

INTERACTION IN ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA OF PRACTICE AND MANDARIN
CHINESE: PRACTICE, PRAXIS AND PERCEPTION

By

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To my family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DCTs	discourse completion tasks
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELFP	English as a lingua franca of practice
L1	first language
L2	second language
MC	Mandarin Chinese
SLA	second language acquisition

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By

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Little research has examined the salient interactional features of English as a Lingua Franca of Practice (ELFP) and Mandarin Chinese (MC), the disagreement behavior of these speakers in informal, natural conversations from the perspectives of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and their perception of disagreement behavior, ELFP and English Corners. To fill the gap, this study analyzed audiotaped and videotaped naturally occurring conversations of 62 non-familial ELFP speakers and 68 non-familial MC speakers in informal social activities in a southeastern city of Mainland China to reveal these speakers' salient interactional features and disagreement behavior; it also examined the correlation between disagreement behavior and sociolinguistic variables, and ethnographic interviews with some speakers' perception of disagreement behavior, ELFP and English Corners.

This study has theoretical and pedagogical implications. It seems to disconfirm the stereotypical assumption of Chinese being indirect in communication (Cardon and Scott, 2003) and the prior research results of Chinese preferring indirect disagreement (Du, 1995). It weakens the claims of universals of disagreement (Leech, 1983) and politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It also contributes to studies on the correlations

between sociolinguistic variables and speech behaviors in naturally occurring conversations. It can inform both the TESOL and TCFL professions and provide authentic resources for EFL and CFL teachers and learners.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Twenty years ago, when I went to college majoring in English, I had no idea what I was getting into. This was for two reasons: 1) studying English in the Chinese-dominated society; 2) studying English after the critical period that Lenneberg (1967) advanced. I still remember the mornings when I got up and read English texts aloud in a small garden in front of a school building and the nights when I imitated the voice of English audio-books in a college dorm crowded with seven roommates. Despite having developed advanced proficiency in English language skills, I did not feel proud of being able to communicate ideas better than non-English majors because what I learned was classroom English, which I rarely spoke in the Chinese-dominated environment. Compared with English majors, non English majors had even fewer English classes to take and fewer opportunities to speak English in those days. This has resulted in what Chinese people call Mute English, which means that most of Chinese learners of English can read and understand English but are unable to speak English.

Responding to the fact that the majority of learners of English in Mainland China had few opportunities to practice speaking English, what Chinese people call English Corners emerged. No written records can be found to track down the origin and history of English Corners. However, an Associate Professor of English at a Chinese southeastern university recalled,

English Corners came into being probably in the 80s. In those years, people started to realize the importance of studying English and thus automatically gathered to talk in English. But before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, most people were encouraged to study Russian. Failing English exams was considered a heroic deed. People were proud of not answering the questions on English exams. English was excluded from College

Entrance Exams. Since the Open Door Policy took effect, an increasing number of people have become interested in English due to its function in the world and felt the need to practice speaking English regularly.

(From Perception_Wu, 2009)

As a result of the internationalization of English across the world and the rising status of English in Mainland China, Chinese users of English have gotten together, for decades, to improve their communication skills in English in parks or colleges at regular times. The English Corners at colleges tend to be organized by faculty and students of an English Department in regular semesters. The English Corners in parks are not organized but open to anyone in the Chinese society who is so motivated as to take a bus, ride a bicycle, or even walk to join the community and practice speaking English for hours. With or without the presence of English L1 speakers, Chinese users of English discuss issues of their interest, share worldviews /personal experiences, seek specific information or socialize with others. They might be preparing themselves for graduate study in a foreign country where English is the medium of education; they might practice speaking English in order to be ready for business negotiations with westerners; they might simply enjoy chatting in English and pass time as a way of getting away from work.

For instance, Hu, an unemployed middle-aged man, said,

But I want to I want to speak English very well. And I want to speak English
spea- I want English speaking style. And I can and I can and I can do some
business with my foreigner and I can express my feeling what I want to say.

(From EngCorn2008-3:157)

Like Hu, Zhan, a graduate from a community college, went to English Corners very often. However, he held a different perspective on why he adored English Corners.

Hmm. No. It [speaking English here] is not only practice. I think it is a part of my life. I think, communicating is really won- a wonderful thing in my life.....Yeah. I I think, you think it is unbelievable. I don't like speak too much uh in in in life, when I was not in the English Corner, you know. But but when I co- but when I come to the English Corner, I become, yeah, I be, I'd like to speak to, talk, talk more.....So so, I like communica-, I like communicating. I like reading. I like to make, I like to make friends.

(From EngCorn2008-3:124)

The discovery of English Corners filled my heart with hopes because I realized that I was not the only one desiring to speak English in the Chinese-dominated society. Also, I would be able to improve my oral English proficiency and market myself more effectively upon graduation. The more often I spoke English with people at English Corners, the more I wished to help these highly motivated Chinese users of English achieve their goals. Therefore, I conducted a pilot study on the linguistic features and interactional patterns of participants at English Corners. In this study, the disagreement behavior of Chinese users of English appeared as a salient interactional feature that differs from that of English L1 speakers. In order to understand this interactional feature, I conducted another pilot study investigating the disagreement behavior of Chinese L1 speakers when they spoke Mandarin Chinese. Both studies showed that direct expressions of disagreement used by Chinese users of English and Chinese L1 speakers outnumbered the indirect ones. Interviews with participants suggested that Chinese L1 speakers did not perceive direct disagreement as impolite, whereas English L1 speakers did.

Expanding on the pilot studies, this research focuses on the interactional features and disagreement behavior of Chinese users of English at English Corners and those of Chinese L1 speakers for the purpose of comparison. To understand the English-Corner phenomenon and participants' disagreement behavior, this study also investigates

Chinese teachers' perception of English Corners and Chinese L1 speakers' perception of disagreement behavior. The study relies on naturally occurring conversations and informal ethnographic interviews collected in a southeastern city of Mainland China, Nanchang, for unbiased findings and an emic perspective. Spontaneous conversations were derived from three sources: 1) dialogues at two unorganized English Corners in the city; 2) informal get-togethers in Mandarin Chinese mixed with English over coffee; 3) everyday conversations in Mandarin Chinese in public places or homes.

The study was carried out because of its potential contributions to the linguistic subfield of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), pragmatics and sociolinguistics. First of all, few studies have examined the interactional features of Chinese users of English at English Corners where they share Mandarin Chinese (MC) as their native language but choose to speak English for social and practice purposes. The type of English they speak seems to differ from English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which occurs among speakers of different native languages (Firth, 1996). Therefore, English as a Lingua Franca of Practice (ELFP) is proposed to capture this difference and label the English spoken at English Corners. A pilot study was conducted to investigate the similarities and differences between ELF and ELFP. In addition, disagreement emerged as a salient speech act which does not go along with the conventional image of Chinese people being indirect (e.g. Cardon and Scott, 2003) and the typical disagreement pattern employed by English L1 speakers (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984). This finding led to further investigation of the disagreement behavior of ELFP speakers in the current study, especially because only a few scholars (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004)

have examined the disagreement behavior of learners of English whose native languages are not Chinese.

Second, little research has examined the interactional features of natural everyday conversations in MC in informal non-familial settings. Although a few studies (e.g. Du, 1995; Liu, 2004) have looked at MC speakers' disagreement behavior in institutional settings, the results were mainly built on Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), which might not reflect their disagreement behavior in authentic natural conversations in everyday life. Only one study (Pan, 2000) has employed natural conversations in business, official and family settings which might not demonstrate MC speakers' disagreement behavior in everyday conversations in informal non-familial settings (Biber, 1995). The pilot study on the everyday conversations among a few MC speakers in informal non-familial settings featured disagreement behavior as salient because of participants' preference of direct disagreement expressions over indirect ones. Hence, it was important to expand this part of study to include more participants who conducted more hours of natural everyday conversations.

Third, none of the previous studies has looked at the sociolinguistic variables of ELFP speakers; a few studies (e.g. Du, 1995; Liu, 2004) concluded that social status constrains MC speakers' disagreement behavior in institutional settings on the basis of DCTs, which might not apply to natural conversations in informal non-familial settings; only one study (Pan, 2000) investigated the effect of sociolinguistic variables on the disagreement behavior of MC speakers in business, official and family settings. It is thus necessary to examine the effect of sociolinguistic variables on the disagreement

behavior of both ELFP and MC speakers in naturally occurring conversations in informal non-familial settings.

Fourth, little research has examined MC speakers' perception of ELFP and their own disagreement behavior. Most of the previous research (e.g. Liu, 2004) was based on native-speaker intuitions or DCTs to explain the pragmatic features of MC speakers although Pan (2000) used business, official and family conversations in MC as baseline data. MC speakers' perception can provide an emic perspective of ELFP and disagreement behavior and a profound understanding of the topics under discussion.

Fifth, few studies have employed Interactional Sociolinguistics to analyze the interactional features and disagreement behavior of MC and ELFP speakers and Ethnographic Interviewing to get an emic perspective of their disagreement behavior. The combination of these two approaches may uncover interactional features, disagreement behavior and underlying beliefs in a relatively more comprehensive and comprehensible way.

Therefore, how Chinese people interact and disagree in MC and ELFP in Mainland China is still not fully understood or described in the literature. To understand participants' disagreement behavior, it is essential to examine the influence of sociolinguistic variables on disagreement as well as their perception of disagreement behavior. The study is particularly relevant to the globalized world given the rising economic power of China, the increasing demand for international business with China and the potential problems that might occur in cross-cultural communication.

Purposes of the Study

For the aforementioned reasons, the present study investigates and compares the interactional features which occur in ELF discussed in the literature (e.g. Firth, 1996) and in ELFP. It is vital to remember that ELF speakers of different L1s have to communicate in English for social or business purposes, whereas ELFP speakers of the same L1 choose to communicate in English for social, learning or practice purposes. To understand the interaction and disagreement behavior of ELFP speakers, this study investigates and compares the interactional features and disagreement behavior of both ELFP and MC speakers. A close look at the disagreement behavior of ELFP speakers, MC speakers and English L1 speakers raises questions on the feasibility of applying the disagreement pattern typically used by English L1 speakers (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984) to non English L1 speakers and reveals the misconception of Chinese culture being indirect in general (e.g. Cardon and Scott, 2003).

For a better interpretation of participants' disagreement behavior, the study examines their sociolinguistic variables and pragmatic perceptions. Intuitively, one might venture that in a stereotypically indirect and hierarchically structured society like China, factors like social status and age would play an absolutely significant role. Is this supported by data of naturally occurring conversations? How do participants perceive this? What do they think of their own disagreement behavior and politeness? This study discusses the relationships between sociolinguistic variables and disagreement behavior, between behavior and perception, and between disagreement and politeness. The study also touches upon the rising status of ELFP as a result of globalization and internationalism despite prescriptive attitudes against it. The findings of this study demonstrate the necessity of using naturally occurring conversations and integrated

methodologies (e.g. Interactional Sociolinguistics and Ethnographic Interviewing) to improve the validity of such research.

In other words, this study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. How do ELFP speakers interact in general and disagree in particular at English Corners in Nanchang?
2. How do MC speakers interact in general and disagree in particular in Nanchang?
3. What sociolinguistic variables affect the disagreement behavior of ELFP speakers most?
4. What sociolinguistic variables affect the disagreement behavior of MC speakers most?
5. How do ELFP and MC speakers perceive disagreement behavior?
6. How do Chinese teachers of English perceive ELFP and English Corners?
7. Do the findings of this study, which is based on natural conversations occurring in informal non-familial settings, support the results of previous studies based on DCTs?

Overview of Chapters

This study is presented in accordance with the following outline: Chapter 2 discusses two important theoretical models and reviews previous relevant studies including research on ELF, disagreement behavior and sociolinguistic variables; Chapter 3 compares varying methodologies for SLA and discourse analysis but focuses on the integrated methods of interactional sociolinguistics and ethnographic interviewing employed for this study; Chapter 4 presents and explains the interactional features of natural conversations in general and disagreement behavior in particular in ELFP; Chapter 5 presents and explains the interactional features of natural conversations in general and disagreement behavior in particular in MC; Chapter 6 uncovers the pragmatic perceptions of MC speakers who may or may not speak English in terms of directness and disagreement behavior, and the viewpoints of Chinese teachers of

English on ELFP and English Corners; Chapter 7 discusses the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings to SLA, pragmatics and sociolinguistics and possible directions for future research along this line.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Community vs Community of Practice

Speech Community

The concept of Speech Community can be associated with three types of linguistic frameworks (Scherre, 2006). In the first framework Structural Linguistics, Hockett (1958) defined a speech community as “the whole set of people who communicate with each other, directly and indirectly, via the common language” (p. 8); Bloomfield (1961) described a speech community as “a group of people who use the same system of speech-signals” (p. 29); Lyons (1973) stated that a speech community is “all the people who use a given language” (p. 326). Obviously, in the framework of Structural Linguistics, sharing one common language is fundamental to what counts as a speech community.

However, this is not sufficient according to the advocates of other frameworks, specifically the Sociology of Language and Ethnography of Communication. Gumperz, Hymes and Fishman believed that members of a speech community should share norms. Gumperz (1972) argued that a speech community is “any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs” although members might speak different languages (p.463); Hymes (1981) agreed by saying that a speech community refers to people “sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use. Both conditions are necessary” (p. 51). Likewise, Fishman (1971) contended, “a speech community is one,

all of whose members share at least a single speech variety and the norms for its appropriate use” (p. 232).

The notion of Speech Community as a social entity has been refined by variationist, or followers of Labovian Sociolinguistics. Labov (1972) added social attitudes towards language to the definition of Speech Community. He posited, “the speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation” (pp. 120-121). Variationists, orienting their work towards quantitative research, focus on “the relationship between variation and change and the effect of norms of social evaluation on language change” (Scherre, 2006, p. 718).

The Speech Community Model has been employed as a useful tool for research into the homogeneity or structured heterogeneity (Weinreich, Herzog and Labov, 1968) of language in social settings. Nevertheless, it may not have successfully captured the complex linguistic patterns and social practices of human beings. Milroy (1980) pointed out that some people might not feel like they belong to a big abstract category assigned to them because they have local loyalty to a small-scale category. She went on to say that a community refers to “cohesive groups to which people have a clear consciousness of belonging” (p. 14). These people share a “local language that functions as an index of symbolic integration” (p. 18). The standard language spoken by these people and others in the larger society does not necessarily make them a speech community. Therefore, sociolinguists often look for complementary perspectives to understand the whole set of linguistic phenomena.

Community of Practice

A good way of looking at linguistic phenomena in social practice is the recently coined Community of Practice Model, which often works as a social theory of learning. This construct was first developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 and then brought into sociolinguistics to theorize language and gender by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet in 1992 (Eckert, 2006). Wenger (1998) portrays a community of practice as a group of people who have developed social practice together, including “both the explicit and the tacit, what is said and what is left unsaid, what is represented and what is assumed” (p. 47). To be more specific, the shared social practice includes:

the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. (Wenger, 1998, p. 47)

These are signs of membership in a community of practice even though some may never be put into words, which leads to Wenger’s definition of a community of practice—that is, a group of people who “are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another” (1998, p. 73). Wenger presents three dimensions of a community of practice: “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise” and “a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Membership of a community of practice is not just a matter of geographical proximity or social category; rather, it involves intrinsic practice and complementary contributions from diverse groups of people who are connected through experiences. These people negotiate actions and create a common goal. They respond to conditions outside their community, produce reality within the resources and

constraints of their situations, and establish their own enterprise. Over time, the joint pursuit of an enterprise creates a repertoire for negotiating meaning. This repertoire “includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). This whole sense-making process is not a static agreement, but a dynamic process.

The notion of Community of Practice is valuable in that it identifies a social grouping by means of shared practice over time and a commitment to shared understanding. Built upon this, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s (1992) community of practice projects a new focus on the agency of language users and their strategic linguistic practices in the construction of gendered identities. They propose, “A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages” (p. 464). In their study on language and gender, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet aptly connected broad categories to local social and linguistic practice.

Differences between the Two Models

Having applied the concept of Community of Practice to their studies, many researchers (e.g. Freed, 1999) explained their reasons for favoring this relatively new concept. First of all, the Community of Practice Model recognizes practice as the motivating context for linguistic interaction. People practice to make sense of the

outside world; they practice to achieve a consensus on the situations inside the community; and they practice to get involved, to build an enterprise and to create a repertoire. This model regards language as one of many social practices where participants engage. In contrast, the Speech Community Model seems to focus more on language-related elements such as language, social norms of language use, or social attitudes towards language (Bucholtz, 1999) but little on social practice where language is used.

Secondly, the Community of Practice Model decentralizes members of the community. All interested people are encouraged to join the community, negotiate their identities, contribute their efforts, experience things together, and move towards their common goal in virtue of social practice. For example, Bucholtz (1999) looked at a marginalized group in high school. This group chose to speak and behave differently from other teenagers, identified themselves as nerd girls and rejected all the other forms of coolness that teenagers take. However, in the Speech Community Model, this marginalized group would not stand out as a distinctive community and might be treated like other teenage girls. Any group that shares the same language, social norms or social attitudes towards the language in a large domain tends to become the center of research. A marginalized subgroup might be external to the analysis if they do not share the same linguistic or social norms from the big community (Rampton, 1999).

Thirdly, the Community of Practice Model emphasizes individual agency. Community members make purposeful choices and actively engage in social practice while acknowledging structural constraints on them. They opt to participate in one or several communities of practice in accordance with their experiences despite the limits

imposed upon them by social structure. This was supported by Eckert's (1989) study on two communities of practice at a high school—Jocks (overachieving students) who chose to orient their activities to the school institution and Burnouts (underachieving students) who chose to orient their activities to the urban center. On the other hand, in the Speech Community Model, individual agency is not as important because individuals are more of passive recipients of group identity. This model seems to privilege groups over individuals, stressing the decisive power of social order on individuals.

Finally, the Community of Practice Model demonstrates the fluidity of social space and the diversity of experience. People do not necessarily inherit speech and behavior characteristics from categories. Geographical, ethnic or class proximity does not suffice to entail a community of practice. Instead, members of a community of practice gradually develop their own ways of speaking and behaving from everyday experiences (Eckert, 2006). Their memberships and identities are not predetermined but internally constructed through participating in varying social practices together. They might identify with different social groups and work on the interdependency of their individual identities and group identities. They might move from one community to another, from one identity to another; however, they do not contrast in-groups with out-groups. Conversely, the Speech Community Model seems to take a relatively more static but steady perspective to examine linguistic phenomena in social structure. External social properties seem to decide individual memberships assuming that people do not have dramatic changes causing them to cross social boundaries (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999).

In short, the Speech Community Model differs from the Community of Practice Model theoretically and methodologically. The Community of Practice Model is a bottom-up ethnographic paradigm that emphasizes dynamic local practice and local meanings, and links local practice to membership in extra-local categories (Eckert, 2006), whereas the Speech Community Model takes a top-down look at broad linguistic phenomena and abstract social categories such as class, sex, or race. The Community of Practice Model values both participant perspectives and analyst interpretations for analysis purposes and allows heterogeneity of membership in the community, whereas the Speech Community Model seems to privilege analyst interpretations over participant perspectives and central members over peripheral members while giving more attention to homogeneity (Bucholtz, 1999). Consequently, the Community of Practice Model can function as a social theory of learning and a richly contextualized approach to language and society. It enables researchers to view language use in the context of social practice and provide complete linguistic descriptions of particular social groups as well as insightful explanations of complex human experiences. On the other hand, the Speech Community Model may work as a social theory of language variation and a general approach to language change over time and space in broadly divided social groups on a global level.

Despite the current popularity of the Community of Practice Model, Meyerhoff (1999) questioned its applicability to her study on the distribution of the word *sore* 'sorry' in Bislama, the language spoken in Vanuatu. She found that the Speech Community Model worked better to understand and analyze the asymmetric distribution of *sore*. Likewise, Davies (2005), Irvine (2006) and Eckert (2006) called for combining the

Speech Community Model with the Community of Practice Model, if necessary, to better illustrate how language interacts with society because either model “offers a different lens through which to view patterns of linguistic variation and the ways in which individuals construct and maintain their identities” (Davies, 2005, p. 557). The two models are complementary in that “the value of each depends on having the right abstract categories and finding the communities of practice in which those categories are most salient” (Eckert, 2006, p. 685). Accordingly, feedback from both models can lead to the best analytic process and the most comprehensive interpretation of the interaction between language use and social change.

Communities in China

As the fourth largest and most populated country in the world, China has fifty-six ethnic groups, seven documented mutually unintelligible languages, and more than one hundred un-described languages. The country is undergoing incredible changes in economic power and socio-cultural values resulting from a rapidly increasing amount of international business and a more open mind to western values. Also as a result of globalization and transnationalism, a growing number of students at all levels of education take English as a mandatory course with more than 500,000 nonnative teachers of English (Bolton, 2003), leading to a growing demand for opportunities to speak English in mini English environments like English Corners in the large Chinese-dominated environment. A large geographical area, diverse ethnic groups, great language variation, drastic social changes and macroacquisition of English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002) have made it possible to carry out all sorts of SLA, pragmatic and sociolinguistic studies on China-related issues on local and global scales.

To get a comprehensive picture of MC speakers and ELFP speakers in Mainland China, this study integrates the Speech Community Model and the Community of Practice Model. The Speech Community Model can work for the baseline data of MC speakers because they live in the same city, have the same ethnic originality, speak the same languages—MC and Gan, share knowledge of social norms that prevail in this particular city and hold the same belief in the prestigious status of MC. They differ from speech communities in other cities. Meanwhile, the Community of Practice Model can serve to capture the sociolinguistic phenomena of English Corners. First of all, ELFP speakers at English Corner mutually engage in their social practice—speaking English on any possible topic and interacting with others; second, they share a common goal in their joint enterprise—improving their ability to communicate in English while socializing; third, they endeavor to create a repertoire including code switching, discourse markers, candidate completion, turn-taking, topic-switch, lip smacking and disagreement exchanging; fourth, they choose to join the community and shift between peripheral members and central members; finally, they might share diverse experiences and social practices wherever English Corners are. Neither social space nor community boundary is fixed.

Interlanguage

ELFP speakers at English Corners are nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English who do not have the characteristics of native speakers (NSs) (Bloomfield, 1961; Stern, 1983; Johnson and Johnson, 1998; Davies, 1996; Cook, 1999). Is ELFP an interlanguage, which is considered deficient compared with English L1, or a variety of ELF, which is considered an effective means of communication in its own right? To answer this question, elaborated discussion on interlanguage and ELF is needed. Interlanguage,

having taken varying names (Corder, 1967, 1971; Nemser, 1971), refers to the separate linguistic system produced by NNSs when they attempt to express meanings in a target language (Selinker, 1972). Interlanguage research suggests that learners actively apply cognitive strategies to language learning tasks and construct their own language rules. They follow linear successive stages to acquire target linguistic and social norms (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). They might cease developing at some point before target norms are reached as a result of fossilization (Tarone, 2006).

The Interaction Hypothesis

Built on the framework of interlanguage, some studies have looked at learners' development of a system of morphology (Larsen-Freeman, 1975, 1976), syntax (Gass, 1984), and phonology (Tarone, 1980). Others have discussed learner interaction in interlanguage. For instance, Hatch (1978) urged researchers to focus on how the communicative use of a second language (L2) may lead to the learning of L2 structure and how a specific type of interaction may occur when learners try to restructure their language use to convey their message. As learners negotiate, "they work linguistically to achieve the needed comprehensibility, whether repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, changing its words, or modifying its form and meaning in a host of other ways" (Pica, 1994, p.494).

Following Hatch (1978), Long (1981) also emphasized the significant role of negotiated interaction in learners' interlanguage development because during interaction, learners have opportunities to solve communication problems by means of conversational modifications such as repeating, segmenting and rewording a message. He proposed the Interaction Hypothesis to describe a more direct relationship between negotiated interaction and comprehension. This hypothesis seems to have served well

to explain NNSs' interlanguage development. In NS-NNS interactions, interactional features such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks emerge to keep conversations going (Long, 1983; Schmidt and Frota, 1986).

In addition to NS-NNS interaction, NNS-NNS interaction also abounds in interactional features. Mackey, Oliver and Leeman (2003) investigated the effects of interlocutor type on the provision and incorporation of feedback in task-based interactions. They found that adult NNSs produced more corrected output by negotiated interaction between themselves than with NSs. For example, interactionally modified input was found to lead to better comprehension and more new words being acquired by high-school students of English in Japan (Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki , 1994). The similar NNS-NNS interaction helped the recall and retention of new vocabulary based on the study on twenty-four ESL students in Western Australia (Dobinson, 2001).

Issues in Interlanguage Research

Most SLA studies, such as those on interaction involving NNSs, neglected social interactional perspectives and caused “an imbalance between cognitive and mentalistic orientations, and social and contextual orientations to language” (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 285). Unlike Doughty and Long (2003) who characterized the field of SLA “as a branch of cognitive science” (p. 4), Firth and Wagner (1997) favored sociolinguistic perspectives over psycholinguistic perspectives. They pointed out that generally speaking, the psycholinguistic approach to SLA research is severely affected by the Chomskyan view of language that favors formalistic and context-free grammatical competence. This approach emphasizes the distinction between NSs, who are competent and omniscient, and NNSs, who are deficient and subordinate. Assuming that “NS competence is constant, fully developed, and complete” (Firth and Wagner,

1997, p. 292), the approach focuses on communicative problems, instead of communicative successes, in NS-NNS or NNS-NNS interaction; it “views communication as a process of information transfer from one individual’s head to another’s”; it prioritizes etic concerns over emic ones and marginalizes the social, contextual dimensions of language (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 288).

Conversely, the sociolinguistic approach assumes that language is not a purely cognitive phenomenon but fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, which follows Hymes’ perspectives. This approach seems to merge the distinction between L2 learners and L2 users especially in the context where English functions as a lingua franca. Believing that L2 users may resourcefully and strategically employ marked forms to achieve social and interactional purposes such as displaying empathy or accomplishing mutual understanding (Rampton, 1987; Firth, 1996), this approach describes how L1 and L2 speakers collaborate in constructing meaningful discourse. It takes an emic sensitivity towards SLA research and stresses the impact of social/contextual factors on SLA.

Firth and Wagner’s (1997) arguments triggered a huge debate on the orientation of SLA research. They were strongly supported by Hall (1997) and Liddicoat (1997) who criticized the context-free, cognitive orientation of traditional SLA research and called for socially oriented examination of learners’ ability to use language. Some researchers (Ohta, 1994, 1999, 2005; Atkinson, 2002; Atkinson et al, 2007; Lantolf, 2007) have successfully conducted socially oriented studies on language acquisition. Firth and Wagner were partially rebutted by Kasper (1997) who objected to their confusing language use with language acquisition. Kasper (1997) posited, “language socialization

theory has a particularly rich potential for SLA because it is inherently developmental and requires establishing links between culture, cognition, and language, between the macro-levels of socio-cultural and institutional contexts, and the microlevel of discourse” (p. 311). However, Firth and Wagner met strong resistance by Long (1997) and Gass (1998) who maintained their position that SLA is mostly an internal mental process and questioned Firth and Wagner’s empirical evidence for their arguments.

Despite the differences between the psycholinguistically oriented approach to SLA and the socially oriented approach to SLA, it is not impossible for researchers to benefit from the two competing views. Ortega (2005) contended that both schools of thought are complementary and can co-exist to help researchers investigate and understand both aspects of human cognition and socially embedded human capacities. Neither of them “has consistently and systematically set out to gather the sort of data which might show whether social factors affect cognitive processes of acquisition in specific ways and thereby enable both strands to see how their work is related” (Tarone, 2000, p. 186). Seeking empirical evidence seems like a good way to relate psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors in SLA and deconstruct the dichotomy of language acquisition versus language use. Integrating viewpoints from different sides into SLA research can definitely open a new window for applied linguists to conduct valid and reliable research.

Interlanguage Pragmatics vs Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

When Firth and Wagner (1997) challenged the foundational concepts of NNS and interlanguage, the subfield of the interlanguage framework—Interlanguage Pragmatics—was also affected. Kasper and Dahl (1991) defined interlanguage pragmatics as “nonnative speakers’ comprehension and production of speech acts, and how that L2-related knowledge is acquired” (p. 216). In this area, researchers have

conducted investigations on varying speech acts such as apologies (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Levenston, 1987; Bergman and Kasper, 1993; Yang, 2002), compliments (e.g. Yuan, 1996; Rose, 2000; Yu, 2003; Qu and Wang, 2005), thanks (e.g. Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986), requests (e.g. Cook and Liddicoat, 2002; Kasanga, 1998; Hassall, 2003; Hong, 1997; Dalton-Puffer, 2005), complaints (e.g. Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993), corrections (e.g. Takahashi, 1993), refusals (e.g. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990), disagreement (e.g. Beebe and Takahashi, 1989a, 1989b), and chastisement (e.g. Beebe and Takahashi, 1989b).

Even though “interlanguage pragmatics has been sociolinguistic, rather than psycholinguistic in its orientation”, with a focus on NNSs’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper and Rose, 1999, p. 82), it has several assumptions that fall into the old school of thought in SLA. In interlanguage pragmatics, learners are deficient compared with NSs; target pragmatic norms are established for learners to work towards; the pragmatic norms that learners produce on the “interlanguage continuum” (Ellis, 1994, p. 350) are inappropriate unless they are very close to target norms. Apparently, interlanguage pragmatics intends to describe how learners progress unidirectionally—from their native pragmatic norms towards target pragmatic norms.

This SLA construct tends to be mixed up with the sociolinguistic construct Cross-Cultural Pragmatics, “a study of communicative practices in different speech communities” (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 73). Boxer (2002a) clarified the distinction between the two constructs. Interlanguage pragmatics takes a one-way perspective, assuming that language learners aim to acquire target norms and are responsible for causing miscommunication. Different from interlanguage pragmatics, cross-cultural

pragmatics takes a two-way perspective to demonstrate how “individuals from different societies or communities interact according to their own pragmatic norms, often resulting in a clash of expectations and, ultimately, misperceptions about the other group” (Boxer, 2002a, p. 150). In cross-cultural pragmatics, an L2 is only a means of communication rather than a target form to acquire; L2 users do not need to progress along an interlanguage continuum towards target pragmatic norms; any interlocutors, including L1 speakers, may be held accountable for communication breakdowns.

This bi-directional view can help us understand cultural differences of interlocutors and sources of misunderstandings that occur in cross-cultural interactions. As a result, diverse studies on cross-cultural pragmatics have been conducted to compare several languages, such as English and German (e.g. House, 1982, 1984; House and Kasper, 1981), English and Hebrew (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983, 1987), English and Greek (e.g. Tannen, 1981), English and Japanese (e.g. Kitagawa, 1980; Fukushima, 1996), English and Swedish (e.g. Stenstrom, 1984), English and Italian (e.g. Amzilotti, 1983), English and Polish (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1985), English and Chinese (e.g. Yu, 1999, 2003), English and Spanish (e.g. Reiter, 1997), English and Arabic (e.g. Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols, 1996), Danish and German (e.g. Faerch and Kasper, 1983), or French and Hebrew (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989).

Pragmatic Awareness

Many interlanguage studies have shown that L2 learners may use an L2 inappropriately for L1 speakers. Are learners aware of the gap between L1 and L2 pragmatics? Schmidt (1983) argued that learners must first notice the surface structures of a target language in the input, its distinctive linguistic forms, functional meanings and contextual features, in order to acquire every aspect of the target language including

pragmatics. In his Noticing Hypothesis, conscious noticing or awareness is necessary for learners to convert input into intake, as he states, “attention to input is a necessary condition for any learning at all” (p. 35). When learners become aware of a mismatch between what they produce and what they are supposed to produce, or between what they produce and what native speakers of the target language produce, they can make changes in their utterances and develop into more proficient L2 speakers. The role of conscious noticing or awareness is significant because “noticing is a consequence of encoding in short-term memory, and is necessary for learning. What is noticed may be subsequently encoded in long-term episodic memory” (Robertson, 1995, p. 298). The Noticing Hypothesis has been reinforced in SLA studies (e.g. Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Swain, 1998, 2000; Ellis, 1994) even though Curran and Keele (1993) argued that some forms of learning do not need attention.

Learners’ selective attention in L2 input processing seems to strongly correlate with their proficiency in the target language (Bialystok, 1993). More proficient learners can give selective attention to the target pragmatic features more accurately and faster than less proficient learners. However, proficiency may not work as the best indicator of learners’ awareness of L2 pragmalinguistic features. Matsumura (2003) noticed an indirect effect of proficiency on pragmatic competence. Moreover, Takahashi (2005b) observed no significant correlation between the learners’ pragmalinguistic awareness and their proficiency. Both low- and high-proficiency learners may or may not notice the target pragmalinguistic features, but their motivation can make a difference in pragmalinguistic awareness. Also, at different proficiency levels, learners use “qualitatively and quantitatively different conventions of form to implement speech act

strategies and select different strategies in comparable contexts” (Kasper and Rose, 1999, p. 88). For instance, Scarcella (1979) investigated the politeness strategies employed by beginning and advanced ESL learners. She found that participants learned politeness forms earlier than when they appropriately used the forms.

Pragmatic Transfer

Unaware of the differences between L1 and L2 pragmatics, L2 speakers might resort to L1 pragmatics in social interaction, causing pragmatic transfer. Pragmatic transfer has been defined in many different ways. Scarcella (1983) discussed transfer in the light of conversational features. Odlin (1989) used discourse transfer, instead of pragmatic transfer, for “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (p. 27). Wolfson (1989) described pragmatic transfer as “the use of rules of speaking from one’s own native speech community when interacting with members of the host community or simply when speaking or writing in a second language” (p. 141). Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) defined pragmatic transfer as “transfer of L1 socio-cultural competence in performing L2 speech acts or any other aspects of L2 conversation, where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language” (p. 56). Kasper (1992) posited, “Pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information” (p.207).

Pragmatic transfer may fall into two categories—pragmalinguistic transfer and sociopragmatic transfer. Leech (1983) defined pragmalinguistic transfer as “the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular

illocutions” (p. 11). Kasper (1992) proposed pragmalinguistic transfer as a process where “the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to particular linguistic material in L1 influences learners’ perception and production of form-function mappings in L2” (p. 209). On the other hand, Leech (1983) defined sociopragmatic transfer as “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (p. 10), meaning participants’ social perceptions of linguistic action. Kasper (1992) delimited sociopragmatic transfer as transfer that only operates “when the social perceptions underlying language users’ interpretation and performance of linguistic action in L2 are influenced by their assessment of subjectively equivalent L1 contexts” (p. 209).

Unlike Leech and Kasper, Thomas (1983) gave a negative meaning to pragmalinguistic transfer and sociopragmatic transfer. She restricted pragmalinguistic transfer to “inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from one language to another, or the transferring from the mother tongue to the target language of utterances which are semantically/syntactically equivalent, but which, because of different ‘interpretive bias’, tend to convey a different pragmatic force in the target language” (p. 101). She also reduced sociopragmatic transfer to failure to have correct perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior due to social conditions placed on language in use. Unfortunately, Thomas’ emphasis on negative transfer and consequences of transfer did not acknowledge the neutral connotation of transfer in speech act realization and the possibility of positive transfer. Some studies have shown that learners can transfer L1 into L2 and successfully realize linguistic forms or speech act norms. For example, language learners successfully transferred indirect speech act

of requesting from English to Hebrew (Blum-Kulka, 1982) and past tense forms from Danish and German to English (House and Kasper, 1987; Faerch and Kasper, 1989).

Many studies have been conducted to demonstrate pragmatic transfer. For instance, researchers observed how Japanese speakers employed Japanese way of expressing gratitude (e.g. Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986), requesting (e.g. Cook and Liddicoat, 2002), and making corrections (e.g. Takahashi and Beebe, 1993) in English. Yang (2002) showed how Korean EFL learners transferred L1 norms of apology to English. Other research has revealed pragmatic transfer from Japanese to German (e.g. Hohenstein, 2005), from Russian to English (e.g. Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986), from Thai to English (e.g. Bergman and Kasper, 1993), from Turkish to English (e.g. Aktuna and Kamisli, 1997), from German to Turkish (e.g. Marti, 2006), from Australian English to Indonesian (e.g. Hassall, 2003), from English to Chinese (e.g. Hong, 1997), and from African languages to English (e.g. Kasanga, 1998).

Moreover, stereotypically indirect peoples have been found to transfer their indirect communication style into English. For example, Japanese people appear to be ambiguous in using nonverbal cues or circular discourse in conversations in English (Lebra, 1976; Mickova, 2003). They tend not to express their ideas directly in cross-cultural business meetings but transfer conventionally indirect request strategies from Japanese to English (March, 1982; Graham, 1983; Graham and Herberger, 1983). Korean learners of English indirectly express outright refusals of propositions in order to avoid losing face (Kang and Lim-Chang, 1998). Chinese learners of English often transfer an indirect, artistic written communication style and Chinese cultural rhetorical patterns into English writing (Gonzalez, Chen and Sanchez, 2001).

Studies have also demonstrated how Chinese people transferred indirectness, a stereotypical characteristic of the nation, into communication in the business world. Wong and Phool-Ching (2000) found that in job interviews, Chinese people stress the maintenance of surface harmony with a group like a family by avoiding using direct, individualized address like I, you, or first names. The Chinese interviewees appear to lack assertiveness, do not contribute to the flow of conversation in the interview setting, and strike American interviewers as self-deprecating, indirect, not confident, and unfit for business management. Even in business negotiations, Chinese negotiators take an indirect style of communication oriented towards collectivism (Cardon and Scott, 2003). They might start negotiations with an introduction to the great history of China, the economic glory of China, the importance of technology or culture exchange between China and the U.S., eventually leading to the business they are supposed to discuss. Also, Chinese people are inclined to employ inductive reasoning in cross-cultural business meetings, which unfortunately perplexes American negotiators and stalls negotiations (Sheer and Chen, 2003).

Outside of the business world, Chinese L1 norms seem to appear in L2 pragmatics as well. Li, Zhu and Li (2001) examined how harmony maintenance, a typical Chinese cultural value, gets transferred into cross-cultural communication in English. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) noticed a deviation from English L1 pragmatics in terms of gratitude expressions produced by Chinese learners of English. Qu and Wang (2005), Liu (1995) and Yuan (1996) examined Chinese native speakers' responses to compliments in English. They observed that the traditional cultural value of being modest is transferred into the target language and thus causes some communication problems. Yeung (1997)

and Cook and Liddicoat (2002) found that Chinese learners of English use Chinese L1 norms when making requests in English. Rose (2000) explored requests, apologies and compliment responses performed by Chinese learners of English in Hong Kong. He discovered that his participants, with increasing proficiency, gradually moved to the target pragmatic norms without relying on pragmatic transfer to realize speech acts.

Nonconventional Findings

Even though research about conventional directness in English-speaking countries and indirectness in non-English-speaking cultures seems to have dominated pragmatics for decades, some studies have shown counterexamples to these findings. Nelson, Al-Batal and Bakary (2002) found that contrary to being conventionally indirect, Egyptian Arabic speakers employed more direct strategies in refusals and compliments than Americans. Americans can be indirect in cross-cultural business negotiations (Billow, 1995). Similarly, other native speakers of English including Australians, Britons, and Canadians may strongly favor indirect query preparatory requests over direct requests (Blum-Kulka, 1983; Fukushima, 1996; Hassall, 2003).

To challenge the traditional literature on directness and indirectness, Miller (1994), having compared communication styles in Japanese culture and American culture, argued that both directness and indirectness are appropriate behaviors for both cultures. However, communication styles might be interpreted differently because of the interlocutors' varying social relationships, presuppositions about communication tasks, and contextualization cues employed to indicate directness and indirectness. Miller found that Japanese speakers often used inbreathed fricative <hss:>, or hiss as a cue to show dispreference, which cannot be picked up by English speakers who would say "no" instead. Not using explicit words like "no" does not necessarily correlate with

indirectness. Contextualization cues like <hss:> do disclose speakers' meanings.

Hence, Miller suggested that hearers rely on discourse structure to interpret talk and ensure good communication.

Likewise, it should not be surprising that Chinese cultural features need to be re-investigated from a new angle. Garrott (1995) conducted a two-part survey of cultural values and of attitudes toward English learning and teaching during class periods to 512 men and women ranging from age eighteen to fifty-two in fifteen colleges and universities in China. The results showed that Chinese students place Confucian values like collectivism, harmony with others, and respect for tradition at a low rank but individualism, self-cultivation, and personal knowledge at a high rank. This study indicates that it is inappropriate to associate Chinese speakers only with traditional collectivist values. Also, Lee (2005) observed that Cantonese speakers make requests in a direct sequence accompanied by fewer directness reduction devices than English speakers. This does not support the stereotypical feature of Chinese culture—indirectness. To some extent, these studies have questioned the validity of labels polarizing populations and warned researchers of the risks of making generalizations about the communication style of an entire culture.

This section has discussed interlanguage, a traditional SLA construct, and important findings in L2 interaction and L2 pragmatics. For example, NNS-NNS interaction, rather than NS-NNS interaction, may allow NNSs to produce more corrected linguistic forms. Bi-directional cross-cultural pragmatics seems able to account for miscommunications more reasonably than uni-directional interlanguage pragmatics. Pragmatic awareness and pragmatic transfer are language/culture specific and tightly

tied to individual and socio-cultural variables. The psychologically-oriented SLA studies need to be complemented by socially-oriented research that investigates social/contextual factors in order to capture complex, non-traditional SLA and sociolinguistic phenomena that occur in the changing world. A good example of these phenomena is English Corners, where Chinese users of English gather to socialize while improving communication skills in English. Undoubtedly, English Corners can evidence globalization and the spread of English to China—an Asian country with a history of more than five thousand years and MC as its prestigious language.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Transnationalism, Globalization and the Spread of English

The studies on cross-cultural pragmatics have given us “a good sense of applying findings from discourse research to solve real communication problems in a shrinking planet” (Boxer, 2002a, p. 152). A shrinking planet is a consequence of transnationalism and globalization. Transnationalism has been defined in anthropology as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.... many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (King, 2007). Kearney (1995) located transnationalism in cultural specificities of local places. This differs from globalization that takes place in global space. Globalization indicates “a perspective beyond the personal, local, and national, and an awareness that human actions and institutions can have worldwide repercussions and implications” (Xanthopoulos, 2007). Both transnationalism and globalization result from new technologies that facilitate worldwide communication, transportation, and capital transfer. Communities all over the

world are deterritorialized (Appadurai, 1996) and experiencing interaction and exchange in one single field to some extent.

With transnationalism and globalization comes the spread of English, as Fishman (1996) stated, “the international world...is linguistically dominated by English almost everywhere, regardless of how well established and well-protected local cultures, languages and identities may otherwise be” (p. 628). Crystal (1997) also noted that approximately 1000 million people speak ESL at varying levels of competence; eighty-five percent of international organizations officially use English; eighty percent of world’s electronic information is conveyed in English; ninety-nine percent of pop music groups work mostly in English; English is widely used in international tourism and film market; in many countries, English is a mandatory course especially in higher education. Even in societies like Columbia, Argentina, Egypt, and Sweden, where English has no official status and its functional range is restricted, the spread of English is going through an unprecedented boom (Velez-Rendon, 2003; Nielsen, 2003; Schaub, 2000; Berg, Hult and King, 2001).

The development of English in the world has been motivated by sociopolitical and econocultural events. Phillipson (1992) suggested that imperialism, coming from the United Kingdom and the United States, is most likely responsible for the spread of English in those parts of the world where English is not a mother tongue. Nonetheless, Brutt-Griffler (2002) contended that the spread of English is a result of historical development, just as Crystal (1997) said that the spread of English occurs in the right place at the right time. The development of the world language, English, is the product of the development of a world econocultural system, which includes a business

community and a cultural life. More importantly, the world language, English, tends to exist along with local languages in multilingual contexts. It is acquired by various levels of a society and spread through macroacquisition (Brutt-Griffler, 2002).

Macroacquisition of English by communities in diverse contexts can lead to language contact and subsequent language change. This calls for reconceptualization of varieties of English across the world.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The role of English has grown in significance to the world after taking in local “innovations and creative impulses” (Kachru and Smith, 2009, p. 9). Since Quirk (1962), Smith (1976) and Kachru (1990) described the divergence of English, varying terms have been coined to capture the flourishing varieties of English in the world. Kachru (1992) used the term World Englishes to describe nativisation and acculturation, two ways of interaction between English and non-English cultures. McKay (2002) proposed English as an International Language in a global sense and in a local sense. In a global sense, English is used for international communication between countries. In a local sense, English is embedded in the culture of a country and serves wider communication between multilingual societies. Crystal (2003) preferred English as a Global Language since roughly one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language. Interaction in English between speakers who do not have a grasp of standard grammar or recognized norm might expedite the process of “internationalisation and destandardization” (Seidlhofer, 2004. p. 4).

Following UNESCO’s (1953) definition of a lingua franca, Seidlhofer (2001) and Jenkins (2006a) liked the term English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) because it suggests “any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues”

(Samarin, 1987, p. 371). Pickering (2006) agreed and defined ELF as “talk comprising expanding circle speaker-listeners, also described as nonnative speakers (NNSs), competent L2 speakers” (p. 2). The message that a lingua franca has no native speakers was further reinforced in Firth’s (1996) description of English as “a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (p. 240). In Dewey’s (2007) words, ELF “is fundamentally different [from American English/British English] for the fluid nature of the communities of practice that use it, and for the flexibility displayed in the use of linguistic resources” (p. 349).

Even though Seidlhofer (2004, 2005) later concluded that the narrow definition of ELF should be revised because ELF interactions may include speakers outside the Expanding Circle in varying settings, ELF interactions are generally understood as interactions “between members of two or more different lingua cultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue” (House, 1999, p. 74). ELF researchers (e.g. Firth, 1996) have revealed some characteristics of ELF interaction: (1) ELF interlocutors do not run into miscommunication breakdowns very often; when misunderstanding happens, they tend to change topic and occasionally use communication strategies such as rephrasing and repetition; (2) interlocutors hardly transfer L1 norms into ELF interaction; (3) interlocutors may share the let-it-pass principle and overtly show consensus and cooperation.

ELF interaction differs from foreigner talk, interlanguage talk or learner interaction because the former involves unprejudiced description, takes a pluricentric view based

on local norms, and is not reduced but relatively stable in its own norms (Davies, 1989). By contrast, the latter indicates linguistic/pragmatic incompetence, takes a monocentric view based on native English norms, and changes along the interlanguage continuum towards target norms. ELF interactional features strongly suggest that speakers of ELF are language users in their own right and they follow certain norms independent of either their own native language or English as a native language. It is not appropriate to stigmatize ELF speakers as failed native speakers (Cook, 1999) or deficient nonnative speakers of English (Thomas, 1983). ELF, just like other language varieties, is not an interlanguage (Davies, 1989) but an effective means of communication.

English in China

Even though NSs of English intuitively feel the ownership of English, those who speak English as a lingua franca might have the power to determine its world future due to globalization and increasing varieties of English. “For the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions, and as a consequence, is being shaped, in its international uses, at least as much by its nonnative speakers as its native speakers” (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 3). Graddol (2006) claimed that NNSs have come to outnumber NSs, and that most interactions in English take place in the absence of NSs. This can be partially attributed to nonnative teachers who work in a wide range of settings to teach English as a second/foreign language (Bolton, 2005). According to Bolton (2003), the number of secondary school teachers of English in China alone now totals around 500,000.

Mainland China may exemplify a country developing at a rapid pace owing to globalization. After the historic Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee Meeting of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978, economic reforms were launched to

restructure and accelerate China's economy. An Open Door Policy has been enforced to lead China to join the trend of globalization. Opening up China to international markets has caused unprecedented economic, social, cultural, and ideological changes in Chinese society. Foreign investment and advanced technology from other countries have been introduced into China; Special Economic Zones have taken the lead to modernize China; personal income has significantly increased; people's lifestyle has become much diversified; traditional Confucianism and collectivism have been shaken (Zhang, 2001). With an open mind and a young heart, China is emerging as a world power.

The economic reforms and the Open Door Policy enthroned English as the first foreign language in Mainland China and triggered a great boom in English education across the country. English has kept its supremacy in foreign language education in Mainland China for decades. The rapid pace at which English education has been growing can be demonstrated by the completion of transition from English as a mandatory course only in secondary and tertiary education to English as a mandatory course at all levels of education. According to The Ministry of Education Guidelines for Vigorously Promoting the Teaching of English in Primary Schools issued on January 18, 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001), students are required to take English classes at and above the third grade of elementary school. Therefore, most people, after their college education, will normally have had an admirable history of studying English for at least ten years. Unfortunately, having studied English in the classroom setting for a decade does not ensure that learners can communicate in English fluently because there is not

much reinforcement from English newspapers, English TV programs, and native speakers of English in Mainland China.

Despite little exposure to authentic native English, macroacquisition of English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002) is happening in Mainland China. After China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and held the Olympic Games in 2008, English has reached a new peak with educationalists and ordinary Chinese people. Many taxi drivers, businessmen, and those who work in international corporations in modernized cities have been studying English. An increasing number of Chinese learners of English frequent English Corners, mini English environments in the large Chinese-dominated environment, which has led to an growing number of active Chinese users of English and a more distinctive variety of English.

Further Discussion on Relevant Theories

Speech Community and Native Speaker

The concept Speech Community overlaps with the concept Native Speaker, based on the traditional definitions of these two notions, with regards to their properties, functions and limitations. Both members of the speech community and members of the native speaker camp receive their membership owing to shared external properties. Both memberships belong to relatively fixed, stable social categories and display more group identities than individual identities. Common social practice is not required for membership. Also, members of a speech community have seemingly more similarities than differences just as the notion Native Speaker suggests NSs' inherently higher level of competence in comparison with NNSs. A speech community might preclude people who do not share external properties and focus on central members; the native speaker camp precludes NNSs who are considered deficient even if they may have reached

high language proficiency and social competence. Both the speech community and the native speaker camp unconsciously share social norms and set them up for outsiders to follow. It is essential to complement these constructs and employ more inclusive ones for fluid communities and new language varieties, considering that the world, cultural norms, social values and languages are rapidly changing and inextricably intertwined.

Community of Practice and ELFP Speaker

Just as the concept Speech Community overlaps with the concept Native Speaker, the notion Community of Practice shares features with the notion of ELF. Both members of the community of practice and members of the ELF Speaker camp receive their membership through common social activities. The community of practice is characterized by fluid social categories or boundaries and acknowledges the complexity of social groups; similarly, the ELF speaker camp rejects the notion of boundary but accepts hybridity willingly. The community of practice allows individual identities to develop and negotiate with group identity, while the ELF speaker camp permits norms that differ from both L1 and L2 to exist and refuses to blindly follow L2 norms. Furthermore, both blur the distinction between peripheral members/NNSs and central members/NSs; both derogate homogeneous, stable norms but welcome heterogeneous, changing norms.

Built upon the concept of ELF, English as a Lingua Franca of Practice (ELFP) is hereby proposed to be a more appropriate term for the variety of English spoken at English Corners in Mainland China for two reasons. First, ELF speakers do not share L1s but have to communicate in English; ELFP speakers share the same native language and culture but choose to communicate in English. ELF speakers gather for social and business purposes; ELFP speakers gather for social, learning and practice

purposes because practicing the use of English in the Chinese-dominated environment is the key motive for communities at English Corners. Therefore, ELFP distinguishes itself from ELF and would work better to capture the sociolinguistic phenomena of English Corners.

As Jenkins (2006b) pointed out, traditional research may not accept language forms that do not adhere to native speaker norms: the strength of the notions of community of practice and ELFP lies in their consistent pluralism and inclusiveness. We have to move forward from conventional notions of language variety and speech community, and acknowledge the pluralism involved in language use if we do not want to risk freezing English spatially and temporally (Giddens, 1990). The local often becomes defamiliarized and the global familiarized (Robertson, 1995) due to transnationalism and globalization which are driving a construction of new economic, social, and political world orders, and affecting almost every aspect of our lives.

The previous sections have discussed several key concepts used in this dissertation—Speech Community, Community of Practice, Interlanguage, ELF and ELFP. We have also compared Speech Community with Community of Practice, Interlanguage pragmatics with Cross-cultural pragmatics, Interlanguage with ELF, ELF with ELFP, Speech Community with Native Speaker, and Community of Practice with ELFP Speaker. The discussion shows that the Speech Community Model may work very well for research on interaction in MC, and the Community of Practice Model for interaction in ELFP.

The Speech Event of Disagreement

Sociocultural knowledge about how to express disagreement appropriately is essential for both L1 and L2 speakers to fit into a society smoothly. Disagreement, like

challenge, denial, accusation, threat and insult, is a type of oppositional talk that people use to express opposite viewpoints (Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004). Leech (1983) proposed an Agreement Maxim contending that people reduce disagreement between self and other in order to enhance agreement. He believed in a general tendency to mitigate disagreement through showing partial agreement, expressing regret, and using hedges. Brown and Levinson (1978) also indicated that there is a universal tendency that people attempt to avoid disagreement by “pretending to agree”, “displacing disagreement”, “telling white lies”, or “hedging opinions with such expressions as ‘sort of’, ‘well’, and ‘really...in a way’” (pp. 117-122). These theoretical discussions of disagreement behavior were enriched and further developed by Pearson’s (1986) and Pomerantz’s (1984) linguistic data from English L1 speakers and proposal of agreement and disagreement patterns.

Pomerantz (1984) summarized two types of disagreement: strong disagreement versus weak disagreement. Strong disagreement is not preceded by agreement components, whereas weak disagreement employs delay devices such as silence, hesitation, repair initiator, repetition, clarification request, hedge, or partial agreement to postpone the emergence of disagreement. In other words, because listeners orient to disagreeing as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, and even offensive, speakers maximize the occurrences of agreement and minimize the occurrences of disagreement. However, self-deprecation is a different case because self-deprecated speakers feel more comfortable when listeners respond with strong overt disagreement or weak covert agreement. Thus, listeners tend to react to self-deprecation by

undermining it, negating it, giving compliments, proffering a second self-deprecation, or maintaining neutrality.

Disagreement Patterns in L1s

In addition to the above research, disagreement exchanges in English have been investigated in various domains in other studies (e.g. Kuo, 1994; Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Gruber, 2001; Jacobs, 2002; Clayman, 2002; Kaufmann, 2002; Norrick and Spitz, 2008). Some researchers (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; O'Donnell, 1990; Walker, 1987; Locher, 2004) found strong disagreement in L1 speakers' non-self-deprecation speech data as a result of power exertion. In general, scholars have found that high-status interlocutors tend to disagree with low-status interlocutors more directly and strongly in varying settings, with the exception of Rees-Miller (2000), who had opposite findings in the conversations between professors and students. Katriel (1986) and Schiffrin (1984) examined natural conversations between Jewish people with little status difference. They came to a similar conclusion that disagreement does not necessarily appear as a dispreferred action which threatens social interaction, but sometimes acts as a form of sociability that works to build solidarity.

Several scholars (e.g. LoCastro, 1987; Kangasharju, 2002; Edstrom, 2004) have looked at disagreement exchanges in non-English languages. Kakava (2002) described disagreement behavior in Modern Greek in support of Schiffrin's (1984) findings. Georgakopoulou (2001) provided additional positive evaluations on disagreement in Greek and showed that disagreement could be a process of collaborative perspective building. As Bond (1986) and Ting-Toomey (1988) argued that Chinese people avoid direct disagreement to maintain harmony, Pan (2000) observed that low ranking officials disagree indirectly; Du (1995) and Liu (2004) concluded that Chinese people tend to opt

out of disagreement or disagree indirectly with people who have higher status.

However, these studies on Chinese L1 speakers examined disagreement behavior either in business, official, family or academic settings. Their findings might not be able to apply to natural conversations in Mandarin in informal, non-familial settings.

Disagreement Patterns in L2s

Relatively fewer studies have addressed the disagreement behavior of people speaking English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). It was observed that Japanese EFL students tend to opt out of producing disagreement due to pressure from status difference (Pearson, 1984; Walkinshaw, 2007). If they need to express disagreement, they are indirect most of the time (Beebe and Takahashi, 1989b) but direct occasionally using explicit expressions such as 'I disagree' (Pearson, 1986, p. 51). Conversely, Greek learners of English expressed disagreement very directly to American professors in class (Kakava, 1995). Likewise, ESL students from other cultures often employed strong disagreement without agreement components more frequently (Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001; Kreutel, 2007); as time passed by, these students might gradually learn from their exchanges with English L1 speakers to use partial agreement or hedges and to postpone disagreement (Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004). In contrast, Habib (2008) looked at naturally occurring cross-cultural communication data collected from informal social gatherings. She contended that advanced ESL speakers, even though they had been in the United States for a while, could disagree very directly and strongly to educate each other, to preserve individual pragmatics and to build relational identity (Boxer, 2002b, 2004), while maintaining good relationship.

Sociolinguistic Variables and Speech Acts

Social Status

Considering the complexities of spoken interaction, researchers (e.g. Kecskes, 2006) have highlighted the importance of taking account of varying social factors including social status/ power, social distance, sex, age and education in accounting for the complex ways in which speech behaviors are realized. The specification of the impact of sociolinguistic variables on politeness is one of the greatest strengths of the face-work approach to politeness (Holtgraves, 2005). Brown and Levinson (1987) discussed the influence of power and social distance on politeness strategies. Scollon and Scollon (1995) also stated that politeness strategies are mainly influenced by sociological variables such as relative power and social distance when they study discourse-level cross-cultural communication. The inclusion of social status/power and social distance in the politeness theory is noteworthy because they clearly are two major dimensions underlying social interaction in western cultures (Wish, Deutsch and Kaplan, 1976). For instance, in a conversation, lower status interlocutors tend to prefer agreement and avoid frequent and intense dispreferred utterances; higher status interlocutors tend to initiate topic changes and control the direction of the conversation (Holtgraves, 2005).

Language users have sensitivity to the relationship between what is said, how to manipulate words and how those words influence the hearer. Interlocutors are capable of fully utilizing special linguistic forms of their own native languages to fit into the social situation where social distance and social status matter (Lee, 2005). Some studies have shown a linear relationship between social status/power and directness (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson (1985) found that in Israeli society, the

lower status the hearer has, the more direct their conversation turns out. Relative social power in that society affects choice of requesting behavior. Beebe and Takahashi (1989a) noted that Japanese speakers' expressions of disagreement are constrained by the interlocutors' social status. They are unwilling to express disagreements in exchanges with high-power interlocutors (Walkinshaw, 2007). Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) discovered the same thing in refusals by Japanese speakers. Takahashi (1993) observed that Japanese use softeners when talking to higher-status interlocutors but few softeners when talking to lower-status interlocutors. Egi (1999) found that Japanese speakers tend to complain to interlocutors who assumedly have less power rather than those who have high power. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) attested the effect of power relationships on the requesting behavior of Argentine Spanish speaker. Byon (2004) revealed that Koreans, pressured by social status difference, indirectly addressed junior professors. Based on their research on L2 learners in an American university, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996) finally concluded that status inequality might influence the course of development of interlanguage pragmatics in the institutional setting.

The impact of social status on interaction also emerged in Locher's (2004) study. Locher examined the interaction of social status/power and politeness in the expression of disagreements in varying settings in the United States including a family, a business meeting and a political interview. She demonstrated that participants of differing statuses exercise power in accordance with the context of an interaction. The equality or inequality of statuses seems to severely affect whether a disagreement in an interaction is negotiable or not, although other factors, such as conversation topic,

interlocutors' speaking style, cultural background or sex, also contribute to the negotiability of a disagreement. Locher's investigation of the exercise of power in disagreement exchanges led her to these conclusions:

“Power is (often) expressed through language. Power cannot be explained without contextualization. Power is relational, dynamic and contestable. The interconnectedness of language and society can also be seen in the display of power. Freedom of action is needed to exercise power. The restriction of an interactant's action-environment often leads to the exercise of power. The exercise of power involves a latent conflict and clash of interests, which can be obscured because of a society's ideologies.” (pp. 321-322).

Nevertheless, the interaction between social status/power and politeness seems weakened in some studies. Holmes (1984) showed that greater politeness investment does not necessarily encode lack of power in conversational interaction. Byon (2004) found that American students may not be affected by social status because they tend to address junior professors directly. Conversely, American professors may not express disagreement directly to students even though they have high institutional power (Kakava, 1995). Takahashi (1993) also discovered that Americans tend to soften their expressions to both people of higher status and lower status.

Social Distance

Before Locher published her insightful perspectives on power, Wolfson's (1989) Bulge Theory had already captured the effect of social status difference and social distance on a conversation to a great degree. After examining the speech behavior of middle-class Americans, Wolfson claimed that people of equal status are open to negotiation while people of unequal status discourage attempts at negotiation. She also

observed that the speech behaviors of status unequals, intimates and strangers share commonalities just as the speech behaviors of status-equal friends, nonintimates and acquaintances are similar. This occurs probably because status unequals, intimates and strangers have relatively certain and stable relationships and they know what they should expect and what is expected of them; however, status equal friends, nonintimates and acquaintances have uncertain and dynamic relationships and they do not know what to expect and what is expected of them. The first group of people simply acts according to their expectations, whereas the second group of people needs to carefully figure out expectations, signal solidarity and avoid offensive utterances. Hence, she concluded that power and distance affect politeness, which can be represented by a bulge shaped curve. In speech acts including requests, compliments, refusals, disapprovals and apologies, intimates use the same politeness patterns as status unequals and strangers, whereas non-intimates use similar politeness patterns as status-equal friends and acquaintances.

Wolfson's theory was well supported by some studies on speech acts. For examples, Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) found that status unequals use restrained and unelaborated thanks, whereas friends use formulaic thanks and considerable elaboration to express gratitude. Accordingly, they concluded, "shorter thanking episodes sometimes reflected greater social distance between interlocutors" (p. 177). Likewise, Beebe (1985) found that both intimates and strangers who speak American English in her study were brief and direct in refusals. They meant what they said and they did what they said. By contrast, friends and acquaintances tend to "get involved in long negotiations with multiple repetitions, extensive elaborations, and a wide variety of

semantic formulas” (p. 4). Native speakers of American English working in service encounters also directly express disapproval if they are intimates or strangers. However, they may be very indirect if they are acquaintances or friends among nonintimates (D’Amico-Reisner, 1983). In D’Amico-Reisner’s study, more than ninety percent of the disapproval exchanges among nonintimates occurred between strangers who behave very similarly to intimates; intimates and strangers occupied opposite ends of a social spectrum continuum; acquaintances or friends among nonintimates occupied the middle range of the social spectrum. This indicates a clear association between direct disapproval expression and intimates/strangers. Likewise, Ervin-Tripp (1976) observed a linear relationship between directness and social distance. Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson (1985) found that in Israeli society, the more the speaker knows the hearer, the more direct their conversation turns out.

Nevertheless, the seemingly stable correlation between social distance and directness has been put in question by some researchers. Marquez Reiter (2000) revealed a negative correlation between social distance and directness in British English and Uruguayan Spanish speakers. These speakers tended to be more indirect when interacting with people they were not familiar with than when interacting with those whom they knew well. Similarly, Peninsular and Uruguayan Spanish speakers showed a negative correlation between directness and social distance. Interlocutors realized requests more indirectly to people they did not know well (Marquez Reiter, 2002). Boxer (1993a) examined the relationship between social distance, the degree of politeness in verbal exchanges and the speech act of indirect complaints. She analyzed the data for indirect complaint behavior in a northeastern American university

community and found that strangers and intimates exhibit disparate behavior for both indirect complaint theme and indirect complaint response. These Americans tend to interact differently with intimates than with friends, acquaintances and strangers. They are more direct with those closest to them than with others. This indicates that the Bulge shape Wolfson proposed for compliments and invitations is actually skewed toward one end of the continuum or the other. Therefore, Boxer concluded, “quantified data from other speech act studies might indeed show similar patterns when plotted out along the same continuum. It seems clear that such a precise graphing of data is necessary before a theory of social distance can be put forth with any degree of certainty.” (p. 124).

Sex

In addition to social status and social distance, researchers have directed their effort towards the relationship between sex and speech behavior. Labov (1994) argued that studying sex differences in interaction can help understand the mechanism of language change. Sociolinguists have discovered systematic sex-based linguistic patterns. Women are said to use fewer stigmatized and nonstandard variants than men in the same speech community (Chambers, 1995). Women appear more sensitive to prestigious linguistic patterns than men and might enjoy asserting their status within the social structure (Labov, 1972; Romaine, 1978), just as Holmes (1997) stated, “language is an important means by which women assert their authority and position, a form of symbolic capital for women” (p. 135).

There is not necessarily a clear-cut dichotomy between women and men. However, women and men have shown vast differences in terms of language use (Chambers, 1992). Women tend to use language to establish and develop personal

relationships, whereas men tend to use language to obtain and convey information (Tannen, 1990). Women might use more hedges and tag questions than men; women seem to compliment others (Manes and Wolfson, 1983) and apologize more often than men do (Holmes, 1995). Women appear less direct and tend to embed underlying messages into utterances, while men might have an opposite conversation style (Tannen, 1990). Women seem to commiserate more than men (Boxer, 1993b). Women appear to mitigate disagreement more often than men at academic conferences (Swacker, 1979). Even though these claims are grounded in English speaking communities, researchers have discovered that women and men behave quite differently in other communities as well. Furo (2000) found that Japanese females use a greater number of reactive tokens such as backchannels or reactive lexicons as responses in conversations than males. Gass (1986) found that male nonnative speakers appear to dominate conversations while female nonnative speakers tend to initiate meaning negotiations.

Despite the sex differences shown in the above studies, some linguists have demonstrated that females and males perform speech acts in very similar ways. For instance, Kemper (1984) did not find much sex difference in Americans' requesting behavior. Zimin (1981) revealed little effect of sex difference in apologies realized by English and Spanish native speakers. Moreover, Mills (2003) argued against stereotypes of sex and politeness. According to her, the traditional views that women are more indirect and polite and that they want to cooperate and avoid conflict are based on the assumption that women are socially powerless and linguistically powerless. These views fail to describe women's enhanced social status and linguistic

power in the changing world and society owing to their active participation in the public sphere. In real-life situations, women can be as direct, assertive, impolite and powerful as men. It is important to take into account other social factors when analyzing sex role in speech act performance in specific contexts.

Age

As another independent variable, age can make a big difference in interlocutors' speech act behavior (Cook, 1990). Ervin-Tripp (1982) observed that young American children might adjust their behavior in accordance with the relative power of speaker and addressee, and the social distance between them. They tend to use more imperatives when talking to mothers than to fathers; they may aggressively give orders to siblings but politely request from strangers. Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984) also contended that children at a certain age are very sensitive to degree of imposition in making a request. Only by school age do children become aware of what might be disruptive to the hearer and thus vary their language accordingly. Both Israeli children and adults vary the indirectness of their requests according to the age and social status of the addressee (Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson, 1985). However, Goodwin (1983) observed that children attempt to achieve aggravated disagreement; they use "intonation contours, turn shapes and patterning in sequences of talk to display rather than put off the expression of opposition" (p.675). This differs from adults' preference for agreement and dispreference for disagreement (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984).

Education

Individuals within the same society might have differing patterns of speech act performance due to sociolinguistic variables including level of education (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). Some of the previous studies held education as a constant variable

and compared the speech act realization of participants with similar educational backgrounds. Others observed participants in an extremely wide range of educational levels without comparing the effects of different educational levels on their speech act realization. Unfortunately, few studies have overtly looked into the relationship between the variable of education and speech act realization. However, some linguists might make the assumption that language learners' proficiency levels overlap with their educational levels. For instance, Trosborg (1987) assumed three educational levels as three proficiency levels. She observed that when language proficiency increases, suggesting an increase in learners' educational level, learners acquire native-like request strategies including higher frequencies of adjuncts. She concluded that learners' repertoires of pragmatic routines and other linguistic means of speech act realization expand as their proficiencies increase.

Language Proficiency

Unlike educational level, language proficiency is quite often considered in SLA research. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) argued that a higher lexico-grammatical proficiency facilitates pragmatic proficiency. If learners have low proficiency and a strong L1-dominated conceptual system, they will most probably fail to comprehend and produce norms of L2 speech acts (Kecskes, 2006). Takahashi (2005a) showed that learners' higher awareness of L2 pragmatic norms would lead to appropriate L2 speech act realization. Takahashi and DuFon (1989) reported that when Japanese learners of English reach a higher proficiency, they change their indirect requesting strategies and acquire more direct, native-like conventions. Maeshiba et al. (1996) observed that advanced Japanese learners of English transfer fewer apology strategies from Japanese to English than intermediate learners. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) also

found a positive relationship between L2 proficiency and learners' use of target-like supportive moves in the speech act of requesting. Rose (2000) reported that the higher students' L2 proficiency, the less their dependence on pragmatic transfer to realize L2 speech acts.

Even though empirical studies have demonstrated the potential facilitative role of language proficiency in SLA, some scholars (e.g. Kreutel, 2007) can still argue that more studies need to be done to confirm a strong or significant correlation between proficiency and pragmatic competence or L2 speech act realization. No empirical data have indicated that pragmatic competence is automatically linked to proficiency in the grammatical and lexical spheres or that proficiency gives rise to pragmatic competence (Kreutel, 2007). Learners' pragmatic competence may or may not be native-like regardless of L2 proficiency. Both the low- and high-proficiency learners depend on their L1 speech act strategies to realize L2 speech acts. An interesting observation is that low-proficiency learners, rather than high-proficiency learners, may show higher pragmatic competence if they know relevant L2 conventions of realizing speech acts in specific contexts (Takahashi, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1996) or if they have so limited L2 knowledge that they cannot transfer L1 conventions to realize L2 speech acts (Blum-Kulka, 1991; Olshtain and Cohen, 1989). Lack of L2 socio-cultural knowledge is a crucial factor affecting the advanced nonnative speakers' interlanguage (Felix-Brasdefer, 2003).

Sociolinguistic Variables of Chinese Participants

It is definitely a challenging task for MC speakers to acquire pragmatic knowledge of English. Interlocutors' patterns of speech act performance may indicate social hierarchy in Mainland China. Scollon and Scollon (1991, 1994) divided complex

relationships in Asian countries, including China, into categories—inside relationships and outside relationships. Inside relationships refer to five classical Confucian relationships (ruler-ruled, parent-child, husband-wife, elder-younger, friend-friend). These include people sharing experiences at the same school, same town or same workplace. Outside relationships are temporary relationships with strangers such as salesmen, bank tellers and taxi drivers. Within the inside relationships, social hierarchy functions to influence which one of the interlocutors speaks first, who dominates conversations, who changes topics, and who uses politeness strategies. Because China is a society that places great importance on social hierarchy, Chinese people are sensitive to the hierarchical order among speakers. They are more concerned with situational factors incorporated in the setting, “individuals’ appropriate place and behavior among their fellow men” (Hsu, 1981, p. 12). Interlocutors need to know “each other’s social attributes in order to behave appropriately within this hierarchical structure. Attention is paid to how to use politeness strategies to signal social differences appropriately” (Pan, 2000, p. 18).

Since Chinese interlocutors are very conscious of their place in society, it is important to discuss some social factors that might affect their speech act realization. Du (1995) examined the realization in Chinese of three face-threatening acts—complaining, giving bad news and disagreeing. He used a nineteen-item production questionnaire to collect data from thirty college students in Beijing, China, each item describing a face-threatening situation for participants to respond to. The results showed that college students avoid complaints that might damage hearers’ face, that they give hints for bad news to reduce its severity, and that they indirectly express

disagreement to avoid confrontation when hearers have higher social status/power. Likewise, Liu (2004) employed DCTs to examine institutions and found the role of social status/power critical in interlocutors' disagreement behavior. Despite the limitations of DCTs, the two studies demonstrated how social status constrains the interaction between Chinese interlocutors in formal academic settings. However, research needs to be done to show the effect of sociolinguistic variables on speech act realization of MC and ELFP speakers conducting naturally occurring conversations in informal non-familial settings.

Social status is defined as the location of a person within the Chinese social system (Ho, 1976). People's social status may be conventionally indicated by their socioeconomic status, political/administrative status, sex, age or education. Access to and drawing upon these "power resources" (Norrick and Spitz, 2008, p. 1662) may cause status difference and influence on conversational interaction. In other words, males with a higher socioeconomic status, a higher political/administrative status, a higher age, a better education background tend to have a higher social status with high power. Higher-status people may manipulate interactions and express disagreement very directly without considering lower-status people's face want. Lower-status people tend to be more agreeable and use more politeness strategies. However, Sealey (2007) posited, "even deep immersion in participation and observation of the practices of the people being studied will not yield unmediated descriptions of their location in different kinds of social relations" (p. 646).

The MC and ELFP speakers in this study were strangers, acquaintances or friends who did not have political/administrative power over one another; they conversed about

everyday topics that did not involve conflicts of interest in informal non-familial settings. Their social interaction quintessentially differs from the interaction that happens in business, official or academic settings where political/administrative status or power difference is obvious and critical. Therefore, in this study, sex, age, education and socioeconomic status or income, rather than political/ administrative status, are considered. Social distance is also considered due to its important role in conversational interaction. Moreover, with “a participant-oriented view of social categories” (Sealey, 2007, p. 646), the study includes other sociolinguistic variables such as years of studying English, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries, because some participants spoke both MC and ELFP.

When examining interaction in MC and ELFP by people living in Nanchang, this study does not presume the influence of specific sociolinguistic variables but focuses on salient social categories and salient interactional features/speech acts that emerge in data transcription and analysis. Since the Speech Community Model is adopted for MC data and the Community of Practice Model for ELFP data, different interactional features/speech acts and social categories might occur as salient, whereas some salient items might overlap in different data sets. It is interesting to examine all the data sets on a general scale and even more interesting to look at the MC and ELFP conversations produced by same participants on a specific scale because any overlapped salient interactional features/speech acts of the same participants might reveal the trace of pragmatic transfer.

This section has discussed how social status, social distance, sex, age, education and language proficiency may affect speakers’ speech behavior in general. Even

though the effect of social factors has received comparatively little attention in the field of pragmatics (Barron, 2005), it is necessary to consider the interaction of salient abstract social categories, speech behavior, pragmatic transfer, and pragmatic awareness within the frameworks of Speech Community and Community of Practice. The role of social status has stood out and been discussed in a few studies on Chinese culture, society and communication. To investigate which sociolinguistic variables emerge as salient in the dynamics of social interaction in Mainland China, detailed analysis and discussion are presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Since this study involves both L1 and L2 users in various discourses, it is reasonable to draw on approaches to SLA and discourse analysis. This study employs Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and Ethnographic Interviewing (EI) to examine social interaction and disagreement behavior of MC and ELFP speakers. These two approaches have advantages over traditional approaches to SLA and other approaches to discourse analysis. The following discussion discloses the reasons for selecting IS and EI for the current study.

Traditional Approaches to SLA

Traditional SLA researchers tend to carefully construct experiments to control and manipulate variables (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) listed varieties of instruments used to obtain SLA data such as structured exercises, completion tasks, story-telling and cloze. Ellis (1994) summarized two ways to collect traditional research data: clinical elicitation and experimental elicitation. For example, judgment tests (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989) are widely used to test L2 learners' linguistic competence. Verbal reports (Chase and Ericsson, 1981, 1982; Ericsson and Simon, 1993; Cohen, 1996; Gass, 2001; Leow and Morgan-Short, 2004) are obtained through thinking aloud, introspection and retrospection. However, Birdsong (1989) pointed out the difficulty of gaining reliable judgments from illiterate bilinguals without biases or from L2 learners who vary in their performance skills. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) discovered problems of validity and reliability in verbal reporting. For instance, subjects may report what they think they should have been doing or what they think researchers are looking for, instead of what they are actually doing. Some subjects may

not verbalize significant information because they cannot think aloud while performing a task.

A majority of studies on interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics have employed discourse completion tasks (DCTs) to examine speech acts (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Olshtain and Blum-Kulka, 1985; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; Beebe and Cummings, 1985; House and Kasper, 1987; Olshtain and Weinbach, 1987; Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Takahashi and Beebe, 1993; Aktuna and Kamish, 1997; Hong, 1997; Yang, 2002; Marti, 2006; Banerjee and Carrell, 1988; Yuan, 1996; Cook and Liddicoat, 2002; Du, 1995; Liu, 2004). However, this study does not collect data through DCTs because of its limitations on authenticity and validity. Responses to DCTs may not “represent the actual wording used in real interaction; the range of formulas and strategies used; the length of response or the number of turns it takes to fulfill the function; the depth of emotion that in turn qualitatively affects the tone, content, and form of linguistic performance; the number of repetitions and elaborations that occur; or the actual rate of occurrence of a speech act” (Kasper and Dahl, 1991, p. 38). Furthermore, data collected through DCTs may be biased because illiterate people cannot complete DCTs, participants may not respond to some questions, and others may not correctly understand questions. DCTs of different designs may lead to different research results. Accordingly, data collected through DCTs cannot be compared to data of actual conversational interaction (Wolfson, Marmor and Jones, 1989).

Considering the disadvantages of DCTs, some researchers (e.g. Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1987; Tanaka, 1988; Andersen, 1989; Wildner-Bassett, 1994; Houck and

Gass, 1996; Rose, 2000; Hassall, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin, 2005; Felix-Brasdefer, 2005, 2006) preferred the technique of role plays because they allow researchers to study speech behavior in its full discourse context. They “allow us to observe how speech act performance is sequentially organized...what kinds of interlocutor responses are elicited by specific strategic choices, and how such responses in turn determine the speaker’s next move” (Kasper and Dahl, 1991, p. 19). They are more natural than elicitation techniques and replicable when needed. Nevertheless, Kasper and Dahl (1991) raised doubts as to the feasibility of this research method. Role plays are not as authentic as naturally occurring conversations because participants may behave differently in role-play situations from in real-life situations. They might not take role plays seriously or they might act in accordance with what they think researchers expect to see.

To gain in-depth insights about participants’ speech behavior, face-to-face interviews may be conducted. They have an advantage over other procedures in that they are personalized and flexible, seeking free responses and thought-provocative information. Structured interviews occur when researchers present questions to interviewees from the start to the end. This works well for researchers to obtain uniform and specific information from a large number of participants even though interviewees are not allowed to elaborate on their answers. Semi-open interviews start with specific core questions determined by researchers in advance and move towards in-depth explanation, though within limits, as interviews proceed. Open/unstructured interviews take place in informal talks and allow interviewees to express thoughts with more freedom and details. Open interviews might start with a topic but later proceed without

any control from researchers because they do not prepare a list of questions to ask interviewees. This way, unexpected but significant information might emerge naturally. However, any type of interviews can be costly, time-consuming and difficult to carry out. They are criticized for potential subjectivity and bias because in interviews, participants might provide answers that they think will please researchers (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989).

Approaches to Discourse Analysis

Since traditional psycholinguistic approaches to SLA such as elicitation techniques, DCTs, role plays and structured interviews may not provide authentic and valid data, sociolinguistic approaches seem more feasible for this study, which targets natural conversations in society. Socially oriented approaches are grounded in the belief that language learning occurs in “socially constituted webs of communicative practices” and that “psychological development [is] socially rooted and conjointly constructed” (Hall, 1997, p. 304). These approaches study communicative moments that occur in the context where both individual behavior and socio-cultural processes play a role. They can “offer fairly compatible insights” into L2 processes (Boxer, 2008). Including them into psycholinguistically based SLA research can definitely provide applied linguists with more varieties of channels to understand language learning in society and the interaction between cognitive ability and social factors. More importantly, such approaches as IS and EI can provide emic perspectives and objective descriptions of broad phenomena along with local features of language processes.

IS and EI stand out as better approaches for this study than others for the following reasons. First of all, IS (Goffman, 1969; Gumperz, 1992) is a more comprehensive approach to discourse analysis than the Speech Act Theory (SAT) (Searle, 1969).

Although SAT successfully incorporates speech acts into linguistic theory and raises linguists' awareness of the performance of utterances that used to be considered only descriptive, it does not intend to address the correlation between language use and speakers' cultural and social backgrounds. It completely ignores the function of non-verbal signals that can facilitate communication. It limits findings to small domains which may not be able to make inferences about speakers' socio-cultural schemata (Schiffrin, 1994). It might lead to imprecise interpretations rather than thought-provoking explanation.

In contrast, IS looks into both verbal and nonverbal features of interaction and seeks larger social implications. This approach, "known as a microethnography, is a methodological approach to interactional analysis using video-taped data and taking into account non-verbal behavior such as facial gestures, postural shifts, and proxemics" in addition to verbal behavior (Boxer, 2002b, p. 13). Gumperz's (1992) view of language "as a socially and culturally constructed symbol system" used to "reflect macro-level social meanings and create micro-level social meanings" (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 102) expands the limits of the seemingly outdated SAT. This view discloses the connection between language and society, indicating that language actively creates a world instead of staying as an isolated language (Schiffrin, 1994). In other words, IS addresses both verbal and non-verbal features of either interpersonal or social interaction and situates inferences in contexts, which increases the accuracy of inferences and suffices to illustrate why a particular utterance is used in a particular way and how that affects interaction. Hence, its findings may have implications for a larger social domain.

Secondly, EI, the major research method in the Ethnography of Communication (EC), allows consideration of sociocultural contexts for data interpretation, which would not be possible for Conversation Analysis (CA). CA is fundamentally built on the beliefs that structured conversation provides a source for social order and that “the relevance of context is grounded in text” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 236). CA distrusts premature generalizations and idealizations as a basis for social science or human action; it also “distrusts linguistic categorizations of the functions of particular words or expressions” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 234). CA seeks to discover the structures of communication such as opening, turn-taking, and closing (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) without presuppositions about interlocutors. It focuses on sequences of utterances in a conversation but ignores the effects of cultural background or social context on human communication. This structural approach views each utterance as dependent on other utterances while ignoring its dependence in a world of social relations.

In contrast, EC intends to “analyze patterns of communication as part of cultural knowledge and behavior” (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 137). It holds the belief that communication through language not only reveals and sustains culture but also is constrained by culture. It provides explanations that locate behaviors in a wider context of beliefs, actions, and norms (Schiffrin, 1994). Enriched by the SPEAKING grid that Hymes (1972b) proposed, this ethnographic approach aims to frequently demonstrate structures and functions adapting to different cultural systems by analyzing videotaped, audio-taped data, field notes or participant observations (Boxer, 2002b). Data may derive from ethnographic interviews that are often used to obtain information about a research topic from participants. Interviews are initiated and continue with researcher

prompting. Due to the relevance of context to communication practices, it is essential that all transcribed data should cover contextualization cues and the SPEAKING grid (Schiffrin, 1994).

Thirdly, using unstructured open-ended questions in interviews can help researchers “uncover not only knowledge that is explicit but also knowledge that is tacit” (Boxer, 1996, p. 220). In reality, “a large part of any culture consists of tacit knowledge. We all know things that we cannot talk about or express in direct ways. Ethnographers must then make inferences about what people know by listening carefully to what they say, by observing their behavior, and by studying artifacts and their use” (Spradley, 1979, p. 9). EI should work better than traditional structured interviewing in that it allows flexibility in posing questions and eliciting profound perspectives from interviewees although traditional interviewing attempts to “get brief, concise answers to the structured questions” so that “they could be easily tabulated” (Boxer, 1996, p. 222). Moreover, EI can function as a better approach than observation because EI provides in-depth emic perspectives, whereas observation is limited by Observer’s Paradox (Labov, 1972).

Finally, integrating IS and EI can enhance the effectiveness of this study due to the limitations of individual method of data collection. This triangulation approach allows for various data analyses from diverse perspectives to gain precise and comprehensive information that one method would not elicit. In other words, on one hand, triangulation can serve to increase the credibility of a study by having varying methods check one another. The study becomes highly credible when results from different methods converge. On the other hand, triangulation can ensure the completeness of a study by providing complementary data collected from diverse aspects of a linguistic

phenomenon (DuFon, 2001). To conduct credible and complete research, triangulation has been used in both experimental and non-experimental studies (Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Fraser, Rintell and Walters, 1980; Rintell, 1981; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004), both quantitative and qualitative research (Kasper, 1997; Brown, 1973; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986; Bodman and Eisenstein, 1988; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Kasanga, 1998; Garcia, 1989; Egi, 1999).

To summarize, this study employs IS and EI, two approaches to discourse analysis, to uncover salient features of social interaction and disagreement behavior of MC and ELFP speakers. These two approaches have advantages over other research methods. For example, traditional SLA researchers may put in question the authenticity of data and research results when they quantify the speech behavior of a population and control experimental settings. They establish research questions/hypotheses or identify variable before research is actually conducted. They follow set standard procedures of experiments. They aim to explain discrete mental individualistic processes with an etic, deductive, static perspective. For a study such as the present one, these methods would not suffice to illustrate the social practices of unbounded communities that occur in natural settings. They have to be substituted by IS and EI, two qualitative, natural, holistic, heuristic, semiotic and social approaches taking emic, inductive and fluid perspectives. Using both IS and EI can facilitate validation and triangulation.

IS is “the application of interpretive methods of discourse analysis to gain detailed insights into the many communicative issues that arise in today’s social environments, by means of systematic investigation of how speakers and listeners involved in such

issues talk about them in the conduct of their affairs” (Gumperz, 2006, p. 724). It looks at human behavior within natural contexts where researchers would minimally affect participants’ normal behavior. It does not start with predetermined research questions/hypotheses or identified variables as traditional SLA research methods do. Not having controlled variables indicates little manipulation or interference in the research context. Using IS, we can examine both central linguistic features and marginalized contextualization cues that might cause misunderstandings in interpersonal or social interaction in the MC and ELFP data since every aspect of language is socially situated and may presuppose important meanings. We can extend the research scope from minute details of linguistic features to large social/contextual implications. We can increase the accuracy of inferences and illustrate why a particular utterance is used in a particular way and how that may affect interaction and indicate something fundamentally important to society. This study is intended to appear open-ended and dictated by the context where social interaction and disagreement behavior occur.

EI involves participants’ interpretation of social interaction and speech behavior and their understanding of the communities they actively engage in. It is very important to understand how social interaction influences language acquisition, as Erickson (1986) stated, “The central consideration in conducting research from a semiotic perspective is the immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actors’ point of view”. To gain an understanding of participants’ meanings for social actions, researchers should consider every possible relevant, salient micro and macro contextual factor that might affect speech behavior systematically. Also, they have to

beware their own frames of interpretation when observing participants' frames of interpretation in order to avoid subjectivity and bias in research findings. One way to complement this is to triangulate data and present data from participants' perspectives by integrating varying methods such as IS and EI for this study.

Data Sets and Participants

This study includes three data sets transcribed in accordance with Schiffrin's (1987) conventions (Appendix A). All three data sets were collected in Nanchang, which is well known for the Chinese revolution before 1949. As the economic, political and cultural center of Jiangxi Province, the city is populated with more than 2,500,000 residents living on a land area of about 210 square kilometers. It has more than ten government-run universities and many private colleges that offer English Training Programs. The city has witnessed an amazingly growing number of English learners, young or old, male or female, employed or unemployed, after the Open Door Policy took effect and made Chinese people realize the function of English in the world. Questionnaires were administered to collect the demographic information of participants (Appendix B).

The First Data Set

The first data set is intended to study how ELFP speakers interact and realize disagreement behavior in natural conversations at English Corners. Data was derived from ELFP interactional conversations at the two English Corners in Nanchang. One of the English Corners is located in a big city park built around a lake. The park, open to anyone free of charge anytime, is always crowded with elders who chat with friends while taking a walk, middle-aged people who sing or dance for fun, and children who run around or take rides in a small built-in amusement park. Between the amusement

park and the lake are a hill and some open space covered with a few trees. It is this place where ELFP speakers socialize and practice using English to discuss issues, share viewpoints/experiences, seek information or look for tutees. They come to meet roughly between 9am and 12pm on Saturdays and Sundays if they wish. The other English Corner, located on a playground of a teachers' college, welcomes its visitors roughly between 7pm and 9:30pm on Thursdays. It started out as an organized activity of the English Department of the college in fall and spring semesters, but has become a natural event of what Chinese call English Lovers even when the college is closed for summer or winter holidays.

Both English Corners have survived for decades owing to persistent English lovers. Even if some cannot make it to English Corners one day, there are always newcomers to fill in. This makes these communities of practice fluid and long-lasting. Before videotaping natural data of ELFP conversations from these communities of practice three times a week in the two summers of 2008 and 2009, I decided to make a few friends at the two English Corners and let them introduce me to other members of the communities to prevent the shocking effect of being videotaped by a complete stranger. After I made myself a little familiar to some members, I walked around the English Corners and joined ongoing conversations conducted by two to four interlocutors. The interlocutors might or might not be surrounded by peripheral members who stood there, listened quietly or cut in with a few words occasionally. At least one of the interlocutors was my acquaintance who normally greeted me once seeing me. This gave me the opportunity to explain my research project and ask interlocutors for the permission of videotaping and later analyzing their conversational data. This way, I

collected 48 hours 46 minutes 28 seconds of natural interactional conversations in ELFP involving 117 interlocutors of different backgrounds.

However, only 62 interlocutors stood out as relevant to this study due to the random formation of conversation groups at the English Corners and mostly unfocused conversation contents. The conversation groups tended to have different members at different times of each English-Corner day because ELFP speakers often joined the conversations they were interested in and left other interlocutors talking whenever they had to go. The conversation contents varied and changed in accordance with the interlocutors who decided to stay and continued the conversations. Therefore, 55 interlocutors contributed to the collected conversations so little that it was impossible to analyze their interactional features and speech behavior, whereas the other 62 interlocutors became the focus of this part of the study owing to their sufficient contribution to the data of conversations. Table 3-1 is the general demographic information of these participants.

The Second Data Set

The second data set comprises of 96 hours 55 minutes 30 seconds of natural interactional conversations of 120 interlocutors in MC in everyday life in Nanchang. Only 68 interlocutors stood out as relevant to this study due to the random formation of conversation groups in everyday life and mostly unfocused conversation contents; the other 52 interlocutors did not contribute to the collected conversations enough for analysis of their interactional features and speech behavior. The 68 MC speakers could be strangers, acquaintances and friends who met and talked about things that happened in everyday life. These conversations might occur over a social meal at a restaurant, in the sitting room of a friend's condo, at a social gathering of a community,

in a bus to a shopping mall, on the way to visit friends, or on the playground of a middle school where residents nearby come to jog or walk. Therefore, some of the conversations were videotaped, whereas others were audio-taped due to the difficulty of taking a camcorder along. This data set serves as baseline data to demonstrate how MC speakers interact and realize disagreement behavior in everyday life because simply relying on native-speaker intuitions would undermine the validity of academic research due to a possible gap between perception and behavior. Table 3-2 is the general demographic information of the 68 participants of this data set.

The Third Data Set

In order to achieve an emic understanding of the relation between perception and behavior and between disagreement and politeness, I conducted ethnographic interviews and investigated participants' perceptions of disagreement behavior in comparison with their actual disagreement behavior in the previously collected data sets. Without making participants aware of what I was looking for, I opened the interviews with a brief discussion on the cultural differences between China and America and then went along with the flow to touch upon the topic of disagreement behavior. I had approximately one-hour interviews with 20 MC speakers who can speak English and have been to English-speaking countries, 12 MC speakers who can speak English but have not been abroad, and 18 MC speakers who know little English. In addition, I interviewed 10 consultants for their comments on the acceptability of the disagreement expressions that appeared in a few clips and 10 Chinese teachers of college English for their perspectives on ELFP and English Corners. Table 3-3 shows the demographic information of the interviewees addressing directness and disagreement; Table 3-4 is the general demographic information of the interviewees

evaluating disagreement expressions; Table 3-5 shows the background of the Chinese teachers of English talking about ELFP and English Corners.

This chapter has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of various methodologies in L1 and L2 discourses. To overcome the limitations of traditional research methods, an increasing number of researchers have combined socially oriented approaches with psychologically oriented approaches to get a complete picture of SLA and sociolinguistics. Traditional, quantitative approaches can be integrated with interpretive, qualitative approaches to get a better understanding of L1 and L2 speakers' speech behavior. Triangulation stands out as the most valid, effective and comprehensive approach to both SLA and sociolinguistic studies. This study employs IS, which serves to uncover both verbal and nonverbal features of social interaction and disagreement behavior, and EI, which seeks emic and semiotic perspectives of social interaction and disagreement behavior, to analyze and interpret naturally occurring conversations in ELFP and MC in Mainland China.

Table 3-1. Sixty-Two Participants at English Corners

Sociolinguistic variables		Number of participants
Age	10-19	18
	20-29	33
	30-39	5
	40-49	6
Sex	Male	35
	Female	27
Education/Degree	Below Bachelor's	29
	At least Bachelor's	33
Years of studying English	3-9 years	34
	At least 10 years	28
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	51
	At least once	11
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	40
	Middle	19
	High	3

Table 3-2. Sixty-Eight Participants Speaking MC

Sociolinguistic variables		Number of participants
Sex	Male	33
	Female	35
Age	10-19	1
	20-29	14
	30-39	27
	40-49	19
	50-59	3
	60-69	3
	70-79	1
Education/Degree	Below Bachelor's	20
	At least Bachelor's	48
Ability to speak English	Yes	38
	No	30
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	41
	At least once	27
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	15
	Middle	39
	High	14

Table 3-3. Fifty Interviewees Addressing Directness and Disagreement

Sociolinguistic variables		Number of participants
Age	10-19	1
	20-29	11
	30-39	17
	40-49	12
	50-59	7
	60-69	1
	70-79	1
Sex	Male	25
	Female	25
Education/Degree	Below Bachelor's	16
	At least Bachelor's	34
Ability to speak English	Yes	32
	No	18
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	30
	At least once	20
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	13
	Middle	28
	High	9

Table 3-4. Ten Interviewees Addressing Acceptability

Sociolinguistic variables		Number of participants
Sex	Male	5
	Female	5
Age	20-29	1
	30-39	7
	40-49	2
Education/Degree	Below Bachelor's	1
	At least Bachelor's	9
Ability to speak English	Yes	10
	No	0
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	0
	At least once	10
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	0
	Middle	5
	High	5

Table 3-5. Ten Teachers Talking about ELFP and English Corners

Sociolinguistic variables		Number of participants
Age	30-39	5
	40-49	3
	50-59	2
Sex	Male	2
	Female	8
Education/Degree	Below Bachelor's	0
	At least Bachelor's	10
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	0
	At least once	10
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	0
	Middle	10
	High	0

CHAPTER 4 SALIENT INTERACTIONAL FEATURES OF ELFP

As explained in Chapter 2, the communities of practice at English Corners speak MC as their first language and ELFP as a second language. This chapter presents the most salient interactional features that occur in the natural conversations in ELFP. Excerpts that show these interactional features are provided to promote comprehensibility. In total, 4863 tokens of utterances in ELFP were transcribed. Transcription conventions are attached as Appendix A at the end of this dissertation.

ELFP speakers meet to talk in English at English Corners at regular times for various purposes. All of them have in mind the goal of improving their communication skills in English because they believe practice makes perfect. In addition to that, they might come to socialize, share their worldviews, seek information, or simply pass time. Actively engaged in conversations in English, they practice to enhance English proficiency, they practice to make sense of the outside world, and they practice to build their own distinctive repertoire and establish their own enterprise, just like other types of communities of practice. It is important to notice that these ELFP speakers share a native language and common culture but choose English as the means of communication at English Corners. This differs from the initial restrictive definition of ELF whose speakers share neither a common native tongue nor a common culture.

Research (e.g. Jenkins, 2000; Firth, 1996) has shown the linguistic and interactional features of ELF. Firth (1996) contends that even though ELF speakers have grammatical, phraseological, phonological and prosodic infelicities, they do not seem to have many misunderstandings or much L1 transfer. They adopt the let-it-pass principle and ignore others' mistakes. They do not complete others' thoughts but take

orderly turns when talking. They show overt consensus on issues they are discussing. They do not code switch most probably because they do not speak the same language. Do these features apply to natural conversations in ELFP?

To examine the features of ELFP, conversations involving 62 participants at English Corners were videotaped and analyzed. Among the participants, 35 were male and 27 were female; 41 range from age 19 to age 39; 33 have already earned a bachelor's degree; 19 claimed themselves as middle class with steady income; 28 have studied English for at least ten years, whereas only 11 have been to English-speaking countries. These participants claimed that they were either strangers who met at the time of data collection, acquaintances who had met a few times at English Corners or friends who made contact a few times after they left English Corners. The majority of them rarely socialized with one another outside English Corners. They might remember only each other's English names instead of Chinese names because they went by English names at English Corners.

The communities of practice at English Corners have created an ELFP repertoire that unsurprisingly shares some features with ELF observed by Firth (1996):

1. Both ELF and ELFP speakers make nonnative but nonfatal errors such as mispronouncing words, applying nonstandard intonation, missing articles, tense markers, aspect markers and plural markers, using wrong verb, adjective, preposition and noun forms, and favoring topic-prominent structures.
2. Both ELF and ELFP speakers tend to adopt the let-it-pass principle to ensure the flow of conversations. They do not repair nonfatal errors since these errors do not cause misunderstandings.
3. A lot of repetition occurs in both ELF and ELFP conversations, most of which seem to emerge more at the beginning of an utterance in the ELFP data.
4. The delay marker *uh* is overused by ELF/ELFP speakers, compared with English L1 speakers, to gain some time in search for words or ideas.

5. There is a lot of laughter in the conversations, suggesting that speakers enjoy talking with one another.

However, features that do not appear in ELF conversations emerged in the ELFP conversations under investigation. For instance, ELFP speakers switched back and forth from English to Chinese. They heavily used the discourse marker yeah at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of utterances in addition to the delay marker uh. They actively contributed to conversations by completing others' thoughts when they noticed a pause at the end of an utterance or when they thought they had predicted their partners' following utterances. They talked over one another and competed for turns to carry on conversations with overlaps. They might change topics without providing smooth transition. They produced side sequences to make sense of previous utterances, to involve newcomers into conversations or to tease for solidarity building. They made a smacking sound with their lips when they became a little emotional because they felt frustrated with the words that slipped away or the issues they were discussing. Moreover, disagreement behavior that appeared as a salient feature in pilot studies also emerged as salient in this study, since it differs to a great extent from the disagreement behavior of English L1 speakers as described in the literature.

Code-Switching

Code-switching, defined as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59), can occur either intersententially or intrasententially (Myers-Scotton, 2000; Brice, 2000). Situational code-switching varies in accordance with factors such as participants, situation and topics; conversational code-switching is intended to convey information (Gumperz, 1977, 1982). This linguistic phenomenon

may indicate culture-specific topics (Ruan, 2003), deficiency in L2 (Crowl and MacGinitie, 1974; Ramirez and Milk, 1986), competence in both L1 and L2 (Cheng and Butler, 1989; Arnfast and Jørgensen, 2003), negotiation of identities (Myers-Scotton, 1983) or accomplishment of communicative functions (Romaine, 1989). As an additional contribution to this body of research, English Corners under study witness code-switching in natural conversations among ELFP speakers who share Mandarin Chinese as an L1 and speak English as a social practice. A closer look at ELFP conversations disclosed more reasons behind code-switching than discussed in the literature.

In addition to 192 tokens of culture-specific borrowings (Gumperz, 1977) involving the Chinese names of people, constructions, games, places or provinces, ELFP speakers switched from English into Chinese for several reasons. First of all, they used Chinese when they had trouble finding the right words for things they wanted to express in English. This function of code-switching seemed to work in twenty-two tokens. It happened more often to low-proficiency English speakers, who were peripheral members of the communities of practice at English Corners. Secondly, high proficiency English speakers displayed multilingual competence and made use of both English and Chinese words, whichever came in handy. This was supported by eleven tokens. Thirdly, ELFP speakers might make intense evaluative or emotional statements in Chinese rather than English, as was evidenced by eighteen tokens. This occurred probably because L1 works more effectively and accurately than L2 in describing ones strong feelings. Finally, speakers collaborated with one another through difficult moments to get information across. They might say an English word or expression, which they thought was not easy to understand, and then immediately translated it into

Chinese to make sure listeners could follow; or one of the listeners jumped in and translated the challenging word or expression into Chinese to show their understanding or make sure other listeners could follow. This collaborative effort was seen in 69 tokens.

Since the first two reasons of code-switching have been well discussed in the fields of SLA and bilingualism, focus is thus given to the last two—code-switching for evaluative and emotional statements or for social and collaborative learning. Excerpt (1) exemplifies how ELFP speakers switch from English to Chinese when they become intense in evaluation or emotion.

Excerpt (1)

Jian: (226) So what do you think about western people?

Ted: (227) Western people.

Jian: (228) English native speakers.

Ted: (229) (stepping forward and lowering voice) They are direct.

Jian: (230) They are direct. Ok. They are very direct in [giving you their opinions].

→ Ted: (231) [No, no, no, no]. I mean some of uh foreigner teacher, actually, (unclear) coming from America, right? <非常非常不文明的人，都，才才来中国>. [I think so, most of them, most of them]=

Jian: (232) (looking astonished) [@@@@@<非常不文明的人>@@@@]

Ted: (233) =I think so.

(From EngCorn2008Allen)

In this excerpt, Jian and Ted were talking about their impression about English L1 speakers in western countries. After Ted generalizes that those people are direct, in a low voice, as if preventing it from being overheard by English L1 speakers who occasionally pass by, Jian tries to make sense of direct in a particular way. Ted corrects and directs Jian to his actual impression of English L1 teachers in Mainland China. He disagrees strongly with Jian's statement by repeating No several times. When he provides his negative evaluation of the English L1 teachers due to his frustrating experiences with them, he switches to Chinese 非常非常不文明的人，都，才才来中国, which literally means only very uncivilized people came to teach English in China. Code-switching into Chinese seems to make the speaker feel less inappropriate but more accurate and forceful in making this overgeneralization. This function of code-switching also occurs in Excerpt (2).

Excerpt (2)

Miqi: (2638) My teacher haven't haven't checked my homework for a long time because she is busy. [(unclear)]

→ Ye: (2639) [No, no, no, no. It's an excuse]. <我每天都叫你们交作业，我我不至于没有时间看你的>。

(From EngCornYe)

The above conversation happened when Jian met Miqi and her English tutor at an English Corner. As we can see, the tutee Miqi points out that her English tutor Ye has not checked tutees' homework for a while. She intends this to be self defense because Ye accused all the tutees including her of not wanting to turn in homework. However,

her self defense sounds more like a complaint to Ye who immediately talks back. Since Ye becomes very emotional, she repeats No several times to reject Miqi's accusation and switches into Chinese 我每天都叫你们交作业，我我不至于没有时间看你的, which means I ask you to turn in your homework everyday, so of course I have time to check it. She hopes to clear up what she thinks is a misunderstanding and express her willingness to examine tutees' homework. Even though Miqi presents her thoughts in English, Ye starts off with strong negation words in English but falls back on Chinese probably because in this situation, L1 can demonstrate her opinions about the issue in a more precise and effective manner.

Unlike Excerpts (1)-(2), Excerpts (3)-(4) are evidence for social and collaborative learning. This is considered natural and essential to the communities of practice at English Corners because learning is social practice. The community members mutually engage in improving their communication skills in English through social interaction at English Corners. They have to collaborate through challenges and difficulties to ensure the flow of their conversations.

Excerpt (3)

Cai: (65) I just read the ar- article about the uh secret of the A student, A B C D <的

>¹ A student, number one student, top student. Secret of the A student.

Do

you know?

Jia: (66) Yeah. I know. A student mean the best student.

¹ 的 is a possessive marker in Mandarin Chinese. Cai wanted to say *A as in ABCD*; but he phrased this thought in the Chinese structure *ABCD 的 A*.

Cai: (67) Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The secret of the A student. I just read the article. So I tell you. I tell you.

→ Jia: (68) But you know, uh, in the university, there are, there are many, many entertainment, entertainment, <娱乐娱乐, 很多娱乐那个>

Cai: (69)

Yeah.

Entertainment. Entertainment.

Jia: (70) Yeah. Entertainment. So maybe difficult, very difficult for university student concentrate on their study, yeah, difficult for university student concentrate on study.

(From EngCornCai 9)

In Excerpt (3), Cai wants to share the article he read about the secrets of being an A student with Jia. He wonders whether Jia understands the meaning of an A student before he elaborates on the article. After Jia explicitly says that she knows what an A student means, she brings up the issue of having too many social entertainments in college life that distract students from studying hard and becoming A students. In this short dialogue, both Cai and Jia conduct comprehension checks to make sure their conversation partner is following. At first, Cai checks on Jia's knowledge of an A student (Line 65) and then volunteers to explain the secrets of an A student (Line 67). Later, Jia is concerned that Cai does not understand the meaning of entertainment, so she translates the word into Chinese immediately after its English version. After Cai confirms his understanding of the word, she moves on to point out the negative effect of too much social entertainment on becoming an A student. Having become acquaintances at

English Corners, Cai and Jia built their conversation on mutual contribution and helped each other out whenever they noticed something challenging. They made sense of new English words or expressions through collaborative effort and social interaction.

ELFP speakers might translate their own utterances from English into Chinese to engage their listeners as in Excerpt (3); on the other hand, listeners might volunteer to translate speakers' utterances from English into Chinese to show their understanding or help others follow a conversation as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (4)

Jeff: (640) So in your in your class how many how many stu- uh how many countries uh do the student come from?

Jian: (641) I have um we have people from China, people from Korea, people from Thai

Song: (642) Oh. Thailand.

→ Jeff: (643) <就是泰国嘛>

Jian: (644) Uh-huh. Um people from Vietnam.

Wan: (645) Pardon?

→ Song: (646) [越南]

(From EngCorn B)

In this excerpt, Jeff expresses his interest in the nationalities of people in Jian's class. Before Jian finishes her utterance, Song cuts in to take over and show his awareness of the country Thailand. To go along with this, Jeff begins code-switching and translates the word into Chinese to confirm Song's interpretation and ensure others' being with them (Line 643). Likewise, after Jian mentions Vietnam, Wan says Pardon because he

either does not hear the word or does not understand it. Right away, Song offers his help and translates the English word into Chinese (Line 646). Collaborative work like this typifies the conversations at English Corners. Even though the communities of practice at English Corners get together for various purposes such as learning English, making friends or seeking information, they collaborate to make sense of English and practice making sense of the globalized world. English has become more than the goal of language practice at English Corners; it is the means of social practice and the link to the outside world.

The Use of *yeah*

In the everyday spoken discourse, discourse markers, defined as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31), play an indispensable role. They connect words/utterances, build the unsaid upon the said and make conversations flow. However, they do not affect the truth conditions of an utterance, the propositional content of an utterance or the grammaticality of an utterance (Fuller, 2003); they are related to the speech situation rather than the situation talked about; they can indicate the speaker’s attitudes. (Hölker, 1991; cited from Jucker, 1993). They account for one of the linguistic forms that L2 speakers have difficulty acquiring; for that reason, L2 speakers may be marked as foreign. For example, German users of English (Müller, 2005) and Chinese users of English (Fung and Carter, 2007) were observed unable to use discourse markers as appropriately as L1 speakers. This might result from the lack of classroom instruction on discourse markers (Sankoff et al, 1997; Remero Trillo, 2002). Therefore, it is suggested that contact with L1 culture should lead to better use of L2 discourse markers.

One of the discourse markers *yeah* has been found with more varieties of functions in L2 conversations than in L1 conversations (Wong, 2000; Liao, 2009). This marker is often employed to display attention (Jefferson, 1993), show understanding (Schegloff, 1982), express agreement (Drummond and Hopper, 1993; Schegloff, 1993) or shift topics (Jefferson, 1993) in L1 conversations. However, in addition to these functions, English L2 speakers tend to use this marker for same-turn repair when they recheck their own utterances and attempt to make corrections, for self-presentational display when they attempt to show their competent management of language deficiencies in their conversations with L1 speakers (Wong, 2000), or for closing when they do not want to continue talking in ESL contexts (Liao, 2009).

All these functions of *yeah* have been observed in ELFP conversations which, however, demonstrate a few more functions than discussed in the literature. Because the ELFP conversations occur between L2 speakers from the same culture (i.e. the Chinese culture in this case), by nature they differ from those between L1 speakers, between L1 and L2 speakers (e.g. ESL contexts), or L2 speakers from different cultures (e.g. ELF contexts). The differences have led to the generation of unique communities of practice with a unique repertoire including an extreme variation in the use of *yeah*: freestanding, repetitive, turn-initial, turn-medial and turn-final tokens of *yeah*. To be more exact, there are 66 freestanding tokens, 94 repetitive tokens, 436 turn-initial tokens, 203 turn-medial tokens and 60 turn-final tokens. Freestanding *yeah* is likely to serve as an acknowledgment token suggesting that the speaker's utterance is heard; turn-initial *yeah* tends to function to show understanding, agreement or topic shifting;

turn-medial *yeah* works either as self repair or as self presentation; turn-final *yeah* indicates the end of a turn.

Other two functions of *yeah* that appeared in the ELFP conversations can be a meaningful addition to the literature. First, *yeah* serves to display strong agreement or self-confirmation when repeated a few times in a turn, even though repetition of this kind indicates loss of patience to English L1 speakers. Second, turn-medial *yeah* may function as a delay and self-confirmation device for speakers to gain thinking time and confirm with oneself before producing the next utterance as well as self repair or self presentation, even though English L1 speakers tend to use the delay marker *uh* or *um* in the middle of a turn (Clark and Tree, 2002). These two new functions were brought to attention in playback during which ten participants were invited to explain in retrospect why they used a great number of *yeah* in their conversations. In the following examples, excerpts (5) and (6) illustrate the first new function; excerpts (7) and (8) illustrate the second new function.

Excerpt (5)

Fei: (2219) What's the great difference you find?

Qiang: (2220) They have some_ they have some, uh, we we we call it Singlish.

You know what is Chinglish, right? [It's]=

→ Fei: (2221) [Yeah], yeah, yeah, yeah.

Qiang: (2222) =It's translated from
directly from [Chinese to to]

Fei: (2223) [So, if we you say] it's Singlish, then there must be something
wrong in grammar.

Qiang: (2224) Uh, of course, of course, something wrong, but but but they they
think it's_ [it's correct]=

Fei: (2225)

[It's ok.]

Qiang: (2226)

=It's ok for them.

(From EngCorn2008-8)

In Excerpt (5), after knowing that Qiang studied in Singapore for a while, Fei expresses her interest in the difference between the variety of English spoken in Singapore and Standard English (Line 2219). Qiang compares Singlish to Chinglish which indicates the deficiency of hybrid language varieties (Line 2220). To show her understanding of this comparison, Fei responds with four *yeahs* (Line 2221), the first of which overlaps with Qiang's last words in Line 2220. This repetition does not strike Qiang as impatient at all, so he continues voicing his opinions on the grammar of Singlish. In playback, Fei also commented that she did not lose patience by repeating *yeah*. Instead, she wanted to confirm her own understanding strongly through this repetition. Excerpt (6) is another example of this function of *yeah*.

Excerpt (6)

Jing: (44) That's why, that's support support by the Chinese government for
the students=

→ Bei: (45) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jing: (46) =who want to go abroad, go Japan. So that is
more easy for you, that is, to get your passport.

→ Bei: (47) Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because the the aim of the scholarship is to uh
improve the relationship uh between Japane- Japan and other

foreigner countries.

Jing: (48) Improve what?

Bei: (49) Improve, improve the relationship.

(From EngCorn B)

In Excerpt (6), Jing and Bei were talking about how Bei received a scholarship and student visa for his graduate study in Japan. After Jing shows his understanding of Bei's receiving a scholarship from the government in Line 44, Bei immediately expresses his agreement by repeating *yeah* three times even though Jing has not finished his utterance. At the end of Jing's utterance (Line 46), Bei, again, repeats *yeah* three times to show his strong confirmation of Jing's comprehension of the situation. Neither repetition seems to annoy Jing who continues the conversation as normal. In playback, Bei explained that repeating *yeah* was to fully confirm Jing's description of the process of applying for scholarship and student visa from Japan. This type of repetition is very typical in conversations among ELFP speakers at English Corners. Another frequent use of *yeah* in ELFP conversations is in the middle of a turn as in excerpts (7) and (8).

Excerpt (7)

Pan: (275) I I like prepare. I like read books a lot, a lot, a lot.

Teng: (276) I know. I know. That's the problem. You know, I remember one year ago, I used to discuss this problem with my teacher Mr. Lei Jun Xiong. He told me, you know, you'd better prepare topic before you come here. And when you got, when you come to English Corner, You'd better lead your partner far- uh farther more into your topic.

Yang: (277) But sometimes the topic depends on your partners.

→ Teng: (278) (smacking lips) I know. That's the problem. That, yeah, that's problem, yeah, that's what, that that's what I was told by Mr. Lei Junxiong.

Pan: (279) Oh. I know. [I know].

Teng: (280) [You have] to lead your partner farther more into your topic, like, yeah.

(From EngCorn D)

In Excerpt (7), Pan and Teng were discussing how to start and keep conversations at English Corners. Pan shares his experience—preparing a topic before coming to the English Corner (Line 275). This matches the suggestion Teng received from his English teacher. At this time, Yang jumps in and says that the prepared topic might be changed by conversation partners (Line 277). Also realizing this issue, Teng points out that this is exactly the problem his teacher talked about and gave a suggestion (Line 278). In this line, Teng uses *yeah* twice in the middle of his utterance not for the purpose of repairing his own words because no errors are located before *yeah*. Neither does he intend to present himself to English L1 speakers as a competent speaker as Wong (2000) proposed because the conversation happened between English L2 speakers. Instead, when he says *yeah*, he gains some thinking time to search for what comes next and confirms what comes up in his mind before he actually puts the words out there. Therefore, *yeah* can serve as a delay and self-confirmation marker turn-medially. This was checked and confirmed with Teng in playback.

Excerpt (8)

Zhan: (60) Post gradu- Wow. I admire you so much. @@

Song: (61) Really? I don't think so. You know that nowadays few people want to study as a graduate student. They just want to find a work with [good payment].

→ Zhan: (62) [I, I, yeah], I also want to just find a job. You know, as uh I learned something, you know, international trade and companies always always want someone who is experienced.

Song: (63)

Yeah.

→ Zhan: (64) Yeah. So I just want to uh, when I graduate from my school, I just go to the company and experience, yeah, get more experience. That's my target.

(From EngCorn2008-3)

Just as in Excerpt (7), in Excerpt (8) the turn-medial *yeah* respectively in Lines 62 and 64 functions as a delay and self-confirmation marker. After Zhan expresses his respect to Song who got into a Ph.D. program in the US, Song refuses to take the compliment and downgrades the glory of being a graduate student but upgrades jobs with good payment (Line 61). Agreeing with this, Zhan uses *yeah* as a delay marker before he produces a complete utterance because he needs some time to come up with the right utterance (Line 62). In Line 64, the turn-medial *yeah* works more as a self-confirmation marker than a delay marker. In this case, Zhan first rechecks his preceding utterance about experience; once he is sure of his thoughts expressed in the previous utterance, he says *yeah* to show the result of his rechecking and repeats the relevant part for confirmation purpose.

Candidate Completion

Candidate completion refers to the second speaker completing the first speaker's utterance and also the first speaker's turn at that point (Lerner, 1991, 1992). Candidate completion involves three-part sequences: the first speaker's utterance, the second speaker's completing utterance and the first speaker's response to the completing utterance. To ratify a candidate completion, the original speaker would repeat part/all of the completing utterance or use explicit agreement; to challenge a candidate completion, the original speaker would mark the third turn with explicit disagreement; when the end of the completing utterance is attached with a suffix such as *no*, the original speaker tends to continue his/her turn without responding to the completing utterance; on the other hand, after completing the first speaker's utterance, the second speaker might keep the floor and make it less possible for the first speaker to respond (Antaki, Diaz and Collins, 1996).

In contrast with ELF conversations where candidate completion rarely occurs (Firth, 1996), in the ELFP conversations under investigation, candidate completions happened in 162 regular three-part-sequence tokens and two irregular more-than-three-part-sequence tokens. Among them, 123 tokens were met with explicit agreement and five with explicit disagreement. Even though none of the candidate completions was tagged with a suffix², twelve candidate completions were met with silent/implicit agreement and nineteen with silent/implicit disagreement. In addition, five candidate completions were developed into elaborated explanations, suggesting that the second speaker kept the floor. Silent/implicit agreement or disagreement in this study means

² Antaki, Diaz and Collins (1996) observed that if the second speaker suffixed a word such as *no* to a candidate completion built on the first speaker's unfinished utterance, the first speaker in the third turn would not evaluate the completed utterance.

that the attitude of agreement or disagreement is implied, without explicit verbal expressions, in the first speaker's response to the second speaker's completing utterance. The facts that explicit agreement greatly outnumbered explicit disagreement and that silent/implicit disagreement was acceptable to some degree may characterize the nature of the ELFP communities of practice who are supposedly encouraging and supportive to one another for their joint enterprise.

Since candidate completion normally involves three-part sequences as described in the literature, it is unusual to observe a delay in the first speaker's response to the second speaker's completing utterance. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt (9)

Jian: (1417) That's our belief here. Maybe that's the traditional belief of Chinese people. But in America, almost everybody stays in an air-conditioned building. Ok? Only when it's open, you know, it's outdoors, there is no air-conditioning. But everywhere, the bus, buildings, any anywhere you know, [if it has a]

Qun: (1418) [Apartments]?

Jian: (1419) Yeah, yeah. Like apartments, you know, anywhere, [if it has a roof]=

→ Jack: (1420) [In a bus].

Jian: (1421) =If it has a roof, it's air-conditioned. So it's very cool everywhere.

Jack: (1422) Oh. In a bus, they have air-conditioners?

→ Jian: (1423) Yes.

(From EngCorn2008-12)

After Qun and Jack mentioned the disadvantage of living in an air-conditioned environment, which most Chinese people believe in, Jian brought up the availability of air-conditioning in America in Excerpt (9). Before she finishes her words in Line 1417, Qun volunteers to help with the word apartments. This is included in what Jian means by anywhere. So she explicitly agrees with the candidate completion in the third turn and tries to continue her utterance in the first turn (Line 1419). At this point, Jack cuts in and attempts to complete Jian's thoughts with in a bus. Unlike what she did to Qun, Jian does not respond to this new candidate completion right away; instead, she continues to finish what she wanted to say (Line 1421). However, Jack insists on receiving feedback on his candidate completion, so he restates his ideas in Line 1422, which eventually leads to Jian's brief response yes (Line 1423). This response appeared in the fifth turn, instead of the regular third turn, after a candidate completion was provided in the second turn to the first speaker Jian in Line 1419. This excerpt shows that the first speaker's response to a candidate completion might be delayed and might go beyond the traditional three-part sequences.

Another emerging finding that has not been discussed in the literature is silent/implicit agreement or disagreement with candidate completions without a suffix, as in Excerpts (10) and (11).

Excerpt (10)

Bei: (239) Uh. In future, will uh will I study France? I don't want to study that language. I think English is uh is ok. If I can, maybe my pronunciation is very poor, but I, when I go uh Japan, I I (smacking

lips) will improve my pronunciation, uh and uh (smacking lips) and I will study Japanese. I think with that, with tho- with those two languages, I think it's ok, it's enough. Uh. If if I can speak speak English well, I can go uuuh other countries, for example, uh Australia uh [Canada]=

→ Den: (240)

[Britain]

Bei: (241)

=and uh [USA]=

Den: (242)

[(unclear)]

Bei: (243)

=those uh, if I go to

other countries, I can communicate with uh uh with foreigners freely. I think it's very easy for me to survive uh in other foreign countries. But (smacking lips) if you can if you can only speak Japanese or or Chinese, I I think uh uh if you want to uh study in that in other countries, you will first uh met difficulties. You will meet many uh difficulties. (nodding) Uh. It's very difficult. So I think English is the most important lang- uh language.

(From EngCorn B)

In Excerpt (10), after being asked whether he would study French, Bei overtly said *no*. In Line 239, he continues to express his great interest in studying English well because he still wants to visit English-speaking countries after his first stop at Japan for his graduate study. When he lists English-speaking countries, Den jumps in to complete his utterance by saying Britain (Line 240). Bei neither overtly rejects nor overtly accepts this country into his list. Instead, he continues to list USA as another English-speaking

country in Line 241 and emphasize the importance of English. Since Den's proposal of Britain is undoubtedly one of the English-speaking countries, Bei's silent response to Den's candidate completion is generally understood as agreement. Silent agreement with candidate completion may indicate mutual understanding of the conversation and mutual support to interlocutors who speak English as an L2. To these ELFP speakers, overt verbal acceptance might become superfluous once words are clear and meanings are straightforward.

Just like silent/implicit agreement, silent/implicit disagreement with candidate completion appears also very intriguing. Excerpt (11) is an example.

Excerpt (11)

Nan: (859) Films is a little difficult for me to comprehend.

Fei: (860) I I think film is easier because you can find the caption, the the the
[script],=

→ Nan: (861) [Situation]

Fei: (862) = script, script, yeah, online. So if you can't
understand, you can find the script. You can read.

(From EngCorn2008-10)

In Excerpt (11), Nan and Fei are talking about the difficulty of watching English movies. After Nan states that she has trouble understanding English movies, Fei immediately expresses her disagreement and explains that English movies are easier to follow with the help of scripts. In Line 860, Fei shows some difficulty retrieving the word script by repeating the article the several times. This signal calls for candidate completion on Nan's part. So she makes a guess and throws out situation (Line 861), which,

unfortunately is not the word Fei was searching for. However, Fei does not overtly reject Nan's proposal; instead, she simply repeats script several times and ends the repetition with a delay and self-confirmation marker *yeah* (Line 862). On one hand, Fei's repetition of script makes it clear that situation is not the right word; on the other hand, her silent disagreement, rather than explicit disagreement, with Nan's candidate completion, would definitely encourage Nan to speak up to practice oral English and provide candidate completion when necessary next time.

The examples discussed above unexceptionally show the power of the first speaker who receives a candidate completion in the second turn but still maintains his/her floor in the third turn. Only 5 out of 162 candidate completions discovered in the ELFP conversations witnessed the yielding of floor to the second speaker who provided a candidate completion, as in Excerpt (12).

Excerpt (12)

Fei: (1800) Physics, you hear, Uh-huh. So, uh, (smacking lips) do you think that's easy, or difficult?

Mei: (1801) Yeah. I think it's easy for me, because I think Physics_ English is also very easy, and Math is a piece of cake. And I have won the second prize in <Jiangxi>> Province to go to <Beijing>> for English speech contest and I think English is a piece of cake for me,=

Fei: (1802) [Yeah. Your English is very good.]

Mei: (1803) =[and Physics, Physics], I got ninety, ninety, ninety-eight this year, and many students gets seventy or eighty. I think it's a piece of cake. It's not easy. It's not difficult.

- Fei: (1804) But but when you go there, uh, your parents, uh
- Mei: (1805) } My parents agree, because I have told them that I have grown up and sooner or later, and I must go out to experience some things. So it's a good chance for me and why can't I go out to, just, uh, to, uh, see the society and enter the society.
- Fei: (1806) Uh, if you, and they, they offer all the things?
- Mei: (1807) Yeah.
- Fei: (1808) The living place, the board, and the lodge, right?
- Mei: (1809) Yeah.

(From EngCorn2008-8)

In this excerpt, Fei is curious about the difficulty of Physics to Mei, a high school student. Mei appears to be an outstanding student who plans to continue her college education in Singapore. She claims that Physics, Math and English are all easy to her (Line 1801). After Fei compliments her English, Mei switches to explain how well she did in Physics in Line 1803. Before Fei, apparently a parent, finishes asking what Mei's parents might think or do about her visit to Singapore alone, Mei offers a putative completion and announces that her parents have agreed on this plan. However, she does not stop here like other completers in the previous examples. Instead, she starts elaborating on how she has convinced her parents of this plan (Line 1805). Mei is empowered to keep the floor because the first speaker Fei mentions her parents that Mei knows better. Since she is able to satisfy Fei's curiosity, she successfully maintains

her floor for a while without any interruption from Fei who silently accepts her putative completion.

Candidate completion can also demonstrate joint telling and collaborative effort when it serves as a thread to weave through talk (Lerner, 1992; Sacks, 1992). Excerpt (13) is a good example of this.

Excerpt (13)

Tan: (1643) Yeah. And I play <Maoxian Dao>>.

Jian: (1644) Aaah.

Haizi: (1645) [(unclear)].

Tan: (1646) [Its English] name, its English name is Maple Story.

Haizi: (1647) [Maple Story].

Miqi: (1648) [Maple Story].

Tan: (1649) Yeah, just, yeah.

Haizi: (1650) He's also some guy fight (unclear)

→ Tan: (1651) Yeah, also fight fight fight monster monster and you can, and_

→ Haizi: (1652) You can have the money.

→ Tan: (1653) Yeah. Money and so on. So

→ Haizi: (1654) And the the person in the game will be clever, more and more clever

→ Tan: (1655) And more and more strong

→ Miqi: (1656) And more and more smart.

→ Haizi: (1657) —Yeah. And they can spend their money to
 buy something, to buy some

Miqi: (1658) But when I, when I play this game, I needn't to spend money.

Tan: (1659) —Yeah.

You you you don't need money to play. Just you fight a monster.
 And the monster was dead, they will, the monster will uh just throw
 some money on on the floor, and you can pick it up.

(From EngCorn2008ShiDa)

In this excerpt, Tan, Haizi and Miqi are introducing a computer game named Maple Story to Jian. After Tan mentions this game in Line 1646, Haizi and Miqi repeat the name for confirmation purpose. Tan seems to try explaining this game in Line 1649, but he backs out right after he starts. Haizi immediately takes over and resumes the introduction (Line 1650). At that point, the three ELFP speakers have consecutively completed and positively evaluated one another's utterances from Line 1651 to Line 1657. Each putative completion lengthens the syntactic structure of the previous utterance and contributes to the account of the game. In other words, the speakers build their contributions upon the previous speaker's utterance and collaboratively work on the illustration of the game. It is in this way that the ELFP speakers demonstrate the tacit knowledge of their communities of practice and three dimensions of their communities: 1) mutual engagement; 2) a shared repertoire; and 3) a joint enterprise.

Turn-Taking

Turn-taking, "a basic form of organization for conversation", has "an appropriate sort of general abstractness and local particularization potential" (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, p. 700). Interlocutors including ELF speakers follow systematic rules

and orderly turns to converse. However, the ELFP speakers in the study did not seem to wait for their turns. In fact, they often talked over each other, trying to maintain their turns, compete for the floor and actively contribute to conversations. This resulted in a lot of overlaps (Zimmerman and West, 1975) that occur in balanced, solidarity building communication (Tannen, 1994). These overlaps differ from interruptions, violations of the turn-taking system (Zimmerman and West, 1975) that occur in asymmetrical, power-laden communication (Tannen, 1994). According to this difference, it is reasonable to say that ELFP conversations feature overlaps instead of interruptions for two reasons: 1) ELFP speakers are strangers, acquaintances or friends in the English-Corner communities of practice who have neither conflict of interest and nor desire to show power/status difference; 2) they actively collaborate to practice speaking English and make sense of the outside world. This study uncovered 746 tokens of overlaps and 280 tokens of disrupted turn-taking. Disrupted turn-taking refers to one interlocutor cutting another interlocutor short to offer help, complete his/her unfinished thoughts or collaboratively carry out discussions or talks. This differs from interrupting which results from unbalanced power operation. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt (14)

Wan: (262) You see, if I get into the a famous university in China for the post graduate study, then I can find some part-time job. That means I can have the teaching experience.

Jian: (263) [[Yes]].

Song: (264) [[Yes]].

Wan: (265) But if I work now, it's very hard for me to to study.

- Jian: (266) That's true.
- Wan: (267) [[So]]
- Jian: (268) [[But]] you have teaching experience [now, right?]=
- Wan: (269) [I know that.]
- Jian: (270) =You work now.
You are not a student.
- Wan: (271) Z Yeah. I'm not a student now. So compare with these two ways, I think [to study first is a better one].
- Song: (272) [Uuuh do you know do you] know the basic thing for application is recommend letter and PS, personal statement, or purpose of study, and things about the score of GRE and TOEFL. These three thing is the basic thing for the requirement of the university in the United States. But actually
- Wan: (273) Z Yeah. If I
- Song: (274) work Z But actually the most important, I think, is the PS.
- Jian: (275) Uh-huh.
- Song: (276) Yeah. It all depends on what you say. Actually, [even even]
- Wan: (277) [You mean] how
- Song: (278) you write Z Yeah. How you write yourself, how you write how you introduce yourself, how you write yourself, how you impress the professor of the United States. Yeah. Even you (the thing you

already do is not high) enough you can you can write as as as good as possible, you know.

Jian: (279) Right. Personal statement is very important.

[It's difficult to] write. Yeah.

→ Song: (280) [Very important].

(From EngCorn2008-4)

Excerpt (14) focuses on whether Wan should continue his graduate study or get a job of teaching English first. After he presents his idea of working a part-time job of teaching at his prospective graduate program, Jian and Song simultaneously express agreement leading to the first overlap (Lines 263-264). Their agreement does not reinforce Wan's own proposal. Instead, he shows his concern of working through graduate study. The second overlap happens when Wan tries to continue talking about his concern and when Jian reminds Wan of his current part-time teaching job (Lines 267-268). This reminder collides with Wan's acknowledgement again (Lines 268-269). These few conversational exchanges seem to help Wan decide which to pick: study or work. His decision engenders an overlap with Song's description of how to apply to a graduate school of the US (Lines 271-272). Even though Wan's thoughts still stay with the dilemma of work vs study (Line 273), Song continues talking about the application process until it attracts Wan's attention (Line 277), which causes another overlap (Lines 276-277). After Song elaborates on how to write a personal statement (Line 278), Jian makes a comment in overlap with Song's own comment (Lines 279-290). Although these interlocutors did not always wait for previous speakers to complete their utterances before claiming a turn, none of the five overlaps (Lines 268, 269, 272, 277

and 280) and the three disrupted turn-takings (Lines 273, 274 and 278) in this excerpt served to display the power of one interlocutor over another. Instead, the interlocutors jumped into the conversation when they believed they had important information to share. All the information was brought up and discussed to help Wan decide whether to work or study first. This collaborative effort apparently assists interlocutors to make sense of their own life.

However, ELFP speakers' sense of collaborative effort, which prevails in ELFP and Chinese conversations, might cause misunderstanding when English L1 speakers are involved. In a casual conversation among two ELFP speakers, one of them revealed his awareness of cultural differences when his turn-taking behavior conflicted with an English L1 speaker's turn-taking belief.

Excerpt (15)

Jian: (25) Do you think native speakers of English might misunderstand Chinese people?

Yin: (26) (nodding and looking serious)

Jian: (27) Do you believe so?

Yin: (28) Yes. I believe so.

Jian: (29) Why?

→ Yin: (30) That two black men in my in my college, and when I when I once talked to to black man, and I, you know, our cultures are quite different from. And once my classmate asked one sentence, and I just want to explain it clearly, but he's very angry to me. Yes. "You can't can't interrupt me while I'm answering questions". And I told

myself: yes, the cultural difference is so, is very big problem
between the person from two different countries. So, English, I
mean, the tool of big surprise, is really really very important.

(From EngCornCai3)

As we can see from Line 30 in the above excerpt, Yin describes his shock at the reaction of an African American English speaker to his good intention of clarifying his classmate's confusing utterance in English. He emphasizes that "I just want to explain it clearly, but he's [the African American] very angry to me. He did not realize the importance of orderly turn-taking in a casual conversation to English L1 speakers until this unhappy incident. This personal experience made him aware of cross-cultural issues conveyed through the medium of English, leading to his somewhat humorous naming of English as the tool of big surprise. Undoubtedly, even if both ELFP speakers and English L1 speakers converse in the same language—English, their cultural expectations of interactional behavior differ so much that cultural conflicts occur more often than we think.

Another turn-taking rule that interlocutors follow is when two parties start talking simultaneously, one of them will certainly withdraw before the completion of an utterance, repair this turn-taking error and let the other party continue (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Since this observation excludes the possibility of overlapping that lasts, Schegloff (2000) added to the literature that overlapping talk does exist and it often leads to a schism of a single conversation into multiple conversations. Also, these multiple conversations can last much longer than what Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) suggested. An example of this is conversations among ELFP speakers at

English Corners. ELFP speakers often cut in an ongoing conversation and involve a couple of the interlocutors of this conversation into another new conversation that happens simultaneously with the old conversation. This occurs partially because of the fluidity of the communities of practice at English Corners. The communities are not organized and fixed in terms of members and the number of members; their conversations are flexible in terms of speakers and the number of speakers. An example of this is Excerpt (16).

Excerpt (16)

Zhang: (2278) (Looking at Jian and Nong) So you have very profound opinion about USA.

Jian: (2279) But we have different viewpoints about food.

Nong: (2280) (Looking at Jian) But I believe you will change. @@

Jian: (2281) @@@Look at him, very stubborn.

.....

Wan: (2282) My grandparents lived in <Henan>> before. They went to <Nanchang>> maybe thirty years ago. And I grew up in <Nanchang>>. My root is not in <Nanchang>>; it's in <Henan>>. Maybe that's why that's the reason why I love the north part of China food.

Jian: (2283) That's good. But I was thinking, you have been in the south for a long time, right?

Wan: (2284) But I lived with my grandparents. My grandma always made me dumplings. I like it.

.....

Zhang: (2285) I can give you an example. In USA, there are so many American Chinese. And they uh have been living in USA for many years, even [they cannot speak Chinese]=

Nong: (2286) [They grew up there.]

Zhang: (2287) Yes. They cannot speak Chinese, just speak English. And when they select food, they will select Chi- American food, rather than Chinese food.

Nong: (2288) No, no, no. They eat Chinese food. They live in the China town. They buy food from the Asian market.

.....

(From EngCornEngin)

In this excerpt, a conversation was launched between Zhang, Nong and Jian, who brings up the topic of food in the US and in China (Line 2279). In the middle of the conversation, Wan cuts in and talks about dumplings, a typical food in the northern part of China, as his favorite food even though he has lived in the south of China for a while (Lines 2282-2284). Every speaker is aware of the ongoing simultaneous talk, but no one withdraws prematurely and repairs “turn-taking errors” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, p. 701). The simultaneous talk between Wan and Jian does not stop Zhang and Nong from continuing their original conversation. They keep discussing American food and Chinese food (Lines 2285-2288). In this case, a conversation initiated with three speakers ended up with two simultaneous conversations among four speakers. Two of the original speakers (Zhang and Nong) stuck together and persisted in their original

talk, whereas the third one (Jian) was drawn into another conversation with a newcomer (Wan). These simultaneous conversations continued until speakers had to leave for home. This suggests that overlapping talk and simultaneous conversation are normal and acceptable to ELFP speakers. Turn-taking does not have to be strictly orderly and follow the rule of one speaker at a time.

Topic-Switching

When interlocutors take turns, they follow “a three-part structure: one which addresses the relation of a turn to a prior, one involved with what is occupying the turn, and one which addresses the relation of the turn to a succeeding one” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974, p. 722). When interlocutors use their turns to change topics, they tend to alleviate it with “an explicit (either verbal or nonverbal) digressive marker, such as oops, which cues the addressee as to the change of topic” (Giora, 1998, p. 80). However, this ideal situation does not always happen in natural conversations. Interlocutors might switch topics without digressive markers so suddenly that a new turn fails to show its relation with a prior one. It was observed that in a conversation between English L1 and L2 speakers, after the English L2 speaker initiated an “unintentional topic-switch” (Long, 1983, p. 136), which had nothing to do with the previous topic, the English L1 speaker decided to accept it and go along. The number of topic-switch seems to decrease with the increase of English L2 speakers’ language proficiency (Boxer, 1993c).

Although unexpected topic-switch did not occur frequently in Long’s (1983) elicited conversations, 98 instances of unexpected topic-switch were located in ELFP conversations. ELFP speakers seemed to switch topics very suddenly for various reasons: 1) to satisfy curiosity or to seek information; 2) to share personal experiences

or perspectives; 3) to diversify topics under discussion. Excerpt (17) illustrates how an interlocutor switched topic unexpectedly because she could not wait to satisfy her curiosity and seek important information.

Excerpt (17)

Fei: (1615) Uh, but when I was taking the examination, my English, yeah, the results, the marks of my, yeah, of the examination in English was very good, so that's why I changed, changed my, uh, how do you say? You can say yeah

Mei: (1616)

Can_ change your major?

Fei: (1617) Yeah, changed it to English and that's also the decision of my head teacher.

.....

Mei: (1622) Maybe you just consider the words of your head your head teacher very important, you always listen to elders and others to make your decision.

Fei: (1623) Well, I was a good girl when I was young @.

Mei: (1624) Yeah, well maybe you will regret now, but=

Fei: (1625)

Yeah, yes.

Mei: (1626)

=you don't

have any chance more to

Fei: (1627)

I think It's too late for me to change, uh,

if I if I like to_ learn another, another trade, it's very difficult, you know.

→ Mei: (1628) Have you ever went, have you ever been abroad, been abroad?

Fei: (1629) I don't think so. Mm. Oh, you mean

Mei: (1630)  Yeah, have you ever been abroad?

Fei: (1631) Uh. To the_ yeah, I I went to_ [Eng- England.]

Mei: (1632) [Which country?] England? What do you think of it?

Fei: (1633) I think it's very good country, beautiful sceneries. It's a good place to live, live there.

(From EngCorn2008-8)

In the above excerpt, Fei explains that she chose English as her major because her English grade was high and her head teacher told her to (Lines 1615-1623). Since Mei sensed a little regret in Fei's explanation, she shows her sympathy and states that Fei has few opportunities to change her profession now (Line 1626). Fei immediately expresses her utter agreement with that in Line 1627. Unexpectedly, Mei switches to a question wanting to know whether Fei has had any overseas experiences (Line 1628). The question appears so abrupt that Fei provides a wrong answer (Line 1629). But she corrects her answer after Mei repeats the question (Lines 1630-1631). Their interaction thus continues around the emerging new topic. Mei brought up this topic probably because she planned to pursue her bachelor's degree in Singapore, which she mentioned later, and also because she knew Fei was a college English teacher who supposedly had some opportunities to go abroad. Fei's description of her visit to England could satisfy Mei's curiosity about life overseas.

In addition to satisfying curiosity or seeking information, ELFP speakers also switch topics without providing any clue in advance to share experiences or perspectives, as in Excerpt (18).

Excerpt (18)

Song: (261) When I studied in my undergraduate university, I know many many foreign teachers. And I heard that from another teacher, Chinese teacher, English teacher. She she told me that many foreign teacher, because they are, when when she became English teacher in our university, he will get a laptop. This is some kind of lending for him to use. Most most of them take away the laptop when (unclear).

Jian: (262) Ok. That's really bad. That's interesting.

→ Yu: (263) I found something very interesting. When people grow older, Chinese, they lose their respect [with each other].

Jian: (264) [They lose their respect]?

Yu: (265) Yeah, with each other. Not like this age, [they]=

Jian: (266)

[Why]?

Yu: (267)

↳ =always say good

words to each other. But when they grow older, (shaking head and scoffing) they don't do this any more.

Jian: (268) Really? For example, what type of good words?

Yu: (269) Say, (smacking lips) just like this, they, people say goodbye to each other. But less and less people [say goodbye]=

Jian: (270)

[Say goodbye].

Yu: (271)

↳
↳=when they grow

older. They just ok, you know, maybe they don't say please.

(From EngCorn2008Allen)

In the above excerpt, Jian and Yu are listening to Song talking about the bad behavior of some foreign teachers in Mainland China (Lines 261-262). Suddenly, Yu makes a comment on manners because he noticed that some adult Chinese have lost mutual respect (Line 263). Obviously surprised, Jian repeats Yu's comment, which leads to Yu's elaboration on the issue (Lines 265, 267, 269 and 271). Yu has observed that adult Chinese disregard polite formulae so much that they do not sound nice to one another any more. This interesting observation launched a profound discussion on the changing Chinese culture. However, the way it was brought up was sheer deviation from the expected English L1 conversational norms.

Another way for ELFP speakers to change topics is to make an explicit request as follows.

Excerpt (19)

Nong: (2294) But but well before I went to USA, I don't know that, I because I see the McDonald's are very expensive. So I believe people eating in, eating, eating in McDonald's are rich people, and from the Chinese market, those are very poor.

Jian: (2295) It's the opposite.

Nong: (2296) But actually it's the opposite.

Jian: (2297) Yeah. That's interesting. I think Chinese people have some

misconceptions about American culture. A lot of people here told me that in America, people only eat food in McDonald's or KFC.

→ Zhang: (2298) Excuse me. You just came, uh, I mean, we can change a topic?

Jian: (2299) Oh. Sure. What would you like to talk about?

(From EngCornEngin)

In Excerpt (19), Nong talks about his misconception that McDonald's represents wealth and Chinese restaurants represent poverty (Line 2294). Then, both he and Jian clarify that the truth is the opposite (Lines 2295-2296). In Line 2297, Jian provides more evidence for the misconceptions about American culture. Having realized that Jian and Nong had been in the US for a while, Zhang is eager to discuss other issues of his interest because he already knew about American food and felt it unnecessary to proceed with the same topic. Hence, in Line 2298, he starts out with an attention-getter Excuse me followed by you just came [from the US]. Before he completes that utterance, he is aware that what he wants to discuss has nothing to do with the previous topic. So he requests overtly that they change a topic, which, of course, meets no objection and results in a discussion on American economy, cars, fuels and business people. Explicit requests for changing topics, along with explicit requests for joining conversations, seem to be a unique characteristic of the communities of practice at English Corners.

Side Sequences

A side sequence is defined as a block of exchanges embedded in an ongoing conversation (Jefferson, 1972). A conversation may be deviated from an ongoing sequence into a side sequence when explanation is required to clear up misapprehension. The side sequence thus consists of three parts: a statement, a

misapprehension and a clarification. At the end of the side sequence normally is a resumption achieved by attention getters such as listen or you know, or a continuation signaled with so or and. Either the resumption marker or the continuation marker signals satisfactory termination and directs the side sequence back to the ongoing sequence. According to these characteristics, 70 tokens of side sequences were observed in the transcribed ELFP conversations.

Few functions of side sequences, except for the misapprehension sequence, have been discussed in the literature. However, three functions including clarification, newcomer involvement and teasing seem to be embodied in the side sequences of the ELFP conversations under investigation. The most common one is clarification, the function of the misapprehension sequence. This is not surprising because ELFP speakers often have to digress from the main talk to negotiate the meanings of expressions or solve misunderstanding when practicing speaking English. They have to collaborate to make sense of ongoing conversations and the outside world together. Excerpt (20) is an example.

Excerpt (20)

- Den: (73) Did you go to the Great Wall?
- Bei: (74) What?
- Den: (75) [Great Wall].
- Jing: (76) [Great Wall].
- Chen: (77) Did you go to the Great Wall?
- Jing: (78) Great Wall. [Did you go to the Great Wall]?
- Den: (79) [You don't know Great Wall]?

→ Jing: (80) <你知道>³ [Great Wall]?

→ An: (81) [<长城>⁴].

Bei: (82) Oh. No, no, no. I didn't. But I go to the uh Museum Palace.
Museum Palace.

(From EngCorn B)

In Excerpt (20), Den poses a question to Bei, wondering whether Bei went to the Great Wall (Line 73). Unfortunately, Bei does not understand the phrase Great Wall. This misapprehension makes Bei request clarification (Line 74). Noticing Bei's trouble, Den and Jing repeat the phrase Great Wall (Lines 75 and 76), which does not solve the problem. Therefore, another interlocutor offers help by repeating the original question (Line 77). Right after that, Jing repeats the phrase and the question (Line 78). Then, Den explicitly asks whether Bei knows the phrase (Line 79) and Jing repeats Den's question half in Chinese (Line 80). After all these efforts turn out unsuccessful, An translates the phrase Great Wall into Chinese (Line 81), which apparently clears up the misapprehension and terminates the side sequence. In Line 82, Bei shows his understanding of the phrase by using the discourse marker oh and answering the original question. The side sequence from Line 74 to Line 81 is a representative instance of ELFP speakers deviating from an ongoing sequence to promote understanding and then back to the ongoing sequence.

Another typical side sequence happens when newcomers are encouraged to be involved in an ongoing conversation. The arrival of newcomers runs through the whole English-Corner time. It reflects the fluid but collaborative nature of the communities of

³ This Chinese phrase means *do you know* in English.

⁴ This Chinese phrase means *Great Wall* in English.

practice at English Corners. ELFP speakers visit English Corners whenever they have time and feel like going. Upon arrival at English Corners, they can choose to act as peripheral members and only listen to talks; or they can actively join a conversation and contribute their thoughts. The most convenient way to partake in a conversation is to locate an acquaintance or a friend, who is already part of the conversation, and get introduced to other interlocutors of the conversation. Scenarios like this result in such side sequences as Excerpt (21).

Excerpt (21)

Walin: (84) Uuuh. You know, I I I'm asking them to imitate imitate_

Jian: (85)

Which

variety of English?

Walin: (86) Like uuuh, British.

Jian: (87) British English?

Walin: (88) Uhum. American is more popular. But I think British is the most standard. This is my opinion also, my my uh when I was learning that, I I followed the British English.

→ Jian: (89) Hey, good to see you.

→ Song: (90) Hi.

→ Jian: (91) Song. I got it.

→ Walin: (92) Walin.

→ Song: (93) Walin. I heard that you're English teacher.

→ Walin: (94) Uh. Yeah.

→ Song: (95) Teaching college or middle school?

- Walin: (96) College.
- Song: (97) College?
- Walin: (98) (nodding) Uh.
- Song: (99) So you're talking about how to_
- Jian: (100)  Yeah. Um. He was talking about how to educate English majors in China, and what kind of, which variety of English should they speak, should they study.

(From EngCorn2008Allen)

In the above excerpt, while Jian and Walin are talking about which variety of English they should encourage their students to imitate, Jian notices the arrival of her newly acquainted conversation partner Song at this English Corner. So she discontinues her discussion with Walin and switches to greet Song (Line 89). Walin, as one of the central talkers, immediately shows his interest in involving the new arrival into the conversation by presenting himself to Song (Line 92). Feeling welcomed, Song joins in the conversation by making connection with Walin, the person he did not know before he came. The conversation digresses into a background check on the newly acquainted (Lines 93-98), which typifies the beginning of conversations among strangers at English Corners. The digression is terminated when Song poses a question on the interrupted topic (Line 99). Immediately, Jian introduces the old topic to the newcomer and continues the discussion on which variety of English should be taught in China (Line 100). The side sequence (Lines 89-98) triggered by a newcomer indicates the inclusive nature of the communities of practice at English Corners, where anyone interested in practicing speaking ELFP is welcome to join an ongoing conversation.

One way to show solidarity between acquaintances or friends is teasing. A side sequence caused by teasing can make a conversation less formal and more dynamic. Excerpt (22) illustrates how Jian teased Hu, her newly made acquaintance, in terms of ordering drinks.

Excerpt (22)

Jian: (1362) I guess you must have some savings. Otherwise, you wouldn't want another child. @ @ @

Hu: (1363) Of course. Saving, saving is a little.

Jian: (1364) But the savings is enough for you to support your family, right? Otherwise, people would say, no, no more children. I cannot support more children.

Hu: (1365) Maybe, now it's no problem. [But]

→ Jian: (1366) [You] see, now it's not a problem to him at all. [I should have] ordered more expensive drinks.[@ @ @ @]

→ Hu: (1367) [@ @ @ @] [No.]

→ Fei: (1368) [Still, you can order now].

Hu: (1369) 不过，我告诉你，我本来是没什么忧虑的。我去年一年亏了个几十万块钱。就是把原来原来以前的全部亏光了。我跟你讲，我我我我就跟你用中文讲一讲吧⁵.....

(From ChinCorn2008-5)

⁵ The translation of these Chinese utterances is: "But, I tell you, I didn't have any concerns. I lost hundreds of thousands of *yuan* last year. I lost all that money. Let me tell you. Let me me me me tell you in Chinese....."

This conversation happened when Hu treated his newly acquainted friends to drinks and ice-cream. Before the above excerpt, Hu shared with his acquaintances some information about his family. Despite the Only Child policy in China, Hu, a private businessman, had two children after he paid a fine to the government. In Line 1362, Jian guesses that Hu has savings to raise two children because most other Chinese families would choose to have only one child because of limited budgets in modern days. Hearing Hu's acknowledge of modest savings (Line 1363), Jian goes on to indicate he has more than a little savings (Line 1364). Jian's joking imposition forces Hu to admit that he is financially strong and can afford to raise two children (Line 1365). It seems typical and acceptable in China for a speaker to impose a joking statement upon others to show that others make more money than the speaker. Even though Hu tries to transition to his financial problems because flaunting wealth is considered inappropriate in Chinese culture, Jian cuts in and deviates into a side sequence of teasing. She teases that she should have ordered more expensive drinks had she known Hu can afford it (Line 1366). Hearing Jian's hilarious statement, Hu laughs and says no considering his emerging financial problems (Line 1367). Overlapping with Hu, Fei jumps in and jokingly encourages Jian to spend more of Hu's money and order more expensive drinks now (Line 1368). This side sequence (Lines 1366-1368) was brought back to the discussion on Hu's financial situation in Line 1369 when Hu resumes the description of his financial loss last year in Mandarin. This might be because L1 works better than L2 for a speaker to describe important life experiences and capture emotional moments.

Lip Smacking

Lip smacking is mostly studied in the field of neuroscience using monkeys as experimental subjects. It is defined as “an affiliative gesture consisting of rhythmically opening and closing the mouth” (Fogassi and Ferrari, 2007, p. 136). Monkeys smack lips as a simple ingestive action or as an important facial gesture with communicative value. Research has shown that lip smacking has gradually shifted from a meaningless mechanic action to a communicative behavior (Fogassi and Ferrari, 2007).

Unfortunately, lip smacking has not been well studied as an extralinguistic feature in the field of linguistics. One important study (Magnusson, 2006) looked at blind people’s behavior of lip smacking in Sweden. It was observed that all the blind subjects signaled or even demanded their turns by means of extralinguistic sounds including lip smacking. These nonverbal turn-holding signals seemed straightforward and effective to the blind community. In addition to this turn-requesting /turn-holding function, lip smacking displayed other communicative functions through 112 tokens used by the ELFP communities of practice under investigation. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt (23)

Nan: (910) Such, which, such things like which is, which is hurting others, and which is making funny, they can make sure. I I’m sure they can know the difference between them.

→ Jian: (911) (smacking lips) Ok. I had a student who wrote a paper about violent games. And she was very against the violent games because, because she uh, she argued that a lot of violent games made kids or changed kids’ behavior. Ok? You don’t, you might be sure, or you might thought, you might think that you won’t follow the actors

in the games. But you never know, because the game can influence you so much that you act like people in the games very naturally.

(From EngCorn2008-9)

In Excerpt (23), Nan and Jian are discussing the pros and cons of playing violent games. Nan believes that violent game players would not use violence on others in real life because they know it hurts (Line 910). Hearing this, Jian requests her turn of speaking by means of lip smacking in Line 911. She draws on the evidence of her student who strongly argued against violent games. Then she concludes that violent behavior might work its way into the player of violent games without being noticed. Apparently, lip smacking in this case is located at the utterance-initial position and signals a request for a turn which leads to the beginning of an utterance and the introduction of a new idea. The distinctive nonverbal feature sounds so clear and loud that it increases the success rate of turn-requesting / turn-holding.

Lip smacking might also emerge utterance-internally to apply the function of word search or lexical choice making, as in Excerpt (24).

Excerpt (24)

→ Yu: (296) Yeah. Maybe the foreigner would totally accept that if the person tell him his thought. But the Chinese won't say things about this, won't think this way, won't (smiling and shaking head). They say they would rather (smacking lips)_

Jian: (297) Why is that?

Yu: (298) Why is that? Well. Face, (scoffing) about losing face.

[Generally speaking]

Jian: (299) [Ah. So if if if] he asked the foreigner to pay for the dinner, it would hurt his face.

→ Yu: (300) Mm. Has something to do with that. Face, I think, is the most complicated philosophical concept in Chinese culture. It has a lot of uh (smacking lips) denotation. Uh (smacking lips) it is very hard to say precisely what it is. But you can feel it, you can feel it, when you (smacking lips) when you are in such a situation (unclear).

(From EngCorn2008Allen)

Earlier, Ted complained about treating an English L1 speaker to dinner many times without being paid back. Like most other Chinese people, he believed that treating each other to dinner back and forth is a good way of socializing and building solidarity. But when this mutual effort turns into unidirectional work, it also becomes a financial burden. After hearing Ted's story, Jian suggested that he tell the English L1 speaker to split the bill when they hang out together, since it is normal to do so in the western countries. However, in Line 296, Yu states that the Chinese would not reveal thoughts as directly as the foreigner. Unfortunately, he loses words when describing what the Chinese prefer. So he smacks lips while searching for the right expression. But Jian does not wait to the end of his search. She poses a question trying to understand the reason behind what he thinks the Chinese communication pattern is (Line 297). Interestingly, Yu decomposes the issue into face value (Lines 298 and 300). After he claims face as the most complicated philosophical concept in Chinese culture, he attempts to pinpoint what it is. But he smacks lips when he struggles with the word denotation, when he

searches for more precise words, and when he tries to hypothesize a situation of people feeling the value of face (Line 300).

In addition to functions of turn-requesting / turn-holding and word search, lip smacking can serve to display frustrating feelings or negative evaluation, as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (25)

→ Pan: (309) But uh studying language, learning learning language is a, is the same thing. We all should have confidence, preservance. Yeah. And uh another another factor is method, you know, method, yeah. How should we use the uh correct method? Yeah. You know, in China, we we don't have uh such a uuuh environment, good environment, as we live in America society or as we live in uh British society. Yeah. In in China, we (smacking lips and shaking head) don't have many, ok, uh good environments. Maybe sometimes, uh we just feel the English Corner is good good place for us to learn language. Yeah. Maybe just every every week we find some, with our time, we find some time to to go to here, uh, to go here, to come here, to to improve, improve our oral English, only oral English. But I think most time, we should develop our imagination. Maybe, most time, we walk in the street, we sit in the uh uh cafe, or we sit in the restaurant, we uh uh in this moment, at the moment, we should develop our imagination. Ok. Uuuh. We should think, we should translate in my mind everything we saw.

Yeah. Maybe, ok, uh, this is lake, oh, what's in the lake? Ok, we should think, oh, in the lake, uh some fish in the lake, or some bamboo in the lake, or just like that.

(From EngCorn D)

In this excerpt, Pan is introducing his methods of studying English in the Chinese-dominated environment, which represents one of the most common and popular topics at English Corners. He encourages English learners to have confidence and perseverance in English learning. Even though he uses a wrong word preservation for perseverance, his conversation partners rely on the let-it-pass principle because it is not difficult to figure out what he actually means by context. Consequently, he is able to continue his comment on China not being a good English learning environment as English-speaking countries. However, to him, this first comment on China does not seem enough to get his message across. So he smacks his lips and shakes his head before he repeats his negative comment on the English learning environment in the Chinese society. Believing his message has been conveyed, he continues to show his appreciation of English Corners as good places to practice speaking English and introduce his other unique ways of studying English on his own such as thinking aloud in English. In brief, lip smacking seems effective for ELFP speakers to disclose such negative feelings as frustration, disappointment, dissatisfaction and stress.

Disagreement Behavior

This study adopts Pomerantz's (1984) definitions of direct and indirect disagreement: one's disagreement behavior appears strong and direct if it is not preceded by partial agreement, hedges or concessions; disagreement is softened and indirect if it is preceded by any agreement component. English L1 speakers tend to

employ weak and indirect disagreement expressions (e.g. Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1978). However, same-status speakers might discourage their conversation partners' self denigration and disagree to build solidarity (e.g. Schiffrin, 1984); high-status speakers tend to express disagreement more strongly and directly (e.g. Locher, 2004) except in the domain of professor-student conversations in the US (Rees-Miller, 2000). Power seems to be the most significant factor in Chinese L1 speakers' choice of direct disagreement (e.g. Liu, 2004).

In contrast, in English L2 discourses, speakers might disagree directly to display personal identity, to maintain relationship or to gain knowledge of the world (e.g. Habib, 2008); they might opt out of disagreement or express disagreement indirectly as Japanese learners of English did in Beebe and Takahashi's (1989b) study; they might gradually transit from direct disagreement to indirect disagreement after having interacted with English L1 speakers for a while (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004). Unfortunately, little research has focused on the disagreement behavior of Chinese users of English—ELFP speakers at English Corners in this case. The following sections uncover this through authentic data of natural conversations.

Strategies of Disagreement

Contrary to the findings of Chinese users of English being indirect in communication (e.g. Wong and Phool-Ching, 2000; Sheer and Chen, 2003; Cardon and Scott, 2003), ELFP speakers under study made use of more direct disagreement (442 tokens) than indirect disagreement (39 tokens). Since direct disagreement, rather than indirect disagreement, emerged as a salient interactional feature, which differs from softened disagreement used by most English L1 speakers, it was chosen as the focus of discussion in this section. A close examination of the direct disagreement

expressions used in the collected natural conversations unveils ELFP speakers' typical disagreement strategies. The speakers used the coordinating conjunction *but* to express direct disagreement very often. They tended to employ three varieties of strategies: 1) issue-oriented negation (307 tokens); 2) self-oriented negation (121 tokens); and 3) other-oriented negation (14 tokens). Consider the following excerpts.

Excerpt (26)

Jian: (892) Do you think playing games is good for you?

Nan: (893) I think it's ok because we all will often, we will often laugh and very happy.

→ Jian: (894) But some games are very violent, right?

→ Nan: (895) But sometimes if you don't hurt each other, it's ok.

Jian: (896) What if a person, a kid is so into a game, and he imitates everything, every action in the game, and he imagines everybody around him is, you know, a game player?

(From EngCorn2008-10)

In Excerpt (25), Jian wants to know why Nan enjoys playing games with her classmates. But the way she poses her question discloses her negative attitude towards playing games (Line 892). Sensing that, Nan explains that playing games is ok because of the happiness it brings to her (Line 893). Rather than accept Nan's explanation, Jian straightforwardly points out the problem of video game violence starting her utterance with *but* (Line 894). This, however, does not sound convincing to Nan who immediately retorts with an utterance initiated with *but* (Line 895). Jian obviously was neither convinced nor offended. She went on to make her point by posing a hypothetical

question (Line 896), which led to more discussion. Utterance-initial but is the most frequently used disagreement strategy in the ELFP conversations under study. Even though it is not preceded by partial agreement, concessions or hedges, its following utterances seem to be well accepted by ELFP speakers.

Likewise, issue-oriented negation does not sound offensive to ELFP speakers either. Issue-oriented negation means that disagreement targets things or issues instead of interlocutors. Excerpt (27) illustrates how issue-oriented negation is taken as normal in a conversation.

Excerpt (27)

Zhang: (2285) I can give you an example. In USA, there are so many
American Chinese. And they uh have been living in USA for many
years, even [they cannot speak Chinese]=

Nong: (2286) [They grew up there.]

Zhang: (2287) =Yes. They cannot speak
Chinese, just speak English. And when they select food, they will
select Chi- American food, rather than Chinese food.

→ Nong: (2288) No, no, no. They eat Chinese food. They live in the China town.
They buy food [from the Asian market].

Jian: (2289) [That's the environment]. It's not ancient, ancient
people.

(From EngCornEngin)

In the above excerpt, Zhang brings up the topic about American Chinese who have lived in the US for many years. His comment on them being unable to speak Chinese

overlaps with Nong's description of them growing up in the US (Lines 2285 and 2286). When Zhang continues making comments on these people's choice of food, he reveals assumption that American Chinese prefer American food to Chinese food (Line 2287). This, of course, meets disagreement from Nong who has lived in the US for four years. He repeats No a few times before he presents his side in Line 2288. Nong's direct and strong disagreement orients to the issue under discussion, rather than any interlocutors involved, which seems to lessen the force of the repetition of No and does not affect the dynamic of the conversation. Jian, in Line 2289, jumps in to argue that Chinese people eat Chinese food because of the environment of the China town rather than their genes. The conversation continues to discuss food choice as a result of environmental influence or natural selection.

When direct disagreement is oriented toward the speaker him/herself, it is called self-oriented negation in this study. Self-oriented negation is as useful as the conjunction but or issue-oriented negation to ELFP speakers. It appears explicit and straightforward but not offensive to interlocutors in the ELFP conversations. Excerpt (28) is an instance.

Excerpt (28)

Den: (177) Excuse me. If china we have so many famous person say China doesn't need English, so I don't want to say learning English any more.

Jing: (178) No, no, no.

Den: (179) Yes.

→ Bei: (180) No, no, no. I don't agree with you.

- Den: (181) Yeah. Maybe uh
- Bei: (182) I think uh English is very important, is the most important language. If you uh just like me uh, I think, uh if you uh, if you become a graduate student, you will first meet difficulties when you do some research, just like me. Because my major is pharmacology, uh, when when I was a graduate student in medical college, I should do some research in uh pharmacology. So_
- Den: (183) Because you want to go abroad, so you must study it, you must study English.

(From EngCorn B)

In the above excerpt, Den, Jing and Bei are talking about the necessity of studying English in the Chinese-dominated society. Den tries to support his argument that China does not need English with famous people whose names he does not provide in Line 177. This extreme opinion is bombarded by Jing in Line 178 and Bei in Line 180. Interestingly, after Jing repeats No a few times to show his strong disagreement, Den refuses to give in and presents a contradictory Yes (Line 179). But after Bei repeats No a few times and adds to it the utterance of self-oriented negation I don't agree with you in Line 180 for stress purpose, Den appears less forceful than compromising. This softened argument enables Bei to elaborate his viewpoints about the importance of studying English especially for graduate research based on his personal experiences (Line 182). His elaboration at least makes Den realize the necessity of English to people planning to study abroad (Line 183).

In opposition to self-oriented negation, other-oriented negation is defined as orienting direct disagreement to others. Even though this disagreement strategy can sound accusatory to recipients, it seems normal and acceptable to ELFP speakers, as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (29)

- Bei: (205) Just like me, because in <Jiangxi>> Medical College, the condition is very poor. So I can't find uh mm uh articles in English, and I will go <Shanghai>> ci-, [go to <Shanghai>> City to find uh_]
- Jing: (206) [(smiling) Oh. You don't know, you don't] know the university is very poor. You may say university is not good enough, not good enough, not so very poor, that is.
- Bei: (207) @@ Not good enough. So it's very difficult for me to find uh uh some articles uh relative to my research in English. So I will, you should go, uh, many graduate student will have to, have to go to <Shanghai>> City or <Beijing>> City to get that information. It's very difficult. And if you can't uh (smacking lips), if you can't find uh that articles, you you uh I think it's very difficult for you to do uh tho- to do those experiments. Very difficult. (frowning)

(From EngCornB)

In this excerpt, Bei complains about his current medical college not having sufficient research resources. He comments that his school is poor in Line 205. However, Jing does not think poor is the right word to precisely describe the condition of the medical college. So he directs disagreement to Bei by repeating you don't know before he

suggests what he believes is a better phrase not good enough (Line 206). Obviously, Bei is not offended by Jing's other-oriented negation; he laughs and accepts Jing's correction by repeating not good enough. Then, he continues talking about the difficulty of obtaining research articles in English from his college and the frustration of going all the way to metropolis for research information.

Functions of Disagreement

The disagreement strategies of using 1) issue-oriented negation, 2) self-oriented negation and 3) other-oriented negation are very typical in ELFP conversations. ELFP speakers do not seem to take offense at these disagreement strategies. Instead, they made full use of the strategies for such functions as perspective sharing, solidarity building, information giving, suggesting, modesty display, self-defense and joking accusation. Excerpt (30) illustrates how interlocutors share different perspectives.

Excerpt (30)

Teng: (282) You know, a- another problem, another question, you know, uh is that how to s- how to speak English the way as most foreigner do. I think that, I think that's big problem for all of us to discuss. You know, to tell you the truth, I don't think too much of people's English standing here. You know. I think most of them speak Chinglish, not Standard English, you know.

Pan: (283) @@@

Teng: (284) That's the truth. You know, I I used to listen to you know, uh uh, some relevant uh English uh uh tape and you know and and video, and video, you know. I uh, when I when I was listen to American English, I was excited. Yes. I was excited.

→ Pan: (285) Ok, ok. This is your problem. I don't care about that. What you say is Chinglish, or Canadian English, or Indian English, I, you know, uh, I don't care that. Ok. What I want to do is, I should adapt myself every kind of English. [I think this is a good way]. =

Teng: (286) [I see, I see. I know. I see.]

Pan: (287) =Uh. Because you know, do you know why?

Teng: (288) Why?

Pan: (289) Because in the world, maybe sixty or seventy English, uh, English speaking people cannot speak Standard English. Ok? Do you agree with me?

Teng: (290) I see. I agree with you.

(From EngCorn D)

In this excerpt, Teng brings up the issue of the variety of English people speak at English Corners. He claims that he appreciates Standard English much more than Chinglish and would like to speak English the way English L1 speakers do (Line 282). On hearing this, Pan bursts into laughter without saying anything. Teng continues expressing his excitement at listening to Standard American English in Line 284. This triggers Pan's urge to make comments. He starts off with a combination of other-oriented negation This is your problem and self-oriented negation I don't care about that to demonstrate his resolute opposition to Teng's viewpoints (Line 285). He believes that he should adapt himself to all kinds of English (Line 285) because the majority speakers of English cannot speak Standard English (Line 289). Encountering such strong

disagreement, Teng does not display any sign of unhappiness because he knows Pan is simply sharing perspectives with a good intention. Apparently, Pan's disagreement successfully changes Teng's views and makes him show agreement twice respectively in Lines 286 and 290. The perspective-sharing function of disagreement occurred most frequently in the ELFP conversations. However, a different function surfaced in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (31)

- Fei: (1566) I think of, yeah, my experience very simple, very dull, boring.
- Gi: (1567) But you you are rich in teaching.
- Fei: (1568) Uh, maybe.
- Gi: (1569) Yeah. [It's] enough.
- Fei: (1570) [I]=
- Gi: (1571) It's enough.
- Fei: (1572) I just, yeah. What, what makes me_
- proud is that I (smacking lips) I meet so many students. Yeah.
- They're all so young, so new, so fresh. Yeah.
- Gi: (1573) Is that including me? [@ @]
- Fei: (1574) Of course! Yeah, so many
- people
- Gi: (1575) [Yeah].
- Fei: (1576) [Yeah]. When you're together with the young people, you will feel that yourself are young too, even younger.

(From EngCorn2008-8)

In Excerpt (31), Fei and Gi are strangers who practice speaking English at English Corners. Fei complains about her simple boring experience as a college English teacher because it's the only job she has ever held (Line 1566). Immediately, Gi overtly disagrees with her self-deprecation and uplifts her by complimenting her teaching experiences (Line 1567). The disagreement functions to build up a friendship between Fei and Gi. Gi's more supporting words in Lines 1569 and 1571 encourage Fei to disclose her positive feelings about being a teacher (Line 1572). Noticing the change in Fei's attitude, Gi jokingly asks whether young students include him (Line 1573). This indicates an upgrade of the social distance between Fei and Gi. The solidarity building would not have worked without Gi's strong disapproval of Fei's self-deprecation. Examples like this excerpt are additional evidence to support the previous studies on disagreement with self denigrations for solidarity building (e.g. Schiffrin, 1984).

ELFP conversations also display instances in support of studies on disagreement for educational purposes. Habib (2008) observed that advanced English L2 speakers directly disagreed with misconceptions of the things they specialized in. By means of direct disagreement, they often educated one another with what they knew. Excerpt (32) illustrates how one interlocutor negated the other interlocutor's opinion and informed him of a website as a valuable resource for job hunting.

Excerpt (32)

Zhan: (104) Yeah. We work together. And I [(unclear)]

Song: (105) [So so], but actually, I think the position on the internet is very little. So you said you and your classmates join together to find [an opportunity].

→ Zhan: (106) [No. You don't know] the exact, yeah,
you don't know the, yeah, you don't know. There are so many
information about positions in the, hey, three w dot <Jiangxi Rencai
Jiaoliu Wang>> dot com. Yeah. There are so many positions
and we want to do something just like teaching or marketing, yeah,

Song: (107) some
Z So is the position for part time job also offered
[on the internet]?

Zhan: (108) [You can choose from] you can choose from it. You can choose.

(From EngCorn2008-3)

Earlier, Zhan mentioned that he and his classmates found jobs on the internet. In Line 105 of this excerpt, Song expresses his doubts about it. Right away, Zhan disagrees directly and points out Song's lack of knowledge of the amazing function of the internet which has lots of information about jobs (Line 106). Zhan's illumination arouses Song's curiosity in the respect of part time jobs on the internet (Line 107). To answer Song's question, Zhan explains that there is a choice for that in Line 108. Even though Zhan employs strong other-oriented negation in Line 106, Song does not take offense because Zhan is providing objective and educational information that can be useful to Song in the future. This type of disagreement for educational purposes seems welcomed by ELFP speakers who join the communities of practice at English Corners initially for another educational purpose such as improving English language skills. It displays the important function of the communities of practice as an incredibly valuable repertoire.

This repertoire has allowed ELFP speakers to visit English Corners for another reason as well, which is talking about their personal concerns or issues and seeking suggestions. ELFP speakers have realized the benefits of getting to know and making connections with people from varying backgrounds and with different specialties. Hence, they come to English Corners to conduct social practice, outgrow problems and make sense of the outside world together. Consider Excerpt (33).

Excerpt (33)

Song: (481) But all my professor like me to do research.@@

Jian: (482) I know.

Song: (483) But I don't like

Jian: (484)

You don't like

Song: (485)

I just want to find a position and
make a living. That's Ok.

Jian: (486) [@@@You don't like research at all]?

→ Nong: (487) [But you you should not tell the professor about this].

Song: (488) I like I like the campus. But I don't like I hate to write paper. [@@@]

Jian: (489)

[@@@]

I know it's tough. It's tough to anybody you know, writing papers.

(From EngCornCai 9)

In the above excerpt, Song brings up his problem as a Ph.D. student of statistics. He is expected to do research (Line 481) although he does not enjoy it (Line 483). He claims that he only wants to find a position and make a living (Line 485) as a statistician which does not require research. Jian feels it hilarious to hear his honest confession which

contradicts Ph.D. mission—conducting original research and contributing to the academic world (Line 486). Unlike Jian, what Nong, a researcher and Ph.D. of agriculture, is concerned is how disappointed Song's professor can feel on knowing Song's true feelings about research. So he suggests that Song should not confess his real thoughts to his professor, which is not preceded by any agreement components but initiated with the disagreement signal but (Line 487). This suggestion makes Song realize the necessity of clarifying that he likes his school life on campus and being a student taking classes with professors, but he resents writing research papers (Line 488). His new confession receives sympathy from Jian who feels the same pain of writing papers (Line 489).

Showing sympathy is considered a quintessential merit just like showing modesty in Chinese culture. Chinese people tend to reject compliments to show less arrogance but more modesty (Yuan, 1996; Yu, 2003). This happens probably because compliment rejection would make compliment givers, who lack the same good qualities, feel more comfortable to continue ongoing conversations. Their behavior differs from English L1 speakers who tend to accept a compliment even though they might downgrade it a little bit (Wolfson, 1983). Modesty display, particularly compliment rejecting in this case, accounts for another function of direct disagreement. This traditional trait in Chinese culture seems to find its way into ELFP communication at English Corners. Excerpt (34) is an example.

Excerpt (34)

Cai: (60) I don't understand what you say. I don't know what you say. So I say, so I say no.

- Jian: (61) So if you don't understand me, you'd better say excuse me or could you, you know, repeat, rather than no, no, no, yes, yes, yes. That means you understand.
- Teng: (62) When we, when we talk talk English, never, if you don't understand something, never pretend you understand it, because you lose an opportunity to learn it.
- Heng: (63) I think you are a good listener. So you can be a good speaker.
- Cai: (64) No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I just a beginner.

(From EngCornCai 5)

In this excerpt, Cai states that he says no when he gets lost in conversations in English (Line 60). Jian does not think this is a good idea, so she teaches Cai to use excuse me or could you repeat instead of no or yes when he cannot follow people in conversations (Line 61). To show his agreement, Teng adds that pretending to have understood what people said actually takes opportunities to learn English away from English learners (Line 62). In contrast with Jian's and Teng's teachings about the importance of clarification requests, Heng looks at the bright side of the issue and encourages Cai to become a good speaker of English (Line 63). However, his compliment on Cai's listening ability receives extremely strong denial when Cai responds with eight nos to show he is a beginner learner of English (Line 64). Direct disagreement resulting from modesty display like this typifies the ELFP conversations under investigation.

In addition to perspective sharing, solidarity building, information giving, suggesting and modesty display, direct disagreement used by ELFP speakers can serve as self-defense or self-clarification, as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (35)

Ye: (8) They don't say some students; they say some student (smiling and nodding). It's a mistake. [But this is not] =

Heng: (9)

[This is, this is]

Ye: (10)

=a big mistake. But maybe

because of his nose.

Heng: (11)

But this may be due to the the translation system. Maybe he pronounce the s so lightly. Maybe you can't get it.

→

Ye: (12)

No. Student, students, if you listen carefully, you will find the difference.

(From EngCornCai 1)

In Excerpt (35), Ye, a private college English teacher, shares typical errors her students make when speaking English in class. She gives the example of some student in Line 8 to show that Chinese learners of English tend to use singular forms for plural meanings. Before she finishes, Heng cuts in and tries to voice his opinion (Line 9). But he is cut off by Ye who continues explaining the reason behind that error (Line 10). Her explanation is challenged by Heng who thinks that translating utterances from Chinese into English in a low voice might be the reason for her to hear her students leaving out the plural form -s (Line 11). This explanation justifies what Ye considered an error is actually not an error. Refusing to take the blame of misjudgment, Ye immediately says no and claims that she listened very carefully to her students before coming to that conclusion (Line 12). Ye's self defense took the form of strong disagreement and was well accepted because the conversation went on without any sign of emotional disturbance.

Emotional disturbance might come and go very quickly within a couple of turns when strong disagreement functions as a joking accusation, as in Excerpt (36).

Excerpt (36)

Den: (137) In future, we doesn't need fighter. We just, uh, have uh, uh, safe life or, we just develop economic and get high [money].

Jing: (138) [Why] don't you, why don't try your best to turn the situation? why don't try your best to turn the situation? [why do you com-]=

Den: (139)

[The situation]

Jing: (140)

=complain much?

Den: (141)

The

situation is you can have good life. If you can have a good life, you doesn't need to worry about that. Or you you can't have a, so what what what do you think about that? (smiling)

→ Jing: (142) You always, you always have attitude. So I can't agree with you. You always have attitude.

Den: (143) Sure. You can't agree with me, because (unclear). So we have no discussion.

Jing: (144) (unclear) I think, uh, don't take it serious, ok? It's nothing (smiling).

Den: (145) I get this information from a famous person in America. And he said China will have no power.

(From EngCorn B)

Earlier, Den stated that China did not need power. This aroused Jing's curiosity about why. So in Line 137 of the above excerpt, Den explains that China needs to focus more on economic development instead of political power. Jing, who did not appreciate Den's negative comments on China at the very beginning of this conversation, started questioning Den's effort to turn the problematic situation around because Den sounds like a constant complainer (Line 138). Ignoring Jing's question, Den continues explaining, with a smile, the problem of people not living a good life (Line 141). He assumes that his explanation should be able to support his point of China not needing power. However, the message does not successfully get across to Jing, who jokingly accuses Den of having attitude and not being convincing (Line 142). Jing's accusation seems to make Den feel a little uncomfortable and disturbed because he sounds like being ready to quit the discussion (Line 143). Noticing this, Jing turns to ease the tension and comfort Den with soft talks and a big smile (Line 144). Jing's friendly compromise undoubtedly takes effect because in the next turn, Den clarifies that it was not he but a well known American who claimed that China did / would not need power. He is not the one who proposed the original view that Jing strongly disagrees with. This excerpt shows that strong disagreement might sound / become accusatory and disturbing, which, however, can be softened by means of compromising utterances or friendly facial expressions.

Sociolinguistic Variables and Disagreement

In addition to constraining speech acts, in general, in English L1 (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, 1982; Wolfson, 1989; Boxer, 1993) and in English L2 (e.g. Trosborg, 1987; Takahashi, 2005b), sociolinguistic variables have also been shown to have impact on disagreement behavior in particular. For instance, social status seems to affect speakers' choice of

disagreement expressions in English L1. High status people tend to employ direct disagreement more frequently than low status people (e.g. Locher, 2004). Nevertheless, in English L2 discourse, little research has been carried out to examine the effect of sociolinguistic variables on disagreement behavior in informal natural settings.

To fill this gap, this section addresses the correlation between the frequency of ELFP speakers' direct/indirect disagreement and sociolinguistic variables, including age, sex, education, years of studying English, experience in English-speaking countries, socioeconomic status and social distance. In this study, education is indicated by whether participants have earned a bachelor's degree or not; experiences in English-speaking countries is indicated by whether participants have been to English-speaking countries or not; socioeconomic status is indicated by participants' income levels compared with local living expenses; and social distance refers to three relationships between interlocutors: friends, acquaintances and strangers.

The correlations between ELFP speakers' sociolinguistic variables and the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement were subjected to Chi-square tests. The study observed that participants employed 442 tokens of direct disagreement (91.89% of the total disagreement expressions), but only 39 tokens of indirect disagreement (8.11% of the total disagreement expressions); they used 307 tokens of issue-oriented direct disagreement, 121 tokens of self-oriented direct disagreement and 14 tokens of other-oriented direct disagreement. The high frequencies of direct disagreement in general and issue-oriented direct disagreement in particular do not necessarily mean a significant correlation between participants' disagreement behavior and sociolinguistic

variables. Test results display whether seven sociolinguistic variables are significantly associated with disagreement behavior in ELFP.

Figures 4-1—4-7 show the test results of the correlation between the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement and sociolinguistic variables such as sex, education, years of studying English, experience in English-speaking countries, socioeconomic status and social distance. Since the six P-values⁶ are much greater than the $P=0.05$ level⁷, the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement is not strongly correlated with the six sociolinguistic variables. However, the test result in Figure 4-1 shows that P-value is a little greater than 0.05 but smaller than 0.1, indicating the marginal significance of age to the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement⁸. Age might be correlated with disagreement behavior in a non-traditional sense. Traditionally, seniority has superordinate status and older generations are more entitled to disagree directly than younger generations. But this study shows that people aged 10-19 used 96.08% direct disagreement and people aged 40-49 used 97.50% direct disagreement, suggesting younger people can be as direct as older people. People in the middle age groups are relatively less direct, even though their direct disagreement outnumbers indirect disagreement to a great extent. This might be because most youngsters in China are the only child of their families who are cherished so much that flouting traditional values

⁶ The P-values of sex, education, years of studying English, experience in English-speaking countries, socioeconomic status and social distance are 0.1161, 0.7913, 0.8871, 0.4268, 0.5739 and 0.6441 respectively.

⁷ The observed significance level (P-value) in this study is less than 0.05.

⁸ The cell of indirect disagreement by 10-19 year-olds has an expected value (4.1351), which is lower than the minimum value (5.0) required for the validity of Chi-square test results. This suggests that the P-value of the test on age might not be precise. This also applies to the test on social distance in Figure 4-7. The expected value in the cell of indirect disagreement by friends in the figure is 1.6216, which is too low to ensure the validity of the test result.

is not considered very inappropriate. Also, they have more access to western values that might have challenged the status of the traditional values in China.

More importantly, the percentages of direct disagreement expressions employed by participants of varying backgrounds are much higher than those of indirect disagreement expressions (see Table 4-1), indicating that participants tended to disagree directly rather than indirectly. This counters previous research on Chinese users of English being indirect in communicating ideas (e.g. Wong and Phool-Ching, 2000; Cardon and Scott, 2003).

Moreover, differences exist between the speakers' choices of issue-oriented negation, self-oriented negation and other-oriented negation regarding percentages (see Table 4-2). ELFP speakers seemed to use more issue-oriented negation, less self-oriented negation and even less other-oriented negation. However, none of these differences were shown to be statistically significant. Chi-square tests showed no significant correlation between the seven sociolinguistic variables and ELFP speakers' choices of direct disagreement with different orientations. All seven P-values⁹ are much greater than 0.05. Note that before running Chi-square tests, tokens of self-oriented negation and other-oriented negation were joined together as person-oriented negation because of the extremely low production of these two types of direct disagreement.

To summarize, none of the sociolinguistic variables but age appear to have a significant role in participants' frequency/proportions of direct/indirect disagreement. For instance, socioeconomic status, which is conventionally considered an essential factor in such a hierarchical society like China, seems to lose its power in ELFP communities.

⁹ The P-values for age, sex, education, years of studying English, experience in English-speaking countries, socioeconomic status and social distance are 0.7901, 0.9404, 0.4771, 0.7013, 0.4319, 0.2685 and 0.4230 respectively.

Even though it is natural to assume that education, years of studying English and experience in English-speaking countries have effect on disagreement behavior in English L2, these variables have left little trace on participants' disagreement behavior in ELFP according to the Chi-square tests. Neither has social distance. This is likely due to the fact that ELFP communities are special sociolinguistic phenomena framed in the globalization of the world, internationalization of English, and dominance of Mandarin in the Chinese society. Their priorities of improving communication in English and making sense of the world together might have leveled out variable difference.

Because of the fluid nature of ELFP communities, it is unrealistic to administer language proficiency tests on participants. However, in ethnographic interviews, participants brought up the importance of language proficiency in their choice of joining conversations or showing disagreement. Especially in their first few English-Corner experiences, they behaved as peripheral members who had inefficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge to conduct discussion or to express disagreement. Very often, they opted out of discussion or disagreement and chose to be good listeners. After they have developed confidence and competence in speaking English, they can become central members who have more choices of conversation partners and conversation topics, probably because high English proficiency leads to more respect from community members. They can feel more pleasure of speaking English and making sense of the world.

Table 4-1. Percentages of Disagreement Expressions in ELFP

Sociolinguistic variables		Percentage of direct disagreement	Percentage of indirect disagreement
Age	10-19	96.08%	3.92%
	20-29	91%	9%
	30-39	88.67%	11.33%
	40-49	97.5%	2.5%
Sex	Female	89.92%	10.08%
	Male	93.83%	6.17%
Education/Degree	Below bachelor's	91.3%	8.7%
	At least bachelor's	92.08%	7.92%
Years of studying English	3-9 years	91.6%	8.4%
	At least 10 years	92%	8%
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	92.89%	7.11%
	At least once	90.91%	9.09%
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	91.14%	8.86%
	Middle	91.54%	8.46%
	High	95.24%	4.76%
Social distance	Stranger	91.07%	8.93%
	Acquaintance	93.37%	6.63%
	Friend	90%	10%

Table 4-2. Percentages of differently oriented direct disagreement in ELFP

Sociolinguistic variables		Percentage of issue-oriented negation	Percentage person-oriented negation	
			Self-oriented negation	Other-oriented negation
Age	10-19	63.27%	32.65%	4.08%
	20-29	70.33%	27.47%	2.2%
	30-39	70.68%	24.81%	4.51%
	40-49	69.23%	28.21%	2.56%
Sex	Female	69.63%	26.63%	3.74%
	Male	69.3%	28.07%	2.63%
Education/Degree	Below bachelor's	66.67%	29.52%	3.81%
	At least bachelor's	70.33%	26.71%	2.96%
Years of studying English	3-9 years	70.83%	25.83%	3.34%
	At least 10 years	68.94%	27.95%	3.11%
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	71.17%	25.68%	3.15%
	At least once	67.73%	29.09%	3.18%
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	68.75%	28.47%	2.78%
	Middle	67.65%	28.99%	3.36%
	High	78.33%	18.3%	3.34%
Social distance	Stranger	68.63%	27.45%	3.92%
	Acquaintance	69.23%	28.4%	2.37%
	Friend	83.33%	16.67%	0%

Disagreement vs. Age_Group

Age	Disagreement		
Frequency	Direct D	Indirect	Total
Expected	isagreem	Disagre	
Percent	ent	ement	
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
10-19 Years	49	2	51
	46.865	4.1351	
	10.19	0.42	10.60
	96.08	3.92	
	11.09	5.13	
20-29 Years	182	18	200
	183.78	16.216	
	37.84	3.74	41.58
	91.00	9.00	
	41.18	46.15	
30-39 Years	133	17	150
	137.84	12.162	
	27.65	3.53	31.19
	88.67	11.33	
	30.09	43.59	
40-49 Years	78	2	80
	73.514	6.4865	
	16.22	0.42	16.63
	97.50	2.50	
	17.65	5.13	
Total	442	39	481
	91.89	8.11	100.00

Statistics for Table of Age by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	6.8844	0.0757

Figure 4-1. Correlation between age and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Sex

Sex Disagreement

Frequency	Expected	Percent	Row Pct	Col Pct	Direct D isagreem ent	Indirect _Disagre ement	Total
Female	214	24	238				
	218.7	19.297					
	44.49	4.99	49.48				
	89.92	10.08					
	48.42	61.54					
Male	228	15	243				
	223.3	19.703					
	47.40	3.12	50.52				
	93.83	6.17					
	51.58	38.46					
Total	442	39	481				
	91.89	8.11	100.00				

Statistics for Table of Sex by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	2.4687	0.1161

Figure 4-2. Correlation between sex and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Education

Education	Disagreement		
	Direct Disagreement	Indirect Disagreement	Total
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
At Least Bachelor	337 336.32 70.06 92.08 76.24	29 29.676 6.03 7.92 74.36	366 76.09
Below Bachelor	105 105.68 21.83 91.30 23.76	10 9.3243 2.08 8.70 25.64	115 23.91
Total	442 91.89	39 8.11	481 100.00

Statistics for Table of Education by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.0700	0.7913

Figure 4-3. Correlation between education and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Years_of_studying_English

Years	Disagreement		
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct	Direct D isagreem ent	Indirect Disagre ement	Total
10 Years or More	322	28	350
	321.62	28.378	
	66.94	5.82	72.77
	92.00	8.00	
	72.85	71.79	
9 Years or Less	120	11	131
	120.38	10.622	
	24.95	2.29	27.23
	91.60	8.40	
	27.15	28.21	
Total	442	39	481
	91.89	8.11	100.00

Statistics for Table of Years by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.0202	0.8871

Figure 4-4. Correlation between years of studying English and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Experience

Experience	Disagreement		Total
	Direct Disagreement	Indirect Disagreement	
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Been to English-Speaking Countries at Least Once	220 222.38 45.74 90.91 49.77	22 19.622 4.57 9.09 56.41	242 50.31
Never Been to English-Speaking Countries	222 219.62 46.15 92.89 50.23	17 19.378 3.53 7.11 43.59	239 49.69
Total	442 91.89	39 8.11	481 100.00

Statistics for Table of Experience by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.6314	0.4268

Figure 4-5. Correlation between experience to English-speaking countries and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Status

Status		Disagreement		
Frequency	Expected			
Percent	Percent			
Row Pct	Row Pct			
Col Pct	Col Pct	Direct D	Indirect	Total
		isagreem	Disagre	
		ent	ement	
High	60	3	63	
	57.892	5.1081		
	12.47	0.62	13.10	
	95.24	4.76		
	13.57	7.69		
Low	144	14	158	
	145.19	12.811		
	29.94	2.91	32.85	
	91.14	8.86		
	32.58	35.90		
Middle	238	22	260	
	238.92	21.081		
	49.48	4.57	54.05	
	91.54	8.46		
	53.85	56.41		
Total	442	39	481	
	91.89	8.11	100.00	

Statistics for Table of Status by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	1.1105	0.5739

Figure 4-6. Correlation between socioeconomic status and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Disagreement vs. Social_distance

Distance	Disagreement		Total
	Direct Disagreement	Indirect Disagreement	
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Acquaintances	169	12	181
	166.32	14.676	
	35.14	2.49	37.63
	93.37	6.63	
	38.24	30.77	
Friends	18	2	20
	18.378	1.6216	
	3.74	0.42	4.16
	90.00	10.00	
	4.07	5.13	
Strangers	255	25	280
	257.3	22.703	
	53.01	5.20	58.21
	91.07	8.93	
	57.69	64.10	
Total	442	39	481
	91.89	8.11	100.00

Statistics for Table of Distance by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	0.8799	0.6441

Figure 4-7. Correlation between social distance and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Age_Group

Age	Orientation		
	Issue-or	Person-o	Total
Frequency	iented	riented	
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
10-19 Years	31	18	49
	34.034	14.966	
	7.01	4.07	11.09
	63.27	36.73	
	10.10	13.33	
20-29 Years	128	54	182
	126.41	55.588	
	28.96	12.22	41.18
	70.33	29.67	
	41.69	40.00	
30-39 Years	94	39	133
	92.378	40.622	
	21.27	8.82	30.09
	70.68	29.32	
	30.62	28.89	
40-49 Years	54	24	78
	54.176	23.824	
	12.22	5.43	17.65
	69.23	30.77	
	17.59	17.78	
Total	307	135	442
	69.46	30.54	100.00

Statistics for Table of Age by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	3	1.0460	0.7901

Figure 4-8. Correlation between age and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Sex

Sex	Orientation		Total
Frequency	Issue-or oriented	Person-o riented	
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Female	149	65	214
Expected	148.64	65.362	
Percent	33.71	14.71	48.42
Row Pct	69.63	30.37	
Col Pct	48.53	48.15	
Male	158	70	228
Expected	158.36	69.638	
Percent	35.75	15.84	51.58
Row Pct	69.30	30.70	
Col Pct	51.47	51.85	
Total	307	135	442
Expected	69.46	30.54	100.00

Statistics for Table of Sex by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.0056	0.9404

Figure 4-9. Correlation between sex and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Education

Education	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
At Least Bachelor	237	100	337
	234.07	102.93	
	53.62	22.62	76.24
	70.33	29.67	
	77.20	74.07	
Below Bachelor	70	35	105
	72.93	32.07	
	15.84	7.92	23.76
	66.67	33.33	
	22.80	25.93	
Total	307	135	442
	69.46	30.54	100.00

Statistics for Table of Education by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.5054	0.4771

Figure 4-10. Correlation between education and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Years_of_studying_English

Years	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
10 Years or More	222 223.65 50.23 68.94 72.31	100 98.348 22.62 31.06 74.07	322 72.85
9 Years or Less	85 83.348 19.23 70.83 27.69	35 36.652 7.92 29.17 25.93	120 27.15
Total	307 69.46	135 30.54	442 100.00

Statistics for Table of Years by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.1471	0.7013

Figure 4-11. Correlation between years of studying English and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Experience

Experience	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Been to English-Speaking Countries at Least Once	149 152.81 33.71 67.73 48.53	71 67.195 16.06 32.27 52.59	220 49.77
Never Been to English-Speaking Countries	158 154.19 35.75 71.17 51.47	64 67.805 14.48 28.83 47.41	222 50.23
Total	307 69.46	135 30.54	442 100.00

Statistics for Table of Experience by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	0.6178	0.4319

Figure 4-12. Correlation between experience to English-speaking countries and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Status

Status	Orientation		
	Issue-or iented	Person-o riented	Total
High	47	13	60
	41.674	18.326	
	10.63	2.94	13.57
	78.33	21.67	
Low	15.31	9.63	
	99	45	144
	100.02	43.982	
	22.40	10.18	32.58
Middle	68.75	31.25	
	32.25	33.33	
	161	77	238
	165.31	72.692	
Total	36.43	17.42	53.85
	67.65	32.35	
	52.44	57.04	
	307	135	442
	69.46	30.54	100.00

Statistics for Table of Status by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	2.6298	0.2685

Figure 4-13. Correlation between socioeconomic status and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

Orientation vs. Social_distance

Distance	Orientation		
	Issue-or iented	Person-o riented	Total
Frequency			
Expected			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Acquaintances	117	52	169
	117.38	51.618	
	26.47	11.76	38.24
	69.23	30.77	
	38.11	38.52	
Friends	15	3	18
	12.502	5.4977	
	3.39	0.68	4.07
	83.33	16.67	
	4.89	2.22	
Strangers	175	80	255
	177.12	77.885	
	39.59	18.10	57.69
	68.63	31.37	
	57.00	59.26	
Total	307	135	442
	69.46	30.54	100.00

Statistics for Table of Distance by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	1.7206	0.4230

Figure 4-14. Correlation between social distance and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in ELFP

CHAPTER 5 SALIENT INTERACTIONAL FEATURES IN MC

To understand why ELFP speakers interact as described in chapter 4, it is helpful to examine the interactional features of MC speakers because ELFP speakers share MC as their first language. Therefore, naturally occurring everyday conversations in MC were collected in Nanchang as baseline data. In total, 3673 tokens of utterances were transcribed. This chapter presents salient interactional features that emerged in these natural conversations. Excerpts that show these interactional features are provided in Chinese and English translation. To examine the features of MC, everyday conversations involving 68 participants were videotaped or audiotaped and analyzed. Among the 68 participants, 33 were male and 35 were female; 60 ranged from age 20 to age 49; 48 had a bachelor's degree; 39 claimed themselves as middle class with steady income; 38 were able to speak English; 27 had been to English-speaking countries. These participants claimed that they were either strangers who met on the day of data collection, acquaintances who had met a few times or friends who had been keeping in touch.

The 68 MC speakers showed some salient interactional features in common with the ELFP speakers in chapter 4. For instance, the MC speakers used 对 (dui), which is literally translated into yeah in English. They actively contributed to conversations by completing others' thoughts when they noticed a pause at the end of an utterance or when they thought they had predicted their conversation partners' following utterances. They often talked over one another and competed for turns to carry on conversations with many overlaps. They might change topics without providing a smooth transition. They digressed from topics under discussion and produced side sequences. They made

a smacking sound with lips and unconsciously displayed emotions or attitudes. They tended to disagree directly without providing concessions, hedges or partial agreement.

The Use of 对 (dui)

Although the MC speakers under study often used 对 (dui) in conversations, this marker appeared mostly at the beginning of a turn (175 tokens) or stood alone (61 tokens) to show agreement, but less in the middle of a turn (30 tokens) to confirm previous utterances and even less at the end of a turn (15 tokens) for the purposes of closing and self-confirmation. This is similar to how ELFP speakers used yeah in conversations in English because yeah seemed to stand alone or appear most at the beginning, less in the middle and least at the end of a turn. Also, just like the use of multiple yeahs in ELFP, 对 (dui) was repeated several times in a sequence (32 tokens) to display strong agreement. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt (37)

费：（176）她也教，她的课不见得比你的少。你问她一个星期多少节课。

Fei: (176) She also teaches. Her classes are not necessarily fewer than yours.

You ask her how many classes she has per week.

→ 剑：（177）对，我教课的。我教两个班，算二十个小时的。

Jian: (177) Yeah. I teach. I teach two classes, which is counted as the workload of twenty hours.

欧：（178）哦，哦，也要上课的。

Ou: (178) Oh, oh, you have to teach as well.

岳：（179）两个班算二十个小时啊？

Yue: (179) Two classes as the workload of twenty hours?

→ 剑：（180）对。

Jian: (180) Yeah.

(From CaiFam4)

The above conversation happened between several Chinese teachers of college English¹⁰ who had known each other for a while. After Ou complained about her teaching load and expressed her jealousy of what Jian did in the US, Fei cuts in to say that Jian also had to teach (Line 176). Then, Jian confirms, with对 (dui) at the beginning of her utterance, that she taught two classes which was counted as the workload of twenty hours per week (Line 177). This obviously clears Ou's doubts (Line 178), but surprises Yue who repeats what Jian said and implies that it is a great deal for Jian to have such a workload (Line 179). Jian simply agrees with a stand-alone对 (dui). Both the stand-alone对 (dui) in Line 180 and the turn-initial marker in Line 177 serve to show agreement with previous utterances.

The discourse marker 对 (dui) may also appear in the middle of a turn to function as delay and self-confirmation, as in Excerpt (38), even though its occurrences are relatively lower than when at the beginning of a turn or standing alone.

Excerpt (38)

费：（52）不喜欢打扫。很多男人他喜欢做，就是炒的这一道，然后他其他的不
管了，[摘，择菜呀，或者那个]=

Fei: (52) They don't like cleaning. Many men like cooking, just stir-frying food.

¹⁰ The teachers were comparing who had higher workload and pay. Salary or income is a typical and interesting topic in Mainland China probably because since the Open Door policy took effect, earning more money to improve living standards has become a goal of many Chinese. Social gatherings could be an opportunity to get information about varying workplaces and opportunities to increase income.

They don't want to do other things [such as picking vegetables or]=

门: (53) [嗯, 我哥哥是这样的]。

Mena: (53) [Mm. My brother is like this].

费: (54) =那个切菜呀, 备呀, 这些准备的工作他
不管, [他就管下锅这一下子]。

Fei: (54) =cutting vegetables and preparing, he doesn't care about preparing for
cooking. [He only wants to stir-fry food in the wok].

→ 门: (55) [我哥哥就是这样子], 对, 我哥哥就是这样子。他每次做个菜吧, 叫我
洗这个洗那个, 我说你还不如让我自己来做算了。

Mena: (55) [My brother is like this]. Yeah. My brother is like this. Every time he
cooks, he asks me to wash vegetables. I would say, why don't you let me
cook instead.

(From Mena)

In the above excerpt, Fei's comments about Chinese men remind Mena of her brother who asks her to do the washing and cleaning whenever he cooks. In Line (55), after Mena brings up her brother, she confirms her own mention of her brother as a good example to support Fei's comments by saying 对 (dui) before she continues to explain why she thinks so. This turn-medial discourse marker functions as self confirmation for previous utterances before new utterances emerge. This use of this marker may give speakers a little time to think over what they said and more confidence about what they will say.

The following excerpt illustrates how 对 (dui) is used repetitively to show strong agreement and at the end of utterances for closing/self-confirmation.

Excerpt (39)

昌：（277）英语只是一门交流工具。

Chang: (277) English is only a tool for communication.

米：（278）啊？

Miqi: (278) Ah?

昌：（279）只是一门交流工具。他听懂了就

Chang: (279) Only a tool for communication. Once he understands

→ 剑：（280）对，对，对。

Jian: (280) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

张：（281）你象印度人，印度人的英语是普及率按道理只要他受过教育基本上都会讲。但他的发音很不标准，你不能你不能说他不会讲英文，但他英文很好。

Zhang: (281) Take Indians as an example. Indian English is widely spoken. An educated Indian can speak it. But it is nonstandard. You can say he is unable to speak English. His English is very good.

→ 剑：（282）对，对，对。没错。哦，我发现只要接触过不同的那种英语国家的人，或者说英语的人，慢慢你就会有这个思维，就觉得没必要一定要模仿那种标准英语，对吧？

Jian: (282) Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right. Oh. I found that those who had some experience with different English-speaking countries or English L1 speakers have gradually developed the idea that it's not necessary to imitate Standard English. Am I right?

→ 张：（283）对，对，对。[那没必要。]

Zhang: (283) Yeah, yeah, yeah. [That's not necessary].

费：（284） [但是那天] 我我那天在师大碰到一个人，他说那个新加坡英语那个[也是那个_哎，他说那个]=

Fei: (284) [But that day] I met a person at the Normal University. He said Singapore English [is like, is like, uh, he said it is like]=

张：（285） [<Singlish>] @@叫<Singlish>

Zhang: (285) [<Singlish>.] @@It's called <Singlish>.

费：（286） =发音
也很怪的。

Fei: (286) =Its
pronunciation is weird.

→ 张：（287）是很怪，对。

Zhang: (287) It is weird. Yeah.

(From ChinCorn2008-2)

In Excerpt (39), five MC speakers were talking about whether English learners in China should acquire Standard English because they all spoke some sort of English. Before Chang gets to finish expressing his belief about English (Lines 279), Jian jumps in to firmly support his viewpoint by repeating 对 (dui) a few times (Line 280). Upon hearing Zhang's example of Indian English (Line 281), Jian repeats 对 (dui) a few times to show strong concurrence (Line 282). Likewise, Zhang gives full endorsement to Jian by repetitively uttering 对 (dui) (Line 283). However, their consensus does not seem to

satisfy Fei who heard from a Singaporean that Singapore English was weird (Lines 284 and 286). This does not surprise Zhang at all, so he simply repeats Fei's comment and finishes his turn by means of the turn-final 对 (dui). In brief, when 对 (dui) is repeated (Lines 282 and 283), it functions as strong agreement; when it is at the end of a turn, it signals closing (Line 287).

Candidate Completion

Candidate completion exists in MC conversations as well as in ELFP conversations. In the transcribed data of natural conversations in MC, 104 tokens of candidate completions were observed and met with explicit agreement, explicit disagreement, implicit agreement or implicit disagreement. Most of these cases followed the pattern of three-part sequences, where the original speaker starts an utterance, the second speaker finishes the first speaker's thought briefly, and he or she takes the third turn to keep the floor. Only a few candidate completions appeared in more-than-three-part sequences or became elaborated explanations in the second turn.

The use of candidate completions in the following example is typical in the MC conversations under investigation.

Excerpt (40)

剑：（371）那你说那个范跑跑该不该跑？

Jian: (371) So do you think Fleeing Fan should have fled?

费：（372）[@@@]

Fei: (372) [@@@]

雄：（373）[范跑跑啊]？

Xiong: (373) [Fleeing Fan]？

剑：（374） 呸，他该不该跑？他是不是违背了道德准则，不应该当老师？

Jian: (374) Mm. Should he have fled? Did he violate moral standards? Should he be a teacher?

雄：（375） 如果他不是个老师，就[没事]。

Xiong: (375) If he weren't a teacher, he could have [been ok].

→ 剑：（376） [他就]可以跑。

Jian: (376) [He could] have fled.

费：（377） 他是老师，他这样做了，本来也没事。就他不应该那样说。

Fei: (377) As a teacher, he would have been ok if he had fled. But he shouldn't have said those things.

雄：（378） 他不应该说，你知道吧？但是[作为]

Xiong: (378) He shouldn't have said so. Do you know? [But as]

→ 费：（379） [也就是]不应该太诚实。

Fei: (379) [He should]n't have been so honest.

雄：（380） 也不是太诚实了，不是太诚实了。你这个观点讲出来以后，是绝对遭到很多人反对的，你知道吧？

Xiong: (380) It's not about being honest, not about being honest. If you spoke out views like that, you would face lots of opposition. Do you know?

(From Xiong)

In Excerpt (40), three interlocutors were sharing their opinions of a young high school teacher, Mr. Fan¹¹. In Line 376, before Xiong finishes his utterance, Jian tries to

¹¹ Mr. Fan ruined his own reputation in China because he did not try to save his students but ran out of the classroom to stay safe when the earthquake struck Wenchuan, China, on May 12th, 2008. After the

complete his thought and thus causes an overlap. This candidate completion does not receive any response from Xiong because Fei cuts in. Then in Line 378, Xiong cannot finish his words because Fei attempts to complete his thought, saying that Fleeing Fan should not have been so honest (Line 379). This encounters Xiong's explicit disagreement in Line 380.

Like ELFP speakers, some MC speakers did not respond to a candidate completion in the third turn but delayed it till the fourth or fifth turn, as in Excerpt (41).

Excerpt (41)

万：（927）而且第一是性格，第二考虑到对方是，对方是 _ [生人还是熟人]。

Wan: (927) And first is personality; second is to consider whether the other party, the other party is [stranger or acquaintance].

→ 佳：（928） [亲密程度]。很熟的话就无所谓。

Jia: (928) [The degree of closeness]. If you know each other very well, it's alright.

→ 万：（929）很熟的话就是，直接，就是 _

Wan: (929) If you know each other very well, directly, just _

→ 佳：（930） 直接说。

Jia: (930) Directly say it.

→ 剑：（931）很熟直接说出来。

Jian: (931) If you know each other very well, directly say it.

earthquake, Mr. Fan honestly told his disappointed students that he would only try to save his baby girl, not even his mother, at such a critical, tragic moment, because he cherished his life and was unable to carry any adults who actually had the capability to run for their own lives. After he revealed these thoughts on a website, the whole nation was shocked and heated discussion was triggered on honesty and morality. Consequently, he was named Fleeing Fan and lost his job.

→ 万：（932）就是这样，就是如果是熟人的话，那就用一种很熟悉的方式。@@

Wan: (932) That's right. If you know each other very well, then use a way to show it.

剑：（933）嗯，很直接。

Jian: (933) Mm. Very directly.

佳：（934）对。

Jia: (934) Yeah.

万：（935）非常直接。

Wan: (935) Very directly.

(From ChinCorn2008-4)

In Excerpt (41), three acquaintances were talking about how they communicate in Chinese. Wan thinks personality and social distance play a role in his communication style (Line 927). Before he finishes his words, Jia jumps in to complete his thought by saying that speaker relationship matters, which causes an overlap (Line 928). Implicitly agreeing with Jia, Wan continues to say that if interlocutors are close, they would be direct (Line 929). Again, Jia manages to finish his thought (Line 930). Wan's explicit agreement with this candidate completion is postponed to Line 932 because Jian cuts in to briefly summarize the conversational exchanges between Wan and Jia in Line 931. After Line 932, all the interlocutors confirm to show their consensus on the point that close people are direct to each other (Lines 933-935). Apparently, the second candidate completion involves four-part sequences rather than the canonical pattern of three-part sequences discussed in the literature.

Even though most candidate completions in MC appeared brief and were immediately followed by the original speaker's response, a few candidate completions were so elaborated that the original speaker could not provide a response. Excerpt (42) is an instance.

Excerpt (42)

万：（891）相对于相对于你谈话的对象。当然很多人他会瞧不起说，哎呀，印度英语，根本就说得象话，但是他们[同样达到了交流]

Wan: (891) Depends on what you're talking to. Of course, many people would look down upon Indian English and say it's awful. But they [can communicate ideas].

剑：（892） [那就说明他有一种] 标准在那，对不对？他的标准 _[不是印度英语]。

Jian: (892) [That means he has] a standard in mind, right? His standard is [not Indian English].

→ 万：（893） [就是能否能否] 有效沟通，能否有效沟通，这就是他们的标准。我觉得这个标准就是一个很很普遍的一个标准。

Wan: (893) [It's intelligibility]. That's their standard. I think this criterion is very typical.

佳：（894）中国人对对中国人对外国人我觉得都有口音。你就是说得再漂亮，还是觉得你有中国人的口音。

Jia: (894) I think to foreigners, Chinese people have accent. Even if you speak beautiful English, I still think you have Chinese accent.

剑：（895）那是。

Jian: (895) Right.

(From ChinCorn2008-4)

The above excerpt involves discussion of people's standards of spoken English. In Line (892), Jian infers that some people hold some standards in their mind and do not think Indian English meet the standards. Before she finishes her utterance, Wan relates the standards to intelligibility (Line 893). After this candidate completion, he continues to elaborate his belief that intelligibility is a typical criterion. This elaborated explanation seems to have caused the cancellation on Jian's response. She withholds her comment (Line 895) until Jia voices her opinion that Chinese speak English with an accent (Line 894). Therefore, the elimination of responses to elaborated candidate completions does not seem surprising in either ELFP or MC data of interactional conversations.

Turn-Taking

The MC speakers under study did not appear very orderly in turn-taking because they talked over each other, fought to maintain or get turns and contributed haphazardly to conversations. However, their conversations featured solidarity-building overlaps and disrupted turn-taking, rather than power-laden interruptions. The MC speakers were strangers, acquaintances or friends who had little conflict of interest but conducted social conversations for the purpose of networking. The analysis of MC conversations uncovered 1489 tokens of overlaps and 71 tokens of disrupted turn-taking. Some of the conversations diverged into small simultaneous conversations due to interlocutors' different interests. The great number of overlaps may suggest a distinctive interactional

feature of MC conversations that differs from English L1 conversations where interlocutors tend to take orderly turns.

It is not surprising to see MC speakers claim a turn and take over the floor before a previous speaker finishes, as in Excerpt (43).

Excerpt (43)

→ 吉: (30) 这个道理是不能喝冰的。你想象得到咯, 那个胃是热的, 你喝这个冷的东西下去, 冰的东西下去, 肯定是对它有刺激咯, [对胃不好]。

Ji: (30) The reason is you can't have ice beverages. Imagine that your stomach is warm and will be hurt after you have had ice beverages. It's [not good for your stomach].

→ 剑: (31) [呃, 为什么] 他们这么作兴喝刺, 喝冰的东西呢?

Jian: (31) [Uh. Why do they] love ice beverages?

蔚: (32) 他们冬天那个水呀, 里面还要放冰块, 一定要冰冰的喝。冬天都是这样。

Wei: (32) They even put ice into drinking water in winter.

吉: (33) 根本不科学。

Ji: (33) That's not scientific.

→ 蔚: (34) 等于说他们肠胃习惯了那种, [习惯]=

Wei: (34) This means their stomach gets used to it. It's a [habit].

→ 剑: (35) [习惯]

Jian: (35) [Habit].

→ 吉: (36) [习惯]

Ji: (36)

[Habit].

蔚: (37)

=就像我们习惯了吃热的。

Wei: (37)

=It's like we get used to eating

warm food.

吉: (38) 习惯了也不行。

Ji: (38) You can't live with this habit.

→ 蔚: (39) 那人家一样的长寿。[你怎么讲呢]?

Wei: (39) But they have long lifespan. [How can you explain it]?

→ 吉: (40) [你晓得他]长寿? 有些人长寿, 你晓得怎样长寿? 这怎么讲得清楚? 讲不清楚。

Ji: (40) [How do you know] they have long lifespan?

Do you know the exact reasons why some people have long lifespan?

How do you know? It's hard to explain.

(From CaiFam3)

The three friends in the above excerpt were talking about the American habit of drinking iced beverages in any season. Overlaps emerged in Lines 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 39 and 40. In Line 30, before Ji finishes saying that iced beverages do harm to one's warm stomach, Jian seizes the opportunity to express her wonder about why Americans love iced beverages that are harmful (Line 31). In Line 34, Wei tries the explanation of living habits, which seems to be accepted by the other two interlocutors who overlap on the word habit (Lines 34-36). Again, before Wei finishes her turn in Line 39, Ji grabs the next turn to reveal his thoughts that there must be other reasons why some Americans have long lifespan (Line 40). This typical MC everyday conversation continued without

anyone showing unhappy signs for a couple of hours until one interlocutor had to leave for errands. Seven out of eleven turns in the above excerpt were overlapped, indicating that overlapping, a less orderly turn-taking phenomenon, is normal and acceptable to the MC speakers under study.

Another normal interactional feature is simultaneous conversations derived from one common conversation among more than three interlocutors. An example of this was a conversation that occurred among seven female Chinese teachers of English, ranging from age 35 to age 55. The teachers gathered for fun right after a summer break started; they sat in a big couch, in front of which was a big tea table covered with different kinds of fruits and snacks, in the living room of one teacher's condo; they shared updates in terms of their personal lives and summer plans. The conversation lasted for a little over one hour, in different directions, depending on who was loud enough to keep the floor. Despite the ongoing major conversation, those sitting next to each other often diverged into simultaneous conversations of their own interests in low voices. Six simultaneous conversations were recorded because a digital recorder was placed nearby, although the voices were not clear enough to be transcribed.

Topic-Switching

Similar to English L1 conversations where smooth transition or digressive markers normally occurs between unrelated topics, the MC speakers under investigation might alert listeners to topic-switch by means of a Chinese attention getter 哎 (ei). However, like ELFP conversations, the collected MC conversations featured unexpected topic-switches not preceded by digressive markers and showing no relation between two consecutive turns or topics. In total, 63 instances of unrelated topics that were

introduced unexpectedly were found in the transcribed natural conversations in MC. Interlocutors seemed willing to follow the unorganized thoughts that occurred to them in the middle of casual conversations and enjoyed the moments of seeking information or sharing perspectives.

The following excerpt illustrates how an interlocutor switched between topics without giving a warning.

Excerpt (44)

麦: (10) 嗯, 所以简历就能够看出来, 他这么多空档在做什么事情。

Mai: (10) En, so a resume can show when he does what.

剑: (11) 对, 对, 对, 对。但中国学生大多数的简历都是很简单的, 都是读书, 对吧? 没什么经验的。对, (smacking lips) 挺逗的。@@

Jian: (11) Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But most Chinese students have simple resumes because they only study at school, right? They don't have job experiences. Yeah. (smacking lips) That's funny.

→ 麦: (12) 对呀。然后, 我也不知道。对, 那, 我觉得教语言, 双语应该是很很好的。(pointing at a pillow case) [我们这个也做]=

Mai: (12) Yes. Then, I don't know. Yeah. So, I think teaching a language, two languages should be very very good. (pointing at a pillow case) [We also do business with this].=

剑: (13) [我也不知道]。

Jian: (13) [I don't know either].

麦: (14) =我们家。

Mai: (14) =Our family.

剑：（15）哦，你们家做这个，你们家现在还有工厂吗？

Jian: (15) Oh. Your family does business with this. Does your family still have a factory?

麦：（16）没有，从来没有。

Mai: (16) No. We never have.

(From Mai)

Before the above conversation, Jian and Mai were talking about the role of resumes in job hunting in China and America. In Line 12, she suddenly brings back the topic they discussed earlier concerning the job of teaching languages because both Jian and Mai can speak Chinese and English well. Right after this, she unexpectedly switches to her family business with pillow cases. Apparently unable to follow Mai, Jian says in Line 13 I don't know either in MC to echo Mai's confession of uncertainty about job search, which accidentally overlaps with Mai's last utterance. Jian has not realized Mai already started the new topic about her family business until Mai finishes her utterance (Line 14). So in Line 15, Jian begins her utterance with the discourse marker Oh, suggesting her realization of what was going on, and continues to ask Mai questions about her family business with pillow cases. Such unexpected topic-switch as that in Line 12 indicates the informality of natural conversations and the relaxed mindset of the MC speakers who follow their random ideas.

Side Sequences

Side sequence was initially described as deviation from an ongoing sequence due to misunderstanding. In addition to clearing up misunderstanding, it was found in ELFP data that it served to welcome newcomers to joining a conversation and tease for

solidarity building. In the transcribed data of MC conversations, side sequences did not seem to occur as often as in ELFP conversations; only 15 were observed. They did not have the function of welcoming newcomers to joining a conversation probably because of lacking the fluid feature of ELFP communities of practice. Instead, they displayed another function as well as the functions of clearing up misapprehension and teasing for solidarity building. The new function is to remind an interlocutor of an issue or alert an interlocutor to a potential problem, as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt (45)

门：（82）不要说是为了赚钱，光为了就是说事业上的成功，就算为了自己也有很大的好处。

Mena: (82) It can bring you money, ensure your success in career and do you good.

剑：（83）那是噢。（smacking lips）但是什么东西学问都太大了，你很难真地学完整个领域的东西，你只能学到[肤浅]，皮毛的东西。知道一点点也可以了。

Jian: (83) Of course. (smacking lips) But there's so much knowledge to learn. It's hard for you to acquire everything in one field. All you can learn is superficial things. It's alright to know [a little bit about everything].

门：（84） [皮毛]

Mena: (84) [Superficial things].

→ 费：（85）今天你公公会等你吧，你跟他说了吗？

Fei: (85) Will your father-in-law wait for you today? Did you tell him about it?

→ 剑：（86）我跟他说了。吓了我一跳，我跟他说了，我说了早上和下午都不会

在，中午和晚上都不会回去。[他知道了]。

Jian: (86) I told him. You scared me. I told him that I won't be home this morning and this afternoon. I won't go back for meals at noon or at night. [He knew it].

→ 费：（87） [他知道了]。

Fei: (87) [He knew it].

门：（88）我感觉你在外国待了以后回来说中文都不一样了。

Mena: (88) I feel that you speak Chinese differently after you have been abroad for a while.

剑：（89）说得很别扭是吧？[@@]

Jian: (89) It sounds awkward, right? [@@]

门：（90） [不是]，感觉特柔一样的，(turning to Fei) 你觉得不？

Mena: (90) [No]. It sounds very gentle, (turning to Fei) Do you think so?

(From Mena)

In the above excerpt, Mena, Jian and Fei were initially talking about the advantages to them of studying a new subject, psychology. Jian and Fei were friends but Mena was an acquaintance to both of them. In Line 85, Fei abruptly reminds Jian of her father-in-law and asks her whether she told him she was not going home for meals. Fei's question leads the ongoing conversation to side sequences (Line 85-87), which are not related to the prior sequence (Line 84) or the following sequence (Line 88). This side sequence tends to happen between friends who know each other's personal life very well and serves as a friendly reminder or alert to avoid potential problems. It did not occur in the

ELFP conversations under study because the majority of the ELFP speakers were strangers or acquaintances who did not know each other very well.

Lip Smacking

Another salient interactional feature in MC conversations is lip smacking, an extralinguistic feature that has not been well studied in the field of linguistics. Similar to the findings about lip smacking used by the ELFP speakers, lip smacking used by the MC speakers under study also served to request a turn, search for words/thoughts in the middle of a turn and express negative feelings at the beginning or the end of a turn. In addition, lip smacking seemed to show another new function: to express positive feelings in the middle of a turn. It is interesting to observe that lip smacking seemed to emerge less frequently in MC conversations than in ELFP conversations; 72 tokens of lip smacking were found in the transcribed MC conversations, as compared with 112 tokens in the ELFP conversations. This is likely due to the fact that the MC speakers under study did not have as much difficulty finding the right words for their thoughts when speaking Chinese L1 as the ELFP speakers did when speaking English L2.

Despite that, the MC speakers in this study did smack lips at the moment of searching for words or thoughts as the ELFP speakers did in the conversations at English Corners. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt (46)

→ 蔡: (32) 我我我看到一个就是, 有一个搞计算机很有名的, 我今天, 噢, 昨天看到的, 获图林奖的, 就到清华去了。终生教授, 人家辞掉终生, 而而且是很好的大学, 那个叫什么 (smacking lips)

Cai: (32) The one I read was about a well-known computer expert. Today, oh,

yesterday, I read it. He received a Turing Award and went to work at Tsinghua University. He was tenured, but he gave it up. He was at a very good university, the one that's called what (smacking lips)

廖：（33）啊呀，他那种是回去享福的。

Liao: (33) Aya, people like he went back to China to retire and enjoy the rest of their life.

剑：（34）[对，他退休回去，他不是说去]

Jian: (34) [Yes. He retired and went back. He didn't go to]

廖：（35）[他那个终生教授在这拿到了]。然后就回去享福。

Liao: (35) [He received a tenure position here] and then went back to enjoy life.

剑：（36）那是不一样的。

Jian: (36) This is a different case.

廖：（37） 不一样的。

Liao: (37) Different.

剑：（38） 他是落叶归根¹²的感觉哦，回去退休了。

Jian: (38) He retired and returned to China just like falling leaves.

(From Liao)

¹² This well-known four-character Chinese idiom means that people would return to their hometowns when they are old and accomplished, just like falling leaves going back to where they originated from.

In Excerpt (46), Cai, Liao and Jian were talking about the difficulty of finding good academic jobs in China. However, Cai shows some confidence because he read a piece of news about an old successful tenured computer expert who gave up his job in America and returned to work at one of the best universities in China. When he cannot remember the exact name of the American university the expert worked at, he smacks his lips to show frustration (Line 32). This is an instance of smacking lips in search of lost words or thoughts.

Excerpt (47) illustrates the function of lip smacking as an indicator of negative evaluation. In this case, the utterance immediately following the sound of lip smacking normally has a negative meaning. This function appeared in the ELFP conversations under study as well.

Excerpt (47)

剑：（33）你要相信你妈妈。

Jian: (33) You have to trust your mom.

门：（34）我不是说不相信我妈妈。是有些很多事情是控制之外的，你知道吧？

Mena: (34) I'm not saying that I don't trust my mom. It's because you can't control everything. Do you know?

剑：（35）你妈妈她在选择这个人的时候，她肯定是考虑过这个人会不会对我的孩子好。

Jian: (35) When your mom accepted this man, she must have considered whether this man would be nice to her child.

→ 门：（36）还是不，当然有些事情，觉得电视看多了，可能觉得，（smacking lips），现实与梦想之间还是有差距的。

Mena: (36) But still there're a few things. Having watched too much TV, I kinda think (smacking lips) there's a gap between reality and dream.

(From Mena)

The above dialogue happened between two acquaintances, Jian and Mena, at lunch. Jian attempts to convince Mena¹³ that her mom is trustworthy and must have considered her stepfather's attitudes toward her before getting into the new marriage (Lines 33 and 35). This, however, does not seem to help much because Mena argues that the reality does not match her dream of a perfect family life as in TV shows or movies. Before she brings out the gap between realities and dreams, she smacks her lips to reveal her frustration (Line 36).

The following excerpt illustrates another two functions of lip smacking: turn request and positive evaluation. To request a turn, the speaker smacks lips at the beginning of his/her turn, before the prior speaker ends the prior turn or immediately after the prior speaker ends the prior turn. To show positive evaluation, the speaker smacks lips in the middle of a turn.

Excerpt (48)

剑: (80) 我不行, 我不上相, 我一上相片, 我的脸[就是胖嘟嘟的]。

Jian: (80) I can't. I don't look good in any picture. Once I'm in a picture, [my face looks fat].

→ 费: (81) (smacking lips) [没有。你要看]怎么打扮。我觉得其实今天我在那里一看你, 我就觉得你今天打扮得很, 很青春, 很小。这

¹³Mena, a female college student originally from a different province, surprisingly opened herself up to Jian and talked about her concerns one day. She told Jian that her mom found her a stepfather and implied her unwillingness to replace her birthfather, who died of cancer when she was little, with this stepfather.

也是为什么人家会说你是我女儿。

Fei: (81) (smacking lips) [No. It depends on] how you're dressed I think, actually I was looking at you there, I think you're dressed like, very lively, very young. That was why you were mistaken as my daughter.

剑: (82) @@@我怎么打扮? 我[平时就是这样穿的]。

Jian: (82) @@@How am I dressed? [I'm dressed as usual].

→ 费: (83) [没有, 就是你今天]这样子穿呐, 特别是那顶帽, (smacking lips), 然后那个整个的就是

Fei: (84) [No. Today you're] dressed like this, especially with the hat, (smacking lips) then as a whole

剑: (84) 我自己都没注意我穿得什么样子, 我只是那个帽子遮太阳。

Jian: (84) I wasn't aware of how I'm dressed. I put the hat on only to block the sun.

费: (85) 没有, 真的, 今天真的是显得很小。

Fei: (85) No. Really, you look very young today.

(From Jun3)

Right before the above dialogue, Fei showed her friend, Jian, her pictures. While complimenting on Fei's pictures, Jian denigrates herself and complains about her fat face in pictures (Line 80). Before Jian finishes her utterance, Fei smacks lips and says that Jian can look lively and young if dressed appropriately. Her lip smacking indicates her readiness for a turn even though the prior turn has not ended and also her disagreement with Jian's statement (Line 81). In other words, this instance of lip

smacking for the purpose of turn requesting is triggered by the speaker's disagreement with the prior utterance. This also appeared in the ELFP conversations under study. Upon hearing Fei's comments, Jian explains that she did not do anything special with her dress that day (Line 82). This, however, fails to change Fei's comments. She continues to point out why Jian looks young that day. In the middle of her utterance, she smacks her lips again, neither to request a turn nor to express disagreement, but to give positive evaluation of appropriate dress. This function of lip smacking did not appear in the ELFP conversations discussed in Chapter 4. It might be because smacking lips to express positive evaluation especially about appearance happens more appropriately between friends, rather than strangers or acquaintances. However, most ELFP speakers did not know each other well.

Disagreement Behavior

In this study, direct disagreement is defined as disagreement that is not prefaced by partial agreement, hedges or concessions, whereas indirect disagreement is preceded by agreement components (Pomerantz, 1984). Previous research has demonstrated that English L1 speakers tend to employ indirect disagreement expressions (e.g. Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1978); Chinese L1 speakers prefer being indirect when expressing disagreement to people of higher status (e.g. Du, 1995; Liu, 2004); Chinese users of English appear indirect in business communication (e.g. Wong and Phool-Ching, 2000; Sheer and Chen, 2003; Cardon and Scott, 2003). However, in the ELFP conversations at English Corners, direct disagreement has a higher overall rate of occurrence than indirect disagreement. Because of this difference, it is important to examine MC speakers' disagreement behavior in natural MC conversations for the purpose of comparison.

A close look at the transcribed data uncovered 674 tokens of direct disagreement and 15 tokens of indirect disagreement that meet Pomerantz's (1984) definitions. Another 26 tokens of disagreement do not strictly match Pomerantz's definition of indirect disagreement and are thus called less direct disagreement. Even though the expressions of less direct disagreement are not preceded by agreement components, they end with Chinese-specific particles such as 吧 (ba) that function to soften direct disagreement. Therefore, less direct disagreement was joined with indirect disagreement for analysis in this study. The following excerpts respectively disclosed how indirect, less direct or direct disagreement was realized in MC conversations.

Excerpt (49)

剑：（8）他现在性格还好，但是性格好不等于说能够接受批评啊。他虽然开朗一点，跟别人都能玩，但是_（sigh）不能接受批评了，现在已经变成了，@@@，这是另外一个[缺点了]=

Jian: (8) Now his personality is good. But it doesn't mean he can take criticism. He is open and can get along with others, but_ (sigh) he can't take criticism. Now he's turned into, @@@ . This is another [weakness]=

晓：（9） [习惯了]。

Xiao: (9) [He's used to it].

剑：（10） =已经变成了，对，他只接受表扬。你鼓励他，他他会做得更好，你批评他，他就不做，就那样子了，变成了。

Jian: (10) =He's become, yeah, he only takes compliments. If you encourage him, he can do better; if you criticize him, he refuses to do it. That's what he's turned into.

→ 晓：（11）是噢。但是他美国人，你像，比如说，长大了的那些人，他们也习惯批评。你说，大家不是，比如说，那些，嗯，那些领_总统啊什么，会经常被别人批评。（unclear）

Xiao: (11) Yeah. But Americans, for example, American grow-ups, they are used to criticism too. For instance, uh, those lead_ presidents are often criticized by others. (unclear)

(From XiaoYan2)

In Excerpt (49), two acquaintances were talking about their children. Jian mentions that her son has changed to become responsive to positive feedback rather than negative feedback after he has stayed in the US for a few years (Lines 8-10). It is not convincing to Xiao that experience in the US can change a child's attitude toward feedback because she believes that American adults such as presidents take criticism well (Line 11). However, Xiao softens her opposition with yeah at the beginning of her utterance and disagrees with Jian indirectly.

Unlike indirect disagreement prefaced by softeners, less direct disagreement ends with Chinese-specific particle softeners such as 吧 (ba). Consider Excerpt (50).

Excerpt (50)

志：（11）我忍了好久。[（unclear）]

Zhi: (11) I put up with it for a long time. (unclear)

剑：（12） [我觉得] 没必要忍，你一开始不高兴的时候就要说出来，[就要很有礼貌地跟她说]

Jian: (12) [I don't think] you have to put up with it. You should have talked it out when you didn't feel happy. [Talk to her politely].

志：（13） [说得没用啊，就是因为说得没用]，晓得吧？

Zhi: (13) [It was no use talking to her, no use talking to her],
you know?

剑：（14）说得没用的话那就糟糕了，这个屡教不改@@，达不成一致，这是。

Jian: (14) There is a problem when it's no use communicating. This is keeping
bad habits @@ and reaching no agreement.

志：（15）有时候讲理没有用的。

Zhi: (15) Sometimes it's no use being reasonable.

→ 剑：（16）哎呀，那也不对吧¹⁴？我觉得讲理还是有用，我还是比较信讲理的。

Zhi: (16) Whoa, that's not right, is it? I believe being reasonable is useful. I
believe in reasoning.

(From Zhi1)

The above conversation happened at a classmate gathering. Zhi was disclosing his dissatisfaction with his wife, who spent more time playing Mahjong games than taking care of the family. He claims that being reasonable might be useless to problem solving (Line 15). Instead of aggressively opposing Zhi's claim, Jian exclaims first, then adds a particle softener 吧 (ba) to the end of the judgmental negation word 不对 (budui), which means wrong in English, and also presents this comment in the tone of a question (Line 16). The particle softener apparently weakens the impact of Jian's negative evaluation of Zhi's view. The possibility of use of particle softeners such as 吧 (ba) in Line 16 only exists in MC conversations, not in ELFP conversations. This might be due to the fact that particle softeners do not have counterparts in English and are not translatable.

¹⁴ This Chinese particle serves to soften disagreement but does not have a counterpart in English.

Without any softener, disagreement comes out as direct and forceful, as in Excerpt (51).

Excerpt (51)

吴：（113）呃，菲律宾好不好？

Wu: (113) Uh, is the Philippines good?

梁：（114）肯定比印度好咯。

Liang: (114) It is absolutely better than India.

吴：（115）更近，也近一些。

Wu: (115) It's closer, a little closer.

梁：（116）而且他这起码说汉，说汉语的人更多一点。

Liang: (116) And at least there're more speakers of Chinese there.

费：（117）啊？ @[@@]

Fei: (117) Ah? @[@@]

→ 董：（118）[其实]印度比菲律宾更好哦。

Dong: (118) [Actually] India is better than the Philippines.

梁：（119）印度啊？

Liang: (119) India?

董：（120）印度比菲律宾更先进。

Dong: (120) India is more advanced than the Philippines.

→ 梁：（121）印度的气候不好，气候不好。

Liang: (121) The weather in India is not good, not good.

→ 吴：（122）印度不行。印度富的很富，（unclear）相差太大。

Wu: (122) India is not good. In India, the rich are extremely rich, (unclear).

There's a big gap.

梁: (123) 哎, 悬殊太大了。

Liang: (123) Yeah. There's a big gap.

(From CaiFam2)

In Excerpt (51), four female Chinese teachers of college English were discussing whether the Philippines or India is a better place to work for a Chinese language teacher¹⁵. After Wu and Liang have agreed that the Philippines is better (Lines 113-114), Dong overtly opposes their viewpoints. She claims that India is better than the Philippines without using any hedges, concessions or partial agreement (Line 118) and reemphasizes her standing in Line 120. Liang seems to have taken a few seconds to think over Dong's claim by repeating the word India in Line 119, and then forcefully counters Dong's proposition by saying the weather in India is not good (Line 121). This elicits support from Wu, who finds another fault with India: a wealth gap (Line 122). In the above dialogue, none of the interlocutors expressed disagreement indirectly. However, their direct disagreement expressions were well accepted and kept the conversation flow.

Strategies of Disagreement

The MC speakers' quantitatively elevated use of direct disagreement expressions over less direct or indirect ones is not in line with previous findings about the indirect communication style of Chinese L1 speakers and Chinese users of English.

Nonetheless, it does line up with the findings of the ELFP speakers' preference of direct

¹⁵ The Chinese National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language was recruiting college language teachers for teaching Chinese abroad that summer.

disagreement over indirect disagreement. Since direct disagreement, rather than indirect disagreement, emerged as a salient interactional feature, which differs from softened disagreement used by English L1 speakers, it was chosen as the focus of discussion in this section. A close examination of the direct disagreement expressions used in the collected natural conversations unveiled MC speakers' typical disagreement strategies. Similar to the ELFP speakers, the MC speakers frequently employed a coordinating conjunction, which can be translated into its English counterpart but, to express direct disagreement in addition to other choices. Their strategies can be divided into three categories: 1) issue-oriented negation (529 tokens); 2) self-oriented negation (71 tokens); and 3) other-oriented negation (74 tokens). Consider Excerpts (52) through (54).

Excerpt (52)

欧：（25）象评职称¹⁶啊。你要想那些东西也不好过，头发都会白。

Ou: (25) For instance, if you think about tenure evaluation, you can't live happily and your hair will turn white.

→ 剑：（26）不过，评到副教授了就无所谓了。

Jian: (26) But once you become an associate professor, you don't have to care that much.

→ 欧：（27）不行，也不行。

Ou: (27) No, no.

剑：（28）也不行哪？

¹⁶ Tenure evaluation at Chinese universities has become very stressful to many Chinese teachers of college English because new requirements for research projects are very challenging to the teachers most of whom only have a bachelor's degree and do not know how to do research.

Jian: (28) No?

欧: (29) 如果完不成任务就不保底。

Ou: (30) If you can't complete your research projects, you won't receive even minimum wage.

(From CaiFam4)

In the above conversation between Chinese teachers of English, after Ou has complained about tenure evaluation, Jian expresses her strong, direct disagreement because she does not think it is a problem for Ou who was recently promoted to the position of associate professor (Line 26). Her disagreement immediately meets Ou's blunt opposition (Line 27). This excerpt is an example of issue-oriented negation. Both Jian and Ou directly negated each other's statement to display their own standing. But they oriented negation to the issue under discussion instead of the other speaker.

Excerpt (53)

剑: (42) 美国人冬天也不喝热水。

Jian: (42) Americans don't drink warm water even in winter.

新: (43) 水龙头里的水烧热会有味。

Xin: (43) Tap water tastes weird if heated.

→ 怡: (44) 我觉得不烧的有味。不烧的不是有漂白粉啊那些什么的。

Yi: (44) I think unheated tap water tastes weird because it might have bleaching powder in it.

新: (45) 没有。他们那边的那边水龙头里的水都是可以喝的。

Xin: (45) No. Their tap water is drinkable.

(From ChiScholar2)

In Excerpt (53), Jian mentions that Americans do not heat drinking water in winter (Line 42). Xin says it is because tap water tastes weird if heated (Line 43). This statement triggers Yi's opposition that unheated tap water tastes weird because it might contain bleaching powder (Line 44). Yi's disagreement expression is oriented toward herself when she says I think, meaning that she does not try to speak for others or make a generalization. Self-oriented negation like this can sound less aggressive than other-oriented negation which is exemplified in Excerpt (54).

Excerpt (54)

菊：（30）我老公是个很倔的人，他认准的事情绝对不回头。属于那种。

Ju: (30) My husband is very stubborn. He never changes his mind if he strongly believes he's right. He's that type.

剑：（31）但他一般情况下都让步的咯。

Jian: (31) But he usually compromises.

→ 菊：（32）是我让他，你搞错了。

Ju: (33) You're wrong. It's me who compromises.

剑：（33）你为什么要让让他呢？

Jian: (33) Why do you have to compromise?

菊：（34）我不让他？我们两脾气都很倔啊。我反而被他磨圆了。@

Ju: (34) I don't? Both of us are stubborn. But I lost my difficult personality because of him.

剑：（35）我怎么觉得他他是那种很很圆的人哪。

Jian: (35) Why do I think he's very easy-going?

→ 菊：（36）你搞错了。一切都看走眼咯。

Ju: (36) You're wrong. You got everything wrong.

(From Jiping)

In Excerpt (54), Ju was talking about her husband with her acquaintance Jian who she met unexpectedly outside of her condo. She states that her husband is very stubborn (Line 30), whereas Jian has the impression of him being nice and easy-going because they attended a few social activities together many years ago (Line 31). Ju immediately reveals that she often has to compromise and claims that Jian's impression is wrong (Line 32). Since Jian does not seem to agree (Line 33), Ju has to explain that one member of the stubborn couple has to compromise to keep the marriage working and that she has changed since getting married (Line 34). This, however, still does not clear up Jian's doubt about her old impression of Ju's husband (Line 35). Upon hearing this, Ju emphasizes again that Jian is wrong and has gotten everything wrong (Line 36). Even though Ju oriented strong disagreement toward Jian in Lines 32 and 36, Jian did not feel offended but continued the conversation until Ju had to return home to feed her baby girl.

Functions of Disagreement

The disagreement strategies of using 1) issue-oriented negation, 2) self-oriented negation and 3) other-oriented negation are very typical in MC conversations. MC speakers under investigation did not seem to take offense at these disagreement strategies. Instead, they made full use of the strategies for such functions as perspective sharing, solidarity building, information giving, suggesting, modesty display, self-defense and joking accusation. These functions also appeared in ELFP conversations, as shown in chapter 4.

The function of direct disagreement as perspective sharing is illustrated in Excerpt (55).

Excerpt (55)

剑: (30) 如果一个班只有十个人哪, 你经常跟他练哪, 你也有时间哪。对吧?

Jian: (30) If there're only ten students in class, you can often practice English with them because you have time for them, right?

→ 新: (31) 但是你别忘了, 你这样的话, 整个学生, 整个这个英语教育就又下滑了。

Xin: (31) But don't you forget that in this case, all the students, the whole field of English education will go down.

剑: (32) 你就是说这个普及率低了。

Jian: (32) You mean not as many students will study English.

新: (33) 对, 普及率低了。

Xin: (33) Yes.

→ 剑: (34) 但是就是说这一批的学生, 这少量的学生[质量就上来了]。

Jian: (34) But these students, the few students who take English classes will [learn English well].

新: (35) [少量的几个可以]。

Xin: (35) [Only a few can].

(From ChiScholar1)

In the discourse prior to that shown in Excerpt (55), Jian mentioned a reform idea of English education in China, which is turning English as a mandatory course into English as an elective. In this case, fewer students would register for English classes, so

teachers could have time to improve students' spoken English (Line 30). This idea is not accepted by Xin, who worries that the field of English education would deteriorate (Line 31). After a couple of negotiations (Lines 32-33) on what Xin meant, Jian expresses her disagreement directly with Xin because she believes the few registered students can make great progress in English due to small class sizes (Line 34). This apparently sounds right to Xin (Line 35). In this excerpt, Xin and Jian expressed direct disagreement respectively in Lines 31 and 34 to share their differing perspectives on an education reform idea. This perspective-sharing function prevails in natural conversations in MC. The following excerpt is an instance of solidarity building.

Excerpt (56)

剑：（268）嗯，很好的学校的。培养小孩还是挺有方法的嘛，看你。

Jian: (268) Mm. It's a very good school. You must have good methods to educate kids.

费：（269）那好像不是他的功劳噢。

Fei: (269) It seems that he can't take credit for that.

雄：（270）@@

Xiong: (270) @@

→ 剑：（271）那肯定有他培养的功劳。

Jian: (271) He surely can take credit for educating his son.

费：（272）他父母的功劳。

Fei: (272) His parents did all the work.

雄：（273）[@@]

Xiong: (273) [@@]

剑：（274）[啊]？你没有出力啊？

Jian: (274) [Ah]? You did nothing?

雄：（275）嗯，不要这样，[不能这样什么东西都点破嘛! @@把我告诉你的全部都_揭露出来]@@@

Xiong: (275) Mm. Don't do that. [Don't disclose everything. @@Don't reveal_ all that I told you]. @@@

费：（276） [@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@] 没有吧，这个应该不算隐私吧。

Fei: (276) [@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@] Not really. This shouldn't be considered private?

雄：（277）不算隐私_我没有一点功劳那不可能的。

Xiong: (277) It's not private_But it's impossible that I can't take any credit.

费：（278）起码你生了他咯。[@@@@]

Fei: (278) At least you gave him a life. [@@@@]

→ 剑：（279） [@@@@]不行，人家还是有父亲的那种关爱嘛。

Jian: (279) [@@@@] No. As a father, he still cares for and loves his son.

(From Xiong)

In Excerpt (56), Xiong, Fei and Jian were talking about Xiong's son over dinner. Fei had just introduced her female friend Jian to her male friend Xiong, so Jian and Xiong were strangers. However, Jian attempts to build a friendship with the stranger, Xiong, three times: 1) she compliments Xiong for his son's academic success (Line 268); 2) she

insists on giving Xiong credit by strongly disagreeing with her friend who does not think Xiong has contributed to his son's success (Line 271); 3) she makes positive comments on Xiong as a caring father to counter her friend's dismissal of Xiong's value (Line 279). Jian's utterances in Lines 271 and 279 oppose her friend Fei but boost Xiong, a stranger, because she wants to build solidarity with Xiong and she knows that her disagreement would not upset her friend Fei. Therefore, Jian's direct disagreement in this excerpt functions to build solidarity with a stranger and show solid relationship with a friend.

In addition to solidarity building, direct disagreement also can serve to give information, as in Excerpt (57).

Excerpt (57)

昌富：（17）美国是高福利国家。

Changfu: (17) America is a great country with good social welfare.

→ 云：（18）还不算高福利国家。[高福利在欧洲]。

Yun: (18) No. It doesn't count. [Good social welfare is in Europe].

→ 剑：（19） [不算，瑞典那里更多]。

Jian: (19) [No. Sweden is better].

(From Yun1)

In this excerpt, Changfu makes a comment on the good social welfare of America (Line 17). Yun directly disagrees with this because he believes European countries have better social welfare (Line 18). Aligning herself with Yun, Jian negates Changfu's comment and offers the example of Sweden as a great country with good social welfare

(Line 19). The acquaintances in the above conversation expressed disagreement directly to share information about which country has better social welfare.

Excerpt (58)

剑：（11）说实在，烧饭这个事情啊，女孩子可能还是喜欢会做一点的。你不能说你啥都不会做。

Jian: (11) To be honest, as far as cooking is concerned, girls seem to like the boys who can cook something. You can't say you can't cook at all.

蔡：（12）啊呀，谈朋友的时候谁会问你会做饭吗？

Cai: (12) Whoa, who would ask you whether you can cook when dating?

→ 剑：（13）没有。你请她来的时候，你稍微露一手，你其它不会做，你就做这一两样，她心里都会很高兴。

Jian: (13) No. When you invite her to come over, she'll be very happy if you cook a couple of things. You don't need to know how to cook everything.

康：（14）你之前要做一点，之后可以不做。

Kang: (14) You cook for her before marrying her. After being married, you don't need to cook.

港：（15）不过是这样的。我以前不是讲过我对做饭真没兴趣。我没兴趣的东西我真学不会。

Gang: (15) But this is the thing. I said earlier that I have no interest in cooking. I can't do things that I'm not interested in.

(From DinnerGang)

In Excerpt (58), the interlocutors were talking about how to get Gang a girlfriend since he had never dated. Jian suggests that Gang learn cooking because girls like those who can cook (Line 11). This idea encounters opposition from Cai who doubts that girls would ask about that when dating (Line 12). Jian strongly disagrees with Cai's view and continues to elaborate her point and explain why cooking is important (Line 13). Jian's strong disagreement serves to give a suggestion.

Another typical function of direct disagreement is modesty display, as in Excerpt (59).

Excerpt (59)

秀: (50) 你看我就是社会适应能力不行。

Xiu: (50) You see, I have poor social adjustment.

剑: (51) 你还社会适应能力不行? 你不挺好的吗?

Jian: (51) You have poor social adjustment? Aren't you good at that?

→ 秀: (51) 不行, 不行。我跟你讲, 我一般的朋友交往没问题, 就是大家都觉得我还挺不错的, (clearing throat) 也挺爱学习的, 然后呢, 这个人呢, 也不是_呃, 也不是坏人。但是一到那种社会关系, 我就不行, 同事, 单位, 上下级。

Xiu: (51) No. No. Let me tell you. I don't have a problem socializing with friends, which means people think I'm nice. (clearing throat). I also love studying. And I'm not evil. But when it comes to social networks, I'm not good at dealing with colleagues, departments and superior-subordinate relationships.

(From Xiu6)

In the above conversation between two friends, Xiu's self-denigration (Line 50) meets Jian's disagreement because Jian wants to be supportive and encouraging (Line 51). However, the conversation did not stop there. Xiu displays modesty, as most Chinese would do after receiving positive comments, by strongly disagreeing with Jian's encouraging words and emphasizing her weakness (Line 51).

In addition to the functions of perspective sharing, solidarity building, information giving, suggesting and modesty display, direct disagreement may also work to serve the functions of self defense and joking accusation. Consider Excerpts (60) and (61).

Excerpt (60)

欧：（167）你是读书呢！我是卖命，卖劳动力呢。

Ou: (167) You're working on your degree! I'm selling my life, my labor.

梁：（168）是噢。

Liang: (168) Yeah.

→ 剑：（169）我也卖劳动力，我也教课的，[不是说它白给钱的]。

Jian: (169) I also sell my labor. I also teach classes. [I don't receive income for nothing].

欧：（170）
[呃，你有学位呢]。我我上了两年我什么都没有。

Ou: (170) [Uh. You'll have a degree]. I won't have anything after I've taught classes for two years.

吴：（171）你赚了钱是！

Wu: (171) You've earned money!

剑：（172）就是，你赚了钱是，我还没有[其它补贴]。

Jian: (172) Yes. You've earned money. But I don't have [other subsidies].

(From CaiFam4)

In the discourse leading up to Excerpt (60), a group of Chinese teachers of college English were comparing incomes, which is not unusual in China. Jian showed surprise at hearing that Ou would have as much salary for teaching Chinese in Malaysia as she had as a teaching assistant in the US because her monthly stipend in dollars, if converted into Chinese yuan, was much higher than those teachers' in China, not considering living expenses. Ou offers the explanation of her teaching many classes and jokingly accuses Jian of not selling labor for income (Line 167). This triggers Jian's self defense with the evidence that she also teaches classes for her stipend (Line 169).

Similarly, direct disagreement may serve as joking accusation, as in Excerpt (61).

Excerpt (61)

蔚: (18) 小孩子气起人来真的是好气人, 你就只好紧讲紧讲, 气得死啊。

Wei: (18) Kids can be very annoying. Then you have to nag and become extremely mad.

剑: (19) [你就换个办法嘛]。

Jian: (19) [You can change your method].

蔚: (20) [你就乱骂, 有时候], 管你_

Wei: (20) [Sometimes you just scold and curse], you don't care.

剑: (21) 骂得没用的, 我告诉你, 真的。

Jian: (21) It's no use scolding and cursing. I'm telling you, really.

蔚: (22) 骂了他总出了一点气, 自己感觉 [好受一点]

Wei: (22) At least I can vent anger by scolding and [feel better].

→ 剑: (23) [从你的角度], 你还没教好他, 有什么用?

Jian: (23) [From your perspective], you haven't turned him better. So what's the point?

蔚: (24) 就是这样子的。

Wei: (24) That's it.

剑: (25) 你的目的是教好他, 而不是说你出完气就拉倒了。

Jian: (25) Your purpose is to make him a better man, not to vent anger.

蔚: (26) 那就没办法了。出完气就算了, 嘎就心里想, 算了, 管他去啥, 随他的便。没办法就是没办法, 反正我们尽了能力, 就是这样子讲, 到时候不能怪我。

Wei: (26) I have no choice but to vent anger. I think, forget it, leave him alone, I don't have a choice. We've tried our best. That's it. You can't blame me later.

→ 剑: (27) @@ 还没有尽能力, 你还没有换其它办法。[@@@@]=

Jian: (27) @@ You haven't tried your best. You haven't tried other methods.

[@@@@]=

蔚: (28) [@@@@]

Wei: (28) [@@@@]

剑: (29) =那当然咯。我觉得骂没用的, 真的。

Jian: (29) Of course, I don't think scolding is useful, really.

(From CaiFam2)

In the above conversation, two female friends were discussing how to deal with annoying children. After Wei discloses her angry reaction to her child (Lines 18, 20 and 22), Jian admonishes that she cannot make her child better by scolding and cursing (Line 23) and not having tried her best (Line 27). The first joking accusation leads to Wei's self defense in a gentle tone (Line 26) while the second one results in a good laugh (Lines 27 and 28). Jian's direct disagreement did not offend Wei because the two friends looked happy in the video and their conversation continued after the joking accusation for a couple of hours. This is another piece of evidence to show that friends tend not to take offense at strong, direct disagreement.

Sociolinguistic Variables and Disagreement

Human speech behavior is certainly influenced by sociolinguistic variables. A few studies have examined the relationship between sociolinguistic variables and disagreement behavior of Chinese speakers. Du (1995) and Liu (2004) concluded that high-status people tend to disagree directly, whereas low-status people tend to be indirect or opt out of disagreement in the setting of higher education. Their findings were mainly based on DCTs instead of naturally occurring conversations. Pan (2000) discovered, on the basis of natural conversations, that in the official setting, rank can predict who will disagree directly.

However, little research has been carried out to investigate the effect of sociolinguistic variables on the disagreement behavior of MC speakers in natural conversations in informal non-familial settings. To fill this gap, this section addresses the correlation between the frequency of MC speakers' direct/indirect disagreement and sociolinguistic variables, including age, sex, education, ability to speak English, experience in English-speaking countries, socioeconomic status and social distance. In

this study, education is indicated by whether participants have earned a bachelor's degree or not; experience in English-speaking countries is indicated by whether participants have been to English-speaking countries or not; socioeconomic status is indicated by participants' income levels compared with local living expenses; and social distance refers to three relationships between interlocutors: friends, acquaintances and strangers.

The correlation between MC speakers' sociolinguistic variables and the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement was examined by Chi-square tests. The study observed that participants employed 674 tokens of direct disagreement (94.27% of the total disagreement expressions) and 41 tokens of indirect disagreement (5.73% of the total disagreement expressions) (including 15 tokens of indirect disagreement prefaced by agreement components and 26 tokens of less direct disagreement ending with Chinese particle softeners). Whether the high frequency of direct disagreement has a significant correlation with seven sociolinguistic variables is revealed in the figures of Chi-square test results.

Figures 5-1—5-7 are a set of test results that differ from those of ELFP conversations. The observed significance level (P-value) in this study is less than 0.05. The test results on social distance and age are not significant¹⁷; the results on education and socioeconomic status are marginally significant because their P-values are respectively 0.059 (Figure 5-3) and 0.0698 (Figure 5-6). This means that there might be a correlation between socioeconomic status and the frequency of

¹⁷ The P-values of age and social distance are respectively 0.6744 (Figure 5-1) and 0.3428 (Figure 5-7), which are much greater than the P=0.05 level, indicating no strong correlation between them and direct/indirect disagreement.

direct/indirect disagreement or between education and the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement¹⁸.

In contrast, the test on sex disclosed a P-value of 0.0159, which is smaller than 0.05 (Figure 5-2). This significant result indicates a strong correlation between sex and the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement. To be more specific, 93.03% of the disagreement expressions used by females are direct, whereas 97.83% of the disagreement expressions used by males are direct. This test result suggests that males used significantly more direct disagreement than females. This might be due to the influence of deep-rooted traditional Chinese values that require females to speak and behave like gentle and obedient ladies in the patriarchal Chinese society. It is true that China has witnessed, since the 20th century, positive changes in the women's rights such as abandoning the practice of foot-binding, receiving formal education, working outside the home and participating in governance (Yang, 2001). Nevertheless, the ideology that only a man can be the head of a household and make major life decisions but a good woman, wife and mother should be docile and take good care of the family (Honig and Hershatter, 1988) has left its trace in all sectors of society and still influences Chinese speech and behavior. Chinese women are still facing traditional sex-related constraints and expected to be agreeable.

The significant results of the Chi-square tests on participants' ability to speak English ($P=0.0099$, Figure 5-4) and experience in English-speaking countries ($P=0.0078$, Figure 5-5) reveal the correlations between these two variables and the

¹⁸ In Figure 5-3, the expected value in the cell of indirect disagreement used by speakers without a bachelor's degree is 4.7594, smaller than the required minimum value for a Chi-square test, suggesting that the test result might not be precise. In Figure 5-6, the expected values in the cells of indirect disagreement used by high-status and low-status speakers (respectively 4.4154 and 4.4151) are smaller than the required minimum value (5.0), suggesting that the test result is questionable.

frequency of direct/indirect disagreement. 93.24% of the disagreement expressions used by people who had the ability to speak English are direct; 99.19% of the disagreement expressions used by those who did not are direct. This suggests that those with the ability to speak English used significantly less direct disagreement than those without the ability. Likewise, 92.62% of the disagreement expressions used by people who had experience in English-speaking countries are direct; 97.51% of the disagreement expressions used by those who did not are direct. This indicates that those with experience in English-speaking countries used significantly less direct disagreement than those without the experience. In other words, the participants who had the ability to speak English or experience in English-speaking countries were less direct in comparison with those who did not. This suggests that eye-opening cross-linguistic and cross-cultural experiences might be able to raise people's awareness of the value of opposing viewpoints to some extent and make them comparatively less direct in disagreement.

More importantly, the percentages of direct disagreement expressions employed by the MC speakers, with varying backgrounds, in the present study are much higher than those of indirect disagreement expressions (see Table 5-1), indicating that these participants tended to disagree directly rather than indirectly, much like the ELFP speakers in chapter 4. This finding fails to support previous research on both English L1 speakers (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984) and Chinese L1 speakers (e.g. Liu, 2004), who have previously been found to prefer indirect disagreement.

Chi-square tests were also run to examine the correlation between the MC speakers' choice of orientation for direct disagreement and the seven sociolinguistic

variables. Note that before running the Chi-square tests, 71 tokens of self-oriented negation and 74 tokens of other-oriented negation were joined together as person-oriented negation because of the low production of these two types of direct disagreement. The results for this part of data differ greatly from the test results of the data of conversations in ELFP, as is shown in Figures 5-8—5-14.

The Chi-square tests unveiled significant correlations between MC speakers' choice of orientation for direct disagreement and four sociolinguistic variables: sex, ability to speak English, experience in English-speaking countries and social distance. Furthermore, the correlation between their choice of orientation for direct disagreement and educational background is marginally significant. However, there is no significant correlation between the choice of orientation for direct disagreement and socioeconomic status ($P=0.1015$). Though this is surprising, considering the important role of socioeconomic status in the hierarchical Chinese society, it might be because the participants conversed about everyday topics in informal non-familial settings, without administrative power over one another or conflicts of interest. This result differs from Pan's (2000) findings on natural conversations in business, official and family settings. Similarly, age is not shown to be significant ($P=0.3656$)¹⁹.

There is a possible correlation between education and the choice of orientation for direct disagreement, which showed a marginally significant result ($P=0.0569$). Although the participants with or without a bachelor's degree all favored issue-oriented negation, those with at least a bachelor's degree used significantly fewer instances of issue-oriented negation (77.36%) than those without that degree (86.59%). Also, those having

¹⁹ However, since the cell of person-oriented negation by 10-19 year olds display the expected value of 0.6454 which is much smaller than the minimum value (5.0) required for the validity of Chi-square test results, the test result on age might be questionable.

at least a bachelor's degree used fewer instances of self-oriented negation (10.81%) than other-oriented negation (11.83%), whereas those without a bachelor's degree had much more self-oriented negation (8.53%) than other-oriented negation (4.88%). These findings could suggest that well-educated MC speakers feel relatively more confident about orienting disagreement toward either themselves or listeners, perhaps because education can expand people's horizons and increase their confidence about what they share with others.

In contrast, sex, ability to speak English, experience in English-speaking countries and social distance all were found to be significant in the choice of orientation for direct disagreement (respectively, $P=0.0036$, 0.0029 , 0.0077 and 0.0454). To be more specific, even though both female and male MC speakers in this study employed a greater number of issue-oriented negation (respectively 75.71% and 86.11%), females used significantly more person-oriented negation than males (respectively 24.29% and 13.89%). Moreover, females used slightly more self-oriented negation (13.77%) than other-oriented negation (10.52%), whereas males used much less self-oriented negation (1.67%) than other-oriented negation (12.22%). This test result suggests that females in this study tended to personalize disagreement and oriented it toward either themselves or others while males in this study preferred to focus on issues. A close look at the different percentages of self-oriented and other-oriented negations showed that the male participants used much more other-oriented negation that directs disagreement toward listeners, whereas females used more self-oriented negation which prefaces disagreement with personalized markers such as I think or I believe.

This finding might reflect the patriarchal feature of Chinese society where males take a more dominant and assertive role while females are expected to be agreeable.

The significant results of the Chi-square tests on participants' ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries indicate the correlations between these two variables and the choice of orientation for direct disagreement. The participants with the ability to speak English employed significantly fewer instances of issue-oriented negation than those without the ability (respectively 76.27% and 88.52%). In other words, people with the ability to speak English used significantly more person-oriented negation (including self-oriented and other-oriented negations). This might be because the ability to speak English is considered a plus to good education. People who can speak English are considered very competent and competitive, which might have increased their confidence in directing disagreement toward either themselves or listeners.

Likewise, the participants with experience in English-speaking countries used significantly less issue-oriented negation than those without the experience (75.4% and 84.26%, respectively). People with experience in English-speaking countries used significantly more person-oriented negation than those without the experience. This might be because cross-cultural experiences can enrich people's perspectives and increase their confidence when presenting direct disagreement with person-oriented orientation or when directing disagreement toward either themselves or listeners.

The last important finding is the significant correlation between social distance and the choice of orientation for direct disagreement. Strangers under study used significantly more issue-oriented negation than acquaintances and friends (respectively

83.59%, 78.07% and 72.26%). In other words, friends used significantly the most person-oriented negation, acquaintances used significantly more person-oriented negation and strangers used significantly less person-oriented negation. The significant test result implies that people with a closer relationship employed more person-oriented direct disagreement but strangers oriented direct disagreement toward issues. This is likely due to the fact that strangers do not have a relationship, do not know each other well, and do not feel comfortable to personalize direct disagreement.

Differences also exist between the speakers' choice of issue-oriented negation, self-oriented negation and other-oriented negation regarding percentages (see Table 5-2). Just like the ELFP speakers, the MC speakers chose more issue-oriented negation than self-oriented negation and other-oriented negation. However, unlike ELFP speakers, who preferred self-oriented negation over other-oriented negation in general, some MC speakers preferred other-oriented negation over self-oriented negation. The following table shows that the participants aged 30-39, those who had at least a bachelor's degree, those who were able to speak English and those who had low status used other-oriented negation slightly more than self-oriented negation. Furthermore, male participants, those who had never been to English-speaking countries, those with high status and those who did not know one another before the day of data collection employed much more other-oriented negation than self-oriented negation.

To summarize, the MC speakers used absolutely more direct disagreement than indirect disagreement and absolutely more issue-oriented direct disagreement than person-oriented direct disagreement. The frequency of their use of direct or indirect disagreement is significantly correlated with the speakers' sex, ability to speak English

and experience in English-speaking countries, marginally significantly correlated with their educational background and socioeconomic status, but not significantly correlated with their age and social distance. Meanwhile, their choice of issue-oriented, self-oriented or other-oriented negation is significantly correlated with their sex, ability to speak English, experience in English-speaking countries and social distance, marginally significantly correlated with their educational background, and not significantly correlated with their age or socioeconomic status. Whether these findings match the MC speakers' perceptions of disagreement behavior is discussed in the next chapter.

Table 5-1. Percentages of Disagreement Expressions in MC

Sociolinguistic variables		Percentage of direct disagreement	Percentage of indirect disagreement
Age	10-19	100%	0%
	20-29	93.48%	6.52%
	30-39	93.68%	6.32%
	40-49	95.27%	4.73%
	50 and over	100%	0%
Sex	Female	93.03%	6.97%
	Male	97.83%	2.17%
Education/Degree	Below bachelor's	98.8%	1.2%
	At least bachelor's	93.67%	6.33%
Ability to speak English	No	99.19%	0.81%
	Yes	93.24%	6.76%
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	97.51%	2.49%
	At least once	92.62%	7.38
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	97.4%	2.6%
	Middle	93.23%	6.77%
	High	98.7%	1.3%
Social distance	Stranger	92.86%	7.14%
	Acquaintance	95.53%	4.47%
	Friend	93.2%	6.8%

Table 5-2. Percentages of Differently Oriented Direct Disagreement in MC

Sociolinguistic variables		Percentage of issue-oriented negation	Percentage of person-oriented negation	
			Self-oriented negation	Other-oriented negation
Age	10-19	100%	0%	0%
	20-29	82.56%	9.3%	8.14%
	30-39	78.5%	10%	11.5%
	40-49	74.53%	13.05%	12.42%
	50 and over	87.5%	8.33%	4.17%
Sex	Female	75.71%	13.77%	10.52%
	Male	86.11%	1.67%	12.22%
Education/Degree	Below bachelor's	86.59%	8.53%	4.88%
	At least bachelor's	77.36%	10.81%	11.83%
Ability to speak English	No	88.52%	5.74%	5.74%
	Yes	76.27%	11.59%	12.14%
Experience in English-speaking countries	Never been abroad	84.26%	5.1%	10.64%
	At least once	75.4%	13.44%	11.16%
Socioeconomic status/Income	Low	85.33%	6.67%	8%
	Middle	76.67%	12.43%	10.9%
	High	84.21%	1.32%	14.47%
Social distance	Stranger	83.59%	6.15%	10.26%
	Acquaintance	78.07%	11.4%	10.53%
	Friend	72.26%	14.6%	13.14%

Disagreement vs. Age_Group

Age	Disagreement		
Frequency	Direct D	Indirect	Total
Percent	isagreement	Disagree	
Row Pct	ment	ment	
Col Pct			
10-19	3	0	3
	0.42	0.00	0.42
	100.00	0.00	
	0.45	0.00	
20-29	86	6	92
	12.03	0.84	12.87
	93.48	6.52	
	12.76	14.63	
30-39	400	27	427
	55.94	3.78	59.72
	93.68	6.32	
	59.35	65.85	
40-49	161	8	169
	22.52	1.12	23.64
	95.27	4.73	
	23.89	19.51	
50 and over	24	0	24
	3.36	0.00	3.36
	100.00	0.00	
	3.56	0.00	
Total	674	41	715
	94.27	5.73	100.00

Statistics for Table of Age by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	2.3349	0.6744

Figure 5-1. Correlation between age and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Sex

Sex	Disagreement		
Frequency	Direct D	Indirect	Total
Percent	isagreem	_Disagre	
Row Pct	ent	ement	
Col Pct			
Female	494	37	531
	69.09	5.17	74.27
	93.03	6.97	
	73.29	90.24	
Male	180	4	184
	25.17	0.56	25.73
	97.83	2.17	
	26.71	9.76	
Total	674	41	715
	94.27	5.73	100.00

Statistics for Table of Sex by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	5.8101	0.0159

Figure 5-2. Correlation between sex and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Education

Education	Disagreement		
Frequency	Direct D	Indirect	Total
Percent	isagreem	Disagre	
Row Pct	ent	ement	
Col Pct			
At Least Bachelor	592	40	632
	82.80	5.59	88.39
	93.67	6.33	
	87.83	97.56	
Below Bachelor	82	1	83
	11.47	0.14	11.61
	98.80	1.20	
	12.17	2.44	
Total	674	41	715
	94.27	5.73	100.00

Statistics for Table of Education by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	3.5639	0.0590

Figure 5-3. Correlation between education and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Ability_to_speak_English

Ability		Disagreement		
Frequency	Direct D	Indirect	Total	
Percent	isagreem	Disagre		
Row Pct	ent	ement		
Col Pct				
No	122	1	123	
	17.06	0.14	17.20	
	99.19	0.81		
	18.10	2.44		
Yes	552	40	592	
	77.20	5.59	82.80	
	93.24	6.76		
	81.90	97.56		
Total	674	41	715	
	94.27	5.73	100.00	

Statistics for Table of Ability by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	6.6559	0.0099

Figure 5-4. Correlation between ability to speak English and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Experience

Experience	Disagreement		Total
	Direct Disagreement	Indirect Disagreement	
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Been to English-Speaking Countries at Least Once	439 61.40 92.62 65.13	35 4.90 7.38 85.37	474 66.29
Never Been to English-Speaking Countries	235 32.87 97.51 34.87	6 0.84 2.49 14.63	241 33.71
Total	674 94.27	41 5.73	715 100.00

Statistics for Table of Experience by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	7.0802	0.0078

Figure 5-5. Correlation between experience to English-speaking countries and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Status

Status Disagreement

Frequency Percent Row Pct Col Pct	Direct D isagreem ent	Indirect Disagre ement	Total
High	76 10.63 98.70 11.28	1 0.14 1.30 2.44	77 10.77
Low	75 10.49 97.40 11.13	2 0.28 2.60 4.88	77 10.77
Middle	523 73.15 93.23 77.60	38 5.31 6.77 92.68	561 78.46
Total	674 94.27	41 5.73	715 100.00

Statistics for Table of Status by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	5.3254	0.0698

Figure 5-6. Correlation between socioeconomic status and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Disagreement vs. Social_distance

Distance	Disagreement		Total
	Direct Disagreement	Indirect Disagreement	
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Acquaintances	342 47.83 95.53 50.74	16 2.24 4.47 39.02	358 50.07
Friends	137 19.16 93.20 20.33	10 1.40 6.80 24.39	147 20.56
Strangers	195 27.27 92.86 28.93	15 2.10 7.14 36.59	210 29.37
Total	674 94.27	41 5.73	715 100.00

Statistics for Table of Distance by Disagreement

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	2.1411	0.3428

Figure 5-7. Correlation between social distance and frequency of direct/indirect disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Age_Group

Age	Orientation		
	Issue-or	Person-o	Total
Frequency	iented	riented	
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
10-19	3	0	3
	0.45	0.00	0.45
	100.00	0.00	
	0.57	0.00	
20-29	71	15	86
	10.53	2.23	12.76
	82.56	17.44	
	13.42	10.34	
30-39	314	86	400
	46.59	12.76	59.35
	78.50	21.50	
	59.36	59.31	
40-49	120	41	161
	17.80	6.08	23.89
	74.53	25.47	
	22.68	28.28	
50 and over	21	3	24
	3.12	0.45	3.56
	87.50	12.50	
	3.97	2.07	
Total	529	145	674
	78.49	21.51	100.00

Statistics for Table of Age by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	4.3110	0.3656

Figure 5-8. Correlation between age and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Sex

Sex Orientation

Frequency	Orientation		Total
Percent	Issue-or- iented	Person-o riented	
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Female	374	120	494
	55.49	17.80	73.29
	75.71	24.29	
	70.70	82.76	
Male	155	25	180
	23.00	3.71	26.71
	86.11	13.89	
	29.30	17.24	
Total	529	145	674
	78.49	21.51	100.00

Statistics for Table of Sex by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	8.4551	0.0036

Figure 5-9. Correlation between sex and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Education

Education	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
At Least Bachelor	458	134	592
	67.95	19.88	87.83
	77.36	22.64	
	86.58	92.41	
Below Bachelor	71	11	82
	10.53	1.63	12.17
	86.59	13.41	
	13.42	7.59	
Total	529	145	674
	78.49	21.51	100.00

Statistics for Table of Education by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	3.6264	0.0569

Figure 5-10. Correlation between education and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Ability_to_speak English

Ability		Orientation		
Frequency				
Percent				
Row Pct				
Col Pct	Issue-or iented	Person-o riented	Total	
No	108	14	122	
	16.02	2.08	18.10	
	88.52	11.48		
	20.42	9.66		
Yes	421	131	552	
	62.46	19.44	81.90	
	76.27	23.73		
	79.58	90.34		
Total	529	145	674	
	78.49	21.51	100.00	

Statistics for Table of Ability by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	8.8893	0.0029

Figure 5-11. Correlation between ability to speak English and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Experience

Experience	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Been to English-Speaking Countries at Least Once	331 49.11 75.40 62.57	108 16.02 24.60 74.48	439 65.13
Never Been to English-Speaking Countries	198 29.38 84.26 37.43	37 5.49 15.74 25.52	235 34.87
Total	529 78.49	145 21.51	674 100.00

Statistics for Table of Experience by Orientation			
Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	7.1107	0.0077

Figure 5-12. Correlation between experience to English-speaking countries and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Status

Status	Orientation		
	Issue-or- oriented	Person-o riented	Total
High	64 9.50 84.21 12.10	12 1.78 15.79 8.28	76 11.28
Low	64 9.50 85.33 12.10	11 1.63 14.67 7.59	75 11.13
Middle	401 59.50 76.67 75.80	122 18.10 23.33 84.14	523 77.60
Total	529 78.49	145 21.51	674 100.00

Statistics for Table of Status by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	4.5756	0.1015

Figure 5-13. Correlation between socioeconomic status and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

Orientation vs. Social_distance

Distance	Orientation		Total
	Issue-oriented	Person-oriented	
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct			
Acquaintances	267	75	342
	39.61	11.13	50.74
	78.07	21.93	
	50.47	51.72	
Friends	99	38	137
	14.69	5.64	20.33
	72.26	27.74	
	18.71	26.21	
Strangers	163	32	195
	24.18	4.75	28.93
	83.59	16.41	
	30.81	22.07	
Total	529	145	674
	78.49	21.51	100.00

Statistics for Table of Distance by Orientation

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	2	6.1855	0.0454

Figure 5-14. Correlation between social distance and choice of orientation for direct disagreement in MC

CHAPTER 6 PRAGMATIC PERCEPTIONS AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Chapters 4 and 5 have revealed salient interactional features in general and disagreement behavior in particular that emerged in natural conversations in ELFP and MC. To achieve an emic perspective of why participants disagree in a certain way, this chapter explores how MC speakers, who may or may not speak English, perceive disagreement behavior in American and Chinese cultures. It also unveils how Chinese teachers of college English view ELFP, the variety of English spoken at English Corners. Ethnographic interviewing is employed to uncover consultants' explicit and tacit knowledge "after a rapport has been established between the researcher and the informant" (Boxer, 1991, p. 152). It enables interviewers to follow up on issues that emerge in casual interview conversations and makes consultants feel comfortable to provide profound insights. This is better than formal structured interviews that push consultants to answer close-ended questions in limited time without giving them any opportunities to elaborate viewpoints or explain through narrative. The interviews for this study included three sections: 1) interviews on American/Chinese disagreement behavior in general; 2) interviews on the acceptability of disagreement expressions in playback; 3) interviews on ELFP and English Corners.

Interviews on American and Chinese Disagreement Behaviors

When conducting the first section of the interviews, I tried to maximally elicit consultants' explicit and tacit knowledge without having them notice it. I was careful not to disclose my research focus and make them think they should give me what I was looking for. I started the interviews with brief discussions on the cultural differences between China and America because most of the consultants had never been to

America and were curious about America, although some had been to other English-speaking countries. The consultants were so engaged in our conversations on the cultural differences that they did not seem to notice being interviewed. This reduced their tension of being interviewed and prevented them from rushing to answer my questions and taking my interviews as boring tasks. Although they asked me as many questions as I asked them, I managed to have them talk and explain more in these conversations. The conversational exchanges seemed to have revealed the consultants' most natural, unprepared, truthful perspectives on disagreement behavior.

The questions woven into informal interview conversations for perceptions on disagreement behavior included: 1) What is your impression of Americans/Chinese in terms of communication style in general? 2) Do they appear direct or indirect to you when communicating ideas? 3) How do Americans/Chinese express disagreement? 4) Is there anything that might affect their disagreement behavior in particular situations? If so, what is it? 5) Could you recall any such instances or personal experiences and tell me about them? The wording of the questions varied a little with each conversation to fit in the conversation context. The questions were posed in Chinese to most consultants, but in English to a few consultants who chose to practice speaking English while being interviewed. Rephrasing and repeating the questions occurred when consultants digressed from answering them. In total, 50 consultants were interviewed, ranging from age 13 to age 74; 25 were male and 25 female; 34 had at least a bachelor's degree and 16 had a middle school or high school diploma; 32 were able to speak English; 20 had been to an English-speaking country at least once; 13 claimed to have low income, 28 middle income and 9 high income.

Perceptions of Americans

“I have no idea”

It is very interesting to find that nine consultants claimed no knowledge of American communication style. They explained that they did not speak English, watch American movies translated in Chinese, or have connections with Americans; they did not need to understand American communication style because they would never go to the US. This view was shared by another consultant, who had been in the US to accompany his wife for a few years. He said,

I don't know how Americans express disagreement. I have noticed some pragmatic differences between Chinese and English. Americans use a lot of formulaic expressions that don't mean anything. To immigrants in America, it's important to know the host culture and do as Romans do. But to learners of English in China, it's not important to know the differences because they can communicate smoothly using their own native cultural habits.

This consultant admitted that he rarely socialized with Americans during his stay in the US. Because of his legal status as a dependent of an international graduate student, he was not allowed to work in the US. He spent most of his time watching TV, preparing for TOEFL and GRE tests, or surfing the internet alone in his apartment. Living in the US had made him notice more use of formulaic expressions such as Thank You or Excuse me than in China. However, he was not aware of American disagreement behavior. This is probably because disagreement behavior tends to emerge in relatively longer conversations which this consultant never had with Americans, whereas formulaic expressions may appear in unexpected encounters that do not entail conversations. This consultant could be an instance to show that living in the US does not guarantee

a dramatic increase in pragmatic awareness of Americans if having no socialization with Americans. Also, believing that English is useless for living in China, some MC speakers might not be motivated to pay attention to the characteristics of disagreement behavior in English.

“Americans are direct in general”

The other 40 consultants claimed to have knowledge of American communication style; nineteen of them had been to an English-speaking country. All of them said that Americans are very direct and straightforward in expressing ideas, that Americans share thoughts and opinions that Chinese would hide, and that Americans reject things or point out the negative aspects of things to one’s face. Most of the consultants got that impression from media, movies, shows and textbooks; others made that conclusion on the basis of their personal experiences with Americans in China or in the US. Some of their thoughts on the subject illustrate:

Americans are very direct; they don’t beat around the bush.

They are very direct in presenting their ideas. It’s good to be direct. It makes things easier.

When it comes to things relevant to their benefits, Americans usually are very direct and clear about the advantages and disadvantages of these things; but Chinese might not want to confront issues but imply what they mean.

Americans don’t consider others’ opinions. They are very direct to express their opposing position.

They don’t hold anything, right? They just tell you what they want.

Americans are also very direct in conveying their messages.

Native speakers are direct to colleagues. Americans are more direct than Brits.

Americans are direct as described in textbooks.

Americans are very, how to say, straightforward. And I don't think they are as bad as what people think. Americans are very open and proud.

Like like I think, uuuh, according to my experience, they will directly tell you, I like it or not, I think it's right or wrong. But they will not force you to take suggestions..... Yeah. They will tell you, I like it or not. It's right or not. But they will not force you to fo- follow them.

Uh. Americans, generally speaking, they are direct. They always say, speak out what they think. Uh. Yeah. I should say that's cultural difference. The Chinese, they always tend to find excuse.

One consultant, who had been in the US for two years pursuing a Ph.D. degree in statistics, said that he had learned to become direct in expressing opposing opinions because it is typical in America. He added in English:

There're seminar in my university, seminar. Some professor give out a talk. And some other professor will point out various mistake. They quarrel with each other.....So if my professor make mistake in class, I point out that. My other classmates do that as well.

Several consultants even inferred that some Americans had learned to become indirect in communicating ideas or expressing disagreement after having interacted with MC speakers for a while during their stay in China:

But they disagree indirectly in China because they do as Romans do. Chinese are indirect. They are tactful when expressing disagreement.

It seems that most consultants perceived Americans as direct after they had seen, through personal experiences or other channels, that Americans confronted issues and presented opposing opinions, which Chinese normally would not do. This strong belief had influenced their observation and understanding of both American and Chinese disagreement behaviors. Even if some of the consultants did notice signs of indirectness in American disagreement behavior or find themselves direct when disagreeing, they still thought of indirectness as foreign to Americans but heritage of

Chinese culture. Therefore, those Americans who disagreed indirectly must have been affected by their Chinese friends, whereas those Chinese who disagreed directly must have been affected by their American friends. These participants' perceptions of American disagreement behavior do not confirm the proposal that Americans preface disagreement with agreement components (Pomerantz, 1984).

“Americans soften their disagreement”

Although all the 40 consultants agreed on Americans' direct communication style in general, five of them noted that they had realized that Americans tend to disagree indirectly and politely in English, that Americans are much more encouraging than discouraging, and that Americans present opinions in a clearly different way from factual statements.

Americans tend to praise you before they point out your weaknesses. Americans soften their disagreement by saying Well, I think the idea is good, but..., That's great. However... They tend to compliment on your opinion before they tell you their real thoughts.

Americans compliment and encourage people more often. They like to say That's great even though they might not think that's great, which sounds fake.

Americans would be more polite by using subjunctive mood. Americans wouldn't present opinions as if they were facts. I think Americans often use I think, I don't think to soften statements. They make it clear that their statements are their opinions, not factual conclusions.

Americans would disagree more indirectly. That could be..., It may be a concern... Yeah. But... They do have the habit of showing partial agreement before they express disagreement.

Americans would not say that in discussion. They tend to say I don't think so. They don't negate opposing viewpoints so directly.

It has been previously discussed that English L1 speakers tend to express disagreement indirectly. Linguists such as Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978),

Pearson (1986) and Pomerantz (1984) observed that English L1 speakers would preface disagreement with hedges, concessions or partial agreement to reduce the force of disagreement. Apparently, the five consultants' pragmatic perceptions of how Americans disagree match the previous research findings, even though they believed Americans are direct in general. They had acquired higher awareness of American disagreement behavior than the other 35 consultants who had opposing viewpoints of American disagreement behavior. Among the 35 consultants, 21 had never been to the US or UK, whereas 14 had. What is the difference between the 14 consultants and the 5 consultants who had also lived in the US or the UK?

A close examination of the five consultants (Table 6-1) in comparison with other consultants showed that the five consultants all had received higher education and had work experience either as a post doctorate or teaching assistant (TA) in the US for several years, which gave them many opportunities to interact with Americans and increased their awareness of how Americans express disagreement. In contrast, the other fourteen consultants (Table 6-2) stayed in the US or UK as a dependent spouse (DS) who was not allowed to attend school or work in town, a research assistant (RA) whose job did not require high communication skills, a visiting engineer (VE) who basically travelled around in his days in UK, or a visiting scholar (VS) sponsored by the Chinese government who only had to take classes. They did not encounter much disagreement and become aware of disagreement behavior because they did not have to negotiate and interact with English L1 speakers. Likewise, the 21 consultants who had never been to America had few opportunities to socialize with English L1 speakers and encounter disagreement in English L1. Even when facing disagreement, these

consultants tended to focus more on what was disagreed on than how disagreement was expressed. They seemed to pay more attention to why English L1 speakers disagreed than how disagreement was initiated.

To summarize, the majority of the 50 interviewees believed that Americans are direct in communication and willing to express their opinions openly and honestly; a few revealed no comments on American disagreement behavior; only five noticed the hedges, concessions or partial agreement that Americans tend to use before expressing disagreement. These five interviewees' perceptions matched the findings of some research (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984) which observed that Americans tend to disagree indirectly. However, most of the interviewees' perceptions of American disagreement behavior in general failed to match the research findings on how Americans disagree.

Perceptions of Chinese

“Chinese are indirect in general”

Though not unanimously, 45 out of 50 consultants agreed that Chinese are indirect in general because they believe: 1) being direct would offend others who might avenge the offense later; 2) being direct would damage face and break harmonious relationships; 3) being direct would aggravate what is trivial rather than solve problems; 4) being direct is rude and arrogant, which counters traditional Chinese Confucian values. If people have no choice but to present their viewpoints, they will wait until the last minute. Their last-minute points might come out surprisingly direct and strong.

Some of the consultants intuited:

Most Chinese are indirect and afraid of offending others, which might cause themselves some trouble later. Chinese are more polite and indirect to native speakers of English, especially to those who are highly respectable.

Chinese are well known for being indirect and saving face.

Chinese are indirect and modest and would soften disagreement to save face, unless they hate you. For instance, they don't tell you the purpose of their visit until after a long irrelevant greeting and talk.

Chinese are indirect.....Chinese pay more respect to the collective culture, traditional morality and regulations than to individual rights.

I'm indirect because I want to be polite. I don't make comments on things if disagreeing. I try to play along or simply show my opinions. I opt out when talking to strangers and am direct to good friends.

I think Chinese are actually, honestly speaking, almost all of them are more indirect.....For instance, in everyday life (clearing throat), maybe, for example, your friend invites you to visit a place, you really want to go, but you'll say, no, no, I'm not going. Actually this is not rejection, but politeness.....I'm saying, they're indirect in using language. Another example is, you're invited to dinner, almost everyone would say no, no, no, first. But later you accept it.....You're just being polite. But you would be misunderstood. Of course, Chinese people understand this. If you say you're not going, I insist, then you will go. But if foreigners say they're not going, they really mean it.....I think foreigners are more direct.

I think more Americans are very direct. Chinese, most of the time, Chinese are indirect, indirect for Chinese. If someone hate you, he can, he or she can smile and you never know that something they do bad, they do something bad.

You know, uh, it is uh American people are direct. But you know with Chinese, especially for the southern in China, you know, even you don't like this, maybe you are saying, I like it very much.

Chinese people speak politely. Chinese people, they are very, how to say, they are very, how to say _ how to say, very soft, until the last point. Their last point is very strong. But before that, they are very soft.

A sixty-five year old man, who was a local party leader for two decades, traced Chinese indirectness back to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that happened between 1966 and 1976 in China. He explained that in those chaotic, horrifying years, everyone was full of fears and uncertainties. Disasters could strike whenever politically inappropriate words were heard; complaints were made by strangers, acquaintances, friends, relatives and even family members. Any words could lead to suspicion,

criticism, repression, imprisonment and death. People were severely discouraged from directly speaking out what they really thought. Furthermore, the old local party leader commented that Chinese people have to be indirect if they want to get promoted. Being indirect means less offense, stronger interpersonal skills and better social network which can help manipulate power relationship and achieve political goals.

“Chinese don’t like disagreeing with others”

Since indirectness can dissolve issues and pave the road to personal peace, public politeness and social harmony, the 45 consultants brought up varying strategies to avoid direct disagreement, delay disagreement and opt out of disagreement. They would compromise, emphasize facts or expert opinions instead of personal opinions, change topics or simply keep silent especially when the issues under discussion do not involve conflicts of interest. Some of their thoughts on the subject illustrate:

Disagree, uh, uh, I don’t know. First, people have disagreement. So for myself, I always, first I go to the fact, which is the fact is the subject, And maybe my opinion, uh, is uh kind of biased. His opinion is very remark. And I will, how to say, ok, you win.

Maybe in America, just do some overstating. You should point out what’s uh, what what’s uh severe uh severeness of the problem. You should point out it. In China, we just understate it, because uh we don’t want to boss you, we don’t want to offend you, because that is your agreement, that is your opinion. Maybe you think about a long time. So we won’t, we don’t want to uh uh uh, how to say, uh overstate it, just show our disagreement about it. So we should do some euphemism, euphemism way, not very offending way.

I don’t like disagreeing with people. If I don’t like what you said, I will change the topic.

Uh. If uh, if we, how to say, talk uh, talk things is not, how to say, talk things is not important, maybe we, if I disagree with you, maybe I will keep silent.

The belief of Chinese being indirect supports previous research on Chinese communication style (e.g. Cardon and Scott, 2003) and disagreement (e.g. Du, 1995;

Liu, 2004). This popular perception, however, fails to match the research findings that both ELFP and MC speakers used an absolutely larger number of direct disagreement expressions than indirect ones. These speakers' actual manner of expressing disagreement reveals a gap between perception and behavior. In other words, the natural conversations in real life situations employed for this study demonstrate that people do not always behave in accordance with what they think. Perception elicited from DCTs cannot reflect behavior in real life.

Contrary to the popular belief, five consultants (Table 6-3), two female and three male, did not follow the crowd. Ranging from age 50 to 74, these consultants did not have a bachelor's degree, were unable to speak English and had never been an English-speaking country. They claimed to have low socioeconomic status because they earned low income. When asked whether Chinese are direct or indirect in expressing opinions, they replied that Chinese are direct except to their bosses or strangers. They added that no one would want to offend their bosses who might get revenge on them later; also, it would waste their time and effort to disagree with strangers who do not have any relationship with them. In other situations, Chinese people, including the consultants themselves, would not hesitate to tell others what is on their mind. To these five consultants, being direct suggests honesty, efficiency and less misunderstanding.

In contrast, a fifty-one year old man, who was the same as the above five consultants regarding education, income, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries, answered that Chinese are indirect. To elaborate on his point, he said that he would not directly express opinions to his boss; as a team leader,

he would indirectly tell his teammates to work out things efficiently because being direct would only make them unhappy and discouraged from working with him; also, he would need both his boss' and teammates' support in order to get promoted to a higher position. He had to skillfully maintain his network with indirect expressions.

To summarize, the majority of the 50 interviewees believed that Chinese are indirect in communication and unwilling to reveal their real thoughts openly to hurt others' face; only five claimed that Chinese people express disagreement directly, except to their bosses or strangers, because they want to be honest. These five interviewees' perceptions match the research findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5 that Chinese people used many more direct disagreement expressions than indirect ones. However, most of the interviewees' perceptions of Chinese disagreement behavior in general fail to match the research findings on how Chinese disagree (See Chapters 4 and 5). This indicates a gap between perception and behavior. In other words, perceptions should not be counted as the only reliable source for research. Research findings built utterly on the basis of unnatural data collection such as DCTs might be questionable.

Perception of Sociolinguistic Variables and Disagreement Behavior

To answer the question "How would you express disagreement?", the consultants took sociolinguistic variables of interlocutors into consideration. All of them emphasized the effect of socioeconomic status and social distance of interlocutors on their disagreement behavior. When talking to their bosses who have administrative power over them, they would opt out of disagreement or disagree indirectly if they have to express disagreement; when talking to people of the same rank, they might disagree less indirectly if no conflicts of interest are involved; but to people of a lower rank, they

can express disagreement directly without any concern. This is not surprising reflection of China as a hierarchically structured society:

Depend on different situation. If you want to show your disagreement with your officials, or with your leaders, you don't want to do anything about the direct way. You just show your indirect way. Uh, that is our traditional characteristic. First, you should say, ok, uh, uh, there are a lot of merits (unclear) our leader. He put forward this opinion is ok, is suitable to our development. But in some fields, we can do this. We can perfect, uh, perfect this opinion, in this way. You don't want to overturn, overturn this original opinion. So if we are good friends, if we in the same rank, we're not, we're not higher, just we're in the same rank, ok, we can go directly. No problem. In Chinese way, we will do little indirect, not direct, indirect.

Social distance seems to play an important role in how Chinese people think they express disagreement. The consultants claimed that they are very direct to family members, direct to intimate friends, less direct to acquaintances and indirect to strangers. They tend to treat family members and intimate friends as themselves; being direct to family members and intimate friends indicates solid, close relationship. They would feel hurt if they were treated less like family members or intimate friends than expected. However, they do not share everything with or express opinions directly to acquaintances who they do not know very well. They choose to refrain from talking to strangers, especially showing disagreement, because disagreeing with people they will not contact again in the future is a waste of time and effort. Some of their thoughts illustrate:

Politeness is universal at some point. Americans are direct to good friends and indirect to acquaintances, just like Chinese people. But they can be direct and defend their rights when their interest is violated.

Spouses and siblings can be treated like yourself in the mirror. They are not as polite as American correspondences because they are intimate..... Respect doesn't come from words but actions..... Too much politeness suggests remote distance and lack of closeness.

Chinese are generally indirect. But relationship between speakers matters. People are indirect to acquaintances... Chinese are more polite to acquaintances than to good friends. They speak with techniques to save their own or others' face. Family members are direct.

They're indirect to acquaintances, direct to good friends, but opt out to strangers.

Strangers should be more polite to each other just like the low ranked to the high ranked. Distance makes people more polite.

If uh they are my common friends, my common friends, I I will not forced my opinion on him or her, because different people have different opinion on on different issues. But if we are so close, he's my my old fellow or something very clo- closest friend, I will argue with him or her to some degree. So it's really hard to say.

In addition to socioeconomic status and social distance that Chinese people think would make a difference in disagreement behavior, some consultants noted that people might be comparatively more direct in private talk than in public speech; they can sound more direct when defending their personal rights or discussing sociopolitical issues of their own interest; extroverts can be more direct than introverts; males appear more direct by using imperatives or statements; young people and seniors can be more direct than middle-aged people; the uneducated tend to be more direct than the educated; people with little social experience can be more direct. In brief, just like socioeconomic status and social distance, other variables such as settings, topics, personality, sex, age, educational background and social experience could also impact people's disagreement behavior to some extent. Some of the consultants commented:

In casual situations, I would be more direct and speak out what's on my mind. In formal situations, I wouldn't speak directly.

I think this has something to do with the number of audience members. For example, if two people are talking in private, not in public, many people may not care about what you say. If you hurt her, no one else knows. She wouldn't mind that much because no one else knows. It's ok. She'll understand you.

In some circumstances, if you want to stress your opinion to reach some objectives, objectives, or to fulfill some obligations, you should do it. But just a very normal, very leisure, a very leisure topic, we never do that. We never do that in China. Just, uh, keep silence. If you want to, uh, if you, if you don't agree with somebody, if you don't agree with some strangers, who speak, uh, opinion, who express their opinion in the public occasion. But this opinion doesn't make sense. We never we never say something against them.

When simply discussing issues not relevant to personal benefits, it shouldn't be a big deal to say you are wrong, that's not true. But when it comes to issues relevant to personal benefits, people would take it seriously if you say they are wrong.

People working at school, which is considered Ivory Tower and more pure than real society, might be more direct, because they are not as much affected by power difference as those working at government departments.

I'm a very indirect person. I don't disagree directly. For topics not relevant to personal benefits, it's ok if we have obviously opposite perspectives. I would opt out of trivial things. But if the things are important and conflict with my interests, I would tell them my opinions.

It depends on the personality of interlocutors and their social distance. If the person I'm speaking with, she is forceful, has high self-esteem, then I will talk along and show partial agreement. I will not eagerly say, you're wrong, you're wrong. Or if I have to express disagreement, I will not disagree, I mean, I will ask questions. To me, asking questions should be the first step.

Females are more indirect than males. It took me so many years to understand this. My wife, if she wants something, she often times asks me whether I want the thing. For many years, I said no because I didn't want it. And I didn't understand why she became upset for the next couple of days. Later, there were a few times when she asked me the same type of question, I said yes. Everybody was happy. The other day, a friend of mine came from another city to visit me. So I told my wife by phone that I should do what every Chinese would do as a host—taking my friend to dinner to show hospitality. To save money, I didn't plan to have my family to come along. But my wife asked me whether I wanted her and our daughter to join us. If I had told her the truth, I would have got into a big trouble. But I got her message. So I said of course. They came along and she happily paid the bill.

The elderly are relatively more direct because it is moral to respect them in our tradition. Young people appear direct because they have few

experiences in society. A Chinese saying goes: when you just get out of school and enter society, you look square, full of personality, original ideas and fighting spirit. But it won't take long for you to turn round, lose your individuality and follow the crowd. You become indirect to avoid offending people after some lessons.

We have a female colleague who likes to dress up in a fancy but weird manner. My other colleagues often compliment her dresses to her face but criticize her dresses to her back. No one wants to offend her by pointing out how unpopular the way she dresses up. Well educated people disprefer directness to save face and maintain harmony.

Although the consultants strongly believed in the significant role of sociolinguistic variables in disagreement behavior, the Chi-square test results of the role of sociolinguistic variables in ELFP speakers' disagreement behavior did not show significance. This might be due to the uniqueness of ELFP speakers who come to English Corners for the purposes of language practice and social practice.

Conventionally important variables such as socioeconomic status and social distance seem to lose their power in these communities of practice for at least two reasons:

1. The communities are fluid with some changing members everyday. People have become accustomed to socializing and communicating in ELFP with mostly strangers and acquaintances.
2. People care less about social distance and socioeconomic status than about language proficiency; high proficiency ELFP speakers seem to receive more attention and respect than high status but low proficiency ELFP speakers. Unfortunately, the fluidity and informality of the communities of practice makes it extremely difficult to test ELFP speakers' language proficiency.

Nevertheless, the consultants' perceptions partially agree with the results of the Chi-square test on MC speakers. The test results displayed significant correlations between several individual sociolinguistic variables and MC speakers' disagreement behavior. Sex, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries can influence the frequency of direct and indirect disagreement expressions chosen by MC speakers. Although the consultants mentioned sex as a factor that might affect how

people communicate, they did not think of ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries. The two sociolinguistic variables, socioeconomic status and social distance, which the consultants believed were essential to their disagreement behavior, did not show a significant correlation with the frequency of direct and indirect disagreement expressions. This may indicate another gap between perception and behavior.

Differences, Conflicts and Changes

The informal setting of interview conversations for this study worked well to elicit the consultants' input on some cultural differences and conflicts between America and China and ongoing changes in cultural values. Most consultants said that Americans are direct but polite because they would confront conflicts of interest but often use polite formulaic expressions; Americans would disagree directly in order to solve problems but would not take disagreement as personal attack. In contrast, Chinese would manage to avoid confronting issues for the purpose of solving problems and appear indirect because they perceive direct disagreement to one's face as offensive and face hurting, as stated in the following narratives:

I think American people very open-minded, they don't think, ok, you refused me, you refused my opinion, you want to offend me just for the for the purpose of offend me. They don't think that. They think, ok, we just focus on the business. Get onto the business, nothing to do with other personal relationship. But in China we will combine the personal relationship with uh working, work, working relationship. So that is con- the confused.

I believe Americans express their ideas more directly but they speak more politely.....When it comes to things relevant to their benefits, Americans usually are very direct and clear about the advantages and disadvantages of these things; but Chinese might not want to confront issues but imply what they mean.

I think Americans are soft for trivial issues but firm and direct for big issues; when they are not hesitant to tell you their opinions, it's over at the end of

the conversation; Chinese are indirect for big issues but direct for trivial issues; Chinese might not confront you but spread words through others.....But when it comes to important issues relevant to their benefits, they don't negotiate with you directly. They take a less effective way to tell you for being afraid of hurting your face. They are indirect in handling issues or solving problems.

According to some consultants, the cultural differences between American and Chinese communication styles may also cause confusion to people who know of both styles and have to switch between the two cultures and misunderstanding to those who have little knowledge of the cultural differences but assume universal politeness. This seems very contradictory, but it is what happens to both multilinguals and monolinguals. When culturally different communication styles compete for emergence in a specific situation, multilinguals might appear inappropriate or abnormal. A forty year old multilingual male researcher of agriculture, who had been in the US for four years, said that he had difficulty adjusting to life in the US during his first visit there and reverse cultural shock when he returned to China four years later:

I believe if you stay in USA for a very long time, then you will have problem staying in China. But when you just uh, when you just arrive in USA, you will also meet the cultural confliction. You have to. It takes time for you to understand the way.

A similar cultural conflict was claimed to be experienced very often by a thirty-seven year old female teacher of college English. She liked to increase her knowledge of English language and culture by means of making friends and hanging out with English L1 speakers in China, even though she had never had a chance to go abroad. She did appear to speak English more fluently and know American communication style better than many other Chinese users of English. However, she revealed her problem of switching back and forth between Chinese and American communication styles:

Sometimes I also have the problem with Chinese relatives or friends to communicate, because sometimes I think in American method, their way of daily life, in American method. Sometimes Chinese friends, relatives, they cannot accept my methods. So that's my problem. Sometimes I al- but I I'm Chinese, I have Chinese culture and Chinese customs. I also have the con- (looking down and thinking) conflicts <矛盾>, conflicts with, conflicts with Americans. Sometimes I, yeah, I communicate with Chinese using American way; sometimes I communicate with American uh with Chinese way. So that's the conflict.

On the other hand, not knowing the cultural differences in communication styles could lead to cross-cultural misfires. Changu, 37, male, had been in the US as a dependent spouse for four years when his wife pursued a Ph.D. degree in education. He pointed out the disadvantage of being unaware of how different other languages and cultures might be. Also, it is important for English L1 speakers to realize English L2 speakers' difficulty of using English appropriately in order to avoid cultural misunderstanding. Thinking of his own personal experiences, he could not help complaining:

Americans feel very superior. They believe they are better than others. They think everyone should do as they do. They assume their way is the best or the only way. An example of this is that one American went to China and commented that Chinese people were rude because they didn't answer his questions politely when he asked for directions. But those Chinese people were trying to help him in English which they were not good at. Why was he expecting them to use English appropriately in China? They could have responded in Chinese which would sound appropriate to Chinese native speakers although he wouldn't understand Chinese.

In contrast, another thirty-nine year old male post doctorate, who had been in the US for six years, greatly enjoyed his experiences with Americans. After claiming that he would not return to China, he started to compare Americans with his fellow Chinese and commented:

Americans are polite and friendly. They use words that make people more comfortable. Chinese use direct and less friendly words. I've been to a lot of

Chinese gatherings and I found that people don't care about viewpoints held by acquaintances, not friends. They don't respect acquaintances that much. Americans are better at this. Even though they might not agree, they listen to you until you finish. Honestly, I think Chinese culture has deficiencies. They don't show respect to speakers that much. They often cut in before you finish your talk. They appear very arrogant to acquaintances no matter what. So they might become good friends if they don't mind. Most often, they don't. Even though I don't know many Americans, I feel that Americans don't usually behave like that. They are comparatively respectful. Even though they might disagree, they let you finish your talk. They might have learned good manners for social activities from parents and teachers.

This post doctorate's perception of Chinese cutting in conversations supports previous research findings which provided evidence of ELFP and MC speakers overlapping with each other and talking simultaneously. His perception of Chinese using direct and less friendly words was embraced by some consultants who had noticed the ongoing changes in traditional Chinese culture. The consultants believed that these changes had been caused by globalization and contact with western cultures via high technology. Rural areas that have few resources of high technology are least affected by western cultures and most imprinted with Chinese traditions. They remarked:

Mainland Chinese people are not traditional anymore; their social values have changed.

Traditional culture stays in the rural areas where western cultures and globalization have little influence.

In the past, people were reserved and indirect; now they are more open and direct.

People's values have been changed via media/internet from western countries.

These viewpoints support Garrott's (1995) findings that Chinese college students placed Confucian values and respect for tradition at a much lower rank than individualism, self-cultivation and personal knowledge. When requested to provide an

instance to exemplify Chinese becoming less traditional and more direct, a twenty-seven year old male engineer, who had travelled to a few English-speaking countries, added:

Mm. For example, last week, we talked with each other in the English Corner, another guy who is post doctorate in the United States for four years. That is very good example. They are strangers. And they disagree with each other; then they argue with each other, quar- quarrel with each other, then dismiss. So it's not very good situation, it's not very good uh result. I think they don't want to expect this kind of result. Why? This result happen because they want to be much more direct, even they they they think, ok, they they they are strangers. Maybe we we meet this time, but we don't, maybe we don't meet another time, maybe we never meet each other again. So they don't, they don't think about other issues related to uh relationship, I mean the the personal relationship, so just express their uh their opinions freely, so then quarrel each other. That is uh, uh direct disagreement with strangers, I think_ yeah, yeah, because it is in the English Corner. They want to uh imitate English speaking behavior.

Summary

The interviews on American and Chinese communication styles in general and disagreement behavior in particular showed that Chinese people under investigation, with a few exceptions, believed that Americans prefer direct communication style and Chinese favor indirect communication style. According to the consultants, Chinese disagreement behavior is constrained by sociolinguistic variables, especially socioeconomic status and social distance. Most of the consultants attributed changes in Chinese communication style, such as Chinese direct disagreement behavior, to contact with English L1 speakers and influence of western cultures.

Most of the perceptions on disagreement behavior, however, seem unable to support the research findings in chapters 4 and 5. The empirical data of natural conversations of Chinese ELFP speakers and MC speakers in this study demonstrated that Chinese people tend to skip agreement components and disagree directly with

people who have little administrative power over them. The disagreement behavior in ELFP is not significantly correlated with any sociolinguistic variables, whereas the disagreement behavior in MC, in general, is significantly correlated with sex, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries.

Interviews on the Acceptability of Disagreement Expressions

For the second section of the interviews, ten of the 50 consultants, who had been in the US for at least four years and were able to speak English, were invited to watch two clips of ELFP conversations and two clips of MC conversations (Appendix C) and make comments on the disagreement expressions that appeared in the clips. The consultants were requested to evaluate the acceptability of the disagreement expressions and justify their evaluations. They were asked why those disagreement expressions were used or how they would disagree in those situations. They were also encouraged to compare the differences between Chinese and Americans in terms of disagreement behavior on the basis of their personal experiences in China and in the US. Of the ten consultants ranging from age 28 to 44, half were female; nine had at least a bachelor's degree and one had a community college degree; five claimed to be upper class with good income and the other five middle class.

“Yes. This is acceptable.”

After watching the four clips, all of the consultants commented that it is normal and acceptable for Chinese people to use the disagreement expressions in the clips for the following reasons: 1) disagreement not preceded by partial agreement, concessions or hedges does not necessarily sound rude or accusatory; 2) the tone of disagreement expressions, rather than their structure, would reveal speakers' attitude and make a difference in the force of disagreement realization; 3) the interlocutors in the clips simply

expressed their opinions without using strong personal attack or curse words; 4) the consultants' attention was drawn to the content or information after the disagreement expressions.

When examining specific disagreement expressions, especially in terms of structure, the consultants touched upon the cultural differences between American and Chinese communication styles. They pointed out that disagreement without agreement components prevails in Chinese conversations and is well accepted as normal polite behavior. They would not feel offended when receiving disagreement not preceded by agreement components. Softened disagreement is an advanced interpersonal skill that not everyone needs to acquire. Some people might preface disagreement with agreement components to build solid social network or achieve personal goals. They remarked:

No, no, no simply shows strong disagreement, nothing impolite. It only means that the speaker is absolutely sure about his statement.

People say that's your problem, I don't care about that, in Chinese all the time. Of course it's acceptable.

Most Chinese people aren't sensitive to disagreement initiated with but instead of hedges. But they would circle around a topic before going to the actual issues they intend to talk about.

Chinese people are indirect for prepared topics but more natural, maybe direct, for unprepared talks. If everyone speaks the direct way, it wouldn't sound impolite. The English structure yes, but... is not typical in Chinese. Only when people intend to get something from others or not to offend their bosses, they will be very indirect.

It's normal to do that in Chinese. Chinese don't preface disagreement. We don't make concession or use hedges. Maybe those who are very social and have good interpersonal skills might concede for business purposes or certain needs.

It sounds normal and acceptable in Chinese. I would feel comfortable with that. They rarely say I think. Chinese people tend to make claims more directly as if they were presenting facts.

The consultants emphasized the attitudinal implications that the tone of disagreement expressions can carry. If disagreement is expressed with a forceful, aggressive tone, normally in the form of high pitch and high volume, it may indicate that the speaker is upset and accusing the listener. In this case, disagreement could sound offensive and bring unhappiness to the listener. However, if disagreement is expressed with a gentle, mild tone, it would not mean anything abnormal but a regular statement, even though it is not preceded by any agreement component. A forty year old male engineer, who had been in the US for eight years and spoke English fluently, evaluated the disagreement expressions he heard from the clips as acceptable in the Chinese environment. But he added:

I feel that they used a strong intonation to present their points. Americans would be more polite to strangers. These two guys rarely used subjunctive mood as Americans would. Americans would say I would not care, instead of I don't care.

Another impression I got from the video is that Chinese people seem to accentuate every word when they speak English, which sounds stiff as if they were reproducing each word independent of any context from their memory. But Americans sound softer. They use different intonations in different contexts. Especially American girls say the same word differently in different contexts. Americans will feel intimidated and uncomfortable if you use stiff intonation and accentuation on every word, instead of questions or subjunctive mood, to make requests.

When providing evaluations and judgments on the disagreement behavior of the interlocutors in the clips in general, the consultants stated that it is not a problem for Chinese to share one's opinions or show disagreement if not using strong personal attack or curse words. It is natural and honest to have one's views come out as it is, but

unnecessary to make concessions or provide partial agreement for the sake of making concessions or providing partial agreement. The consultants would make concessions if they did partially agree with their conversation partners from the bottom of their heart; however, they would simply go with their opposing viewpoints without making concessions if they did not partially agree with their conversation partners. They believed that Chinese people would pay attention to the content or information after the disagreement expressions, rather than how disagreement was initiated, just like what they did when watching the clips.

I wouldn't be offended by their disagreement because I'm more interested in what comes after disagreement. Impatience or impoliteness is shown by tone and curse words, not by direct disagreement.

It's normal to talk like that. They had different opinions. That's normal. I would accept that. It wouldn't sound accusatory to me. You have your choice. You can say whatever you want, right? You don't have to make concessions if you don't have partial agreement.

I think this is normal. I would talk the same way. They simply presented their own different viewpoints. I think Americans would talk the same way. Nothing goes wrong when you tell people your perspectives. I think Americans like to tell people exactly what's on their minds.

I would feel fine with that response. They were simply directly expressing their different opinions. They didn't put themselves in others' shoes. But this is our way of thinking. It's important to achieve mutual understanding.

I don't see any problem with them expressing disagreement that way. It is normal to tell people your ideas. I wouldn't feel unhappy if people talk to me like that. They were simply discussing things. Feeling unhappy only indicates that you are narrow-minded.

I think it's typical and normal for Chinese to talk like that. They simply expressed their own opinions directly. Of course, you wouldn't do that to your boss.

“They transferred Chinese into English”

When discussing why ELFP speakers expressed disagreement the way they did in the clips, the consultants provided two possible reasons: 1) the speakers transferred Chinese into English because it would be normal to use those expressions in Chinese; 2) the speakers' low language proficiency was not sufficient for them to disagree in English appropriately. Some consultants admitted that they had to think in Chinese and translate their thoughts into English when speaking English. This may unavoidably cause inappropriate language and pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 when there is a gap between L1 and L2 forms or norms. Some of their thoughts illustrate:

They transferred Chinese into English. When I speak English, I usually have Chinese words in my brain and translate them into English before I say them out.

Language proficiency might affect the way they speak English. Since they don't know how to express disagreement in English, they may discard formulaic/polite expressions and appear more direct than they want to be.

They might not know how to disagree indirectly in English, so they will appear direct. When Chinese don't feel comfortable talking about things, taboos like sex, make love, they use English.

The consultants' first explanation goes along with the previous research on pragmatic transfer that shows that L2 speakers tend to employ L1 pragmatics to realize L2 speech behavior. The consultants' second explanation was contestable because some studies have indicated the positive relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence while others have not. More empirical research is needed to test the correlation between language proficiency and pragmatic competence.

Summary

The interviews on the acceptability of disagreement expressions showed that the direct disagreement expressions were accepted and would be used by the ten

consultants. The consultants explained that 1) agreement components preceding disagreement are not considered essential; 2) impoliteness is normally displayed by speakers' tone or curse words; 3) disagreement is simply opinion presentation without evil intentions; 4) the actual opinions after disagreement expressions draw more attention than the structure of disagreement expressions. Consequently, expressing disagreement not prefaced by agreement components tend to be transferred into English by Chinese people if they have low language proficiency and no knowledge of how English L1 speakers disagree.

Perceptual Conflicts

The findings in previous sections seem to disclose conflicts between the perceptions of American/Chinese communication style and the acceptability of Chinese disagreement behavior. The consultants believed that Americans are generally direct and Chinese people are generally indirect in communicating ideas and expressing disagreement, despite a few exceptions. In contrast, the consultants accepted the direct disagreement expressions used in the four clips as normal and typical in Chinese culture. So why did the consultants think Chinese would not disagree directly, whereas they perceived Chinese direct disagreement behavior as normal and acceptable? These apparent perceptual conflicts might result from cultural differences in attentional focus and understanding of direct disagreement.

The concepts of direct disagreement and indirect disagreement for this study are based on Pomerantz's (1984) structural definitions: direct disagreement is strong and not prefaced by any agreement components, and would make listeners feel uncomfortable; indirect disagreement is weak, preceded by agreement components, and well accepted by listeners. She observed that English L1 speakers prefer indirect

disagreement and respond to indirect disagreement better. Pomerantz's definitions work well to capture the disagreement behavior and response to disagreement of English L1 speakers whose attentional focus seems to fall on the beginning of disagreement expressions and then move onto the actual content of disagreement.

However, the Chinese consultants seemed to have a different understanding of direct/indirect disagreement. They noted that the beginning of disagreement expressions is not as important as the content of disagreement where their attention focus lies. Even though the Chinese interlocutors in the clips did not precede disagreement with agreement components, the consultants would not judge it as direct and abnormal because the content after disagreement was indirect and acceptable. Just as some consultants mentioned, Chinese tend to find excuses to avoid confrontation when conflicts of interest are involved, which is considered an indirect and appropriate way to solve problems. In contrast, Americans impress Chinese as willing to confront conflicts of interest and express disagreement directly even though they preface disagreement with softeners. The softeners located at the beginning of disagreement expressions slip out of most Chinese consultants' attention because they focus more on what comes after disagreement expressions. Therefore, the cultural differences between China and America in terms of attentional focus and understanding of direct disagreement can account for the seemingly contradictory perceptions of Chinese consultants.

Interviews on English Corners and ELFP

The third section of the interviews was conducted in a similar manner to the first part of the interviews. I carefully relaxed interviewees with small talk and their personal experiences in the UK because all of them had been there as visiting scholars for a few

months. When they were excitedly recalling cultural shock and interesting stories in the UK, we touched upon varieties of English in the world and discussed the values of ELFP and English Corners to Chinese users of English in the Chinese-dominated environment. Questions woven into the informal discussions included: 1) Have you ever been to English Corners? How often? 2) What do you think of the English-Corner phenomenon? Why did it come into existence? How does it affect learners of English in China? 3) What do you think of the type of English at English Corners? Would you consider it a variety of English just like British English, Singapore English or Indian English? Why or why not? 4) Would you teach Chinese English to your students? Why or why not?

In total, ten Chinese-speaking teachers of college English were recruited to share their perspectives on ELFP and English Corners. All of them had at least a bachelor's degree and had taught college English for at least ten years. All of them claimed to be middle class with steady, decent income. They ranged from age 35 to age 59; two were male and eight female.

Perceptions of English Corners

All but one of the teachers confessed that they had never been to any unorganized off campus English Corners like the one in the city park. They went to an on campus English Corner organized by the English Department of their university only once during a regular semester because they had to. The English Department often proposes two conversation topics on the advertisement for their on campus English Corner at the beginning of a week; it sends one class, two Chinese teachers of English and a couple of English L1 speakers to the English Corner once a week to attract learners of English from other departments and keep the English Corner alive. New faculty who recently

joined the department in the past few years are requested to take this assignment, whereas old faculty, such as the ten interviewed teachers of college English, can choose not to go to the English Corner. The ten teachers explained that they did not have time to visit English Corners because they were busy with teaching, research and family responsibilities.

The teachers agreed that English Corners, especially the unorganized ones, were amazing phenomena resulting from globalization. Ever since China opened its door to the outside world and resumed its connection with western countries, both the Chinese central government and Chinese people have realized the importance of knowing English in order to develop the economy, improve technology and catch up with western countries. Because English makes possible international business and globalized communication, Chinese learners of English have to find a way to improve their spoken English in the Chinese-dominated society. Since limited class time is not sufficient for oral English practice, after-school time has to be considered. Although none of the teachers knew who initially started English Corners, they all believed that English Corners have been in existence for decades and functioned as mini English environments for oral English practice and social practice.

However, regarding the usefulness of English Corners, the teachers held varying opinions which formed a balanced continuum as follows.

useful fluency	good for highly motivated learners	good for high proficiency learners	good for low proficiency learners	useless fossilization
2	2	2	2	2

This continuum shows that two teachers of English believed that English Corners are very useful for Chinese learners of English to practice speaking English and

improve fluency in particular. Those who only study English in the classroom tend to have the Mute English problem, meaning they cannot speak English, even though they might be able to read English, after having studied English for many years. But they can improve oral English at English Corners by producing as much English as possible. Improvement, however, can only occur to highly motivated learners according to another two teachers. Only with passion for English would learners persistently go to English Corners and change from quiet listeners or passive speakers to active eloquent speakers.

Active eloquent speakers, another two teachers remarked, seem entitled to attention at English Corners. They can seize more opportunities to talk in English and acquire even higher proficiency, whereas low proficiency learners are at a disadvantage to start or hold the floor of a conversation in English. This opinion was not shared by another two teachers who believed that low proficiency learners can learn more from interacting and speaking English with high proficiency learners. In this case, high proficiency learners are at a disadvantage because they would not be able to improve English by talking with low proficiency learners. Finally, two teachers of English degraded English Corners as useless in terms of language acquisition. They justified that people who go to English Corners are mostly English L2 speakers who speak nonstandard English with many errors. Interacting in English among themselves would only fossilize the errors rather than improve their spoken English. Despite the debate on who can benefit from English Corners, all the ten teachers mentioned such useful English learning resources as authentic Standard English videos, audios and movies on

the internet, and English L1 speakers who are willing to make friends with Chinese learners of English.

Perceptions of ELFP

Standard English is the target of the ten teachers. They expressed their wishes to acquire Standard English, either British English or American English, and teach Standard English in the classroom. Three of the teachers claimed that they would correct students' errors even if the errors do not hinder comprehensibility, whereas the other seven would allow students to commit errors when communicating in English if intelligibility is not a problem. One forty-six year old female teacher explained:

Chinese teachers of English are in a dilemma. They want to teach Standard English, but they are not competent enough to do that. They don't have native like proficiency. Then they have to teach English for the purpose of communication. But there must be basic grammar rules to follow to ensure the success of communication in English.

This was shared by a thirty-eight year old teacher who commented that most Chinese teachers of English are actually teaching Chinese English to students because they do not have the knowledge of Standard English forms and norms. Chinese English, which is also ELFP spoken at English Corners, was generally considered nonstandard. Likewise, one forty-two year old female teacher disclosed her thoughts:

I often have to use Chinese English to explain things so that students can understand better. But I feel embarrassed to speak Chinese English because it is not standard. English teachers are models for students. Teachers' nonstandard English might mislead students. So I don't want to speak English unless I have to because I don't think my English is pure or standard and because I don't want to lose face for speaking nonstandard English.

Of the ten teachers, four did not foresee Chinese English as an independent variety of English, like Singapore English or Indian English, in the future. They explained

that Chinese English is full of nonstandard linguistic features and that it would be easier for people with different L1s to communicate in one common standard variety of English. In contrast, the other six teachers thought it might be possible for Chinese English to grow as an internationally recognized full fledged variety of English in the future. They gave such examples as long time no see, which are literally translated from Chinese into English and accepted by some English L1 speakers. Despite the divergence in terms of the future of Chinese English, all the teachers said that they would benefit from Chinese English becoming an internationally recognized variety of English because they would feel more confident about the way they speak English.

Summary

The interviews on English Corners and ELFP showed that the ten Chinese teachers of English rarely went to speak English at English Corners; they preferred learning, speaking and teaching Standard British English or American English to other varieties of English; they described authentic standard English videos, audios on the internet and English L1 speakers as valuable resources, and ELFP as nonstandard and embarrassing for them to speak. However, for their students, the ten teachers held varying views of the usefulness of English Corners, ranging from very useful to not useful at all. Seven of the teachers allowed their students to speak English with errors that do not interfere with intelligibility, whereas the other three would correct every error. Four of the teachers thought of it impossible for ELFP to become a distinctive variety of English in its own right, whereas the other six opposed this view because English has gone through so many changes over time and space. Although agreeing on the negative connotation associated with Chinese English, all the ten teachers welcomed

the idea of ELFP becoming internationally recognized because it would release their burden of speaking nonstandard English.

Pragmatic Perceptions and Language Attitudes

This chapter portrays Chinese people's perceptions of American and Chinese disagreement behaviors, the role of sociolinguistic variables, pragmatic judgement of direct disagreement expressions, and Chinese teachers' perceptions of English Corners and ELFP. Most Chinese consultants under study believed that Americans disagree directly, Chinese disagree indirectly and disagreement behavior is greatly impacted by sociolinguistic variables including socioeconomic status and social distance. However, previous research (e.g. Pomerantz, 1984) showed that Americans tend to disagree indirectly; the findings in chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that Chinese tend to disagree directly and that sex, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries are significantly correlated to the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement. This suggests a gap between perception and behavior and the potential problem of building research results completely on perceptions elicited through DCTs.

Also, the consultants' judgments of what Americans would think is direct disagreement as indirect reflects cultural differences between China and America in terms of attentional focus and understanding of direct disagreement. Although Chinese teachers of English agreed on English Corners as a result of globalization and its positive role in the Chinese-dominated society, they disagreed on the contribution of English Corners to the acquisition of English. All the teachers preferred Standard English to nonstandard ELFP, but welcomed the idea of ELFP becoming internationally recognized. These findings have important theoretical and pedagogical implications, which are discussed in chapter 7.

Table 6-1. Consultants with awareness of American disagreement behavior

Name	Sex	Age	Education / Degree	Status/ Income	Able to speak English	Experience in English-speaking countries
Jin	M	39	Ph.D.	High	Yes	6years, post-doc
Fu	M	40	Ph.D.	High	Yes	8years, post-doc
Guo	F	38	M.A.	High	Yes	4years, TA
Liao	F	28	M.A.	Middle	Yes	5years, TA
Xue	F	31	M.A.	Middle	Yes	6years, TA

Table 6-2. Consultants without awareness of American disagreement behavior

Name	Sex	Age	Education / Degree	Status/ Income	Able to speak English	Experience in English-speaking countries
Changu	M	37	B.A.	Middle	Yes	4years, DS
Song	M	28	M.S.	Middle	Yes	2years, RA
Yuan	F	39	M.A.	High	Yes	8years, DS
Hong	F	37	<B ²⁰	High	Yes	6years, DS
Tianlun	M	50	M.A.	Middle	Yes	1year, VS
Zhang	M	27	M.S.	High	Yes	2months, VE
Jun	M	39	M.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Fei	F	42	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Yue	F	46	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Dong	F	53	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Xiao	F	38	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Ya	F	38	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Ju	F	35	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS
Wu	F	48	B.A.	Middle	Yes	3months, VS

Table 6-3. Five Consultants' Perception of Chinese Disagreement Behavior

Name	Sex	Age	Education / Degree	Status/ Income	Able to speak English	Experience in English-speaking countries	Perception of Chinese disagreement behavior
Jumu	F	53	<B	Low	No	None	Direct
Lianhuiwi	F	50	<B	Low	No	None	Direct
Ji	M	74	<B	Low	No	None	Direct
Guizhenfu	M	53	<B	Low	No	None	Direct
Ouyang	M	55	<B	Low	No	None	Direct

²⁰ <B stands for a degree lower than Bachelor's.

CHAPTER 7 THEORETICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

This study has examined the interactional features and disagreement behavior of Chinese people speaking ELFP at English Corners and MC in everyday life in Nanchang. It also investigated Chinese people's perception of disagreement behavior and Chinese teachers' perception of English Corners and ELFP. The ELFP speakers under study appeared to code-switch between English and Chinese to search for words; display multilingual competence; make evaluative or emotional statements; or show collaborative work. They used the discourse marker yeah frequently to show attention/ understanding/ agreement/ topic shifting; repair or present oneself; signal closing; display strong agreement/ self-confirmation; or delay responses. They completed others' thoughts to show collaborative effort, which might be met with explicit/implicit agreement or explicit/implicit disagreement. They overlapped with each other or had simultaneous conversations to show solidarity and collaboration. They switched topics unexpectedly to satisfy curiosity; seek information; share personal experiences or perspectives; or diversify topics under discussion. They produced side sequences to clarify things; involve newcomers; tease for solidarity building; or remind friends of things. They smacked lips while talking to request/ hold turns; search for words/ thoughts; or display evaluation. They favored direct disagreement over indirect disagreement and employed more issue-oriented negation than person-oriented negation to realize such functions as perspective sharing; solidarity building; information giving; suggesting; modesty display; self-defense; and joking accusation.

Although the above eight interactional features did not emerge in ELF conversations examined in previous research (e.g. Firth, 1996), they did characterize the MC conversations under study except for code-switching, which rarely emerged in the MC conversations because the MC speakers did not need to. However, the disagreement behaviors of ELFP and MC speakers differ in the Chi-square test results of the correlation between disagreement behavior and sociolinguistic variables. None of the sociolinguistic variables are significantly correlated with disagreement behavior in ELFP. In contrast, the sociolinguistic variables of sex, ability to speak English and experience in English-speaking countries have significant correlations with the frequency of direct/indirect disagreement; these three variables and another variable, social distance, are also significantly correlated with the MC speakers' choice of orientation for direct disagreement. To be more specific, males used significantly more direct disagreement and less indirect disagreement than females; those who were unable to speak English or who had no experience in English-speaking countries used significantly more direct disagreement than those who were able to speak English or who had been to English-speaking countries. In terms of the choice of orientation for direct disagreement, males used significantly more issue-oriented negation than females; those who had no ability to speak English or who had no experience in English-speaking countries used significantly more issue-oriented negation than those who did; strangers used significantly more issue-oriented negation than acquaintances; acquaintances used significantly more issue-oriented negation than friends.

The aforementioned findings about the disagreement behaviors of ELFP and MC speakers do not completely match the interviewed Chinese people's perceptions of

disagreement behavior in general. Most of the interviewees claimed that Americans disagree directly, whereas Chinese disagree indirectly. They believed that sociolinguistic variables, especially socioeconomic status and social distance, can influence disagreement behavior. However, ten consultants commented that they would accept and use the direct disagreement expressions in the clips selected for pragmatic judgment because those expressions were used only to display opinions without unpleasant, offensive intentions. They showed more interest in the content or information following the expressions. They thought that speakers' tone of disagreement expressions, rather than the structure of disagreement expressions, signals speakers' attitude. On the other hand, Chinese teachers of English agreed that English Corners, a result of globalization, function as mini English environments in the Chinese-dominated society. However, the teachers disagreed on the usefulness of English Corners to Chinese learners of English in terms of improving fluency and accuracy in speaking English. Their opinions landed on a continuum from very useful to not useful at all. All the teachers viewed ELFP as nonstandard and dispreferred in the classroom, but they welcomed the idea of ELFP becoming internationally recognized, because it would release their burden as speakers of nonstandard English.

Theoretical Implications

This study integrates the Speech Community Model with the Community of Practice Model to uncover the interactional features and disagreement behavior of MC speakers and ELFP speakers. Since MC speakers share such stable characteristics as a first language, social norms of language use and social attitudes towards language, the Speech Community Model works to capture their interactional features; however, because ELFP speakers gather to mutually engage in a joint enterprise and create a

shared repertoire of interactional features while practicing language and social skills, the Community of Practice Model is better for the analysis of ELFP conversations. The integration of the two models indicates examining patterns of linguistic variation through different lenses and considering both abstract stable categories, such as sex, and salient fluid interactional features. It helps elicit complementary feedback from both models for better analysis and interpretation of the interaction between language use and social change.

This study is also a theoretical contribution to research on varieties of English used across the world. It proposes the new construct of English as a Lingua Franca of Practice (ELFP) to define the distinctive type of English spoken by Chinese users of English at English Corners in China. Since other constructs, such as World English, English as an International Language, English as a Global Language, English as a Lingua Franca, cannot capture the nature of English spoken at English Corners, ELFP functions as the medium of communication chosen by speakers sharing the same first language and culture for the purposes of language and social practice. This study uncovered the interactional features of ELFP that no research has looked at before. It is an important addition to the body of research on second language acquisition and development (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004). The perception of Chinese teachers of English, which is that ELFP is nonstandard and dispreferred in the classroom, supports Jenkins' (2007 and 2009) investigation that disclosed people's negative attitudes toward ELF.

For the purpose of comparison, this study also examined the interactional features of MC, which has been absent from previous research. As China becomes economically

and socioculturally stronger, it is important for the world to understand how Chinese people interact in natural conversations. The findings of this empirical study can contribute to the studies on cross-cultural communication involved in international business and increase the success rate of cross-cultural communication in everyday life. Also, the similarities between the salient interactional features of MC and those of ELFP suggest pragmatic transfer, whereas the differences between ELFP and English may be reasons for potential communication breakdowns that occur between Chinese users of English and English L1 speakers. This may work as an alert for both Chinese people and English L1 speakers to be aware of cultural and pragmatic differences.

One distinctive interactional feature this study focused on was disagreement behavior in ELFP and MC. Using Pomerantz's (1984) definitions of strong/direct disagreement and weak/indirect disagreement, this study found that both ELFP and MC speakers employed significantly more direct disagreement expressions than indirect ones. The finding weakens the previous research on universals of disagreement (e.g. Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1978) proposing that people tend to soften direct disagreement with partial agreement, hedges and concessions. It also disconfirms the stereotypical assumption of Chinese being indirect in communication and the prior research results of Chinese preferring indirect disagreement (e.g. Du, 1995). The finding that the participants did not take offense at direct disagreement puts in question the correlation between directness and impoliteness and the theory of universal politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Since the participants explained their attentional focus was on the content/information following disagreement expressions rather than the structure of disagreement expressions (i.e. whether disagreement is

softened or not), this suggests cultural differences in pragmatic awareness and definitions of theoretical constructs such as direct disagreement.

Furthermore, this study unraveled the correlation between sociolinguistic variables and disagreement behavior in naturally occurring conversations. None of the previous studies has looked at the sociolinguistic variables of ELFP speakers; a few studies (e.g. Du, 1995; Liu, 2004) concluded that social status constrains disagreement behavior on the basis of DCTs; one study (Pan, 2000) also found the influential role of social status on disagreement behavior in official settings. However, Chi-square test results in the current research showed no correlation between any sociolinguistic variables and disagreement behavior in ELFP. This suggests the uniqueness of English Corners, where the effect of sociolinguistic variables was undermined by ELFP speakers' collaborative effort in language and social practice. Also, this study discovered that neither socioeconomic status nor age is significantly correlated with disagreement behavior in informal non-family ELFP or MC settings. Despite the hierarchical structure of the traditional Chinese society, China has been undergoing great social changes caused by the Open Door policy, cultural contact with western societies, the Only Child policy and dominating only children appealing for nontraditionalism and individualism. It is not surprising to see that socioeconomic status and age have less effect on the disagreement behavior of Chinese L1 speakers, who have no administrative power over one another, in everyday life.

In contrast, a few other sociolinguistic variables showed correlations with disagreement behavior in MC, which enriches research on sociolinguistic variables and speech behavior. First of all, the conventional role of sex still stays to affect

disagreement behavior, suggesting the remaining effect of the traditional patriarchal Chinese society and the dominating, decision-making, problem-solving role of males. It was found that males used significantly more direct disagreement in general and more issue-oriented negation than females. This finding supports previous studies on language and sex (Boxer, 1991 and 1993b; Coates, 1993; Aaron, 2004), which posited that men prefer impersonal topics or issues, whereas women tend to personalize things. Secondly, since those who had ability to speak English or who had experience in English-speaking countries used significantly less direct disagreement and issue-oriented negation than those who did not, this indicates that cross-linguistic and cross-cultural experience may have exposed speakers to different ways of disagreement and taught speakers how to soften or personalize their expressions. Thirdly, the finding that strangers used significantly the most issue-oriented negation and friends used significantly the least issue-oriented negation indicates the greater social distance, the less personalized direct disagreement. This also supports Boxer's (1991) finding that strangers do not behave the same as friends, but it disconfirms Wolfson's Bulge Theory (1989).

This study shows the importance of conducting empirical research on the basis of natural, authentic data in informal non-familial settings. Although a few studies (e.g. Du, 1995; Liu, 2004) have looked at MC speakers' disagreement behavior in institutional settings, the results were mainly built on DCTs. Only one study (Pan, 2000) has employed natural conversations in business, official and family settings. All of them found that Chinese tend to disagree indirectly to people of higher rank or status. Their results fail to represent Chinese people's disagreement behavior in authentic

conversations in everyday social life. Based on naturally occurring everyday conversations, this study concluded that Chinese tend to disagree directly in informal non-familial settings. It counters prior research findings on Chinese disagreement behavior, but more accurately reflects how Chinese actually disagree in everyday life. However, this new finding does not match what the participants thought, indicating a gap between behavior and perception. The gap reveals a flaw in purely DCTs-based research and calls for more empirical research on the basis of natural conversations in informal non-familial settings.

Finally, the study has methodological implications. It employed Interactional Sociolinguistics to analyze both verbal and nonverbal features that emerged in natural conversations and Ethnographic Interviewing to get an emic perspective of the participants' disagreement behavior. The combination of these two approaches revealed the participants' behavioral characteristics and underlying beliefs in a relatively more comprehensive and comprehensible way. This study showed that Chinese tend to disagree directly while believing themselves as indirect. This gap between behavior and perception was explained by the participants who thought that Chinese tend to focus more on the content/information after disagreement expressions than on how disagreement is initiated. The participants' insights enlightened the current research on disagreement behavior and led to another interpretation that cultural differences play a role in where people focus attention and what they think is direct disagreement. In addition, the qualitative picture of the participants' disagreement behavior is reinforced by quantitative analysis through Chi-square tests. The Chi-square test results were better understood with the input of participants' perspectives. The triangulation of the

research and the integration of qualitative and quantitative analyses increase the reliability and validity of the research results of this study.

Pedagogical Implications

This study is pedagogically important for both language teachers and students. Since people tend not to forgive language learners with inappropriate interactional manners or speech behaviors, even though they would sympathize with learners with low L2 proficiency, it is essential for English and Chinese language teachers and learners to become aware of cultural and pragmatic differences between English and Chinese. Unfortunately, most English textbooks in China and Chinese textbooks in the United States do not address these differences. Even if a few do, the examples provided in the textbooks come from native-speaker intuitions, which might not be as reliable and valid as instances from naturally occurring conversations in real-life situations. The findings of the interactional features and disagreement behavior in ELFP and MC in this study can provide English and Chinese language teachers and students with authentic everyday conversations which can be analyzed as teaching and learning resources.

For example, English teachers can explain to Chinese students that the use of yeah in the middle or at the end of an utterance is not typical in English, that a smooth transition is needed before moving on to another topic, that smacking lips while talking might sound impolite to English L1 speakers, or that disagreeing directly without softeners may lead to an unpleasant end of an ongoing conversation. Without explicit instructions about these, Chinese students might not notice the inappropriateness of transferring Chinese interactional features or speech behavior into English. Also,

English teachers can demonstrate videotaped or audiotaped authentic conversations in English L1 to students and raise their awareness of cultural and pragmatic differences.

Both these explicit instructions and video/audio demonstrations can be applied to Chinese language teaching as well especially because most Chinese textbooks in the United States focus on vocabulary, grammar and cultural introductions. They need improvement on pragmatic instruction. Knowledge of how Chinese L1 speakers actually interact and disagree can facilitate cross-cultural communication between Chinese and English L1 speakers, a phenomenon increasing in amount as a result of the Chinese Open Door policy and international trade between China and western countries. The competitive multilingual and multicultural globalized world has made it necessary for language learners to be aware of pragmatic differences and increase pragmatic competence if they want to reduce cross-cultural miscommunication and become successful in international business.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the important findings and implications discussed in the above sections, the study has some limitations. First of all, when examining the correlation between sociolinguistic variables and disagreement behavior in ELFP, the participants' English proficiency was not considered because of the difficulty of testing English proficiency to the fluid community of practice. It would be optimal if future research could follow some ELFP speakers, test their English proficiency, record their disagreement behavior and check the correlation between English proficiency and disagreement behavior. Secondly, when conducting statistical tests, it was necessary for this study to join self-oriented and other-oriented negation as person-oriented negation for the purpose of quantification because participants did not produce enough direct disagreement

expressions with these two orientations. It would be interesting to see whether sociolinguistic variables are significantly correlated with self-oriented negation or other-oriented negation because these two types of negation have different meanings in terms of politeness.

Thirdly, in order to adequately study possible pragmatic transfer, it would be preferred to follow some participants through their ELFP-speaking and MC-speaking experiences and compare their interactional features in general and disagreement behavior in particular. Fourthly, since this study was based on ELFP and MC communication between Chinese L1 speakers, it would be interesting to follow the same participants to see whether they show the same interactional features and disagreement behavior when talking with English L1 speakers in informal non-familial settings. Fifthly, it would also be interesting to investigate Chinese students' perception of English Corners and ELFP in comparison with Chinese teachers' perception in this study. Finally, since English Corners can be located in all other major cities in Mainland China, it would be an additional contribution to this body of research if studies could be carried out to examine the interactional features and disagreement behavior in ELFP and MC in other cities.

Despite the limitations, the findings of the study on how Chinese interact and disagree in both English and Chinese are important to the globalized world. Since Chinese compose one of the largest ethnic groups in many countries, it is essential to achieve a "conceptual and practical understanding of Chinese communication practices and their underlying cultural premises" (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998, viii). This knowledge can help minimize communication breakdowns and promote successful

cross-cultural communication where China plays an increasingly important role. China has risen in its sociocultural and political status due to its rapid development in economy and tight connections with other countries in the past decade. Its changes may affect the structure of the world. Its development, however, is not built upon western models of culture, politics or economy, but on a special model with Chinese characteristics and with both traditional and nontraditional elements. This model has entailed culture-specific, context-dependent ways of face-to-face interpersonal communication in China. Little knowledge of these Chinese means of communication would hinder the development of the world as a unified, harmonious global community.

APPENDIX A
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS (ADAPTED FROM SCHIFFRIN, 1987)

Speaker turn start	:
Simultaneous utterances	[[]]
Overlapping utterances	[]
Contiguous utterances after an interruption	=
Omission	...
A short untimed pause	—
Long untimed intervals	(pause)
Laughter	@
Code switching	< >
Bollowing	<>>
Emphasis	<i>italics</i>
Characteristics of the talk	(coughing)
Items in doubt	(unclear)
No pause between different speakers' utterances	Z

11. 你多久来一次英语角? (How often do you come to English Corners?)

12. 你为什么来英语角? (Why do you come to English Corners?)

APPENDIX C
CLIPS FOR PRAGMATIC JUDGMENT

Clip (1)

- Jing: (155) Yeah. That is, take here for example. So the park provide a very very beautiful environment for us to to improve our English. That is, until we master the English, we can (unclear) English to master, to uh receive a lot of information, a lot of technology. That is, advantage uh, (smacking lips) uh, information and uh knowledgeable. So we can, that is, make our uh (unclear) country stronger. Ok?
- Den: (156) No, no, no. We just think that you studying English I'm studying English can get much more information.
- Jing: (157) Yeah. Of course.
- Den: (158) I don't think so.
- Jing: (159) You don't think so? Why?
- Den: (160) Yes. Do I get information from you? Or do I need must speak English [to get information]?
- Jing: (161) [(unclear) you can] improve spoken English. That is, improve your spoken English. That is.
- Den: (162) Yeah. It's spoken English. What's the need of spoken English? It, I mean, it can't make money.
- Jing: (163) Yes. Why you go here?
- Den: (164) I'm go here to speak English.
- Jing: (165) [@@] Of course.
- Bei: (166) [@@]
- Den: (167) So, we are talking about
- Jing: (168) Why why why do you learn English?
Why do you, why do you learn English?
- Den: (169) No.
- Jing: (170) What's your goal of learning English?
- Den: (171) I I'm not a famous person. I'm just a common person.
- Jing: (172) What? What?
- Den: (173) I'm not a famous person.
- Jing: (174) Famous person?
- Den: (175) Yeah.
- Jing: (176) No. Learning English that that doesn't that don't mean you'll be you are a foreigner, you are a foreigner, you are, you are a fore- you are a foreigner.
- Den: (177) Excuse me! If china we have so many famous person say China doesn't need English, so I don't want to say learning English any more.
- Jing: (178) No, no, no.
- Den: (179) Yes!
- Bei: (180) No, no, no. I don't agree with you.
- Den: (181) Yeah. Maybe uh

- Bei: (182) – I think uh English is very important, is the most important language. If you uh just like me uh, I think, uh if you uh, if you become a graduate student, you will first meet difficulties when you do some research. Just like me. Because my major is pharmacology, uh, when when I was a graduate student in medical college, I should do some research in uh pharmacology. So
- Den: (183) Because you want to go abroad, so you must study it, you must study English.
- Jing: (184) (unclear) further study (unclear) improve himself, improve himself.
- Bei: (185) Yeah, yeah, yeah. Improve myself in research if I go abroad.
- Jing: (186) (unclear) A lot of useful information and a lot of useful knowledge, enrich himself. So it can it can train himself best, that is, to do what he want to do.

(From EngCorn B)

Clip (2)

- Teng: (282) You know, a- another problem, another question, you know, uh is that how to s- how to speak English the way as most foreigner do. I think that, I think that's big problem for all of us to discuss. You know, to tell you the truth, I don't think too much of people's English standing here. You know. I think most of them speak Chinglish, not Standard English, you know.
- Pan: (283) @ @ @
- Teng: (284) That's the truth. You know, I I used to listen to you know, uh uh, some relevant uh English uh uh tape and you know and and video, and video, you know. I uh, when I when I was listen to American English, I was excited. Yes. I was excited.
- Pan: (285) Ok ok. This is your problem. I don't care about that. What you say is Chinglish, or Canadian English, or Indian English, I, you know, uh, I don't care that. Ok. What I want to do is, I should adapt myself every kind of English. [I think this is a good way]. =
- Teng: (286) [I see, I see. I know. I see.]
- Pan: (287) =Uh. Because you know, do you know why?
- Teng: (288) Why?
- Pan: (289) Because in the world, maybe sixty or seventy English, uh, English speaking people cannot speak Standard English. Ok? Do you agree with me?
- Teng: (290) I see. [I agree with you].
- Pan: (291) [Yeah. Because I] have such experience. Yeah. I have experience, I have experience of contacting with Finnish people, American people, or Austrian people. You know, every country, every country of people speak English differently. Yeah. Their style, their fashion is different, to- completely different (shaking head and looking serious). Yeah. Just in this way, just like uh Finnish

- people, they speak English very bad. Ok. Uh. Even such lady, maybe such lady, also know that, even he stay in America, just some Americans cannot say Standard English.
- Teng: (292) And, ok, uh, well, well, well. I think uh if you want to be, if you want to have a good command of English, it's not enough for you to master uh, master a a a good mu- a good mu- a good much vocabulary. It's not enough to say. And I mean, if you want to have a good master, master of English, you have to learn much more about the uh British uh uh uh uh (looking away) British uh uh British culture, you know, British culture, British, you know, uh British uh uh uh (looking away), you know, you know, and and many other things, you know, of course including the English vocabulary. You know, I mean, if you want to be good at English, you know, you'd better behavior like an English man or British man, you know, like American man or British man. You must behavior like British man or American man. Yes. Everything, your talking, you know, your thinking, your behavior. Right.
- Pan: (293) Uh. I just imitate. Yeah. We just imitate. You know, we we cannot do that uh, we cannot do that as English people or American people do. [There i- isn't what we do]=
- Yang: (294) [After all, we are living in China].
- Pan: (295) =What we do. We just imitate, you know. Oh ok. Everybody is Chinese, Chinese people, you know, we are Chinese people. Ok. Chinese is our seco- first language. Maybe English is our second language. (unclear) However, anytime we cannot do that as Americans do that. You know that, yeah, we just imitate.
- Teng: (296) I'm sorry. I don't, I don't think so. I don't think so. You know, Uh. I think (looking up and thinking) I was told by my teacher if you want to be good at English, you'd better immerse yourself into the uh British or American culture atmosphere. Right? I remem- I remember, for example, you know, uh Lei- uh Li Yang, you know, Li Yang. And when he was a student at at a college, you know, when he can study English, he used to he used to go to the western, western restaurant, and you know, try as much as possible. And he used to uh dye his hair blue, dye his hair yellow, right? I think this is also one of the way we can learn English, you know.

(From EngCorn D)

Clip (3)

- 宇: (1542) 好像在美国很容易交到朋友, 是吧? 在学校。
- Yu: (1542) It seems very easy to make friends in America, right? At school.
- 剑: (1543) 对。但一般的朋友。很, 很, 很难交到知心朋友。
- Jian: (1543) Yeah. But only general friends. It's hard to have very close friends.

- 宇: (1544) 你说美国是吧?
- Yu: (1544) Are you talking about America?
- 剑: (1545) 对。
- Jian: (1545) Yeah.
- 宇: (1546) [[但是至少]]
- Yu: (1546) [[But at least]]
- 剑: (1547) [[一般朋友]] 很容易, 就是, 随便见到谁, 你问一声好, 很快就会交换那个, 交换那种联系方式, 就这样认识了。
- Jian: (1547) [[Making general friends]] is very easy. That is, when you see someone, you send your greetings and exchange contact information. This way you become acquainted.
- 宇: (1548) 但是也是个基础啊, 在这个基础上可能有进一步的交往。
- Yu: (1548) But this is a basis on which you can hang out together.
- 剑: (1549) 对, 可以进一步交往。
- Jian: (1549) Yeah. You can hang out.
- 宇: (1550) 中国就存在一个什么问题呢? (smacking lips) 就是说, 我觉得不是学校, 包括延伸到任何一个<community>里, 都有这种现象, 就是, 人们之间处于一种互相不信任的这个, 呃, 社会关系, 就是很难展开这种交朋友<make acquaintance>这种事。
- Yu: (1550) There is a problem in China, isn't there? (smacking lips) I think there's a common problem in not only school but also any community. That is, people don't trust each other. Uh. It's difficult to make acquaintance.
- 剑: (1551) 呃, 那是, 那可能是个问题。在那边我觉得大家还是普遍, 就是说, 比较相信简单, 相信别人。
- Jian: (1551) Uh. That could be a problem. I think generally speaking, people there are relatively more simple and trusting.
- 宇: (1552) 是, 是, 是。
- Yu: (1552) Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 剑: (1553) 然后, 但是他们也有要求, 就是说, 他虽然可以交, 跟你交朋友, 一般他不会交很知心, 很知心的朋友。就是象我们说的推心置腹, 可以谈很深很深的问题。
- Jian: (1553) Then, but they have requirements. That is, although they might make friends with you, they won't be as close to you as what we call intimate friends do. Close friends can talk about things in depth.
- 宇: (1554) 但是那个很难说说说一种短期的一种交往会[建立起来]。
- Yu: (1554) But this type of relationship is difficult to [build over a short term].
- 剑: (1555) [那要很长的]。
- Jian: (1555) [It requires a long term].
- 宇: (1556) 对, 对, 对。我觉得这东西[不是说]
- Yu: (1556) Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think this [isn't]
- 剑: (1557) [但他们]那种就是长期的有时候都很难交到, 因为他们不是很, (smacking lips) 我觉得他们过于独立了, 他们不是[很依赖], =
- Jian: (1557) [But they] have difficulty building that type of

relationship even over a long term, because they're not, (smacking lips), I think they're too indepenent. They are not [very dependent],=

- 宇: (1558) [他们文化]
Yu: (1558) [Their culture]
剑: (1559) =对, 依赖一种
Jian: (1559) =Yeah, rely on a
宇: (1560) 我觉得他们过于, 就象你讲的太<close>了, 互相之间[会影响]
Yu: (1560) I think if they are too, just like you said, too <close>, it will [invade]
剑: (1561) [会影响] 相互的[那种私人
的空间]。
Jian: (1561) [Invade] each other's
[privacy].
宇: (1562) [绝对的, 绝对的]。
Yu: (1562) [Absolutely, absolutely].
剑: (1563) 但他们交朋友是很简单, 比如说, 他他很<open>的嘛, 非常开放。
Jian: (1563) But it's very easy for them to make friends. For instance, they're very
<open>, very open.
宇: (1564) 但是他他这种这种环境, <open>的环境吗, 有助于它这个社会的运转, 维持和运转。
Yu: (1564) But their environment, <open> environment, is conducive to the operation
and maintenance of society.

(From ChinCorn2008-6)

Clip (4)

- 蔚: (18) 小孩子气起人来真的是好气人, 你就只好紧讲紧讲, 气得死啊。
Wei: (18) Kids can be very annoying. Then you have to nag and become extremely
mad.
剑: (19) [你就换个办法嘛]。
Jian: (19) [You can change your method].
蔚: (20) [你就乱骂, 有时候], 管你_
Wei: (20) [Sometimes you just scold and curse], you don't care
剑: (21) 骂得没用的, 我告诉你, 真的。
Jian: (21) It's no use scolding and cursing. I'm telling you, really.
蔚: (22) 骂了他总出了一点气, 自己感觉 [好受一点]
Wei: (22) At least I can vent anger by scolding and [feel better].
剑: (23) [从你的角度], 你还没教好他, 有什么用?
Jian: (23) [From your perspective], you haven't turned
him better. So what's the point?
蔚: (24) 就是这样子的。
Wei: (24) That's it.
剑: (25) 你的目的是教好他, 而不是说你出完气就拉倒了。
Jian: (25) Your purpose is to make him a better man, not to vent anger.

蔚: (26) 那就没办法了。出完气就算了, 嘎就心里想, 算了, 管他去啥, 随他的便。
没办法就是没办法, 反正我们尽了能力, 就是这样子讲, 到时候不能怪我。

Wei: (26) I have no choice but to vent anger. I think, forget it, leave him alone, I don't have a choice. We've tried our best. That's it. You can't blame me later.

剑: (27) @@ 还没有尽能力, 你还没有换其它办法。[@@@@] =

Jian: (27) @@ You haven't tried your best. You haven't tried other methods.
[@@@@]=

蔚: (28) [@@@@]

Wei: (28) [@@@@]

剑: (29) =那当然咯。我觉得骂没用的, 真的。

Jian: (29) =Of course, I don't think scolding is useful, really.

(From CaiFam2)

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