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Original Paper

The Speech Act of Compliment Response: A Study of English Textbooks Designed for Chinese Primary School Students

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Abstract

Compliments and Compliment Responses (CRs) in English have been a focus of pragmatics research for decades. Drawing on Giao Quynh Tran's (2008) classification of CR strategies, this study examines how compliment responses are presented in the Chinese primary school English textbooks published by People's Education Press (PEP edition), the most popular textbook series for primary school education in China. Results show that compliments and CR strategies occur infrequently and fall within a narrow range of types.

Keywords

compliments and compliment responses, Giao Quynh Tran, primary English textbooks

1. Introduction

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, highlights how language use in interpersonal communication in reality (Vaezi et al., 2014). It studies the language from the stance of users, "especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal, 1985, p. 240). As one of the recent research focuses (Kasper, 1992), the scope and definition of pragmatics remain debatable in the research field (Levinson, 1983a). Pragmatic competence, defined by Thomas (1983), focuses on the capability of using language according to contextual variables (Hu, 2014). In modern China, increased awareness has been raised about the significance and necessity of enhancing EFL learners' pragmatic competence (Tian, 2014). Nevertheless, compared with how to teach pragmatic knowledge, less attention has been paid to how to design and analyze textbooks for developing Chinese EFL

learners' pragmatic competence and awareness (Dong & Chang, 2010).

This essay, consisting of eight parts, attempts to analyze the knowledge of the speech act of Compliment Responses (CRs) in Chinese primary school textbooks of People's Education Press edition (PEP edition), which are the most popular textbooks designed for general primary school education in China. The study is framed with Tran's (2008) classification of CR strategies. After a brief introduction of the national context and background knowledge, previous relevant studies in this research area will be outlined. Followed by the identification of research questions and the description of the data collection method, results, and findings of the study will be presented, together with the further discussion. Based on the discussions of results, implications for teaching and textbook design will be listed. Finally, a succinct conclusion will be drawn.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Speech Act Theory

Speech acts play a significant role in daily communication (Anzhelika & Luis, 2018), as a central focus highlighted by pragmatics (Rintell, 1979). As all utterances, apart from their meanings, perform particular actions with specific forces (Levinson, 1983b), Austin (1962) defined "speech arts as the minimal unit of communication" (Anzhelika & Luis, 2018, p. 40). He (1962) put forward with three types of speech acts when performing an utterance: *locutionary act* (the words that are expressed), *illocutionary act* (the intended action), and *perlocutionary act* (the action brought by the utterance). Searle's theory of speech acts combines the general theory of meaning with other philosophy issues (Levinson, 1983b). He proposed five basic types of action that one performs in speaking: *Assertives* (the statement of the truth of the expressed theme), *directives* (the speaker' attempt to make the addressees do something), *commissives* (the commitment to future actions), *expressives* (the expression of a psychological condition), and declarations (instant changes in the institutional condition of affairs) (Searle, 1969).

2.2 Compliments and Compliment Response

Compliments and Compliment Responses (CRs) in English have been one of the research focuses for decades. Holmes (1988, p. 446) defined a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for 'good' (possession, characteristics, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer". Aceves (1996) assumed that the study of the compliment speech act entailed valuable and meaningful information, especially understanding, and interpreting implicit meanings in different social and cultural meanings, and responding properly when receiving a compliment. As for the function of a compliment, it usually serves as the bridge to establish or enhance the solidarity between the speaker and the addressee, but sometimes it can also be used to reinforce or replace other speech acts, such as judgments, requests, or expressions of approval (Wolfson, 1983). Manes (1983) added that the forms and expressions of

compliments could be a window of a particular culture. However, in some situations, compliments can also be ironic as criticism or the expression of anger. The act of complimenting expects the response from the addressee (Sepideh, 2018). Pomerantz (1978) divided CRs into three main categories: *acceptance* (agreement), *rejection* (disagreement tokens) and *self-praise avoidance* (alleviation of the positive evaluation of a compliment). Concerning the linguistic aspect, Golato (2005) undertook a study to analyze the grammatical structure, discourse and sequential organization of compliments and CRs. Compliment responses can vary significantly across different cultures (Sepideh, 2018), as complicated acts that are omnipresent and multifunctional (Ye, 1995).

2.3 Compliment Response Strategies

In the interpersonal communication, while people give a compliment, they also expect a compliment response in return. Nevertheless, how to produce an appropriate response depends on the particular context (Phoocharoensil, 2012). Either saving the speaker's face by accepting the compliment or avoiding self-praise by refusing the compliment indirectly might be demanding and challenging to respond to compliments (Pomerantz, 1978). Mohajernia & Solimani (2013) made a contrastive study and presented that CRs strategies appear to be different in different cultures by comparing Iranian EFL learners and Australian English speakers. Levinson et al. (1983) claimed that people tend to favor agreeing or accepting invitations, offers or requests, which occurs more frequently than disagreement or rejection in daily communication. They (1983) also noted that the rejection of compliment is more likely to be given with hesitation compared with acceptance. Likewise, Cai (2012) studied the CRs strategies in the Chinese context, pointing out that Chinese college students prefer to accept compliments and gender can affect the use of CRs strategies (males using more implicit strategies than females). Tran (2008) illustrated that CR strategies were not independent or separate, but associated with one another to make up a continuum and the pattern of pragmatic transfer of mother-language CRs concern with the places of strategies on the continuum (for further information, see Appendix 1).

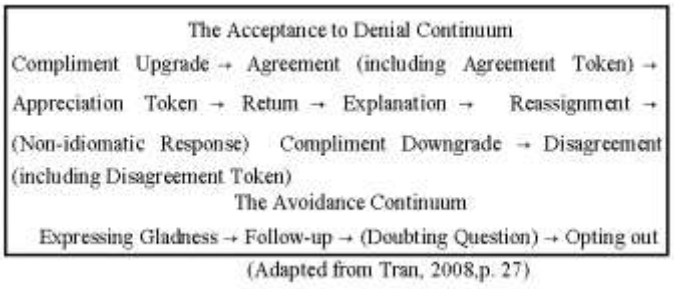


Figure 1. Tran's (2008) Classification of CR Strategies (Framework of this Study)

2.4 Previous Research on the Speech Act of Compliment Response

The study of complimenting behaviour has been one of the most intriguing topics in linguistics (Cai, 2012, p. 543), with many CR studies conducted by scholars and research pioneers in the research history. The empirical research of CRs is mainly in three aspects: pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and psychology. Pomerantz is the research pioneer who initially studied CRs (Cai, 2012; Phoocharoensil, 2012). As mentioned early, she (1978) contended that the addressee has to face a dilemma of choosing to agree with the compliment or avoid self-praise. Based on the study of Pomerantz (1978), Herbert (1986) initiated a taxonomy of CRs to probe into CRs in American English by studying how American college students communicate and interact with others for three years. The research demonstrated that the acceptance in CRs only accounted for 36.35%, which conflicted with the specified norms of CRs. In other words, language performance differs from language prescription because it is complicated and intriguing in terms of specific contexts in reality (Phoocharoensil, 2012). Apart from studying how native speakers respond to compliments (e.g., Tran, 2007; Herbert, 1986), researchers are also passionate about how EFL leaners from different cultural backgrounds use CRs and how CRs differ from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Falasi, 2007; Bu, 2010). Razmjoo et al. (2013) investigated CRs in Persian language and demonstrated that CRs were various concerning different topics, with the acceptance of nationality accounting for the most significant proportion. Liu (1995) studied how Chinese EFL learners undertake CRs and how it has been transferred from Chinese to English pragmatically and socio-linguistically. Han (1992) also carried out a study of the difference in Korean female EFL learners' English communication and Korean interactions. Apart from Asian EFL learners, Falasi (2007) demonstrated how CR strategies transferred from Arabic to English and discovered that Arabic learners even respond to compliments with jokes and prayers.

Languages are different from each other on account of speech acts and linguistic realization. The differences in speech act conventions, however, are one of the primary factors of cross-cultural misinterpretation and misunderstanding (Razmjoo et al., 2013). The study of Herbert and Straight (1989) reveals that American college students use a high frequency of compliment but a low tendency to accept the compliment, while South African university students use a relatively lower frequency of making compliments but use more acceptance strategies. Daikuhara (1986) identified that Japanese people avoid self-praise more often to keep distance, whereas Americans are more oriented to accept the compliment to build solidarity. Similarly, results in Chen (1993) demonstrated that in contrast to the high frequency of rejecting compliments by Chinese learners, American native speakers tend to appreciate compliments, as in Chinese traditional culture, people often humble themselves by lessening the complimentary forces of the praise directed to them (Phoocharoensil, 2012, p. 278). Compared with language performance in reality, Sepideh (2018) conducted a contrastive study based on online social media by comparing American native speakers and native Persian profile users. The results showed that American native speakers tend to use more acceptance than Persian speakers, which mirrors that

social distance and online chatting does not restrict the appearance and difference of cultural values and beliefs of language communities. Similarly, Eslami and Yang (2018) compared the online CRs patterns in American Facebook and Chinese Renren.

To conclude, plenty of studies of CRs have been undertaken in both sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects, including the study of CRs, the contrastive study of CRs used by native speakers and non-native speakers, the study of how CRs in mother language transfer to that in English, and the study of interlanguage pragmatics of how EFL learners use CRs. However, there is not enough research on the analysis of CRs in EFL learners' textbooks.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Objects and Research Questions

Based on Tran's (2008) CR patterns, this study attempts to analyze four textbooks (PEP Edition) targeted at Chinese primary school EFL learners, with a total of 46 units and 535 pages (Table 1). The pages counted below are only about the learning content of units, which excludes the appendixes and notes at the end of textbooks.

This study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

1) What is the frequency of compliments and CRs, and what are the types of speech acts of CRs contained in the Chinese primary school English textbook (PEP edition)?
2) What are the features of speech acts of CRs in the four textbooks for young Chinese EFL learners?

Table 1. Distribution of Teaching Units and Pages of Selected Textbooks

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Teaching units	12	12	12	10	46
Pages	138	138	138	121	535

3.2 Data Collection

CR strategies mentioned in the selected textbooks will be collected. Since the number of examples of compliment responses in textbooks are relatively small, all of them will be collected for data analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is employed. Dialogues are always the aim of the speech act of CRs, as speech acts can be well presented through conversations (Traum, 1999). To answer the first research question, the frequency of CR strategies in dialogues will be measured quantitatively based on Tran's (2008) framework. Thematic analysis refers to the process of encoding qualitative information (Boyatzis, 2007). To address the second research question, a qualitative analysis will be adopted by identifying the features of CR strategies in the textbooks. After the analysis, several themes will be drawn upon: the analysis of contexts, the theme-based distribution of

compliments and CRs, an increased complexity of conversation and an increased difficulty in the CR strategy.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 RQ1: What is the frequency of compliments and CRs, and what are the types of speech acts of CRs contained in the Chinese primary school English textbook?

Quantitative analysis will be conducted in this session. The data in Table 2 demonstrates that the occurrence of compliments in the textbook for grade 5 accounts for the largest proportion (5.80%), while those in the textbook for grade 3 take up the lowest proportion (0.72%), only featuring on one page. Surprisingly, the frequency of compliments in Chinese primary school textbooks, altogether, is quite low, with just 2.43% percentage involving the speech acts of compliment. There is only one page of speech acts of compliments in the textbook for grade 3, three pages in the textbook for grade 4, eight pages in the textbook for grade 5, and one page in the textbook for grade 6, suggesting no gradual increase in the number of pages for speech acts of compliments from grade 3 to grade 6.

Table 2. Frequency of Compliments in these Four Textbooks

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total
Pages cover compliments	1	3	8	1	13
Pages	138	138	138	121	535
Percentage	0.72%	2.17%	5.80%	0.83%	2.43%

Through the Table 3, half of the compliments presented in the textbooks are not aligned with direct compliment responses. Apart from that, appreciation token is most frequently used, accounting for 25% of total pages. The other frequently used strategy is the explanation, with a relatively high proportion of 12.5%. Strategies of agreement (including agreement token) and reassignment have an equal occurrence, taking up only 6.25%. However, strategies of compliment upgrade, return, non-idiomatic response, compliment downgrade, disagreement (including disagreement token), expressing gladness, follow-up question, doubting question, and opting out cannot be found in the four textbooks.

According to Tran's (2008) classification of CRs, there are nine types in the acceptance to denial continuum and four types in the avoidance continuum. However, there are only four types of strategies in these examined textbooks. In addition, there is one type of CRs strategy in the textbook for grade 3, two types in the textbooks for grade 4 and grade 5, respectively, but strangely no any CR strategy is mentioned in the textbook for grade 6, which means that the increased variety of CR strategies is not apparent. Furthermore, most types of CRs strategies appear to agree with or accept the compliment,

while almost no types of CRs strategies refer to rejection or disagreement, which implies that the strategies presented in the textbook are insufficient and fail to cover all the types that are proposed to exist.

Table 3. Frequency and Types of CRs in these Four Textbooks

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total (16 times)	Percentage
No Direct Reply	1	3	3	1	8	50%
Compliment Upgrade					0	0
Agreement (including Agreement Token)			1		1	6.25%
Appreciation Token	1	3			4	25%
Return					0	0
Non-idiomatic Response					0	0
Explanation		2			2	12.5%
Reassignment			1		1	6.25%
Compliment Downgrade					0	0
Disagreement (including Disagreement Token)					0	0
Expressing Gladness					0	0
Follow-up Question					0	0
(Doubting) Question					0	0
Opting Out					0	0
(Total Times of occurrence)	2	8	5	1	16	
Types of CRs strategies	1	2	2	0	5	

4.2 RQ 2: What are the features of speech acts of CRs in these four textbooks for young Chinese EFL learners?

Qualitative analysis will be carried out to address the second research question, with a description of the interpreting what learners are supposed to learn in primary school through the textbooks.

1) The Analysis of Context

The dialogues presented in the textbooks have already notified the relationship between different speakers, usually with equal social status, same ages, such as schoolmates, friends or family members, teacher-student, as typical scenes in daily life.

E.g. (Teacher and student, from Grade 5, Unit 7)

---Amy: Hello, Miss White. Look at my picture.

---Miss White: Good job! I like the trees. The colours are very pretty.

---Amy: Yes. I like autum best. The weather is good and the colours are beautiful.

E.g. (Schoolmates, teacher-student, from Grade 5, Unit 1)

Rabbit scores then goals.

---Rabbit: Then to three! We win!

---Zoom: You're great!

---Dog: Our new PE teacher is a great football player, too.

---Rabbit: I am your new PE teacher!

The above examples show that in textbooks, many conversations take place with teachers giving compliments to students or students giving compliments to fellows. To make it understandable and fun, students in the textbooks are often named with simple names, and animals can also talk, which caters to young leaners' interest and inspires their learning passion.

E.g. (Shopkeeper and buyer, from Grade 5, Unit 7)

---Shopkeeper: Why are you shopping today?

---Sarah: My mum worker last night. So I'm shopping today.

---Shopkeeper: Good girl! So what do you do on the weekend?

E.g. (Family members, from Grade 6, Unit 8)

---Mike: What did you do?

---Grandpa: Well, I stayed at home with your grandma. We drank tea in the afternoon and watched TV.

---Mike: I watched TV, too. I watched some children's shows on TV.

---Grandpa: That's nice. Did you do anything else?

---Mike: Yes, I cleaned my room and washed my clothes.

---Grandpa: You are a good boy!

The above examples present typical examples and practical interaction in daily life, such as dialogues between friends and family members.

2) The Theme-Based Distribution of Compliments and the CRs

To probe into the distribution of units that contain compliments and CRs, the contents and themes of the 46 units, altogether, are studied by analyzing some examples extracted from the textbooks. It reveals that the topic of the lesson can affect the distribution of the frequency of compliments and the CRs.

E.g. (Theme: My family, from Grade 3, Unit 8)

---Zip: Who's that woman?

---Zoom: She's my mother.

---Zip: She's beautiful.

---Zoom: Thank you. My mom is an actress.

E.g. (Theme: Work quietly. From Grade 5, Unit 12)

B is making a performance of Kung fu.

---A: Are you from China?

---B: Yes, I am.

---A: You're so cool. Can you teach me?

---B: Sure

E.g. (Theme: Work quietly. From Grade 5, Unit 12)

---A: Oh hello, what are you doing?

---B: I's drawing a picture. Have a look.

---A: It's lovely!

E.g. (Theme: My family, from Grade 4, Unit 7)

---A: Welcome to our school. This way please.

---B: How beautiful!

Viewing from all the units (see Appendix 2), the textbook for grade 3, which contains the least occurrences of CRs, is mainly themed on necessary communication (e.g., "Happy birthday!") to teach basic knowledge of English language (e.g., "Colours" and "How many?"). The textbook for grade 4, however, mainly focuses on items (e.g., "My schoolbag' and "My classroom') and relationships among people (e.g., "My family' and "My friends"), highlighting learners' ability to describe things or stating a fact in reality. Therefore, the coverage of CRs can be slightly increased but it remains at a relatively low level. In marked contrast, the textbook for grade 5 refers to daily life communication (e.g., "Work quietly" and "My day"), individual opinions (e.g., "My favorite season"), and personal feelings (e.g., "What would you like?"). By talking deeply and getting to know people more, offering compliments can occur more, deriving from feelings of surprise, admiration, or attraction. Nevertheless, the textbook for grade 6, strangely, hardly mentions the CRs, as it tends to be information-oriented (e.g., "How can I get there?" and "What does he do?") and cross-cultural communication-oriented (e.g., "I have a pen pal".) to help sixth-grade students prepare for secondary school education.

3) An Increased Complexity of Conversations and an Increased Difficulty in the CR strategy

A noticeable feature of the textbooks is the increased complexity of dialogues that covers compliments and CRs and a slight increase of difficulty in CR strategies for students at different grades. In general, the conversation gets more complex, more interactive and more extended, with increased types of CR strategies.

E.g. (From Grade 4, Unit 7)

---A: Welcome to our school. This way please.

---B: How beautiful!

E.g. (From Grade 4, Unit 8)

---A: This is our living room.

---B: Wow! It's beautiful!

---A: Come and meet my family. They are in the kitchen.

E.g. (From Grade 4, Unit 8)

---Zoom: How do I look?

---Zoom's mother: You look like Zip.

---Zoom's father: Wow, you'll be a star!

The examples above are extracted from the textbooks for grade 3 and grade 4. The common point is that they are all straightforward conversations with simple vocabulary. It is worthy of mentioning that in these dialogues, the addressee does not directly give CRs, as either the textbooks fail to present, or the addressee changes the subject without giving any response to the compliments ("Come and meet my family. They are in the kitchen").

E.g. (From Grade 5, Unit 11)

---Squirrel: Wow! What a beautiful painting! Is it yours?

---Bear: No, it's his.

E.g. (From Grade 5, Unit 5)

---A: There so many pictures!

---B: My father can draw it very well.

---C: What a nice photo!

---B: That's my grandma's garden. There are many pretty flowers in it.

E.g. (From Grade 5, Unit 5)

---Sarah: You room is really nice!

---Zhang Peng: Thanks.

---Mike: There is a big bed.

---Zhang Peng: Yes. I like my bed.

---Mike: There is a nice photo, too.

---Sarah: Wow! You look cool!

---Zhang Peng: Thank you. Hey my computer is here on the desk. Let's play!

In contrast, these examples contain relatively longer and more complicate dialogues with more diversified CR strategies. Examples of appreciation token ("Thanks" and "Thank you"), reassignment ("No. It's his."), and explanation ("That's my grandma's garden. There are many flowers in it.") are presented. However, almost no CR strategy has been covered in textbooks for grade 6.

5. Discussion

The findings show that most of the CR strategies in these four textbooks are the acceptance, with almost no examples for rejection CR strategies, which conflicts with Chen's (1993) study of language performance mentioned in the forepart, where statistics expose that Chinese people reject compliments

more than accept compliments in the light of modesty in Chinese traditional virtues. According to the study of Levinson et al. (1983) and Daikuhara (1986), people in western countries tend to accept compliments more. So perhaps the textbooks do not fully reflect Chinese CR strategies, but attempt to present the authentic scene from the targeted culture to increase learners' cross-cultural awareness and pragmatic competence.

It is also noticeable that dialogues in the textbooks show the change from small talks to more prolonged and more in-depth conversations to assist with the advancement of learners' language knowledge and skills. However, only four types of CR strategies are covered according to Tran's (2008) classification. The lack of variety might impede learners in stimulating functional networks in their minds and hinder their development of pragmatic competence (Soozandehfar, 2011). The limited sorts of CR strategies fail to provide students with a full range of options about the English language. Though considering the age and cognition of young learners, overproduction and cramming knowledge are also what textbook designers try to avoid. However, more proper types of CR strategies and an increasing frequency are needed when designing textbooks.

The results also show that the contexts and roles of speakers are restricted to family members, schoolmates, teacher-students, and friends, which is meaningful to provide explicit information about the relationship of speakers in daily life, such as the degree of closeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Nevertheless, we should also note that more conversations that take place between strangers, such as a shopkeeper and customers, should be included to foster students' ability to cooperate and negotiate with others, because the capability of using language and the cultivation of pragmatic competence are based on contextual variables (Tian, 2014).

Hu (2002) presents three features of textbooks: "the adoption of a theme-based principle of organisation, the progressive recycling of language knowledge and skills" and four essential dimensions for communicative competence ("cognitive skills, linguistic knowledge, personal experiences, and interpersonal communication strategies"). The analyzed textbooks in this study, aimed to develop students' communicative capacity, consist of several units that cover different aspects of themes. The themes are diverse and practical to present different types of CR strategies, entailing a strong cultural element. The findings of the present study are in line with the study of Razmjoo et al. (2013), in which the occurrence of types of CR strategies varies from different topics and themes. However, the textbooks seem to lack the recycling and input of CR strategies, as the knowledge and difficulty of speech acts have not aligned with students' cognitive development and learning capacity, especially sixth-year students who could accept more input on how to offer compliments and how to apply CR strategies.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings and the discussion of the research, some implications are suggested for compilers, English teachers, and English learners.

6.1 For Compilers

In the national context, English textbooks, as the primary source of English input, are essential to the quality of English-Language Teaching (ELT) (Hu, 2002). Therefore, it is suggested to design textbooks with up-to-date knowledge and learning principles, where knowledge and attention to the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing are equivalent (Phoocharoensil, 2012). Moreover, compared with Tran's (2008) classification of CR strategies, the textbooks fail to cover the full range of CR strategies, and the contexts of these conversations are insufficient, which may result in learners' incompetence in appropriately applying the strategies into other conditions. Thus, compilers should offer diversified and authentic contexts with different social, cultural, and pragmatic demands to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication competence. Finally, considering that students have different English proficiencies, the compiler needs to increase the difficulty and complexity in aspects of frequency, variety and content when designing textbooks.

6.2 For Teachers

Since Chinese learners tend to rely on acquiring language skills through textbooks (Leung & Andrews, 2012; McGrath, 2006), and the frequency of CR strategies is low in the examined textbooks, additional teaching materials should be provided both in classroom teaching and in after-class self-study to expand the knowledge. Extract of some English novels or magazines at an appropriate level for learning can be selected as a supplement and assistance for language teaching. Moreover, materials from authentic media, such as English movies or downloaded video clips, are highly advocated to familiarize students with natural and native English, and boost their pragmatic awareness (Phoocharoensil, 2012).

Another point is that language teachers themselves should also receive training and keep learning about how to use new textbooks effectively and how to adopt appropriate teaching methods. Otherwise, new textbooks might be taught in old approaches because of insufficient training and knowledge (Kam & Lai, 2006). In addition, attending teacher education programmes is suggested as it enriches pragmatic knowledge and enhances teaching skills. Finally, considering that the variety of CR strategies is diverse, which might be hard for primary school students to learn and distinguish their differences, teachers should provide more scaffolding and clearer instructions with the combination of explicit and implicit teaching to facilitate students' motivation, cognition, and acquisition.

6.3 For Learners

Sankoff et al. (1997) claim that people, who have been immersing themselves in the second language in a context of everyday communication with native speakers, are more likely to express themselves confidently and fluently and make cohesive discourse. Though interacting with native speakers is

somehow hard to achieve in China (Wu, 2009), learners should seize possible opportunities to increase their exposure to the second language, such as finding language partners online or making international friends.

In addition, students are expected to make full use of textbooks and consolidate basic pragmatic knowledge, which means "students are encouraged to react to, reflect on, and make creative use of the information provided by the textbook" (Hu, 2002). Furthermore, since timely and corrective feedback from teachers is useful to monitor students' output (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), and promote their future production (Chen, 2009), students should read the feedback carefully, realize noticeable mistakes they have made, and attempt to avoid making the same mistake again.

7. Limitations

Although this paper attempts to collect data based on Tran's (2008) framework, as precisely as possible, the existing subjectivity and possible research biases might affect the methods of pages measuring and the classification of CRs. Another limitation is that this research only analyzes English textbooks designed for young Chinese EFL learners, without the comparison with textbooks used by students in other countries, mainly English-speaking countries. Future research is suggested to focus on a comparison of textbooks, as the use of the speech act of CRs can be different in different cultures and contexts. Finally, since examples of CRs are not adequate, the results might not be general enough to be applied to the evaluation of other Chinese primary school textbooks.

8. Conclusion

The present study examines Chinese primary school textbooks (PEP edition) with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The results suggest that the frequency of compliments and CR strategies are low and the types of CR strategies are narrow. Despite the limitations identified above, this study might contribute to the design and modification of the distribution and features of CR strategies in textbooks. The strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks noted in this essay can assist primary school teachers to teach effectively, and that facilitates students' development of pragmatic awareness and competence.

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Appendix

A. Tran's (2008) definition and demonstration of each strategy of CRs

The Acceptance to Denial Continuum	
Compliment Upgrade	The addressee agrees with the speaker and increases the degree of complimentary force. e.g., A: Nice coat! B: Thanks. Brand new.
Agreement (including Agreement Token)	The addressee agrees with the compliment assertation and responds back by saying something that is fitted to the compliment. e.g., A: You look so good today. B: Yeah, that's correct. (Agreement token: The addressee might agree with the praise by saying "Yes" or "Yeah." It could also be possible by

	providing "Yes, I think so.") e.g., A: Your coat is very fashionable. B: Yeah.
Appreciation Token	The addressee realizes the previous utterance from other people and expresses the appreciation. e.g., A: What a lovely skirt! B: Thank you.
Return	The addressee reciprocates the compliment by paying back the compliment to the speaker. e.g., A: You look so beautiful today. B: Oh, so are you.
Non-idiomatic Response	The addressee indicates or tends to indicate express the disagreement, such as that's ok or that's alright. e.g., A: I like your coat. B: Oh that's ok. (Intended meaning: It looks common. Nothing special.)
Explanation	The addressee impersonalizes the compliment assertation by providing further information, which might not be relevant to the object or topic of the compliment. e.g., A: I like your haircut. It looks well. B: Thanks. My mom did this for me this morning. She is good at making. beautiful haircut.
Reassignment	The addressee redirects the compliment offered by the speaker to another person or something else. e.g., A: You dissertation is so good. B: Oh, my supervisor helped me a lot.
Compliment	The compliment understates the

Downgrade	importance or quality of complementation. e.g., A: You look great in your dress. B: oh, it looks so but actually it is not a new dress.
Disagreement (including Disagreement Token)	The addressee directly disagrees with the compliment and thinks it is overdone. e.g., A: You are so intelligent! B: No I don't think so.
The Avoidance Continuum	
Expressing Gladness	The addressee does not address the compliment and show the expression of avoidance, but shows up the gladness that the speaker likes the object, such as "Well, great." e.g., A: I have read your article. It is really well-structured! B: oh, that's good. Thanks.
Follow-up Question	The addresses responds to the compliment with questions that make the compliment assertation more detailed. It might be aimed to fish more compliments or get specific information about the objection of compliments. e.g., A: I have read your article. I really like it. B: Thanks. What do you find interesting about the article?
(Doubting) Question	The addressee responds to the compliment by asking a question that relates to the request for repetition or further information of the compliment assertation. e.g., A: I have read your article. I really like it. B: Oh, really?

Opting Out	The addressee responses to the compliment or praise with mere laughter. e.g., A: You have such a nice car! I hope I could get one after I graduate. B: Heh heh.

B. The topics and contents of all the units in the four textbooks that this study analysed

Grade 3	
Unit 1	Hello!
Unit 2	Colours!
Unit 3	Look at me!
Unit 4	We love animals
Unit 5	Let’s eat!
Unit 6	Happy birthday!
Unit 7	Welcome back to school!
Unit 8	My family
Unit 9	At the zoo
Unit 10	Where is my car
Unit 11	Do you like pears?
Unit 12	How many?
Grade 4	
Unit 1	My classroom
Unit 2	My schoolbag
Unit 3	My friends
Unit 4	My home
Unit 5	Dinner’s ready
Unit 6	Meet my family!
Unit 7	My school
Unit 8	What time is it?
Unit 9	Weather
Unit 10	At the farm
Unit 11	My clothes
Unit 12	Shopping
Grade 5	
Unit 1	What’s he like?

Unit 2	My week
Unit 3	What would you like?
Unit 4	What can you do?
Unit 5	There is a big bed
Unit 6	In a natural park
Unit 7	My day
Unit 8	My favorite season
Unit 9	My school calendar
Unit 10	When is Easter
Unit 11	Whose dog is it?
Unit 12	Work quietly!
Grade 6	
Unit 1	How can I get there?
Unit 2	Ways to go to school
Unit 3	My weekend plan
Unit 4	I have a pen pal
Unit 5	What does he do?
Unit 6	How do you feel?
Unit 7	How tall are you?
Unit 8	Last weekend
Unit 9	Where did you go?
Unit 10	Then and now