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AN EXPLORATORY CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT

Kenneth R. Rose
City University of Hong Kong

This paper reports the results of an exploratory cross-sectional study of pragmatic development among three groups of primary school students in Hong Kong who completed a cartoon oral production task (COPT) designed to elicit requests, apologies, and compliment responses. The first two of these speech acts are among the most well represented in the pragmatics literature and are also included in the Hong Kong English language syllabus for primary schools. The latter has also been studied extensively but is not part of the syllabus. Data was collected in Cantonese using the same instrument. Although a number of developmental patterns are revealed—particularly in choice of request strategy, frequency of supportive moves, and use of adjuncts with apologies and compliment responses—there is little evidence of sensitivity to situational variation or pragmatic transfer from Cantonese. This study adds to the small, but growing, body of research on pragmatic development in a second language.

Although studies on pragmatic development in a second language were first carried out more than 15 years ago, the relative shortage of developmental pragmatics research (as opposed to pragmatic performance research, which is abundant) has led Kasper and Schmidt (1996) to strengthen the connections between SLA and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) by profiling the latter as an

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Address correspondence to Kenneth R. Rose, Department of English, City University of Hong Kong, Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, China; e-mail: ken.rose@cityu.edu.hk.

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area of inquiry in SLA. Theirs is a welcome and much needed move to garner more attention for this underrepresented area and to generate more research efforts to begin to compensate for its relative neglect. This paper is an attempt to fill this gap by reporting the results of an exploratory cross-sectional study on the development of requests, apologies, and compliment responses in English among three groups of Cantonese-speaking primary school students in Hong Kong, ages 7, 9, and 11. The study is intended as an initial foray into interlanguage (IL) pragmatic development in Hong Kong, with the eventual aim of extending the cross-sectional range by an additional 6 years (adding ages 13, 15, and 17) in order ultimately to isolate a 2-year period that appears particularly fruitful for a 2-year longitudinal study. The current study explores developmental patterns and situational variation for the three speech acts and also, given the collection of Cantonese baseline data, explores the possibility of pragmatic transfer from Cantonese. Before discussing the study, however, an overview of existing research on IL pragmatic development is offered, which points to the need for continued attention to this vital area.

RESEARCH ON INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT

The research literature on ILP now boasts a fairly large number of pragmatic performance studies. Such studies have proven useful in exploring both the pragmalinguistic (Færch & Kasper, 1989; House, 1989) and sociopragmatic (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993) aspects of ILs and have also been fruitful in the study of pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996). However, the same cannot be said of studies on IL pragmatic development (Kasper & Rose, 1999; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). This is in marked contrast to first language (L1) developmental pragmatics, which has been the focus of much research in the last few decades and now represents a substantial literature. For example, a number of the papers in the two volumes edited by Ochs and Schieffelin (1979, 1983) are based on the observation of children over the course of one year or more, with the specific intent of making claims concerning the development of pragmatic (or conversational) competence. There is a volume edited by Schiefelbusch and Pickar (1984) on the acquisition of communicative competence that contains work by de Villiers (1984) on the development of negatives and questions, and by Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984) on the structure of children's requests, and a second volume edited by Schiefelbusch (1986) again contains work on the acquisition of pragmatic competence, such as the paper by Ervin-Tripp and Gordon (1986) on the development of requests. Another collection, edited by Conti-Ramsden and Snow (1990), contains a number of papers on the development of L1 pragmatics, including Becker's (1990) treatment of processes in the acquisition of pragmatic competence. There is the work of Clancy (1986) on the acquisition of communicative style in Japanese and Slosberg Andersen's (1990) cross-sectional study of the sociolinguistic skills of children, much of which is relevant for pragmatics (such as the analysis of children's requests), as well as

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work on the acquisition of politeness in an L1 (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990; Kwarciak, 1993; Snow, Perlman, Berko-Gleason, & Hooshyar, 1990). This represents only a sampling of a rich literature on L1 pragmatic development that has isolated, among other things, stages in L1 pragmatic development akin to other aspects of L1 development (for review, see Ninio & Snow, 1996).

As noted above, although there have been many studies on IL pragmatic performance, the literature on IL pragmatic development lags far behind the L1 literature. Unlike performance research, studying pragmatic development requires either longitudinal research with a given group of participants over an extended period of time, or cross-sectional studies with participants at various stages of development. Ideally, ILP research should routinely incorporate both. Unfortunately, relatively few longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of IL pragmatic development have been carried out, which is no doubt largely responsible for Schmidt's (1993, p. 21) observation that "there has been little discussion of how pragmatic abilities are acquired in a second language" (see also Kasper & Rose, 1999; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). I will now briefly discuss some of the existing studies of IL pragmatic development.

Schmidt's (1983) 3-year longitudinal study of the acquisition of English by Wes, a Japanese artist who relocated to Hawai'i as an adult, is among the earliest studies of pragmatic development in a second language. Schmidt's data on Wes's early directives indicated reliance on a limited range of unanalyzed request formulas, frequent use of requestive markers such as *please*, and an apparent transfer of Japanese sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic norms. At the end of the 3-year observation period, some of the request formulas had been analyzed and were used productively by Wes and his use of imperatives had increased. Schmidt also noted the potential for individual idiosyncrasies in language use, with Wes's rather unexpected response to a friend's sneeze being *Stop it! This is your habit?* Although Schmidt noted that Wes had developed impressive conversational management skills, owing to a lack of data on Wes's early discourse-level abilities, nothing can be said about their development. In another study, Schmidt and Frota (1986) followed Schmidt's acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese during a 5-month stay in Brazil, relying on Schmidt's own language learning journal as well as tape recordings of four unstructured conversations in Portuguese between the two co-authors, recorded at approximately 1-month intervals. The focus of the study was the various effects of instruction, interaction, and correction in SLA (and ultimately an argument for noticing), with particular emphasis on the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. There is, however, some discussion of the development of Schmidt's conversational abilities, which evidenced less use of repetition over time and a failure to acquire the pragmalinguistic abilities to answer Portuguese questions in the affirmative, due partly to the inappropriateness of a simple *yes* (i.e., *sim*) and the fact that affirmative responses often require correct marking of verbs for person and number. A more recent case study was carried out by Siegal (1994, 1996), who followed the pragmatic development over an 18-month period of four "white western upper-middle-class women be-

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tween the ages of 21 and 45 of intermediate to advanced Japanese language proficiency studying Japanese" (1996, p. 359) in Japan. Siegal drew on a wide range of data, including language learning journals, learner interviews, and audio-taped interactions. Perhaps the most significant finding of her study derives from its ethnographic nature—as these white women gained the necessary proficiency in Japanese to understand and potentially make use of the stereotypical high-pitched, overly deferent Japanese female style, they made conscious choices to resist assuming what was to them a socially unacceptable self image. Siegal's extensive data base and thick description provide important insights into the role of learner subjectivity in pragmatic development, and more such work (i.e., genuine ethnographic research) needs to be carried out to further our understanding of this dimension of L2 development.

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of the development of suggestions and rejections by 16 adult nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English in academic advising sessions. Over time, their participants more closely approximated native speaker (NS) norms for appropriate speech act choice but not for appropriate form, thus favoring sociopragmatics over pragmalinguistics. Ellis's (1992) 2-year study of the requests of two beginning learners of English (aged 10 and 11) in a classroom setting also dealt with pragmatic development. Although he concluded with a rather pessimistic assessment of the language classroom as an environment for the development of pragmatic competence, Ellis's study did produce some interesting findings. For example, over time his participants' use of direct requests decreased, whereas conventionally indirect requests increased, a pattern also found in L1 pragmatic development. Sawyer's (1991) 1-year study of the acquisition of the Japanese affective particle *ne* by 11 adult learners of Japanese revealed slow development in the use of *ne*, but it also showed a general progression from use of *ne* in unanalyzed chunks to its use in other linguistic contexts. Bouton's (1988, 1989, 1992, 1994) work on NNSs' ability to interpret implicature in English found that over a 4½-year period, 30 NNS participants from his earlier study (of an original 436 participants) had significantly higher scores on a test for interpreting implicature. Although this shows that learners can develop the ability to interpret implicature, it does not—nor did it intend to—address the process of that development.

Several studies on the effects of instruction have been carried out and, although the emphasis of such research tends to be on instructional outcomes, they often collect data on pragmatic development over a period of time and thus qualify as longitudinal. Among these is Billmyer's (1990) study of the effects of instruction on compliments and compliment responses, which followed the development of 18 Japanese adult learners of English over a 12-week period. Results indicated that, although the instructed group exhibited more nativelike use of the target speech acts, the uninstructed group also appeared to have made significant gains from exposure alone. Wildner-Bassett (1994) examined the use of conversational routines by 19 American learners of German as a foreign language, who received instruction over the course of

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one academic year. She found that even beginning students of German were capable of learning some conversational routines, and so argued that such routines should be taught from the beginning of German instruction. House (1996) studied the differential effects of explicit and implicit instruction aimed at developing conversational fluency (i.e., use of gambits, discourse strategies, and speech acts) with a total of 32 very advanced learners of English at a German university. The instruction took place over a 14-week period, and data were collected in the form of pre- and post-instruction interviews, audio-taped conversations, and three pragmatic tests done as role plays at equal intervals throughout the program. Results indicated that, although there are clear limitations to the learning of pragmatics in a foreign (as opposed to second) language setting, both groups benefited from instruction. The study also indicated that, although metapragmatic information provided via explicit instruction is no guarantee of pragmatic development, it appears that such information is essential to avoid negative pragmatic transfer. A similar argument has been advanced for the acquisition of syntax (see, e.g., White, 1987).

Moving to cross-sectional ILP research, one finds once again a small, but growing, number of studies. In the introduction to their own longitudinal study of pragmatic development, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993, p. 280) presented a list of studies that they consider to be cross-sectional, as well as several that have "sampled nonnative speakers at a single level of proficiency." This is an important distinction to keep in mind, which is no doubt the reason why Cook (1993, p. 34) found it necessary to introduce a new term for the latter type of study. As he noted:

> [A] cross-sectional study . . . looks at different learners at different moments in time and establishes development by comparing these successive states in different people. . . . [Other studies] do not compare groups of learners at different cross-sectional levels to establish a series of developmental language states, but either lump all the learners together in one group, or separate them by first language or criteria other than chronological development. . . . A further term, *single-moment* studies, needs to be coined to distinguish this approach from the true cross-sectional design. [emphasis in original]

Cook also pointed out that many of the L2 morpheme studies were not truly cross-sectional and thus were unable to provide developmental information, as was attempted by equating accuracy orders with acquisition orders.

In terms of ILP research, it appears that Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1993) list of cross-sectional studies blurred the distinction between cross-sectional and single-moment research because most of the studies they considered to be cross-sectional are in fact single-moment—they did not collect and compare data from learners at various levels of proficiency, but instead compared NNSs to NSs. For example, Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared written refusals of 20 NSs of Japanese, 20 NSs of English, and 20

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Japanese NNSs of English. Although there was a considerable range of length of stay in the United States for the NNS group, it was treated throughout as one group, making this a single-moment study. Blum-Kulka (1982) compared written requests of 32 NSs of Hebrew, 10 NSs of English, and 44 NNSs of Hebrew. Although she noted that her NNSs of Hebrew were intermediate and advanced, for the analysis, Blum-Kulka treated them as one group, also making this a single-moment study. Færch and Kasper (1989) compared written requests of 163 NSs of Danish, 200 NSs of German, 100 NSs of British English, 200 Danish NNSs of German, and 200 Danish NNSs of English. House and Kasper (1987) conducted analyses using this set of data but substituted 200 German NNSs of English for the Danish NNSs of German. Kasper (1989) also used this data set but included the Danish NNSs of German. Thus all three are single-moment studies. Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) compared written complaints of 35 NSs and 35 NNSs of Hebrew. Omar (1992) compared naturally occurring conversational openings of NSs of Kiswahili with role play and naturally occurring data (from office and telephone conversations) collected from five American learners of Kiswahili, and Zuengler (1989) compared the relative participation in conversations of 27 NSs and 27 NNSs of English and found that NSs did not automatically dominate conversations, but rather that conversational involvement was a function of topic or discourse domain. Although these (and other) single-moment studies are no doubt valuable in addressing issues such as pragmatic transfer, they are not cross-sectional and therefore cannot provide information concerning pragmatic development.

Several of the studies listed by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) were in fact cross-sectional, but unfortunately not all provide insight on pragmatic development. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) compared utterance length in written requests using two sets of data, the first from 172 NSs and 250 NNSs of Hebrew, and the second from 28 NSs of English and 142 American NNSs of Hebrew. Although they did mention briefly external modification differences by proficiency level for the American learners of Hebrew, as well as some effect for length of stay, their analysis was concerned mainly with pragmatic failure and, for the most part, compared NSs and NNSs without regard to development. Omar (1991) compared the (mainly) elicited greetings of 16 beginning and 16 intermediate-advanced NNSs of Kiswahili and found little difference between the two groups, with both failing to conform to the more elaborate (than English) Kiswahili greeting routine. Though Omar's results most likely reveal pragmatic influence from English to Kiswahili, her study tells us nothing about development. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) compared the written refusals of 20 NSs of Japanese, 20 NSs of English, and 40 Japanese NNSs of English (20 each in Japan and the United States). The NNS groups were further divided into low- and high-proficiency groups. Takahashi and Beebe pointed out that pragmatic transfer from Japanese to English was found in both contexts (ESL and EFL) and at both proficiency levels, and that more pragmatic transfer was found in the EFL group; however, their results were mixed when comparing transfer at different levels of proficiency. It seems that

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their EFL group did not actually differ in proficiency (as they had assumed it would), but the ESL group did. Nevertheless, Takahashi and Beebe did not discuss pragmatic development per se but referred only to slight differences in amount of pragmatic transfer. In addition to the studies cited by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), Robinson's (1991) refusal study involved 12 female Japanese learners of English at the University of Hawai'i, divided into two groups: intermediate (TOEFL scores ranging from 513 to 530) and advanced (TOEFL from 587 to 650). Robinson's focus was largely methodological (and offers a fine example of the use of verbal report in pragmatics research) and, although she noted qualitative (but not quantitative) differences for the two groups in the data produced through use of verbal report, she had little to say about pragmatic development. All of these studies, then, employed a cross-sectional design but ultimately did not yield significant information regarding IL pragmatic development.

There are, however, a number of cross-sectional studies that have proven fruitful in illuminating certain aspects of IL pragmatic development. Scarcella (1979) used three role-play situations to investigate the politeness strategies of 10 beginning and 10 advanced NNSs of English, comparing them to data collected from 6 NSs of English. She found (among other things) that her participants appeared to acquire politeness forms before acquiring the rules for their appropriate use, thereby—unlike the participants in the Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) study—putting pragmalinguistics before sociopragmatics. Trosborg (1987) used role plays to compare the apologies of NSs of English, NSs of Danish, and three levels of Danish NNSs of English: intermediate, lower-advanced, and higher-advanced (the number of participants was not provided). Although Trosborg displayed the results for each level of proficiency separately and occasionally noted differences across groups, her focus was more on comparing all NNSs with NSs. However, she did find that use of modality markers (e.g., downtoners, hedges, intensifiers) increased with proficiency across NNS groups to a level closer to that of NSs. Because use of modality markers for NSs of Danish was more than double that of NSs of English, these results seem to indicate a clear developmental pattern (as opposed to pragmatic transfer). In another role-play study, Trosborg (1995) examined the requests, complaints, and apologies of three groups of Danish learners of English: secondary school grade 9, high school and commercial school, and university students (again no subject numbers were provided). No proficiency tests were administered, but it was assumed that the three educational levels also represented proficiency levels. Among the findings were a closer approximation of nativelike request strategies with increased proficiency, which included higher frequencies of adjuncts to main strategies (e.g., upgraders, downgraders, supportive moves). Only slight differences were obtained across groups for main apology and complaint strategies, with a higher incidence of opting out among the lower proficiency groups.

Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, and Ross (1996) conducted a questionnaire study of apologies by intermediate and advanced Japanese learners of English

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at the University of Hawai'i, which had as its focus pragmatic transfer—specifically the testing of Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) hypothesis that pragmatic transfer correlates positively with language proficiency due to more proficient learners' having developed the capacity to transfer complex conventions of means and form. Having also collected data from NSs of English and Japanese, Maeshiba et al. were in a position to determine whether this was the case for their participants, and they found that it was not. Although there was far more similarity across all groups than was expected (particularly in the NS groups' assessments of the questionnaire scenarios), they found that advanced learners did not evidence higher frequencies of negative pragmatic transfer in their apology strategies. In another study focusing on pragmatic transfer and the effects of proficiency, Takahashi (1996) developed a pragmatic transferability scale based on L1 contextual appropriateness and L1-L2 equivalence and tested this scale by examining the requests of a total of 142 low- and high-proficiency male Japanese university students who had studied English for 7–10 years. She found only minimal proficiency effects on learners' transferability perceptions, with low-proficiency learners rating more highly only one of five request strategies. That is, both groups relied equally on L1 request conventions, which supports neither of the positions on a possible correlation between language proficiency and pragmatic transfer. Takahashi suggested that contextual familiarity, rather than proficiency, may be the determining factor in pragmatic transfer. Hill (1997) also studied the requests of a total of 60 university-level Japanese learners of English, representing three levels of proficiency. He found a heavy reliance on direct requests for the low-proficiency group, with the advanced group employing direct requests far less frequently, although the opposite pattern was found for conventionally indirect requests, which indicates a clear developmental trend for request strategy. Interestingly, though, Hill also found that advanced learners evidenced higher frequencies of negative transfer for particular conventionally indirect strategies (such as willingness), which would seem to support (at least in part) Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) hypothesis.

In sum, then, the current state of our knowledge of IL pragmatic development is far from complete. We may have moved beyond the point where we were more than 15 years ago, when Schmidt (1983, p. 138) observed that "what is new, in fact just beginning, is systematic study of the actual acquisition of communicative abilities by nonnative speakers," but not much ground has been covered. Although a handful of longitudinal studies have been carried out, far more need to be done. Researchers have tended to rely on single-moment studies and, even in studies that employ a cross-sectional design, to treat groups of participants at various proficiency levels as a single group of NNSs in comparison with NSs. Such studies are capable of providing information regarding IL pragmatic performance, but they say virtually nothing about development. Nonetheless, existing longitudinal studies, combined with the true cross-sectional studies done to date, reveal a number of avenues for further research to explore, some of which are taken up in the present cross-

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sectional study. Given the exploratory nature of this study, no specific hypotheses were formulated, but the research questions that guided the study can be summarized as follows:

1. What is the range of pragmalinguistic proficiency in English evidenced in the request, apology, and compliment-response strategies of three groups of Hong Kong primary school children ages 7, 9, and 11?
2. Is there evidence of pragmalinguistic development across the three groups of Hong Kong primary school children?
3. What is the range of sociopragmatic proficiency in English evidenced by sensitivity to contextual factors in choice of request, apology, and compliment-response strategy of Hong Kong primary school children?
4. Is there evidence of sociopragmatic development across the three groups of Hong Kong primary school children?
5. Is there evidence of influence from L1 Cantonese in the English requests, apologies, and compliment responses of Hong Kong primary school children?

THE STUDY

Participants

The search for institutions or individuals willing to participate in research is a challenge in any setting, and Hong Kong is no exception. Given the exam-driven nature of education in Hong Kong, schedules are very tight, and anything that does not have obvious relevance to the syllabus is looked upon with disfavor. Local English teachers are under constant media scrutiny and are often blamed for a perceived decline in English standards; recent reports have indicated that fewer than half of the English teachers in secondary schools have training in either English or language teaching. Furthermore, within a few months after Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty, most secondary schools were ordered by the government to abandon English as a medium of instruction, opting instead for Cantonese. As in other former British colonies, English language schools are the most prestigious, making the switch to mother-tongue instruction a bitter pill to swallow for schools, parents, and children. All of this (and more) leads to a perpetual state of defensiveness among school administrators and teachers and makes finding participants in schools even more difficult. After a number of local primary schools declined participation in this study, one school finally did offer access to their students. However, they allowed only 2 days for data collection, which had to occur during school hours and in groups—they would not allow access to individual students. Additionally, the administration of background questionnaires was not permitted, which rendered impossible the exploration of the impact of various demographic factors on pragmatic development (e.g., parents' English proficiency, contact with English-speaking domestic helpers). Nevertheless, the access provided was appreciated—particularly given the prevailing conditions—and this access was used to the fullest extent possible.

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The primary school students participating in this study were taken from three levels: Primary Two, Primary Four, and Primary Six (P-2, P-4, and P-6). The approximate average age for each group was 7, 9, and 11 years, respectively. There were two separate sets of participants, both of mixed genders. The first group consisted of 15 students, 5 from each level, who completed the preliminary questionnaire used in developing the data collection instrument employed in the study (described below). These students did not participate in the actual data collection. The second group consisted of three classes, one each for P-2, P-4, and P-6. Data was collected from approximately half of each class in English and half in Cantonese. The resulting subject numbers for English were as follows: 20 for P-2, 14 for P-4, and 19 for P-6. For Cantonese, there were 15 in each group. Hong Kong secondary schools are graded according to academic level and placed into Bands, ranging from Band 1 (highest) to Band 5 (lowest). As one would expect, the banding of a school often reveals more than academic achievement and can be a relatively reliable indicator of, say, the socioeconomic status of the children attending that school. Given that the school at which this study was conducted refused to allow the administration of background questionnaires, banding information would be of some use because it might indicate the likelihood of, say, whether children were exposed to English through English-speaking domestic helpers or whether their parents were likely to be fluent speakers of English. Unfortunately, primary schools in Hong Kong are not subject to the same ranking system and have no banding. However, informal reports have indicated that this particular school, located at the nexus of both affluent and working-class residential districts, represents something of a cross-section of the surrounding area and so contains a rather broad range in its student body, which is evident in the English data collected for this study (see below).

Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a cartoon oral production task (COPT). To develop the COPT, a preliminary questionnaire was administered in Cantonese to a group of 15 primary school children, 5 from each level targeted in the study. The preliminary questionnaire provided one example of a request, apology, and compliment (to generate compliment-response scenarios), each of these followed by seven numbered lines to be filled in with the most recent requests, apologies, and compliments the children had made or witnessed. Virtually all 15 students filled in the preliminary questionnaire completely, thus generating approximately one hundred potential scenarios for each of the desired speech acts (e.g., *I asked my classmate to lend me his pencil*, *My sister said she was sorry for losing my brother's book*, or *My teacher said I was a good class monitor*). These three speech acts were chosen for several reasons: They are among the most well documented in the literature, requests and apologies are included in the syllabus for primary school English instruction in Hong Kong (compliment responses are not), and several studies

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have indicated that there may be substantial cross-cultural differences between Chinese and English compliment-response strategies (e.g., Chen, 1993; Loh, 1993; but see Ye, 1995). Based on the pool of scenarios from the preliminary questionnaire, 30 items were selected, 10 each for requests, apologies, and compliment responses, and a single-frame cartoon was drawn to depict each scenario. The scenarios that appeared in the COPT are shown in (1).

(1)
01 Siu Keung asks to borrow a pencil from his classmate. (=, L)
02 Siu Keung bumped into his classmate, and s/he fell down. (=, M)
03 Siu Keung's father congratulates him for doing very well on his exam. (HD, Act)
04 Siu Keung's classmate says s/he likes his new school bag. (=, Poss)
05 Siu Keung's teacher wants his homework, but he forgot to bring it to school. (HD, M)
06 Siu Keung asks his father to take him to McDonald's for lunch. (HD, M)
07 Siu Keung spilled milk on his classmate's book. (=, L)
08 Siu Keung's classmate says that he is a good class monitor. (=, Abil)
09 Siu Keung asks his classmate to help him with his homework. (=, M)
10 Siu Keung lost a book that he borrowed from his classmate. (=, H)
11 Siu Keung's teacher says that his uniform looks tidy today. (HD, App)
12 Siu Keung asks to borrow his friend's bicycle. (=, M)
13 Siu Keung borrowed a book from his classmate, but forgot to bring it to school. (=, M)
14 Siu Keung's classmate says that he is better at playing the piano than s/he is. (=, Abil)
15 Siu Keung dropped his classmate's pencil case, and it broke. (=, H)
16 Siu Keung asks to borrow an eraser from his older brother. (HD, L)
17 Siu Keung asks his classmate to buy him some stationery. (=, H)
18 Siu Keung's classmate says he got the highest mark in the class on dictation. (=, Act)
19 Siu Keung bumped into his teacher, and s/he fell down. (HD, M)
20 Siu Keung asks his older sister to help him with his homework. (HD, M)
21 Siu Keung's teacher says that he is a good class monitor. (HD, Abil)
22 Siu Keung broke his mother's glasses. (HD, H)
23 Siu Keung asks his classmate to give him some M&Ms. (=, M)
24 Siu Keung's teacher says s/he likes his new pencil case. (HD, Poss)
25 Siu Keung asks to use his older brother's Game Boy. (HD, M)
26 Siu Keung lost a book that he borrowed from his older brother. (HD, H)
27 Siu Keung's mother says that he is a good swimmer. (HD, Abil)
28 Siu Keung spilled juice on his older sister's book. (HD, L)
29 Siu Keung asks his father to buy him a new school bag. (HD, H)
30 Siu Keung's classmate says that s/he likes his new haircut. (=, App)

The variables indicated in parenthesis after each scenario in (1) are intended only as working guidelines arrived at through consultation with adult NSs of Cantonese—they were not arrived at through a process of metapragmatic assessment by the participants. All scenarios make use of social status (either status equal [=] or hearer-dominant [HD]), which is listed relative to the perspective of Siu Keung as speaker. There are 15 scenarios in which Siu Keung addresses a higher status hearer (i.e., 3, 5, 6, 11, 16, 19–22, 24–29) and

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15 in which the hearer is a status equal (i.e., 1, 2, 4, 7–10, 12–15, 17, 18, 23, 30). Additionally, the request scenarios (1, 6, 9, 12, 16, 17, 20, 23, 25, 29) also incorporated degree of imposition, which was considered high, medium, or low (H, M, L); apology scenarios (2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 19, 22, 26, 28) included severity of offense, also considered high, medium, or low (H, M, L); and the compliment-response scenarios (3, 4, 8, 11, 14, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30) made use of four different compliment topic types, that is, appearance, possession, ability, and act (App, Poss, Abil, Act). The tentative values assigned for the variables in each of the scenarios may seem a bit problematic at first blush. That is, whether the values assigned hold up to empirical scrutiny would be an important issue if one were attempting to, say, make claims concerning the relationship between particular contextual variables and the realization of a given speech act, but this study does not attempt to do this. Given the exploratory nature of this research, the aim here was to ensure that the participants were provided ample opportunity to demonstrate their pragmatic proficiency in a range of contexts. Results seem to indicate that they were. However, future research will no doubt incorporate efforts to empirically validate the variables and values for the target participants, which, to my knowledge, has yet to be done with children. Finally, scenarios were designed so that matched pairs were created that differed only for social status. So, for example, items 1 and 16 involve low-imposition requests, but the former is a request of a status equal (asking a classmate for a pencil), whereas the latter is a request of a higher status hearer (asking an older brother for an eraser). The remaining request items are paired as follows: 12–25, 9–20, 23–6, 17–29. The pairings for the apologies items are: 7–28, 15–22, 10–26, 2–19, 13–5. For compliment-response items, the pairings are as follows: 18–3, 30–11, 8–21, 14–27, 4–24.

On the COPT, each cartoon also included a brief caption to describe the scenario. The scenarios all involve the exploits of a young boy in primary school named Siu Keung. For the Cantonese groups, Siu Keung was simply described as a primary school student in Hong Kong. However, given the fact that it would be entirely unnatural for a primary school student in Hong Kong to speak English in the settings in which Siu Keung found himself (or in any setting outside of English class, for that matter), the English groups were told that Siu Keung had emigrated to Canada as a child, now attended school there, and spoke only English. This is a state of affairs that most people in Hong Kong, including primary school children, can relate to. All instructions and scenario descriptions were written in Cantonese (see the Appendix for the full COPT).

On the day of data collection, a team composed of myself and six local research assistants descended upon the school for a full morning of activity. Two teams of three were formed, each assigned to a separate room, while I moved between rooms. Classes were brought into the two rooms at approximately 1½-hour intervals, beginning with P-6, followed by P-4, and finally P-2. Class size was approximately 40 for each level, and each class was divided into two groups by the classroom teachers, who were not informed as to

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which half would complete the COPT in Cantonese and which half would complete it in English. Data collection for all groups was carried out in Cantonese to ensure adequate comprehension of the task and scenarios. Each student was assigned an individual tape recorder that had been supplied with a blank tape. Students were first taught how to operate the machines by recording their own voices before proceeding with data collection. Once all students were capable of operating the tape decks, data collection proceeded, lockstep, one item at a time. A group leader (one of the research assistants) would first direct the participants' attention to the cartoon depicting the scenario, read the brief description (in Cantonese), then instruct the participants to either say what they thought Siu Keung should say, or to state the item number if they did not know what Siu Keung would say. That is, participants could choose to opt out. Opting out (see, e.g., Bonikowska, 1988; Rose, 1994; Rose & Ono, 1995) clearly carries at least two potential meanings: intentional nonperformance of an act after having taken into consideration the relevant contextual factors, and inability to perform the act owing to limited proficiency in a language or limited familiarity with a particular scenario. Given these children's limitations in English proficiency and experience outside of Hong Kong, it is unlikely that the former type of opting out would be a factor. However, the nature of any resulting opting out in this study is, of course, difficult to determine because appropriate data (e.g., questions to the participants exploring their reasons for opting out) was not collected. For the most part, data collection was not problematic, with the exception of a few malfunctioning tape recorders, which led to the elimination of several participants from each level. Transcripts of each tape were produced, with the English transcripts ignoring phonological characteristics of the learner data. The Cantonese data was romanized using the Yale system (see, e.g., Matthews & Yip, 1994).

Analysis

The analysis of requests and apologies was based on the coding scheme for requests and apologies that appears in Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), and compliment responses were analyzed according to the coding schemes for compliment responses employed in studies such as Herbert (1989), Holmes (1988), Pomerantz (1978), and Miles (1994). Relevant coding categories for each speech-act type will be discussed throughout as necessary. Although it is generally standard practice to employ more than one person in coding data and subsequently report interrater reliability figures, a very narrow range of strategies was employed by the participants for each of the speech acts studied, thus making coding unproblematic and the need for a second rater unnecessary. For example, close to 95% of English apologies used an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) as the main apology strategy, and virtually all of these consisted of some form of *I am sorry*. For level of directness in English requests, conventionally indirect requests were preferred at levels of 85% and 96% for P-4 and P-6, respectively, and were realized

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Table 1. English request strategies by group

Group		Opt out	Direct	Conv. indirect	Hint	Total
P-2	%	49.0	11.6	35.4	4.0	100
	F	(97)	(23)	(70)	(8)	(198)
P-4	%	12.1	0.7	85.7	1.4	100
	F	(17)	(1)	(120)	(2)	(140)
P-6	%	1.1	1.1	96.8	1.1	100
	F	(2)	(2)	(180)	(2)	(186)
Total	%	22.1	5.0	70.6	2.3	100
	F	(116)	(26)	(370)	(12)	(524)

Note. Inaudible responses ($n = 6$) have been omitted; F = frequency.

almost exclusively as *Can I* or *Can you*. The other main strategy choice for requests was opting out, the coding of which was also not problematic as it was indicated by the participant simply stating on tape the number of the item for which they were opting out. And for compliment responses, more than 80% of the data consisted of acceptance (generally as a simple *Thank you*) or opting out, neither of which pose problems for coding. This covers the main strategies, leaving the adjuncts, which, as we shall see below, occurred very infrequently even for the P-6 group. Taking all of this into account, and considering the exploratory nature of this study, lack of multiple raters would not appear to be a serious problem.

RESULTS

Requests

Requests were analyzed first for head act, which was coded as direct (e.g., *Give me your notes*), conventionally indirect (e.g., *Can I borrow your notes?*), or hint (e.g., *I missed class yesterday. Did you go?*). As noted above, the participants were also informed that they could opt out if they chose to by simply recording on tape the number of the item in question. Table 1 shows that conventional indirectness was the most frequent strategy overall, almost exclusively query preparatory with either *can* or *may*, constituting a total of 70.6% of the requests. The percentage of conventionally indirect requests is not constant across groups. In fact, there is a rather wide gap in the use of this strategy between P-2 (35.4%) and P-6 (96.8%), with P-4 (85.7%) toward the higher end of this range. This pattern is reversed for opting out, the most preferred choice of the P-2 group (49.0%), and the second choice of the P-4 group (12.1%). The use of this (and other) strategies for P-6 is negligible. Examples (2)–(4) are some conventionally indirect requests taken from item 6, with level and subject number indicated in parentheses.

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Table 2. English request strategies by item (all groups)

Item		Opt out	Direct	Conv. indirect	Hint	Total
01 (=, L)	%	17.7	5.9	76.5	0.0	100
	F	(9)	(3)	(39)	—	(51)
06 (HD, M)	%	30.2	3.8	66.0	0.0	100
	F	(16)	(2)	(35)	—	(53)
09 (=, M)	%	30.2	0.0	50.9	18.9	100
	F	(16)	—	(27)	(10)	(53)
12 (=, M)	%	17.0	5.7	77.4	0.0	100
	F	(9)	(3)	(41)	—	(53)
16 (HD, L)	%	5.8	11.5	82.7	0.0	100
	F	(3)	(6)	(43)	—	(52)
17 (=, H)	%	37.7	3.8	58.5	0.0	100
	F	(20)	(2)	(31)	—	(53)
20 (HD, M)	%	29.4	2.0	64.7	3.9	100
	F	(15)	(1)	(33)	(2)	(51)
23 (=, M)	%	26.4	3.8	69.8	0.0	100
	F	(14)	(2)	(37)	—	(53)
25 (HD, M)	%	9.4	11.3	79.3	0.0	100
	F	(5)	(6)	(42)	—	(53)
29 (HD, H)	%	17.3	1.9	80.8	0.0	100
	F	(9)	(1)	(42)	—	(52)
Total	%	22.1	5.0	70.6	2.3	100
	F	(116)	(26)	(370)	(12)	(524)

Note. Inaudible responses ($n = 6$) have been omitted; F = frequency; HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; L indicates low imposition; M indicates medium imposition; H indicates high imposition.

(2) *Can you McDonald, please?* (P-2, E11)

(3) *Can I eat lunch in McDonald?* (P-4, E17)

(4) *Can you take me to McDonald's for lunch?* (P-6, E10)

Another significant point to note is that directness was most frequent among the P-2 group (11.6%), as was the use of hints (4.0%). Although the latter fact comes as a bit of a surprise given the tendency for hints to appear late in both L1 and IL pragmatic development, the higher percentage of direct requests among lower proficiency learners fits well with findings in both L1 and IL pragmatics. These findings, then, add to existing evidence of the reliance on direct requests in the early stages of pragmatic development. As far as the hints are concerned, Table 2 shows that they occurred only in items 9 and 20—a request for help with homework, first of a classmate, then of an older sister. These two scenarios account for all of the P-2 hints. Furthermore, the majority of hints for all groups occurred in item 9, the request to a classmate for help with school work. In fact, none of the P-4 or P-6 hints occurred in item 20, only in item 9. It appears that there is potential for considerable face loss in seeking academic assistance from one's peers, which comes as no

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Table 3. English request strategies by item (P-2)

Item		Opt out	Direct	Conv. indirect	Hint	(*xxx*)	Total
01 (=, L)	%	25	10	60	0	5	100
	F	(5)	(2)	(12)	—	(1)	(20)
16 (HD, L)	%	15	25	60	0	0	100
	F	(3)	(5)	(12)	—	—	(20)
12 (=, M)	%	40	15	45	0	0	100
	F	(8)	(3)	(9)	—	—	(20)
25 (HD, M)	%	25	30	45	0	0	100
	F	(5)	(6)	(9)	—	—	(20)
09 (=, M)	%	65	0	5	30	0	100
	F	(13)	—	(1)	(6)	—	(20)
20 (HD, M)	%	70	5	15	10	0	100
	F	(14)	(1)	(3)	(2)	—	(20)
23 (=, M)	%	55	10	35	0	0	100
	F	(11)	(2)	(7)	—	—	(20)
06 (HD, M)	%	70	5	25	0	0	100
	F	(14)	(1)	(5)	—	—	(20)
17 (=, H)	%	75	10	15	0	0	100
	F	(15)	(2)	(3)	—	—	(20)
29 (HD, H)	%	45	5	45	0	5	100
	F	(9)	(1)	(9)	—	(1)	(20)
Total	%	48.5	11.5	35	4	1	100
	F	(97)	(23)	(70)	(8)	(2)	(200)

Note. (*xxx*) = inaudible; HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; L indicates low imposition; M indicates medium imposition; H indicates high imposition; F = frequency.

surprise given the highly competitive nature of classrooms in Hong Kong. Some examples of direct requests and hints from the P-2 data are found in (5)–(8); *xxx* indicates an incomprehensible utterance:

(5) *Give me your pencil, please.* (P-2, E10, item 1)

(6) *Give me a Game Boy, please.* (P-2, E07, item 25)

(7) *Please. I have these homework—don't know how to work.* (P-2, E05, item 09)

(8) *My (xxx) is don't know.* (P-2, E11, item 20)

Having examined the distribution of request strategies across groups and determining that there is some evidence for developmental patterns, it remains to be seen whether there is evidence within or across groups of situational variation. That is, do these participants exhibit sensitivity to social status and degree of imposition differences in their choice of request strategy? Given the overwhelming preference for conventional indirectness in P-4 and P-6 requests, there is virtually no situational variation in request strategy for these groups. Table 3 shows the distribution of request strategies for P-2 by item, with the items ordered in the matched pairs discussed above. Al-

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Table 4. English supportive moves by group

Group		– Supportive move	+ Supportive move	Total
P-2	%	97.0	3.0	100
	F	(98)	(3)	(101)
P-4	%	96.8	3.3	100
	F	(119)	(4)	(123)
P-6	%	88.6	11.4	100
	F	(163)	(21)	(184)
Total	%	93.1	6.9	100
	F	(380)	(28)	(408)

Note. All cases of opting out have been omitted; F = frequency.

though the occurrence of opting out is less frequent and conventional indirectness is most frequent for low-imposition requests (i.e., items 1 and 16), no clear pattern emerges that would indicate systematic sensitivity to situational variation in choice of request strategy other than the use of hints in item 9 discussed above. This is especially evident in the responses to the request for a new school bag (item 29), which prompted among the highest use of conventional indirectness and lowest opting out, despite being both a high-imposition and higher status hearer scenario. It appears, then, that there is little evidence of sensitivity to situational factors in the distribution of request strategy in this data set.

In addition to strategies employed in the head acts, requests were also analyzed for the use of supportive moves, for which Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, pp. 287–289) listed a number of subcategories, including getting a precommitment (e.g., *Could you do me a favor?*), grounders (e.g., *I missed class yesterday. [Could I borrow your notes?]*), promise of reward (e.g., *[Can you give me a lift home?] I'll pitch in some gas.*), and imposition minimizer (e.g., *[Would you give me a lift,] but only if you're going my way.*). Table 4 displays the distribution for use of supportive moves by group, indicating that there was only minimal use of supportive moves, and this consisted mainly of grounders employed by the P-6 participants. Although no group makes frequent use of supportive moves, there is a clear gap between P-6 (11.4%) on the one hand, and P-2 and P-4 on the other (3.0% and 3.3%, respectively). This may be indicative of some sort of developmental threshold that has been crossed by the P-6 participants—that is, a stage they have reached in which the use of supportive moves is now becoming more frequent. As we shall see in the next examples, however, it may also be an artifact of the lack of homogeneity within groups. Examples (9)–(11) are some of the supportive moves that appeared in the P-6 requests.

(9) *I don't know that question. Can you teach me?* (P-6, E19, item 9)

(10) *Can you borrow your bicycle to me? I will give back to you at 6 p.m.* (P-6, E03, item 12)

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Table 5. English supportive moves by item, P-6

Item		– Supportive move	+ Supportive move	Total
09 (=, M)	%	73.7	26.3	100
	F	(14)	(5)	(19)
29 (HD, H)	%	78.9	21.1	100
	F	(15)	(4)	(19)
20 (HD, M)	%	84.2	15.8	100
	F	(16)	(3)	(19)
12 (=, M)	%	89.4	10.5	100
	F	(17)	(2)	(19)
25 (HD, M)	%	89.4	10.5	100
	F	(17)	(2)	(19)
23 (=, M)	%	89.4	10.5	100
	F	(17)	(2)	(19)
17 (=, H)	%	89.4	10.5	100
	F	(17)	(2)	(19)
16 (HD, L)	%	100.0	5.3	100
	F	(18)	(1)	(19)
01 (=, L)	%	100.0	0.0	100
	F	(19)	—	(19)
06 (HD, M)	%	100.0	0.0	100
	F	(19)	—	(19)
Total	%	88.9	11.1	100
	F	(169)	(21)	(190)

Note. HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; L indicates low imposition; M indicates medium imposition; H indicates high imposition; F = frequency.

(11) *Father, can you buy me a new school bag? My old school bag has broken.* (P-6, E05, item 29)

To determine whether use of supportive moves by P-6 participants offers evidence of situational variation, Table 5 shows the distribution of supportive moves by item for P-6, ordered by frequency of supportive moves. Although there is no clear pattern for any relationship between supportive moves and either social status or degree of imposition, there appears to be less tendency to use supportive moves in low-imposition scenarios (i.e., items 1 and 16). This provides, at best, weak evidence of situational variation. There are a number of possible explanations for this, two obvious ones being that these participants have yet to develop the pragmatic competence in English to exhibit such situational variation—that is, they have neither the sociopragmatic savvy nor the pragmalinguistic tools to make and execute contextually appropriate requests—or that the scenarios and variable designations do not adequately capture the relevant contextual features the participants are attending to (a distinct possibility given the absence of empirical validation of variables and their values). It should come as no surprise, despite widespread practice in the pragmatics literature, that scenarios intended for the elicitation of speech acts are far more complex than can be represented by two variables. As noted above, another likely explanation is one that invokes within-group

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Table 6. English supportive moves by subject, P-6

Subject	– Supportive move	+ Supportive move	Percentage of all supportive moves
P-6/E05	4	6	28.6
P-6/E19	7	3	14.3
P-6/E03	8	2	9.5
P-6/E07	8	2	9.5
P-6/E20	8	2	9.5
P-6/E06	9	1	4.8
P-6/E09	9	1	4.8
P-6/E12	9	1	4.8
P-6/E16	9	1	4.8
P-6/E17	9	1	4.8
P-6/E18	9	1	4.8
P-6/E01	10	0	0.0
P-6/E02	10	0	0.0
P-6/E04	10	0	0.0
P-6/E08	10	0	0.0
P-6/E10	10	0	0.0
P-6/E11	10	0	0.0
P-6/E13	10	0	0.0
P-6/E14	10	0	0.0
Total	169	21	100.0

differences for P-6—that is, the lack of homogeneity across learners in this group.

A further investigation of P-6 supportive moves, this time by subject, appears in Table 6, which is sorted by frequency of supportive move per subject. This table clearly demonstrates the lack of homogeneity within this group of learners: The top five participants (26.3%) account for the majority of supportive moves used (71.4%), with eight participants (42.1%) using no supportive moves at all. If it had been possible to collect demographic background data from these participants (this was not allowed), it would have been of interest to examine how other variables (such as overall proficiency in English or exposure to English-speaking domestic helpers) related to what appears to be a higher level of pragmatic development in these top five participants. Future research will attempt to explore such possibilities.

In addition to examining the English requests produced by these primary school children, it is also useful to consider their use of requests in Cantonese. Turning to the Cantonese data, Table 7 displays the distribution of request strategy by group for Cantonese. As the table indicates, the differences across levels that were evident in the English requests were not reflected in Cantonese. As with the English requests, conventional indirectness was the most preferred strategy overall (92.8%), but for the Cantonese requests it appears at roughly the same levels across groups. I am not aware of any work on Cantonese requests, but existing research on the requests of adult speakers of Mandarin has found both a preference for directness (Lee-Wong, 1994) as well

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Table 7. Cantonese request strategies by group

Group		Direct	Conv. indirect	Hint	Total
P-2	%	6.8	92.6	0.7	100
	F	(10)	(137)	(1)	(148)
P-4	%	5.4	94.6	0.0	100
	F	(8)	(141)	—	(149)
P-6	%	9.0	91.0	0.0	100
	F	(13)	(132)	—	(145)
Total	%	7.0	92.8	0.2	100
	F	(31)	(410)	(1)	(442)

Note. Inaudible responses ($n = 8$) have been omitted; F = frequency.

as conventional indirectness (Zhang, 1995). The data collected in this study would appear to support the latter case, that is, a preference for conventional indirectness. Because the existing research on Mandarin involves adults, it is not clear what implications arise from this data. At any rate, it is clear that differences in request strategy revealed in the English data collected here are not similarly represented in the Cantonese requests and so do not appear to be related to L1 factors. Rather, as noted above, the higher frequency of directness in the P-2 requests is indicative of L1 pragmatic developmental sequences in English (see, e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1977). Examples (12)–(14) illustrate conventionally indirect requests in Cantonese for each of the groups' responses to item 12. (PRT indicates a particle, whereas CL indicates a noun classifier; for detailed explanation, see Matthews & Yip, 1994.)

(12) *Síu mìhng à, néih hó-mhóyíh je bouh dàan chè béi ngóh, hóu faai wàahn*
Siu Ming PRT you can-not-can lend CL single car to me very fast return
fáan béi néih ga là.
V-PRT to you PRT PRT
"Siu Ming, could you lend me your bicycle? I will return it to you really soon." (P-2, C03)

(13) *Néih hó-mhóyíh je bouh dàan chè béi ngóh à, m-gòi?*
you can-not-can lend CL single car to me PRT please
"Could you lend me your bicycle, please?" (P-4, C01)

(14) *Síu mìhng, hó-mhóyíh je bouh dàan chè béi ngóh waahn à?*
Siu Ming, can-not-can lend CL single car to me play PRT
"Siu Ming, could you lend me your bicycle to play with?" (P-6, C02)

Having established that the across-groups differences that were evident in the English requests did not appear in the Cantonese data, it remains to determine whether such differences were found for use of supportive moves in Cantonese. Table 8 displays the frequency of supportive moves by group for the Cantonese requests, showing that no such differences were found.

In fact, the occurrence of supportive moves in the Cantonese requests is

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Table 8. Cantonese supportive moves by group

Group		– Supportive move	+ Supportive move	Total
P-2	%	75.7	24.3	100
	F	(112)	(36)	(148)
P-4	%	69.8	30.2	100
	F	(104)	(45)	(149)
P-6	%	73.8	26.2	100
	F	(107)	(38)	(145)
Total	%	73.1	26.9	100
	F	(323)	(119)	(442)

Note. F = frequency.

well over double that for the English P-6 data, and it is distributed fairly evenly across the three groups, with a slight advantage for P-4. The differences across groups here, however, do not reflect the much wider range found in the English data, which, once again, seems to merit a developmental explanation rather than one based on influence from the L1. Although a detailed analysis of supportive moves used in the Cantonese requests would no doubt be interesting, it is beyond the scope of the present study. The aim of this paper is to identify developmental patterns in English requests, apologies, and compliment responses. So far, the requests have provided some evidence of this. I now consider the apologies.

Apologies

Unlike requests, which are generally coded as having one main strategy realized as the head act, apologies can contain multiple strategies. Apology strategies listed in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, pp. 290–294) include the illocutionary force indicating device, or IFID (e.g., *Sorry*), taking on responsibility (e.g., *My mistake*), explanation (e.g., *The traffic was terrible*), offer of repair (e.g., *I will pay for the damage*), and promise of forbearance (e.g., *This won't happen again*). All of these strategies appeared in the English apologies but only for P-6 participants. The apologies were initially coded for main strategy, which was defined as the first strategy in each utterance. Any subsequent strategies used were considered adjuncts and will be discussed momentarily. Table 9 displays main apology strategy by group, indicating that all groups have mastered the IFID, which occurs as the main apology strategy in 98.6% of apologies overall.

In terms of main strategy, then, there is little to distinguish across groups. Use of apology adjuncts, however, is a different story. Table 10 displays adjunct apology strategies by group. Note that intensifiers were coded as adjuncts. Although intensifiers are syntactically integrated into IFIDs and so are not generally considered adjuncts, they are also entirely optional elements and may reflect a (albeit slightly) higher level of pragmalinguistic or socio-

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Table 9. English main apology strategies by group

Group		IFID	Other	Total
P-2	%	100.0	0.0	100
	F	(191)	—	(191)
P-4	%	96.3	3.7	100
	F	(131)	(5)	(136)
P-6	%	98.9	1.1	100
	F	(187)	(2)	(189)
Total	%	98.6	1.7	100
	F	(509)	(9)	(516)

Note. F = frequency; *IFID* = illocutionary force indicating device.

Table 10. English adjunct apology strategies by group

Group		Intensifier	Responsibility	Explanation	Repair	Forbearance
P-2						
(*n* = 191)	%	1.6	12.6	4.7	0.0	0.0
	F	(3)	(24)	(9)	—	—
P-4						
(*n* = 136)	%	6.6	8.8	8.1	5.9	0.0
	F	(9)	(12)	(11)	(8)	—
P-6						
(*n* = 189)	%	32.8	44.4	1.1	21.7	2.6
	F	(62)	(84)	(2)	(41)	(5)

Note. F = frequency.

pragmatic development. Rather than treat them separately, it was decided that they should be coded as adjuncts. Because multiple strategies can occur within a single apology, percentages in Table 10 reflect the proportion of the participants' use of each particular adjunct separately (i.e., 12.6% of P-2 participants used taking responsibility, but only 1.6% used intensifier). The overall pattern for apology adjuncts is not unlike that found for use of supportive moves in requests (see Table 4), that is, a marked increase for P-6 (total 194) over the P-2 and P-4 (total 36 and 40, respectively). The range of adjuncts used also increases across levels, with P-2 relying primarily on taking responsibility and P-6 evidencing fairly frequent use of intensifiers, taking responsibility, and offer of repair. P-6 is also the only group that employed promise of forbearance. In (15)–(19) are examples of English apologies from P-6 participants.

(15) *Oh, I'm sorry. Are you all right?* (P-6, E09, item 2)

(16) *I'm sorry. I'll clean it for you.* (P-6, E12, item 7)

(17) *I'm sorry. I'm lost your book. Tomorrow I will give you a new.* (P-6, E16, item 10)

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Table 11. Most frequent English adjunct apology strategies by item, P-6

Item		Intensifier	Responsibility	Repair
10 (=, H)	%	16.6	94.4	38.8
	F	(3)	(17)	(7)
26 (HD, H)	%	31.5	84.2	21.0
	F	(6)	(16)	(4)
28 (HD, L)	%	47.3	21.0	57.8
	F	(9)	(4)	(11)
13 (=, M)	%	21.0	100.0	0.0
	F	(4)	(19)	—
22 (HD, H)	%	42.1	57.8	10.5
	F	(8)	(11)	(2)
05 (HD, M)	%	36.8	42.1	21.0
	F	(7)	(8)	(4)
07 (=, L)	%	31.5	15.7	36.8
	F	(6)	(3)	(7)
15 (=, H)	%	36.8	10.5	31.5
	F	(7)	(2)	(6)
02 (=, M)	%	47.3	10.5	0.0
	F	(9)	(2)	—
19 (HD, M)	%	15.7	10.5	0.0
	F	(3)	(2)	—

Note. $n = 19$ for all items except (10), for which $n = 18$; F = frequency; HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; L indicates low severity of offense; M indicates medium severity of offense; H indicates high severity of offense.

(18) *I'm sorry, Miss Chan! I didn't mean to. I'll be more careful next time.* (P-6, E-20, item 19)

(19) *Sorry. That's my fault. I-I put the glasses not (xxx).* (P-6, E18, item 28)

Unlike requests, for which differences were found across groups in main strategies that were indicative of developmental patterns found in both L1 and L2 pragmatics research, no such differences were found for main apology strategies. However, as with supportive moves in requests, distribution of apology adjuncts across groups did offer some evidence of developmental trends, with a tendency for both a higher frequency and wider range of apology adjuncts with P-6 participants.

Recall that an examination of the use of supportive moves by item revealed at best only weak evidence of situational variation for P-6 participants. A similar examination of the use of the most frequent apology adjuncts for P-6, displayed in Table 11 (sorted in order of adjunct frequency), once again shows no clear patterns of variation according to social status or severity of offense. Although there seems to be a tendency for adjuncts to appear in high-severity and higher status hearer scenarios, this is certainly not absolute, as indicated in items 15 and 19, which merited infrequent use of adjuncts, and item 28, which—although low severity—rated the highest for use of two of the three

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Table 12. Cantonese main apology strategies by group

Group		IFID	Other	Total
P-2	%	95.3	4.7	100
	F	(143)	(7)	(150)
P-4	%	96.0	4.0	100
	F	(144)	(6)	(150)
P-6	%	91.8	8.2	100
	F	(134)	(12)	(146)
Total	%	94.4	5.6	100
	F	(421)	(25)	(446)

Note. F = frequency; *IFID* = illocutionary force indicating device.

Table 13. Cantonese adjunct apology strategies by group

Group		Intensifier	Responsibility	Explanation	Repair	Forbearance
P-2						
(n = 150)	%	8.7	58.7	1.3	41.3	5.3
	F	(13)	(88)	(2)	(62)	(8)
P-4						
(n = 150)	%	26.7	50.0	2.0	45.3	2.0
	F	(40)	(75)	(3)	(68)	(3)
P-6						
(n = 146)	%	24.7	41.1	2.1	54.1	4.8
	F	(36)	(60)	(3)	(79)	(7)

Note. F = frequency.

most frequent adjuncts (i.e., intensifiers and offer of repair). No doubt similar explanations can be offered for this as were offered for the distribution of supportive moves in requests—namely, lack of pragmatic development, inadequacy of scenarios to capture all relevant factors, and lack of homogeneity within the P-6 group.

Given that the English apology adjuncts revealed what appears to be a developmental trend toward a higher frequency and wider range of adjuncts for P-6 participants, it is worth examining the Cantonese apologies for any similar patterns. Table 12 displays the main apology strategies for the Cantonese data, indicating that—as in the English data—IFID is overwhelmingly preferred across the three groups. This is to be expected, given the prevalence of IFID as a main apology strategy in virtually every apology study conducted to date. Table 13, however, does not reveal (for Cantonese apology adjuncts) the pattern found for English apology adjuncts. With a few exceptions (most notably a lower frequency of intensifiers for P-2 participants), there is a similar frequency and range of adjuncts across all three groups, unlike the tendency in English for both a higher frequency and wider range of adjuncts for

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P-6. In (20)–(22) I provide some examples of Cantonese apologies from each group for item 28.

(20) *Deui m jyuh à, jé jé, ngóh johnh dit jó néih er- er ngóh jih géi bùi*
sorry PRT elder sister I bump into-PFV your er- er I my self CL
cháang jâp, daahn er jíng sâp jó néih bún syù, ngóh bòng néih muht fáan
orange juice but er make wet-PFV your CL book I help you sweep V-PRT
là.
PRT
"Sorry, elder sister, for bumping into your er- er my orange juice, but er it has wet your book, I will help you to clean (it) up." (P-2, C01)

(21) *Deui m jyuh à, jè jè. Ngóh léuhng jíng jíng wù jòu néih bún syù, ngóh*
sorry PRT elder sister I two make make dirty your CL book I
bòng néih muht fáan kéuih à.
help you sweep V-PRT it PRT
"Sorry, elder sister. I dirtied your book. I'll help you to clean it." (P-4, C02)

(22) *Deui m jyuh à, jè jè. Ngóh bòng néih muht fáan bún syù à.*
sorry PRT elder sister I help you sweep V-PRT CL book PRT
"Sorry, elder sister. I'll help you clean up your book."

The analysis of both English and Cantonese requests and apologies, then, has provided some evidence of developmental patterns but little evidence of situational variation. As mentioned earlier, both requests and apologies are an integral part of the English language curriculum for primary schools in Hong Kong, and it appears that either through instruction or exposure (the present project cannot provide evidence to argue for either), these students have made considerable inroads in pragmatic development, as their ability to use basic request and apology strategies indicates. Also mentioned earlier was the fact that compliment responses were not a part of the English language curriculum for primary schools but are claimed by some (but not all) researchers to differ markedly in Chinese and English, thus making them an obvious object for analysis, so it is to the compliment responses that I now turn.

Compliment Responses

As noted above, unlike requests and apologies, compliment responses are not part of the Hong Kong government's English language syllabus for primary schools. This, of course, does not mean they are not taught. It appears that, despite their absence from the syllabus, they were in fact taught and students have done quite well in learning them. Like apologies, and unlike requests, a single compliment response can contain multiple strategies. As noted above, compliment-response strategies used in coding the data for this study were based on those used in studies such as Herbert (1989), Holmes (1988), Miles (1994), and Pomerantz (1978). Strategies that appeared in the data include acceptance (e.g., *Thank you*), agreement (e.g., *I like it, too*), returning the compliment (e.g., *You look good, too*), rejection (e.g., *I do not look pretty*), and deflection or evasion (e.g., *My mother gave it to me*). An additional category

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Table 14. English main compliment-response strategies by group

Group		Opt out	Accept	Agree	Return	Reject	Deflect	Offer	Total
P-2	%	17.6	75.1	1.0	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
	F	(34)	(145)	(2)	(12)	—	—	—	(193)
P-4	%	16.5	67.6	2.2	5.8	5.0	2.2	0.7	100
	F	(23)	(94)	(3)	(8)	(7)	(3)	(1)	(139)
P-6	%	2.3	73.4	8.5	2.3	11.3	1.7	0.6	100
	F	(4)	(130)	(15)	(4)	(20)	(3)	(1)	(177)
Total	%	11.5	69.6	3.8	4.5	5.1	1.1	0.4	100
	F	(61)	(369)	(20)	(24)	(27)	(6)	(2)	(509)

Note. F = frequency.

was added, namely, making an offer (e.g., *I can buy one for you if you like*), to indicate cases in which compliments were apparently interpreted as requests.

Table 14 displays the main compliment-response strategies by group, with main strategy again defined as the first strategy in each utterance. As Table 14 indicates, and as was confirmed in informal discussions with teachers, acceptance as a preferred compliment-response strategy in English had been taught to these participants, and it was the most frequent strategy overall (69.9%), as well as for each group. In fact, aside from a meager 7.2%, the bulk of the compliment responses for P-2 consist entirely of a simple *Thank you* (the remaining 17.6% was opting out). Rejection is the next most frequent strategy (after opting out), but it does not occur in the P-2 data and is used only marginally in the P-6 data (11.3%), with the P-4 group—as they should—once again occupying the middle ground (5.0%). Although some researchers have claimed that speakers of Chinese languages regard rejection as the preferred compliment-response strategy (e.g., Chen, 1993; Loh, 1993), Ye (1995) found in her study of adult speakers of Mandarin that compliment acceptance was the most frequent strategy—chosen by over 70% of respondents, as compared to compliment rejection accounting for fewer than 15% responses. The finding here that primary school children in Hong Kong prefer acceptance at levels similar to those reported by Ye would support her findings. However, it is also worth considering what the higher rate of rejection among the P-6 group may indicate. If rejection of compliments is to be interpreted as pragmatic transfer from Cantonese (and that is an empirical question), the higher rate of rejection for P-6 participants would appear to support the claim that there is a positive correlation between proficiency and pragmatic transfer (see, e.g., Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; but see Maeshiba et al., 1996).

Although there was considerable uniformity across groups in terms of main compliment-response strategy, once again there is some evidence of development across groups in the use of compliment-response adjuncts. Table 15 displays compliment-response adjuncts by group and, as with apologies, there is a marked increase in both frequency and range of strategies used with the

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Table 15. English compliment-response adjuncts by group

Group		Accept	Agree	Return	Reject	Deflect	Offer
P-2							
(*n* = 193)	%	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
	F	—	—	(3)	—	—	—
P-4							
(*n* = 139)	%	0.0	4.3	2.2	0.7	0.0	0.0
	F	—	(6)	(3)	(1)	—	—
P-6							
(*n* = 177)	%	1.7	6.8	0.6	2.3	10.2	1.1
	F	(3)	(12)	(1)	(4)	(18)	(2)

Note. F = frequency.

Table 16. English compliment-response adjuncts by item, P-6

Item		Accept	Agree	Return	Reject	Deflect	Offer
24 (HD, Poss)	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.6	10.5
	F	—	—	—	—	(6)	(2)
18 (=, Act)	%	0.0	5.3	0.0	5.3	21.1	0.0
	F	—	(1)	—	(1)	(4)	—
08 (=, Abil)	%	5.3	21.1	0.0	5.3	0.0	0.0
	F	(1)	(4)	—	(1)	—	—
30 (=, App)	%	5.3	0.0	0.0	10.5	15.8	0.0
	F	(1)	—	—	(2)	(3)	—
21 (HD, Abil)	%	5.3	10.5	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.0
	F	(1)	(2)	—	—	(1)	—
27 (HD, Abil)	%	0.0	15.8	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.0
	F	—	(3)	—	—	(1)	—
14 (=, Abil)	%	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.0	5.3	0.0
	F	—	—	(1)	—	(1)	—
04 (=, Poss)	%	0.0	10.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	F	—	(2)	—	—	—	—
11 (HD, App)	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.5	0.0
	F	—	—	—	—	(2)	—
03 (HD, Act)	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. *n* = 19; F = frequency; HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; Poss indicates possession compliment topic; Abil indicates ability compliment topic; App indicates appearance compliment topic.

P-6 group, ranging from a total of three adjuncts for P-2, to 40 for P-6, thus adding to the evidence for developmental patterns. Although few studies have attempted to examine possible correlations between contextual variables (such as social dominance and compliment topic) and compliment response (but see Ye, 1995), this is one source of potential awareness of contextual factors. Table 16 displays compliment-response adjuncts by item for P-6 (sorted by frequency of adjunct), and there appear to be no patterns that would link use of adjuncts to contextual variables. That is, all values for social status re-

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Table 17. Cantonese main compliment-response strategies by group

Group		Accept	Agree	Return	Reject	Deflect	Offer	Total
P-2	%	66.9	0.8	2.3	18.5	10.0	1.5	100
	F	(87)	(1)	(3)	(24)	(13)	(2)	(130)
P-4	%	44.5	0.7	5.5	39.0	2.7	7.5	100
	F	(65)	(1)	(8)	(57)	(4)	(11)	(146)
P-6	%	45.2	11.9	9.6	17.0	8.9	7.4	100
	F	(61)	(16)	(13)	(23)	(12)	(10)	(135)
Total	%	51.8	4.4	5.8	25.3	7.1	5.6	100
	F	(213)	(18)	(24)	(104)	(29)	(23)	(411)

Note. F = frequency.

lations and compliment topic type appear at either end of the spectrum for adjunct frequency. As with requests and apologies, then, there is little evidence of situational variation in the compliment responses. Some examples of P-6 compliment responses are provided in (23)–(27).

(23) *Thank you very much, but I am not the best monitor.* (P-6, E03, item 8)

(24) *Oh! Thank you, but you—you play piano is very good.* (P-6, E18, item 14)

(25) *Oh, thank you very much. If you work—if you read hard, you can higher than me.* (P-6, E05, item 18)

(26) *Thank you very much. It's my Christmas present.* (P-6, E02, item 24)

(27) *Oh, yes. That's my mum—my mum to take me to the—to have this. Thank you.* (P-6, E07, item 30)

Given the somewhat unexpected preference for acceptance as a preferred compliment-response strategy (admittedly based on little data and the absence of this speech act from the school curriculum), it is worth looking at the Cantonese data to see what sort of patterns obtain there. Table 17 displays the main compliment-response strategies for Cantonese, indicating that—as in the English data—acceptance is the most frequent strategy overall, if only by just short of two percentage points. Nevertheless, it is the most frequent strategy overall and for each group. This may indicate that notions about preferences for compliment responses, at least for Cantonese, may be subject to the same sort of overgeneralization and cultural stereotyping that has often characterized discussions of Japanese indirectness (see, e.g., Miller, 1994; Rose, 1996). As one might expect, however, there is a wider range of strategies employed in the Cantonese data, including a much higher frequency of rejection, which is easily the second most frequent strategy overall and for each group. It is interesting to note that there are some considerable differences across the three groups—namely, the comparatively higher frequency of acceptance, rejection, and agreement among P-2, P-4, and P-6, respectively.

I will not offer any explanations for these results but rather indicate that

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Table 18. Cantonese compliment-response adjuncts by group

Group		Accept	Agree	Return	Reject	Deflect	Offer
P-2							
(*n* = 130)	%	6.2	0.0	6.2	1.5	0.8	2.3
	F	(8)	—	(8)	(2)	(1)	(3)
P-4							
(*n* = 146)	%	2.7	1.4	6.8	2.7	3.4	2.7
	F	(4)	(2)	(10)	(4)	(5)	(4)
P-6							
(*n* = 135)	%	1.5	2.2	3.0	3.7	6.7	4.4
	F	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(9)	(6)

Note. F = frequency.

they are areas of interest for future study on Cantonese pragmatics (which is sorely lacking). It appears, however, that the reported gulf between Chinese and English norms for responding to compliments may have been overstated; that, of course, is an empirical question. As with both the English and Cantonese apologies, it is worth examining the distribution of compliment-response adjuncts for Cantonese to determine whether what appeared to represent a developmental pattern in the English data also obtains in the Cantonese data. As Table 18 indicates, this was not the case, although there was some variation in the particular strategies used. As with apology adjuncts, compliment-response adjunct frequency for Cantonese did not differ significantly across the three groups, thus lending support to the contention that the marked increase for use of adjuncts in the P-6 English data is indicative of pragmatic development.

CONCLUSION

This paper has reported the results of an exploratory cross-sectional study of pragmatic development in the requests, apologies, and compliment responses of students at one primary school in Hong Kong. Although results must be considered tentative, owing to factors such as the inability to collect background information or to empirically validate the scenario variables and their values, the data do provide some evidence of pragmatic development, particularly in the movement from direct to conventionally indirect request strategies, and in the higher frequency of supportive moves, apology adjuncts, and compliment-response adjuncts for the P-6 group. However, the data revealed little evidence of situational variation for any of the speech acts, which may indicate the precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics in the early stages of pragmatic development in a second language. It is not possible to determine at this point whether the two would ultimately be more evenly represented as learners' proficiency in English develops or whether this lack of sociopragmatic development is endemic to foreign language contexts. Chil-

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dren learning English as a first language have been shown to evidence sensitivity to contextual factors—that is, sociopragmatic development—by the age of three or four (e.g., Ervin-Tripp's [1977] finding that 2½-year-old children use indirect requests more frequently with adults than peers, or Slosberg Andersen's [1990] finding that 4-year-old children use fewer imperatives with fathers than mothers), so the lack of sociopragmatic development by age 11 for the participants in this study (which is generally 6 years after commencing the study of English) and any subsequent development in that area are questions for future research. The overwhelming reliance on IFID as main apology strategy and *Thank you* as virtually the only compliment-response strategy employed by the P-2 group may indicate reliance on unanalyzed routines in beginning stages of pragmatic development, which, as noted earlier, has been found in some of the longitudinal studies of pragmatic development. This study has also demonstrated the general effectiveness of COPT to elicit pragmatic production in primary school students, but there is clearly a need to refine and develop this form of data elicitation via metapragmatic assessment—not yet done with child L2 learners.

As noted at the outset, the majority of ILP research has examined pragmatic performance, not development. The need for both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of pragmatic development in a second language cannot be overstated. With this in mind, a follow-up to this study is being planned that will develop what has been done here, this time with a wider range of participants, from ages 7 through 17. Contexts will be sought that will allow for the administration of background questionnaires, which will go a long way in helping rectify some of the problems inherent in the present study, such as issues that arise from the lack of homogeneity within groups and the attempt to determine the effects of a wide range of variables in pragmatic development (e.g., exposure to English-speaking domestic helpers, parents' English proficiency, and attitudes to English). Apart from contributing the sort of indirect information cross-sectional studies can provide on development, the ultimate aim of this research is to isolate the most fruitful 2-year period of pragmatic development for an eventual ethnographic longitudinal study to be conducted in Hong Kong, which, it is hoped, will contribute to our understanding of how pragmatic competence develops in a second language.

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APPENDIX

The Cartoon Oral Production Task (COPT)



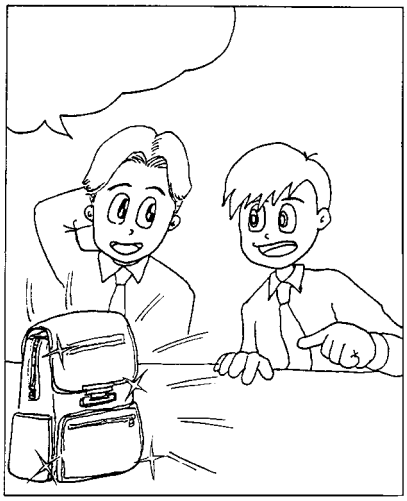
1. 小強向同學借用一支鉛筆。



2. 小強不小心走路,撞倒了同學。

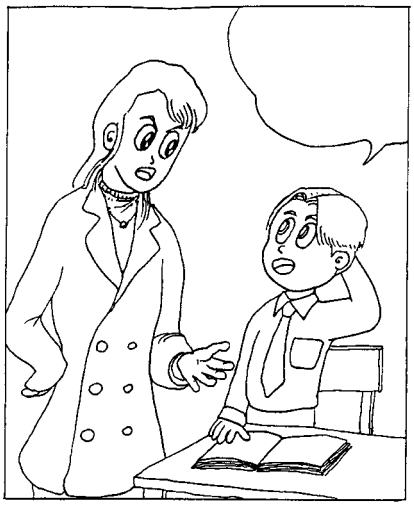


3. 小強的爸爸稱讚他考試成績好。

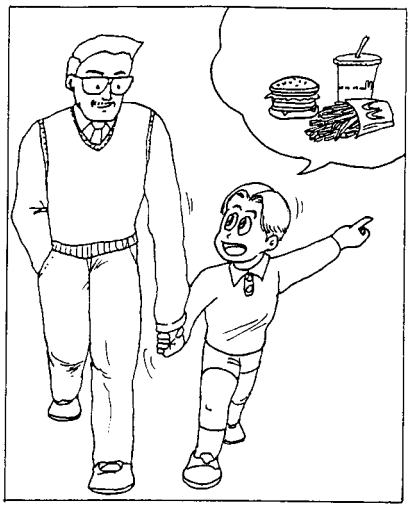


4. 小強的同學說他很喜歡他的新書包。

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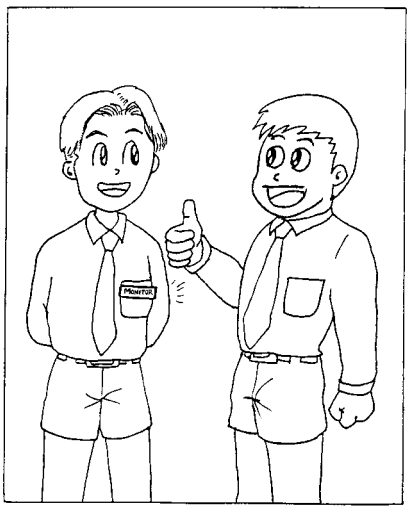
5. 小強的老師責備小強沒有把功課帶回學校。



6. 小強問爸爸可否帶他去麥當勞吃午餐



7. 小強不小心翻瀉了牛奶，把同學的課本弄污了。

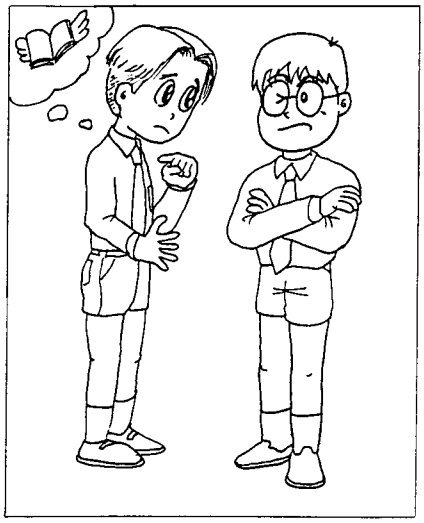


8. 小強的同學說他是個好班長。

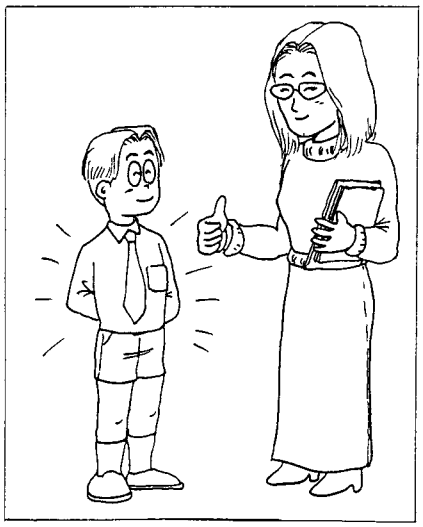
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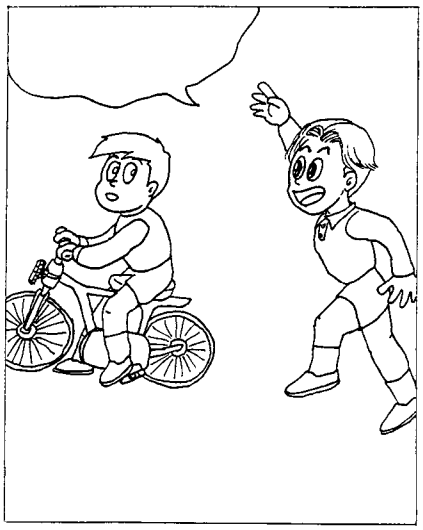
9. 小強向同學問功課。



10.小強遺失了由同學借來的圖書。

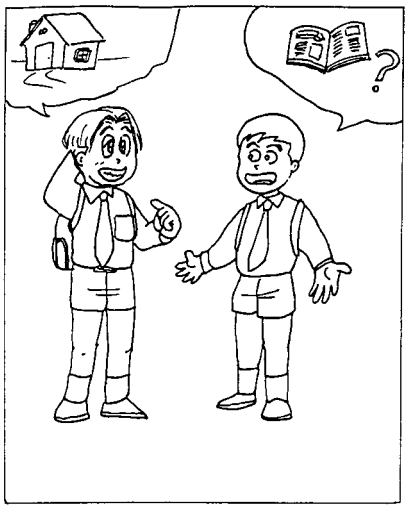


11.小強的老師讚他校服整潔。

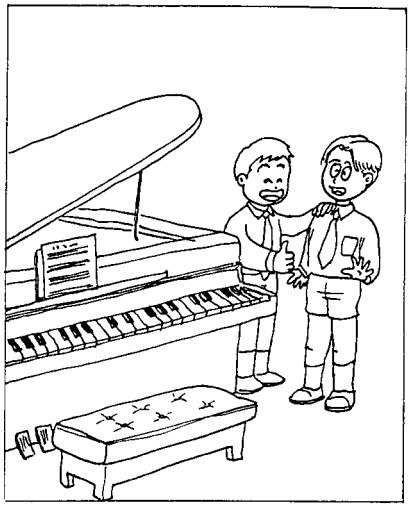


12.小強向小明借用單車。

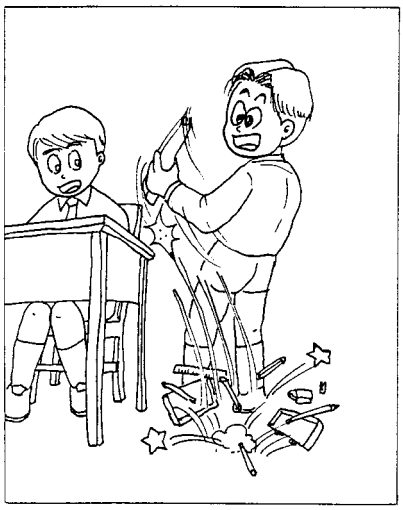
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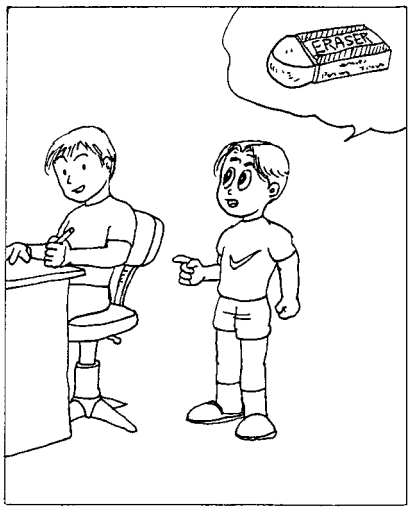
13.小強忘記把由同學借來的書帶回學校。



14.小強的同學說小強彈琴彈得比他好。

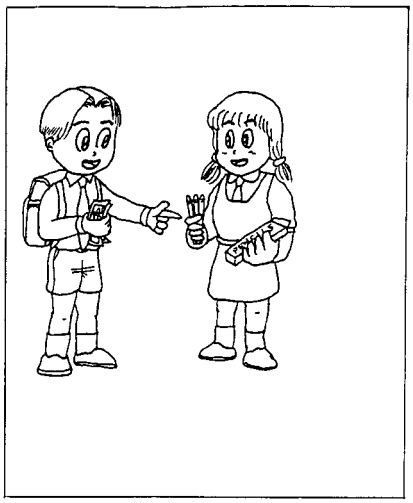


15.小強不小心把同學的筆盒翻到地上。

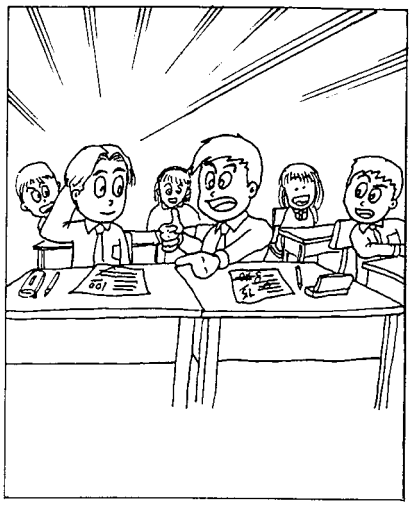


16.小強向哥哥借用擦膠。

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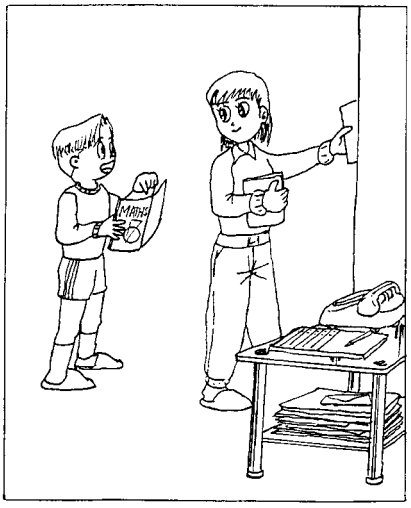
17.小強請小玲給他買些文具。



18.小強的同學讚他默書分數全班最高。

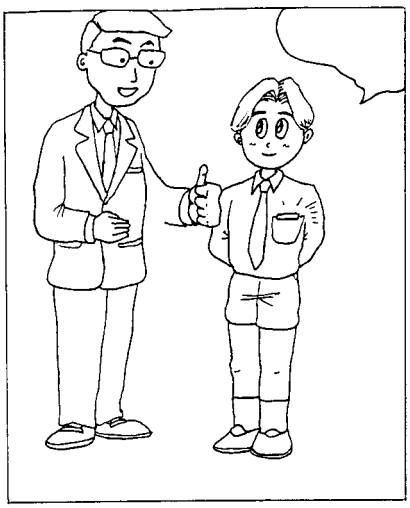


19.小強在走廊不小心撞倒了陳老師。

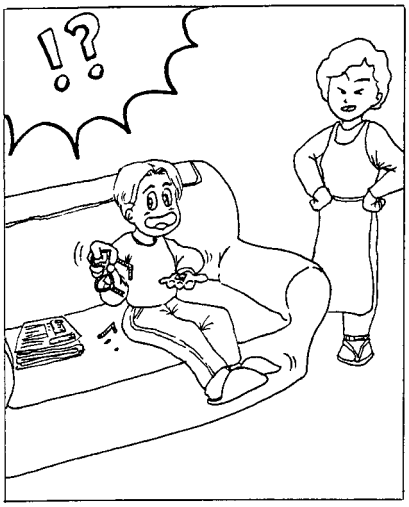


20.小強希望 姊姊教他做功課。

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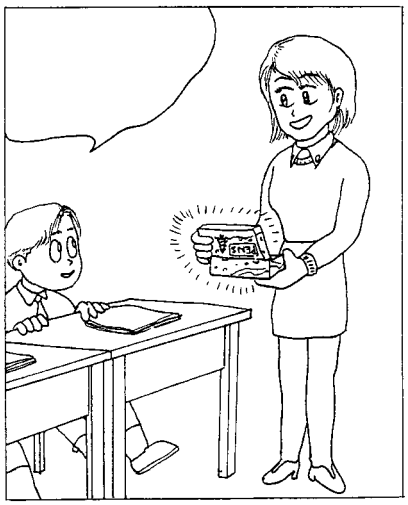
21.小強的老師稱讚他是個好班長。



22.小強把他媽媽的眼鏡打破了。

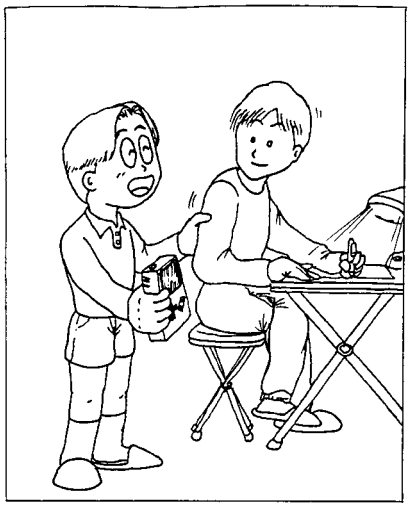


23.小強想他的同學請他吃 M&M 朱古力豆。

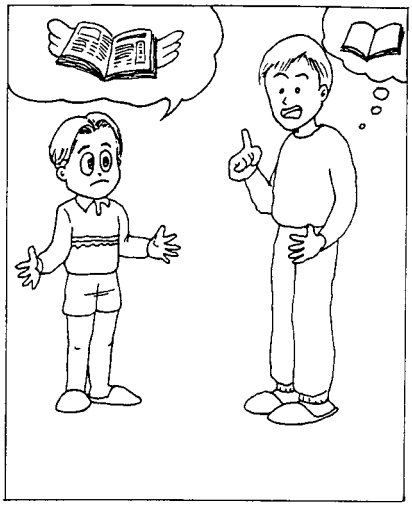


24.小強的老師很喜歡他的新筆盒。

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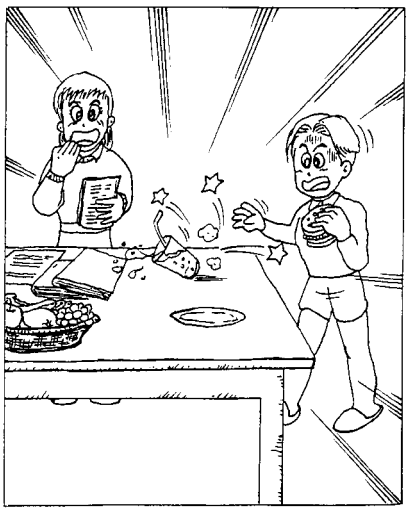
25.小強想玩哥哥的 Game Boy 遊戲機。



26.小強把從哥哥借來的書遺失了。



27.小強的媽媽說他是個游泳健將。

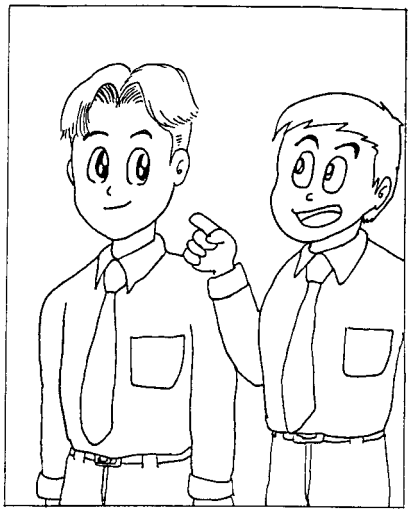


28.小強不小心將果汁倒在姊姊的書上。

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29.小強要求爸爸買一個新書包給他。



30.小強的同學很喜歡他的新髮型。

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