天的早餐沒時間吃完
jiù zúotīan de zǎocān méi shíjiān chī wán
aux. yesterday of breakfast neg. time eat complete
'((I)) didn't have time to finish breakfast yesterday'

然後晚上就(無法辨識的句子)一起吃。
ránhòu wǎnshàng jiù (wúfā biànshide jùzi) yìqǐ chī
then night aux. (can't discernible sentence) together eat
'so ((I)) ate (indiscernible sentence) together at night.'

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

14. Michelle:

Betty: (無法辨識的句子)
(wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi)
(can't discernible sentence)
'(indiscernible sentence)'

Cindy:

Annie: 那狐狸中午吃什麼?
nà húli zhōngwǔ chī shéme
then fox noon eat what
'Then what did fox [Michelle's nickname] have for lunch?'

15. Michelle: 中午的便當。中午開會所以就有便當。
zhōngwǔ de biāndāng zhōngwǔ kāihuì sūoyǐ jiù yǒu biāndāng
noon of packed lunch noon meeting so aux. have packed lunch
'A packed lunch. There's a meeting at noon so ((I)) had a packed lunch.'

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

(服務生 送餐 打斷 對話)
(fúwùshēng sòngcān dǎduàn duìhuà)
(waitress deliver meals interrupt conversation)
'(Waitress comes to serve the food and thus the conversation is interrupted)'

APPENDIX C

EXCERPT 2

Talking about Voting for Ma Ying-Jeou

1. Betty: 姊姊 妳 趕快 畢業 然後 回來 投票!
jiějie nǐ gǎnkuài bìyè ránhòu huílai tóupiào
big sis you hasten graduate then return vote
'Big Sis you hurry up to graduate soon and come back to vote!'

支持 馬英九!
zhīchí Mǎ Yīng-Jeou
support person's name
'Support Ma Ying-Jeou!'

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:

(停頓 兩 秒)
(tíngdùn liǎng miǎo)
(pause two second)
'(pause 2 secs)'

2. Betty:
Michelle: (笑 五 秒)
(xiào wǔ miǎo)
(laugh five second)
'(laugh 5 secs)'
Ann: 好 (笑) [慢 Michelle 三 秒]
hǎo (xiào) [màn Michelle sān miǎo]
ok (laugh) [slow Michelle three second]
'Ok.' (laugh) [starts to laugh 3 secs later than Michelle]'
Cindy:
Annie:

3. Betty: 馬英九! 馬英九! 支持 馬英九!
Mǎ Yīng-Jeou Mǎ Yīng-Jeou zhīchí Mǎ Yīng-Jeou
person's name person's name support person's name
'Ma Ying-Jeou! Ma Ying-Jeou! Support Ma Ying-Jeou!'

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:

4. Betty: 這樣 我 才能 回來! 不然 我就 永遠 待在那裡。
zhèyàng wǒ cáinéng huílai bùrán wǒ jiù yǒngyǎn dāi zài nàlǐ
this way I able return otherwise I aux. forever stay at there
'This way I can come back [to Taiwan]! Otherwise I'll stay away forever.'

Michelle:
Ann:
Cindy:
Annie:

5. Betty:
Michelle:
Ann:

Cindy:

Annie: 真的嗎？爲什麼？他爲什麼當選 你 就 能 回來？
zhēnde mā wèishéme tā wèishéme dāngzuǎn nǐ jiù néng huílái
really S.F.P why he why to be elected you aux. can return
'Really? Why? Why if he becomes the president then you can come back?'

6. Betty: 因爲 2008 馬英九 或許 比 民進黨 來的
yīnwei 2008 Ma Ying-Jeou huòxǔ bǐ mínjindǎn lái
because 2008 person's name maybe compare DPP come

對 大陸 方面 比較 友善 吧！
duì dàlù fāngmiàn bǐjiào yǒushàn ba
toward China aspect more friendly S.F.P

'Because in 2008 maybe Ma Ying-Jeou will be friendlier to China than the DPP!'

Michelle:

Ann:

Cindy:

Annie: 真的 嗎？
zhēnde mā
really S.F.P
'Really?'

7. Betty: 大陸... 就是 民進黨 不可能 承認， 對 啊。
dàlù jiùshì mínjindǎn bùkěnéng chéngrèn duì a
China that is DPP impossible admit right S.F.P.
'China...' 'DPP won't admit it, right.'

Michelle:

Ann: 也 對 啊！
yě duì a
also right S.F.P.
'Also true!'

Cindy:

Annie: 肚子 好 餓！
dùzi hǎo è
stomach very hungry
'((My)) stomach is really growling'

8. Betty: 應該 不是 說 他 一定 會 承認， 是 相對的。
yīngāi búshì shuō tā yíding huì chéngrèn shì xiāngduìde
should neg. say he definitely will admit is relative
'((I)) don't mean that he will definitely acknowledge [China], but ((it)) is relative.'

Michelle:

Ann:

Cindy:

Annie:

9. Betty:

Michelle:

Ann:

Cindy: 是真的 很 餓! (笑)

shì zhēnde hěn è (xiào)

is really very hungry (laugh)

'((I)) am indeed very hungry! OR ((Stomach)) is indeed growling!(laugh)'

Annie:

(停頓 五 秒)

(tíngdùn wǔ miǎo)

(pause five second)

'(pause 5 secs)'

10. Betty: Cindy 如果 沒事 也 可以 來 上海 來 玩。
Cindy rúguǒ méishi yě kěyǐ lái shànghai lái wán
Cindy if free also can come to Shanghai come to play
'Cindy can also come to visit Shanghai if free.'

Michelle:

Ann:

Cindy: 好。

hǎo

okay,

'Ok.'

Annie

11. Betty:

Michelle:

Ann:

Cindy:

Annie: 問題 是 大家 都 有事。

wèntí shì dàjiā dōu yǒushì

problem is everyone all occupied

'But the problem is everyone is occupied.'

(服務生 送餐 打斷 對話)

(fúwùshēng sòngcān dǎduàn duìhuà)

(waitress deliver meals interrupt conversation)

'(Waitress comes to serve the food and thus the conversation is interrupted)'

APPENDIX D

EXCERPT 3

Talking about Yang's Figure

1. Ann: 阿姨 你 爲什麼 那麼瘦 啊?
āyí nǐ wèishéme nàme shòu ā?
Auntie you why so thin S.F.P.
'Auntie why are you so thin?'

Yang: 我沒 辦法。
wǒ méi bànfa
I negation way
'I can't help it.'

Amy:

2. Ann: 你 幾 公斤 啊?
nǐ jǐ gōngjīn ā?
you how much kilogram S.F.P.
'How much do you weigh?'

Yang: 你 這樣, 你 等下 看 Lin 怎麼樣?
Nǐ zhèyàng nǐ děngxia kàn Lin zěnmeyàng?
You this way you later see Lin what do you think
'Well, look at Lin ['s figure] later ok?'

Amy:

3. Ann: 你 幾 公斤? 喔?
nǐ jǐ gōngjīn ō?
you how much kilogram S.F.P.
阿 你 幾 公分?
ā nǐ jǐ gōngfēn
S.F.P. you how much centimeter?
'How much do you weigh? Oh? How tall are you?'

Yang: 47。 162。
47 [kilograms]. 162 [centimeters].

Amy:

4. Ann: 哇! 真的 太瘦 了! 至少 要 50 呢!
wā zhēnde tài shòu le zhishǎo yào 50 ne!
wow really too thin S.F.P. at least require 50 S.F.P.
'Wow! Really too thin! ((You)) need at least 50 [kilograms]!'

Yang: 我們 家 那 三個 姊妹, 你 有 看到 嗎?
wǒmen jiā nà sāngè jiěmèi nǐ yǒu kàndào ma?
our house that three-CL¹⁶ sisters you have see S.F.P.
'My three sisters, have you seen them?'

Amy:

5. Ann: 這樣 像是 有生 過 小孩 的人 嗎?
zhèyàng xiànshì yǒu shēng guò xiǎohái de rén mā?

¹⁶ CL stands for classifiers.

this way resemble have give birth past time (grammar) children of person S.F.P.
'Do you look like someone who has given birth already?'

Yang: 阿?
ā?
S.F.P.
'Ah?'

Amy:

6. Ann: 這樣 像是 (笑) 有 生 過 小孩 的 人 嗎?
zhèyàng xiànshì (xiào) yǒu shēng guò xiǎohái de rén mā?
this way resemble (laugh) have give birth past time (grammar) children of person S.F.P.
'Do you look like (laugh) someone who has given birth already?'

Yang: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Amy:

7. Ann:
Yang: 我 我 我 這個 樣子 喔, 真的 喔,
wǒ wǒ wǒ zhègè yàngzi o zhēnde o
I I I this look S.F.P. really S.F.P.
不 太 像 媽 對 啦!
bú tài xiàng mā duì la!
neg. too resemble mom right S.F.P.

Amy: 'I I I the way I look, really, doesn't look like a mom indeed!'

8. Ann: 狗狗 哩?
gǒugǒu lǐ?
dog S.F.P.
'Where is the dog?'

Yang: Happy! 嘿, 那 這 樣子 你 媽 有 跟 你 講 嗎? 他 34 歲。
Happy! hēi nà zhè yàngzi nǐ mā yǒu gēn nǐ jiǎn mā tā 34 suì
Happy! hey that this way you mom have with you tell S.F.P. he 34 years old
'Happy! [Dog's name] Hey, then did your mom tell you? He's 34 'years

old.

Amy: 身材 苗條...
shēnchái miáotiáo...
figure slender
'A Slender figure...'

APPENDIX E

EXCERPT 4

Talking about Ann's characteristics

1. Michelle: Annie的姊姊 會...就 很 像 那 種...我 覺 得
Annie de jiejie hui jiu hen xiang nazhong wo juede
Annie of big Sis can aux. very resemble that kind I think

她 比 較 像 狡 猾 的 狐 狸 。 (笑)
ta bijiao xiang jiaohuade huli (xiao)
she relatively similar to cunning fox (laugh)

‘Annie’s big Sis is...is like that kind of...I think she is more like a cunning fox.’

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie

2. Michelle: (笑, 和 Ann 說 話 同 時)
(xiao han Ann shohua tongshi)
(laugh with Ann talk at the same time)
‘(laugh at the same time when Ann is talking)’

Ann: 你 說 人 家 是 狡 猾 的 狐 狸 ?
ni shou renjia shi jiaohuade huli?
you say person is cunning fox?
‘You said person is a cunning fox?’

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

3. Michelle: (笑 五 秒) 然 後 妹 妹 就 一 直
(xiao wu miao) ranhuo maimai jiu yizhi
(laugh 5 second) then little Sis aux. keep on

無 奈 的 把 眼 睛 往 上 吊 。
wunaide ba yanjing wang shang diao
have no choice make eyes toward up hang

‘Then little Sis [refers to Annie] has no choice but keeps on rolling her eyes.’

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

4. Michelle: (笑)
(xiao)

(laugh)
'(Laugh)'

Ann: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(Laugh)'

Betty: 姊姊， 你 可以 生氣！
jiějiě nǐ kěyǐ shēngqì
big sister you can angry
'Big Sis [refers to Ann], you can be angry!'

Cindy: (笑 兩 秒)
(xiào liǎng miǎo)
(laugh two second)
'(Laugh for 2 secs)'

Annie: (笑 兩 秒)
(xiào liǎng miǎo)
(laugh two second)
'(Laugh for 2 secs)'

5. Michelle: 沒有 啦， 就 很 可愛， 就是 那種... (笑)
méiyǒu la jiù hěn kěài jiù shì nàzhǒng (xiào)
neg. S.F.P. aux. very cute that is that kind (laugh)
'No, ((it's)) very cute, it's that kind of... (laugh)'

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

6. Michelle: 不知道 耶...
bùzhīdào ye
don't know S.F.P.
'((I)) don't know...'

Ann:

Betty: 你 很 沒大沒小 耶！ 你！
nǐ hěn méidàméixiǎo ye nǐ
you very disrespectful to the elders S.F.P. you
'You are very disrespectful to the elders! You!'

Cindy:

Annie:

7. Michelle: (笑 兩 秒) 就是 那種 很 聰明 又 很
(xiào liǎng miǎo) jiùshì nàzhǒng hěn cōngmíng yòu hěn
(laugh two second) that is that kind very smart and very
慧黠的 那種 感覺
hùjiéde nàzhǒng gǎnjué
clever and artful that kind feeling
'(laugh 2 secs) It's that kind of very clever and very artful impression.'

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Annie:

8. Michelle

Ann: 喔(拉 長 音) (笑)
ō (lā cháng yīn) (xiào)
oh (lengthen long sound) (laugh)
'Oh (prolonging sounds) (laugh)'

Betty: 喔(拉 長 音) (笑) 姊姊, (無法 辨識的 句子)
ō (lā cháng yīn) (xiào) jiejie (wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi)
oh (lengthen long sound) (laugh) big sister (can't discernible sentence)
'Oh (prolonging sounds) (laugh), big Sis, (indiscernible sentence)'

Cindy: 喔(拉 長 音)
ō (lā cháng yīn)
oh (lengthen long sound)
'Oh (prolonging sounds)'

Annie: 喔(拉 長 音)
ō (lā cháng yīn)
oh (lengthen long sound)
'Oh (prolonging sounds)'

9. Michelle: (笑), 姊姊, 不要 生氣!
(xiào) jiejie búyào shēngqì
(laugh) big sis neg. angry
'(Laugh) Big Sis, don't be angry!'

Ann: 不會 (一邊講一邊笑)
búhuì (yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)
neg. (While talking, one laughs, too)
'No (laughing and talking at the same time)'

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

10. Michelle:

Ann:

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie: 姊，那我們來替 你訪問你自己
jiě nà wǒmen lá ti nǐ fǎnwèn nǐ zìjǐ
big sis then we let take the place of you interview you oneself

好了。請問一下當你面對這種稱讚
hǎo le qǐng wèn yíxià dāng nǐ miànduì zhèzhǒng chēngzàn
okay S.F.P. please ask a bit when you face this kind compliment

的時候 你會怎麼...
deshíhòu nǐ huì zěnmē
expletive (used with ‘當’ dāng) you will how

‘Big Sis, we should interview you for you. When you receive this kind of compliment, how’ll you...’

11. Michelle:

Ann: 好尷尬 喔！
hǎo gāngà ō
so embarrassed S.F.P.
‘((I feel)) So embarrassed!’

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

12. Michelle: (笑) (笑)
(xiào) (xiào)
(laugh) (laugh)
‘(laugh)’ ‘(laugh)’

Ann: 既開心又害羞。
jì kāixīn yòu hàixiū
not only happy but also shy
‘((I feel)) both happy and shy.’

Betty: (笑) (笑)
(xiào) (xiào)
(laugh) (laugh)
‘(laugh)’ ‘(laugh)’

Cindy: (笑) (笑)
(xiào) (xiào)
(laugh) (laugh)
‘(laugh)’ ‘(laugh)’

Annie: (笑) (笑)
(xiào) (xiào)
(laugh) (laugh)
'(laugh)' '(laugh)'

13. Michelle:

Ann:

Betty: 喔，我快笑死了喔！
ō wǒ kuài xiào sǐ le o
oh I almost laugh death expletive S.F.P.
喔！我快笑死了！
ō wǒ kuài xiào sǐ le
oh I almost laugh death expletive

'Oh, I'm going to laugh myself to death! Oh! Oh! I'm going to laugh myself to death!'

Cindy:

Annie:

14. Michelle: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'laugh'

Ann: 哪有這種研究的！可以跟受訪者
nǎyǒu zhèzhǒng yánjiū de kěyǐ gān shòufǎngzhě
what this kind research expletive can with interviewee

打成一片的呢？
dǎchéngyīpiàn de ne?
play along with expletive S.F.P.

'What kind of research this is! ((The investigator)) can play around with participants?'

Betty:

Cindy:

Annie:

15. Michelle:

Ann:

Betty: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Cindy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Annie: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

APPENDIX F

EXCERPT 5

Talking about vocatives

1. Amy: 嘿，阿 你們家 小姐 懷孕 了 嗎？
hei, ā nǐmen jiā xiǎojiě huáiyùn le ma
hey initial particle your house miss pregnant expletive S.F.P.
'Hey, has the miss of your family ever been pregnant?'
- Lisa:
Joanne: 懷孕 喔？生 了！
huáiyùn o shēng le
pregnant S.F.P. give birth S.F.P.
'Pregnant? She already has kids!'
- Ann:
2. Amy: 阿！ 你已經 作 阿媽⁷ 了！
a nǐ yǐjīng zuò āmā le
initial particle you already to be grandmother S.F.P.
'Ah! You're already a grandma!'
- Lisa: 是 阿媽 了， 你 不知道 喔？
shì āmā le nǐ mǒzhīdào o
am grandmother S.F.P. you don't know S.F.P.
'((She)) is already a grandma, you don't know that?'
- Joanne: 怎麼 辦？這麼...
zěnmē bàn zhème
how to do so
'How's that? So...'
- Ann:
3. Amy: Ann, 你 有 看 過 這麼 年輕的 阿媽？
Ann, nǐ yǒu kàn guò zhème niánqīngde āmā
Ann, you have see past time (grammar) so young grandmother
'Ann, have you ever seen such a young grandma?'
- Lisa: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'
- Joanne:
Ann: 對 呀， 認不出來 耶！
duì ya rèn bù chū lái yē
right S.F.P. can't tell S.F.P.
'No, ((I)) can't tell!'
4. Amy: 你 真的是...
nǐ zhēndì shì...
you really are
'You're really...'
- Lisa:

¹⁷ Italics in appendixes indicate words that are spoken in Taiwanese.

Joanne: 認不出來 喔? (笑) 我 不 願意 也 要 當 啊!
rènbúchūlai o (xiào) wǒ bú yuànyì yě yào dān a
can't tell S.F.P. (laugh) I negation be willing to also has to be S.F.P.
'Can't tell? (laugh) I can't help being one even though I don't want to!'

Ann:

5. Amy: 你 黑 瓶子 裝 醬油!
lǐ o hēi-á de dòuyóu
you black bottle to load soy sauce
'You ((are)) a black bottle loading with soy sauce!'
'[You impress me!]

Lisa:

Joanne: 阿?
a
S.F.P.
'Ah?'

Ann: 爲什麼 不 願意? 爲什麼 不 願意?
wèishéme bú yuànyì wèishéme bú yuànyì
why neg. be willing to why neg. be willing to
'Why don't ((you)) want to? Why don't ((you)) want to?'

6. Amy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Lisa: 她 太 年輕 不 願意 當 阿媽。
tā tài niánqīng bú yuànyì dān āmā
she too young negation be willing to be grandmother
'She's too young to be willing to be a grandma.'

Joanne: 太 年輕 了 啊! 她 太 年輕 就 結婚 啦
tài niánqīng le a tā tài niánqīng jiù jiéhūn la
too young expletive S.F.P. she too young aux. get married S.F.P.
'She's too young! She got married too young!'

(無法 辨識的句子) (一邊講一邊笑)
(wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi) (yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)
(can't discernible sentence) (While talking, one laughs, too)
'(indiscernible sentence) (laughing and talking at the same time)'

Ann: 阿姨 幾 歲 啦?
ayí jǐ suì la
auntie how many years old S.F.P.
'Auntie is of how many years old?'

7. Amy: 嘿, 才 扯, 我們 隔壁 搬 了 一個 那個 師大 的
hei, cái chě wǒmen gébi bān le yíge nàge shīdà de
hey just ridiculous we the next door move expletive one-CL that teacher's college of

那個地理系助理教授，
nàge dìlǐ xì zhùlǐ jiàoshòu
that geography dept. assistant professor
'Hey, it's ridiculous, an assistant prof. from the geography dept. of teacher's college moved in next door.'

Lisa:

Joanne: 嗯。
ēn?
S.F.P.
'Huh'

Ann:

8. Amy: 阿 他們 生 了 兩個小孩 很小，
a tāmen shēng le liǎngge xiǎohái hěn xiǎo
initial particle they give birth expletive two-CL child very young
'Ah And they have two little kids,

阿 他太太 每次 看到我 喔，
a tā taitai měici kàndào wǒ o
initial particle his wife every time see me S.F.P.
'when his wife sees me every time,'

Lisa:

Joanne: 真的 喔？
zhēnde o
really S.F.P.
'Really?'

Ann:

9. Amy: 就叫 他 兒子 說 “叫 奶奶， 叫 奶奶！
jiù jiào tā érzi shuō jiào nǎinai jiào nǎinai
aux. call his son say call grandmother (father's side) call grandmother (father's side)
'She tells her son to call me "Grandma, Grandma!"'

Lisa:

Joanne: 叫 奶奶！ (一邊講一邊笑)
jiào nǎinai (yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)
call grandmother (father's side) (While talking, one laughs, too)
'Call Grandma! (talk and laugh at the same time)'

Ann:

10. Amy: 後，我聽了 以後真的... (笑)
hòu wǒ tīng le yǐhòu zhēnde (xiào)
gosh I hear expletive after really (laugh)
'Gosh, when I heard that I felt... (laugh)'

Lisa: (笑)

(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Joanne: (笑) 很 生氣。 叫 奶奶！
(xiào) hěn shēngqì jiào nǎinai

(一邊講一邊笑)
(yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)

(laugh) very angry call grandmother (father's side) (While talking, one laughs)
'(laugh) very angry. Call Grandma! (talk and laugh at the same time).'

Ann:

11. Amy: 我心裡 想說 我的頭髮到底 有多白。
wǒ xīnlǐ xiǎngshuō wǒ de tóufǎ dàodǐ yǒu duō bái
I one's inner think I of hair what on earth have much grey
'I was thinking how grey my hair really was.'

Lisa:

Joanne: 什麼年紀 叫我奶奶?
shéme niánqì jiào wǒ nǎinai
what age call me grandmother (father's side)
'How old do I look to be called Grandma?'

Ann:

12. Amy: 爲什麼 叫我奶奶 呢?
wèishéme jiào wǒ nǎinai ne
why call me grandmother (father's side) S.F.P.
'Why did they call me Grandma?'

Lisa: 叫你奶奶? 還有人叫我阿婆哩!
jiào nǐ nǎinai hái yǒu rén jiào wǒ ābō li
call you grandmother (father's side) still person call I old woman S.F.P.
'Call you Grandma? People even call me old woman!'

Joanne:

Ann:

13. Amy: 嘿呀, 還好 不是 叫阿婆! (笑)
heiya haihǎo búshì jiào wǒ ābō (xiào)
right fortunately neg. call old woman (laugh)
'Right, I should feel glad they didn't call me old woman! (Laugh)'

Lisa:

Joanne: 真的啊! 嘿, 有一次...
zhēnde a hei yǒu yíci
really S.F.P hey there is one time
'It's true! Hey, there was one time...'

Ann:

14. Amy:
Lisa:
Joanne: 有 一次 就去朋友家, 就去那个一个朋友家,
yǒu yíci jiù qù péngyǒu jiā jiù qù nàge yíge péngyǒu jiā
there is one time aux. go friend house aux. go that one-CL friend house

他說 叫我阿婆 啦!
tā shuō jiào wǒ ābō la
he say call me old woman S.F.P.

'I went to a friend's house, I went to a friend's house, he told ((people)) to call me old woman!'

Ann:

15. Amy: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Lisa: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Joanne: 他說叫我阿婆啦！(笑) (無法辨識的句子) (笑)
tā shuō jiào wǒ ābō la (xiào) (wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi) (xiào)
he say call me old woman S.F.P. (laugh) (can't discernible sentence) (laugh)
'he told ((people)) to call me old woman! (laugh) (indiscernible sentence) (laugh)'

Ann: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

16. Amy: 真的叫你阿婆喔，Joanne？
zhēnde jiào nǐ ābō o, Joanne
really call you old woman S.F.P. Joanne
'They really call you old woman, Joanne?'

Lisa:

Joanne: (笑) 對呀，他說叫我阿婆啊！
(xiào) duì ya tā shuō jiào ābō a
(laugh) right S.F.P. he say call old woman S.F.P.
'(laugh) Yup, he told ((people)) to call me old woman!'

Ann:

17. Amy:

Lisa: 有一次我去電器行
yǒu yíci wǒ qù diàncì háng
there is one time I go electronic equipment store

啊，阿不曉得要買什麼，
a a bù xiǎode yào mǎi shéme
S.F.P. initial particle neg. know want buy what

'One time I went to the electric appliance store, I didn't know what I to buy.'

Joanne: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
'(laugh)'

Ann:

18. Amy:

Lisa: 阿進去啊，就跟他兒子講說
ā jìnqù ā jiù gēn tā érzi jiǎnshuō
initial particle enter S.F.P. aux. with he son tell

喔你看這個阿婆要做什麼。

o nǐ kàn zhègè ābǒr yào zuò shéme
initial particle you look this old woman want do what

‘As soon as I went into the store,
((The owner)) told his son to check what this *old woman* wants to buy.’

Joanne: 叫 阿婆 買...
gào ābōr mài
call old woman buy
‘Ask the old woman to buy...’

Ann:

19. Amy:

Lisa: 喔 我 就 回 來 跟 我 兒 子 講 說 我 這 麼 老 ， 叫 我 阿婆？
o wǒ jiù huí lái gēn wǒ er zǐ jiǎn shuō wǒ zhème lǎo jiào wǒ ābōr
initial particle I aux. return with my son tell I so old call me old woman
‘Oh I went home and told my son I was so old, that they called me ‘old woman?’

Joanne: (笑)
(xiào)
(laugh)
(laugh)

Ann:

20. Amy: 你 可 能 剛 好 梳 個 慈濟 頭。
nǐ kě nén gāng hǎo sūh ge Tzuchi tóu
you maybe happen to to comb ((one))-CL name of a Buddhist Compassion Relief
Foundation in Taiwan head

阿 我 也 沒 有 梳 啊！
a wǒ yě méiyǒu sūh a
initial particle I also negation to comb S.F.P.
‘Maybe you happened to have your hair in a bun. But I didn’t!’

Lisa:

Joanne: 不 買 了。
bù mǎi le
neg. buy S.F.P.
‘I won’t buy anything.’

Ann:

21. Amy: 這 樣 我 頭 髮 短 短 說 叫 奶 奶。
zhèyàng wǒ tóufǎ duǎn duǎn shuō jiào nǎinǎi
this way I hair short short say call grandmother (father’s side)

喔 ， 我 都 很 想 跟 她 講 說 ，
o wǒ dōu hěn xiǎng gēn tā jiǎngshuō
initial particle I all very much would like to toward her tell
‘That my hair was short and I were called Grandma. Oh, I wanted to tell her,’

Lisa:

Joanne:

Ann:

22. Amy:

Lisa: 拜託你叫阿姨就好了好不好？叫阿姨差不多。
baituo nǐ jiào āyí jiù hǎo le hǎobùhǎo jiào āyí chàbùduō
please you call auntie aux. enough S.F.P. how about that call auntie just about right
'Please just call me Auntie ok? The least you can do is to call me Auntie.'

Joanne: (無法辨識的句子) 我跟你講...
(wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi) wǒ gēn nǐ jiāng
(can't discernible sentence) I toward you tell
'(indiscernible sentence)' 'Let me tell you...'

Ann:

23. Amy:

Lisa:
Joanne: (無法辨識的句子)
(wúfǎ biànshíde jùzi)
(can't discernible sentence)
'(indiscernible sentence)'

Ann: 那如果叫你們叫姊姊，那又太假了一點。
nà rúguǒ jiào nǐmen jiào jiějie nà yòu tài jiǎ le yídiǎn
then if ask you-PL call big sis that further too hypocritical S.F.P. a bit
'Then if they call you big Sis, that's too hypocritical.'

24. Amy:

Lisa: 對呀，通常都會叫阿姨啊！
duì ya tōngcháng dōu huì jiào āyí a
right S.F.P. usually all can call auntie S.F.P.
'Right, people often call us Auntie!'

Joanne:

Ann: 那我這種呢？我這種就叫阿姨啦！
nà wǒ zhèzhǒng ne wǒ zhèzhǒng jiù jiào āyí la
then I this kind S.F.P. I his kind aux. call auntie S.F.P.
'How about me? I was called Auntie already!'

25. Amy:

Lisa: 喔！我們，對喔！
o wǒmen duì o
oh we right S.F.P.
'Oh! We, right!'

Joanne:

Ann: 那你們的話就不能，就不能叫阿姨啦！
nà nǐmen dehuà jiù bùnéng jiù bùnéng jiào āyí la
then you-PL expletive (usually used with 'if') aux. can't aux can't call auntie S.F.P.
'Then about you, people can't call you Auntie!'

26. Amy:

Lisa:

Joanne:

Ann: 我應該去測試一下那個阿姨會怎麼叫她小孩叫我。
wǒ yīnggāi qù cèshì yíxià nàge āyí huì zěnmē jiào tā xiǎohái jiào wǒ

I should go test a bit that-CL auntie will how ask her child call me
'I should test to see how that Auntie will ask her kid to address me.'

27. Amy: 其實他應該叫我奶奶 應該是正確的。
qíshí tā yīnggāi jiào wǒ nǎinaī yīnggāi shì zhèngquède
in fact he should call me grandmother (father's side) should be correct
'In fact it's true that he should call me Grandma.'

Lisa: 對啦，只是我們沒有辦法接受。
dùì la zhìshì wǒmen méiyǒu bànfǎ jiēshòu
right S.F.P. only we neg. way accept
'Right, it's just that we can't accept the fact.'

Ann:

28. Amy:

Lisa: 嗯呀 嗯呀 (笑)
ēnya ēnya (xiào)
uh-huh uh-huh (laugh)
'Uh-Huh Uh-Huh (Laugh)'

Joanne: 對呀！沒有辦法接受。說叫我阿婆啦！
dùì ya méiyǒu bànfǎ jiēshòu shuō jiào wǒ ābō la
right S.F.P. negation way accept say call me old woman S.F.P.

我是有多老 (笑)
ghua si iu loi lau (xiào)
I am have how much old (laugh)

'Yup! I can't accept it. ((People)) call me old woman! How old am I! (Laugh)'

Ann:

29. Amy: Joanne 那個是比較誇張 (一邊講一邊笑)
Joanna nàge shì bǐjiào kūazhāng (yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)
Joanna that is more exaggerating (While talking, one laughs, too)
'Joanne's example is extreme. (talk and laugh at the same time)'

Lisa:

Joanne: (笑) 叫我阿婆! (一邊講一邊笑)
(xiào) jiào wǒ ābō (yībianjiǎngyībianxiào)
(laugh) call me old woman (While talking, one laughs, too)
'(Laugh) ((People)) call me old woman! (talk and laugh at the same time)'

Ann:

30. Amy: 叫阿婆!
jiào ābō
call old woman
'Call old woman!'

Lisa: 是啦，其實我們自己應該有體認。
shì la qíshí wǒmen zìjǐ yīnggāi yǒu tǐrèn
right S.F.P. in fact we oneself should have understanding
'Right, in fact we should face the music.'

Joanne: 是啦。

shì la
right S.F.P.
'Right.'

Ann:

31. Amy: 嘿，人，妳簿子拿來。
hei lang lǐ pauà telai
hey person you bankbook bring over
'Hey, you, give me your bankbook.'

Lisa: 因為是同輩的孫子嗎，所以叫奶奶？
yīnwei shì tóngbei de sūnzi ma sūoyí jiào nāināi
because is same generation of grandchild S.F.P. so call grandmother (father's side)
'Because he's a grandson of our generation, so call you Grandma?'

Joanne: 嘿啦！
hei la
hey S.F.P.
'Yup!'

Ann:

32. Amy: 簿子拿來，要拿去幫你換帳號。
pōà telai māi te qǐl ba ng li ūa diòhōr
bankbook bring over want take to help you change bank number
'Give me your bankbook, I'll help you change your account number.'

Lisa:

Joanne: 阿她年紀又比我們大...
a tā niánjì yòu bǐ wǒmen dà
initial particle her age further compare we big
'And she's older than us...'

Ann:

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hui-Yen graduated with her two Bachelors Degrees in French and English Language & Literature from Fu-Jen Catholic University in Taiwan in 2003. Hui-Yen started her graduate program in the Department of Linguistic and TESOL at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2003. During the academic years 2005-2007, Hui-Yen was employed by the department of Linguistic and TESOL as a research assistant, teaching assistant and a teaching associate. Hui-Yen enjoyed teaching because she could share her passion for knowledge with students and inspire them in every aspect as well as learn from them. Besides linguistics, Hui-Yen is especially enthusiastic about music. She had learned to play the piano, recorder, and flute. Hui-Yen would like the understanding of human communication with a special focus on cross-cultural to pursue a degree in music in the future. Meanwhile, she would continue her work in communication.