

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The development of children's conversational skills has been a growing area of interest within child language research during the past decade. The earlier focus on children's linguistic development in regard to their acquisition of sound inventory, the development of word combination, and the development of word and sentence meanings, has shifted to communicative skills, that is, how children use language to express their intentions appropriately within particular interpersonal situations.

One of the most compelling notions in the field of language use is speech act theory. It has been claimed by some scholars (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Searle, 1975) that speech acts are governed by universal pragmatic principles. The modes of children's speech act performances thus carry heavy social implications (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Although conversation is a universal human activity performed routinely in the course of everyday interactions, the nature of conversational talk, and the means by

which children learn to participate in conversations have still not been discussed systematically and explicitly. These early capacities are both communicative and interactive. However, during the early stages, children are not yet exchanging information. When children get older, they start to use language to express intent related to content and form. Every day children use language to perform a variety of social activities: to negotiate, to make requests, to complain, to refuse, and so on. A number of studies have been conducted to explore children's speech acts, especially request (Emihovich, 1986; Ervin-Tripp, 1982; Goodwin, 1980; Liao, 1997; Rose, 2000). However, no such large attention has been paid to children's refusal.

Refusal is recognized as a kind of face-threatening act, since a hearer may lose face when a speaker rejects a request or invitation. Therefore, it seems to be an important task for speakers to soften the face-threatening force of refusal. The reasons why refusal is worthy of further discussion in children's language development are as follows. First, refusal is complex in that it often involves a negotiated sequence in natural conversation, and carries the risk of offending the interlocutor. Speakers need to consider the nature of the situation in order to perform the most effective refusal strategies. Second, refusal is interesting in that the form and content vary in different conversational interactions. Both the social relation between the interlocutors and the interpersonal factors affect the way refusals are performed. Nevertheless, refusal does

not draw much attention. Also, the investigations of refusal mainly focus on adult production and cross-cultural comparisons (Chen et al., 1995; Liao, 1994; Liao and Bresnahan, 1996; Wang, 2001). Thus, there are still many issues to be dealt with in regards to children's performance in refusals.

1.2 The motivation of this study

Children's refusals have been discussed within the literature of non-compliance strategy and conflict talk. In previous studies which examined children's conflict talk from one to three years old (Kuczynski et al, 1987; Dunn, 1996), refusal was taken as one kind of strategy for non-compliance. However, little mention is given to the content and form of children's refusals.

Speech act theory has only recently attracted a lot of attention, especially in child language acquisition and the way that children refuse has also aroused the interest of researchers. A number of studies have been conducted on elementary school children's refusal production (Yang, 2003; Yang, 2004). Nevertheless, there exists a gap in previous discussions. Refusals have seldom been examined structurally as a speech act in young children's talk. On the contrary, refusals have been viewed as a kind of strategy of non-compliance. In addition, studies of children's refusal responses have been mostly concerned with the statistical display of refusal strategies, or the way social factors influence children's refusal strategies. Little attention has been paid

to the way children develop their skill in making refusals.

To sum up, there are few studies examining young children's performances of refusals explicitly as a speech act. Furthermore, the significance of the content and form of children's refusals has not yet been discussed systematically.

1.3 The purpose of the study

Refusal is far more complicated in adult talk than in children's. Adults apply a variety of strategies to perform a refusal and utilize diverse modifiers to decrease the face-threatening power of a refusal. In children's talk, refusal is comparatively simple than adults'. Nonetheless, children's refusal still features certain structural patterns and children's refusal strategies are not manipulated randomly.

The present study will examine how a child performs refusals at three different ages and discuss the performance from the developmental perspective. The research questions are listed below:

1. What refusal strategies does the child apply at different ages?
2. What are the developmental changes observed in the child's refusal strategies at different ages?

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Children's pragmatic development and communicative competence

With the growing interest in the exploration of the communicative functions of language in society, there have been some changes in the focus on child language acquisition. First, the focus has shifted from the acquisition of syntactic structures and phonological systems to the semantic meaning and pragmatic function which are considered to represent a child's communicative competences. Second, the acquisition of language should be studied on the basis of the social-communicative context. Lastly, language acquisition may be systematically understood with respect to the child's cognitive development. Children's verbal communicative skills continue developing at the very early period. Young children's use of language is rudimentary; it needs to undergo considerable expansion and sophistication to reach the level of proficiency exhibited by adults with average pragmatic skills. Ninio and Snow (1984) suggested that development during the childhood years includes an expanded range

and variety of verbal communicative acts, increased interpretability of communicative acts, decreased reliance on non-verbal means to express intents, expanded mastery of a variety of mapping rules and encoding strategies, and greater conventionality of expression. By examining these aspects, we may understand how children combine social functions and linguistic conventions to express their intentions appropriately.

According to Hymes (1971), a child acquires knowledge of sentences, in terms of not only what is grammatical, but also what is appropriate. For children, learning to speak not only means to become familiar with the repertoires of messages, but also includes learning to map intentions directly onto appropriate utterances in particular social contexts. When children start to exchange information by means of language, they also express their communicative intent at the same time.

With the development of cognition and greater exposure to interpersonal communication, children master how to express their intentions in related content with appropriate linguistic forms. “Children acquire communicative competences as to when to speak, what to talk about, whom to talk with, when, where, and in what manner” (Yang, 2003). Therefore, communicative competence is crucial for conversational and social skills, since it enables children not only to take the situational variables into consideration and modify the way they talk accordingly, but also to practice how to be a ‘member’ of a communicative society.

Children are sensitive to social factors when they are very young and the recognition of social elements is reflected in their talk. Foster (1999) indicated that very young children are able to make requests for actions and for information, and can also provide responses and acknowledgements according to differences in the situation and interlocutor. In addition, she also discovered that when communications failed, children would use other linguistic strategies to fulfill their intentions. Keenan (1974) and Atkinson (1979) reported that young children repeat an attempt until it gets a response. In the meantime, children started to make their communicative end by deliberate linguistic forms.

Over the course of language acquisition, children establish the knowledge of communicative competencies step by step and talk with others more and more appropriately. Ervin-Tripp (1980) stated that after age two, children turn to acquiring the more complex, infrequent speech uses and to developing skills at utilizing the basic repertoire acquired in parent-child dyadic interaction in a variety of situations. Ninio and Snow (1984) also suggested that starting at about two years; the major acquisition task appears to be perfecting the linguistic means by which familiar communicative speech acts are expressed.

Furthermore, they postulated that verbal communicative competence expands in an orderly fashion, and some factors affect the order of the emergence of

communicative competence. First, children may acquire those speech uses which achieve their most basic interactive goals the earliest. Second, speech uses that require taking the other's perspective are acquired later than those which are performed from an egocentric perspective. In addition, some scholars proposed the principle of complementarity (Chafe, 1974; Goffman, 1983; Rommetveit, 1974). This principle refers to the encoding of communicative intention in a verbal form the process of which involves anticipatory decoding and taking the hearer's assumptions, knowledge, and point of view into consideration.

In addition, the principle underlies such pragmatically central behaviors as the choice of style and the adjustment of the forms. Children may not operate complementarity principle when they are very young. Pragmatic skills can not be separated from cognitive skills or linguistic skills. Cognitive manipulation affects children's linguistic performance. Children's mastery of the selective mapping of intent to words has a deep impact on both their linguistic abilities and their pragmatic capacities (Ninio and Snow, 1984). The growth of children's intent mapping strategies not only changes the way in which a communicative intent is expressed but also broadens the communicative repertoire itself.

By virtue of the examination of communicative functions of speech uses, we can obtain an understanding of the principal motivating force in language acquisition, and

also observe how children elaborate linguistic code cognitively. Children learn how to do things verbally that they did non-verbally before. Furthermore, children learn to use different approaches to accomplish their intentions. In brief, children need to manipulate their social understanding and conversational skills to choose the most appropriate linguistic forms to realize a certain speech act.

2.2 Children's speech acts

It is believed that children's speech acts exhibit the significance which shows how children manipulate linguistic competence and social knowledge when performing speech acts. In addition, much attention has been paid to the relationship between children's speech acts and the concept of politeness. We will first introduce children's speech acts in Section 2.2.1 and then discuss the theory of politeness in 2.2.2.

2.2.1 Request and refusal

In the past decade, a number of studies were conducted in respect of children's speech acts, especially children's request (Gordon & Ervin-Tripp, 1984; Garvey, 1984; Mctear, 1985; Goodwin, 1980; Liao, 1997; Rose, 2000). Request is that a speaker use language to have a hearer carry out an act to satisfy his/her desire or wants (Searle, 1976). Since request puts pressure on the hearer to perform an act, request is viewed as a face threatening act. In addition, request may bring about a conflict between the

desires of the requester and those of the recipient because it imposes a burden upon the hearer. Refusal, another type of speech act, has drawn the attention of many researchers and it has been studied from various perspectives. Refusal is considered as a kind of face-threatening act because a hearer may lose face when a speaker rejects a request. Thus, speakers may apply different strategies to perform refusals in a polite and effective way. While mothers may be active in socializing their children in the ways to make a request, they will not make an active attempt to socialize their children in ways how to refuse successfully. The teaching of acceptable refusals appears to not be as open a process as the teaching of requests (Leonard, 1993). Due to the intrinsic similarity between requests and refusals, some previous research has discussed request and refusal without differentiation (Dunn, 1988; Dunn and Munn, 1987). In 1990, Kuczynski and Kochanska went further and asked about the extent to which request and refusal performances are correlated with each other. They found that there were some relationships between children's non-compliance strategies and the strategies that they used to control their mother's behavior. The frequent use of explanations in request is highly related to the frequent use of bargains in refusals, and the frequent use of reprimands in request to the frequent use of defiance in refusals. Wang (2007) further discussed children's refusal performance from the structure of a request. According to Garvey's (1974) discussion on children's requests,

a sincere request is established on the basis of the following four conditions.

1. S (speaker) wants H (hearer) to do A (act)
2. S assumes H can do A
3. S assumes H is willing to do A
4. S assumes H will not do A in the absence of the request

The essential condition that characterizes a request in a communicative situation is that the utterance addressed by S to H counts as an attempt to get H to do A (Searle, 1969). Wang (2007) claimed that when children refuse, they refer to their assumptions of the four conditions of a request and refuse accordingly by means of denying these assumptions. From these studies, it can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between children's requests and refusals, not only in regard to the parallel nature of the development of their use, but also in regard to the shared knowledge that is used as a basis to their performance.

2.2.2 The concept of politeness

Politeness is generally defined as proper social conduct and is expressed in tactful consideration of others' in language use (Kasper, 1990). In the politeness theory proposed by Lakoff (1973), he suggested that the need to be polite is considered to be more important to avoid offence than the need to achieve clarity.

He further proposed two rules of pragmatic competence: (a) be clear and (b) be polite.

Being polite works to avoid conflicts between participants. There are three rules to

achieve politeness as suggested by Lakoff. First, do not impose upon or offend the hearers. Second, give the hearers options/choices. Third, make the hearer feel good in interactions. Leech (1983) further classified principles of politeness into six maxims (p. 132).

- (1) Tact maxim: (a) Minimize cost to others
 (b) Maximize benefit to others
- (2) Generosity maxim: (a) Minimize benefit to self
 (b) Maximize cost to self
- (3) Approbation maxim: (a) Minimize dispraise of other
 (b) Maximize praise of other
- (4) Modesty maxim: (a) Minimize praise of self
 (b) Maximize dispraise of self
- (5) Agreement maxim: (a) Minimize disagreement between self and other
 (b) Maximize agreement between self and other
- (6) Sympathy maxim: (a) Minimize antipathy between self and other
 (b) Maximize sympathy between self and other

Leech claimed that each sub-maxim (a) carries more weight than (b). From these maxims, it seems that politeness puts more focus on the hearer than the speaker. The tact maxim may be further examined by three sets of scales: the cost-benefit scale, the optionality scale, and the indirectness scale. According to the idea of cost and benefit, the speaker tends to minimize cost of others and to maximize benefit to him/herself. The other two scales imply that indirect illocution exhibits more degree of politeness since it decreases the illocutionary force and thus increases the degree of optionality.

Refusal, as a speech act, is a responding act in which the speaker refuses to

engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor and it thus is considered to be a face-threatening act. "Face" refers to the public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for him- or herself (Brown and Levinson, 1987). A speaker needs to apply certain strategies to increase the degree of politeness and to reduce the threat when performing a face-threatening act. Brown and Levinson further classified face into two types, negative face and positive face. Negative face is the want of every 'competent rational adult member' of a society that their actions be unimpeded by others; that is, the need to be free from imposition. Positive face is the want of every member that his/her want be desirable to at least some others; that is, that the want be approved of and appreciated by others. Refusal violates the hearer's face-want to be accepted.

2.3 Children's refusal strategies

Children's refusal is explicated within the literature of compliance and non-compliance at the early stage. Kuczynski, Kochanska, Radke-Yarrow, and Ginius-Brown (1987) examined the non-compliance strategies used by 1; 3-3; 8 year-old children. They indicated that there was a shift from physical behaviors to verbal modalities as the children grew up. They further described four non-compliance strategies, viz. passive non-compliance, direct defiance, simple refusal, and negotiation. As the children grew up, the use of passive non-compliance

and defiance, which were classified as less skilled strategies, significantly decreased, and the use of simple refusal and negotiation, which were grouped under the more skilled strategies, increased. The analyses of the linguistic forms of non-compliance suggested that direct defiance, simple refusal, and negotiation represent separate forms of resistance and that the use of these forms also implies different degrees of sophistication from a developmental perspective. In their research, negotiation was taken as most indirect and subtle form of expressing resistance, and was thus classified separately from simple refusal.

Kuczynski and Kochanska (1990) further examined two groups of children: one consisted of 1~3 year-old children, and the other was made up of 5-year-old children. In their study, simple refusal was further classified into two sub-categories: first, excuses used to justify non-compliance; secondly, negotiation of the acceptable forms for non-compliance. Their findings also showed that the skill with which the non-compliance is expressed appears to change with age. Certain relationships also existed between children's non-compliance strategies and the way that their mothers made requests. There was a strong relationship in that when mothers made the requests with explanations more frequently, the children used more bargaining in their refusals to respond. Furthermore, when mothers made a request in a voice of reprimand, children tended to respond with defiance in their refusals. The effect of

maternal strategies was reported.

Some studies also provided evidence that children vary their refusals depending on the way mothers made requests. Kuczynski et al. (1987) found that mothers' use of reasoning and suggestion was associated with children's use of negotiation as a form of resistance, whereas direct maternal strategies of requests were related to direct refusal in responses. It was concluded that children employ different strategies based on the form and content of the previous request.

Children's refusal can be also observed from the perspective of conflict talk. Eisenberg & Garvey (1981) examined 48 dyads of the same and mixed gender children and 40 dyads of the same gender children between the ages of 2; 10 and 5; 7. They defined conflict talk as a social task whose objective was to resolve certain forms of conflict which began with an opposition to a request for an action, an assertion, or an action. This type of speech event is composed of three phases; that is, an antecedent event, an opposition to the antecedent, and the subsequent responses to that opposition. The opposition or negating responses included refusals, disagreements, denials, and objections. Children's refusals can be further classified into five categories:

(1) A. Simple negative

B. Reason or justification for non-compliance

C. Counter-move such as alternative, proposal and substitution

D. Temporizing

E. Evasion by reacting to the legitimacy of the request rather than the intended messages.

Among these five categories, children most frequently employ “reason” and “simple negation”. At the same time, the results suggested that children who consider other’s perspectives and apply reasons and offer alternatives are likely to be successfully in resolving conflicts. In contrast, children who use more provocative strategies such as resistance tended to fail to achieve their ends. The choice of children’s strategies revealed the assumption that the speaker considers the conversational situation and adopts his/her language accordingly. Eisenberg and Garvey then went on to discuss the pragmatic functions of these strategies. Reasons can be used as a basis to support the non-compliance. Compromises and offers for substitution reflect an understanding that the speaker has the need for his/her desire to be met and accepted. The analysis thus showed that children use a number of different strategies to settle conflicts. Children consistently support their desires and needs with reasons and explanations.

Most studies show that older children are able to manipulate more refusal strategies than younger children. The increase in the number of strategies used implies

that children adopt different means to meet the end as they grow up. Bates & Silvern (1977) claimed that the ability to speak indirectly increases with age. Reeder (1989) indicated that both the frequency of refusal and the use of reason when refusing increases with age. Reeder's (1998) study showed that children relied extensively on "reason" and "simple negative" when they made their refusals. Guidetti (2000) proposed that children increase the number of verbal refusals which they produce and reduce their reliance on non-verbal refusals as they get older. Some researchers have investigated how Mandarin children performed refusals (Liao 1994, Guo 2001, Yang 2003, Yang 2004). Guo (2001) found that two-year-old children tend to apply direct refusals. She postulated that indicating their unwillingness in refusals was children's prior consideration and that they did not take the hearer's face into consideration when producing refusals. It can be concluded from these findings that older children utilize more refusal strategies and a greater number of words in refusal responses and that they also generate more indirect refusals but fewer direct refusals, more reasons but fewer direct refusals, and more soft direct refusals like "*I DON'T WANT*" but fewer hard direct refusals such as "*NO*", and more adjuncts (Kuczynski, 1987; Guidetti, 2000; Yang, 2003).

Guo (2001) analyzed the utterances of a Taiwanese-speaking child aged 2 years old and categorized refusal strategies into five types:

(2) A. Simple negative without explanation

B. Reason

C. Alternative

D. Simple negative with reason

E. Simple negative with alternatives

The results indicated that simple negatives without any explanations were most frequently used. The findings also showed that the child refused most frequently with *buai* 'I don't want' and that the use of this linguistic lexical form implied that at this period, children seldom consider the face of their interlocutors. Expressing their own will is their priority and thus they do not consider other's "face". The uses of discourse markers were also discussed in Guo's study. The child often used *la* to beg the interlocutor to give up his/her request. Based on Guo's study (2001), *la* was seen to be used under two conditions. First, when the speaker (child) was supposed to comply with the request made by his/her interlocutor, he or she was likely to use *la* in his/her refusal to invoke the interlocutor's concession. Second, the child used *la* to signify friendliness and show intimacy and kindness. Guo (2001) concluded that a two-year-old child is able to manipulate discourse markers to modify his/her refusal and to convey communicative intentions according to different conversational situations.

Yang (2003) examined 300 Mandarin-speaking children of kindergarten and elementary school ages in an investigation of refusal production and perception. In her study, Yang adopted Beebe et al.'s (1990) categorizations of refusal responses.

They are listed below:

(3) A. Direct refusal: direct denial of compliance

B. Insistence: insistence on the refuser's original plan or action

C. Negated ability: utterances showing inability

D. Reason: utterances showing reasons for non-compliance

E. Regret: expression of regret

F. Alternative: suggestions or other proposals

G. Dissuade the interlocutor: responses persuading the hearer to give up his/her request

H. Avoidance-verbal: utterances avoiding direct responses to the proposed action such as postponements or request for reason

I. Conditional acceptance: acceptance under a certain condition

J. Other strategies: including expressions of wishes and folk wisdom

(3A) belongs to direct refusal. (3B-J), on the other hand, belongs to indirect refusal. Yang observed that first, children produced indirect refusals most frequently, and that they combined direct and indirect refusals, though the trend was not as

obvious as that in the case of indirect refusals. Second, as to the strategies children use, younger children employed “direct refusal” more frequently, and “reason” was the second most frequently used response and “negated ability” was the third. Older children generated “reason” most frequently; “direct refusal” second; and “negated ability” third. Children manipulated one refusal strategy and two combined strategies in their responses most frequently. Children seldom manipulated three, four, or five strategies at the same time. Older children applied the combination of two or more strategies most frequently. Third, the effect of social class was also reported. Children at lower and higher social class levels produced more direct refusals than those in the middle social class level. Fourth, a significant effect of gender groups on refusals was found. Females generated more “alternatives” than males did. Yang concluded that children’s refusal strategies were significantly influenced by age, sociolinguistic background, and gender.

Another similar classification is found in Yang’s (2004) study of elementary school children’s refusals. The results are also consistent with previous findings. However, although studies have revealed that children apply more than one strategy at the same time, few studies have discussed the way that children combine strategies in detail.

Genishi and Di Paolo (1982) indicated that children’s goal in refusing appears to

control the other's behavior rather than to seek a fair resolution of a conflict. Dunn (1988) observed 50 second-born children between 33 and 47 months and found that the children are less likely to argue for conciliation at 47 than at 33 months. Dunn concluded that when children become more sophisticated in understanding other people, they apply their reasoning skills to satisfy their own interests instead of to resolve conflicts or maintain harmony in a relationship. However, the children's refusals became more sophisticated in terms of indirectness and thus were less face-threatening with growing age.

2.4 Adult refusal

Adult refusal has been examined by asking subjects to fill out a questionnaire. Most studies have adopted the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in which different situations are presented to elicit a speech act performance.

Liao (1994) collected natural dialogues of Mandarin-speaking junior high school students, undergraduates, and teachers. In addition, subjects were also asked to fill out questionnaires. Analyzing the data from the oral and written sources, Liao categorized adult refusal into twenty-two strategies.¹ Certain expressions/strategies in conversation are conventionalized in specific contexts; and thus became "on-record", a term coined by Brown and Levinson (1987). Liao's observations were that, first; it is

¹ For more detailed definition and explicit examples, please refer to Liao, C.C. (1994).

more polite to use the address form than not, even if the speaker has already drawn the hearer's attention. Second, people who used a performative verb *jiēn4-yi4* 'suggest' in an explicit performative utterance in an assertive form were considered to be more polite. Third, giving an alternative was better than giving only a vague reason. Fourth, in 'why not' form, giving a specific reason was more polite than giving an alternative. Lastly, a combination of vague reason and alternative was better than an alternative or a reason alone. People use the linguistic form *duì4-bu4-qi3* 'I'm sorry' to precede a refusal strategy to express politeness. To refuse a request of invitation, or offer of a help, or an offer, *xiè4-xiè0* 'thank you' was frequently adopted. To conclude, the twenty-two strategies may be universal amongst adults' speech uses; however, people choose the most appropriate expression to use in a refusal based on the nature of the context. As time goes by, some usages became conventionalized and consequently served specific pragmatic functions.

Chen, Ye, and Chang (1995) investigated the use of refusal strategies in mainland Chinese. Fifty males and fifty females whose mean age was 32.3 years old were asked to fill out a questionnaire with 16 different scenarios. The scenarios were classified into four initiation acts: requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. Each scenario specified the speaker's social status relative to the interlocutor and the social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor.

The results showed that the order from high to low frequency of the overall distribution of adults' refusal strategies in Chinese was "reason", "alternative", "direct refusal", "regret", "dissuade the interlocutor", "avoidance", "conditional acceptance", "principle", and "folk wisdom". "Reason" was the most frequently used strategy. Furthermore, the reasons subjects used mostly referred to prior commitments or obligations beyond the speaker's control, rather than stating the speaker's deliberate preference for non-compliance. Chen et al. justified such a response by arguing that that people seek to refuse without running the risk of causing the other side to lose face. The second most frequently used strategy was to provide an alternative. The provision of an alternative provided a way to avoid a direct confrontation. Furthermore, the provision of an alternative illustrates consideration in acknowledging the desires and needs of the interlocutor.

The relation between refusal strategies and the four types of initiation acts was also examined. The findings indicated that there was a correlation between refusal strategies and the initiating acts. "Reason" was used most frequently in responses to request, suggestion, and invitation, while "dissuade the interlocutor" was generated most frequently in responses to offers. The preference patterns in the refusal strategies reflected that the specific conversational context plays an important role in the choices of refusal strategy.

The combination of refusal strategies is also discussed. The most preferred combination for refusal in Chinese was “Reason-Alternative”. This combination highlights two different but related aspects in the speaker’s attempt to take both the speaker’s and the interlocutor’s face into consideration when refusing. The provision of a reason stresses the speaker’s attempt to diminish the disruptive impact of the refusal by explaining the non-compliance. At the same time, the provision of an alternative focuses on the interlocutor’s desire or need, and presents an alternative to the interlocutor. Speakers co-operate with the interlocutor in his/her aim of realizing his/her goal by expatiating upon the reason why the compliance was not possible or desirable and by bringing up possible substitutions based on the reasoning behind the interlocutor’s original request. The provision of a reason thus emphasizes the justification for the speaker’s non-compliance, and the provision of an alternative implies that speakers are trying to satisfy the interlocutor’s desire or need. To conclude, reason was the most preferred strategy in adult refusal. However, the selection of a specific strategy or combination of strategies is mediated by the type of the initiating act and the social factors, and most importantly, adults regard the need to maintain their own and other’s face as much as possible, which can be reflected in their choices of refusal strategy.

The provision of an alternative when refusing was also evaluated by Gu (1990),

who suggested that the notion of “respectfulness” and “modesty” lead to the proffering of an alternative, and thus softened the force of a refusal. To give a direct refusal is the most direct form of refusal and is sometimes considered to be the most effective. The prior consideration in adult refusal is to minimize the face-threatening force of the refusal and people adopt some specific ways to achieve such an end.

Wang (2001) also investigated refusal strategies used by mainland Chinese. The distribution of strategies was examined in terms of different situations, social distances, and status relative to the interlocutor. Based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1984, 1989) research on the cross-cultural pragmatics of requests, Wang adopted a discourse-completion-test in which nine scenarios were designed to elicit refusals in different conversational contexts. The data were collected from 100 mixed-gender undergraduates. Combinations of refusal strategies were analyzed from the perspective of three components of a speech act: a central speech act (CSA), an auxiliary speech act (ASA), and microunits, which were suggested by Blum-Kulka et al. (1984, 1989) and Wood and Kroger (1994).² The findings were quite similar to those of previous studies. Furthermore, Wang found that certain extra strategies were used to strengthen or soften the effect of CSA as an ASA, such as gratitude, positive opinion, and pick-up repetitions³. The findings also indicate that adults apply a variety

² We adopt the framework of Blum-Kulka's (1984, 1989) and Wood & Kroger's (1994) in this study.

For a detailed description, please refer to the discussion of the analytical framework in Chapter 3.

³ Pick-up repetition means that the speaker refuses by repeating part of the interlocutor's utterance.

of linguistic devices to function as microunits to soften the effect of face-threatening effects. The microunits can be categorized into four types.

(6) A. Address forms: titles, names or roles

Example → Sorry, *brother*, I have too much schoolwork to do.

B. Indicative marker: indicate who the refuser is personally or impersonally.

Example → *Company policy* prohibits the use of computers for anything but business.

C. Syntactic structure: the transformation of declarative and interrogative forms; active and passive voices.

Example → ...but this book can't be borrowed.

D. Lexical items: appealers, downgraders⁴, discourse markers and some orthographic downgrading.⁵

The findings showed that adults operate different strategies to perform the speech act of refusal. To refuse successfully requires the manipulation of three components of a speech act. First, a CSA should be executed clearly to realize the refusal. Second, an ASA contributes to the accomplishment of the CSA. Lastly, some microunits may be used to supplement an increase in the force of a CSA or ASA. Also, while it is not

Davidson (1987) considered that repetition functions to show respect and save face for the interlocutor.

⁴ Downgraders contribute to decrease the effect of what they modify such as “please” in “could you please reschedule it?”

⁵ Subjects used orthographic punctuation markers to show the strength of their utterance, e.g., “No, you fucked up already! Get out!!!”

necessary to manipulate these three components at the same time, we can detect the interaction of these refusal strategies from the evidence of the relationships among these three components.

As observed in previous studies, the refusal strategies used by children and adults are different in two respects. As the findings suggest, adult refusal strategies are far more complicated at the semantic and functional levels. In regard to the nature of the refusal strategies, “reason” occurred more frequently than other strategies in both adult and children’s refusal. While “direct refusal” was the most frequently used strategy in children’s talk, it seldom occurred in adult uses of refusal. When children get older, they began to use more tactful ways to say *NO*. Giving a reason to dissuade the interlocutor to accept the opposition seemed to work more successfully than just saying “NO”. When adults refuse, they adopt more than one strategy to assure the achievement of being able to refuse indirectly and acceptably.

From the functional perspective, the apparent difference between children’s and adult refusal is that children express their own willingness more often than considering the necessity to save the face of their interlocutors; however, in the adult world, refusal should be polite and take the other’s needs and desires into account.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Subject and material

The subject in the present study was a Mandarin-speaking boy who was observed from the age of 2; 7 to 3; 7. As the only child in his family, he lived with his parents in Taipei City, Taiwan. Both of his parents are highly-educated. The child's mother tongue is Mandarin Chinese, which is the language mainly used in his daily conversation. Code switching to English takes place sometimes.

The data examined in the present study were adopted from Professor Chiung-chih Huang's database⁶. The data were collected in natural conversations between the child and the mother. During the observation, they were engaged in various activities, such as playing with toys, eating, and drawing. The total length of the conversations analyzed is six hours. In order to observe the nature of the developmental change, we analyzed our data at three intervals, that is 2; 7, 3; 1 and

⁶ I am deeply grateful to Professor Huang for her generosity and kindness in sharing her data.

3; 7, respectively. For each time point, we extracted three hours for data analysis. The conversations were video-recorded and then transcribed in the CHAT format (Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts).

3.2 Procedure of data analysis

The procedure of data analysis is described below. First, all the mother-child dyadic interactions were transcribed verbatim in CHAT format (see Appendix 1). The criterion of refusal tokens is utterance-based. Once the refusal tokens were located, they were coded using the proposed refusal categories listed in section 3.3. After that, CLAN was used to compute the frequencies.

3.3 Coding scheme

Based on Wang's (2001) categorization of refusal, we modified and revised the classification of refusal strategies to make them appropriate for the child's data. We omitted some categories those did not appear in the child's refusal performance. Refusal strategies may be further classified into two categories: direct and indirect. Indirect refusal may be further divided into Insistence, Negated ability, Reason, Alternative, Dissuade interlocutor, Avoidance-verbal, Unrelated answers and Silence. These strategies are defined below.

(A) Direct refusal: This type of response refers to the direct denial of compliance without reservation. (e.g., 不要 *buyao* 'no', 不行 *buxing* 'no')

- (B) **Insistence:** This type of response refers to utterances showing an insistence on the speaker's original plan of action. The utterances often begin with 我想 *wo xiang* 'I want' or 我要 *wo yao* 'I want'.
- (C) **Negated ability:** This type of response refers to an inability to respond to the request. (e.g., 我沒有辦法拿那個 *wo meiyou banfa na nage* 'I can't pick up that.')
- (D) **Reason:** This type of response refers to utterances showing reasons for non-compliance. (e.g., 我在寫功課 *wo zai xie gongke* 'I am doing my homework.')
- (E) **Alternative:** This type of response refers to utterances suggesting or choosing an alternative course of action. (e.g., 那我玩這個好了 *na wo wan zhege hao le* 'In that case, I'll play this one.')
- (F) **Dissuade interlocutor:** This type of response refers to utterances persuading the hearer to give up his/her previous request. (e.g., 你太胖了不會玩 *ni tai pang le bu hui wan* 'You are too fat to play.')
- (G) **Avoidance-verbal:** This type of response avoids a direct response to a proposed action. Postponement, (e.g., 等一下 *dengyixia* 'Wait a minute.'), is most often used.
- (H) **Unrelated answers:** The speaker gives an unrelated answer or request.

(I) Silence: The speaker remains silent and ignores the request when he/she doesn't know how to make a refusal.

(A) is the strategy of a direct refusal, and (B)-(I) are strategies of indirect refusals.

The framework of refusal analysis in the present study is summarized in Figure

1.

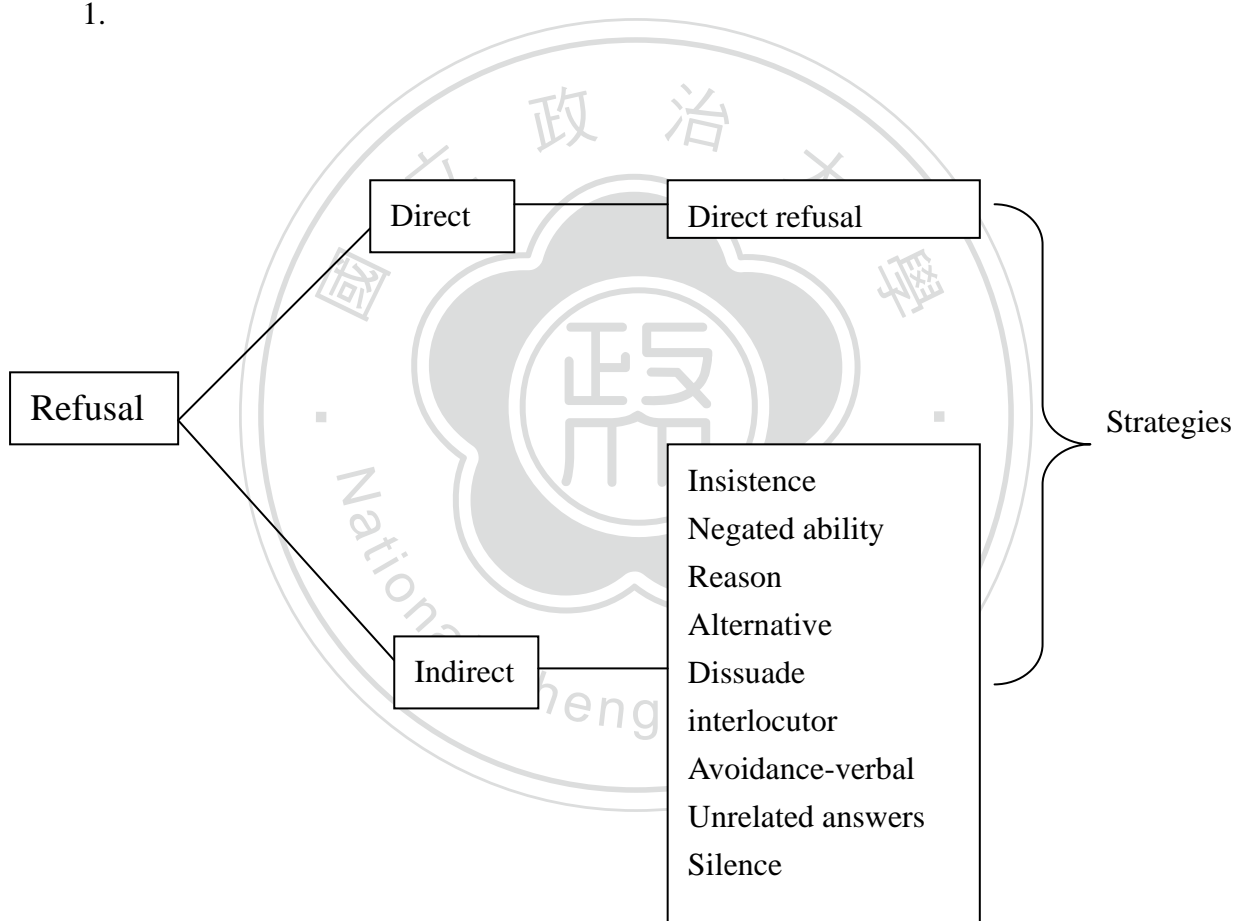


Figure 1. Framework of refusal analysis

Chapter4

Data Analysis

In this chapter, we will first display the child's refusal responses. Since the data were collected at six-month intervals, that is, at 2; 7, 3; 1 and 3; 7, we will discuss the child's refusal responses at the three temporal points in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

4.1 The child's refusals at 2; 7

In order to explore the child's utilization of refusal, we will first consider his performance of refusals. We examined the child's refusal responses, and 52 refusal utterances were identified in his responses to his mother. Table 1 shows the refusal strategies at 2; 7.

Table 1. The realization of the child's refusals at 2; 7

| Strategy | Number of token | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Direct refusal | 41 | 78.9 |
| Unrelated answer | 4 | 7.7 |
| Insistence | 4 | 7.7 |
| Silence | 3 | 5.8 |
| Total | 52 | 100.1 |

In Table 1, the column of strategy summarizes the refusal strategies the child adopted at 2; 7. The number of tokens and percentages are shown next to the strategies. Four strategies are used at 2; 7.

Direct refusal (78.9%): the child relied extensively on Direct refusal to refuse, which type of utterance occurred with the most frequency of all types at 2; 7. From the table, it is obvious that direct refusal occupied the most major percentage. Example 1 illustrates how he refuses with a direct refusal.

Example 1

1. MOT: 你看 # 車車收進去好不好?
'Look, pick up your toy cars, OK?'
2. CHI: 不要.
'No.'

In Example 1, the mother asked the child to pick up his toy cars, and he refused with the strategy of direct refusal 'No'. Based on the observations in previous studies (Liao, 1994; Guo, 2001; Yang, 2003; Yang, 2004), children seldom consider other's

feelings and face, and thus adopt the most direct way to refuse. Guo (2001) claims that children's prior consideration is to deliver their unwillingness in refusal and that they do not take the hearer's face into account. The child's extensive use of the strategy of direct refusal at 2; 7 reflects that he is still concerned with his own willingness first and so he chooses the most direct way to refuse. The linguistic form of direct refusal used by the child is 不要 *buyao*. Dunn (1991) classified refusal responses into two types of argument, namely self-oriented and other-oriented. First, other-oriented or conciliatory argument (see also Kruger, 1992) refers to those conversational turns in which the speaker takes account of the hearer's needs and desires in an attempt to conciliate the hearer or to avoid possible conflict. The second category is self-oriented argument, in which the speaker's own interest is explicitly expressed. It also includes reference to the speaker's own desire, need, or emotional state. Based on Dunn's classification, the linguistic form of 不要 *buyao* could be viewed as a self-oriented argument since it emphasizes the speaker's own desire, *yao* 'want', and *buyao* directly denies the willingness of the child. It can be seen as further evidence that the child at 2; 7 still considered his own needs, desires, and interest firsts, which is reflected in his refusal strategy (direct refusal), and the use of the linguistic form of direct refusal *buyao*.

In addition to direct refusal, the child also adopted other strategies although they

occurred much less than direct refusal. They are Unrelated answer, Insistence, and Silence.

Unrelated answer (7.7%): the child refused by giving an unrelated answer to his mother's request. Consider the following example.

Example 2

- 1.MOT: 你講一遍給媽媽聽?
'You repeat what I just said?'
- 2.MOT: 媽咪講什麼?
'What did Mommy just say?'
- 3.CHI: 講故事.
'Tell a story.'

The scenario in Example 2 is that the mother had previously warned the child not to jump from the sofa or he would get hurt. She wanted him to repeat what she had just said to him, while he replied with an unrelated answer 'tell a story.' In Chen et al.'s study of adult refusal, giving an unrelated answer can be considered as being less skillful despite the fact that it may be thought of as indirect. In conversation, any act occurring immediately after an initiating speech act is viewed as a meaningful response. The avoidance of a direct positive response is interpreted as a refusal, and a refusal that evades the proposition of the initiating speech act can be perceived as not skillful (Chen et al, 1995).

Insistence (7.7%): the child insisted on his original plan of action as a strategy of refusal. In Example 3, he was requested to talk with his mother and he refused by

insisting on continuing to perform his previous activity—watching ‘Dare Topis’⁷. Insistence adds no new information to the interaction, and reflects a proactive tendency rather than a reactive one (Bales, 1990). As discussed previously, any act occurring after a speech act is viewed as a meaningful response. In Example 3, the child replied to his mother’s request by insisting on continuing in the performance of his original activity, which reply actively expressed his desire (proactive); however, the insistence can not be viewed as skillful since it did not respond to the proposition of his mother’s request (reactive).

Example 3

- 1.MOT: 你要跟姊姊玩或跟媽咪說話啊。
 ‘Do you want to play with your sister or talk with me?’
- 2.CHI: 看 dare topis.
 ‘Watch ‘Dare Topis.’’

Silence (5.8%): When the child did not know how to refuse, he would remain silent or ignore the request. According to Chen et al. (1995), remaining silent could be viewed as not skillful as giving an unrelated answer when refusing since both of them did not provide a meaningful response to the context.

At 2; 7, the child often softened his refusals with some linguistic devices although it occurred less often (9.6%). He used discourse markers and changed the syntactic structure to soften the face-threatening power of his refusal. In Example 4,

⁷ ‘Dare Topis’ is the name of a TV program.

he was playing with his mother. His mother offered him a book and he refused with a direct refusal 'No', which was modified by a discourse marker 啊.

Example 4

- 1.MOT: 那這本是不是你要買的书啊?
'Is this the book you want to buy?'
- 2.CHI: 不要啊.
'No'

The use of a discourse marker also occurred in another context. Consider Example 5.

Example 5

- 1.CHI: 媽咪變一個什麼?
'What does Mommy want to make?'
- 2.MOT: 變一個蛇.
'I want to make a snake.'
- 3.CHI: 蛇要幹什麼?
'What does the snake want to do?'
- 4.MOT: 蛇要咬你 # 咬你的鼻子.
'The snake wants to bites your nose.'
- *sit: Mommy pretends to bite the child.
- 5.CHI: 不要喔.
'No.'

In Example 5, the child was playing with his mother. The mother pretended that there was a snake and that it would bite the child's nose, and he replied with a direct refusal 'No' which was modified by the discourse marker 喔.

According to Guo (2001), discourse markers are used under two circumstances. First, children may use a discourse marker to show friendliness and closeness. In Example 4, the mother had just offered the child a book and had then asked the child whether he wanted to buy it. The child had not been requested to take the book his

mother offered, and he adopted 啊 to show his friendliness instead of giving an absolute 'No', and thus softened the power of his refusal. Second, children may use a discourse marker to beg his/her interlocutor to give up doing something. In Example 5, the child didn't want to be bitten by the snake. In addition to a direct 'NO' to the threat of being bitten, he also used a discourse marker 喔 to invoke the concession of his mother.

In addition to the use of discourse markers, the child also changed the syntactic structure of his refusal. Example 6 illustrates how the syntactic structure was changed to soften the power of the refusal.

Example 6

- 1.MOT: 我們來聽音樂喔.
'Let's listen to the music.'
2.CHI: 不要好不好?
'I don't want to, OK?'

In Example 6, the mother invited the child to listen to some music and he changed the syntactic structure declarative 不要 to the interrogative 不要好不好 to refuse. The change of syntactic structure was considered to be more polite in Wang's discussion of adult refusal (1995) since the interrogative provides the hearer with a choice and thus decreases the face threatening power of the refusal.

Previous studies (Kuczynski and Kochanska, 1990; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Kuczynski et al., 1987) have shown how mothers' requests affect the way in which

children refuse. Children's refusal may bring about conflict due to the difference between the mothers' desire and children's willingness. In the course of interacting with mothers, children often encounter situations in which they receive a request that they don't want to comply with; and children's refusals may cause mothers' compensation of unsuccessful requests.

When facing children's non-compliance, mothers may reformulate their requests, and thus, children need to accommodate their refusals to meet the immediate context. Two recurring patterns were identified in the interactional sequence between the child and the mother. First, the data indicates that the mother's response to the child's frequent refusals at 2; 7 was to reformulate her requests. Based on Levin and Rubin's study (1984), the reformulation of a request can be generally divided into three types, that is, aggravation, mitigation and explanation. Aggravation means that speaker intensifies the force of the request to reformulate a failed request. Mitigation means that speaker decreases the imposition and cost of the request to make up for an unsuccessful request. Explanation refers to reasons or justifications that the mother provides to create the grounds and support for an original request.

At this stage, the mother usually adopted aggravation as her dominant strategy to reformulate her failed request. She applied aggravation mainly via repetition of her original request. When the child faced the mother's reformulated requests, he usually

responded with the same strategy with his original refusals in a sequence. Example 7 shows how the child and his mother responded to each other in an interactional sequence.

Example 7

- 1.MOT: 你要跟姊姊玩或跟媽媽講話呀
'Do you want to play with your sister or talk with me?'
- 2.CHI: 看 dare topis.
'Watch 'Dare Topis'
- 3.MOT: 你還是要看 dare topis 是不是.
'You still want to watch 'Dare Topis,' right?'
- 4.CHI: 是.
'Yes.'
- 5.MOT: 這樣子啊.
'All right.'
- 6.MOT: 那這樣子你要講話啊.
'In that case, then, talk to me'
- 7.CHI: 看 dare topis.
'Watch 'Dare Topis''

In Example 7, at first, the mother used an imperative to ask the child to say something to her or to his sister (Line 1), while the child insisted on continuing in performing his original activity—watching 'Dare Topis' (Line 2). When faced with the child's negative response, the mother made a repetition of her original request to ask the child to say something (Line 6). When facing mother's request again, the child repeated his previous refusal strategy to respond—Insistence on performing his original activity (Line 7). In the above verbal exchanges, we are given a sequence like this.

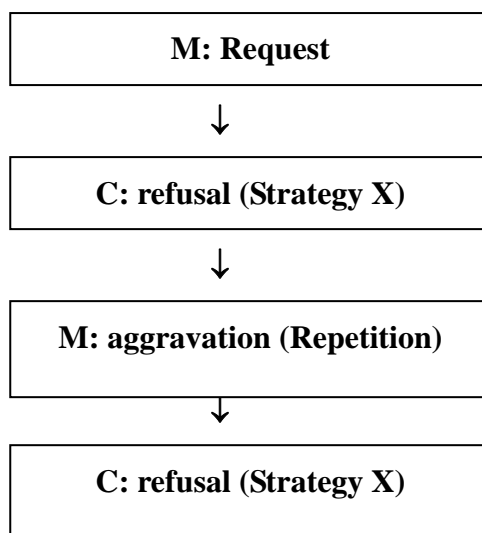


Figure 2 Sequences that involve reformulated request refusal responses (no account)

From the figure, it is found that; first, repetition is the mother's major reformulation strategy. Second, the child adopted the same refusal strategy when his first refusal failed. Many researchers have claimed that young children primarily use repetition to make a reformulation of a failed request. The same phenomenon was observed when the child refused again in the conversational sequence, that is, the child repeated the same strategy to reformulate his original refusal.

Apart from the pattern shown in Figure 2, Pattern 2 shows that the child's refusal is also answered with the mother's account. In other words, after the child directly expressed his non-compliance, the mother often gave some explanation to account for her previous request. Consider the following example.

Example 8

- 1.MOT: 你看.
'Look!'
- 2.MOT: 車車收進去好不好?
'Pick up your cars, OK?'

- 3.CHI: 不要.
‘No.’
- 4.MOT: 可是你的車車不是圈圈啦.
‘But your cars aren’t in order.’
- 5.MOT: 要不要把車車收進去?
‘Do you want to pick up the cars?’
- 6.CHI: 不要.
‘NO.’

At first, the mother requested that the child put his toy cars which were randomly scattered on the ground away (Line 2). However, the child replied with a direct refusal ‘NO’ (Line 3). After failing in achieving her goal, the mother provided the supporting argument of the reason why the child needed to put the toy cars back—the cars were not in order (Line 4). And the mother requested the child to put toy cars again (Line 5). Here, the mother repeated her original request. In Example 8, the mother used an interrogative in her request (Line 2 and Line 5). The illocutionary force of the request was explicitly expressed in the mother’s volume and pitch (louder and higher). In addition, the application of an account failed to invoke the child’s compliance. He still refused with a direct refusal. The sequence in the example is given below.

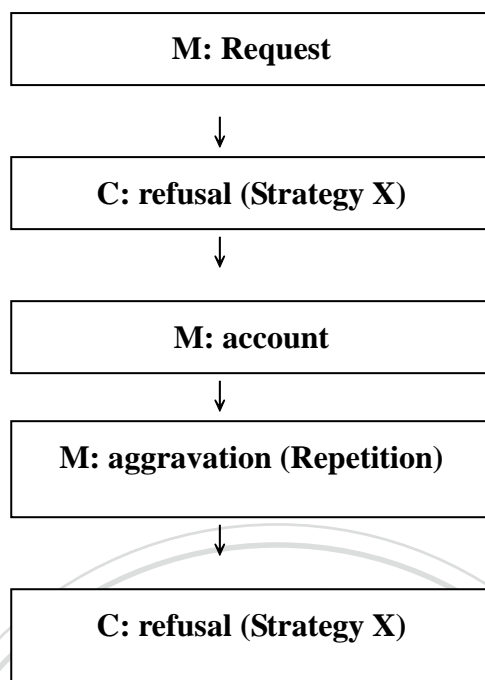


Figure3. Sequences that involve request reformulation and refusal responses (account)

From the figure above, it is found that the child at 2; 7 relied on repeating the same strategy when his mother came up with the account to reformulate her request. Foster (1999) found that when the communication failed, children used three options. They would repeat the communication verbatim, make a new attempt to convey the same information, or give up. At 2; 7, it is obvious that the child relied on repetition in order to reiterate his refusals. In addition, the mother reformulated her request in the same way. Repetition is the main device used by the child to refuse again and is also used by the mother to reformulate her request.

The child at 2; 7 adopted direct refusal and prioritized his willingness when making refusals. Occasionally, he would refuse indirectly with other strategies. These strategies showed an evasion of a response to the proposition of mother's requests and

are thus perceived as impolite. The child's refusal strategies at 2; 7 were direct and impolite from a conversational perspective.

4.2 The child's refusals at 3; 1

The frequency of the child's refusal response decreased at 3; 1. Only 23 refusal responses were identified at this time point. Table 2 shows the child's refusals at 3; 1.

Table 2. The realization of the child's refusals at 3; 1

| Strategy | Number of token | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Direct refusal | 8 | 34.8 |
| Unrelated answer | 2 | 8.7 |
| Insistence | 5 | 21.7 |
| Reason | 3 | 13.0 |
| Alternative | 4 | 17.4 |
| Negated ability | 1 | 4.3 |
| Total | 23 | 99.9 |

As shown in Table 2, the child preferred employing direct refusal as his refusal strategy. However, the percentage has dropped obviously (78.9%→34.8%). Besides, there is a major change in the linguistic form of direct refusal. At 2; 7, as we discussed in the previous section, the child refused with 不要 *buyao* which implicates his own desire and willingness. However, at 3; 1, the child did not refuse with *buyao*, instead, he used another linguistic form 不行 *buxing*. The lexical term *buxing* is more

objective than the term *buyao* since *buxing* does not refer to the speaker's own desire as obviously as *buyao*. Consider Example 9.

Example 9

- 1.MOT: 喔.
 'Oh'
 2.MOT: 這個給我啦.
 'Give me this one'
 3.CHI: 不行.
 'NO'

In Example 9, the mother wanted the child to give the toy car to her, while the child refused with a direct refusal *buxing* 'No'. As we discussed in the previous section, the major linguistic form of direct refusal is *buyao* which shows the child's unwillingness directly. However, at 3; 1, the child expressed his non-compliance with the more objective lexical form *buxing*, which still implicated his willingness, but not as apparently as *buyao*. The child at 3; 1 still relied on using the direct way to refuse. The change of lexical forms from *buyao* to *buxing* in terms of direct refusal revealed that the child at 3; 1 didn't concern his desire first. The use of a more objective form, *buxing*, may implicate that the child at 3; 1 started to consider other's face and adopted another lexicon which didn't refer openly to his own willingness or desire. Insistence and Unrelated answer adopted at 2; 7 are still manipulated at 3; 1. In addition, the child has started to adopt other strategies when making refusals. Such strategies are more indirect and persuasive than just saying 'No', and they include using an alternative, a reason and showing his inability (negated ability).

Alternative (17.4%): Providing an alternative in a refusal is considered more indirect and persuasive since it supplies an alternative resolution. Chen et al. (1995) pointed out that providing an alternative in refusals implicates the influence of the notion of “respectfulness” since the speaker had considered the hearer’s need and come up with an alternative. Alternative thus softens the face-threatening power of refusals. According to the data collected at 3; 1, the child adopted alternative in certain contexts. Consider the following example.

Example 10

- 1.MOT: 把球給我
 ‘Give me the ball.’
 *sit: MOT tried to take the ball by force
 2.CHI: 這個還給你嘛!
 ‘Uh, this one is for you.’
 3.MOT: 好!
 ‘OK.’

In Example 10, the mother wanted to take the ball back (Line 1). The child refused to give the ball back and he negotiated with his mother by giving her another ball back, instead (Line 2). In addition to the imperative ‘Give me the ball’, the mother also use body language—grabbing the ball to reinforce her request. When the child perceived the strengthened power of his mother’s request, he offered a ball other than the one that she had requested. As Garvey (1974; 45) stated, there are four basic conditions which together underlie a sincere request. The mother’s grabbing of the ball emphasized her desire and the power of her request and simultaneously

strengthened the assumption that speaker wants hearer to do act as in Garvey's first condition. The child's use of alternative mirrors his attempt to satisfy his mother's desire although he was not willing to comply with his mother's request.

Reason (13%): The child came up with reasons for non-compliance. Consider Example 10. The mother wanted the child to pick up his toy car. The child refused with a reason for his non-compliance 我在工作啊 'I am working.'

Example 11

- 1.MOT: 有沒有收車車?
'Did you pick up your toy car?'
- 2.CHI: 恩#我在工作啊.
'Um, I am working.'

Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) claimed that providing a reason played an important role in children's conflict talk since reason provides the interlocutor with a basis for further negotiation. The provision of a reason also reflects the child's awareness of the conditions in which a sincere request takes place (Wang, 2008). In Example 11, the child's reason for non-compliance is concerned with Garvey's third condition, that is, he was not willing to put the toy car back since he was working at that time. Because of the fact that he was working, the requested action—picking up the car cannot be performed. The reason 'I am working' queries the mother's assumption that the child is willing to pick the car, and thus is an example of a successful refusal.

As seen above, the child relied on direct refusal *buyao* to refuse at 2; 7. *Buyao* can be perceived as violating the mother's assumption of the third condition, since *buyao* directly projects the unwillingness of the child to perform the requested action. At 3; 1, the child still denied the mother's assumption of the third condition to perform his refusal, but in different way. He used a more persuasive strategy—providing a reason for his non-compliance and thus indirectly breaking the assumption of the third condition in his refusal. It could be inferred that the child at 3; 1 has started to use different utterance types (direct refusal and reason) for the same function, i.e., to break the assumption behind the mother's request.

Negated ability (4.3%): the child also provided the reason that his non-compliance was due to his inability. Example 12 shows how he refused with a reference to his negated ability.

Example 12

- 1.CHI: 還有誰要?
'Does anyone want this car?'
- 2.CHI: 舉手.
'Raise your hand.'
- 3.MOT: 我們都想要.
'We all want the car.'
- 4.MOT: 我
'Me.'
- 5.MOT: 我
'Me.'
- 6.MOT: 我
'Me.'

- 7.MOT: 我
 'Me.'
- 8.CHI: 不能太多啦.
 '(I) can't give too many cars'

In Example 12, the child and his mother were acting out a role play. The child was a teacher, while the mother was the student. The child was asking who wanted the cars (Line 1) and said that they were to raise their hands (Line 2). The mother replied that everyone wanted the car (Line 3) and repeated 'I' to get the car. The child refused with 不能太多啦 '(I) can't give (away) too many cars at one time' (Line 8). The child's inability to perform the requested action breaks the assumption that he can do it in Garvey's second condition and thus he refused his mother's request accordingly.

From the aforementioned two examples above, the use of reason and negated ability in the child's refusal indicated that he applied his knowledge of a sincere request to deny his interlocutor's assumptions, and thus refused successfully.

According to Garvey (1974; 45), these four conditions constitute the domain of relevance of a request. Speaker and hearer share a mutual understanding of these conditions. They apply their understanding of the conditions in making requests and also in making refusals. The child's skill in negotiation and his attempt to meet the desire of his mother in performing an action are revealed in his argument and obviously he succeeded. The choice of an alternative implies sensitivity to feedback from the previous utterance. In addition, according to the data collected at 3; 1, the

child often adopted an alternative in certain contexts. The more powerful the imposition of the request, the more possible it is that the child will adopt alternative to refuse it. In Example12, the mother's body language, that of grabbing the ball, reinforced the power of her request; and the first condition, i.e., the assumption that S wants H to do A was emphasized, too. When faced with such imposition, the child attempted to satisfy his mother and brought forth an alternative. The usage of alternative under such specific context provides further evidence further that the child was aware of a set of specific interpersonal conditions and adopted different strategies based on different contexts.

It was assumed that children's level of competence is reflected in their use of the strategies which were available to them. They may adopt different refusal strategies to perform the same function, i.e., deny the conditions of a sincere request. This ability is attributed to the children's mutual understanding of the meanings which constitute a request. Garvey (1974) indicated that children are aware of the interpersonal conditions on which the request speech act is based. That awareness is also implied in children's refusals.

As we mentioned in the previous section, there are two types of arguments, self-oriented and other-oriented. At 2; 7, the child adopted self-oriented argument to refuse. At 3; 1, the child offered an alternative to trade-off with his mother and

explained the reason for non-compliance or showed his negated ability in a refusal.

These strategies belong to other-oriented arguments. We adopted these two types of arguments to examine the child's refusal responses and some findings were as the following. First, there is a strategy shift from 2; 7 to 3; 1. At 2; 7, in addition to the great amount of direct refusals, the child also manipulated self-oriented arguments to present his refusal such as insisting on continuing in the performance of his current activity. At 3; 1, he started to apply other-oriented arguments to refuse such as giving an alternative or a reason. According to Fyre & Moore (1991); Perner (1991) and Wellman (1990), there are major developmental changes between the age of 3 and 5 in children's grasp of other's inner states. It could be inferred that a preliminary understanding of another's inner state has influenced the child's in determining the way to refuse and that this could be reflected in his use of arguments as refusal strategies.

4.3 The child's refusals at 3; 7

At 3; 7, 38 tokens of refusal responses were identified. Table 3 shows the refusal strategies involved.

Table 3. The realization of the child's refusals at 3; 7

| Strategy | Number of token | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Direct refusal | 12 | 31.6 |
| Silence | 4 | 10.5 |
| Unrelated answer | 3 | 7.9 |
| Insistence | 1 | 2.7 |
| Reason | 10 | 26.3 |
| Dissuade the interlocutor | 2 | 5.3 |
| Alternative | 2 | 5.3 |
| Negated ability | 2 | 5.3 |
| Verbal avoidance | 2 | 5.3 |
| Total | 38 | 100.2 |

Among the three temporal points, the child's refusal strategies at 3; 7 are the most diversified distribution. From Table 3, direct refusal is still the most frequently used strategy to refuse, but the percentage has dropped increasingly with the age. In addition to those strategies adopted at 2; 7 and 3; 1, the child applied the strategy of dissuading his interlocutor to refuse. Example 13 illustrates how the dissuasion occurred.

Example 13

- 1.MOT: 你自己去拿.
 ‘You go and get it (the toy car) by yourself.’
- 2.CHI: 媽媽.
 ‘Mama.’
- 3.CHI: 我拿很多汽車會掉下來.
 ‘If I pick up too many cars, they will fall down.’

When the child was requested to get a toy car by himself (Line 1), he referred to the consequence that the other cars would fall down to dissuade his mother from asking him to do so (Line 3). In addition, he addressed his mother as ‘Mama’ at the beginning. (Line 2). Liao (1994) observed that it is more polite to use the address form than not, even the speaker has already drawn the hearer’s attention. Therefore the addressed form ‘mama’ is viewed as a linguistic device to show politeness and decrease the power of a face threatening act. According to the data collected at 3; 7, the child’s use of dissuasion usually related to a negative consequence that his mother did not want it to happen. Consider another example.

Example 14.

- 1.MOT: 我要黃色的那一台.
 ‘I want the yellow one’
- 2.CHI: 那你就自己一個人開囉.
 ‘Alright, you have to drive the car by yourself’

In Example 14, the mother and the child were playing a game and they wanted to drive a car together. The mother chose the yellow one; however, the child preferred another one. Therefore, when the child was requested to pick up the yellow car, he came up with the possibility that the mother drive the car by herself. The child

cancelled his participation in the act of co-operation in driving the car to dissuade his mother, and thus shifted the focus of the act of the refusal from himself to his mother. If the mother didn't want the consequence—driving alone, she needed to pick another car except the yellow one, which would invalidate her previous request. (Line1) The strategy of dissuading the interlocutor may be categorized as other-oriented argument (Dunn, 1991) since it takes account of the hearer's needs and desires in an attempt to conciliate or to settle a possible conflict. Dissuading the interlocutor is different from the strategy of alternative, which provides a positive incentive to persuade the hearer, in that a negative consequence is provided to achieve the goal of refusal. In addition, the use of the strategy of dissuading the interlocutor did not violate the four conditions as apparently as did reason or negated ability. However, dissuading is indirectly related to the first condition—S wants H to do A, since it provides the negative consequence of doing A. If the speaker wants A to happen, a negative consequence would accompany the execution of the requested A. In other words, dissuading the interlocutor decreases the desire of S, and thus refuses accordingly.

According to previous studies (Liao, 1994; Chen et al., 1995), adults prefer to combine strategies to eliminate the face-threatening effect and show politeness when refusing. At 3; 7, the child combined strategies to perform his refusals. Consider the following example.

Example 15

- 1.MOT: 快點幫我捶背
‘Give me a massage!’
- 2.MOT: 快點
‘Hurry!’
- *sit: MOT 抓住 CHI 的褲子
‘Mother grabbed CHI’s pants’
- 3.CHI: 0 [= laughing and screaming].
- 4.CHI: 媽媽 # 等 一下.
‘Mama, wait a minute.’
- 5.CHI: 我們 去 騎 馬.
‘Let’s ride the horse.’

In Example 15, the mother asked the child to massage her. In addition to using the imperative form 快點幫我捶背 ‘Give me a massage!’ (Line 1), the mother also grabbed the child’s pants to reinforce the power of her request. The child rejected his mother’s request by avoiding providing a direct response to the proposed action 等一下 (verbal avoidance) first and by then providing an alternative 我們去騎馬 and adopted the linguistic device of ‘mama’ to modify his refusal (Line 4 and 5). The child’s combination of strategies also sheds light on his pragmatic development. In Example 15, the power of the mother’s request was increased by her use of a physical action, grabbing the child’s pants. We have previously discussed the child’s refusal performance at 3; 1 in such a context. Reconsider Example 12.

Example 12

- 1.MOT: 把球給我
‘Give me the ball.’
- *sit: MOT tried to take the ball by force
- 2.CHI: 這個還給你嘛!

‘Uh, this one is for you.’

3.MOT: 好!

‘OK.

The similarity between two examples is that the power of the mother’s request was strengthened by her body language, while the child responded differently at these two time points. At 3; 1, he used a single strategy—alternative to respond, and at 3; 7, he combined verbal avoidance and alternative together to perform his refusal. It can be inferred that, first, that the child could perceive the power of the mother’s request, and so adjust his way to refuse it. At 3; 1, the child used a more skillful strategy—alternative when he faced his mother’s strong request. Nevertheless, at 3; 7, it appeared that the child combined strategies to increase the effectiveness when he dealt with a similar context. At 3; 7, the child’s politeness was reflected in his form of address and his use of refusal strategies, and he adopted combination of strategies to reinforce the effectiveness of his refusal when facing a more compulsory request.

Apart from the compulsiveness of the request, other factors also trigger the child’s combination of strategies at 3; 7. Consider the following example.

Example 16.

1.MOT: 我跟你講說

‘I told you that...’

2.MOT: 你用書包去裝很多車車出來.

‘You can use your book bag to carry lots of cars out.’

3.CHI: 媽媽幫我裝.

Alternative

‘Mama, help me put them in.’

4.MOT: 我不要.

‘I don’t want to.’

- 5.MOT: 你自己要玩的東西 # 你要自己拿.
‘If you want to play with the cars,you have to take carry them by yourself’
- 6.CHI: 我這樣裝了一個.
‘I’ve put one in already.’
- 7.CHI: 拿不動了啦. Negated ability
‘I can’t carry any more’
- 8.CHI: 怕這樣會掉下來. Dissuade the interlocutor
‘I’m afraid that they will fall out.’
- 9.MOT: 不會不會.
‘They won’t.’
- 10.MOT: 你力氣很大
‘You are strong’
- 11.MOT: 你自己去拿.
‘You can carry them on your own’
- 12.CHI: 我沒有力氣 Negated ability
‘I don’t have any strength’
- 13.CHI: 我沒有吃飯. Reason
‘I haven’t eaten anything’
- 14.CHI: 我沒有長大
‘I haven’t grown up’
- 15.CHI: 我就不能幫你的忙了. Dissuade the interlocutor
‘so I can’t help you!’

Example 16 presents a negotiation sequence between the child and his mother. It includes three request tokens by the mother and three refusal tokens by the child. At first, the mother wanted the child to take his toy cars out of his book bag by himself (Line 2, Request token 1). Then the child refused with an alternative ‘help me to put them in’ in an imperative form and with the use of the address form ‘mama’ in the beginning in line 3 (Refusal token 1). After being faced with the child’s non-compliance, the mother refused the child’s suggestion with a direct refusal and referred to the general rule ‘If you want to play with the cars, you have to carry them

by yourself' to justify her previous request (Line 4~5, Request token 2). According to Garvey (1974), adult conversation employs more devious means of getting an addressee to do something. Speakers can indicate a desire or need for some state of affairs without actually saying that the hearers are to bring about that state. In a given situation, these utterances count as an attempt to get the addressee to do something. These cases are called "inferred request" (Garvey, 1974). Here, in Example 16, although the mother's justification didn't apparently request the child to take the cars out, it indeed implied that the child had to carry the cars on his own. Moreover, the mother's direct refusal not only refused the child's suggestion 'help me take them out', but also invoked the point that the mother's original request was still valid.

After the mother's inferred request, the child replied with a combination of his inability 'I can't take anymore' and tried to dissuade his mother with the consequence 'they will fall down' in utterance Lines 6-8 (Refusal token 2). An inferred request is more complicated than a direct request since it requires cognitive operations of inference for the interpretation of the inferred request. The child's combination mirrors that he can perceive the inferred request and that he inferred what he was expected to do and he thus adjusted his way to refuse. The child's perception of inferred requests supports Shatz's claim that children as young as 2 interpret inferred requests correctly as requests for action. The complexity and strength of the mother's

request invoked the child's use of the combination of strategies.

After the child explained his non-compliance with his negated ability and proposed a possible bad consequence, the mother at first rejected these arguments. The mother's clarification of 不會不會 'They won't' and 你力氣很大 'You are strong' in line 9 and 10 can validate her original request since they cancelled the bad consequence and denied the child's inability. In addition, the mother requested the child to carry the cars (你自己去拿) in Line 11 (Request token 3), and the child refused with a combination of three strategies, Negated ability, Reason and Dissuade the interlocutor (Refusal token 3). The complexity and strength of the mother's request affected the child's refusal responses as we discussed previously.

However, the power of the mother's request could be increased in another way. According to Garvey (1974), the force of the request appears to hold increasingly throughout the clarification exchanges. The clarifications following the original request indeed provide the reason for the request and thus strengthen the assumption that speaker wants the hearer to do something. In the exchange in Example 16, the mother's clarification in the three request tokens provided a general rule to account for her request, denied the fact of the child's inability, and cancelled the possibility of a bad consequence. Through the clarifications of these exchanges, the four conditions of a sincere request were consolidated accordingly and thus the power of the mother's

request was strengthened increasingly. Therefore, in a given course of interaction, the position of the request may also assign force to the power of the request. In Example 16, the request 你自己去拿 ‘you carry them on your own’ in Line 11 carries more power than in Line 2 and the child’s combination of refusal strategies also provides evidence for his understanding of the strengthened power of the mother’s request. From the sequence above, it can be inferred that the more complicated and powerful the mother’s request is, the more possible it is that the child will combine strategies if he seeks to refuse. It can also be inferred that the child’s major device to increase the effectiveness of his refusals is to combine strategies when making refusals.

As Example 16 provides a sequence of negotiation between the mother and the child, Figure 4 will illustrate how the mother and the child respond to each other.

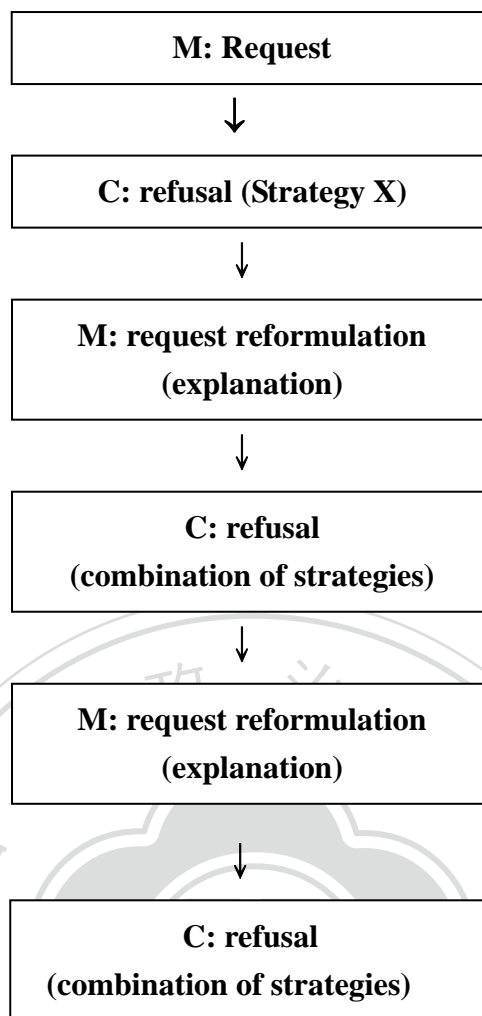


Figure 4 Sequences that involve reformulated request refusal responses at 3; 7

As discussed in the previous section, the strategies used by the mother in the reformulation of requests can be divided into three types: aggravation, mitigation, and explanation. The mother's dominant strategy when the child was at 2; 7, was Aggravation, which was used to compensate an unsuccessful request. However, when the child was at 3; 7, the mother adopted explanation most frequently to support her previous request. In Example 16, the mother's explanation of reference to a general rule (Request token 2) and the child's ability to take the cars by himself (Request token 3) corroborate her original request. On the other hand, the child also

adopted other means to respond. The child first refused with one single strategy –Alternative. When facing his mother’s reformulated requests, he combined strategies to refuse again. It was found that the child adopted explanation to reformulate his refusals. His arguments in Refusal token 2 and 3 provided a reason and negated ability and included a bad consequence to support his non-compliance. Thus explanation is the dominant device in both the mother’s request and the child’s refusal reformulation at this age.



Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

After presenting the analysis of the child's refusal strategies, in this chapter, we will summarize and discuss what we observed from the child's refusal responses from a developmental perspective in 5.1. We will then discuss these findings from the perspective of politeness and sequence in 5.2 and 5.3. Finally, we will also point out the limitation of the present study and provide some suggestions for future research.

5.1 The child's development in refusal performance

Since the data were collected at 2; 7, 3; 1 and 3; 7, the examination of refusal responses at these three temporal points reflects the development of the child's pragmatic knowledge and social skills. First, we will consider what strategies were adopted at these three ages, and how these adoptions were related to the child's pragmatic skills. For current analysis, the refusal strategies were defined based on previous studies (Beebe et al., 1980). They are (A) direct refusal, (B) Insistence, (C) Negated ability, (D) Reason, (E) Alternative, (F) Dissuade the interlocutor, (G)

Verbal-Avoidance, (H) Unrelated answer, and (I) Silence. From 2; 7 to 3; 7, it is apparent that the repertoire of refusal strategies increased with the age. Only 4 strategies were used at 2; 7, while the child manipulated 9 refusal strategies at 3; 7. Furthermore, at 2; 7, the child extensively used direct refusal *buyao* to refuse. The use of *buyao* also evidences that he only considered his own need and willingness first. Other strategies, such as unrelated answer and silence, are viewed as impolite since they did not provide a meaningful response to the mother's request. From Dunn's viewpoint, these strategies could be categorized as self-oriented arguments because they emphasize the speaker's own desire and need. The use of these self-oriented arguments decreased as the child grew up. In contrast to self-oriented arguments, other-oriented arguments do not just contemplate the speaker's needs and desires; instead, they take the hearer's inner state, assumption or knowledge into consideration. At 3; 1 and 3; 7, the child adopted more other-oriented arguments to perform his refusals.

As Garvey (1974; 45) stated, a sincere request is established on the basis of the following conditions:

1. S (speaker) wants H (hearer) to do A (act).
2. S assumes H can do A.
3. S assumes H is willing to do A.
4. S assumes H will not do A in the absence of the request.

We adopted these assumptions of a requester to examine the child's refusal

responses. The child applied the assumptions of his mother's request when making refusals. He denied his mother's assumptions of the second and third condition to perform his refusal, that is, his ability and willingness to do A. Therefore, it can be inferred that the child can refer to other's inner state and perform his refusal accordingly. Our findings also support Ninio and Snow's (1984) claim that some factors affect the order of the acquisition of communicative competence. First, according to their study, children may acquire those speech usages which directly achieve their most basic interactive goals at the earliest stage. Second, speech usages that require taking the other's perspective are acquired later than those performed from an egocentric perspective. In our findings, the child adopted *buyao*, which directly achieves the goal of refusal, at 2; 7; while at 3; 1 and 3; 7, the child adopted other indirect strategies to perform his refusal. Moreover, the refusal strategies at the three temporal points provide evidence that the child acquired those speech usages performed from an egocentric perspective first. The child increased other-oriented arguments with age, which revealed the developmental change that the child did not focus on only his own needs and interests first. The findings show that the child grew in ability to perform his refusal outside from his own perspective and to take his interlocutor's viewpoints into account.

Finally, the pattern of the use of the refusal strategies revealed that the child did

not use these strategies randomly. He considered the power of his mother's request, and adopted the most appropriate strategy to respond. The high frequency of the use of alternative under a compulsory request at 3; 1 and combination of strategies at 3; 7 substantiate the view that the child had an ability to recognize different contexts and thus adopted the most proper strategy to respond. In addition, the power of the mother's request could increase in the sequence of a negotiation. The child's refusal responses under such contexts also provide evidence that the ways in which the child varied his refusals depended on the ways in which the requests were made and also strengthened.

5.2 Refusal performance and the development of the concept of politeness

Our findings reveal that refusal performance at the three temporal points intrinsically involves the development of the concept of cost and benefits in terms of the politeness principles proposed by Leech (1983). In term of the tact maxim, that is, minimizing cost to others and maximizing benefit to others, the child's refusal at 2; 7 did not conform to the maxim. The child only considered his own desire and willingness at this stage. Thus, the findings may imply that the child at 2; 7 did not have a well-formed concept of the tact maxim. The use of other-oriented strategies could serve to decrease the costs of the hearer since they are related to the other's needs and desires. Our findings show that the child increased the usage of

other-oriented strategies with age. Therefore, we suggested that as the child got older, he could have developed a better understanding of the application of the tact maxim. In addition to tact maxim, the generosity maxim, that is, minimizing the benefit to oneself and maximizing the cost to oneself was also applied in the child's refusal. The frequent uses of the strategies of alternative and dissuading the interlocutor which offer benefits to the hearer and allow for compromise reveal that the child had also developed the concept of the generosity maxim and how to apply it when making refusals. In other words, the usages of these strategies at 3; 1 and 3; 7 suggest that the child is attempting to maximize the benefits to the hearer. In sum, our findings imply that the child becomes increasingly aware of the maxim of politeness, which is reflected in this attempt to reduce the cost to his mother and to increase the benefits to her.

5.3 The child's refusal performance in a sequence

In the analysis in Chapter 4, we identified certain sequential patterns of the mother's requests and the child's refusals at different ages. At 2; 7, the mother adopted aggravation (repetition) to reformulate her original request, with or without an account. The child responded with the same strategy as in his original refusal by adopting repetition to refuse again. Here, the mother's repetition is oriented to her original request and the child's refusal is oriented his original refusal. The repetitions

of the mother and the child represent the mother's attempt to make the child carry out the requested action and the child's attempt to express his unwillingness. At 3; 7, the mother did not repeat her request through reformulation; instead, she adopted explanation to provide the basis of supportive arguments for her original request, and the child also adopted other means to respond to his mother's reformulated request instead of repeating the same strategy. The child may adopt another strategy or combined strategies to respond. The mother's explanations are oriented to the child's refusal responses, unlike the repetition at 2; 7, which is oriented to her original request. The child's refusal reformulations are oriented to his mother's explanations, and he combined strategies to refuse again. The mother's explanations signal her attempt to exchange the information so as to maintain the fluency of the conversation.

On the other hand, the child's refusal reformulation suggests his attempt to negotiate and settle the possible conflict. From the sequential patterns observed at 2; 7 and 3; 7, two findings unfolded. First, the way the mother reformulated her requests varied with the child's age. When the child was young, she adopted repetition of her original request to respond to the child's refusal. When the child got older, she adopted explanation to consolidate her original request. Second, the way the child responded to the mother's reformulated requests was influenced by how the mother reformulated her requests. At 2; 7, when the mother repeated her original request, the

child responded with the same strategy as his original strategy. At 3; 7, when the mother adopted explanations to support her original request, the child responded with another strategy or a combination of strategies.

Our findings are consistent with previous studies which claimed that the form in which mothers make requests affects the way their children refuse. Furthermore, in our findings, the effect of mother's requests also existed in the reformulated sequence. Ninio and Snow (1984) claimed that children's negotiation skills will be improved by the other party's use of justification or explanation. Our findings prove that the mother's use of explanation arguments improved the child's negotiation skill, which is reflected in his reformulation of refusals.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions

There are some limitations to the present study despite the findings we observed. First, there may be limits to the findings to some extent since they are based on the results from a single case study only. Since the present study aims to explore the child's developmental change by means of examining his performance of refusals, it is believed that a large amount of data could lead to a more complete understanding of children's refusals and pragmatic skills. Second, in our study, although the effect of the mother's requests was consolidated, the types of activity were quite limited and thus it is hard to discuss the effect of the type of activity. Third, the data in the present

study were limited to mother-child interaction; hence, our findings can not tell us whether there is any difference in the performance of refusals among other kinds of relationship when the child made refusals. However, the child's refusal performance showed that the interactional factors indeed governed the usage of refusal. In addition, the sequential patterns also illuminate how interaction occurred in mother-child conversation. We also found that the effect of the mother's request extends to the reformulated sequence. In this way, we suggest that future research can put more focus on how children reformulate their refusal and their sequential arrangement with age. In addition, as there was only one child in our study, it was not possible to differentiate between differences in performance by gender which plays an important part in children's pragmatic skills. Therefore, it is suggested that more mixed-gender subjects be included in future study. The investigation of the role of gender may provide more insight into children's performance of refusals from a sociolinguistic perspective.

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Appendix

CHAT Symbols (Adopted from Mac Whinney, Brain. 1995. The CHILDES project:
Tools for analyzing talk. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum)

| | |
|----------|------------------------------|
| . | period |
| ? | question mark |
| ! | exclamation |
| -: | lengthening |
| # | unfilled pause |
| +... | trailing off |
| +/. | interruption |
| +^ | quick uptake |
| +, | self-completion |
| ++ | other-completion |
| 0 | actions without speech |
| %act | action tier |
| %sit | situation tier |
| [=] | explanation |
| [=!] | paralinguistic material |
| [% text] | comment on main line |
| [>] [<] | overlapping utterances |
| [/] | retracing without correction |
| [//] | retracing with correction |
| xxx | untelling speech |

