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**Politeness phenomena in pre-modern Chinese:
Invitations and gift-giving in Feng Menglong's *Sanyan*
vernacular stories**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This research aims to shed fresh light on our understanding of how (im)politeness manifests itself as a discursive phenomenon by examining invitations and gift-giving (henceforth I&G) in pre-modern Chinese. To this end, a corpus of I&Gs from Feng Menglong's (1574-1646) trilogy of vernacular stories was analysed using a pragmaphilological approach that emphasizes the contextual analysis of texts. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data show that the interactional elaboration and selection of the strategies of pre-offers, head acts, modifications and responses were highly context-dependent. Hence, the present study provides empirical evidence that I&Gs are far more complex than previously assumed and extends our understanding of them beyond the contemporary limit. In line with the discursive or post-modern approach to (im)politeness, I argue that it is essentially the interactants' contextualized evaluations of the I&Gs that determined whether an offer counted as polite or impolite behaviour. By challenging the conceptual bias of the modern approach to (im)politeness towards speech production, its assumed link between indirectness and politeness and the empirical applicability of positive and negative politeness distinction and also the overemphasis in Chinese politeness scholarship on modesty and rituality, this research contributes to the possibility of developing alternative (im)politeness theories by explicating how I&Gs in Chinese, which have long been stereotyped as interactionally elaborate and intrinsically polite, were judged by participants in relation to (im)politeness.

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List of abbreviations

AmE	American English
B&L	Brown and Levinson
BrE	British English
CA	conversation analysis
CCSARP	Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Project
CP	Cooperative Principle
DCT	discourse completion test/task
FEA	face-enhancing act
FDCT	free discourse completion test/task
Fig	Figure
FTA	face-threatening act
I&G	invitations and gift-giving
IFID	illocutionary force indicating device
IrE	Irish English
J&T	Jucker and Taavitsainen
SAVs	speech act verbs
SM	sequentially-marked
SUM	sequentially-unmarked
T&J	Taavitsainen and Jucker
UIP	utterance-initial particle
UFP	utterance-final particle
UFPM	utterance-final politeness marker
UIPM	utterance-initial politeness marker
YSMY	<i>Yushi mingyan</i>

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the study

This brief introduction is only intended to provide a rationale for my proposal to focus on invitations and gift-giving in Chinese.

Invitations and gift-giving in Chinese have long been perceived by cultural outsiders as a peculiar or inscrutable politeness phenomenon (cf. Leech 2014). With respect to politeness scholarship, the tripartite structure of ‘offer/refusal - reoffer/refusal - reoffer/acceptance’ is characterised by studies such as Gu (1990) and Mao (1992/1994) as the schema prototypical of Chinese invitational discourse. While arguing rightly that this ‘battle of politeness’ (Leech 2007/2014) cannot be accounted for by B&L’s (1987) theory that takes a Gricean and speech-act theoretic perspective, Gu (1990) asserted that inviting ‘will not be considered as threatening H’s negative face’ and that ‘S’s act is intrinsically polite’ (p.242). At the same time, contrary to the above assertion, however, the author went on to claim that ‘issuing and accepting an invitation place both the inviter’s and the invitee’s face at risk’ (p.255).

The aforementioned peculiarity of politeness, according to Mao (1992:86), applies equally to gift-giving in Chinese despite the lack of any empirical evidence. It is claimed that ‘if he can or wants to attend the party [or, by implication, accept the gift], the invitee [recipient] will still refuse the invitation [gift]’ (Mao 1992:82).

It is these more or less inconsistent claims and blanket assumptions about the structure of I&Gs in relation to (im)politeness that motivated the present investigation of these two types of offers.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

The principal objective of the present study is to explore the way in which I&Gs are evaluated by participants in relation to (im)politeness in interaction by adopting the discursive or post-modern approach to (im)politeness, which has been gaining popularity since the start of the new millennium. To achieve this purpose, this research aims primarily to examine some of the major tenets of the modern approach to (im)politeness, including its conceptual bias towards speech production, the assumed link between indirectness and politeness, the empirical applicability of positive and negative politeness distinction, and the claim that invitations (and, by implication, gift-giving) are intrinsically polite. A secondary aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the degree to which modesty and rituality, which has been overemphasized in the Chinese politeness scholarship, play a role in interactants' perceptions of (im)politeness.

To this end, on the basis of a critique of previous empirical studies on I&Gs and the two major approaches to (im)politeness, the present study addresses the following research questions using the pragmaphilological approach to pragmatics that emphasizes contextual analysis of historical texts:

- (1) What was the interactional structure of invitations and gift-giving?
- (2) What politeness strategies were used at different stages of invitations and gift-giving?
 - (a) What politeness strategies were used in the pre-invitation and pre-gifting sequence?
 - (b) What head act and modification strategies were used in extending invitations and offering gifts?

- (c) What acceptance and refusal strategies were used in responding to invitations and gift-giving?
 - (d) Is there any difference between politeness strategies used at different stages of invitations and gift-giving?
- (3) Is there any difference between strategies of executing and responding to I&Gs that were mutually perceived to have different motivations?

1.3 Data translations

Although frequent use was made of the translations of *Sanyan* by Yang & Yang (2000; 2005; 2014), the translations in this study are essentially my own. Roughly, two types of translation were adopted in the present thesis. Illustrations in the tables, mostly truncated segments of I&Gs, are presented with gloss translations, which aim ‘to reproduce as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the original’ (Nida 1964:159). Then, all 75 extended examples analysed in detail were rendered into English principally by means of free translation, in which ‘more attention is paid to producing a naturally reading TT [target text] than to preserving the ST [source text] wording intact’ (Shuttleworth & Cowie 2014:62). Given the importance of these examples and the greater likelihood of making mistakes in free translation, the following explanation focuses on how they were translated in the present study.

While I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable insights of Yang & Yang’s translations of *Sanyan*, every effort was made to ensure that the English rendering in the present study matches the original better. This can be illustrated by two examples, which respectively focus on whether a politeness marker should be used in the English version of an imperative/directive invitation and how misreading the source text may lead to the poor translation of an offer.

To begin with, the head act 千万早降 (gloss: ‘Be sure early descend’) in example (1) was rendered into ‘Be sure to come early’ in the present thesis (cf. 3.4.1). This translation is arguably more faithful to the Chinese invitation than Yang & Yang’s (2000:103) rendering. This is because ‘please’ is added in their rendering although it was not at all used by the inviter in the original as can be seen in the above gloss. Presumably, they wanted to signpost to readers that this directive offer, albeit imperative, is normatively polite. Given the critical role played by this word in the interactants’ perceptions of (im)politeness and the investigator’s interpretation of the offer, the presence/absence of this politeness marker is of utmost importance in a study that focuses on (im)politeness manifestations in I&Gs.

The second illustration is concerned with the impact on translation quality of misinterpreting the source text. Precisely, the offer ‘大官宅上事忙, 不留吃茶了。这馒头转送你当茶罢。’ (gloss: Big official your honourable home things busy, not keep eat tea. these steamed buns transfer you for tea) (see details in example (67)) was translated by Yang & Yang (2014:394) as ‘*I have too many things to attend to, so I’m not going to keep you for tea. Please take these buns instead (italics added)*’. According to the translators, the old man gave the gift buns to Shi Fu’s servant, who escorted him home in the evening, because for Yang & Yang the giver (Note ‘I’) was too busy to keep the servant for tea. This is a gross misinterpretation of the source text. That is, 大官 ‘big official’, which is often translated into ‘sir’, is an honorific term of address to the addressee in historical Chinese. Thus, in the above case it was clearly employed by the speaker to refer to the servant to show his respect for the recipient. By the same token, 宅上 ‘your honourable home’ is an honorific/other-elevating term for referring to the hearer’s house, and not the other way round (e.g. 寒舍 ‘cold/humble house’ in example (35) used to refer to one’s own house). Again, like ‘big official’, it refers to the recipient’s house and hence is respectful. Therefore, the abovementioned grounder or reason for the offer could be translated as ‘Sir, you

are too busy at your honourable home...’, which differs diametrically from Yang & Yang’s interpretation.

To mention briefly, another major issue with Yang & Yang’s translation of this specific offer is their ‘over-translation’. As in their rendering of example (1), the utterance initial politeness marker ‘please’ was added despite absence of a corresponding one in the source text as seen in the above gloss.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into eight chapters. Chapter 1 serves as a brief introduction to the whole thesis mainly by providing a rationale for the present study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, in which approaches to (im)politeness and previous empirical I&G studies are critiqued in separate sections. One of the sections in this chapter assesses the existing literature on topics such as the dynamic nature and interactional structure of I&Gs. Another section surveys previous studies on politeness in the history of Chinese with the aim to provide a rationale for the present examination of I&Gs in pre-modern Chinese. Chapter 3 details the research methodology, focusing on the data coding and verification. Chapters 4 and 5 respectively report findings on the interactional structure, pre-offer strategies and strategies of I&Gs. Chapter 6 presents my findings on the response strategies to I&Gs. Chapter 7 discusses the findings in order to show how the present research can make contributions to I&G scholarship in particular and politeness research in general. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a conclusion of the present research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews pragmatic research on invitations and gift-giving. It starts in section 2.2 by evaluating the two major approaches to (im)politeness currently under debate. Sections 2.3 and 2.4 then focus on critiquing the existing studies of the aforementioned two types of offers. This is followed by section 2.5, which aims to establish a rationale for my proposal to examine politeness phenomena in pre-modern Chinese. The final section formulates the research questions addressed in the present research project.

2.2 Approaches to (im)politeness

There is a general consensus that politeness research has to date adopted either a traditional (or modern) or a discursive (or postmodern) approach (Terkourafi 2005; Watts 2005; Haugh 2007; Kadar & Mills 2011; Mills 2011). This section critiques these two approaches to (im)politeness with the aim of setting the present study within the context of current theoretical debates.

2.2.1 The traditional approach

The traditional approach to politeness is represented by the theories of Lakoff (1973/1990), B&L (1987) and Leech (1983/2014) (and presumably Gu 1990). Following discursive politeness studies such as Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Toukourafi (2005), Locher (2006/2012), Locher & Watts (2005) and Kadar & Mills (2011), I will argue that this approach to politeness is ill-

equipped to address the research questions of the present study by assessing some of the main theoretical and methodological assumptions and conceptual bias.

To begin with, the traditional approach is an ‘indirect approach to politeness’ (Held 1992:139). Despite some differences in theoretical and methodological premises, this is partly attributable to their shared Gricean and speech-act theoretic perspective. It thus does not appear surprising that B&L (1987) is assessed as ‘a speech act theory of language’ (Mills 2001:7). This is because many problems with this approach such as their definition of politeness, model of communication, form of analysis and conceptual bias are in some way related to the above dual theoretical premises (cf. Eelen 2001; Terkourafi 2005). Influenced by the theoretical grounding, politeness in these theories is re-conceptualized as arising from an indirect way of speaking, i.e. flouting the CP that assumes that people adhere to the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. It is claimed, for example, that “indirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be” (Leech 1983:108). Regarding B&L’s theory, as noted by Locher (2012), the assumed link between indirectness and politeness is evident in the fact that they equate politeness with the selection of face-redressive strategies in the form of mitigation. For example, it is suggested in the hierarchical ranking of their five super-strategies, viz. the strategy at the lower level is assumed to be more indirect and less imposing and hence more polite than the one at a higher level (B&L 1987:60).

However, the above association between indirectness and politeness assumed by the traditional approach is criticised by a wealth of studies since the publication of the above theories (Wierzbicka 1985; Blum-Kulka 1987; Sifianou 1997; Terkourafi 2001). Watts (2003:69), for example, argues that this assumption runs into trouble in explaining ironic politeness such as ‘Would you think it an imposition on my part if I were to ask you to take your big feet off my

table?'. In a similar vein, Culpeper (2011a) challenges Leech's (1983) assumption by arguing convincingly that:

'Do you have sawdust of brains?' is clearly more indirect than 'You fool' or 'You're stupid', and Leech's prediction would be that it will be interpreted as more polite. (Culpeper 2011a:184)

Regarding non-English languages, empirical evidence from both historical and contemporary Chinese both supports the above argument. That is, indirectness appeared to play a marginal role in performing direct speech acts in the 18th century literature (Skewis 2003) and it appears even irrelevant in contemporary Chinese (Lee-Wong 1994/1999) (2.4.2.1).

In addition to the problematic assumption between indirectness and politeness, the traditional approach to politeness has what Eelen (2001:87) called 'conceptual bias'. One of them, the author noted, is that speaker and language production are allocated more important theoretical role than hearer and language reception. Thus, the analysis carried out by these speaker-centred theories is about 'how individuals produce linguistic politeness, i.e. it is a production model' (Watts 2003:85) rather than the dynamic negotiation of meanings between participants in social interaction. One of the consequences, as acknowledged by B&L (1987:48) in the 1987 reproduction, is that theories taking such an approach to politeness are unable to capture the 'emergent properties which transcend the characteristics of the individuals that jointly produce it' (cf. Clark 1996, Haugh 2007; Arundale 2010). In addition to the influence of their shared theoretical grounding (the CP and speech act theory), this is arguably one of the reasons for their focus on individual, often created utterances in explicating politeness. This approach, as shown in my subsequent review of Gu (1990), tends to assume that linguistic behaviour is inherently (im)polite.

Gu's (1990) theory of politeness

Due to its cultural specificity, it is necessary to evaluate the degree to which Gu's (1990) theory, albeit 'arguably not one of the major theories of politeness' (Eelen 2001:42), is equipped to account for empirical data in Chinese. However, in light of the recent advance in politeness scholarship, I would argue that Gu's theory, in its current form, does not appear to be adequate for the present study.

Above all, it can be argued that Gu's theory adopts a traditional view of politeness. This is perhaps most obvious in the theoretical premises it shares with the above two models of politeness, viz. Gu's theory is 'cast in the vein of the Gricean doctrine of the CP and its maxims' (Gu 1990:245-246). In other words, Gu's theory, like the above classic theories, is 'unwilling to leave the safe harbour of Gricean pragmatics (Watts 2003:204). Thus, many criticisms against Leech (1983) and B&L (1987) such as the utterance-based analysis, focus on speakers, model of communication, understanding of the role and function of contexts equally apply to Gu's theory (cf. Eelen 2001; Watts 2003; Terkourafi 2005; Culpeper 2011). This can be illustrated by why Gu's assumption that invitations in Chinese are intrinsically polite can be problematic.

Although issuing an invitation places the inviter's face (positive face according to Brown and Levinson's distinction) at risk, it is intrinsically polite. Since it manifests the inviter's observance of the Generosity Maxim, i.e. maximising benefit to other (at the motivational level). (Gu 1990:253-254; italics added)

Underlying the assumption of invitations being 'intrinsically polite' (see also Leech 1983:106/134) is its equation of sense with force. A wealth of literature, however, has proved

otherwise. Locher and Watts (2008:78), for instance, argue that ‘no linguistic behaviour...is inherently polite or impolite’. Rather, im/politeness is always subject to discursive struggle (Eelen 2001, Mills 2003/2011, Watts 2003; Locher & Watts 2005; Culpeper 1996/2011).

On the other hand, the claim that offering an invitation places the inviter’s positive face at risk seems to suggest that an invitation is not ‘intrinsically polite’. This self-contradiction is perhaps most discernible from the following claim:

Issuing and accepting an invitation place both the inviter’s and the invitee’s face at risk. For an inviter to issue an invitation is to present his positive face to the invitee for his approval...To accept an invitation is face-risking too, for the invitee may be seen as being greedy. In this face-risking transaction... (Gu 1990:255; italics added)

Thus, for Gu accepting an invitation threatens the recipient’s face (probably negative face) just as the inviter’s positive face is threatened by the offer. Gu’s argument appears to be circular as the above observation could actually be explained by B&L’s (1987) theory (cf. Mao 1994:465).

Moreover, there is increasing evidence that the explanatory power of Gu’s Self-denigration Maxim seems rather limited in explaining empirical data. The author asserts that the maxim absorbs two of the four essential notions underlying the Chinese conception of politeness, i.e. respectfulness and modesty. Indeed, self-denigration/modesty has long been widely viewed as a salient Chinese cultural norm (cf. Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998). Many empirical findings, however, do not appear to lend their support. For example, studies (Yuan 2001; Chen & Yang 2010; He 2012a/b//2014) show consistently that accepting compliments is fairly common in Chinese and perhaps more importantly Chinese speakers increasingly become more receptive of compliments.

Moreover, showing modesty/self-denigration is very likely to be evaluated negatively in certain contexts. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in Chinese interviewees' comments on disagreement responses of compliments:

Some people commented that 'disagreement responses were too formal or polite for the context (there were 15 Mainland Chinese comments like this), or that they seemed too cold or distant... lack of confidence or low self-esteem.... could suggest poor judgement, could put others down, could make others feel uncomfortable, or could imply disrespect. (Spencer-Oatey & Ng 1999:7)

All these perceptions about modesty manifested in responding to compliments are, if not impolite, apparently negative. They arguably cannot be accounted for by Gu's theory (nor by Leech 1983/2014) while they can be comfortably explained by the reconceptualisation of politeness as a discursive and interactional phenomenon that has been gaining momentum in the past fifteen years or so.

Finally, Gu's theory focuses exclusively on politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. Hence the extent to which historical data can be accounted for by the theory has yet to be attested empirically. In the final analysis, as recently humbly self-assessed by the author as 'oversimplistic and monolithic' (Gu 2011:128), this theory, formulated purposely to account for politeness phenomena in Chinese, is deemed unsuitable for investigating (im)politeness behaviour in the present study.

2.2.2 The discursive approach

The discursive approach to (im)politeness has been developed largely in reaction to the traditional theories of politeness as reviewed above. Thus, its history is clearly longer than the term ‘discursive (or postmodern) turn’ may suggest (Haugh 2007a/2013; Grainger 2011; Mills 2011).

Unlike the dual theoretical premises shared by the traditional theories, studies that employ a discursive approach draw on a range of theoretical traditions, bringing together insights from conversation analysis (Haugh 2007b; Arundale 2006/2010), community of practice (Mills 2003), psychology (Spencer-Oatey 2007), and Relevance Theory (Watts 2003; Christie 2007), among others. It is widely now agreed that there are some shared characteristics and emphases in these studies, including, for example, their emphasis on context, the active role of the hearer and participants’ evaluations about (im)politeness behaviour. This is perhaps best summarized by the following observation about the elements shared by (im)politeness studies that endeavour to provide an alternative to the modern approach to politeness, especially the work of B&L (1987):

theorists are no longer content to analyse politeness and impoliteness as if they were realised through the use of isolated phrases and sentences. It is clear that politeness and impoliteness are, amongst other things, judgements about linguistic phenomena and judgements are generally constituted over a number of turns or even over much longer stretches of interaction. Furthermore, theorists who take a discursive approach generally are concerned with issues of context. (Mills 2011:26)

Thus, issues with the traditional theories such as their theoretical and methodological assumptions and conceptual bias including their focus on speaker are challenged in one way or

another by the discursive approach. For instance, as already noted, politeness in traditional theories is conceptualised as something like Locher's (2004/2006) 'politeness for the speaker' rather than the hearer evaluations or judgements. Discursive studies, however, put hearer perception on a par with the speaker behaviour in the interactional dyad, thereby avoiding the modern approach's conceptual bias towards to (the speaker's) production (cf. Ellen 2001: 179-183) and its assumption of the intimate association between indirectness and politeness. This is perhaps clearest in the discursive view that face and politeness are 'achieved by participants engaged in face-to-face communication in situated relationships' (Arundale 2010:2078; see also Haugh 2007b).

Rather than assuming the close link between indirectness, linguistic structure and politeness, Locher & Watts (2005:10) redefine politeness as a discursive concept arising out of interactants' perceptions and judgments of their own and others' verbal behaviour. Moreover, for discursive theorists, '(im)politeness is a term that is struggled over at present, has been struggled over in the past and will, in all probability, continue to be struggled over in the future' (Watts 2003:9). Therefore, this emerging approach would be able to allow us to describe and account for contemporary and historical (im)politeness phenomena.

2.2.3 Summary

To sum up briefly, a distinction can be made between the traditional and discursive approaches to politeness based on their theoretical grounding, definitions of (im)politeness, assumptions, major claims and arguments. The discursive approach that views (im)politeness as a participant's subjective judgements about her own and the co-participant's behaviour is able to address issues with the traditional approach.

2.3 Studies on invitations and gift-giving

Building on the above critique of (im)politeness theories, this section assesses empirical I&G literature. My main aim is to show that the ‘traditional’ or second-order view of politeness is adopted in most I&G studies while a CA-inspired approach is used in a few of them. I argue that despite differences in their theoretical assumptions, some methods of analysis employed by these two types of studies can be combined to develop an alternative approach to examining I&Gs by incorporating tenets of the discursive view of (im)politeness. This is followed by a survey of studies of politeness in the history of Chinese to show that I&Gs in historical Chinese remain unstudied. On this basis, the research questions of the present study are formulated at the end of this chapter.

2.3.1 The hybrid nature of invitations and gift-giving

Invitations, which are viewed by Leech (2014:180) as a subclass of offers, are far more complex than they may appear. In this section, following studies such as Barron (2005) and Aijmer (2014[1996]), I would argue for the hybrid nature of I&Gs, viz. they are directive, commissive, and conditional in nature. An important caveat here is that there is not the slightest suggestion that the utterance-based analysis adopted by most studies cited below should be used in (im)politeness research (2.2).

Invitations are categorised by Searle (1976:11) as directives as they attempt ‘to get the hearer to do something’. Thus, an invitation for him is the speaker’s attempt to direct the invitee to a particular course of action specified in the proposition. Other speech acts categorised into this group include requests, suggestions, and advice, among others. Moreover, according to Searle, directives differ in force, ranging from ‘modest attempts’ such as invitations to ‘very fierce attempts’ including, for example, insistence, order and command. This classification, as noted

by Barron (2005), is followed by many linguists such as Edmondson & House (1981). Returning to approaches to (im)politeness reviewed above, it is arguable that the directive aspect of offers appears to be overemphasized by theories such as Leech (1983:108) and B&L (1987:60) that associate indirectness with politeness (cf. Locher 2012:2). Regarding I&G research, this assumption, as argued in 2.4.2, underlies many invitation studies such as Garcia (1999/2008) and Felix-Brasdefer (2003) that adopt the CCSARP framework.

However, the meanings of invitations appear to be far richer than as assumed by Searle and his followers. One of the criticisms, for example, is that invitations are not only directive but also conditional. In Ohmann's (1972:125) taxonomy of speech acts, for instance, 'Stay for half an hour, and I'll make you a drink' is viewed as a conditional offer. That is, the success of the invitation is contingent upon the invitee's agreement or willingness to comply with the offer (cf. Wierzbicka 1987:82). Or in other words, 's intends that event will not take place unless *h* indicates agreement or compliance' (Leech's 1983:219; emphasis original). Similarly, Wunderlich (1977) proposes that a class of conditional speech acts be added to Searle's taxonomy. Speech acts such as an invitation, the author argues, is typically realised in the form of 'If you want it, I shall do *a*' (Wunderlich 1977:43, emphasis original; cited in Barron 2005:142). This appears to be consistent with Leech's (2014:181) recent observation that a typical offer is framed as a question about the recipient's volition (e.g. 'Would you like something to eat?').

A still further argument is that more is involved in invitations than the above. This is because when issuing an invitation the speaker 'also obligates herself to what is entailed by it' (Mao 1994:80). As noted by studies such as Barron (2005), this appears to be something that has been neglected by Searle. A closer look into the literature shows that Searle's failure to consider this

aspect of invitations was questioned by his contemporaries. Most notably, while acknowledging the directive nature of invitations, Hancher (1979) argues:

If I invite you to my party and then refuse to let you in, you will normally have grounds to object. The reason for this is that *an invitation is not only a directive but also a commissive*: it commits the speaker to a certain course of behaviour himself. (1979:5; italics original)

Thus, according to the author, speech acts such as invitations should be called ‘commissive directives’ as they combine both illocutionary force.

Therefore, invitations, and by the same token, gift-giving are directive, commissive and conditional. Nonetheless, it is important to note that as suggested by the observation of Wunderlich (1977) and Leech (2014) about the typical realisations of conditional offers in English, in empirical research a certain aspect of the hybrid nature may become salient (at the speech level) with the others operating in the background in different contexts.

2.3.2 Approaches to invitations and gift-giving

Evidence from relevant literature indicates that the face-saving theory is dominant in I&G literature while CA-inspired approaches are used in a few studies. The discursive approach to (im)politeness as reviewed above is yet to take roots in I&G studies.

B&L’s (1987) theory of politeness is used in the overwhelming majority of I&G studies. As noted by O’Driscoll (1996:1), Watts (2003:98) and Brown (2015:330), this theory is especially favoured by studies with a cross-cultural and/or comparative perspective. (Varieties of) languages from which invitations are derived include, among others, AmE/Latin American

Spanish (Felix-Brasdefer 2003); Persian/English (Eslami 2005); Farsi/AmE (Salmani-Nodoushan 2006) and Venezuelan/Argentinean (Garcia 2008). Some intra-lingual/cultural research has also been conducted within B&L's framework. A common issue with these studies is their failure to show convincingly how the theory is suitable for their research despite many criticisms as discussed in 2.2. For instance, in some studies, especially those based on DCT (discourse completion test/task) data such as Chen *et al* (1995), this theory appears to be used somewhat straightforwardly. In others 'this theory was chosen because...it seems to account adequately for the present data' and because it "still has a great deal of analytical mileage in that it provides a framework for understanding social behaviour: even when that behaviour goes against their predictions" (Christie 2005:6) without specifying the 'mileage' and explaining why some social behaviour may not be predicted or accounted for by B&L (1987). Similarly, in studies such as Al-Khatib (2006) on invitations in Jordanian society, a rather detailed account of the speech act theory and B&L's second-order notion of face is provided rather than addressing the numerous criticisms or showing how they are adequate to account for their data.

However, some early studies (Wolfson 1981/1989/1990; Lii-Shih 1994)¹ have already provided empirical evidence for the unsuitability of B&L's theory for examining offers such as invitations (2.3.4). Most notably, Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Zhu *et al* (2000) show that I&Gs in Chinese are reiterative, ritualised and polite or appropriate for the cultural insiders. Despite their disagreement about how Chinese data should be interpreted, these studies all argue that this politeness phenomenon cannot be accounted for by B&L's conceptualisation of face and their assumption of I&Gs as a single speech act. Moreover, this is supported by increasing evidence from offers in other languages, including Arabic (Grainger *et al* 2015), BrE (Barron 2005), IrE

¹ Lii-Shih's (1994) study examines invitations, gift-giving and offers in Taiwan Chinese and hence is not assessed in detail in the present study, which focuses on Mainland Chinese.

(Barron 2005) and Persian (Koutlaki 2002) (cf. O'Driscoll 2007:469). Interestingly, the inadequacy of the face-saving theory in analysing highly structured discourse such as invitations and invitation responses is acknowledged by B&L themselves:

Speech act theory forces a sentence-based, speaker-oriented mode of analysis, requiring attribution of speech categories...the alternative is to avoid taking such categories as the basis of discourse analysis, choosing other more directly demonstrable categories as done in conversation analysis... (1987:10)

Perhaps more explicitly and directly, their FTAs are reassessed as not necessarily inherent in single acts although no alternatives are offered (B&L 1987:233). For these reasons, the face-saving theory, as argued by scholars such as Mao (1994), Bargiela-Chiappini (2003), Watts (2003) and Arundale (2009/2010), cannot account for politeness as manifested in repetitive behaviour, which is characterised by Leech (2014:7-8) as one of the nine characteristics of politeness.

Apart from B&L's theory, as alluded to above, CA-inspired approaches that emphasize contextualised analysis seem to provide a good alternative to the traditional approach to I&G research. Exemplary in this regard are the studies of Mao (1992) and Zhu *et al* (2000), respectively focusing on invitations and gift-giving in Chinese. For instance, drawing upon the insights of conversation analysis, Mao's (1992:90) study demonstrates how Chinese invitational discourse "embraces both serious verbal acts and verbal play, and its tripartite structure makes it possible for the participants to attend to each other's 'negative face, and 'positive face' in a single speech event". On this basis, the author argues that the traditional speech act interpretation and B&L's account of inviting misses the complexity and meaning of this aspect of invitations.

However, a CA-inspired form of analysis is by no means immune to criticism. For instance, as further reviewed in the subsequent sections, some of the major drawbacks of these studies seem to include their neglect of a more detailed analysis of politeness strategies used at different stages of SM I&Gs, the possible variation of politeness strategies in I&Gs depending on the types (invitation vs. gift-giving) and functions (instrumental vs. affective) of the offer.

2.3.3 Affective and instrumental invitations and gift-giving

In Chinese/Japanese scholarship, there is a research tradition of distinguishing between affective or expressive and instrumental gift-giving according to the motivation or social function of the offer. For example, Japanese anthropologist Befu (1966) maintained that in affective gift-giving, ‘the existing status relationship between the giver and the receiver determines the conditions of the gift-exchange (kind and value of gift to be given), and gift-giving supports the status relationship’. In the instrumental use of gift-giving, by contrast, ‘the conditions of exchange (nature and value of the gift) determine the status relationships, that is, one manipulates the status relations by manipulating gift-giving’ (Befu 1966-67:173-74; cited in Yan 1996:45).

The above distinction has recently been introduced into pragmatics research by Zhu *et al* (2000) through anthropological studies (Yang 1994; Kipnis 1996; Yan 1996; Joy 2001). According to Zhu *et al*, a gift in Chinese culture is given either to express friendship and good feelings or to build and expand social networks. Affective gift-giving in Chinese, they argue, is an important communicative event with elaborately ritualised (re)offering and declining due to its socio-cultural symbolism. Moreover, they proceed to claim that the linguistic manifestations of instrumental gift-giving diverge considerably from affective gift-giving:

when gifts are given as an instrument in building and expanding social networks, they are offered and accepted in the most discreet way possible, *without the ritual plying and declining associated with 'expressive' gift-giving*. (Zhu *et al* 2000:84; italics added)

Actually, discreetness is characterised as a 'tactic in the art of [instrumental] gift-giving' in Yang's (1994:132) study that scrutinises the interaction between gifts, favours, banquets and building of social relationships. Giving gifts in a discreet way, according to one of her interviewees' account, is to avoid embarrassing the recipient in front of others and the ensuing rejection.

However, to understand the full import of this distinction at least two issues are worthy of further exploration. Firstly, the discreet nature of instrumental gift-giving remains to be elucidated as it is only mentioned in passing, but not discussed in any detail in the aforementioned works. This is especially true in Zhu *et al* (2000), which, to the best of my knowledge, is the only study that has to date touched upon this phenomenon from a pragmatics perspective. Consequently, it is not yet clear how discreetness was manifested linguistically in the process of presenting and receiving gifts. Secondly and more importantly, Zhu *et al*'s assertion raises the question of whether there is evidence that instrumental gift-giving (and presumably invitations) is devoid of "the ritual plying and declining associated with 'expressive' gift-giving" as claimed above. On the contrary, it seems plausible to assume that rituality can be essential to both affective and instrumental gift-giving despite possible differences in elaborateness. For one thing, 'there is no faceless communication' (Scollon *et al* 1983[2011]:49/58; see also Goffman 1967; Tracy 1990; Locher & Watts 2005; O'Driscoll 2011; Locher 2012). To put it differently, facework always plays a role in interpersonal interactions in public arenas or private quarters (Goffman 1967). For another, consistent with discursive approaches to politeness (2.2), a general consensus among

anthropologists is that the boundary between the two functions or motives is not clear-cut. For example, according to Yang's (1994:127) observation, the two types of gift-giving often shade off into each other. Further, some instrumental gifts were given under the guise of expressive gifts (Yang 1994:136). Moreover, this phenomenon observed in urban Beijing is also found to be true in rural China: 'the pure types of affective and instrumental gifts do not exist' (Yan 1996:45).

Therefore, a natural question emerges of how the above two social functions are manifested in I&Gs and how strategies of making these offers and responses may differ according to the motivations.

2.3.4 The interactional structure of invitations and gift-giving

As in English (e.g. Barron 2003/2005) and Spanish (e.g. Garcia 1999/2008), the interactional structure of I&Gs in Chinese has been examined by some studies. To begin with, it has been argued that 'Chinese invitational activity is a highly structured interaction' (Mao 1994:477). Chinese invitations thus should be viewed as 'a type of discourse' (Mao 1992:79) or 'a transaction' (Gu 1990:252) rather than a single or co-operative speech act. Gu went one step further by claiming that 'the number of talk exchanges completing a successful inviting-transaction average three' (1990:253). It is characterised by the author as a schemata prototypical of the Chinese way of inviting. Similarly, Chinese invitations are characterised by Mao as featuring a tripartite structure, consisting of the 'initial interaction', 'ritualised middle', and 'pragmatic closure' (i.e. pragmatic and functional sequence) (Mao 1992:82).

With reference to gift-giving, Zhu *et al* (2000) seems to be the only pragmatic study that has explored this politeness phenomenon.² In addition to four instances of SUM offers, all 71 offers in their corpus were eventually accepted despite initial declinations. Thus, the overwhelming majority of their data were sequentially embedded, that is, they were either prefaced or followed by at least a conversational exchange. Moreover, despite the ‘unmarkedness’ in a few instances, all the offers in the aforementioned studies were accepted only after varying numbers of reoffers.

Interestingly, although gift-giving is not actually examined in his study, the ‘interactional logic’ of Chinese invitations identified in Mao’s (1994) study was extrapolated to this type of offer:

Chinese gift-giving and -receiving shares the same interactional quality. It readily promotes a kind of ‘prolonged’ verbal interaction characterised by a succession of an ‘offer’ and ‘refusal’ before the receiving party eventually ‘gives in’ and consummates the activity — though the wrapped gift is seldom opened in the presence of the giver for fear that such an act may embarrass the giver if the gift is not to the receiver’s liking. (Mao 1992:86)

Thus, for Mao the schemata or tripartite structure of invitations operates in gift-giving. However, this assumption does not seem to hold in all cases. The claim that I&Gs were all (eventually) accepted not only appears to be counterintuitive but also seems to be-at odds with anthropological studies (e.g. Yang 1994:133, 145) that observed instances of refusing an invitation or gift without initial ritual declinations in Chinese. In pragmatics it has been found, for example, that invitations

² In Lii-Shih’s (1994) study gift-giving is lumped alongside invitations and offers under the rubric ‘hearer-beneficial face satisfying acts’ (FSAs). Underlying this overarching label without distinction is the assumption that FSAs are a set of monolithic speech acts. More importantly, the label FSA seems to suggest that these three types of offers are always beneficial to the hearer and face satisfying. This, as argued in 2.2, is a typical traditional or modern view of (im)politeness that may be inconsistent with the emic notion of politeness. The notion of acts which enhance the hearer’s face has been advanced by various scholars of politeness, under various labels, as a counterweight to Brown & Levinson’s emphasis on face threat (cf. Bayraktoglu 1991; Kerbrat-Orrechioni 1997/2005; Sifianou 2001; Leech 2014).

and gift-giving in Taiwan Chinese were sometimes rejected ‘with explicit or good reasons’, which is often accompanied by the expressions of ‘thank you’ or ‘sorry’ (Lii-Shih 1994:138). In a similar vein, it is argued that ‘most speakers will have refused a thoroughly undesired invitation with appropriate delay and expressions of regret at a competing engagement’ (Atkinson & Heritage 1996:54; see also Komter 2005). Moreover, findings from studies focusing on refusal strategies also suggest that declining an invitation or gift at the first attempt does not appear to be unusual (Chen *et al* 1995; Hong 2008) although it has been found to be a dispreferred response in many contexts (Schegloff 1990/2007; Leech 2014).

2.4 Strategies of invitations and gift-giving and responses

This section reviews existing literature on strategies of I&Gs and responses to these offers. It aims to that there are two major issues with previous studies. Methodologically, pre-offers, head acts and modifications, acceptance and refusals and, if in sequentially marked (SM), variation of strategies at different interactional stages have been (largely) neglected or severed from each other. Theoretically, most studies that have examined the above-mentioned aspects of I&Gs are framed within a modern approach to (im)politeness. I will argue that in order to gain a holistic understanding of I&Gs, we need to adopt an integrative method of examination that is couched in a discursive approach to (im)politeness.

2.4.1 Pre-offer strategies

As is well-known, some of the most influential contributions to pre-offers, especially pre-invitations, has been made by sociological studies (Drew 1984; Schegloff 1990/2007; Terasaki 2004), which all distance themselves from the utterance-based speech act theory (cf. Levinson 1983; Goodwin & Heritage 1990). For instance, by examining the ‘strategic/sequential’ dimension of actions (Schegloff 1989), these studies consistently show that questions such as

‘Are you doing anything tonight?’, which is frequently cited in subsequent studies (Schegloff 1990; Lerner 1996; Levinson 2006), is characteristically used to preface an invitation. Such a question enables the co-participant ‘to abort a projected interaction sequence in which conflict, disagreement, or rejection might emerge’ (Goodwin & Heritage 1990:297; see also Lerner 1996:306; Terasaki 2004:180). B&L (1987:10) acknowledge that this politeness manifestation “escapes some of the conceptual problems of ‘indirect speech acts’ in traditional theories”.

In addition, my literature survey indicates that interest in pre-offer strategies seems to have started in sociolinguistics more or less before conversation analysis. A series of studies carried out by Wolfson and her colleagues around the 1980s is most notable (Wolfson 1981/1989/1990; Wolfson *et al* 1983). For instance, she made the following observation about invitations in AmE:

The great majority of social commitments are reached through a process of negotiation whereby the interlocutors move through steps that lead to a completed invitation. The material which makes up the opening to negotiation, ‘the lead’, may be seen as a definable discourse segment. (Wolfson 1981:12)

Wolfson’s ‘lead’ clearly refers to what is known as pre-invitation. According to the author, very often the ‘lead’ is a question or comment which signals that an invitation is to follow if the response is encouraging. The lead thus serves to establish the addressee’s availability or willingness to engage in the social activity. Moreover, several types of ‘lead’ were observed. One of the typical ways is by expressing a desire for a social commitment without specifying details such as time or venue (e.g. ‘I want to see you tomorrow if you are free’). A second common way is to discover the addressee’s availability. The ‘lead’ was not discussed by the author in relation to politeness, which did not develop into a distinctive (sub)discipline until late

1980's. However, as will be argued in 7.3.1, Wolfson's contention that pre-invitations function as the opening to what she called 'social commitment', i.e. invitation and response, has a lot to offer in our understanding of politeness as a discursive concept (Locher 2006).

However, pre-offer (or 'lead') strategies appear to have been largely neglected in Chinese I&G literature. To begin with, none of the studies on invitations seems to have discussed in any detail the impact pre-invitation strategies may have on the participant's perception of (im)politeness. Indeed, '... I wonder if you are free this evening' embedded in one of the illustrative examples in Mao (1992:81) appears to be a typical form of establishing the possibility to get together and hence exemplifies a pre-invitation. Nevertheless, this pre-invitation was passed over in the interest of the tripartite structure the study is trying to highlight. As a result, its importance of understanding participants' perception[s] of (im)politeness in invitations has not hitherto been fully appreciated. Consequently, as will be further argued later, an important interactional aspect of politeness fails to be captured by the analysis of these studies (cf. Watts 2003; Arundale 2006/2010; Locher 2006; Haugh 2007b).

There appears to be a similar issue with studies on gift-giving in Chinese. In addition to studies such as Lii-Shih (1994), the most notable is apparently Zhu *et al*'s (2000) exploration of the sequential organisation of gift-giving and acceptance in Chinese. According to the authors, the overwhelming majority of offers they collected were either prefaced by sequences of exchange or followed by additional elaboration such as justification. Nonetheless, a closer examination shows that only the first two of the seven gift offering and acceptance strategies identified by the authors could be viewed as pre-offer strategies: 'A question or statement relating to the occasion of the gift offer' (i.e. Strategy 1) and 'A question inquiring about the target recipient's interest in something connected to the gift' (i.e. Strategy 2). All the other strategies appear to be offer

rather than pre-offer strategies. For instance, ‘A small present for you. I know it’s your birthday tomorrow’ was used by the authors to illustrate the strategy “the offer is accompanied by ‘ratification’ or ‘excuse’” (Zhu *et al* 2000:88-91) is arguably the offer proper rather than a pre-offer.

Consequently, as suggested in the preceding paragraphs, many other possible pre-gifting strategies have been left untapped. Possibly, this is due to absence of more pre-offer strategies in their data. If this is true, then their data collection method (i.e. participant observation) may be partly responsible. For instance, it is not very likely that an instrumental offer would be made in the presence of a third party, i.e. the observer, due to its discreet nature (Yang 1994; Zhu *et al* 2000) because such an offer may sometimes be associated with being immoral, unethical, corrupt and antisocial (Yang 1994:51).

Drawing on previous studies, I would argue that at least two more types of pre-offer strategies in Chinese await investigation. Firstly, studies such as Isaacs & Clark (1990) and Yang (1994) show that invitations and gifts are sometimes offered only after they are solicited. In Isaacs & Clark’s study, for instance, a large number of invitations in AmE were solicited by the recipient either through the context or directly. Regarding the direct strategy, the authors noted:

B can also solicit an invitation directly. Invitations are usually extended when A can anticipate B’s desires. But B can explicitly request an invitation when B believes that A can’t or won’t anticipate B’s desires. (Isaacs & Clark 1990:500)

More interestingly, most solicited invitations in their study were found to be insincere or ostensible (or ‘ambiguous’, Wolfson 1981/1983/1989; or ‘ritual’, Schollon *et al* 2012). Precisely,

69 percent of the insincere invitations were issued through the context and 6 percent more issued after an explicit request, as opposed to 19 percent of the genuine invitations solicited indirectly (Isaacs & Clark 1990:500).

Therefore, it seems plausible to assume that I&Gs in Chinese can also be executed only after being solicited at least on certain occasions. Moreover, the possibility of solicitation as a pre-offer strategy in Chinese culture is partly supported by Yang's observation about gift-giving in urban Beijing:

At some point before or after the offer, this person may in the course of conversation make the request, or the request may be made long after the gift has been delivered...A skilled transaction is carried out through *suggestion* and *innuendo*; *direct or outright requests are avoided*. (Yang 1994:131; my italics)

The above ethnographic data actually describes the use of pre- or post-offer strategies in offering instrumental gifts. Precisely, gift-giving is sometimes inexplicably linked to a request, which, according to the author, is often framed very indirectly (see italics) despite the lack of an analysis of the underlying motives or intentions. Unfortunately, however, it appears that the impact of these strategies on participants' perceptions of (im)politeness has to date been neglected in Chinese I&G scholarship. It is thus essential to that pre-offer strategies be thoroughly investigated so as to gain a better understanding of how I&Gs as a discourse phenomenon were perceived by the offerers and recipients in relation to (im)politeness.

2.4.2 Invitations and gift-giving

2.4.2.1 Head acts

Garcia's (1999/2008) studies seem to be the first attempt to use the influential Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989) as the methodological framework for invitation research. Based on the assumption that invitations are directive speech acts, strategies of invitations in Venezuelan Spanish were first classified into head acts and supportive moves, respectively referring to 'the minimal unit[s] which can realise a request [invitation]; [they are] the core of the request [invitation] sequence' and 'unit[s] external to the request, which modif[y] its impact by either aggravating or mitigating its force' (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:275-276). These dichotomous strategies were further categorised within B&L's (1987) theory as deference and solidarity politeness strategies (Scollon & Scollon 1983). These strategies and moves are then analysed within B&L's (1987) theory of politeness.

Drawing on studies such as Bella (2009), I would argue that the above methodology is at odds with discursive views of politeness. Above all, as shown in 2.3.1 above, invitations are not just directive, but commissive and conditional. It appears, however, that only one aspect of this hybrid nature of invitations was built into the framework of the CCSARP and Garcia (1999/2008). This limitation appears to be particularly clear in the way head act strategies were coded: 'A Request[invitation] strategy is the obligatory choice of the level of the directness by which the Request[invitation] is realised... the Request[invitation] strategies [mood derivable till mild hint] ... are ordered according to decreasing degree of directness. They are mutually exclusive' (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:278). One of the assumptions underlying this scheme is that invitations are directive and hence impinge on the addressee's freedom of action. However, as noted by

Bella (2009:245), apart from the potential imposition, invitations can also express approval and liking of the addressee. As I argued in 2.3.1, it is further noted by the author that:

invitations encompass a commissive component since ‘in issuing an invitation the speaker (S) makes a commitment to provide a course of action that is beneficial for the hearer (H)’ (Eslami 2005:455). This seems to be the main distinctive feature between invitations and requests, since the latter do not entail any obvious benefit for the addressee. (Bella 2009:245)

Thus, the above head act coding scheme based solely on one of the three defining features of invitations (and gift-giving) appears unsuitable for examining people’s dynamic perceptions of (im)politeness in executing I&Gs.

Moreover, underlying this framework and specifically the coding scheme of head acts is the assumption that indirectness and politeness are always positively correlated just as the super-strategies in B&L (1987:60) are ordered along the dimension of indirectness. A considerable amount of evidence, however, shows that politeness cannot be simplistically equated with degree of indirectness (Wierzbicka 1995; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Culpeper & Archer 2008; Locher 2006/2012) (2.2). For instance, Culpeper (2011a:183-186) argues that the correlation between indirectness and (im)politeness is bi-directional. On the one hand, of the utterances that are potentially impolite, few are bald on record; on the other hand, utterances such as ‘Do you have sawdust for brains?’ would normally be interpreted as more impolite than ‘You fool’ or ‘You’re stupid’ (2.2.1). In a similar vein, with respect to Chinese, Lee-Wong’s analysis reveals that Chinese respondents overwhelmingly prefer direct bald on-record request strategy such that ‘anything that can be expressed directly is preferred’ (Lee-Wong 1994:511; see also Lee-Wong 1999; Skewis 2003).

Perhaps more importantly, there is evidence that perceptions of indirectness vary greatly from individual to individual. This is found to be closely related to an individual's style of language use. It is argued, for example, that:

People differ in terms of whether they express their meanings directly or indirectly and whether they look for indirect meanings in remarks of others. (Hotgraves 1997:624)

Thus, identifying nine mutually-exclusive types of head acts of invitations and placing them on a directness-indirectness continuum, as Garcia's (1999/2008) study does, would run the risk of imposing the investigator's interpretation or drawing an easy link between linguist forms, (in)directness, and, by implication, degree of (im)politeness.

On the contrary, the head act coding scheme developed by Barron's (2005) study, which focuses exclusively on offering in IrE and BrE, appears to be a promising alternative. Above all, a notable advantage of Barron's analysis of invitation strategies is that the commissive, directive and conditional aspects of offers are all incorporated into the scheme (2.3.1). Precisely, on the top level, three superstrategies, i.e. preference, directive and execution were differentiated building on previous studies such as Schneider (2003), Aijmer (2014[1996]) and Barron (2003). As discussed above, these superstrategies, by definition, respectively highlight the conditional (e.g. *Will you have a cup of tea?*), directive/imperative (e.g. *Come in and have a cup of tea*) and commissive (e.g. *I could offer some help*) nature of the offer in question (Barron 2005:151-153). Thus, unlike the head act coding scheme in the CCSARP and Garcia (1999/2008), the full hybrid nature of invitations and gift-giving is built into Barron's scheme. Moreover, as indicated above, another important benefit of Barron's scheme lies in the fact that, as seen from the illustrative examples, at least to a certain degree, it avoids the issue of coding head act strategies by

distinguishing nine degrees of indirectness, which are then quantified and interpreted as polite or impolite merely according to the degree of indirectness assumed by the CCSARP and Garcia's (1999/2008) study.

2.4.2.2 Modifications

Apart from studies such as Bella (2011) and Leech (2014) that discuss modification of offers and invitations, to my best knowledge, Garcia (1999/2008) and Barron (2005) represent some of the most comprehensive studies on this topic. Interestingly, modification strategies were approached in a similar way in both studies despite their differences in dealing with head acts as assessed above. Thus, there appears to be a generally accepted method of analysing modification strategies in I&G literature.

In Barron's (2005) study, for instance, two main types of external moves were identified as supporting head acts of offers, namely explicit conditionals (e.g. *if you want*) and grounders, i.e. reasons of the offer. Explicit conditionals, according to the author, are 'phrases which...accompany an offer when it is clear that the action is of benefit to the hearer' (Barron 2005:161; see also Aijmer (2014[1996]); Schneider 2003). The author maintains that this modification move mitigates the force of a particular offer by underlining its conditional nature, hence representing a negative politeness strategy. In addition, as in Blum-Kulka *et al* (1989), grounders provide a reason or excuse for the offer, by which the speaker justifies her imposition or 'explains the impingement of the hearer's negative face' (Barron 2005:164). These findings about various modification strategies, including internal and external moves, according to Leech, serve as evidence of a major contribution of the CCSARP: 'speech acts should not be equated with single utterances (as in the Austin-Searle tradition)' (Leech 2014:37). Thus, head acts and supporting moves could be arguably used as units of analysis in investigating I&Gs based on the

understanding that whether the head act and modification strategies and supportive moves are polite or impolite need to be examined in specific contexts (2.2).

2.4.3 Responding to invitations and gift-giving

As noted above, invitation responses have attracted a considerable amount of attention over the past decades. Previous studies fall into one of the following three types. The first type examines invitations and responses simultaneously despite differences in focus and approaches (e.g. Wolfson 1981/1989/1990; Isaacs & Clark 1990; Mao 1992; Garcia 1999; Salmani-Nodoushan 2006; Bella 2009; Leech 2014). Then, studies of the second type such as Garcia (1992), Felix-Brasdefer (2003/2006), Bella (2011), Hong (2011) and Farnia & Wu (2012) exclusively deal with invitation refusals. Finally, there are also a few works such as Chen *et al* (1995) and Yang (2008) that examine refusal strategies in different situations, one of which involves refusing an offer or invitation. The literature shows that gift-giving and responses have been investigated previously, but for unknown reasons Zhu *et al* (2000), as already noted, seems to be the only study from a pragmatics perspective despite the considerable interest in anthropology and sociology (e.g. Mauss 1954[1990]; Sherry 1983; Yang 1994; Yan 1996).

A survey of the literature shows that I&G responses are generally approached with two views, roughly parallel to the two approaches to I&Gs discussed in 2.3.2 above. One view emphasizes the structure of offers more or less at the cost of details at each of the interactional stages. In contrast, however, the other view underlines specific response strategies and linguistic realisations somewhat at the expense of losing sight of the bigger picture. Thus, in the following subsections, by critiquing relevant studies, I would argue that a balanced approach should be adopted by incorporating the above two views so that we can see both ‘woods’ and ‘trees’.

2.4.3.1 Accepting invitations and gifts

As suggested at the outset of this section, studies of I&G responses are heavily biased toward refusals, which is represented by Garcia's (1999) study that examines refusals in addition to offering strategies. A few studies have indeed explored accepting invitations and gifts and different methodological frameworks are used as reviewed below.

To begin with, despite their tendency to highlight ritual refusals, most studies based on ethnographic data indeed discussed acceptance strategies, but often very briefly. This seems to be at odds with Mao's (1992/1994) observation that the ritual play needs to terminate with a 'pragmatic closure' (cf. 2.3.4). Furthermore, the final round of exchange, according to the author, "is oriented towards 'positive politeness' strategy, fostering a sense of intimacy and solidarity" (Mao 1992:88; see also Garcia 1999). Specifically, the invitee accepts the invitation 'with some kind of gratitude' (Mao 1992:88).

Likewise, Zhu *et al*'s (2000) analysis of gift acceptance strategies appears to be far from specific although the study claims to examine 'The sequential organisation of gift offering and *acceptance* in Chinese' (Zhu *et al* 2000:81; italics added). According to the authors, since most offers they collected were sequentially marked (cf. 2.3.4), the recipient needs to respond to what they call 'additional materials', many of which are equivalent to 'grounders' in Garcia (1999/2008) and Barron (2005). In so doing, the 'seesaw battle' (Zhu *et al* 2000:95) (dubbed 'ritualised middle' in Mao 1994 and 'insistence-response' stage in Garcia 1999) is initiated before responding to the offer itself. Consequently, like Mao (1992), their analysis gives emphasis to refusals such that the actual acceptance strategies, if any, is not given sufficient attention: 'The final acceptance is often marked by the recipient with expressions of reluctance' (Zhu *et al* 2000:98).

However, as suggested above, previous analysis of the final acceptance of I&Gs seems to have some limitations. First, the seemingly different strategies of accepting ‘with some kind of gratitude’ and accepting ‘with expressions of reluctance’ can be strikingly similar or different. As suggested by the final acceptance ‘*Thank you, then*’ in Zhu *et al* (2000:95), an offer can be accepted with gratitude (note ‘thank you’) while showing reluctance (note ‘then’). However, reluctance is not necessarily expressed alongside gratitude, as in the example ‘*You make me really uncomfortable*’ (Zhu *et al* 2000:98). Thus it appears that the acceptance strategies observed by these studies are incomplete and hence merit a systematic investigation. In this sense, Mao’s extrapolation of his findings to gift-giving is apparently not supported by empirical data.

Second, it remains unclear to what degree strategies of accepting affective and instrumental I&Gs converge or diverge. This, first of all, brings up an important oversight in studies such as Mao (1992) as they do not even seem to realise that the social function of an offer can have a direct bearing on the choice of response strategies as discussed above. Then, as the passage quoted in subsection 2.3.3 shows, Zhu *et al*’s study indeed touches upon this issue. Unfortunately, however, their brief metapragmatic comment was not fleshed out with empirical data.

Moreover, two questions seem to have been left unaddressed in the literature. First, is there any difference between acceptance strategies in SUM (sequentially unmarked) and SM I&Gs. As shown by Lii-Shih (1994), SUM offers in Taiwan Chinese are usually accepted directly and explicitly while accepting SM offers appears much more indirect and inexplicit. However, no systematic investigation has to date been carried out. This oversight needs to be addressed if we want to better understand I&Gs in mainland Chinese. In addition, some of the final acceptance responses in Zhu *et al* sound like an exemplary refusal rather than acceptance. For example, ‘*you*

make me really uncomfortable' (p.98) was said to accept a gift while *'I feel uncomfortable'* (p.95) refused the offer despite striking similarity in their propositional meanings. It appears that these highly context-sensitive responses were not given the attention they deserve. There is thus a need to explicate the ambiguity and equivocation by examining how they were taken up by the offerer in the ensuing exchanges and/or the recipient's non-verbal moves. For instance, in the Chinese cultural context the recipient may sometimes actually hold out her hand for the gift while uttering something inconsistent with her gesture that is merely meant to show reluctance (cf. Ma 1996; Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998).

In the final analysis, Mao's and Zhu *et al*'s studies do not appear to offer much insight into understanding how invitations and gifts are actually accepted at the final interactional stage because of their failure to elaborate on the strategies they identified and their neglect of SUM and instrumental offers.

However, some studies on other languages provide much more detailed analysis of the actual acceptance strategies. Al-Khatib's (2006) work on invitations in Jordanian society is one of the notable examples. By analysing the components of responses to oral and written invitations, including, among others, those from spontaneous and naturally occurring conversations, an acceptance response in Jordanian Arabic was composed of one or more of what the author called 'speech act components' (Al-Khatib 2006:277): In descending order of frequency, they are (a) thanking and appreciating, (b) offering good wishes, (c) stressing common membership, (d) complimenting, and (e) expressing gladness, which are also confusingly referred to in the study as 'acceptance strategies' although they are not mutually exclusive. Among them the dominant (a) accounts for half of the total components in the study. Element (b) is the second most frequently used as it was found in about one fifth of the responses.

Similarly, Felix-Brasdefer (2003) also touches upon the positive response of invitations. Unlike Al-Khatib, explicit acceptance (e.g. *'Okay, I'll be there'*) and mitigated acceptance (e.g. *'I think I'll be able to make it'*) are distinguished (Felix-Brasdefer 2003:251). This distinction is useful although it has been buried in the author's quantitative analysis of declination strategies. Another study that deals with acceptance strategies is Lii-Shih's (1994) work on offers in Taiwan Chinese. The author's data shows that offers such as invitations are sometimes accepted 'directly and clearly' following the offerer's first attempt. This strategy, according to the author, often occurs between close friends or families where no formality is expected or when the offer is made by a superior 'where a refusal is regarded as impolite behaviour' (Lii-Shih 1994:134). Moreover, consistent with many studies, it has been found that there are also cases in which the offer was accepted after being declined one or more times. Here, strategies such as token acceptance (e.g. *Hao ba!* 'Ok') was mentioned. Despite the lack of more details, Lii-Shih's finding is important because, unlike Gu's and Mao's claim, acceptance can occur within one conversational exchange or after rounds of reoffers and refusals. Moreover, strategies appear to differ: acceptance in SUM interactions tend to be direct and clear (Lii-Shih 1994) while that in SM interactions is more likely to show appreciation or reluctance (Mao 1992; Zhu *et al* 2000).

Some of the issues are due to the fact that the two groups of studies appear to have been divorced from each other while they could cross-fertilise each other. For instance, the analysis of acceptance strategies in studies such as Al-Khatib (2006) and Felix-Brasdefer (2003) appear to be fragmented. Moreover, the acceptance strategies in both studies fail to be analysed adequately. For example, the following passage appears to be the only theoretical discussion of 'thanking and appreciating':

This clearly indicates that these expressions are an active component of Jordanian sociolinguistic output. Furthermore, it implies that Jordanians are, in general, politeness-sensitive when they engage in a process of responding to an invitation. (Al-Khatib 2006:282)

This element of acceptance, albeit most frequent in Jordanian Arabic invitations, is under-analysed, especially within the face-saving theory adopted in the study. Moreover, adopting a traditional approach to politeness, sweeping claims as reproduced below may actually diverge from participants' perceptions although the author appears to be a native speaker.

To invite without insistence means that the concerned person is not serious about the invitation, and offers it as a mere remark of courtesy; and to accept the offer without reluctance means that the recipient is gluttonous, and may be described as an ill-behaved person. (Al-Khatib 2006:274)

As in Taiwan Chinese (Lii-Shih 1994), it is likely in other (varieties of) languages that offers such as invitations between close friends and family members are accepted without ritual declinations on some occasions. Put differently, the offer is accepted in a direct and explicit manner appropriate to a given context, which is 'politic', if not polite (Watts 1992/2003; Locher & Watts 2005). Therefore, more attention needs to be accorded to participants' perceptions about the abovementioned strategies or components of acceptance, especially the offerer's judgements of these responses in relation to (im)politeness. By contrast, studies adopting a CA-inspired approach would benefit from carrying out more detailed analysis of the actual acceptance strategies. Admittedly, their analysis of refusals at earlier interactional stages is insightful. Yet, it would be necessary to flesh out the overarching acceptance strategies by specifying, if any, different strategies if we do not want to get lost in the 'forests'.

In a word, I maintain that the limitations or weaknesses of one approach to acceptance could be offset by the strengths of the other. It would be advisable to carry out a discursive analysis of various I&G acceptance strategies in contexts.

2.4.3.2 Refusing invitations and gifts

Refusing is a speech act by which a speaker ‘denies to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor’ (Chen *et al* 1995:121). It has been examined far more extensively than acceptance presumably because this ‘sticking point’ (Beebe *et al* 1990:56) for non-native speakers has attracted considerable attention in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics studies. Methodologically, roughly two methods of analysis are employed on the basis of different theoretical assumptions (2.3.2).

Unlike the lack of a popular classification scheme of acceptance responses, Beebe *et al*'s (1990) scheme, developed according to written questionnaire data, is generally viewed as ‘the best-known and most frequently cited for analysing refusals’ (Houck & Gass 1999:12; see also Yang 2008:1043; Campillo *et al* 2009:141). Under this scheme, refusal strategies are first distinguished at the macro level, viz. they are either direct or indirect. Direct refusals are of two types, i.e. performative (e.g. ‘I refuse...’) and nonperformative statement (e.g. ‘No’; ‘I can’t’). The indirect strategy is broken down into eleven classes including, among others, statement of regret (e.g. ‘I’m sorry...’) and excuse, reason, explanation (e.g. ‘I have a headache’). Moreover, some refusals consist of four levels of strategy, as illustrated by indirect → avoidance → verbal → postponement (e.g. ‘I’ll think about it’). The accompanying elements that cannot stand alone as refusals are called adjuncts to refusals. Similarly, adjuncts are further categorised into four types such as pause fillers (e.g. ‘uhh’) and gratitude/appreciation (Beebe *et al* 1990:72-73).

This classification system is based on real refusals, primarily DCT data provided by native speakers of English and Japanese. Moreover, the initiating acts include invitations, offers, requests and suggestion that took place in a range of situations. Thus, a high degree of generalisability appears to be guaranteed. However, Beebe *et al*'s system has been criticised by many studies such as Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1991) and Nelson *et al* (2002). For example, Houck & Gass (1999) argue that one of the major problems is the difficulty of determining the force of responses from DCTs because the act they performed are not always transparent. This argument is strongly supported by studies such as Yuan (2001), Kasper (2004) and Félix-Brasdefer (2010), which consistently show that data collection instruments such as DCTs are less likely to provide sufficient contextual information. As a result, the ensuing data analysis would, to a large degree, code strategies according to the linguistic form and proposition of responses. Thus, according to Houck & Gass, it is necessary for researchers to use several instruments of data collection. For instance, they maintain that interviews can be used to access the participants' intention and role plays or naturally occurring interactions are suitable for collecting refusal data as the addressee's rejoinder can be used to pin down the force. More interestingly, it is noted by the authors that nonlinguistic aspects of utterances captured in recordings such as facial expressions, gestures or posture can all provide evidence of the act being performed (Houck & Gass 1999:14-15).

Therefore, one way to address the above weakness of Beebe *et al*'s study is to carry out contextualised analysis of the strategies. For example, one of the adjuncts is named gratitude/appreciation in Beebe *et al*'s system, which is also found in DCTs in Chinese (Yang 2008; Chang 2009). However, as seen below, even the most conventionalised expressions of gratitude may be intended to mean something other than gratitude:

It is useful to keep in mind that not all expressions using the words “thank you” refer to gratitude. Rubin (1983) collected natural data on uses of the words “thank you” that referred not only to gratitude but also to other language functions, such as compliments and closing. In fact, Hymes (1971) states that “thank you” as it is used in British English is often more of a formal marker than an expression of gratitude, which is its more common function in American English. (Eisenstein & Bodman 1993:65)

In fact, there is empirical evidence in the I&G literature. For example, according to Lii-Shih (1994:135), *xie-xie*, ‘thank you’, is one of the common expression for accepting an offer in SUM I&Gs. Moreover, it was found to stand alone as a strategy, rather than an adjunct. Equally important is that expression of gratitude such as ‘Thanks anyway’ can function as a refusal strategy in Greek (Bella 2011:1729). Thus, for the analysis of Beebe *et al* to hold, both refusals and adjuncts need to be examined in their proper contexts. In addition to spontaneous conversations widely used by discursive (im)politeness scholars (Watts 2003; He 2012a/b), dialogues from literary works are an alternative source of contextualised data because ‘features which have been identified as characterising oral discourse are also found in written discourse’ (Tannen 1982:1; see also Tannen 1985; Biber 1991). Moreover, an increasing number of studies show that literary works such as Shakespearean tragedies (cf. Brown & Gilman 1989; Jucker 2008/2012a/2016) and the classical Chinese novel *A dream of red mansions* by Cao (1715-1763) (cf. Skewis 2003; H. Liu 2010) all contain ample dialogues ideal for examining (im)politeness phenomena in the respective historical periods.

A further limitation of Beebe *et al*’s study is that the scheme is not conclusive and needs to be modified, sometimes considerably (Chen *et al* 1995; Nelson *et al* 2002; Bella 2011). For example,

the direct strategy 'performative' that contains the speech act verb 'refuse' (see above) does not seem to occur in Yang's (2008) and Chang's (2009) corporas of refusals, respectively collected from five Chinese television series and a DCT questionnaire answered by speakers of Chinese and AmE. In addition, the indirect strategy called 'wish' (e.g. 'I wish I could help you...') is also absent in Yang's data. Moreover, Beebe *et al*'s taxonomy appears to be modified significantly in Chang's study. Notably, categories such as the direct refusal 'no' never occurred in the response provided by four groups of respondents. Similarly, indirect strategies such as 'acceptance that functions as refusal' and 'avoidance – nonverbal' were not reflected in the data and hence were all dropped from the scheme. More interestingly, the category 'postponement' subsumed under adjuncts to refusals and 'self-defence' and 'criticisms' under indirect strategies in Beebe *et al* were all upgraded to 'indirect' strategies. The above modifications seem to suggest that the meanings of responses are subject to negotiation between participants. The use of postponement is illustrative since it does not stand alone as a refusal response in Beebe *et al* while it is used to refuse invitations in Chang (2009:490). Therefore, despite its popularity, Beebe *et al*'s scheme and analysis need to be modified according to the nature of data.

Unlike the literature reviewed above, studies such as Mao (1992/1994), Zhu *et al* (2000) and Grainger *et al* (2015) take a CA-inspired approach to analysing refusals. My following assessment focuses on the two intracultural studies that respectively examine invitations and gift-giving in Chinese as the last study explores offering hospitality in English and Arabic from a cross-cultural perspective. Despite their lukewarm attention to acceptance strategies, these studies appear to present a more detailed analysis of refusals. Above all, invitations and gift offers in respective studies were all declined initially before being accepted. The importance of ritual declinations is emphasized such that it is claimed 'if he can or wants to attend the party, the invitee will still refuse the invitation' and routinely he would use a conventional expression

such as ‘don’t bother’ (Mao 1992:82-83). In addition to the general characterisation of refusals at different interactional stages (2.3.4), some specific strategies are indeed found in the author’s analysis of motivations. The above quotation, for instance, is an example used at the initial stage. This type of refusal, according to Mao, normally does not specify the reason or explanation and is hence conventional. To put it another way, such a response typifies a ritual refusal as it relates cost to the inviter, as opposed to a substantive one that is more specific and highlights cost to the recipient (Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). Then in the ritualised middle, according to the author, the invitee declines the reoffer “just as forcefully as he does initially – with ‘no’ and *its variations*” (Mao 1992:85; italics added).

As indicated above, Mao’s study is not immune to criticism although his analysis draws on conversation analysis that has gained momentum in (im)politeness research. To begin with, as a result of his engagement with the interactional structure and the underlying motivations, refusal strategies at different stages failed to be fully explored. For instance, it remains unclear whether strategies as identified by DCT-based studies such as Beebe *et al* (1990) in Japanese and English and Chen *et al* (1995), Yang (2008) and Hong (2011) in Chinese are used in the naturally-occurring invitations. Therefore, it would be advisable to examine systematically refusal strategies at different interactional stages, which, as suggested by DCT data, may be positive and negative politeness-oriented. Moreover, as studies such as Garcia (1999/2008) and Bella (2011) show, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of these responses would cast light on a better understanding of the range of strategies employed by both participants in their negotiation of face.

Secondly, the rituality of refusals is emphasized to such a degree that the intention of participants, especially that of the invitee, is assumed to be an *a priori* mental state of speakers. This, as argued

in 2.2, is inconsistent with recent findings that ‘intention, in the sense of a discursive resource of participants, is interactionally achieved’ (Haugh 2008:104; see also Gibbs 2001). That is to say, at least some refusals, albeit ritual on the surface, can function as a tool of negotiation, which is best evidenced by the fact that the length of invitations varies considerably. In other words, whether a refusal is ritual or substantive depends largely on how it is taken up by the inviter because the cost involved in the invitation is arguably subject to participants’ judgements. Moreover, intuitively the cost can be mutual sometimes, for example in instrumental offers.

Regarding Zhu *et al*’s (2000) study, four strategies of refusing gifts were identified by the authors: (i) complaining about the gift being too much or too expensive; (ii) questioning the reason for the offer; (iii) linking the gift to his/her relationship with the offerer; and (iv) insisting that he/she does not need the gift. These strategies are all indirect, bearing a striking resemblance to conventional refusals to invitations such as ‘*don’t bother*’ in Mao’s (1992) study. Thus, it appears that direct refusals as identified by many studies using Beebe *et al*’s methodology did not occur in Zhu *et al*’s data. This is presumably an indication of the discrepancy between DCT and naturally occurring data (Yuan 2001; Golato 2003). Moreover, this could also be attributed to the limitations inherent in the data collection method. For instance, as suggested by the ‘observer’s paradox’ (Labov 1972), instrumental gifts presented in a discreet manner are very unlikely to take place in the investigator’s presence. It can be argued that the same criticism applies equally well to Mao’s study.

Moreover, as suggested by studies within Beebe *et al*’s framework, it appears that the four refusal strategies identified by Zhu *et al* are far from complete to characterise refusals to gift-giving in Chinese between friends, let alone gift-exchanges between strangers. This seems to be understandable considering their focus on the sequential organisation of offering gifts and

acceptance. But as a result, the offerer's perceptions about the abovementioned strategies failed to be examined in a systematic way. For instance, their pragmalinguistic aspect was nearly all neglected in their analysis. Therefore, it would be worthwhile exploring whether a broader range of refusal strategies are actually employed in Chinese gift-giving that occur naturally and spontaneously.

Finally, apart from issues with the current studies critiqued so far, three major research gaps in the I&G literature are summed up. First, parallel to the scarcity of research on accepting offers without ritual declinations, there is no research (perhaps with the exception of DCT-based studies), to the best of my knowledge, that examines refusals of SUM I&Gs. Lii-Shih's (1994) finding that the strategy of accepting SUM offers in Taiwan Chinese is normally explicit and direct seems to suggest that refusal strategies in similar I&Gs would presumably be explicit, probably accompanied by some face-saving elements such as reason or explanation. Second, as suggested by Mao's (1992) and Zhu *et al*'s studies, strategies of accepting and refusing invitations may differ from those in gift-giving. Nonetheless, little attention has to date been given to the way in which these two types of offers diverge or converge in relation to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic (im)politeness. Thirdly, while differences between affective and instrumental gifts (and invitations) have been an interest of anthropologists, this important topic is yet to be examined from a pragmatics perspective despite the brief mention in Zhu *et al* (2000).

In terms of methodology, the strengths of the above two approaches could be cross-fertilised in empirical research. Roughly, strategies of I&Gs and responses as identified by studies such as Beebe *et al* (1990) and Al-Khatib (2006) could be used with modification according to research

questions and nature of data and strategies at different stages of SM I&Gs need to be examined in detail.

2.4.4 Variation of strategies at different stages of interaction

As alluded to in the preceding sections, studies show that many invitations consist of different stages and more importantly, offer and response strategies may vary across stages. To begin with, it has been found that I&Gs are often sequentially marked despite differences in elaboration (2.3.4). Supportive evidence comes from studies of offers and invitations in a range of languages and cultures. In addition to early studies in Chinese (Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000), recent works include Barron (2005) on offers in English and Bella (2009/2011) on invitations in Greek, among others. For instance, Barron's (2005) analysis of data from the free discourse completion task (FDCT) shows that offers in BrE and IrE can be realised over a number of turns and this was found to be true across all five situations she examined, including offering beverage.

Most strikingly, by analysing observation and role-play data respectively, invitations in Chinese (Mao 1992/1994) and Venezuelan Spanish (Garcia 1999/2008) were both found to be generally composed of three distinctive stages. The stages were respectively named 'invitation-response', 'insistence-response' and 'wrap-up' in Garcia (1999:397), corresponding to Mao's (1994:82) labels discussed in 2.3.4. More importantly, as suggested by Mao's terminology, politeness strategies tend to vary across different stages. Roughly, according to the author, the early stages, including (re)offers and responses, are negative or deference politeness-oriented while the final stage positive or solidarity politeness-oriented (see above). This three-stage form of analysis is adopted by some recent invitation studies such as Felix-Bradsdefer (2003) and Bella (2009/2011).

Nevertheless, there appear to be some differences in their findings. First, Garcia's statistical analysis of head acts and supportive moves shows that overall the Venezuelan participants preferred using solidarity over deference politeness strategies. Yet, a similar conclusion was not made in Mao's qualitative analysis, which is favoured by most discursive politeness theorists (e.g. Mills 2003; Watts 2003). Secondly, in both studies the first stage of the invitational interaction was found to be deferential and third stage solidarity-oriented. However, in Spanish, preference for deference was replaced by solidarity strategies in the second stage while strategies in Chinese at this stage were repetitive and ritual in nature. This seems to suggest that quantitative analysis of head acts and modification strategies could be used to triangulate qualitative analysis of politeness strategies in invitational and gift-giving discourse. However, some weaknesses inherent in modern approaches to politeness such as the face-saving model used in Garcia (1999/2008) should be solved beforehand. For example, as exemplified by Terkourafi's (2005) and Bousfield's (2008) quantitative analysis (cf. Mills 2011:28), the context variation needs to be carefully considered in locating and interpreting head acts and supportive moves.

2.5 Invitations and gift-giving in the history of Chinese: A research

lacuna

My purpose of this section is to provide the primary rationale for my examination of invitations and gift-giving in the present study by showing that these types of offers in the history of Chinese have not yet been explored from a pragmatic perspective.

A survey of relevant literature indicates that I&Gs in the history of Chinese have been neglected in the pragmatics research despite their importance of understanding politeness in China (cf. Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000). Nonetheless, other politeness phenomena such as directives, apologies and requests have received increasing attention over the past decades. To

begin with, R. Liu's (1986) and Skewis' (2003) studies seem to represent some of the early explorations of politeness in the history of Chinese. Both studies examine politeness phenomena in mid-eighteenth century Chinese as manifested in *A dream of red mansions* (see above). Among other notable contributions is Liu's finding that face includes all that the self identifies with (e.g. close intimates) rather than being merely confined to the immediate aspects of an individual's self. Moreover, according to Culpeper (2011a:25), this notion of collective face 'is more *neatly conceptualised* by Liu' although it is touched upon by B&L (1987:62-64). Similarly, by analysing the male characters' directive speech acts in the same novel, Skewis found that unlike conventional indirect strategies in English such as subjunctive interrogative requests (e.g. 'Could you ...?'), other linguistic devices including, for example, particles, reduplication of verbs and supportive moves are found to figure more prominently in the linguistic enactment of politeness in the novel. On this basis, the author argues that the concept of indirectness 'has no particular value in the culture and language of eighteenth century Chinese men' (Skewis 2003:161).

These studies, however, appear to share some theoretical limitations as Leech's (1983) and B&L's (1987) theories are used respectively. As reviewed in 2.2, relying heavily on Grice's CP and the classic speech act theory, these traditional approaches assume, at least to a large degree, that (im)politeness resides in isolated utterances; (im)politeness lies with the speaker; and 'some directives (such as invitations) are intrinsically polite' (Leech 1983:106) or 'intrinsically COURTEOUS' (Leech 1983:134; original emphasis). As many discursive (im)politeness theorists (e.g. Eelen 2001; Watts 2003/2005; Locher & Watts 2005) argue, their definition of politeness has been severed from laymen's notion of politeness, which is always subject to judgements and negotiations in contexts. Therefore, the most important contribution of these studies seem to be their finding of evidence for the inadequacy of the classic politeness theories

in accounting for Chinese data. Unfortunately, couched in traditional politeness theories, these studies seem unable to explain their data adequately rather than simply attributing to cultural differences.

In addition to the above works, studies by Kadar and his collaborators arguably make notable contributions to research on politeness in historical Chinese (e.g. Kadar 2005a/b/2007/2008/2012; Ruhi & Kadar 2011). As suggested by Pan & Kadar (2011), roughly two types of studies can be distinguished according to their focus. To begin with, on the lexical level (e.g. ‘face’ lexemes, Ruhi & Kadar 2011), honorifics including address terms (e.g. Kadar 2007) and other ‘unconventional’ terms such as idiomatic expressions or vocative terms have been extensively studied. At the discourse level, most studies have focused on ‘competitive’ speech acts whose illocutionary goal competes with the social goal (Leech 1983/2007), i.e. apologies, refusals and requests. While these are all examined in Pan & Kadar’s (2011) study, the first speech event is examined in greater detail in Kadar (2007). As regards the discursive nature of these speech events, for instance, the author argues that although the formulaic apology chiefly functioned to index and perpetuate social status there were also occasions on which ‘the speakers intentionally deviated from these to attain personal discourse goals’ (Kadar 2007:125). Finally, the speech event of *requests* has been explored although only one example is analysed in some detail. As requesting is a typical directive speech act, this study is complementary to Skews’ (2003) work reviewed above. Therefore, much more research needs to be done in this area.

It has become clear from the above review that there is an important research gap in the existing I&G scholarship. In terms of historical coverage, politeness phenomena in pre-modern Chinese remains largely unexplored as previous studies mainly focus on language usage in modern Chinese. Regarding research topics, scant attention has been accorded to so-called ‘face

enhancing acts' such as invitations and gift-giving in the history of Chinese. This provides a sound rationale for my proposal to reconstruct and explain invitations and gift-giving in pre-modern Chinese.

2.6 Summary and research questions

To summarise, there are some theoretical and methodological limitations in the current I&G literature. Theoretically, B&L's (1987) theory of politeness is adopted as the framework in the overwhelming majority of I&G studies, especially those based on DCT-based and role-play data. It has been argued that due to some inbuilt weaknesses such as its equating politeness with indirectness or with the display of face consideration in the form of mitigation, utterance-based analysis, and neglect of hearer's perspective in the theorisation, B&L's theory is unable to capture the peculiarities of invitations and gift-giving in China. In this sense, analysis in studies such as Chen *et al* (1995) within the face-saving theory appears unable to characterise I&Gs including refusal strategies in Chinese as is claimed. For example, it seems that all refusals collected by means of DCTs in Chen *et al* (1995) are assumed to be substantive although it is possible that a certain refusal may have been intended by the informant as ritual.

Then a discourse-analytic or CA-inspired approach is used in a few studies. A notable example is Mao (1992/1994), two treatises that level some of the strongest criticisms against Leech's (1983) and B&L's theories. Nevertheless, I have argued that studies using this approach, which bears much resemblance to the discursive approach to politeness, fail to address some important issues. For example, invitations and gift-giving are assumed to be (intrinsically) polite (Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000). The generalisability of their findings based on analysis of I&Gs between friends on a limited range of occasions appears to be very limited. Moreover, as they

appear to give too much attention to the structure of the interaction, the offer and response strategies at different stages remain underexplored.

Finally, there is evidence that the data of previous I&G studies is all derived from present-day Chinese. With reference to politeness in the history of Chinese, a handful of studies have indeed examined face-threatening speech acts including requests, apologies and refusals and other politeness phenomena such as denigration/elevation and honorifics. Consequently, face-enhancing acts such as invitations and gift-giving yet await serious investigation.

Base on my assessment of the two approaches to (im)politeness and empirical I&G studies and a survey of research on politeness in the history of Chinese, the present study proposes to address the aforementioned research gap by answering the broad question of how invitations and gift-giving were executed in pre-modern Chinese. To this end, this study proposes to address the following four specific questions:

- (1) What was the interactional structure of invitations and gift-giving?
- (2) What politeness strategies were used at different stages of invitations and gift-giving?
 - (a) What politeness strategies were used in the pre-invitation and pre-gifting sequence?
 - (b) What head act and modification strategies were used in extending invitations and offering gifts?
 - (c) What acceptance and refusal strategies were used in responding to invitations and gift-giving?
 - (d) Is there any difference between politeness strategies used at different interactional stages of invitations and gift-giving?

- (3) Is there any difference between strategies of executing and responding to I&Gs that were mutually perceived to have different motivations?

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to address the research questions formulated at the end of the preceding chapter. It starts by detailing the pragmaphilological approach to analysis, focusing on explaining and justifying the unified approach to locating I&Gs in the 1.2 million-word vernacular stories. It then proceeds to provide a detailed account of a pilot study that explored the effectiveness of the research procedure. This chapter finally terminates with a summary.

3.2 A pragmaphilological approach to analysis of historical data

The fact that an enquiry into historical politeness has to rely on written texts poses methodological challenges that are not faced by traditional pragmatics research that emphasizes analysis of spontaneous naturally-occurring conversations (cf. Jacobs & Jucker 1995; Jucker 2000; J&T 2000; Taavitsainen & Fitzmaurice 2007; Culpeper & Archer 2008). One of the issues, for example, concerns ‘the (re)construction of contexts on the basis of written records’ (Culpeper 2011b:4; original emphasis; See also Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007:11). Another crucial challenge is that language use in speech communities that once existed is no longer accessible for observation, nor can data elicitation methods such as interviews and introspection be employed (cf. T&J 2007; Kadar & Culpeper 2010). A still further difficulty is that we cannot rely too much on native speaker intuition as is the case with the CCSARP (cf. 2.4.2) because ‘historical studies are subject to particular difficulties of interpretation relating to semantic and syntactic changes’ (Culpeper & Archer 2008:58; see also T&J 2008:VII). As a result, historical

texts constitute the only resource available for us to reasonably approximate speech conventions in historical times.

However, after over two decades of development of this relatively new (sub)field of pragmatics research (T&F 2007; Bax & Kadar 2012), the above challenges are no longer seen as insurmountable for investigations of historical pragmatics and politeness. According to Jucker, one of the founders of historical pragmatics, there are at least two main reasons for this:

First, spoken language is no longer seen as the only legitimate data source for pragmatics and second, spoken and written are no longer seen as one simple dichotomy. (Jucker 2000:20)

With respect to methodology, a review of the historical pragmatics and politeness scholarship indicates that a fairly established distinction is made between pragmaphilological and diachronic approaches, which is first proposed by Jacobs & Jucker (1995:11-13) and is adopted in many subsequent studies (Traugott 2004; Busse 2008; Kohnen 2009; J&T 2010; Martínez-Insua 2010). Given that the present study examines I&Gs in a specific historical period rather than their diachronic variations and that the above distinction 'is still valid and frequently repeated' (Taavitsainen & Fitzmaurice 2007:13), the present research adopted the pragmaphilological approach, which:

describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including, the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception, and the goal(s) of the text. (Jacobs & Jucker 1995:11)

By emphasizing the importance of contexts in data interpretation, this approach is arguably consistent with the discursive view that (im)politeness is a matter of judgement that **occasions** in specific context (cf. 2.2). In line with this approach to historical pragmatics, identification of I&Gs and categorisation of offer and response strategies, as illustrated in the following pilot study, were subject to close examination of a range of factors or variables including, among others, the relationship between interactants, settings of the interaction, co-participants' judgements of offers or responses. By the same token, the larger context in which the offer was embedded was scrutinised in the present study to pin down whether (im)politeness arose in a specific instance of invitation or gift-giving.

3.3 Research procedure

Instruments of data collection employed in previous studies on I&Gs include observation (Wolfson 1981; Isaacs & Clark 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000; Grainger *et al* 2015), role play (Garcia 1999/2008; Brasdefer 2003/2008; Barron 2005) and DCTs (Chen *et al* 1995; Hong 2011). However, as in all other research on historical pragmatics, written texts of the past are the only source of data for the present study.

3.3.1 Data source

The data on which this study is based was derived from the trilogy of vernacular stories compiled by Feng Menglong (1574-1646). Among other genres of literature, the vernacular stories were chosen as the data source for the present research for the following four reasons.

Firstly, due to socio-cultural changes such as the printing technology innovation, rapid urbanisation, rise of the literati and middle class, increased social and geographical mobility, *huaben xiaoshuo* 'vernacular stories' emerged as a new genre of literature and were gaining

massive and growing popularity in this historical period spanning more than five centuries. According to studies such as Idema (1974) and Hanan (1981), vernacular stories diverged from *wenyan* ‘Classical Chinese’ because the latter was chiefly confined to written texts and, if spoken, to some formal occasions among the educated elite class. Secondly, vernacular stories are better suited for the present research because the ‘simulated spoken interactions’ (Jacob & Jucker 1995:10) ‘open[ed] possibilities of nuance in expression that were impossible in the classical language’ (Owen 1996:834).

Thirdly, there is consensus that vernacular stories were either transcribed from or written purposefully for stage performance and hence arguably the dialogues were phrased using a speech style (Hu 1980; Hanan 1981). In other words, the dialogues are able to provide approximation to the then naturalistic interactions. Finally, the social interactions in *Sanyan* took place in an extremely wide range of contexts. This appears to be especially clear in the diversity of the social background of the characters in the stories:

... the characters in the stories represent virtually every social echelon, from rulers to farmers, from scholar-officials to street peddlers, from students to hooligans, from Buddhist monks to Taoist masters, and from housewives to courtesans. (Ge 2011:184)

Hence, it appears reasonable to assume that the vernacular literature can provide a representative corpus of I&Gs practiced in the corresponding historical period. More importantly, this seems to suggest that the use of *Sanyan* as the database would enhance the generalizability of findings presented in the subsequent three chapters.

Moreover, from mid-Ming vernacular stories were collected in compilations while in Song-Yuan China they were believed to circulate individually (cf. Hu 1980:132). Most notably, it is agreed that the majority of them were collected in Feng Menglong's trilogy of *Sanyan*, 'Three Words' (cf. Hu 1980; Yang 1998). In the chronological order of their appearance, they are respectively titled *Yushi mingyan* 'Illustrious words to instruct the world' (*YSMY*) (originally named *Gujin xiaoshuo*, 'Stories old and new'), *Jingshi tongyan* 'Stories to caution the world' (*JSTY*), and *Xingshi hengyan* 'Stories to awaken the world' (*XSHY*). For the purpose of this study, the computer-readable versions were used to facilitate data identification.

3.3.2 Locating invitations and gift-giving: A unified approach

This subsection starts by reviewing the debate on how to define invitations and gift-giving and how to identify I&Gs in empirical research. Building on this, two further subsections spell out the unified approach to data identification employed in the present study, i.e. searching for SAVs and manual coding that are mutually complementary.

To the best of my knowledge, identifying I&Gs has to date been largely assumed as straightforward in empirical research. Consequently, unlike studies (e.g. He 2012a:32-33; Leech 2014:186) of other speech acts such as compliments that are built on Holmes' (1988:446) definition of a compliment, there did not appear to be definitions of invitation and gift-giving that have been empirically tested. To further complicate matters, as far as I know, unlike invitations in American English that are fairly formulaic (Wolfson *et al* 1983:117-118), there is no evidence so far that I&Gs in Chinese are, to whatever degree, formulaic. This may suggest that I&Gs in Chinese 'can occur in an infinite number of different realisations' (T&J 2007:107). Locating I&Gs from extremely long literature thus calls for an innovative approach to data identification.

Nevertheless, the recent advancement in this field of research is able to cast fresh light on locating I&Gs. Above all, an invitation is recently discussed by Leech as follows:

An invitation is an offer taking place in a hospitality frame; it means that *S*, in the role of host, offers to provide something nice for *O* in the role of guest. It may be an invitation to a meal, to a party, to stay at *S*'s home, and so forth. (2014:180)

This definition is extremely insightful (see also Edmonson & House 1981:131), but it is by no means impeccable in the light of recent scholarship. Firstly, by focusing on the 'hospitable' aspect of invitations, Leech's construal does not seem to incorporate the possibility that some offers may be motivated by the offerer's 'self-interest' (Wolfenbarger 1990:699). This is because instrumental offers, as argued in subsection 2.3.3, may be mutually beneficial and involve costs to both parties simultaneously. This is an important oversight especially given the pervasiveness of guanxi invitations and gift-giving in China (Yang 1994) although 'the pure types of expressive and instrumental gifts do not exist' (Yan 1996:45; see also Yang 1994:127). The above definition, albeit subject to participants' judgements in contexts, can serve as a useful starting point for locating instances in empirical research.

Similarly, defining the gift or gift-giving is no easy task although theoretically anything valuable to the co-participant is a potential gift. For example, 'any exchange of goods or services with no guarantee of recompense in order to create, nourish, or recreate social bonds between people is a gift' (Godbout 1998:20). However, as Osteen (2002) points out, this definition of the gift begs a key question: is the gift given freely, or does it involve some (implicit) expectation of reward or reciprocation? Hence, 'any useful definition of gift practice must begin not merely by

describing behaviour but by analysing motives' (Osteen 2002:2). Thus, instead of providing a definition of gift-giving, my data identification drew on the structural features of the gift-exchange situations, i.e. the gift object; the sequence of giving and taking; the actors' own understandings of the object, action structure and motives; and the rules or principles of governing their behaviour (Berking 1999:4; see also Sherry 1983).

A range of other sources also provided interesting insights into locating data. Previous findings that invitations and gift exchanges are often associated with certain social occasions. For instance, Zhu *et al*'s (1998/2000) studies show that affective gift-giving in contemporary Chinese occurs frequently on ceremonial occasions such as weddings and birthday celebrations. Furthermore, according to these studies offering gifts is often embedded in social interactions such as thanking someone for hospitality and kindness, attending dinners, visiting the sick, and visiting friends and relatives during traditional festivals or upon returning from a journey. Perhaps more interestingly, invitations and gift offers are very likely to be made when participants seek favour from an individual (Yang 1994; Yan 1996; Zhu *et al* 1998/2000).

Perhaps more importantly, drawing on recent studies of speech acts in the history of English such as Kohnen (2000/2008) and Volkonen (2008), a distinction was made between explicit and implicit invitations and gift-giving. As detailed below, the two types of offers were identified using different methods although both were ultimately subject to verification before they were finalised for further analyses in the subsequent chapters.

3.3.2.1 Locating explicit manifestations

In the present study, explicit manifestations refer to linguistic realisations of the speech act in which one or more illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), typically speech act verbs

(SAVs) are used. Classic examples include ‘I promise’ and ‘I hereby promise’ (Searle 1969:58), which are viewed by the philosopher as explicit performative promises. In the light of this, some invitations and gift-giving in the vernacular stories were hypothesised to use ‘particular conventionalised pragmalinguistic strategies’ (Culpeper & Archer 2008:47) or a prototype-like structures. This has been found to be effective in investigating speech acts in the history of English (J&T 2000; T&J 2007/2008; Kohnen 2000/2009; 2007; Culpeper & Archer 2008). Therefore, following these studies searches for SAVs were performed to locate instances of invitation and gift-giving in the present study.

Due to the lack of comprehensive studies on Chinese speech act verbs as exemplified by Wierzbicka’s (1987) semantic dictionary of speech act verbs in English, *Tongyici cilin* ‘(Chinese) Thesaurus’ (Mei *et al* 1984) was used as the starting point in the present study. The category of social intercourse in the thesaurus subsumes, among others, two groups respectively entitled “‘*yaoqing* ‘invite’ – *yueding* ‘arrange appointment – *fuyue* ‘attend appointment’” and “‘*zengsong* ‘present gifts’ – *zengda* ‘present each other with gifts or poems’ – *juan xian* ‘donate’”. To begin with, nine of the 20 (phrasal) verbs listed under the first group of verbs on social intercourse are SAVs of invitations, namely *yaoqing*, *yueding*, *dunqing*, *yaoyue*, *teyue*, *zhaoyao*, *yao*, *yue* and *qing* (Mei *et al* 1984:270-271). Unlike invitations, 41 SAVs of gift-giving are provided in the *Thesaurus* including, among others, *zengsong*, *kuisong*, *fengsong*, *kuizeng*, *zengyu*, *zeng*, *song* and *gei* (Mei *et al* 1984:277).³ To locate I&Gs, searches for these lexical items were performed despite nuanced differences in the meaning and degree of respect implied (cf. 3.3.3).

³ Some verbs including *yuyue* ‘book appointments’, *juanzeng* ‘donate’ and *xianshen* ‘devote oneself’ were discarded as invalid SAVs in the present study as these verbs apparently perform speech acts other than I&Gs.

The underlying assumption of this method is that although an IFID does not necessarily appear in the speech act, its occurrence in the text would provide good evidence of interactants' perceptions, the compiler's interlinear comment (cf. example (10)), or how a certain act was talked about in this particular genre of literature. Consider Wierzbicka's argument:

One does not boast by saying 'I boast (that I am the best)', or threaten people by saying 'I threaten you (that if you don't do X I'll punch you)'. *The primary function of speech act verbs consists in interpreting people's speech acts, not in performing speech acts*". (1987:16; original emphasis)

Here, the author suggests that in addition to the function of interpreting speech acts, an SAV, even if non-performative, may provide clues to an implicit manifestation of the speech event in the context. Every effort was thus made to determine whether an offer of invitations or gifts was actually made by scrutinising the context manually using Leech's definitions and the four related but discrete components of gift-giving as the guiding criteria. Nevertheless, explicit performatives, as noted by many previous studies (Wierzbicka 1987; Traugott 1991; Valkonen 2008), may only represent a very restricted set of realisations of the speech events. This entails the use of a different method to identify implicit realisations as detailed below.

3.3.2.2 Locating implicit manifestations

It was assumed that many, if not most, I&Gs in Chinese lack a formulaic linguistic form. Instead, they were presumably realised by an infinite number of forms and are, therefore, more difficult to **retrieve** than those with IFIDs such as an SAV (cf. Valkonen 2008:247). To further complicate the matter, speech acts are fuzzy and slippery in nature, hence are subject to the discursive struggles between participants. A certain speech act, for instance, may shade into

another (cf. Mills 2003/2011; Culpeper & Archer 2008; T&J 2008). With respect to offers such as invitations, it was recently noted by Leech (2014:183-184) that there are cases in which a polite offer turns into a polite request (e.g. *Would you mind joining me for supper?*) and it may sometimes masquerade as a suggestion or a piece of advice (e.g. *Why don't* formula). Locating instances of offer, however, is not insurmountable. It may just need much more effort or time because 'often only from context is it possible to judge whether A is for S's benefit (a directive), for O's benefit (an offer or piece of advice), or for the benefit of both (suggestion) (Leech 2014:184; see also Schneider 2003:181). In my study, this entails close reading of *Sanyan* from its very beginning to the last word.

In addition to the definitions of invitations and previous discussions about the fuzzy nature of speech acts in empirical research, inspiration was also drawn from the notion of semantic field that is widely used in studies on historical speech acts. Sufficient attention was paid to examining conversations (letters or message notes, if in writing), particularly those containing words and expressions within the semantic field of invitation and gift-giving such as *yaoqing* 'invite/invitation' and *song(li)* 'give (gifts)' and their various cognate terms. They include, among others, verbs (e.g. *yanqing* 'fete', *sheyan* 'give a dinner', *kuandai* 'entertain the guest at dinner', *shouli* 'accept gift', and *huanli/xi* 'return gift/invitation') and nouns (e.g. *yinyan* 'banquet/dinner', *liwu* 'gift' and *renqing* 'gift/favour').

Moreover, as indicated above, ceremonial and social occasions where invitations and gifts are routinely offered were accorded enough attention to locate the speech events under study. For instance, while reading through birthday celebration, farewell or welcoming dinners and festivals such as *qingming*, the tomb sweeping festival in China were scrutinised. To illustrate, example [5] in Table 2 provides the social setting, i.e. a traditional festival for the second invitation

mentioned in the first paragraph of subsection 6.2.1.3. In addition, special attention was also given to social encounters in which a participant asked favour from her co-participant. This is because instrumental invitations and gift-giving have been found to be recurrent in this context (cf. 2.3.3).

Perhaps more importantly, recent findings regarding the linguistic realisations of offers provide useful insight into locating explicit and implicit I&Gs alike. (e.g. Aijmer 2014[1996]; Schneider 2003). Most notably, as discussed in subsection 2.4.2, a distinction was made between preference, directive and execution realisations of initiative offers in English including invitations (cf. Barron 2005). Despite the lack of similar research on Chinese offers, it seems plausible to assume that parallel realisation strategies are used in Chinese. It was thus hypothesised that there are also three linguistic realisation forms in Chinese comparable to English ‘*Would you like some Scotch?*’ (preference question), ‘*Have a drink*’ (directive/imperative) and ‘*I’ll buy you a cup of tea*’ (execution) (cf. Aijmer 2014[1996]:189; Schneider 2003:181-185; Barron 2005:144, 152-153).

3.3.3 Data verification

To enhance the validity and reliability of this research, data verification was carried out in the present study. Following many empirical pragmatics studies such as Tang & Zhang (2009) and He (2012a/b), this process involved another researcher with expertise in pragmatics and politeness scholarship.

The native speaker of Chinese was first requested to read through all the I&Gs I had located from the first volume of the trilogy. The second rater started by examining independently every offer. When disagreement about the validity of certain offer(s) arose between us, we discussed face-

to-face the particular disputed data until a complete consensus was achieved on whether the controversial data should be retained or discarded. Technically, in the discussions I would first justify my coding of the debated offer. Very often I showed how the fact that the offer was referred to by the interactants(s) or the narrator as *yaoqing* ‘invite (or invitation)’ or *songli* ‘gift-giving (or give gifts’), if not in its immediate dialogue, elsewhere in the same story provided good evidence of my coding (cf. subsection 3.4). Similarly, the second rater would then argue for or against my justification. Throughout this process, we reviewed the dialogues and the larger context closely to ensure whether any clear evidence could be identified as supporting or refuting the particular offer under debate. For example, an essential part of the verification process was to double check the presence/absence of SAVs and how the disputed offer was taken up by the recipient. In a word, none of the I&Gs identified from YSMY, including explicit and implicit manifestations, was assumed to be valid before it withstood the above scrutiny.

3.4 Identifying invitations in *Yushi mingyan*: A pilot study

The purpose of this pilot study is twofold. The primary goal was to determine the effectiveness or suitability of my research procedure, especially the data identification approach as articulated above. The secondary goal was to identify any drawbacks to this approach in order to determine whether and (if yes) how could be refined. To this end, this section provides an account of how fifteen invitations, including five explicit and ten implicit manifestations of the offer, were located from YSMY and how they were verified by using the process that has just been elaborated.

3.4.1 Locating explicit manifestations by searching for SAVs

Following the procedure defined in the preceding section, the pilot study started by locating explicit manifestations of invitations from YSMY. To begin with, my searches for the above-

mentioned SAVs of invitation, a method that is commonly used in corpus grammatics, yielded interesting results. Above all, while five of the nine SAVs of invitation were totally absent for unknown reasons, the other four, i.e. *yaoqing* (×3), *yao* (×24), *yue* (×148) and *qing* (×262) were all used in this volume of *Sanyan* despite considerable difference in frequency (occurrences in brackets).⁴ Below I will show respectively how a number of invitations were located directly or indirectly by scrutinising the texts where these words occurred.

Firstly, three occurrences of *yaoqing*, which can be nominal or verbal depending on contexts, were all used as a non-performative verb. Nonetheless, although one of them occurred in the narrative text about an invitation, the other two occurrences indeed led me to identify four invitations. One of them, i.e. example (5) was identified by following up the clue in a conversation that *yaoqing*, among others, was employed by the host in referring back to his son's earlier invitation when the guest was entertained at home. Then, an invitation, albeit implicit, immediately follows the non-performative SAV (underlined) as reproduced below:

(1)

至四月初七日, 尼姑又自到陈衙邀请, 说道: ‘因夫人小姐光临, 各位施主人家, 贫僧都预先回了。明日更无别人, 千万早降。’

On 7th April, the nun again went in person to the Chen residence to invite them, saying, ‘Since Madam and your daughter are visiting the nunnery, this poor nun has turned down all other benefactors. There will be no other visitor tomorrow. Be sure to come early.’

⁴ The raw numbers of occurrences of the monosyllabic *yao* and *qing* were respectively 27 and 265. Nonetheless, they are both presented three occurrences short here because they are morphological components of *yaoqing* that occurred three times.

This invitation, especially the head act, i.e. the last utterance, was intended to urge the invitees to arrive early while providing a good reason that is known as ‘grounder’ in speech act research (cf. Chapter 5). Like the finding regarding verbal aggression in English that ‘speech act verbs are very often used not performatively but descriptively’ (J&T 2008:232), *yaoqing* (underlined) was used descriptively rather than performatively in this example. Moreover, the adverb *you* ‘again’ in the same narrative sentence (italicised) is indicative of an earlier invitation. These hints led to the identification of two more invitations in the preceding paragraphs. They are respectively reproduced as example [1] in Table 1 and example (29), the latter being identifiable by searching for the SAV *(te)qing* ‘(specially) invite’, which is performative in this case. Consequently, a total of four invitations were located by searching for *yaoqing*, directly or indirectly.

Secondly, two of the 24 occurrences of the monosyllabic SAV *yao* was found to be used performatively. Although the verb has four senses (Chen *et al* 2003:1825), my searches show that all but one of the occurrences meant ‘invite’. Further, four of the non-performatives actually centred around the same invitation located using the clue of *yaoqing* (see above). Then, one of the non-performative uses was closely followed by an instrumental gift-giving, which in turn triggered example (1) and other two invitations mentioned above.

More explicitly, unlike the aforementioned instances, *yao* was used as a performative SAV in two cases, one of which is reproduced as follows:

(2)

女之敝居，十官子巷中，朝南第八家。明日父母兄嫂赶江干舅家灯会，十七日方归，止妾与侍儿小英在家。敢邀仙郎惠然枉驾，少慰鄙怀。妾当焚香扫门，迎候翹望。妾刘素香拜柬。

This woman's humble home is the eighth house facing south in Shiguanzi Lane. Tomorrow my parents, brother and sister-in-law are going to visit my uncle for the Lantern Festival celebration on the riverside and will not not come back until 17th January, leaving behind only my maid Xiaoying and this humble woman at home. *I make bold to invite you, the handsome young man, to honour me with your visit, which will help me not to miss you dreadfully.* This humble woman will burn incense and clean the house and be looking forward to your visit. Respectfully yours. Humble Liu Suxiang.

This is a written invitation by a young woman to a young scholar she was attracted to. The italicized utterance functions as the head act (cf. 2.4.2.1; 5.2 and 5.3) in which the SAV *yao* 'invite' (underlined) was used performatively. In addition, the offer not only provides the grounder or reason but also specifies the time and venue. Hence it instantiates what is known as unambiguous or complete invitations (Wolfson 1981/1986). More importantly, the offer was successfully interpreted by the scholar as an invitation, which, as shown in the subsequent text, is best evidenced by his visit to the invitee the second evening.

Thirdly, as regards the polysemous *yue*, most of its 148 occurrences were used to mean 'approximately' or '(make) appointment'. Nonetheless, quite a few of them were indeed used as a non-performative SAV of inviting despite the absence of its performative usage. Moreover, as noted by studies such as Wierzbicka (1987) (see above), one of the descriptive uses states exactly the illocutionary force of the ensuing utterances:

(3)

[祝英台] 读了三年书, 学问成就, 相别回家, 约梁山伯: ‘二个月内, 可来见访。’

Upon successful completion of her studies after three years, [Zhu Yingtai] came to bid farewell before her departure and invited Liang Shanbo to her home: ‘*Within two months, you can come and honour me with your visit.*’

Here, although the SAV *yue* (underlined) occurs in the narrative text and hence is non-performative, it is evidence that Zhu Yingtai was issuing an invitation (italicised) containing a directive head act using the strategy of stating a permission (cf. Table 3). Among other things, this seems to be consistent with the argument that ‘a study of speech act verbs provides an ethnographic view on how a speech community categorises speech acts...and how they are described’ (J&T 2008:232).

Moreover, two invitations and three instances of gift-giving were found in the immediate context of *yue*. An interesting finding is that two instances of gift-giving occurred in a context where invitations and appointment were talked about. Rather surprisingly, both invitations and one instance of gift-giving were identified in dialogues that closely preceded or followed the use of *yue* ‘approximately’ as an adverbial modifier describing the approximate amount of gift money or the distance between the inviter’s home and the place where the invitation was issued. To put it in another way, as can be seen in example (14), *yue* was not at all a SAV in these cases. One may hasten to argue that this was purely coincidental. Yet, searches in the second and third volumes show that it was a recurrent pattern in all volumes. That is, gift money and distance involved in invitations were often described by using the word *yue* ‘about/approximately’ in the narrative.

Fourth and finally, six invitations were identified from the 262 results from searching for *qing*, which like *yue* is a polysemous verb (cf. Chen *et al* 2003:1265). Precisely, the SAV was performative in three of the conversations in which the verb was embedded, that is to say, three explicit manifestations of invitation used the SAV *qing* ‘invite’. Then, other three cases used the SAV as a politeness marker, which, like its English equivalent ‘please’, was intended to mitigate the initial imperative or directive head act (cf. 2.4.2.1). To illustrate, example (29) that used *(te)qing* ‘specially invite’ performatively was located by using this method for data identification. Regarding the use of *qing* as a politeness marker in invitations, apart from examples presented elsewhere such as example [3] in Table 3 of Chapter 5, the following ‘ostensible invitation’ (Isaacs & Clark 1990) is exemplary:

(4)

三人一头走，一头说，直走到张公门首。张公道：‘二位请坐吃茶。’二人道：‘今日晚了，明日再来。’张公道：‘明日我不出去了，专等，专等。’

Three of them chatted along all the way to Mr Zhang’s doorsteps. Mr Zhang said, ‘*You two* [honorific term of address], *please come in for some tea.*’ The two men said, ‘It’s too late today. We’ll come back tomorrow.’ Mr Zhang said, ‘Tomorrow I won’t got out. Looking forward to your visit. Looking forward to your visit’

This invitation took place between a local cooper and two travellers (see example (26) for more details). The cooper made the hospitable offer on his doorsteps after he met the two strangers unexpectedly on his way home, who claimed they had a lot of work for him in their lodging. What is noteworthy is that as suggested by this example three out of the seven imperative or directive invitation head acts in YSMY were modified by the utterance-initial politeness marker

(henceforth UIPM) 请 *qing* (underlined). Moreover, as detailed in Chapter 5, this was a distinctive feature of directive/imperative offers, especially invitations in the vernacular stories.

The above account has clearly shown that performing searches for SAVs was fairly effective in identifying invitations. By using this method five explicit manifestations of invitation were identified from YSMY (excluding three invitations mitigated by *qing* as an UIPM), in addition to **some** others indirectly identifiable through this method, which is further illustrated in the subsection below.

3.4.2 Locating implicit manifestations of invitations

To locate implicit manifestations of invitations, I read thoroughly all forty chapters of YSMY. Bearing in mind Leech's (2014) definition of invitation and the possibility of different realisation strategies, I paid particular attention to social occasions, and words and expressions in the semantic field of 'invite/invitation'. To my great relief, it became evident soon after I started the first chapter that the dialogues in this genre of fictional text were always put in quotation marks and more importantly conversational turns were almost invariably preceded by the verb 道 *dao* 'said' or 曰 *yue* 'said' (or 'read' if in writing) with a colon.⁵ This was extremely helpful because my focus on the speech behaviours of the characters from a pragmatics perspective means that only in the conversations or dialogues could invitation performatives be located

Although time-consuming, digging deep into the stories was rewarding as in total 10 implicit invitations were located using this method. Again, as noted above, three of them were also identifiable through performing searches for *qing* as it was used in these offers as an UIPM, a

⁵ The two structures occurred 2,682 and 437 times respectively.

major function of the polysemous verb (cf. 3.4.1). An especially noteworthy finding is that example [1] in Table 1 was actually embedded in example (29) that was located in the same volume by searching for *qing*. Precisely, invitee Mrs Chen declined the invitation (i.e. example (29)) ‘by putting blame on the third party’ (cf. Chen *et al* 1995; Liao & Bresnahan 1996) when making the response ‘how can I guarantee my daughter’s visit?’. The inviter then excused herself and went to the toilet before making a reoffer. The ‘third party’, the invitee’s daughter, perceived the inviter’s intention and offered to accompany her, whereupon the implicit invitation (the abovementioned example [1]) was issued and was accepted in the toilet. The inviter then returned after some delay and reassured Mrs Chen about her daughter’s willingness to make the trip. In so doing, she indirectly refuted Mrs Chen’s excuse of declining the initial offer (cf. 5.3.2.2). Note also that example (1) was in a large sense a follow-up to the invitation discussed in example (12) that had taken place earlier between the same pair of participants. Therefore, these three interconnected invitations, one explicit and two implicit, could be identified using either of the identification methods although searching for SAVs was clearly more efficient.

In addition, the following example, as already mentioned in subsection 3.4.1, aims to illustrate in more detail the identification of an implicit invitation.

(5)

朱秀才曰：‘家尊与令祖相识甚厚，闻先生自杭而回，特命学生伺候已久。倘蒙不弃，少屈文旆至舍下，与家尊略叙旧谊，可乎？’李元曰：‘元年幼，不知先祖与君家有旧，失于拜望，幸乞恕察。朱秀才曰：‘蜗居只在咫尺，幸勿见却。’李元见朱秀才坚意叩请，乃随秀才出垂虹亭。

Scholar Zhu said, ‘My father was a good friend of your honourable father’s. Having learned that you are on your way back from Hangzhou, he specially told me to wait for you here. If

you don't think it beneath you, sir, *would you be so kind as to slightly prostrate and go to my humble home to talk awhile with my father about the old friendship?* Li Yuan said, 'Yuan is too young to know about the old friendship. Please forgive me for not having paid my respect earlier to your honourable father.' Scholar Zhu said, 'Our snail house is just a few steps from here. Please do not decline.' At Scholar Zhu's sincere invitation, Li Yuan walked out of the pavilion and followed the scholar to his home.

This is a typical implicit invitation, which by definition means that IFIDs particularly SAVs were absent in the offer turn, normally in the head act (italicised) (cf. 2.4.2 and 5.2). However, it came as a surprise that *qing* occurred 11 times throughout this extended invitational discourse, which involved exchanging pleasantries at the beginning, offering/reoffering and responding to invitations, formal reception at home, and gift-giving on the guest's departure (i.e. example (19)). More precisely, in five of the cases it was used as a descriptive SAV of invitation or its nominal derivative including the above instance (underlined) whereas the remaining six all served as a politeness marker (cf. 5.2.2). Equally important, *yao* occurred three times and *yaoqing* two times in this context. Thus, as argued earlier, uses of these SAVs combined to legitimize my coding of the above conversation as an implicit invitation.

3.4.3 Verification

To verify my initial coding, I first emailed the aforementioned second rater an electronic copy of YSMY, in which all invitations I had located were highlighted and annotated. We agreed with to meet whenever the necessity arose. Meanwhile, she asked me to explain a number of obsolete or archaic words and expressions such as *那步 nuobu* 'move step' (cf. example (14)) and *zege 则个*, a tone-softening utterance-final particle (cf. 5.2.2; 5.2.3) since the stories were written in the Song-Yuan and early Ming dynasties (960-1644). The researcher went over all sixteen

invitations I had already identified at my request. To put it another way, as specified in the preceding section, she assessed whether the conversations I had highlighted in the story counted as invitations from her perspective.

The second rater's feedback was very positive – she endorsed all of my coding except one instance (see details below). It is thus necessary to recount the process of how the disputed 'invitation' failed to survive the rigorous scrutiny and hence was finally discarded as invalid. The researcher argued that the conversation did not instantiate invitations because that the addressee and his family had already been staying with the speaker's family after accepting their invitation the previous day. I defended my coding by relating it to the invitation 你老人家若不嫌怠慢, 时常过来走走 'If you don't think it beneath you, often come over to my house' (cf. [2] in Table 3) that she judged as valid. To solve this disagreement, we re-examined the context of the conversations and found some interesting differences between them although both took place at the speaker's home. The controversial offer, i.e. example (6), indeed took place between the same participants of an earlier invitation (i.e. example (21)), but it occurred on the second day after the guest expressed his plan to rent a house in the village and asked the host for help:

(6)

[贾石]道: '赁房尽有, 只是齷齪低洼, 急切难得中意的。阁下不若就在草舍权住几时, 小人领着家小自到外家去住。等阁下还朝, 小人回来, 可不稳便?' 沈炼道: '虽承厚爱, 岂敢占舍人之宅? 此事决不可!' 贾石道: '小人虽是村农, 颇识好歹。慕阁下忠义之士, 想要执鞭坠镫, 尚且不能; 今日天幸降临, 权让这几间草房与阁下作寓, 也表得我小人一点敬贤之心。不须推逊。'

[Jia Shi] said, ‘There are many houses to rent, but they are all dirty and damp. A decent house is hard to come by at such short notice. Just stay in my humble house for the time being, sir. Wouldn’t it be better if I take my family to live with my wife’s parents and stay there until you return to the capital? Shen Lian said, ‘I appreciate your kindness, but how can I take over your house? That’s absolutely impossible!’ Jia Shi said, ‘Although a farmer, I know right from wrong. Much as I admire you for being a man of honour and integrity, I have not been able to serve you. Today God gives me the opportunity to offer these humble rooms to you as temporary lodging, as a token of this little man’s respect for a man of integrity. Don’t stand on ceremony and turn me down.

The host started by claiming that it was hard to find a satisfactory house at short notice and went on to ask Shen and his family to stay in his home using a tone of suggestion and negotiation (i.e. a preference head act) (cf. 5.2.1). The initiative offer having been declined, he urged the guest not to turn him down just for the sake of formality by giving more reasons. Jia’s words appear to be an exemplary (implicit) invitation. However, the independent rater rightly pointed out that Shen had actually been staying in his home after accepting Jia’s invitation the day before. Therefore, we came to the conclusion that Jia’s offer functions as what is known in Chinese as 留客 *liuke* ‘retaining guests’ rather than issuing an invitation.

In contrast, however, the offer that I used to support my argument differs from the above guest retaining in that it was ‘associated with a future action by *O* [the addressee here]’ (Leech 2014:180) and hence is interpretable as making an invitation despite the fact that the offer, as in example (6), was made in the offerer’s home. In the final analysis, example (6) was assessed as invalid although it ‘can arguably be viewed as a subclass of offers’ (Leech 2014:180).

Consequently, as noted at the beginning of this subsection, *fifteen* invitations were identified from the first volume of *Sanyan*.

3.4.4 Insights from the pilot study

The above account suffices to show that my research procedure was suitable for the present study. This subsection aims to highlight how the pilot study, particularly the findings pertaining to SAVs in locating data, social occasions and realisation strategies of invitations offered valuable insights into locating I&Gs in *Sanyan*, including gift-giving in the first volume and both speech events in second and third volumes.

Above all, the finding that explicit manifestations account for one third of the invitations in YSMY indicates that searching for SAVs is an efficient and effective method of locating invitation performatives from the vernacular literature, although English SAVs of insulting is ‘an unreliable guide to the existence of the speech act they label’ (Jucker 2000:30). Nevertheless, as noted by studies such as Wierzbicka (1987) and Valkonen (2008), it is important to be aware that the majority of occurrences did not occur in their performative force. For instance, as detailed above, all three occurrences of *yaoqing*, one of the four SAVs of inviting listed in the (*Chinese*) *Thesaurus*, were descriptive. However, thanks to the use of a united rather than monolithic approach to data identification, the occurrence of non-performative SAVs actually led me to locate invitation performatives in the immediate or larger context (cf. examples (1) and (3)).

Secondly, the finding about the breadth of social occasions and interpersonal relationship types was of utmost importance for paying enough attention to more diversified contexts than as shown by Zhu *et al* (2000:84) in locating the rest of data. The pilot study shows that invitations in the

vernacular stories used a much broader range of social occasions than those in the existing literature. For instance, while the hospitable offers examined by many previous studies (e.g. Mao 1992; Lii-Shih 1994) are nearly all extracted from interactions between (close) friends, nine of the fifteen invitations in YSMY took place between strangers. Moreover, the invitation occasions in the vernacular stories were clearly more diversified, ranging from chance meetings between total strangers (see above), friends' visit to the invitee's home (e.g. example (1)), to the moment of parting between intimate lovers (e.g. example (3)).

Perhaps more importantly, the finding about realisation strategies also greatly facilitated my subsequent data identification. Like offers in English (Aijmer 2014[1996]; Schneider 2003; Barron 2005), invitations in YSMY were phrased using one of the three superstrategies of preference (e.g. example (5)), directive (e.g. examples (3) and (4)) and execution (e.g. example (2)), which respectively takes up three, seven and five of the total verified invitations (cf. 2.4.2.1). Moreover, there was a remarkable correlation between explicit manifestations and realisation strategies. That is, five of the execution invitations all contain a performative SAV, namely *qing* or *yao*. Similarly, the politeness marker *qing* was exclusively used in directive invitations, which later turned out to be consistent with the overall distribution pattern of the superstrategies in *Sanyan* (cf. 5.2).

Finally, despite its adequacy as demonstrated by the pilot study it is important to note some caveats and limitations of the above data identification approach. To begin with, rather than locating invitations in YSMY by reading through all the stories independently the second rater was just requested to verify the present investigator's initial coding. Consequently, there is a possibility that some offers passed unnoticed. However, while this possibility apparently cannot be completely ruled out, the potential weakness was, at least partly, solved by the use of a unified

rather than monolithic approach to data identification. That is, the limitation of searching for SAVs, which is inspired by corpus methods used in many historical pragmatics studies (cf. Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007; J&T 2008; Culpeper & Demmen 2011), was largely overcome by the process of manual coding. It does not appear to be very likely that invitations (and gift-giving) would fail to capture our attention when the debate about the definitions of invitation and gift-giving, social occasions that are often associated with I&Gs, possible realisation superstrategies and the presentation format of dialogues in *Sanyan* all came under scrutiny (cf. 3.3). This is, in a sense, supported by the finding that implicit invitations account for two thirds of total instances identified.

Another potential limitation lies in the fact that the SAVs are all polysemous and nearly always morphologically identical to their nominal forms. Due to the polysemy of SAVs, texts containing these words may function anything but inviting. For instance, there are cases in which the verb was simply irrelevant to the speech events under study due to its polysemous nature. This is best illustrated by the finding that *(yao)qing* was used as a politeness marker in some invitations while it was indeed employed as a performative SAV of inviting in others. In a similar vein, one result of the morphological similarity between verbs and nouns in Chinese is that the so-called SAV was actually used as a noun in many situations. Nonetheless, as argued in the preceding paragraph, this limitation could be, largely if not completely, addressed in the process of manual coding.

Building on the consensus achieved in the verification, I proceeded to code the remaining two volumes of stories. In the end, a total of 210 I&Gs were finalised for the detailed and nuanced analysis that is presented in the following three chapters.

3.5 Summary

To sum up, this chapter has shown the research methodology adopted in the present study. Special attention has been given to a detailed exposition of the research procedure that specified and justified the fictional texts from which I&Gs were derived and the unified approach to locating these two types of offers in *Sanyan*. Moreover, the approach to data identification and verification was piloted by locating invitations in the first volume of the vernacular trilogy. More importantly, as shown in the above account, the pilot study proved to be effective and useful for locating the rest of the data.

Chapter 4 Interactional Structure of Invitations and Gift-giving and Pre-offer Strategies

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interactional structure of invitations and gift-giving and pre-offer strategies that were identified from 210 I&Gs derived from *Sanyan*. It starts by showing the overall interactional patterns, and the similarities and differences between invitations and gift-giving and those between affective and instrumental I&Gs. Then it proceeds to detail seven recurrent politeness strategies identified at the preparatory stage of the offer.

4.2 The interactional structure

This section describes three major interactional patterns of I&Gs that have emerged from a qualitative analysis of the corpus. Two subsections respectively focus on the overall features and variations in the interactional structures of offers of different types and functions.

4.2.1 The overall results

Drawing on studies such as Mao (1992/1994), Lii-Shih (1994), Garcia (1999/2008), Zhu *et al* (2000), Schneider (2003) and Barron (2005) (cf. 2.4.3), my analysis focuses on the number of conversational exchanges employed to realise the offers under study. Evidence shows that the interactional structure of I&Gs varied considerably, viz. some offers were sequentially-unmarked whereas others were sequentially-marked. Precisely, the offers were realised either within just one adjacency pair or over a number of conversational exchanges before the eventual

acceptance or refusal. Before delving into details, it is necessary to note that to pin down the structural elaboration of I&Gs in the vernacular stories the conversational exchanges in each offer were counted from the actual offer turn to the final acceptance or refusal. Hence, pre-offer strategies, some of which were rather extended, are analysed in the third subsection. The three major interactional patterns that emerged from the corpus are respectively illustrated and quantified below.

PATTERN A: One-exchange offer, i.e. offer-response, in which the invitation or gift was accepted or refused without reiterative ritual as emphasized in previous studies (Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Garcia 1999/2008; Koutlaki 2002; Leech 2007/2014), e.g.

(7)⁶

1 杨益: 你既与众人打伙不便, 就到我舱里权住罢。随茶粥饭, 不要计较。

2 和尚: 取扰不该。(和尚就到杨益舱里住下)

1 Yang Yi: Since you don't fit in well with your cabin-mates, you could just move to my cabin and stay with us. Don't' take it amiss if we have to take potluck.

2 Monk: I really shouldn't disturb you. (So saying, he followed Yang to his cabin)

This example exemplifies I&Gs that took just one conversational exchange, viz. the invitation was accepted indirectly by using a ritual expression of imposing inconvenience on the inviter, who is an official on the way to assume office (cf. 6.2.1.2). As made clear by the present and all the examples presented in the subsequent chapters, acceptance and refusal in this pattern were realised by a wide range of conventionalised expressions. Moreover, as suggested by the above

⁶ To highlight the structural feature of I&Gs, the illustrative examples in this section are all presented roughly in the way as practiced by conversation analysis. For this reason, the narrative texts are put in brackets while a colon was substituted for the word 道 *dao* (or 曰 *yue*) 'said' that introduces the dialogues.

offer between strangers, this pattern occurred in a very broad range of contexts in my data while it was found to be limited to offers between close friends, family members or interactants with considerable power difference in Taiwan Chinese (Lii-Shih 1994:134). More importantly, quantitative evidence shows that this interactional pattern dominates my data (cf. Figure 1), which is in contrast with the previous claim that ritual refusals are obligatory in accepting invitations in Chinese (Mao 1992:82) and in Persian (Koutlaki 2002:1946).

PATTERN B: Two-exchange offer, i.e. offer-response → reoffer-response, in which the invitation or gift was refused once using a range of strategies before the interaction was brought to an end (either accepted or refused), e.g.

(8)

1 伯牙: 愚兄余情不尽, 意欲曲延贤弟同行数日, 未知可否?

2 子期: 小人非不欲相从, 怎奈二亲年老, ‘父母在, 不远游。’

3 伯牙: 既是二位尊人在堂, 回去告过二亲, 到晋阳来看愚兄一看, 这就是 ‘游必有方’ 了。

4 子期: 小弟不敢轻诺而寡信, 许了贤兄, 就当践约。万一禀命于二亲, 二亲不允, 使仁兄悬望于数千里之外, 小弟之罪更大矣。

5 伯牙: 贤弟真所谓至诚君子。也罢, 明年还是我来看贤弟。

1 Boya: This foolish elder brother is not yet ready to leave. I would like to invite my worthy younger brother to go and stay with me for a few days. Would you agree?

2 Ziqi: It's not that this little man doesn't want to go with you, but my parents are already advanced in age. [As Confucius said,] ‘While your parents are alive, don't travel afar.’

- 3 Boya: Since your honourable parents are at home, you can just go and tell them about your plan to visit me in Jinyang. If so, [in Confucius' words,] 'your parents know your whereabouts if you do travel'.
- 4 Ziqi: This little younger brother doesn't want to promise lightly because I don't want to eat my words later. If I promise to my benevolent elder brother now, I will certainly fulfil it. I would only be giving you false hopes while my benevolent elder brother looks forward to my visit hundreds of kilometres away should my parents not agree. In that event, I would feel extremely guilty.
- 5 Boya: My worthy younger brother is such a true gentleman! All right, then, I'll come back to see my worthy younger brother next year.

Unlike Pattern A, the first attempt of this invitation was declined by the recipient who blamed his old parents for his inability to accept the offer (turn 2) and supported this by quoting a Confucius saying that champions the practice of filial piety. The inviter's insistence was refused again by refuting the offerer's advice (turn 4). Turn 5 initiates the 'pragmatic closure' or 'wrap-up' of the interaction as Boya implicitly accepted Ziqi's refutation by abandoning his insistence. That is, Boya, a minister of the state of Jin, proposed to come back to visit his sworn brother instead of insisting on his invitation. As suggested here, initial refusals were not necessarily ritualised or conventionalised, which is at odds with in many previous studies such as Zhu *et al* (2000), among others. In contrast, however, many of them including responses, including, for example, the strategy of checking or questioning sincerity appeared to be substantive (6.3.1.2).

PATTERN C: Three- or more-exchange offer, i.e. offer-response → 1st reoffer-response → 2nd or more reoffer-response, in which the invitation or gift was eventually accepted or refused only after the offer-response was reiterated two or more times, e.g.

It is important to note that Pattern C is an umbrella term as this pattern actually encompasses I&Gs of a wide range of sequential complexity. While the shortest offer in this pattern is composed of three conversational exchanges, the most extended instance of gift-giving in the trilogy was found to cover 16 conversational turns, from which example (72) was excerpted. Moreover, as demonstrated in Figure 2, a quantitative analysis shows that gift-giving was much more likely than invitations to be elaborate in structure.

(9)

- 1 施公: 吾兄勿忧, 吾适带修殿银三百两在此, 且移以相赠, 使君夫妻、父子团圆何如?
 - 2 桂生: 足下莫非戏言乎?
 - 3 施公: 君非有求于我, 何戏之有? 我与君交虽不深, 然幼年曾有同窗之雅。每见吴下风俗恶薄, 见朋友患难, 虚言抚慰, 曾无一毫实惠之加...此吾平时所深恨者...吾之此言, 实出肺腑。
 - 4 桂生: 足下既念旧情, 肯相周济, 愿留借券, 倘有好日, 定当报补。
 - 5 施公: 吾怜君而相赠, 岂望报乎? 君可速归, 恐尊嫂悬悬而望也!
 - 6 桂生: 某一家骨肉皆足下所再造, 虽重生父母不及此恩。三日后, 定当踵门叩谢。(又向观音大士前磕头说誓道) 某受施君活命之恩, 今生倘不得补答, 来生亦作犬马相报。
-
- 1 Mr Shi: Don't worry, my elder brother. I happen to have brought three hundred taels of silver for the temple and now I'll just give them to you instead. How about taking them and reclaiming your family?
 - 2 Gui: Are you joking?

- 3 Mr Shi: Why should I try to fool you when you're not asking for anything? I may not know you very well, but I luckily had the honour of spending our childhood together in the same class. The morality is declining such that one mouths empty words of comfort to friends in trouble, without offering even a penny's worth of help. I find such people most repugnant... These words are truly from the bottom of my heart.
- 4 Gui: Thank you for your help for old times' sake, sir. I would like to draw up a receipt and will surely repay your kindness when situation improves.
- 5 Mr Shi: I am giving this to you out of sympathy. Why would I expect to be repaid? Please go home quickly, sir. Your honourable wife must be worried about you.
- 6 Gui: You've given my entire family a new lease on life. You are no less than a parent who has given us rebirth. In three days, we'll surely come to your house and offer our thanks. (Turning to the bodhisattva statue, Gui kowtows and makes the pledge:) I owe Mr Shi the debt of saving my life. If I can't return it in this life, let me serve him in my next life as a dog or a horse.

This is an instance of affective gift-giving with an extended pre-sequence. It became clear in the preceding exchanges that on his way to a temple Shi heard someone weeping on a cliff edge, who turned out to be Gui, one of his childhood friends who used to live on the same street and attend the same school. Pressed by Shi who expressed his willingness to help out, Gui revealed his extreme plight – he had lost all his property, his wife and two sons due to a heavy debt. At this point, Shi offered the money he happened to have to Gui, who doubted his sincerity (turns 1 and 2) (cf. 6.3.1.2.7). Shi then explained in detail how he was serious in making the offer (turn 3). Gui still tried to decline it indirectly by proposing to draw up a receipt so that it could be repaid when he was financially prepared (turn 4). This idea, however, was dismissed by Shi, who emphasized that the offer was motivated by his sympathy for Gui (turn 5) (cf. 5.3.2.2). The

recipient finally took the money with profound gratitude – thanking him profusely and expressing feeling of indebtedness (turn 6) (cf. 6.4.1).

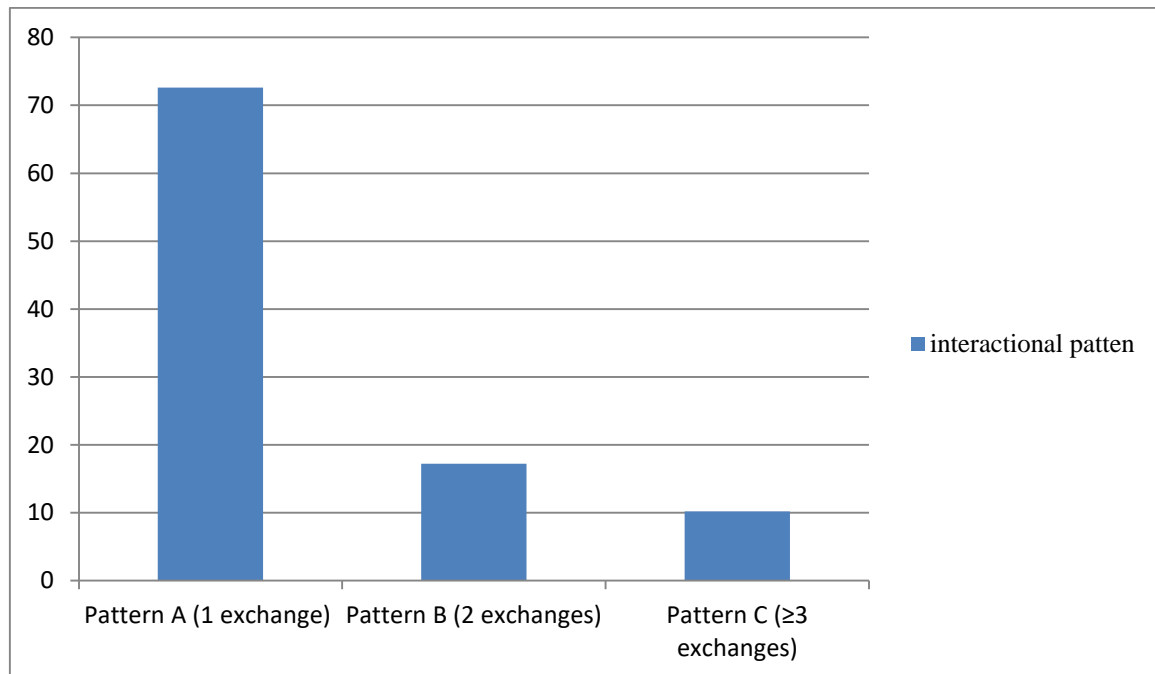


Figure 1: The distribution of three interactional patterns of I&Gs

A quantitative analysis shows that 72.6% of the offers were completed without elaborate rituals while 17.2% were brought to a close with one initial declination and 10.2% realised over three or more conversational exchanges. Thus, as demonstrated in Figure 1, Pattern A dominated my data, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the corpus while slightly more than a quarter of them were distributed unevenly across Patterns B and C, the second of which occurred only in about ten percent of the offers.

Another notable finding is about the interactional patterns in relation to response strategies. As detailed in Chapter 6, the majority of offers were accepted while a considerable number of them refused after the first attempt of offer. Then, nearly about 10% of them were finally declined although about 30% were accepted after a ‘battle of politeness’ (Leech 2014:7; See also Leech

2007). Interestingly, as suggested in the subsequent subsection, most of the extended interactions were gift-giving, especially in cases where the offer was exploited as an instrumental tool.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, invitations in Gu's (1990) and Mao's (1992/1994) studies were all accepted with ritual declinations. Similarly, all gift offers in Zhu *et al* (2000) were eventually accepted and the overwhelming majority of them were 'sequentially-embedded'. Therefore, the overall interactional structure of I&Gs in the vernacular literature under study, other things being equal, differs almost diametrically to that of the I&Gs examined in these studies.

4.2.2 Variations in interactional patterns

4.2.2.1 Similarities and differences between invitations and gift-giving

A deeper analysis of the above findings yielded interesting results on variations in interactional patterns across offers of different types and social functions. To begin with, contrary to previous homogeneity assumption (cf. 2.3.4),⁷ the interactional structure of invitations diverged from that of gift-giving. Precisely, 83.7% of the invitations were executed using Pattern A, 13.0% Pattern B and 3% Pattern C. In contrast to this, the three patterns in gift-giving occurred at 64.2%, 20.3% and 15.4% respectively. Therefore, as shown in Figure 2, the likelihood of each pattern to occur in invitations and gift-giving differs greatly despite similarity in order of preference. Differences in Patterns A and C were especially notable. Comparatively invitations tended much more to be realised in Pattern A whereas Pattern C is about four times more likely to occur in gift-giving than in invitations. This seems to suggest that the 'battle of politeness' featured more prominently in gift-giving than in invitations.

⁷ This might be partly attributable to the usual co-occurrence of *qingke songli* 'invitation and gift-giving' in Chinese popular discourse and the media (cf. Peng 1999).

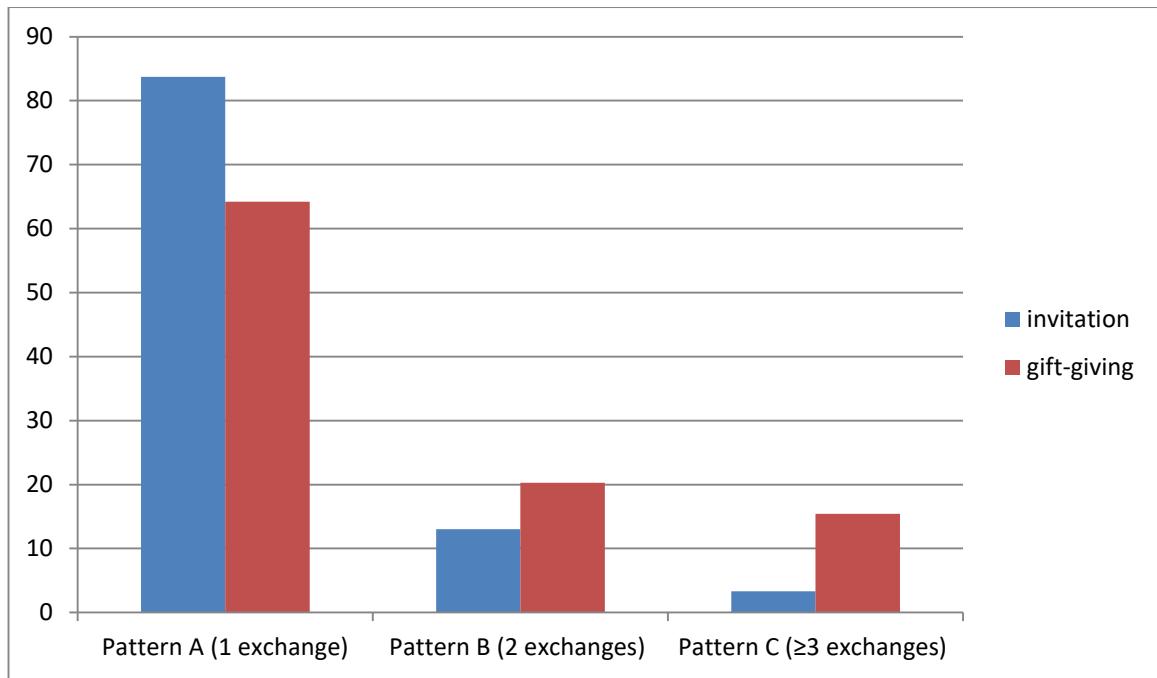


Figure 2: A comparison between interactional structures of invitations and gift-giving

4.2.2.2 Similarities and differences between affective and instrumental offers

In addition, evidence shows that interactional patterns were associated with the social functions of offers, viz. the sequential complexity depended largely on whether the offer was intended mainly to express friendship and/or hospitality or whether the offerer had an ulterior motive (2.3.3). Thus, before carrying out a quantitative analysis, it is necessary to show how affective and instrumental offers were distinguished in my study. Affective offers such as example (8) were relatively self-evident because I&Gs examined by previous studies nearly all fall into this category, which appears to be most prevalent in our daily life. As argued in Chapter 2, to determine whether an invitation or an instance of gift-giving is instrumental, however, is not as straightforward as it may appear. This is because the offerer's intention to achieve their personal social goals was not necessarily explicitly revealed in phrasing the offer as illustrated below:

(10)

(秉中) 称道: ‘小弟久疏趋侍, 昨闻荣回, 今特拜谒。奉请明午于蓬舍, 少具鸡酒, 聊与兄长洗尘, 幸勿他却!’

[Bing Zhong] said, ‘*This little brother’s been long remiss in my services to you. Yesterday I heard about your triumphant return and I’m here today specially to pay you my respects. I respectfully invite you to my humble home for some chicken and wine just to wash off my elder brother’s dust. Please do not turn me down!*

This is an invitation Bingzhong issued to one of his friends who had just returned from a business trip. A range of internal and external mitigating devices were used, including honorifics (e.g. ‘triumphant return’), understater (e.g. ‘just’), politeness maker (e.g. ‘please’), and grounders (e.g. ‘...remiss in my services to you’) (cf. 5.2.3). On the surface, the invitation appears to be intended merely to express ‘friendship and good feelings’ and ‘help to reinforce the affective sentiments and emotional commitment’ (Zhu *et al* 2000:84). However, the preceding narrative sentences, especially 且说秉中思想, 行坐不安, 托故去望张二官 ‘In the meantime, thoughts of Shuzhen made Binzhong restless. As an excuse, Bing Zhong went to see Mr Zhang’ suggests the presence of an ulterior motive. That is, the offer was made principally (if not exclusively) to create an opportunity for the inviter to meet the invitee’s wife with whom he had affairs during the invitee’s absence. Perhaps more importantly, an interlinear meta-comment on the invitation was provided by the compiler of the vernacular stories when Mr Zhang issued an invitation to Bing Zhong days later to return the favour: ‘He gave in order to take. He did not expect reciprocation’. Hence, it is essential to note that, unlike other privately motivated offers such as examples (27) and (75) in which the instrumentality of the offer was mutually perceived, the inviter’s motive underlying the above illustrative example was withheld and was not perceived by the invitee who not only accepted the offer but treated the inviter in the same way. Put differently, at the linguistic/conversational level, there appeared to be no evidence that this instrumental offer

differs, in any way, from affective/expressive I&Gs including examples (12) and (13), among many others.

Therefore, drawing on Yang (1994) and Yan (1996) (cf. 2.3.3), instrumental I&Gs in the present study refer narrowly to cases in which a request was explicitly made by the offerer and/or successfully perceived by the recipient. Consider the following example:

(11)

美娘: ... *只要姨娘肯开口时, 不愁妈妈不允。做侄女的别没孝顺, 只有十两金子, 奉与姨娘, 胡乱打些钗子。是必在妈妈前做个方便, 事成之时, 媒礼在外。*

刘四妈 (笑得眼儿没缝): 自家儿女, 又是美事, 如何要你的东西! 这金子权时领下, 只当与你收藏, 此事都在老身身上。只是你的娘, 把你当个摇钱之树, 等闲也不轻放你出去, 怕不要千把银子!

Sister Mei: ... *If Auntie could bring up this topic to Mother, she'll surely agree. As your niece, I have nothing to give you, but here are ten taels of gold for Auntie to make some hairpins with. Be sure to talk to Mother on my behalf and I'll have more gifts for your matchmaking if you can persuade her.*

Madam Liu (smiles until her eyes all but vanishes at the sight of the gold): You are just like my own daughter and this is a good thing, too. How can I take your money? I'll just keep it for you for the time being. You can leave this job to me. I'm only afraid that your mother won't let you go off lightly because you are her money tree. She'll probably ask for a thousand taels of silver...

There are clear differences between the above two offers. As already noted, the inviter's motivation in example (10) was hidden under the cover of kindness. By contrast, the

instrumentality of gift-giving in example (11) was made explicit (italicized). The gift-giver who was a young courtesan gave money to her ‘auntie’ (NB. It is an honorific address term used to show respect and closeness although they were not blood relatives at all), with modifications such as a disclaimer. In making the offer Sister Mei explicitly asked the recipient, a brothel owner, to persuade her ‘mother’ (who was actually the procuress exploiting Sister Mei) into selling her off so she could marry one of her clients with whom she had fallen in love.

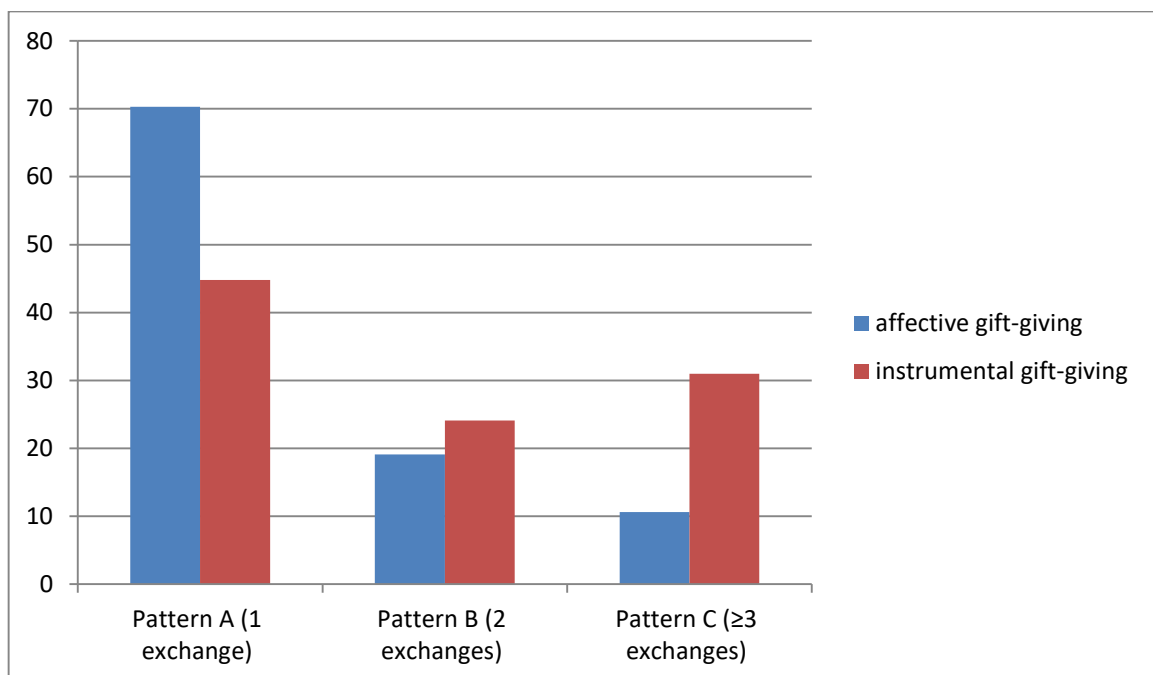


Figure 3: A comparison between interactional patterns employed in affective and instrumental gift-giving

Quantitative and qualitative analyses show that affective and instrumental gift-giving differed greatly in interactional structure. It appears that there did not exist clear intra-invitation difference in interactional complexity, hence the remainder of this subsection focuses on gift-giving. Overall, the interactional structure of instrumental gift-giving tended more to be extended compared with its affective counterpart (Figure.3). First, although it was most favoured in both

affective and instrumental gift-giving, pattern A dominated affective offers, with a notable difference of 33 percentage points. Secondly, as demonstrated by the two groups of columns on the right side of Figure 3, instrumental gift-giving was likely to take more conversational exchanges. Most notably, instrumental gift-giving is about two times more likely than affective gift-giving to be realised in Pattern C.

4.3 Pre-offer strategies

Most I&Gs in my data were prefaced by a pre-sequence although many were just roughly described in the text. Analysis of those provided in their entirety shows that pre-invitation and pre-gifting strategies played a crucial role in most I&Gs (cf. 2.4.1). Among others seven strategies were found to figure prominently in my corpus. Moreover, as detailed below, their use was context-bound because a range of factors such as the type of offer (i.e. invitation/gift-giving), nature or function of offer (i.e. affective/instrumental), vertical and horizontal distance between participants, and perceived moral obligation to offer seemed to exert an impact on the choice of strategies.

Strategy 1: The recipient (usually the host(tess)) responded (verbally) to the offerer, usually a guest/visitor, as soon as they came into view or before they made the offer verbally.

This strategy was exclusively in gift-giving between friends and interactants with considerable power difference. The following example illustrates the use of this strategy triggered by the visit of a friend with perceptible gifts.

(12)

夫人一见,便道:‘出家人如何烦你坏钞?’尼姑稽首道:‘向蒙奶奶布施,今观音圣像已完,山门有幸。贫僧正要来回覆奶奶。昨日又蒙厚赐,感谢不尽。’夫人道:‘我见你说没有好小菜吃粥,恰好江南一位官人,送得这几瓮瓜菜来,我分两瓮与你。这些小东西,也谢什么!’尼姑合掌道:‘阿弥陀佛!滴水难消。虽是我僧家口吃十方,难说是应该的。’

No sooner had she caught sight of them than Mrs Chen said, ‘*How could a nun be made to go to such expense?*’ With a bow, the nun said, ‘Thanks to your generosity, the holy statue of Guanyin has been completed. Blessed is the nunnery. This poor nun was just about to come to offer you thanks when I was again overwhelmed with another benefaction yesterday. My gratitude is boundless.’ Mrs Chen said, ‘I heard you say that you had no good pickled vegetables to go with porridge. Coincidentally, a man from south of the Yangzi gave us a few jars of squash and other vegetables and I gave you two. Why thank me for such trifles?’ Joining her palms, the nun said, ‘Amitabha! Even a drop of water given cannot be taken for granted. Though we nuns live on alms from everywhere, we find it hard to say we deserve them.’

The hostess Mrs Chen ‘criticised’ the guest for spending on what was rightly perceived to be the gifts for her as soon as the visitor came into her house. The ‘criticism’ can arguably be viewed as a pre-offer strategy since it initiated the gift-giving interaction on the verbal level. In so doing, the visitor’s verbal offer and the head act was pre-empted while her sudden appearance at the door, a non-verbal move, functioned as a trigger for the subsequent dialogue. As a result, rather than phrasing an offer, the guest provided some justification for the gifts, which was refuted by the recipient before implicit acceptance (see more details in 6.4.1).

Unlike example (12) that took place between friends who were in regular contact, the following one is a typical instance of gift-giving that involved power differences. That is, the offerers were

the local residents of a county and the recipient was an official who had just assumed the post of magistrate.

(13)

只见庞老人与一干老人, 备羊酒缎匹, 每人一百两银子, 共有二千馀两, 送入县里来。杨知县看见许多东西, 说道: ‘生受你们, 恐不好受么!’ 众老人都说道: ‘小人们些须薄意, 老爹不比往常来的知县相公。这地方虽是夷人难治, 人最老实一性的; 小人们归顺, 概县人谁敢梗化? 时常还有孝顺老爹。’ 杨公见如此殷勤, 就留这一干人在吏舍里, 吃些酒饭。众老人拜谢去了。

Magistrate Yang saw Panglaoren and a group of old men coming to him with sheep, wine, bolts of silk and satin as well as, a hundred tales of silver each, totalling over two thousands taels. At the sight of such an abundance of gifts, Mr Yang said, ‘You shouldn’t have gone to such trouble. *How can I take them?*’ The old men said, ‘Just a slight token of our sentiments. You are different from all of your predecessors. Though the locals are not easy to rule, they are most simple and honest. If we have pledged allegiance to you, no one in this county would dare sur up a trouble. In the future, we will be offering you more tokens of our allegiance.’ Impressed with their sincerity, Mr Yang kept them in his residence for some wine and food before they took their leave with bows of gratitude.

The same analysis of example (12) also applies to this gift-giving. That is, triggered by the residents’ non-verbal move, the recipient initiated the verbal interaction by ‘criticizing’ the locals for giving the generous gifts, which prompted the offerers to justify their offer. Furthermore, like the preceding offer, the abundant gifts in this example were accepted implicitly following the offerer’s insistence or justification.

It is interesting to note that as suggested by the above two examples, the gift in all offers using this pre-offer strategy was accepted following the offerer's insistence or justification.

It has become clear from the above analysis that, unlike most previous findings on pre-offer strategies which are always verbally initiated by the offerer, in my data this strategy was invariably used by the recipient rather than the offerer, whose non-verbal move, in a large sense, served as offering. Consequently, the normal offer-response format, especially the 'head act', i.e. the core of the speech event in question was 'blocked'. Instead, a description of the gift or justification of the offer was often provided in the offerer's response. Moreover, as suggested above, the givers were inferior to the recipient in all instances. Perhaps more importantly, the finding that this strategy occurred exclusively in gift-giving seems to suggest that rather than homogeneity as assumed by Mao (1992) and Lii-Shih (1994) (2.3.4), politeness strategies used in gift-giving may differ from those in invitations.

Strategy 2: Solicitation was made by the recipient in the pre-sequence

Some invitations and gifts in my corpus were offered only after the recipient's solicitation at the preparatory stage of interaction. As in AmE invitations (Isaacs & Clark 1990; Sherry 1983), solicitation was made through one of the three ways: context, indirectly or directly.

A. Solicitation through the context, e.g.

(14)

喜得绝处逢生，遇着一个老者，携杖而来，问道：‘官人为何哀泣？’唐璧将赴任被劫之事，告诉了一遍。老者道：‘原来是一位大人，失敬了。舍下不远，请那步则个。’老者引唐璧约行一里，到于家中，重复叙礼。

Rather unexpectedly, an old man with a staff walked toward him and asked, ‘Why are you weeping, sir?’, whereupon Tang Bi gave an account of how he was robbed on his way to assume a new post. ‘The old man said, ‘Your Excellency! Please forgive me for not recognising a man of distinction. My humble house is not far away. Please come with me.’ After about half a mile’s walk, they arrived at the old man’s house and went through formal courtesies.

As illustrated here in all I&Gs solicited in this way, the recipient was found to be in desperation, which was often revealed by the recipient in responding to the offerer’s sympathetic enquiry. The offerer thus felt a strong sense of moral obligation to offer accommodation, money or clothes (cf. Wolfe 1989; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Barron 2005; Komter 2005). Among many others, the offer in example (15) below was also made in a similar context.

B. Direct and explicit solicitation, e.g.

On some occasions, offers were made after they were solicited directly and explicitly, typically by making a request. I&Gs of this type thus were in a large sense realised in the form of complying with a request. In addition to other examples analysed elsewhere in the thesis such as example (60) in Chapter 6, the following invitation is illustrative:

(15)

忽见岸上一老僧，正不知从何而来，将拄杖卓地，问道：‘檀越伴侣何在？此非驻足之地也！’宋金忙起身作礼，口称姓名：‘被丈人刘翁脱赚，如今孤苦无归，求老师父提挈，救取微命。’老僧道：‘贫僧茅庵不远，且同往暂住一宵，来日再做道理。’宋金感谢不已，随着老僧而行。

Unexpectedly Song Jin saw an old monk emerging from nowhere on the riverbank and coming to him. Knocking his cane against the ground, the monk asked, ‘Where are your

friends, sir? This is no place to stay!’ In haste, Song Jin rose and told him his name, adding, ‘My father-in-law Mr Liu tricked me into this remote place. And now, left all alone by my poor self, I have nowhere to go. *Please help me, Your Reverence, and save my humble life.*’ The monk said, ‘This poor monk’s thatched hut is not far from here. Just go and stay overnight with me and decide what to do next tomorrow.’ With profuse thanks, Song followed the old monk to his hut.

Similar to example (14), this invitation was issued to one in extreme hardship. Nonetheless, unlike the preceding example, the invitee here made an explicit request (*italics*), which was largely triggered by the monk’s initial sympathy. Unsurprisingly, the invitation was accepted with gratitude.

C. Indirect and implicit solicitation, e.g.

Solicitations, generally speaking, tended to be indirect or implicit. This seemed to be the most frequently used way of solicitation in my data. Moreover, despite the multiplicity of indirect strategies and devices (cf. B&L 1987; Kadar & Haugh 2013), showing interest appeared to be most recurrent in soliciting offers, especially gifts.

(16)

正当语酣之际, 黄生偶然举袂, 老者看见了那玉马坠儿, 道: ‘乞借一观。’ 黄生即时解下, 双手献与老者。老者看了又看, 啧啧叹赏, 问道: ‘此坠价值几何? 老汉意欲奉价相求, 未审郎君允否?’ 黄生答道: ‘此乃家下祖遗之物, 老翁若心爱, 便当相赠, 何论价乎!’ 老者道: ‘既蒙郎君慷慨不吝, 老汉何敢固辞! 老汉他日亦有所报。’

Fully engaged in the conversation, Mr Huang happened to raise his arm. Catching sight of the jade-horse pendant, the old man asked, ‘May I have a look at it?’ Mr Huang immediately took

it down and gave it to him with both hands. While examining it closely, the old man sang his praise repeatedly and asked, ‘How much is it? This old man would love to buy it. Would you sell it to me?’ Mr Huang answered, ‘It is a family heirloom. If you like it, I’ll just give it to you as a gift. Why mention the price?!’ The old man said, ‘If you are so generous, this old man wouldn’t presume to reject it. Someday this old man will also give you something in return.’

This gift-giving took place in a bar where Huang was treating the recipient, a sage-like old man, to tea although they just met for the first time. It was directly triggered by the stranger asking for a close look at the pendant and then expressing his wish to buy it. At his request, Huang, a talented but poor scholar, dismissed his idea of paying for it and gave it him as a gift after a brief introduction although the pendant, as the context shows, was a highly cherished family heirloom. In another similar example, impressed by the good *feng shui* of the village, a Daoist asked one of the venerable villagers if he could purchase a house on his farmland as his hermitage. A piece of land was then offered as a gift, for which the Daoist offered to pay (see more details in example (70)). Interestingly, in yet another example the recipient solicited the offer by expressing her intent to 借 ‘borrow’ the gift (i.e. a servant) from a close friend. She was then offered the opportunity to choose from a group of ‘clumsy servants’ and the one she chose was 奉贈 ‘respectfully presented’ as gifts while dismissing the idea of ‘borrowing’ one of her servants.

Moreover, as in gift-giving the strategy of indirect solicitation was not uncommon in pre-invitations. Among others, perhaps this can be most clearly seen in example (48) that is used to illustrate explicit acceptance strategy in Chapter 6. At some point of drinking together in a bar, the Daoist produced his fine wine from a gourd bottle and shared it with his new friend Lu.

Interested in the wine, Lu, who had been treating the Daoist in the bar, asked about its source, which was understood by the Daoist as soliciting an invitation.

As indicated above, all the I&Gs, albeit solicited, were perceived to be genuine and accepted. This was especially true when the offer was made to one in desperate plight probably because, as observed by studies such as Barron (2005), the offerers were morally obliged to show kindness in such situations. This finding appears to differ from studies such as Isaacs & Clark (1990) that show solicited invitations in AmE were predominantly ostensible/insincere.

Strategy 3: A question, statement or comment relating to the social occasion sets the stage and signals to the addressee that invitation or gift-giving, if the response is encouraging, is to follow, e.g.

(17)

老僧道：‘听子所言，真忠厚之士也。尊恙乃七情所伤，非药饵可治，惟清心调摄可以愈之。平日间曾奉佛法诵经否？’宋金道：‘不曾。’老僧于袖中取出一卷相赠，道：‘此乃《金刚般若经》，我佛心印。贫僧今教授檀越，若日诵一遍，可以息诸妄念，却病延年，有无穷利益。’

The old monk said, ‘your account of the experience tells me that you are an honest and kind gentleman. Your honourable illness was caused by excessive grief. It can be treated by no medicine but by so no medicine will work. Resting in peace and quiet is the only treatment. Do you read Buddhist scriptures at all?’ Song Jin said, ‘No.’ The old monk produced a scroll of scripture from a sleeve and gave it to Song Jin, saying, ‘This is *the Diamond Sutra*, the thesis of which is that spiritual realization depends upon transcending rational categories.. This poor monk will teach you from now. If you could read it aloud under my guidance once

a day, you would forget all your secular thoughts, recover from your illness and add years to your life. Its benefits are countless.

This conversation took place in the monk's 'thatched hut' mentioned in example (15). Having had food and drinks offered by the monk, Song Jin gave a detailed account of how his father-in-law wanted to get rid of him because of his illness. Nonetheless, not until after establishing that he did not read Buddhist scripture did the monk offer the scroll as a gift, which, according to the offerer, would help heal Song's illness.

In a similar vein, the offerer in another instance of gift-giving 'casually brought up the subject of the recipient's debt' in the course of conversation. In so doing, he learned that bankrupted by the heavy debt, the recipient's family had decided to move to a new place in order not to 'lose face' in front of their friends and relatives. This provided the precondition of offering an orchard with huts for them to live on (example (22)). In these examples, the initiator asked a question relating to the occasion in appropriate contexts, hence projecting his gift-giving behaviour (cf. Lerner 1996; Schegloff 2007). As argued by Schegloff (1988:58; see also Wolfson 1981 and Zhu *et al* 2000), Song's answer 'no' elicited the offer of the gift from the speaker rather than blocking such a development. In other words, they did not make the offer until the co-participants encouraged them to execute what his question had oriented to or the gifting condition had been established.

Strategy 4: The recipient did something nice, including for example invitations and gift-giving themselves, which became the reason of the (returning) offer of invitations and/or gifts, e.g.

(18)

老者向酒家道：‘既是先交钱后饮酒，如何多把与他吃？这是你自己不是。’又对子春道：‘你在穷困之乡，也不该吃这许多。如今通不许多说，我存得二百钱在此，与你两下和了罢！’袖里摸出钱来，递与酒家。酒家连称多谢。子春道：‘又蒙老翁周全，无可为报。若不相弃，就此小饮三杯，奉酬何如？’老者微微笑道：‘不消得，改日扰你罢！’

To the restaurant owner, the old man said, ‘since he paid you before drinking, why did you serve him extra food? That was your own fault.’ Turning to Zichun, he said, ‘With little money, you shouldn’t have had so much food. Now both stop arguing. *I’ve two hundred pennies here. Let me pay the bill, so you don’t owe each other anything.* He retrieved the money from his sleeve and gave it to the owner, who thanked him profusely. Zichun said, ‘*Again, you helped me out, sir. I have nothing to repay you with. If you don’t think it beneath you, may I just treat you to three cups right here?*’ The old man said with a smile, ‘There’s no need for that. I’ll impose on your hospitality some other day.’

The old man’s kindness apparently functions as a precursor to the ensuing offer, which sometimes overlaps the response strategy called ‘returning offer’ as in compliment response studies (e.g. Holmes 1986/1988) (cf. 6.2.2.2). In this example, Zichun offered to treat the old man to ‘three cups of wine’ in the same restaurant soon after the disputed bill had been paid. Put differently, the old man’s intervention into the dispute and brokering peace between the two parties, together with previous help, indebted Zichun, hence leading to the invitation. In two other instances of gift-giving that employed this pre-offer strategy, a son was offered to the benefactor as a gift respectively to reciprocate the recipient’s kindness of returning a large sum of lost money and of helping save the offerer’s family from going bankrupt by paying a huge debt.

As can be seen in example (18), the emic notion of 报 ('reciprocation') was often explicitly invoked in I&Gs using this strategy (6.2.1). It has long been believed to be central to Chinese social interaction (Yang 1957; Yum 1988; Yang 1994; Yan 1996/2002; Leung 2010; Holt 2011).⁸ In politeness literature, it is often related to 还礼, referring broadly to 'return favour/politeness' or narrowly to 'return invitation/gifts', which is viewed as instantiating the principle of balance (Gu 1990) or as a major characteristic of politeness (cf. Leech 2014:8-9).

Strategy 5: A question was asked about the kind of gifts recipients would like to receive before they were offered or the offerer indicated explicitly to the co-participant he would give whatever the recipient wished for, e.g.

(19)

王曰：‘既解元要去，不敢久留。虽有纤粟之物，不足以报大恩，但欲者当一一奉纳。’李元曰：‘安敢过望？平生但得称心足矣！’王笑曰：‘解元既欲吾女为妻，敢不奉命？但三载后，须当复回。’王乃传言，唤出称心女子来。须臾，众侍簇拥一美女至前...王指此女曰：此吾女称心也。君既求之，愿奉箕帚。’

The king said, ‘Since you insist on leaving, I will dare not ask you to stay any longer. Although I have modest gifts, they are not enough to repay our debt to you. Yet, I shall offer you whatever you may wish for.’ Liyuan said, ‘How can entertain excessive hopes? The only wish in all my life is to achieve satisfaction!’ The king laughed, ‘If your wish is to have my daughter for your wife, how can’t I comply? But you must return her in three years’ time.’ Thereupon the king ordered that his daughter Satisfaction be called forth. In a trice, maidservants escorted

⁸ Early discussions of reciprocity as a fundamental principle of gift-exchange can be found in the classic anthropological works of Levis-Straus (1996[1949]) and Mauss (1990[1954]).

a beautiful girl into the hall...The king said, pointing to the girl, 'She is my daughter named Satisfaction. Since it is your wish to have her, I am happy to offer her to you as your wife.'

This gift-giving took place when the invitee in example (5)) insisted on leaving after being treated in the inviter's home. The host began by giving the recipient freedom to tell what he wished for as a gift, rather than offering the gift, i.e. his daughter Satisfied straightaway. A few characteristics of this strategy are notable. Firstly, the strategy was limited to gift-exchanges between unequals and it was always employed by the superior, for example between the king and a scholar in this example. Secondly, the offers were all accepted, with initial declinations in some cases, probably because, as noted by Lii-Shih (1994:134), it would be inappropriate to refuse gifts from a superior. Thirdly, by giving the recipient freedom to choose gifts, the offerer mitigates the directive force inherent in invitation and gift-giving (cf. 2.3.1).

Strategy 6: The speaker intended to issue an invitation or present a gift, but she started by asking the recipient not to take offence or by asking permission to perform the act. Known as a 'pre-commitment' in request literature (e.g. House & Kasper 1987:1277; Trosborg 1995:217; Ogiemann 2009:206-207), this strategy is illustrated as follows:

(20)

女待诏道: '我承你日常看顾, 感恩不尽。今日有句不识进退的话, 说与你听, 你不要恼我, 不要怪我。' 贵哥道: '你今日想是风了。你在府中走动多年, 那一日不说几句话, 怎的今日说话我就怪你恼你不成? 你说, 你说!' 女待诏道: '这环儿是一个人央我送你的, 不要你的银子。还有一双珠钏在此。'"

The woman hairdresser said, 'I'm ever so grateful to you for looking after me every day. Today I'll tell you something you may not expect. Don't get angry and don't blame me.'

Guige said, 'Are you mad today? You've been a regular visitor here over so many years and you said something every day. Why would I take offense at whatever you say today? Go on and Go on!' The woman hairdresser said, 'These rings are someone wants me to give you, for free. Also, here is a pair of hairpins inlaid with pearls.'

The example is excerpted from an extended instance of instrumental gift-giving, in which examples (72) and (73) are also embedded. Here, the woman hairdresser managed to get the recipient's 'pre-commitment' before making the offer on behalf of a third party. In other words, 'in checking on a potential refusal before making the request[offer], S tries to commit H before telling H what H is letting himself or herself in for' (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:287). This gift-giving is remarkably similar to example (33), in which the monk asked the recipients explicitly not to take offense at the ensuing offer with extended justification. Moreover, the fact that these two instances of gift-giving took place between friends and strangers respectively seems to suggest the use of this pre-offer strategy in a wide range of interpersonal relationships.

Strategy 7: The offerer stroke up a conversation and exchanged pleasantries with a stranger, often a traveller to where the offerer lived, hence orienting to offer an invitation, e.g.

(21)

正在傍徨之际，只见一人打个小伞前来。看见路旁行李，又见沈炼一表非俗，立住了脚，相了一回，问道：‘官人尊姓？何处来的？’沈炼道：‘姓沈，从京师来。’那人道：‘小人闻得京中有个沈经历，上本要杀严嵩父子，莫非官人就是他么？’沈炼道：‘正是。’那人道：‘仰慕多时，幸得相会。此非说话之处，寒家离此不远，便请携宝眷同行，到寒家权下，再作区处。’沈炼见他十分殷勤，只得从命。

Wondering where to find a lodging, they suddenly saw a man with a small umbrella coming towards them. Noticing the luggage by the roadside and impressed by Shen Lian's refined looks, the man stopped, had a close look and asked, '*May I ask your honourable name, sir? Where are you from?*' Shen Lian said, 'My surname is Shen, from the capital,' The man said, 'This little man's heard about a Registrar Shen in the capital, who proposed to the emperor that the corrupt official Yan Song and his son should be executed. Might you be the Registrar, sir?' Shen Lian said, 'I am.' The man said, 'I have long admired you. I am honoured to meet you. This is not a place to talk. My humble home is not far from here. Please take your honourable family and stay there for the time being.' Impressed by his sincerity, Shen Lian felt obliged to comply with him.

This strategy occurred recurrently in invitations between a local and a traveller or visitor to the place such as a village and town. This strategy, as illustrated above, took the form of the local greeting with interest the stranger that typically involves asking for their name and place of origin. The greeting and the stranger's co-operative response thus constitute the pre-offer exchange or sequence.

To sum up, this section has shown seven strategies used in the preliminaries of I&Gs. Amongst other things, this finding suggests that pre-offer strategies were crucial in executing I&Gs, which have attracted little attention of (im)politeness scholars (2.4.1). Perhaps most notably, unlike the stereotypical offer/response pattern initiated by the offerer, some invitational and gift-giving interactions were actually initiated by the recipient. It is also noteworthy that a fairly large number of my corpus started with a request and hence were instrumental in nature (see below), but they have been neglected in the existing (im)politeness scholarship (2.3.3). In a word, my findings seem to suggest that oversight of pre-sequences runs the risk of caricaturing I&Gs.

4.4 Summary

The above findings about the interactional structure of I&Gs in the vernacular *Sanyan* can be summarised in three points. Firstly, seven pre-offer strategies were found to be used recurrently in my corpus of I&G. Among them, the strategy of solicitation subsumes three sub-strategies. Moreover, most of them such as strategies 1, 2 and 6 do not appear to have been observed in previous politeness studies that are based on elicited data or observed conversations in limited social contexts (Ch.2). This finding, as discussed in Chapter 7, is of paramount importance in understanding (im)politeness manifested in offering and receiving invitations and gifts.

The second major finding concerns the interactional patterns in terms of the number of conversational exchanges used in I&Gs. As demonstrated in Figure 1, about three quarters of the interactions were sequentially-unmarked and only approximately one quarter was sequentially-marked. In other words, I&G that terminated within only one conversational exchange constitute the substantial majority of my corpus. In this sense, Gu's (1990) and Mao's (1992/1994) observation of the tripartite structure of invitations in contemporary Chinese does not appear to apply to my data as only about one in ten offers in my corpus took three or more conversational exchanges. However, it is worth highlighting again that the most elaborate gift-giving interaction was not wrapped up until after 8 conversational exchanges.

Thirdly and finally, there is clear quantitative evidence that the interactional structure tended to vary depending on the types and nature of offers. Precisely, as shown in Figure 2, when compared with gift-giving invitations had a clear tendency to be accepted or refused without ritual elaboration emphasized by previous studies (cf. Chapter 2). On the contrary, gift-giving interactions were about four times more likely than invitations to involve rounds of reoffers and

refusals. Before my discussion of its full significance in Chapter 7, it is interesting to note here that this finding does not seem to lend its support to the previous studies' (e.g. Mao 1992; Lii-Shih 1994) assumption about the interactional features of these two types offers.

Moreover, the interactional structure variation was found to be associated with the social function of offers. Interestingly, this finding only concerns gift-giving as no instrumental invitation, as defined above, was identified in my corpus. As can be seen in Figure 3, affective gift-giving was much more likely than instrumental gift-giving to come to an end within an adjacency pair (a difference of 30 percentage points). In contrast, instrumental gift-giving showed a greater tendency to be structurally elaborate in comparison with affective offers. Perhaps more importantly, nearly one third of instrumental gift-giving interactions were structured in Pattern C whereas only about ten percent of affective offers followed this pattern.

Chapter 5 Strategies of Invitations and Gift-giving

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to show the way in which invitations and gifts were executed at different interactional stages. Section 5.2 presents a detailed analysis of the initial offers, focusing on head act and modification strategies. Section 5.3 is then dedicated to analysing strategies employed at the reoffer/insistence stage. The final section provides a summary of the findings about the strategies of extending invitations and offering gifts in *Sanyan*.

5.2 Head act and modification strategies at the initial stage

This section presents the initial offer strategies, focusing particularly on head act superstrategies, strategies and, if any, modifications within or outside the head acts. In total 206 head acts were used to realise 210 I&Gs.⁹ Following the categorisation of offers developed by Schneider (1981/2003) and Barron (2003/2005) and Aijmer (2014[1996]) (2.4.2.1), the head acts were coded into three superstrategies, namely preference, directive and execution, respectively highlighting the conditional, imperative and commissive aspects of offers.

My data shows that these superstrategies differed considerably in frequency and in the range and nature of their subsuming strategies. Briefly, preference occurred least frequently whereas execution was most favoured, accounting for more than half of the total head acts. Directive head

⁹ There are two reasons for this discrepancy. First, as noted by Blum-Kulka *et al* (1989), some offers of invitations and gifts, like requests, were made using two or more head acts. Second, the head act was absent in a number of interactions although the responses and reoffers were provided in full in the text. For instance, in examples (12) and (13) the offerer's initial non-verbal move was substituted for verbal head acts.

acts account for approximately one third of the total, hence they were the second most recurrent superstrategy. A more detailed analysis revealed an interesting pattern of distribution. That is, preference and directive were heavily employed in invitations whereas execution was found to be predominant in gift-giving. Findings about modifications are also notable. For example, they include, among others, the prominent role of politeness markers in directive head acts and the fairly frequent use of urging the recipient to accept an offer in execution despite its apparently high degree of face threat.

5.2.1 Preference offers

5.2.1.1 Superstrategy and subsuming strategies

Underlining the conditional nature of offers (cf. B&L 1987:112-116; Sifianou 2012), preference head acts, termed ‘preference questions’ by Schneider (2003), were framed in interrogatives (See Table 1). This superstrategy was realised in my data by only two lower level strategies or ‘conventions of means’ (Blum-Kulka 1987; Barron 2005; Kasper 2010; Schneider 2010), i.e. ‘suggestory formula’ and ‘question wish/desire’. Furthermore, there was a considerable difference in realisations between these two strategies. As demonstrated in Table 1, the suggestory formula was realised by as many as 10 conventionalised formulas or ‘conventions of form’ (Barron 2005; Kasper 2010; Schneider 2010) while only one conventionalised formula was used to perform the strategy of ‘question wish/desire’. Use of suggestory formulas was thus the predominant strategy. Moreover, a distinction can be made between strategies phrased in a common interrogative, including examples [4] and [10] and those using the *directive/imperative or execution + tag* structure as seen in examples [1] and [2] in Table 1. Further analysis of the distribution revealed that preference head acts were nearly always used in invitations.

Table 1: Preference superstrategies, strategies, and conventionalised formulas at the initial stage

Preference strategies	Conventionalised formulas and examples (gloss translation)
	[1] ..., 若何? '..., how about?' e.g. 你 到 初八日 同 奶奶 到小庵 覷一覷, 若何? You on 8 th of the month together grandma go small nunnery look one look, how about?
	[2] ..., 如何? '..., how about?' e.g. 欲 备 肴酒, 尽 主人接 邻里 之欢, 如何? Want prepare food wine, express host receive neighbour (particle) pleasure, how about?
suggestory formula	[3] ..., 何如? '..., how about?' e.g. 同 去 吃 杯 茶, 何如? Together go eat cup tea, how about?
	[4] ...何如? '...how about?' e.g. 就 在此 下榻 何如? Just here stay over how about?
	[5] ..., 可乎? '..., what do you think?/is that ok? ', e.g. 倘蒙不弃, 少 屈 文旆 至舍下, 与 家尊 略 叙 旧谊, 可乎? if not despise slightly prostrate sir go humble house, with my father awhile talk old friendship, is that ok?
	[6] ..., 可好么? '..., is (that) good? [..., sound good to you?]' e.g. 请 你 吃 三杯, 可好么? treat you eat three cups, is good?
	[7] ..., 尊意如何? ..., your honourable opinion what? e.g. 欲 同 足下 一 游, 尊意 如何? Want with under your feet one walk honourable opinion what?
	[8] ..., 不知...意下如何? '..., not know (your) opinion what'. e.g. 娘子 不若 权时 在这店 里 住 几日, ... 不知 娘子 意下 如何? Madam better temporarily in this inn inside stay a few days, ... not know madam opinion what?
	[9] ..., 未知可否? '..., not know yes no' e.g. 意欲 曲延 贤弟 同 行 数日, 未知可否? Want humbly by inviting worthy younger brother together go a few days, not know yes no?
	[10] 何不...? 'Why not ...?' e.g. 何 不 就 此 安歇? Why not just here stay?
question wish or desire	[11] ...肯从我否? '...willing to come with me not?' e.g. 娘子 肯 从 我 否? Madam willing follow me not?

Moreover, the conventionalised formulas appear to differ in illocutionary force. For example, the persuasive force of negative interrogative forms such as 何不...? 'Why not ...?' is widely believed to be especially strong among others. This is because, like the negation of volitional *will* in English (i.e. *won't you...?*), it 'pays lip service to O's reluctance (usually for reason of politeness) to accept the offer' (Leech 2014:182). However, in contrast to this, formulas such as [8] and [9] involve explicit hedging by expressing uncertainty about the offer's desirability

through uses of 不知 or 未知 ‘not know’ (WT) (cf. G. Lakoff 1973; Holmes 1984; Clemen 1997; Markkanen & Schröder 1997).

5.2.1.2 Modification strategies

The preference head acts were mitigated or aggravated by at least one syntactic or lexical device. Following studies such as Blum-Kulka *et al* (1989), Barron (2005) and Garcia (1999/2008), internal and external modifiers are distinguished, depending on whether the modifier occurred within or outside the head act (cf. 2.4.2).

5.2.1.2.1 Internal downgraders

Despite the absence of upgraders, two types of lexical/phrasal downgraders, namely understaters and tone-softener, were found to mitigate the preference head acts. They are respectively detailed below.

To begin with, understaters, i.e. ‘adverbial modifiers by means of which the speaker under-represents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition’ (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:283), were utilised in nearly half of the preference head acts. They include, among others, 少 ‘slightly’ (e.g. [5]), 权/权时 ‘temporarily’ (e.g. [8]), 略 ‘awhile’ (e.g. [5]), and 小(饮) ‘(drink) a little’ (cf. Chen *et al* 2003:1724). In addition to adverbial modifiers, the two small numerals 一 ‘one’ and 三 ‘three’ functioned as understaters in some head acts. Examples include 一(游) ‘one (walk)’ (cf. [7]) and 一(话) ‘one (chat)’ (cf. Li 1999; Yi 2002). Furthermore, it is worth noting that on some occasions these numerals rather than adverbials were used as understaters. 一(酌) ‘a (drink)’ and 三(杯) ‘three (cups)’ are typical examples (cf. Yang & He 1992:197).

The other downgrader is the reduplication of the verb in 覷一覷 ‘look one look’ (see [1]). According to previous studies (e.g. Lee-Wong 1994; Yang 2003; Skewis 2003), reduplication of verbs serves the function of making the invitation softer in tone or less formal. In a similar vein, some other scholars maintain that such reduplication constitutes the tentative (Chao 1968) or delimitative (Li & Thompson 1981) aspect of verbs. Moreover, reduplication may optionally involve, as in the instance under discussion, the morpheme *yi* 一 ‘one’ between the verb and the reduplicated syllable (Chao 1965:349; Li & Thompson 1981:232; see also J. Li 2002; Xing 2000).

5.2.1.2.2 External supportive moves

Both mitigating and aggravating external moves were employed to support preference head acts. To begin with mitigation, as in English (Barron 2005; Aijmer (2014[1996])), conditionals and grounders were two main types of external mitigating devices. In total six conditionals were identified in my data. That is, about a quarter of preference head acts were mitigated by a conditional. Moreover, three main features emerged from my analysis. Firstly, conditionals were normally introduced by either 倘 (‘if’) or 若 (‘if’). Secondly and more importantly, five of them were apparently intended to show humbleness by using formulaic structures, which apparently parallel to the politeness-marking ‘if you wouldn’t/don’t mind’ in English (Watts 2003:183). Typical examples include 若不嫌寒舍简慢 ‘if you don’t think my humble home is beneath your dignity’ and 倘大人不弃 ‘If your excellency does not think it’s beneath you’ that prefaced a preference head act. Finally, honorifics such as other-elevating address term 大人 ‘your excellency’ and/or self-denigrating terms including 寒舍 ‘cold home’ were embedded in all but one of the conditionals.

Grounders appear to be much more complex than conditionals. In terms of position grounders either preceded or followed the head act while conditionals always came before it. Following studies such as House (1996), Barron (2005/2008) and Garcia (1999/2008), they were respectively referred to as pre- and post-grounders, which provided reasons and justifications for the offer. Moreover, probably due to structural differences between Chinese and many other typologically distant languages such as English, some grounders were embedded in the head act and hence called ‘mid-grounders’ in this study. ‘将息贵体, 等在下探问荆妻消耗, 就便访取尊夫’ embedded in an invitation head serves as a good example (cf. [8] above).

Grounders, with very few exceptions, were prevalent in preference I&Gs. In other words, providing reasons or excuses in making hospitable offers was a pivotal strategy of ‘explain[ing] the impingement of the hearer’s negative face’ (Barron 2005:163; see also Aijmer 2014[1996]:191). Moreover, the grounders in my data fall roughly into nine types as detailed below.

Table 2: Grounders of preference I&Gs at the initial stage

Grounders	Examples (gloss translation)
1. <i>yuan(fen)</i> (predestined bond)	[1] 天 遣 到 此 亭 中 与 娘 子 相 遇, 真 是 前 缘 heaven send to this pavilion with woman meet, really be predestined relationship
2. <i>bao</i> (reciprocation)	[2] 又 蒙 老 翁 周 全, 无 可 为 报 Again receive elder man help, nothing can for reciprocation
3. sympathy or being considerate	[3] 先 生 去 县 中 安 下 不 便 sir to county magistrate’s residence stay over not convenient
4. principle	[4] 为 人 须 为 彻 helping people should be thorough
5. specific reasons	[5] 即 今 清 明 时 候, 金 明 池 上, 士 女 喧 阗, 游 人 如 蚁 Now Qingming time Jinming lake on, men women swarm sightseers like ants
6. sentiment	[6] 愚 兄 馀 情 不 尽 This foolish elder brother sentiment incomplete
7. auspicious dream	[7] ‘今 科 状 元 姓 潘, 明 日 午 时 到 此, 你 可 小 心 迎 接!’ 相 公 正 应 其 兆 ‘This exam top examinee surname Pan, tomorrow noon arrive here, you should respectfully welcome!’ Sir just come true the omen

8. linking to parents' or forefathers' friendship	[8] 家尊 与 令祖 My parents with your honourable parents	相识 甚厚 know very well
9. providing extensive information	[9] see example (22) below	

As demonstrated in Table 2, reasons for making a preference offer are diversified, ranging from belief in predestined interpersonal bond to providing extensive information. Moreover, a nuanced analysis shows that choice of these grounders was largely constrained by the contexts such as the physical and social settings in which the invitations and gifts were offered. Some grounders appeared to be appropriate only in invitations between strangers. To illustrate, [1] that attributed an apparent chance meeting to predestined affinity, was used by a nun to justify her invitation of a stranded middle-aged woman to her nunnery. According to a wealth of literature (Yang & Ho 1988; Chang & Holt 1991; Ho 1998a/b; Chang & Lin 2004; Chen 2011), the notion of *qianyuan* or *yuan(fen)* ‘predestined relationship or bond’ is central to Chinese social life. Similarly, by telling an auspicious dream about the invitee’s visit in [7], albeit unnecessarily true, the inviter provided a good reason for his offer of accommodation to a scholar whom he had never seen before.

By contrast, other grounders including expressing sentiment were found to be recurrent among close friends, often at the time of departure. By way of illustration, [6] was the reason given by the inviter in example (8). Similarly, as illustrated by [4], the grounder called principle, i.e. the principle of behaviour one believes in, was recurrently used to justify the offerer’s further offer of help, typically money, to one who was in difficult circumstances. Among other grounders, *bao* ‘reciprocating favour’ is especially notable as it appears to be the most recurrent type of justification in my data despite differences in the choice of superstrategies (2.2.2 & 2.3.2).

Moreover, an aggravating supporting move was identified. Precisely, in the invitation 长官, 这
般风寒大雪, 着甚要紧, 受此苦楚! 我家空房床铺尽有, 何不就此安歇? ‘Officer, hurrying on
your journey in such a heavy snowstorm would only turn out to be an ordeal! [Persuasion] We
have spare rooms and beds [grounder]. *Why don’t you stay here until it clears up?*’ the
exclamatory tone apparently intensified the speaker’s persuasion of the invitation. While
showing sympathy to the invitee, this aggravation exemplifies the move of ‘orthographic
emphasis’, presented by the exclamation in the text (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:286; see also Garcia
1999/2008) although, unlike these studies, it occurred in an external rather than internal move.

More importantly, a compound strategy, i.e. the combination of two or more external mitigating
or aggravating moves, was used in most preference I&Gs. To take, for example, the invitation
discussed in the preceding paragraph, the preference head act (italicised) was supported by a
deferential address term, two pre-grounders, and an aggravating move. Unlike this example, both
internal and external moves were used in the following gift-giving (see the response in subsection
5.3.2.2).

(22)

施公道: ‘为人须为彻, 胥门外吾有桑枣园一所, 茆屋数间, 园边有田十亩, 勤于树艺, 尽可
度日。倘足下不嫌淡泊, 就此暂过几时何如?’ 桂生道: ‘若得如此, 免作他乡饿鬼。只是前
施未报, 又叨恩赐, 深有未安。某有二子, 长年十二, 次年十一, 但凭所爱, 留一个服侍恩
人, 少尽犬马之意, 譬如服役于豪宦也。’

Mr Shi said, ‘*Helping people should be thorough* [principle]. *Outside Xu Gate I have a
mulberry orchard, with a thatched cottage of several rooms on it and several acres of field
adjacent to it. With diligent work, the orchard should yield enough for subsistence* [extensive
information]. *If ‘at your feet’* [i.e. you] [honorific second person singular pronoun] *don’t think*

that such life is too simple [conditional], *how about staying there for the time being* [understater]?’ [Head act] Guisheng said, ‘If we could stay there, we wouldn’t die from hunger elsewhere! But with the previous debt of gratitude to repay, I would feel too uneasy if I accepted yet another favour I have two sons. The older is twelve years old, and the younger eleven. Please choose whoever you like and keep him as a servant, so that he can at least render some small service to you rather than serving some highly placed officials.

A range of internal and external mitigation devices were employed in this gift exchange between Shi and Guisheng, who were childhood schoolmates living on the same street. In a previous interaction Shi gave Guisheng money to help him pay a crippling debt (cf. example (9)). Then in the current example, an orchard, a cottage and a piece of land were offered to the same recipient again when he was found to be left no means of subsistence after clearing the debt. As emphasized in the translation, the offerer alluded to the saying as his principle of behaviour when making the offer. In addition, the head act was further modified by other external moves, including a grounder that detailed his motivation for the generous offer, a conditional, the humble term ‘thatched cottage’ and other-elevating ‘at your feet (i.e. you)’. Moreover, the head act was internally mitigated by the understater ‘for the time being.’

Finally, as suggested in example (22), honorifics, including respect forms and humble forms were found in all I&Gs using a preference head act. This seems to indicate that use of honorifics appeared to be obligatory in offers using this superstrategy.

5.2.2 Directive offers

5.2.2.1 Superstrategy and subsuming strategies

As demonstrated in Table 3, directive head acts in my data consist of two micro-level strategies: imperative and stating permission. They were found to differ considerably in frequency and linguistic realisations. Imperatives were predominant and realised in a wide variety of conventionalised formulas whereas stating permission appeared rather peripheral and it was realised only by one formula.

Another important feature of this superstrategy, as noted earlier, is its unbalanced distribution across the two hospitable offers under study. That is, about 85% of directive head acts occurred in invitations while the rest were found in gift-giving. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of head acts were phrased by using one of the formulas in Table 3, but differences in realisations between the two types of offers were considerable. The first eight formulas were all realisations of invitations, which seems to suggest that imperative strategy was more appropriate in invitations than in gift-giving. Realisations of gift-giving, however, are very limited as the offer was mostly executed by using conventionalised formula [9]. Interestingly, while the aforementioned formulas were exclusively used in invitations or gift-giving, formula [10] for stating permission was found in both types of offers (cf. example (3)).

5.2.2.2 Modification strategies

5.2.2.2.1 Internal downgraders and upgraders

Internal downgraders in directive head acts fell into three types, i.e. politeness markers, understaters and tone-softeners. First of all, use of politeness markers is one of the most distinctive features of this category of head acts. A caveat is in order here. Broadly defined as ‘optional elements added to an act to show deference to the interlocutor and to bid for cooperative

behaviour' (House & Kasper 1981:166; see also B&L 1987; Watts 2003; Beeching 2006), politeness markers in the present study are used in a narrow sense, referring to lexicons synonymous with English 'please' and tone-softening utterance-final particles (UFPs).

To begin with the utterance-initial politeness markers (UIPMs), 请 *qing* 'please', which is believed to function to 'soften a command' (Li & Thomson 1981:453), was found to be the most recurrent politeness marker in my corpus. A total of 15 occurrences were identified in different head acts. In other words, about a quarter of directive head acts in my data were mitigated by this politeness marker. It is most interesting to note that use of *qing* occurred exclusively in imperative invitations. Further, nearly all of them were found in the top three conventionalised formulas in Table 3, which were routinely used in inviting someone (in)to a place such as a house. This is well illustrated by examples [1] and [3] in the table.

In addition, 屈 *qu* 'prostrate/condescend (oneself)' was another UIPM used to soften the force of an imperative invitation in my data although it did not seem to be as fully pragmaticalised as *qing* (cf. Watts 2003). Below is the only instance of *qu* identified in my data:

(23)

那妇人道：‘官人认得奴家，即去岁金明池上人也。官人今日到奴家相望，爹妈诈言我死，虚堆个土坟，待瞒过官人们。奴家思想前生有缘，幸得相遇。如今搬在城里一个曲巷小楼，且是潇洒，倘不弃嫌，屈尊一顾。’

The woman said: 'Sir, you know who this slave is. I am the one you met by Jinming lake last year. When you visited my house earlier today my parents lied to you in saying that I was dead. The grave is nothing but a mound of earth piled up to deceive you. This slave

Table 3: Directive superstrategies, strategies, and conventionalised formulas at the initial stage

Strategies	Conventionalised formula and examples (gloss translation)
Imperative	[1] 进/入/到/过... ‘enter/come in (to) (into)...’, e.g. 官人 请 进 Sir please come in
	[2] 过来... ‘come over (to)...’, e.g. 时常 过来 走走 Often come over walk-walk
	[3] 那步 ‘move steps’, e.g. 请 那步 则个 (see example (14) for more details) Please move steps (UFP)
	[4] 去 (一坐) ‘go and sit’, e.g. 少不得 同 去 一 坐 Also together go awhile sit
	[5] 吃茶去 ‘(come and) eat tea’, e.g. 大爷 吃茶 去 便好 (see example (57) for more details) Granddad eat tea (particle) (particle)
	[6] 往/到...住/过/下 ‘go... and stay...’ e.g. 且 同 往 暂 住 一宵; (particle) together go temporarily stay one night;
	[7] (光) 降 ‘descend’; 光辉 ‘honour...with a visit’, e.g. 千万 早 降 Be sure early descend
	[8] 顾 ‘visit’, e.g. 屈 尊 一 顾 (see example (23) for more details) Prostrate honourable you awhile visit
	[9] 带去/将去/受 ‘take (away)/accept (the gift) ...’, e.g. see example (41)
Stating permission	[10] 可/不妨/当 ‘can...’, e.g. 你 可 将去 买 些 酒 饭 吃 You can take away buy some wine rice eat

predestined bond that brings us together. This slave has now moved to a small house in a secluded lane in the city. It's a nice place. If you don't think it's beneath your dignity, *please prostrate honourable you to visit me.*

The utterance-initial *屈* *qu* in the head act (italicised) of his invitation by a woman to her lover, according to studies such as F. Chen *et al* (2003:1284), performs the function of *qing* 'please'. Moreover, the imperative head act was given 'supplementary force' (Watts 2003:188) through use of the honorific rather than plain address term *尊* *zun* 'honourable you', which functions as a second person singular pronoun (F. Chen *et al* 2003; J. Hu 2003).

The second type of politeness markers are UFPs known as *yuqici* 语气词 'mood words' or 'modal particles' in Chinese (cf. Chao 1965; Li & Thomson 1987; Lee-Wong 1998; Lu 2002; Simpson 2014; Cheung 2016). In my data quite a few instances of *罢* *ba* and *则个* *zege* used as UFPs were found in imperative head acts, which supports Yang & He's (1992:905) claim about the exclusive use of these two particles in imperative sentences in Chinese. Despite other possible pragmatic meanings in different contexts, it is generally agreed that these UFPs were often used to show a tone of negotiations (Long 1985; X. Sun 1999). The following invitation is exemplary (see example (7) for more details):

(24)

[杨益]就与和尚说道: '你既与众人打伙不便, 就到我舱里权住罢。随茶粥饭, 不要计较。'

Yang Yi spoke to the monk, 'Since you don't fit in well with your cabin-mates, you could just move to my cabin and stay with us. Don't' make a fuss if we have to take potluck.'

The UFP *ba* 罢, as illustrated in this example, ‘has the core function of soliciting agreement and/or the approval of the hearer’ (Simpson 2014:160; see also Li & Thompson 1981). The authors maintain that ‘this function results in *ba* frequently being used in light commands, suggestions, and the expression of opinions seeking confirmation by the hearer’ (Simpson 2014:160). In a similar vein, *zege* seems to be equally recurrent in the corpus. For example, invitation [3] in Table 3 is mitigated by two politeness markers, i.e. the UFP *zege* and the UIPM *qing*. This finding appears to be at odds with Pan & Kadar’s (2011:90-92) suggestion that use of UFPs in imperatives features in contemporary but not in historical Chinese.

Apart from politeness markers, use of six understaters was a salient feature of directive head acts. Most of them are adverbial modifiers such as 略 *lue* ‘briefly’, 权 *quan* ‘tentatively and 聊 *liao* ‘merely’. Moreover, as can be seen in formula [4], the polysemous word 一 ‘awhile’, when used as an adverbial, arguably served as an understater. That is, 一 (坐) *yi(zuo)* ‘(sit) awhile’, which means ‘one’ by default, was intended to indicate that the imposition of the offer would not be long.

Finally, five tone-softeners were identified in directive head acts. To begin with, reduplication of verbs, i.e. 走走 ‘walk-walk’ in the invitation [2] in Table 3 and 话话 ‘chat-chat’ used by a girl when inviting her friend back again at the moment of departure, according to studies such as Tai (1993) and P. Yang (2003), sound softer in tone than otherwise (5. 2.1.2.1). Or in Chao’s (1965:252) words, they ‘express a tentative notion’ and can be understood as ‘just’ or ‘make a try’ in different contexts. It is worth noting that this move was exclusively used in invitations. Then, as noted by Guo (2004), numerals such as 一 ‘one’ and 三 ‘three’ can sometimes connote ‘short in time’ or ‘small in quantity’. Two instances were found in the directive head acts, namely

暂住一宵 ‘just stay one night’ (see formula [6], Table 3) and 到我家吃三杯 ‘come to my house for three cups’ (see more below). Finally, 小 ‘awhile’ in 请到书房小叙 ‘please come to the study to chat awhile’ apparently functioned as a tone-softener in the directive invitation (cf. Chen *et al* 2003:1724).

5.2.2.2.2 External supportive moves

Five types of external mitigating moves were found to support directive head acts, i.e. conditionals, grounders, preparators, disarmers and promise of more gift. To begin with, conditionals were used in about one fifth of the directive head acts. Although this move occurred less frequently than in preference head acts, its linguistic realisations seem to be broader. Despite the dominance of explicit conditionals, the conditional in the invitation (九哥, 你两日没甚事 (到我家吃三杯) ‘(Brother Jiu), you are not busy these days (come to my house for three cups)’ is implicit. In other words, conjunctions such as 若 ‘if’ was omitted in this instance. Moreover, unlike affirmatives in English (Barron 2005; Aijmer 2014[1996]) (Ch.2), conditionals in my data were normally formulated as a negative. In addition to examples that have been discussed above, 若不弃时 ‘If it’s not beneath you’ was provided as the condition for the invitation head act 可到寒舍拜茶 ‘you can come to my humble house for tea’ (2.1.2.2). Invitations and gift-giving of this type would be felicitous only if the recipient did not mind or was not disgusted with the inviter’s claimed humble circumstances.

It is important to note, however, that evidence shows humbleness or self-denigration evident in conditionals is normally ritual rather than speaking the truth. On one occasion, for instance, the inviter/hostess actually ‘slaughtered a chicken and cooked rice’ to treat the guest after her

invitation was accepted (6.3.1.2), in which she set the ‘condition’ that if the inviter did not mind her humble circumstances she would serve 一餐素饭 ‘a plain meal’ in her 草舍 ‘thatched house’.

Second, 12 types of grounders were used to support directive head acts although absent in more than a dozen cases. A comparison between Tables 2 and 4 shows that five types of grounders, i.e. *yuan(fen)*, *bao*, sympathy, principle and special event or occasion were shared by preference and directive offers. Put differently, they were reasons/excuses recurrently used to justify the offer regardless of differences in head act superstrategies. Furthermore, as evident in the two tables, offerers using a directive superstrategy sometimes used a post-grounder that was not found in preference offers. For example, the bottom grounder stating the purpose of the offer in Table 4 was used to mitigate directive head acts. Moreover, in most cases, a pre- and post-grounder co-occurred. Again, [10] in the table was used along a pre-grounder emphasising short distance in an invitation. In this sense, more face-work seemed to be done in a directive/imperative than preference offer. Interestingly, this is supported by the frequent use of strategies such as clarification and justification, which were often requested by the recipient, in the insistence stage of I&Gs.

Table 4: Grounders in directive I&Gs

Grounders	Examples (gloss translation)
1. <i>yuan(fen)</i>	[1] 奴家 思想 前生 有缘 this slave think prelife have <i>yuan</i> (see more details in example (23))
2. <i>bao</i>	[2] 承 处士 脱 某等 大难 Thanks to hermit avert so-and-so big catastrophe
3. sympathy or being considerate	[3] 你 既 与 众人 打伙 不便 you since with other people fit in ill (see example (7) for more details)
4. principle	[4] 杀人 须 见 血, 救人 须 救彻 (see example (25) for details)
5. special event/occasion	[5] 小庵 圣像 新 完... small nunnery holy statue recently completed (see examples (12) & (29) for more details)
6. pleasure of meeting	[6] 仰慕 多时, 幸 得 相会 admire long time honoured to meet

7. short distance	[7] 寒家 离此 不远 cold house from here not far
8. current place inappropriate	[8] 此 非 贵客 坐处 this not distinguished guest sitting place
9. obligation	[9] 我本 道家, 专 以 济 人 为 事 I be Daoist, exclusively to help people as job
10. purpose	[10] 纳 还 船钱 pay back boat fare

The third type of external mitigating move is four disclaimers (cf. Hewitt & Stokes 1975), by which the offerers disclaimed responsibility for something that might be below the recipients' expectations. *只是家间齷齪, (不好屈得贵人)* (see translation in 6.2.2.3) and *无以为报* 'nothing to return your favour with' are two of these instances (see also example (24)). Fourthly, offerers sometimes promised to give more when giving a gift, typically money to one experiencing difficulty. *若少时, 再对我说* 'If more money is needed, let me know' is exemplary. This move, termed 'promise of more gift' in the present study, was exclusively used in affective gift-giving and hence is different from 'promise of more favour/reward' in making instrumental offers that was used an execution superstrategy.

Finally, it is worth noting that more often than not different external supporting moves, like internal mitigating devices, co-occurred in directive offers. Among others, this is clearly observable in examples (23) and (24) analysed above.

More importantly, five types of aggravating moves were used in directive offers. As detailed below, some of them such as insult and patronising, to the best of my knowledge, have not been reported in previous I&G literature. Hence, they were labelled drawing insights from various sources (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989; Garcia 1999/2008; Schneider 2000; Barron 2005).

Firstly, there was an instance of insult, i.e. to increase the impositive force of the offer, a speaker prefaces or follows it with an insult (cf. Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989; Garcia 1999/2008). Precisely, in 大哥, 你也进来吃茶去, 怎么这等小器! ‘Big brother, you too come in for tea. *Don’t be so niggardly!*’ The judgment (italicised) about the recipient is apparently insulting, which, ironically, contradicts the honorific address term. Moreover, the force of this insult was further intensified prosodically, which was evident in the use of an exclamation mark (cf. Lachenicht 1980; Culpeper *et al* 2003). The invitation took place after the recipient’s master, the son of a top official, told the inviter, a brothel-keeper at her request that the recipient was his servant. In the prior invitation, his master was invited inside to ‘tea’ by the procuress, but the servant insisted that they leave. However, probably due to his inferior status, rather than protesting against the apparent insult, the servant kept trying, in vain, to dissuade his master from visiting the courtesan.

Secondly, there were two instances of gift-giving in which the offerer invoked moral maxims in order to lend additional credence to the offer. The move, termed moralising here, can be illustrated by 你可将去, 再做生理, 只不要负了我相赠的一片意思 ‘you can just take all the ingots, but don’t disappoint me’. To the offer, the recipient expressed gratitude by saying 多谢! 多谢! ‘Many thanks! Many thanks!’ while making a respectful gesture with his hands. Thirdly, as detailed in example (23) above, the inviter depicted her house as ‘a nice place’, which apparently instantiates the move called self-elevation in the present study. Fourthly, orthographic emphasis was used to achieve a heightened effect in quite few offers. This is best illustrated by the example of insult above and example (25) below. Fifth, an instance of gift-giving was made in a way that presumed the offerers’ superiority that they may not be considered to have. This move, drawing on Culpeper’s (2011:94-95, 109) study, is called patronising in the present study. The **only** instance identified in my data is reproduced below:

(25)

[老者] 说道: ‘人家败子也尽有, 从不见你这个败子的头儿。三万银子, 恰像三个铜钱, 霎霎眼就弄完了。论起你怎样会败, 本不该周济你了; 只是除了我, 再有谁周济你的? 你依旧饥寒而死, 却不枉了前一番功果。常言道: 杀人须见血, 救人须救彻。还只是废我几两银子不着, 救你这条穷命!’ 袖里又取出三百个铜钱, 递与子春道: ‘你可将去买些酒饭吃, 明日午时仍到波斯馆西廊下相会。既道是三万银子不勾用度, 今次须送你十万两。只是要早来些, 莫似前番又要我等你!’

[The old man] said, ‘*There are many profligates in the world, but I have never seen anyone as prodigal as you. Thirty thousand taels of silver slipped through your fingers just like three pennies in the twinkling of an eye. Considering this, I shouldn’t help you. But who else can give you a hand? If you die of hunger and cold, my previous money literally goes to waste. As the saying goes, ‘Whatever you do, do it thoroughly’. Well, just a few taels of silver to me. Let me help you out, poor man!*’ Producing three hundred pennies from his sleeve, he gave them to Zichun and said ‘You can take them and buy some wine and food. Meet me in the western corridor of the Bosi building as before at lunchtime tomorrow. Since thirty thousand was not enough for you, I’ll give you one hundred thousand taels this time. But be sure to come early. Don’t make me wait again.’

The context shows that the offerer had given money to the recipient several times before the current encounter. The extended comment (italicised) made before giving him money again is apparently patronising. Interestingly, the text shows that the recipient took the money with both hands, bowing deeply, and strode off.

In addition, use of two or more of the above mentioned modification moves prevailed in directive invitations and gift-giving. Such a combination strategy is perhaps best illustrated by example

(25), in which the move principle, i.e. ‘Whatever you do, do it thoroughly’ was embedded in the patronising comments. Strikingly, as suggested by the examples illustrating insult and patronising, orthographic emphasis tended to occur with other moves.

It is important to note, however, that external supportive moves were not obligatory when the head act already contained internal modifications or when the offer was made in contexts.

Consider the following example:

(26)

其时,张公望南回来,二人朝北而去,却好劈面撞见。张公不认得二人,二人却认得张公,便拦住问道:‘阿公高姓?’张公道:‘小人姓张。’又问道:‘莫非是在西城脚下住的?’张公道:‘便是,问小人有何事干?’二人便道:‘我店中有许多生活要箍,要寻个老成的做,因此问你。你如今那里去?’张公道:‘回去。’三人一头走,一头说,直走到张公门首。张公道:‘二位请坐吃茶。’二人道:‘今日晚了,明日再来。’张公道:‘明日我不出去了,专等,专等。’

At that moment, Mr Zhang was coming southwards to his house while the two travellers were heading northwards and so they nearly bumped into each other unexpectedly. Mr Zhang did not recognise the two men, but they recognised him. They thus stopped him and asked, ‘May we ask grandpa’s honourable surname?’ Mr Zhang said, ‘This small man’s surname is Zhang.’ They asked again, ‘Might you be living by the western wall?’ Mr Zhang said, ‘Yes. Why are you asking this small man these questions?’ The two men said, ‘We have a lot of work at the inn for an experienced cooper. Where are you heading?’ Mr Zhang said, ‘I’m on my way home.’ Three of them were chatting along all the way to Zhang’s house. Mr Zhang said, ‘*You two* [honorific term of address], *please come in for tea.*’ The two men said, ‘It’s too late today.

We'll come back tomorrow.' Mr Zhang said, 'In that case, I'll be looking forward to your visit at home tomorrow.'

Standing alone, the head act (italicised) of this invitation was not modified by any external move, which was first conceptualised by DCT-based studies as modification devices used in the same conversational turn (cf. 2.4.2). Nonetheless, the honorific unit word for people 位 *wei* and politeness marker 请 *qing* were employed in the imperative offer. Moreover, the invitation was embedded in an extended conversation, which in a sense pre-empted external moves in the offer turn. Equally important, this offer between total strangers appeared to be ostensible, which was partly evidenced by the lack of the inviter's insistence on the offer after it was declined. It is worth mentioning that there are also offers in which the head act did not use internal modification.

5.2.3 Execution offers

This section presents a detailed analysis of I&Gs using the execution superstrategy, which, as made clear at the outset of this chapter, was the most frequently used among the three superstrategies. The first subsection analyses the head act superstrategy and its subsuming strategies. The second subsection details the various modification strategies.

5.2.3.1 Superstrategy and subsuming strategies

Execution, which highlights the commissive aspect of offers (cf. 2.3.1), subsumes three strategies in my data, i.e. undertaking, stating wish/willingness and relaying. The label 'undertaking' was adapted from Leech (2014). According to the theorist, offers such as 'I'll buy you lunch' and 'I'll drive you home' that give little or no choice to the addressee should be called undertaking so as to distinguish from offers where the recipient 'is given a choice as to whether to accept the

favour' (Leech 2014:185).¹⁰ For example, the recipient's optionality in the gift-giving 老僧赠汝一物 (Table 5) seemed to be at a minimum. Unlike undertaking, meanings of the other two strategies appear to be more or less self-evident. As the examples in Table 5 show, stating wish/willingness, by definition, states explicitly the offerer's wish or willingness to offer invitations or gifts, typically by using 愿 'be willing' and 意欲 'want/desire' (cf. Barron 2005). Finally, by the last strategy, the speaker made an offer on behalf of a third party, usually not co-present in the interaction, by relaying their invitation or gift-giving (see example [9], Table 5). The remainder of this section details these three strategies, two micro-strategies subsumed under undertaking, and the conventionalised formulas with illustrations.

Above all, the strategy of undertaking is further composed of two micro-strategies, respectively called explicit performative and stating function in this study. By using the first strategy, the illocutionary intent was explicitly stated, normally through the use of a relevant illocutionary verb such as 请 *qing* 'invite' in invitations and 赠 *zeng* 'present' and 奉 *feng* 'present respectfully' in gift-giving (cf. Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:279; Garcia 1999:398). This micro-strategy was well illustrated by the top four examples in Table 5. Similarly, a head act using the second strategy, as the term suggests, explicitly states the function or purpose of the offer, typically by using verbs such as 表 *biao*, 布 *bu* (e.g. [5]), 充 *chong* (e.g. [6]) and 当 *dang* that mean 'express' or 'be just (for)'.

Four features were found to be characteristic of I&Gs using this superstrategy. First of all, as suggested by Table 5, undertaking dominated execution head acts. In this sense, the recipient's optionality was kept to a minimum in the majority of offers. Moreover, this also appears to be

¹⁰ Note that the notion of undertaking is used in a broader sense in Leech (2014:184-185) as it covers persuasive or emphatic (second person) imperatives such as 'Do have a seat', which falls into directive in my study.

true of stating wish/willingness and relaying except in four execution head acts that were modified by a conditional (see below). Therefore, high degree of imposition or limited optionality (Lakoff 1973; B&L 1987; Leech 2014) appear to be prevalent in offers in my data, especially gift-giving.

The second prominent feature concerns variation between invitation and gift-giving. Nearly 90% of execution head acts were gift exchanges. Thus, imposition or limited/minimum optionality of declinations was more characteristic of gift-giving than of invitations. Moreover, evidence shows that most instrumental gift-giving was no exception, as illustrated below.

(27)

... [程万里] 即取出五钱银子递与道：‘这薄礼权表微忱，劳主人家用心看顾，得他病体痊愈，我回时还有重谢。’主人家不知是计，收了银子道：‘早晚伏侍，不消牵挂。但长官须要作速就来便好。程万里道：‘这个自然。’

... So saying, [Cheng Wanlui] produced five maces of silver and handed it to the innkeeper, saying said, ‘This small gift is just a token of my sentiment. Please take good care of him and after he recovers from his illness I’ll have generous thank-you on my return.’ Unsuspecting, the innkeeper took the money and said, ‘I’ll surely look after him day and night. Don’t worry. But it would be great if you could come back as soon as possible.’ Cheng Wanli said, ‘Of course I will’.

This offer highlighted the symbolic function of the gift (*italicised*), which was supported by the promise of generous reward. The strategy of undertaking did not seem to give the recipient the option of declination. It is important to note that before making the offer and request Cheng had introduced himself to the innkeeper, emphasising the status of the top official he represented and claiming that he had to set off for the next leg of the journey despite his colleague’s illness. Also, as suggested above,

Table 5: Execution superstrategies, strategies and micro-strategies, and conventionalised formulas at the initial stage

Execution strategies	micro-strategies	Conventionalised formula and examples (gloss translation)
undertaking	explicit performative	[1] 送/赠/把(与)..., ‘give as gifts...’, e.g. 老僧 赠 汝 一物 This old priest give you a thing
		[2] 奉/献/上贡..., ‘present (gifts) respectfully’, e.g. 这几件 东西, 奉与 姨娘 为 伐柯 之 敬 These few items, respectfully present auntie as matchmaking (particle) respect
		[3] ...赐/赏(赐)/敕赐..., ‘reward, award, confer or bestow’, e.g. 我 把 这 银子 赏赐 你 I have this silver reward you
		[4] 请..., ‘invite...’, e.g. 奉 请 明午 于蓬舍, 少具 鸡 酒, 聊 与 兄长 洗 尘 respectfully invite tomorrow noon in humble home, slightly prepare chicken wine, just for elder brother wash off dust
stating wish or willingness	stating function	[5] ...权表/聊布/少申..., ‘(gifts) just/slightly express (sentiment)’, e.g. 谨 以 绿玉 如意 一枚, 聊 布 鄙忱 Respectfully with green jade good luck one item, just express humble sentiment
		[6] ...权充/权当/聊助. ‘(gifts) be just as/for...’ e.g. 薄意 权充 纸 笔 之 用 Modest gift money just for paper pen (particle) use (see example (34) for details) (cf. example [12] below)
relaying		[7] ...愿/情愿/意欲/须/要/当..., ‘...be willing/happy to or should give/invite...’, e.g. 老汉 愿 少 助 资斧 old man willing slightly help travel money [8] ...便当/即便/就, ‘would love/like to give (the gift to one)’, e.g. ...便当 相赠 ...(I) would love give (it to you) (see example (16) for details)
	[9] ...教/央/着...寄...与...: ask (me) to bring (the gift) or invite ..., e.g. 这 环儿 是 一个人 央 我 送 你的 Theses rings be one person ask me give you (particle) (see example (20) for details)	

Cheng actually did not intend to come back as he promised. Perhaps more interestingly, the recipient adopted an avoidance strategy – responding to the request rather than the offer, which was interpretable as accepting the gift indirectly/implicitly (6.2.1.5).

Thirdly, there is evidence that the conventionalised formulas of undertaking were employed by the offerer to negotiate her relationship with the recipient. For example, formulas [1] and [4], which contain a few plain verbs of giving, were normally used between equals. However, my data shows that they were often used as a tool for negotiating interpersonal relationship. For instance, the offerer, an old priest with magical powers, in the first example in Table 5 was apparently superior to the recipient who was young girl in a desperate plight. Nonetheless, use of the first realisation formula is evidence that the priest took their relationship to be equal. Sometimes a great respect was shown by the offerer to her equal, for instance in example [4] in Table 5, in which the SAV was modified by an honorific adverb *fèng* 奉 ‘respectfully’ in an invitation between friends (cf. Y. Zhu 2009).

Unlike the above formulas, [2] and [3] usually occurred between status unequals while they might be used as a tool to negotiate interpersonal relationship. On the one hand, by using [2] the perceived inferior offerer showed great respect by resorting to honorific verbs of giving such as 奉 *feng* ‘give gifts respectfully’, 献 *xian* ‘present gifts respectfully’, 上贡 *shanggong* ‘offer tribute/gifts’ and 孝顺 *xiaoshun* ‘give gifts as a token of loyalty or allegiance’ (see example (18)). On the other, formula [3] that contain 赐 *ci*, 赏 *shang*, 赏赐 *shangci* and 敕赐 *chici*, roughly equivalents of ‘reward’ s evidence of the offerer’s perceived superiority to the recipient. Among these realisations of normally ‘powerful to powerless’ offers, the one using 敕赐 *chici* ‘emperor gives’ was exclusively reserved for offers mad by the emperor or empress.

However, my data shows that there were also cases in which the formula was used by the superior. For example:

(28)

[葛令公] 说道: ‘郟城之功, 久未图报。闻汝尚未娶妻, 小妾颇工颜色。特奉赠为配。薄有资妆, 都在旧府。今日是上吉之日, 便可就彼成亲, 就把这宅院判与你夫妻居住。’
申徒泰听得, 到吓得面如土色, 不住的磕头, 只道得个‘不敢’二字, 那里还说得出什么说话!

[Lord Ge] said, ‘Reward for your bravery in the battle of Tancheng is long overdue. Since I heard that you are not yet married, *I specially and respectfully present you my beautiful concubine as your wife. A meagre dowry is in the old residence.* Today is an auspicious day, so hold your wedding right away. *My former residence is set aside for you and your wife.*’
Pale with fright, Shentu Tai was so mortified that he, kowtowing repeatedly, could only manage to come up with nothing but the two words ‘*Not Dare*’.

This gift-giving contains three head acts (italicised), all using the execution superstrategy. The hierarchical power difference was considerable: Lord Ge was vastly superior to the recipient, who was a general under his command. In the first head act, however, Ge attempted to establish an equal relationship with his inferior by using the honorific 奉赠 *fengzeng* ‘respectfully present’. Such a ‘marked’ offer, according to discursive politeness studies such as Watts (2003) and Locher & Watts (2005), could be positively or negatively judged by the recipient. Interestingly, evidence shows that the recipient’s response 不敢 *bukan* ‘not dare’ (WT) was a substantive rather than ritual refusal (cf. Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). For one thing, non-verbal reactions such as ‘turned pale with fright’ partly as a result of the power differential suggest that the recipient responded this way to show his sincere declination but not merely out

of politeness. For another, a past interaction in which Shen was totally attracted to the concubine such that he did not even hear Lord Ge calling his name several times before other generals ‘awakened’ him and more importantly that experience had always haunted him.

Rather than emphasising interpersonal relationship, formulas [5] and [6] highlight the symbolic meaning of the offer, especially gift-giving. As a distinctive feature, head acts using these formula were routinely modified by an understater, which was mostly marked by adverbials such as 权 *quan* ‘just/tentatively’, 聊 *liao* ‘merely’ and 少 *shao* ‘slightly’ (2.3.2.1). Finally, as detailed in the following subsection, the width of upgraders and aggravating moves seems to be one of the defining features of execution I&Gs.

5.2.3.2 Mitigation strategies

5.2.3.2.1 Internal downgraders and upgraders

To begin with, politeness markers and understaters were two major internal downgraders in execution offers. Three occurrences of UFPs were identified, i.e. two instances of 罢 *ba* and one instance of 则个 *zege* (5.2.2.2.1). This modification strategy is illustrated below:

(29)

斋罢, 尼姑开言道: ‘贫僧斗胆, 还有句话相告: 小庵圣像新完, 涓选四月初八日, 我佛诞辰, 启建道场, 开佛光明。特请奶奶、小姐, 光降随喜, 光辉山门则个。’ 夫人道: ‘老身定来拜佛, 只是小姐怎么来得?’

After lunch, the nun pronounced, ‘This humble nun makes so bold as to say a few words: The holy statue at the small nunnery has been completed. An eye-painting ceremony is scheduled to take place on 8th April, the Buddha’s birthday. *Specially invite Grandmother*

and miss to honour us with your presence at the ceremony (UFPM).’ Mrs Chen said: ‘This old woman will certainly come, but how can my daughter come, too?’

This is an invitation extended by a nun to her friend, an official’s wife who regularly donated money to her nunnery. The head act (italicised) was modified by the UFPM 则个 *zege* with a tone of negotiation, in addition to other downgraders such as honorifics and external modifiers. It is important to note that UIPMs were absent in execution head acts while both UIPMs and UFPMs occurred in directive head acts. This is further evidence that the downgrader UIPMs were exclusive to directive offers.

As regards understaters, there are two groups, typically used in formulas [5] and [6] respectively. Adverbial modifiers include 聊 *liao* ‘just/slightly’ and 权 *quan* ‘just’ (Tab.5) while the numerical understater 一 ‘one’ can be exemplified by 一杯水酒 ‘a cup of water wine’, which actually referred to the finest wine.

Apart from downgraders, three types of moves were used to upgrade the illocutionary force of execution head acts, namely, orthographic emphasis, self-elevation, and emphatic addition (see 特 ‘specially’ in examples (28) and (29)). Orthographic emphasis can be well illustrated by ... 特赍请状拜请! ‘I specially bring the invitation to you!’, the force of which was intensified by the exclamation mark. Regarding self-elevation, the offerer’s assessment of the concubine/gift as ‘beautiful’ in example (28) above is exemplary. A more interesting finding is that contrary to Leech’s (1983/2014) and Gu’s (1990) emphasis on modesty in communicating politeness, self-elevation in execution offers did not appear to be perceived as negative or impolite (cf. 2.2.1). Consider the following example:

(30)

内侍口传皇命道：‘官家见天气奇冷，特赐美酒消遣；又赐美女与先生暖足，先生万勿推辞。’只见陈抟欣然对使开樽，一饮而尽；送来美人，也不推辞。内侍入宫复命，明宗龙颜大悦。

The chamberlain announced the emperor's decree: 'The emperor finds the weather to be unusually cold and hence specially sends you *fine wine* for relaxation and *beautiful women* to keep your feet warm and toasty. Do not decline for any reason, sir.' Without hesitation, Chen Tuan opened the jar in front of the attendant and drank up the wine in one gulp. Nor did he reject the beauties for him. The chamberlain returned to report this to Emperor Mingzong, who was greatly pleased.

This is an instance of gift-giving relayed by a third party on behalf of the giver. Rather than showing modesty or self-denigration as theorised by Leech (1983/2014) and Gu (1990), the gifts were elevated (italicised). Moreover, they both appeared to have been accepted, non-linguistically, with pleasure. Interestingly, it turns out in the subsequent text that despite his love of wine, the recipient, who was a venerable sage and hermit, was not at all interested in women and went to sleep on a mat after gulping down the wine. After waking up in the next morning, the recipient wrote the following response to the offer, in the form of a poem, and asked the women to give it to the emperor:

(31)¹¹

雪为肌体玉为腮，

多谢君王送得来。

¹¹ The English rendering of this example is cited without modification from Yang & Yang (2000:244)

处士不兴巫峡梦，

空烦神女下阳台。

Bodies white as snow, faces fair as jade;

Grateful I am for the emperor's gifts.

The hermit dreams not of clouds and rain;

The fairy maidens descended in vain.¹²

While expressing his gratitude to the emperor for sending him the gift/women (second line), the recipient declined the offer with reasons (third and fourth lines). Moreover, the gift was judged by the recipient to be beautiful (first line) as the court attendant described although, unlike wine, the beautiful women were not his interest (third and fourth lines).

Furthermore, there is a great variation in frequency of the above three upgraders. While the first two moves occurred only in a few offers, about a dozen instances of the last upgrader were found in the corpus. This seems to indicate that use of emphatic addition was one of the major strategies in my corpus.

5.2.3.2.2 External supportive moves

In total six types of external mitigating moves were identified in execution I&Gs. To begin with, four conditionals were found. This move thus played a much less important role in execution than in preference and directive I&Gs. Further analysis shows that the conditionals were all used in gift-giving, which can be illustrated by 若老翁要宅子住, 小子卖契尚在袖里, 便敢相奉 'If old man needs a house, the receipt of my sale is still in my sleeve. I'll make

¹² 'clouds and rain' is the literal rendering of a Chinese poetic term for sexual intercourse.

so bold as to offer it to you'). More importantly, as suggested by the above example, conditionals in execution offers were phrased in affirmatives and generally emphasized the recipient's need or liking of the gift, whereas those in preference and directive offers were normally framed in negatives and highlighted the offerer's modesty.

Table 6: *Grounders in execution I&Gs*

Grounders	Examples (gloss translation)
1. <i>yuan(fen)</i>	天遣 与 尊兄 相会 God-given with honourable elder brother meet
2. <i>bao</i> (reciprocation)	蒙 君 救命 之 恩 thank to sir save life (particle) favour
3. expressing pleasure	风雪 阻 舟, ...实 小弟 之 幸也 snowstorm strand boat, ...really little brother (particle) honour (particle)
4. expressing gratitude	屡 劳 姐姐 费心 repeatedly pester elder sister help
5. sympathy or being considerate	事 已 如此, 足下 休得 烦恼 matter already so , sir do not worry
6. expressing sentiment	吾等 甚 不能 忘情 we really cannot forget friendship
7. apology	聊 表 赎罪 之 意 just express apology (particle) token
8. auspicious dream	(See example (33))
9. rewarding	今日 篋得头 好 today hairdressing good
10. principle	救 人 须 救彻 help people should help thoroughly
11. special event or occasion	(see example (29))
12. obligation	一生 专 行 好事 whole life exclusively do good thing
13. explaining value or benefit of gifts	这件 衫儿, 是 蒋门 祖传之物, 暑天 若穿 了 他, this shirt be Jiang family heirloom summer if wear (particle) it 清凉 透骨。 此去 天道 渐热, 正 用得着 cool to the bone now weather get warmer just useful
14. stating purpose	随身 带得有 黄金 二镒, 一半 代 令郎 甘旨 with me have gold forty taels a half on behalf of your son subsistence 之 奉, 一半 买 几亩 祭田, 为 令郎 春秋 (particle) offer a half buy a few acres sacrifice land for your son annual 扫 墓 之 费 sweep tomb (particle) cost

Second, grounders were of paramount importance in execution I&Gs. As detailed below, 14 types of grounders were used to support the head act.

Evidence suggests that there was a division of labour between most types of grounders. The majority of occurred exclusively in gift-giving while some were used to justify an invitation. For example, as noted earlier, *yuan(fen)*, expressing pleasure of meeting and auspicious dream were normally for invitations between strangers. By contrast, moves such as *bao*, expressing gratitude, expressing apology, principle, explaining value/benefit of gifts and stating purpose (or motive, function) were normally provided as justifications of gift-giving.

It is especially noteworthy that requesting, which was the defining feature of instrumental offers, could be viewed as a grounder given that it is clearly a major reason of the offer. However, arguably requesting differs considerably from other types of grounders because it does not appear to mitigate the impositive force of the offer as previously conceptualised (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989; Garcia 1999/2008):

(32)

美娘道: ‘...只要姨娘肯开口时, 不愁妈妈不允。做侄女的别没孝顺, 只有十两金子, 奉与姨娘, 胡乱打些钗子。是必在妈妈前做个方便, 事成之时, 媒礼在外。’

Sister Mei said, ‘... If Auntie could speak to Mother, she’ll surely allow me to get married. Your niece has nothing else to offer you as gifts. *Here are just ten taels of gold for Auntie to make some hairpins with* [head act]. Be sure to persuade Mother on my behalf [request]. If you can make it [conditional], I’ll prepare gifts for matchmaking [promise to reward]’.

This offer was, at least in a large sense, motivated by the giver's request despite their close relationship. Given that a grounder is understood as the reason, excuse, or justification of the head act in the literature (cf. 2.4.2), the request instantiates a grounder. However, to a great extent the request seemed to foreground the above offer, against the backdrop of gift-giving. Put differently, gift-giving and requesting were inexplicably linked to each other in this offer (see example (11) for more details).

The third external mitigating device is preparator, a move by which the speaker prepares the hearer for the ensuing offer by announcing that she will make offers, without however giving away the nature or indeed the content of the offer (cf. Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:287). Of the three preparators identified is the inviter's first utterance in example (29) above. Another illustration is 老汉一言相告 'This old man has a few words to say' that was used by a man to preface his gift-giving. Interestingly, however, as seen in my analysis of example (59), the offer was perceived by the recipient as insulting.

Fourth, promise of reward was sometimes made by the offerer to modify the head act. Approximately ten instances of this move were identified. The gift-giving 些小薄礼, 先送阿哥买果吃, 待事成了, 再找五两 'This is just a small gift for you to buy some fruits. *After this is sorted out, I'll give you more*' is exemplary. This move, as in preference offers, was used exclusively in instrumental offers. Fifth, one instance of hedge was also found in my data. Yet, unlike its lexical/phrasal manifestation such as 'somehow' in previous studies (Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989:284; see also Garcia 1999/2008), this move was manifested at the syntactic level in my corpus. Sixth, nearly about ten disclaimers (cf. Hewitt & Stokes 1975; see also B&L 1987:178) were used. In addition to the following example, 'don't take it amiss if we have to take potluck'

in example (7) is a typical example. Finally, a combination of two or more external supportive moves was used in most I&Gs, which is best illustrated by the following example.

(33)

[和尚] 转身进来, 就对众举人道: ‘列位相公在上, 小僧有一言相告, 勿罪唐突。’ 众举人道: ‘但说何妨。’ 和尚道: ‘说也奇怪, 小僧昨夜得一奇梦, 梦见天上一个大星, 端端正正的落在荒寺后园地上, 变了一块青石。小僧心上喜道: 必有大贵人到我寺中。今日果得列位相公到此, 今科状元, 决不出七位相公之外。小僧这里荒僻乡村, 虽不敢屈留尊驾, 但小僧得此佳梦, 意欲暂留过宿。列位相公若不弃嫌, 过了一宿, 应此佳兆。只是山蔬野蕪, 怠慢列位相公, 不要见罪。’

[The monk] returned and said to the scholars, ‘My respects to all gentlemen, this little monk has something to tell you. Don’t take offense [preparator].’ The scholars said, ‘Just go ahead.’ The monk said, “To my amazement, this little monk had an unusual dream last night. A massive star fell smack into the backyard of this humble monastery and turned into a green rock. This little monk said to myself in delight, ‘there must be eminent men coming here.’ And indeed, you gentlemen here today. Of the seven of you gentlemen, one will surely come first in the imperial exam [pre-grounder]. I wouldn’t otherwise presume to ask you honoured guests to stay in this little monk’s deserted monastery [hedge], but because of this auspicious dream [pre-grounder], this little monk would like to keep you here [execution head act]. If you gentlemen don’t think it beneath your dignity [conditional], stay overnight to bear out the omen [directive head act]. There is nothing but local vegetables to serve gentlemen, so don’t take it amiss [disclaimer].”

This invitation was issued by a monk to a group of scholars who popped in the roadside monastery on their way to sit an imperial exam. As annotated above, it was delivered by

employing two head acts, one expressing his willingness/desire and the other said in a directive tone. Moreover, to talk the invitees into acceptance, the monk provided a range of external moves, i.e. a preparator, two grounders, a hedge, a conditional and a disclaimer. Regarding the internal and external mitigating devices, the most notable one seems to be the contrast between the denigrating term of self-reference 小僧 ‘little bonze’ and the honorific term of referring to the invitees 相公 ‘gentlemen’, each occurring the five times. Perhaps most notably, the offerer’s account of his auspicious dream to justify his invitation appeared to be dominant in this invitation.

Apart from mitigations, five moves were found to aggravate the force of execution offers. Above all, contrary to previous theorisations (cf. Leech 1983/2014; Gu 1990), self-elevations were identified in quite a few offers of gifts. Among others, they include the evaluation of gifts as 颇工颜色 ‘very beautiful’, 美(酝) ‘fine (wine)’ and 美(女) ‘beautiful (woman)’ (see above). Unlike these offers, self-elevations in some others such as [13] in Table 6 and example (17) appeared to be implicit as they gave more emphasis to the value or benefit of the gifts. Second, a few occurrences of moralizing were used in execution offers. For example, the offerer in an instance of instrumental gift-giving urged his friend, an official in the county, to accept his gift money by invoking friends’ moral obligation to help, viz. ‘... zin (courtesy name), for our old friendship’s sake, don’t turn me down’.

Third, the offerer sometimes warned the recipient not to tell anyone about the offer. This move, called precaution in this study, does not seem to be available in previous I&G studies. Typical examples include 莫对人说 (cf. (16)), 不许一人知道 and 你不可与众人知道, which can all be translated as ‘don’t (or you can’t) tell anyone’ that immediately followed the head act. Moreover, my data shows that precaution was used exclusively in gift giving, especially those

involved instrumentality or love affairs. Clearly precaution imposes a restriction on the recipient's freedom of action and hence would be viewed as impolite or face-threatening (cf. Lakoff 1973; B&L 1987). However, my data shows that offers extended with precaution were not necessarily perceived as theorised by the modern approach to (im)politeness (cf. Ch.2). Consider the following example:

(34)

[颜俊] 又封着二两银子送与钱青道: ‘薄意权充纸笔之用, 后来还有相酬。这一套衣服, 就送与贤弟穿了。日后只求贤弟休向人说, 泄漏其事。今日约定了尤少梅, 明日早行。’ 钱青道: ‘一依尊命。这衣服小弟暂时借穿, 回时依旧纳还。这银子一发不敢领了。’ 颜俊道: ‘古人车马轻裘, 与朋友共, 就没有此事相劳, 那几件粗衣奉与贤弟穿了, 不为大事。这些须薄意, 不过表情, 辞时反教愚兄惭愧。’ 钱青道: ‘既承仁兄盛情, 衣服便勉强领下。那银子断然不敢。’ 颜俊道: ‘若是贤弟固辞, 便是推托了。’ 钱青方才受了。

In addition, [Yan Jun] put two tales of silver into an envelope and handed it to Qian Qing, saying, ‘This small change is just for you to buy some stationery with. I’ll have rewards for you later on. This outfit is for my worthy younger brother. *Just ask you not to tell anyone about this.* I’ll talk with You Shaomei today and you both leave early tomorrow.’ Qian Qing said, ‘Yes, sir. I’ll just borrow the clothes today and give them back to you when I return. As for the silver, I can’t take any.’ Yan said, ‘The ancients even shared horse-carriages and fur coats with friends. Even without asking you for a favour, I would not have grudged giving you a few coarse clothes. These few items are just meant to express my sentiment. I would feel humiliated if you declined them.’ Qian said, ‘All right. Since you are so generous, I’ll take accept the clothes against my inclinations. As for the silver, I definitely can’t take

any.’ Yan said, ‘If you still insist, you are trying to find excuses.’ Only then did Qian accept the silver.

This instrumental gift-giving took place between cousins, both aged 18. Yan, who vowed to find an unusually pretty wife despite his repulsive appearance, offered money and clothes to his younger cousin Qian who, handsome but poor, was staying and studying in his home for free. The offer was peculiar mainly because Yan asked his cousin to keep as a precaution ‘the matter’ a secret, which, as the context shows, refers to the request that Qian pretend to be Yan and go with the matchmaker to be interviewed by the offerer’s would-be father-in-law who was known for being critical of a candidate’s appearance. Despite his agreement to help out in the first response, Qian declined the offer repeatedly, which seemed to be ritual rather than substantive (cf. Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). He eventually accepted the gifts with the initiator’s stronger insistence, especially after Yan ‘warned’ that Qian’s declination would imply his unwilling to comply with the request. Throughout this interaction Qian did not make any negative comment on Yan’s offer and reoffer, including the precautionary move under discussion. Interestingly, as suggested by ‘against my inclinations’ in the quotation, the context shows that the recipient agreed to help because he knew non-compliance would offend his cousin, which would in turn threaten his days as a houseguest.

Fourth, to mention briefly, orthographic emphasis was used fairly frequently in I&Gs adopting the execution superstrategy. Strikingly, this was often used in the move of urging as discussed next. Fifth, there are offers in which the recipient was urged to accept the gift. Peculiar to execution offers, this move does not appear to be available in the current I&G literature. Drawing on studies such as Culpeper (2011a:94), this move is called urging in the present study. My analysis shows that the move, always following the head act, was invariably phrased in an

imperative form. Moreover, three types of realisations can be distinguished roughly according to the illocutionary force and emphasis. The first type, which appeared to be the strongest, urged the recipient not to refuse the offer. Typical examples include *万勿固辞* and *是必勿拒!* both of which can be rendered as ‘Be sure not to refuse’, sometimes intensified with an exclamation mark (see also the example illustrating moralizing above). The second type, on the contrary, urged the recipient to accept the gift. Among others, *幸希笑纳* and *伏乞收入* ‘respectfully request (you) to accept (the gift)’ are exemplary examples, in which the honorific verbs *幸希* and *伏乞*, according to studies such as Yang & He (1992), were largely pragmaticalised and could be interpreted as equivalent to the UIPM *请* (see above). Finally, the third type to urging, including, for example, *勿得嫌轻* ‘don’t take it too trivial’ and *休嫌菲薄* ‘don’t take it too meagre’, urged the recipient not to think of the offer as being too modest. This realisation appears to adopt an indirect strategy of urging.

Urging was clearly an important external move as it was found in about two dozen I&Gs in my data. Moreover, the significance of this move appears to vary across types of offers. The first and third types of realisations were predominant in gift-giving while only a fairly few instances were identified in invitations. The second type, however, was found to be used exclusively in gift-giving interactions. More importantly, my data shows that while most offers using this aggravating move were normally perceived by the recipient to be appropriate, some were indeed experienced as face-threatening. This perhaps can be most clearly seen from example (59) illustrating ‘blunt refusal’, in which the gift intended to repay a life-saving favour was perceived by the recipient to be insulting.

Finally, use of combinatory moves in an execution offer, as in directive I&Gs, is commonplace. Again, the nun’s hospitable offer is exemplary. Precisely, the grounder that provided details of

the special event to which her friends were invited and the preparator were used in combination with several internal downgraders and an upgrader (see details above).

5.3 Strategies at the insistence stage

This section analyses reoffer or insistence strategies of sequentially-marked I&Gs by characterising different realisations. The first subsection focuses on the head act superstrategies and strategies of modified offers and modifications. The subsection that follows then analyses the seven insistence offers realised in various ways.

5.3.1 Strategies of modified offers (head acts) and modifications

Drawing insights from previous studies (Gu 1990; Mao 1992; Leech 2014; Grainger *et al* 2016), of all **66** conversational turns **11** were identified as reoffers made after the first attempt had been declined. Unlike various insistence strategies that mostly addressed the ‘concerns’ or ‘questions’ raised by the recipients about the initial offer (5.3.2), a reoffer was a modified version of the earlier one. This subsection thus focuses on reoffer head acts and, if any, modifications.

All three head act superstrategies were employed at this stage. Unexpectedly, directive became the least preferred superstrategy while preference became as popular as execution. That is to say, the second stage witnessed a sharp rise in preference, a considerable decline in execution and a noticeable decrease in directive. This seems to indicate that offering strategies in SM offers in my data generally observed a persuasive or negotiative trajectory. This pattern differs from Mao’s (1992/1994) characterisation of Chinese invitational discourse as oriented to a solidarity politeness strategy. Moreover, the distribution pattern of these superstrategies across

the two types of offers remained intact. Precisely, three out of four preference head acts and two out of three directive head acts were invitations whereas three in four execution head acts performed gift-giving.

5.3.1.1 Preference reoffers

5.3.1.1.1 Head act strategies

All four preference head acts were phrased as a suggestion, which was realised in different conventionalised formulas (Table.1). Two of them actually occurred in the same invitation, in which the initial head act was an imperative mitigated by both internal and external devices. That is to say, the reoffer switched to a more tentative or persuasive tone from a directive one.

5.3.1.1.2 Modification strategies

Above all, the invitation of the friend's friends *何不一发请来?* 'Why not bring all of them here?', which was issued after the invitee said his friends were waiting for him nearby in refusing the initial offer, stood alone without any modification. There might be two reasons for this. For one thing, an interrogative can be a downgrader in its own right (e.g. Lakoff 1973; B&L 1987; Blum-Kulka *et al* 1989; Leech 2014). And for another, the invitation appeared to be ostensible, which is partly evidenced by the inviter's failure to insist after his suggestion was dismissed as 'preposterous! (or nonsense!)' ('*岂有此理!*'). The other head acts, however, were modified both internally and externally.

To begin with, honorifics including *老哥* 'elder brother' appeared to be the only internal modification device. Nonetheless, a few external moves were identified. As illustrated below, grounders seemed to be the main mitigation strategy.

(35)

后生: 老哥尊姓大号? 今到那里去?

施复: 小子姓施, 名复, 号润泽。今因缺了桑叶, 要往洞庭山去买。

后生: 若要桑叶, 我家尽有, 老哥今晚住在寒舍, 让众人自去, 明日把船送到宅上, 可好么?’

施复: 若宅上有时, 便省了小子过湖, 待我回覆众人自去。

Young man: What is your honourable surname and big courtesy name? Where are you heading?

Shi Fu: This little man’s surname is Shi Fua and, my courtesy name Runze. My friends and I are going to Dongting Hill for mulberry leaves.

Young man: *If you need mulberry leaves, we have plenty [grounder]. Old/elder brother, what do you think if you stay in this humble house tonight, letting others go, and I escort you back to your respectable home by boat tomorrow?*

Shi Fu: If so, that would save me a trip across the lake. Let me go and tell my friends about this first.

This reoffer was made after it turned out that the inviter happened to have mulberry leaves his friend Shi Fu was going to buy. The grounder thus provided a good reason for the offer rephrased as a suggestion and also for the invitee’s final acceptance despite earlier declination of the imperative offer (... *请里面坐* ‘please come in and take a seat’) and the other preference (see above). Furthermore, embedded in the head act is another grounder, i.e. the inviter’s suggestion that Shi Fu’s friends carry on their journey and he escort the invitee home the next day. To mention briefly, two similar grounders were used in the other invitations.

5.3.1.2 Directive reoffers

An imperative strategy was adopted in all directive head acts. Furthermore, they were found to be reformulations of a preceding execution, preference and imperative head act respectively. My analysis below focuses on the way in which these reoffers and modifications were rephrased based on the preceding ones and briefly the recipient's perceptions.

Regarding internal modifications, use of the politeness markers 幸 'please', 但 'please' and 也好 (UFP) in the head acts seemed to be the most striking feature of directive reoffers. The UIPM 幸 is perhaps especially noteworthy. As already noted (5.2.3.2.2), it often occurred in the external move of urging that usually intensified an execution head act. Nonetheless, in the reoffer 蜗居只在咫尺, 幸勿见却 'Our snail house is close by. *Please* don't turn me down', the politeness marker prefaced the head act, i.e. the second utterance, with the first utterance serving as a grounder. To mention in passing, this reoffer, albeit seemingly stronger than the initial preference offer (i.e. [5] in Table 1), was accepted. Like other UFPs discussed in 5.2.2.2.1, 也好 in the reoffer 你老人家许多路来, 料必也饿了, 见成点心吃些去也好 'having come such a long way, you old man must be hungry by now' conveys a tone of suggestion and negotiation, hence softening the imperative force of the re-invitation. As the initial imperative offer was issued without a politeness marker, the reoffer appeared to do more face-work.

It is important to note that grounders of the above two reoffers both differed from those provided at the initial stage. By highlighting the short distance in the first example and giving a specific reason in the second, both invitations were eventually accepted (note also the honorifics 'snail house' and 'you old man'). Like these modifications, the following example provides further evidence that modifications were of paramount importance.

(36)

阿秀站住帘内, 如何肯移步! 只教管家婆传语道: ‘公子不该担阁乡间, 负了我母子一片美意。’公子推故道: ‘某因患病乡间, 有失奔趋。今方践约, 如何便说相负?’ 阿秀在帘内回道: ‘三日以前, 此身是公子之身; 今迟了三日, 不堪伏侍巾栉, 有玷清门。便是金帛之类, 亦不能相助了。所存金钗二股, 金钿一对, 聊表寸意。公子宜别选良姻, 休得以妾为念。’管家婆将两般首饰递与公子, 公子还疑是悔亲的说话, 那里肯收。阿秀又道: ‘公子但留下, 不久自有分晓。公子请快转身, 留此无益!’

Axiu went as far as the screen and refused to move another step! Instead, she asked the housekeeper to relay these words: ‘Young Master Lu should not have tarried in the country. You ruined a best plan my mother and I had worked out.’ Mr. Lu equivocated; ‘I couldn’t come just because of my illness. I am here for the appointment now, so how did I ruin anything?’ Axiu responded from behind the screen, ‘This body of mine was yours three days ago, but now – afte three days of delay, I am not worthy of serving you and accomplishing my wifely duties for fear of sullyng your good name. Unable to offer money and silks, *two gold hairpins and a pair of gold brooches are just for you as a small token of my sentiment* [initial offer]. Master, you’d better find yourself another match and forget me.’ Taking these words to be a hint of a renouncement of the marriage, Mr. Lu grimly refused to accept the jewellery that the housekeeper presented to him. Axiu said, ‘*Please take them* [reoffer]. You will find out why soon enough [ambiguous]. Now please go away [urging]. It will not be to your advantage to remain in the place [warning].’

In this offer of jewellery, the offerer shifted to an imperative strategy from the initial function-stating (execution) one. In this sense, the force of offering was stronger at the second than the first stage. On the other hand, according to some studies (e.g. X. Zhang 2005), *但* in an

imperative serves the function of 请 (5.2.2.2.2). Hence the occurrence in this example was arguably intended to make the reoffer less imposing than otherwise. Moreover, the head acts were accompanied by aggravating moves, i.e. urging him to leave and warning with orthographic emphasis in addition to an ambiguous move.

However, the gifts were refused despite the fiancée's effort to offer the gifts using different strategies. The first attempt was refused because the offer was perceived by her fiancé as hinting at the renouncement of their engagement. He was left even more puzzled by the reoffer, especially the external modifications of the head act or 'additional materials' (Zhu *et al* 2000:88), including, for example, her order and warning 'please leave right now and it would be no good lingering here!' As a result, rather than responding to the offer directly, the recipient lashed the fiancée's mother, who were believed to be the decision-maker. This is evidence that context or participants' perception is crucial to locate instances of (im)politeness occasioned in offers.

5.3.1.3 Execution reoffers

Of the four execution head acts, three adopted the strategy of undertaking and one stating the function of the offer. Moreover, a comparison of these head acts with those employed at the initial stage shows that the same superstrategy was used in the offers and reoffers. This seems to suggest the essential role of modifications in reoffers.

The honorific verb 奉纳 'respectfully present' and understater 些须 'little trifle' (cf. Yang & He 1992:197) (see below) were the only two internal modifiers identified in execution reoffers. Nonetheless, three mitigating and two aggravating external moves were found to support the head acts. First of all, honorific address terms such as 奶奶 'grandmother' were used in the

invitation and one gift-giving reoffer. Further analysis shows that their use appeared to be closely associated with the social distance between the participants. That is, the offerer in both reoffers was lower in status than the recipient. By contrast, in the two gift-giving reoffers without using any honorifics the offerer enjoyed higher status than their co-participant. To illustrate, the recipient in example (38) was addressed with his first name. Secondly, the reoffers were all supported by grounders, one of which co-occurred with promise to give more. These mitigating moves are illustrated below:

(37)

[美娘] 忙忙的开了减妆, 取出二十两银子, 送与秦重道: ‘昨夜难为了你, 这银两权奉为资本, 莫对人说。’ 秦重那里肯受。

Sister Mei hurriedly opened her make-up box and took out twenty taels of silver. Handing them over to Qin Zhong, she said, ‘*Thank you for your kindness last night* [grounder]. *This money is for your business. Don’t tell anyone about it* [precaution].’ Qin Zhong adamantly declined her offer.

美娘道: ‘我的银子, 来路容易。这些须酬你一宵之情, 休得固逊。若本钱缺少, 异日还有助你之处。那件污秽的衣服, 我叫丫鬟湔洗干净了还你罢! 秦重道: ‘粗衣不烦小娘子费心, 小可自会湔洗。只是领赐不当。’

Sister Mei said, ‘*Money comes easily to me* [grounder]. *This little trifle* [understater] *is to show my gratitude for your kindness last night* [head act]. *Don’t turn me down* [urging]. *Anytime you’re short of money for your business in the future, I’ll help you out* [promise]. As for that soiled robe, I’ll have it washed before returning it to you.’ Qin Zhong said, ‘The worthless clothing doesn’t deserve your attention. I’ll wash it myself. And I wouldn’t presume to take your money.’

美娘道: ‘说那里话!’ 将银子扭在秦重袖内, 推他转身。秦重料难推却, 只得受了...

Sister Mei said, ‘Nonsense!’ So saying, she stuffed the silver into his sleeve and turned him around. Realising that he would not be able to prevail, he saw nothing for it but to accept...

This gift-giving took place between a renowned courtesan and one of her clients, a poor oil peddler whom she found herself attracted to. In addition to the internal understater as noted above, the reoffer was modified by a grounder, a promise and urging. On the whole, the first offer appeared to be discreet, partly evident in the precaution. The reoffer, however, seemed to give more emphasis on the affective meaning of the offer, which can be seen from her promise to give more money and to wash the robe on which she vomited after drinking too much the night before. Second, by highlighting the easy money she earned, the second grounder made the offer easier to accept, especially when considering the fact that the recipient had spent all his savings for the visit. Third, the urging, albeit seemingly imposing, showed Mei’s determination and sincerity of the offer. This explains why this gift-giving finally terminated by Mei slipping the money into Qin’s sleeve despite his (ritual) protest.

It is noteworthy that, as reproduced below, one of the reoffers appeared to be reluctant and more importantly it was preceded by the offerer ‘investigating’ the recipient’s refusal of the initial offer:

(38)

夫人心中不乐,叫:‘华安,你好大眼孔,难道我这些丫头就没个中你意的?’华安道:‘复夫人,华安蒙夫人赐配,又许华安自择,这是旷古隆恩,粉身难报;只是夫人随身侍婢还来不齐,既蒙恩典,愿得尽观。’夫人笑道:‘你敢是疑我有吝啬之意。也罢!房中那四个一发唤出来与他看看,满他的心愿!’

Displeased, Lady Hua raised her voice, ‘*Hua An, How high your expectations are! Isn’t any of these maids to your liking?*’ Hua An said, ‘Madam, I can never repay your immense kindness in offering me a wife and allowing me to choose her myself. Such kindness has never been known since time immemorial. I’ll never be able to repay you. But Your Ladyship’s personal maids are not here yet. Since you are already doing me such kindness, may I be granted the privilege of seeing all of them?’ Lady Hua laughed, ‘You suspect me of being stingy? All right! Bring all the four girls in my chamber to satisfy his wish.’

In the preceding context Lady Hua summoned the assistant An in her husband’s study and asked him to choose one as his wife from a group of maidservants to reward his work. To the offerer’s surprise, however, An kept silent when asked about his favourite after inspecting the girls. It is Lady Hua’s displeasure with this that led her to ‘investigate’ the recipient in a raised voice. Her anger seemed to subdue with the lettered recipient’s witty response and the ‘smile’ appeared to show her pleasure in offering her personal maids as requested by the recipient. Nevertheless, at least slight unwillingness was suggested by the reoffer, especially the discourse marker 也罢 ‘all right’ (cf. Luo 1996:767; cf. Jucker 1993/1997). Moreover, the reoffer was delivered with enhanced force through the orthographic emphasis, i.e. the second aggravating move in execution reoffers.

5.3.2 Insistence strategies

Unlike initial offers and reoffers, insistence is understood in this study as responding to the recipient’s ‘concerns’ or ‘questions’ rather than reformulating the earlier head act as analysed in the preceding subsection. While previous studies such as Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Leech (2014) just mentioned insistence strategies in passing, six strategies were found to be used recurrently in my corpus.

5.3.2.1 Clarification

This strategy elaborated on the offer by providing more information, often at the recipient's explicit or implicit request. In an invitation, for example, the recipient declined the first offer by expressing his concern about distance of the inviter's house. The inviter then reassured the invitee by clarifying her offer: *十步之内, 就是老身舍下* 'Within ten steps is this old woman's humble house', whereupon the invitation was accepted. Similarly, in an instance of gift-giving the offerer explained how he was saved by the recipient long time ago after the recipient responded to her offer by saying he did not even seem to know the giver who claimed that her gift was intended to return a favour.

While most modification devices appear to be irrelevant in clarifications, honorifics were found in two of them. In addition to the self-denigrating terms in the above example (italicised), the first person humble pronoun *某* 'so-and-so' was used vis-à-vis the second person honorific pronoun *君* 'gentleman' (two occurrences) in the second example mentioned in the preceding paragraph. In so doing, great deference was shown to his benefactor.

5.3.2.2 Refutation

More often than not, the offerer refuted the reasons or excuses of various kinds provided by the recipient in refusing the initial offer. This strategy, named refutation in this study, appeared to be the most favourite insistence strategy. Moreover, six notable features emerged from a nuanced analysis of the refutations. First, conventions of refutation such as *说那里话!* 'Nonsense!' (cf. example (37)), *何出此言!* 'How did you say so?' [cf: 'what are you talking about?'] and *四海之内, 皆兄弟也* 'Within the four seas, all men are brothers' were used fairly

frequently, either independently or with other moves including, for example, 谁人没有患难之处 ‘Who has never had to go through a difficult time in their life?’ in an invitation.

Second, use of rhetorical questions were recurrent in refutation (cf. Petty *et al* 1981). An old innkeeper, for example, rebutted the recipient’s ritual refusal (i.e. 若得如此, 甚好。只是打搅不当 ‘That would be best, but we shouldn’t be putting you to such inconvenience’) of his invitation to stay overnight from a heavy snow asking rhetorically the poor traveller 谁人是顶着房子走的? ‘Who ever travels with a house on his head?’ Further, he urged the recipient to enter the inn without delay. Third, in I&Gs between friends or relatives their relationship or friendship was sometimes invoked by the offerer to support her insistence while refuting her co-participant’s refusal (cf. Zhu *et al* 2000). In one case, for instance, the gift-giver refuted the recipient’s idea of offering his son as a returning gift by linking to their friendship (cf. example (22)): 既与君为友, 君之子即吾之子, 岂有此理? ‘Nonsense! Since we are friends, your son is my son.’

Fourth, in a few instances of gift-giving the offerer, showed or emphasized her sincerity in persuading the recipient. 礼物虽微, 出自房某一点血诚, 幸勿峻拒 ‘The gift is humble, *but the sentiment can’t be more sincere*. Please do not decline it so harshly’ is a case in point (see example (75) for details). More interestingly, there were cases in which the offerer was indirectly asked to prove her sincerity, as illustrated below:

(39)

桂生惊道: ‘足下莫非戏言乎?’ 施公大笑道: ‘君非有求于我, 何戏之有? 我与君交虽不深, 然幼年曾有同窗之雅…吾之此言, 实出肺腑。’

With a start, Gui Sheng said, *‘Are you joking?’* Mr Shi said with a hearty laugh, ‘Why should I try to fool you when you’re not asking me for anything? I may not know you very well, but I had the honour of spending our childhood together in the same class ... These words are truly from the bottom of my heart.’

In the preceding exchanges Shi offered Gui, his childhood friend, a large sum of money to help pay a crippling debt. However, as shown above, the recipient suspected Shi’s seriousness in making the unexpected offer (*italics*). Shi then provided an extensive explanation to show why and how he extended the offer sincerely (see example (9) for more details).

Fifth, as already suggested, a few refutations took the form of refusing or refuting reciprocation, which was one of the recurrent response strategies (Ch.6). To illustrate, in responding to Shi’s insistence in example (39) above, the recipient then asked for a receipt and promised to repay the money. However, Shi retorted, *吾怜君而相赠, 岂望报乎? 君可速归, 恐尊嫂悬悬而望也!* ‘Sir, I’m giving out of my sympathy for you. Why would I expect to be repaid? Please go home quickly. Your honourable wife must be worried about you.’

Sixth and finally, on a few occasions the offerer stated their general principle of behaviour, which was a grounder recurrent in I&Gs regardless of differences in superstrategies (see section 2 above). In so doing, they refuted any excuse of refusal given by the recipient. In refuting the recipient’s proposal of payment of a gift (see example (70) for more details), for instance, the offerer emphasized the rule of behaviour he observed: *大丈夫一言, 万金不易, 愚老拙直, 平生不立文券* ‘A true gentleman’s never eat his words. A straightforward man, I never need to draw up a document’. This was clearly intended to show his judgement of the recipient’s response as unacceptable.

5.3.2.3 Justification

Responding to the refusal strategy of requesting justification (Ch.6), some insistence turns took the form of justifying the offer and this appeared to be the third most preferred insistence strategy in my data. Like clarification, justification was often ‘demanded’ by the recipient in an explicit or implicit manner. For example, 你官人送我, 已领过他的情了。如今送你, 乃我之情, 你不必固拒! ‘I’m grateful to your master for giving them to me. Now I transfer them to you as a token of my goodwill. You don’t decline’ was the giver’s response when the recipient questioned the appropriateness of giving back to him the two buns originally offered by his master (see details in example (67)). Furthermore, this strategy was widely used among interactants of a broad spectrum of relationships and occasions. Unlike the above example, the following instance occurred between two strangers from the same community.

(40)

刘翁大惊, 道: ‘老汉操舟之人, 何劳如此厚待? 必有缘故。’ 王公道: ‘且吃三杯, 方敢启齿。’ 刘翁心中愈疑, 道: ‘若不说明, 必不敢坐。’ 王公道: ‘小店有个陕西钱员外, 万贯家财, 丧偶将二载, 慕令爱小娘子美貌, 欲求为继室。愿出聘礼千金, 特央小子作伐, 望勿见拒。’

Puzzled, Liu asked, ‘*This old man is just a boatman. Why treat me so sumptuously? There must be a reason for this.*’ Wang said, ‘*Have three cups of wine before I make so bold to tell you why.*’ Liu grew all the more suspicious, insisting, ‘*If you don’t tell me now, I won’t dare sit down.*’ Wang said, ‘*Well, there’s a traveller in my inn, Squire Qian, from Shaanxi. He’s a very rich man and has been a widower for two years. He’s impressed by your*

daughter's beauty and wants to marry her. He specially asked me to be the matchmaker and offers a thousand pieces of silver as a wedding gift. Please don't turn me down.'

This excerpt is part of a dialogue that took place after the invitee Liu came to the bar with the inviter Wang. However, suspecting Wang's motivation, Liu demanded that the reason for the treat be given before he could enjoy the food and drinks. Initially Wang tried to indebt Liu by urging him to 'have three cups' before disclosing his motive. Then, at Liu's insistence, Wang yielded and explained his invitation. It is important to note that the pattern of (recipient) requesting justification – (offerer) trying to indebt the recipient – (recipient) insisting on justification – (offerer) detailing the request was recurrent in my data, but only in instrumental offers, mostly in gift-giving.

Perhaps more importantly, on two occasions the offerer elevated the value of the gift when justifying the offer or refuting the recipient's refusal. As exemplified by the following post-dinner gift-giving, this diverged markedly from the initial attempt that was often self-denigrating:

(41)

施复道: '两个粗点心, 带在路上去吃。' 薄老道: '老汉酒醉饭饱, 连夜饭也不要吃了, 路上如何又吃点心?'

Shi Fu said, '*Here are two coarse buns. Take them for your snacks on the road.*' Mr Bo said, 'This old man is so full up after having so much wine and food that I won't even need supper this evening. Why would I need trip snacks?'

施复道: '总不吃, 带回家去便了。' 薄老儿道: '不消得! 不消得!' 老汉家中做这项生意的, 日逐自有, 官人留下赏人罢!'

Shi said, *'Even if there's no need, take them home (UFPM).'* Mr Bo said, 'No! No! This old man is in this line of business, making buns every day. Sir, keep them for other people (UFPM)'

施复把来推在袖里道: '我这馒头馅好, 比你铺中滋味不同, 将回去吃, 便晓得。' 那老儿见其意殷勤, 不好固辞, 乃道: "没甚事到此, 又吃又袖, 罪过!罪过!" 拱拱手道: '多谢了!'

Shi Fu slipped the buns into Mr Bo's sleeve and said, *'The filling of these buns is very good. It tastes different from yours. Try them, and you'll know.'* Finding Shi to be so hospitable, the old man felt it inappropriate to turn down the buns. Hence he said, 'I came here for nothing important, but ended up being pampered with food and gifts. Too much honour! Too much honour!' With a respectful gesture, he said 'Thank you so much!' and left.

In the initial offer the gift was modified by a typical mitigation device, namely the self-denigrating adjective 粗 'coarse'. Since it was refused mainly by questioning the grounder/reason (i.e. 'for your snacks on the road') the first insistence appeared to be stronger in force partly by dropping self-denigration although use the tone-softening UFPM made it sounded more persuasive. Again, the reoffer was declined explicitly and firmly with seemingly good reasons – the recipient himself made buns every day. Such a refusal seemed to be more meaningful than merely a ritual as claimed by previous studies (Mao 1992; Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). This prompted the giver to elevate, albeit insignificantly, the gift while slipping it into the recipient's sleeve despite his protest. It is most notable, however, that the offer was perceived as 'hospitable' and was finally accepted gratefully.

5.3.2.4 Coercion

A coercive strategy, by definition, forced the recipient into compliance by resorting to power while concurrently showing hospitality (cf. Yang 1994; Yan 1996; Schrifft 2014). As in Yang's (1994) study, coercion was restricted to instrumental gift-giving. Unlike its close strategy of threatening that took place between interactants with or without power difference (see below), coercion was always employed by the one who had considerable power over the other in dyadic interactions. Of the two instances of coercion occurred in gift-giving in my data, the following example is typical.

(42)

[金绍唤他到私衙,赏了他酒饭,取出私财二十两相赠]

张千、李万: 小人安敢无功受赐?

金绍: 这银两不是我送你的,是总督杨爷赏你的,教你赍文到绍兴去拿沈襄。一路不要放松他,须要如此如此,这般这般,回来还有重赏。若是怠慢,总督老爷衙门不是取笑的,你两个自去回话。’

张千、李万: ‘莫说总督老爷钧旨,就是老爷分付,小人怎敢有违?’

[Jin Shao invited them to the private quarters of the yamen for wine and food, and presented them with twenty taels of silver from this own pocket]

Zhang Qian and Li Wan: How dare little persons take your money for nothing?

Jin Shao: This silver is not mine but Governor Yang grandfather's gift for you. He wants you to carry an order to Shaoxing to arrest Shen Xiang. Keep a tight watch over him all along the way. You must do such and such... You will be handsomely rewarded on your return. *If you're found negligent, be advised that the governor's yamen is no place of joking. You'll have to go and report to him yourselves.*

Zhang Qian and Li Wan: Even if it's an order from old grandfather rather than the governor,
how would we dare say no?

This example starts with the initial declination of a post-dinner gift money that was offered by police officer Jin to his two inferiors Zhang and Li. To the recipients' indirect questioning of the underlying motivation, the offerer lied to them by claiming the governor to be the real giver although the context shows that he gave out of his own pocket. The coercive nature of the reoffer was manifested in Jin's claim of the high-ranking governor as the giver, the governor's private request, his order to ensure that the task be successful, and more importantly the possible consequences of their negligence or failure. In addition, the asymmetrical use of honorifics in coercive (re)offers is noteworthy. In the above example, no terms elevated the addressees or denigrated the speaker himself in the (re)offer. In contrast, however, the humble term of self-reference 小人 'little persons' (WT) and respectful term of address 老爷 'old grandfather' (WT) were used in responding to the offer.

5.3.2.5 Threatening

Threatening, unlike the broad range of situations the term may suggest, refers narrowly to the strategy of threatening to withdraw the offer in the present study (cf. Yang 1994:132-135). As noted above, threatening was used between friends or status equals. Among other instances of this strategy, two were found in the same instrumental gift-giving, one of which is reproduced below:

(43)

女待诏: 依你这般说, 大事成不得了。我依先拿这环珠送还了他, 两下撒开, 省得他来絮聒。

贵哥: 你是老人家, 积年做马泊六的主子; 又不是少年媳妇, 不曾经识事的; 又不是头生儿, 为何这般性急? 凡事须从长计较, 三思而行。世上那里有一锹掘个井的道理?

Woman hairdresser: In your words, he doesn't have a chance. Let me give the jewellery back and have done with him. Then he won't bother us anymore.

Guige: You're an old hand and experienced matchmaker, not a young girl who doesn't know about these things. This is not something you do for the first time. Why so rash? One must think twice before going into any action. Can you dig a well by removing just one shovelful of earth?

This is an excerpt from an instance of extensive gift-giving between two friends, i.e. a hairdresser and Guige, the personal servant of an official's wife. In the preceding turns the hairdresser offered expensive jewellery items to Guige. Under Guige's pressure the hairdresser said the offer was made on behalf of a prince, who wanted Guige to cement a romantic relationship with the woman she served. Since Guige refused to act as a go-between with seemingly good reasons, the hairdresser threatened twice to withdraw her offer in the process of negotiation and the above example was one of them. However, interested in the jewellery, Guige, as evident in the above response, indeed wanted to take the gift, just as the hairdresser's threatening appeared to be strategic because she knew the prince was 'a distrustful and mean person with awe-inspiring power' and could not afford to leave with the gift. (see more details in example (72))

5.3.2.6 Showdown

There were offers in which the recipient insistently refused to accept the gift. In these cases the recipient appeared to be trying to refuse the offer "by exhausting and moving beyond the conventional repertoire of polite expressions or ready-made 'excuses'" (Mao 1992:88). Qian's

refusal of his cousin's gift money in example (34) is a good illustration. As suggested by Yan's final offer 'If you still insist, you are trying to find excuses', an interesting finding is that such an offer was likely to end with what was called 'showdown' in the present study. By using this strategy, the offerer suggested that she was making the final offer and more importantly it was made clear that the recipient's insistence on refusing the gift would be taken to mean something negative, including 'trying to find excuses' in the above example. Moreover, as a showdown was always marked with a conditional clause, typically 若...固辞/再不收 'if (you) still insist/refuse' and an utterance explicating the negative implication of the recipient's insistence, this seemingly face-threatening strategy was always successful in persuading the recipient into accepting the offer.

Interestingly, the final showdown was a strategy used exclusively in gift-giving between friends. Moreover, while it tended more to occur in instrumental gift-giving, this strategy was also found in affective offers, which is illustrated by the following example:

(44)

酒行数巡, 陈朝奉取出白金二十两, 向吕玉说道: '贤婿一向在舍有慢, 今奉些须薄礼相贖, 权表亲情, 万勿固辞。吕玉道: '过承高门俯就, 舍下就该行聘定之礼, 因在客途, 不好苟且, 如何反费亲家厚赐? 决不敢当!' 陈朝奉道: '这是学生自送与贤婿的, 不干亲翁之事。亲翁若见却, 就是不允这头亲事了。' 玉没得说, 只得受了...

After a few rounds of wine, Chen Chaofeng took out twenty taels of silver and said to Lu Yu, 'Because my good son-in-law did not receive the treatment he deserved in this house, I now offer you a small gift to mark the occasion of his redemption, just an expression of my feelings as family member. Do not turn it down for whatever reason.' Lu Yu said, 'Being much honoured by a marriage tie with your honourable family, I should have offered

betrothal gifts, but I can't very well do this while I'm on the road. How could I possibly receive generous gifts from you instead? I would never take it!' Chen Chaofeng said, 'This is a gift for my good son-in-law. It has nothing to do with you. *If you object, you are trying to renounce the marriage arrangement.*' Unable to find the right words, Lu accepted the offer...

This gift-giving took place at table between two new friends, who had just arranged a marriage for their daughter and son the night before. On a business trip Lü was invited to Chen's home after he returned to Chen a large sum of money he found without accepting any reward. Unexpectedly, Lü's son, who went missing seven years before, was found to be living with Chen who bought the boy from a seller. Chen returned the boy to his benefactor and proposed marriage. This partly explains why Chen attributed his offer to not treating the boy well enough in the past. Insisting on the offer Chen strategically claimed that the gift was intended for his son-in-law rather than for Lü himself. Perhaps more effectively, this was followed by a showdown (*italicised*), which was designed to persuade the recipient into acceptance.

5.4 Summary

The major findings about the strategies of I&Gs in *Sanyan* can be summarised in three points. Firstly, offers at the initial stage fell into three categories depending on the head act superstrategy and more importantly their occurrence differed considerably. That is, preference was used least frequently while directive was employed in about one third of the corpus. Unexpectedly, execution was the most popular as initial offers using this superstrategy accounted for more than half of the total data. Equally important, use of these superstrategies

varied across the two types of offers under investigation, viz. preferences and directives were much more likely to occur in invitations whereas executions were most favoured in gift-giving.

A closer analysis showed that head acts were nearly always supported by internal and/or external modifications regardless of differences in superstrategies. Some devices such as understaters, honorifics, conditionals, and grounders were used recurrently in all three categories of I&Gs. However, differences were found between offers adopting different superstrategies and between invitations and gift-giving sharing the same superstrategy. To begin with internal modifications, one of the most striking differences lies in the absence of upgraders in preference and directive head acts while three types of upgraders were identified in executions including self-elevation. Then, understaters and tone-softeners were the only two internal modification devices identified in preference while the fairly frequent use of UIPMs was found to be a striking features of directive head acts just as the utilisation of UFPMs figured prominently in execution.

Then, the use of external modifications displayed some equally noteworthy differences. Above all, there was a notable difference in the repertoire of supportive moves. Three supportive moves were used in preference I&Gs, namely conditionals, grounders and orthographic emphasis. By contrast, a broad range of external moves were employed to either mitigate or aggravate the directive and execution head act. It is especially worth noting that five types of aggravating moves were identified in directive offers, including insult that has long been viewed as highly face-threatening. An even wider variety of external supportive moves were identified in execution offers. Strikingly, seven of them seemed to aggravate the force of I&Gs such as self-elevation, precaution and urging.

Moreover, the importance of some modification devices seemed to differ despite their occurrence in all categories of offers. For instance, conditionals seem to play a more important role in preference and directive offers than in execution ones. This is because conditionals were used to support about a quarter of preference head acts and one fifth of directive head acts while only four instances of this move were identified in execution offers despite the dominance of this superstrategy. Further, the emphasis of conditionals appeared to vary depending on the superstrategy of the head act it modified. That is, conditionals in preference and directive offers were normally framed in negatives and highlighted the offerer's modesty while those in execution offers were phrased in affirmatives and generally emphasized the recipient's need or liking of the gift.

Secondly, strategies of I&Gs at the insistence stage diverged from the initial stage in several ways. Most notably, while the initial offers relied heavily on a head act, reoffers were issued by reformulating the initial head act in about a dozen cases and by addressing directly the refuser's 'concern' in most cases. Regarding head acts, preference became as popular as execution while directive became the least used superstrategy. Modified reoffers used far fewer modification strategies than the initial offers. Among others, use of grounders in all three categories of reoffers and of politeness markers in imperative reoffers is most noteworthy.

Insistence offer realisations addressing the recipient's 'concerns' prevailed at this stage of interaction. Of the six recurrently used strategies, refutation seemed to occur most frequently, which was followed by justification and clarification. Then, use of the remaining three strategies, i.e. coercion, threatening and showdown, each of which was used on a few occasions, was a distinctive feature of the insistence stage of offering I&Gs due to their apparently high degree of face threat.

Finally, some interesting differences were found between strategies in invitations and gift-giving. At the macro level, the higher tendency of preference and directive to occur in invitations and execution in gift-giving was largely consistent over different interactional stages. Several differences, however, were identified at the micro level. Politeness markers at the initial stage were normally used as an internal mitigation strategy in an invitation. Similarly, some grounders such as belief in predestined relationship and auspicious dreams were exclusively used in invitations while others including principle of behaviour were only found in gift-giving. Perhaps most interestingly, the three highly face-threatening strategies, i.e. coercion, threatening and showdown, were only found in gift-giving at the insistence stage.

Chapter 6 Response Strategies to Invitations and Gift-giving

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to characterise politeness strategies used in responding to I&Gs derived from the *Sanyan* vernacular stories. It focuses on the recipient's perceptions of I&Gs by analysing the way in which an offer was accepted or refused in sections 2, 3 and 4. On this basis, section 5 compares responses in SUM and SM I&Gs and responses at different interactional stages of SM offers. The final section summarises the major findings.

6.2 Response strategies in SUM I&Gs

This section shows findings regarding responses in SUM I&Gs, aiming to characterise acceptance and refusal strategies. Before going into details, it is necessary to note at the outset that the majority of the total 210 I&Gs identified from the vernacular stories terminated without elaborate interaction (cf. 4.2.1). However, more than half of the 'responses' were not performative and hence deemed as invalid in the present study as they were just narrated roughly in the text. As a result, a total of 70 responses produced by the recipients were scrutinised.

6.2.1 Acceptance strategies

Most I&Gs were accepted when the first attempt was made by the offerer. Drawing on previous studies such as Liao & Bresnahan (1996), Zhu *et al* (2000) and Al-Khatib (2006) (2.4.3.1), this subsection analyses six mutually exclusive acceptance strategies as detailed in the following subsections.

6.2.1.1 Expressing gratitude

By using this strategy, the recipient accepted the offer by expressing her gratitude or appreciation for the invitation or gift she received. It was found to be the most preferred acceptance strategy in my corpus, accounting for about half of the acceptance response. Roughly four micro strategies could be distinguished although they were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

6.2.1.1.1 Using expressions of thanks

Conventionalised expressions of thanks were used frequently to accept an invitation or gift (cf. Einstein & Bodman 1986:168). Appreciation tokens such as *多谢!* ‘many thanks’ and *深感* ‘deep thanks’ stood alone as a response on occasions. Interestingly, as seen below, they were sometimes reduplicated to heighten the degree of gratitude. Nonetheless, more often than not, appreciation tokens were embedded in a lengthier response including, for example, *如此多谢了!* ‘if so, many thanks!’ and *若得如此, 深感! 深感! 只是不好打搅* ‘If so, deep thanks! deep thanks! But it would be inappropriate to impose on you’.

Unlike the above realisations, some other appreciative responses appeared much harder to interpret given the diachronic changes of Chinese that may have taken place over the past centuries (Ch.3). In such cases, contextual clues proved to be crucial for assigning strategies. One of the important rules, for example, is that the presentation of a grateful response in the literature was often preceded by the narrative text *谢道* ‘thankfully said’ with a colon. To illustrate, *如此甚好* ‘that would be nice’ in responding to invitation [8] in Table 1, Chapter 5, was interpreted as showing gratitude principally according to the text *妇人收泪而谢道*: ‘the woman stopped weeping and said thankfully’ that prefaced the conversational turn. More

importantly, in some instances this also became evident in the way in which the response was taken up by the offerer. Consider the following example:

(45)

[吴山] 说道: ‘这两包粗果, 送与姐姐泡茶。银子三两, 权助搬屋之费。待你家过屋后, 再来看你。’ 金奴接了果子并银两, 母子两个起身 *谢道*: ‘重蒙见惠, 何以克当!’ 吴山道: ‘不必谢, 日后正要往来哩。’

[Wu Shan] said, ‘Here are two packages of coares fruit for Sister’s tea. The three taels of silver are just for you to pay towards your house move. I’ll come to see you after you’ve settled down.’ Taking the packages and silver, Jinnu, along with her mother, rose to *say thankfully*, ‘*How can we deserve such a great favour!*’ Wu Shan said, ‘Don’t mention it. We’ll be seeing more each other.’

In this gift-giving between two lovers, the recipient (and her mother) thanked her lover Wu for giving the fruit and money (*italics*). Although to pin down the exact meaning of the response in pre-modern Chinese appears to be hard today, the dismissal ‘Don’t thank me...’ tells us unmistakably how the response was taken by the giver as showing the recipient’s appreciation.

6.2.1.1.2 Promising to reciprocate favour

In addition, the recipient’s gratitude was often expressed by explicitly promising to reciprocate the favour. Unlike the above one, this sub-strategy was only found in responding to gift-giving. The promise normally contained words or expressions of favour, especially *bao* ‘reciprocation’ (Ch.5) such as *厚恩* ‘generous favour’, *大恩* ‘huge favour’, *报* ‘reciprocation’ and *相报* ‘reciprocation’. Typically, the recipient promised never to forget the favour she received. A poor scholar who later became a minister, for example, responded to an innkeeper’s offer of

travel money by saying 他日寸进, 决不相忘 ‘I will never forget your help when I make an inch of progress in the future’.

6.2.1.1.3 Expressing indebtedness

Another way of accepting an offer gratefully was to express feeling of indebtedness. While similar to the above strategy, expressing indebtedness normally occurred on occasions when the offer was perceived by the recipient to be so generous that it was impossible to be reciprocated. One of the examples is the gift-giving response 荷蒙大恩, 犬马难报 ‘I will never be able to repay your great kindness even if I serve you as a dog or horse’. To mention in passing, in responding to this appreciation, the offerer said 都是缘法, 谅非人为 ‘Everything is predestined rather than a result of human effort’, which attributed his encounter with the recipient to pure serendipity (Ch.5).

Moreover, as demonstrated in example (18), a recipient might sometimes propose to treat the offerer to something nice or give a gift to reduce her feeling of indebtedness while expressing explicitly her inability to repay the benefit completely. Nonetheless, as illustrated below, the recipient tended more to pledge that she would serve as the benefactor’s dog or horse after life to show the magnitude of her appreciation.

(46)

刘公: 此驴畜养已久, 老汉又无远行, 少有用处, 你就乘他去罢, 省得路上雇倩。这包裹内是一床被窝, 几件粗布衣裳, 以防路上风寒。这三两银子, 将就盘缠, 亦可到得家了。

刘奇: 小子受公公如此厚恩, 今生料不能报, 俟来世为犬马以酬万一。

刘公: 何出此言!

Mr Liu: This donkey has been kept for a long time now. As this old man never makes a long trip, it still waits to be put to use. You just take it, so that you won't have to pay for your travel. In the bundle are a quilt and some cheap clothes for you to keep off the cold. Here are three taels of silver. If you use them sparingly, they should last until you get home.

Liu Qi: This little man will never be able to repay you in this life for such great kindness. Let me repay a tiny fraction of it as a dog or horse in my next life

Mr Liu: Nonsense!

The recipient in this example was a young man who had been recovering from an injury in Liu's home after being saved by the host from a boat accident. The offer was made when the recipient was about to leave. As shown above, the gifts, including a donkey, a quilt, clothes and travel money, were so generous that the recipient said he would only be able to repay a tiny part of his kindness even in his next life.

6.2.1.2 Externally no, internally yes

There are several cases in which the recipient used the strategy 'externally no, internally yes', adapted from a similar refusal strategy in studies such as Liao & Bresnahan (1996:706). Such a 'contrary-to-face-value' response (Ma 1996:257; see also Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998) appeared to refuse the offer on the surface (hence 'externally no'). Yet, there is evidence that the offer was actually accepted (hence 'internally yes'). This is best illustrated by 取扰不该 'I really shouldn't disturb you' (see example (7) for more detail). By expressing the inconvenience his move to the official's designated cabin would cause, the monk externally appeared to refuse the invitation. Put differently, on the pragmalinguistic level, this response

highlighted the ‘cost’ to the inviter, and hence appeared to exemplify a ritual refusal (Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). However, the subsequent non-verbal move, i.e. ‘So saying, he followed Yang to his first-class cabin’ provides the clearest counterevidence – the invitation was actually accepted. More importantly, this move is also evidence that the response was not taken by the inviter at face value. Another typical example is reproduced below:

(47)

员外到得寺中, 只见一个和尚出来相揖道: ‘外日深荷了办缘事, 今日幸得员外至此, 请过方丈献茶。’ 员外远观不审, 近睹分明, 正是向日化香罗木的和尚, 只得应道: ‘日昨多感吾师过访, 接待不及。’ 和尚同至方丈, 叙礼, 分宾主坐定。

As soon as the squire entered the temple, a monk came out to greet him. With a bow he said, ‘The other day, you kindly made a donation to the temple. I am so glad you are here today. Please come into my cell for a cup of tea.’ From a distance, Squire Zhang could not recognise him, but upon drawing near, he found the abbot to be none other than the very monk who had asked for his *nanmu* wood and could only respond, ‘Many thanks for *Your Reverence’s* visit the other day, but I wasn’t a good host.’ The monk took him into his cell and both sat down.

This invitation took place when the squire visited a temple. As in the preceding example, the invitee appeared to decline the offer by apologising for not giving the monk a type of fine wood he requested a few days before although it was later mystically taken away by a group of monks led by the inviter. The context shows that the invitee had not given away the wood just because it had been left by his deceased father who asked the squire to donate it to the aforementioned temple which was not made clear by the monk on his visit. This partly explains the invitee’s apology. However, his ensuing non-verbal move in the last sentence of the passage

indicates that the invitation was accepted although pragmalinguistically it bears a striking resemblance to a ritual refusal (6.2.2.1 & 6.3.1.1).

6.2.1.3 Explicit acceptance

By definition, this strategy accepted an offer explicitly and clearly. For example, *多拜上相公, 至期准赴* ‘Tell your master that I will definitely come that day’ and *蒙二兄不弃寒贱, 当得奉陪* ‘since two elder brothers do not disdain my lowly status, I’ll surely be happy to go with you’ both accepted the invitation explicitly. Below is a contextualised example:

(48)

楠饮之, 甘美异常! 问道: ‘此酒出于何处?’ 道人答道: ‘此酒乃贫道所自造也。贫道结庵于庐山五老峰下, 居士若能同游, 当恣君斟酌耳!’ 卢楠道: ‘既有美酝, 何惮相从!’

Nan took a sip and found the wine to be extraordinarily delicious. He asked, ‘Where did this wine come from?’ The priest replied, ‘I made it myself. I live in a hut at the foot of Wulaofeng Peak of the Lushan Mountains. If you go with me, you can drink as much as you want.’ Lu said, ‘*If there’s such fine wine to indulge in everyday, why don’t I?*’

The recipient explicitly accepted the invitation (italicised), which was actually the priest’s response to his solicitation (Ch.4). It appears that the use of this strategy can be partly accounted for by the context. Invitee Lu Nan, a wine lover who used to be very rich, was a man of letters travelling around the country. The above invitation took place in a restaurant where the Daoist was being treated to fine wine by Lu Nan following their first meeting. The priest also took out his own wine to share at table, the taste of which amazed Lu Nan such that he showed deep interest in its source and oriented to accept the offer. As discussed in Chapter 7, refusing the offer in such a context would be perceived as insincere or hypocritical.

6.2.1.4 Mitigated acceptance

Mitigated acceptance was a popular strategy in my data although it does not appear to be discussed in detail in I&G literature such as Mao (1992/1994) and Lii-Shih (1994) and Felix-Brasdefer (2003). In my data a distinction can be made between responses using this strategy. The first realisation was rather paradoxical since the response consists of two contradictory elements, by which the recipient respectively justified her refusal and then acceptance of the offer. Moreover, this strategy was exclusively used in instrumental gift-giving between friends. This paradoxical strategy is perhaps best illustrated by the response in example (11): The recipient appeared to decline the offer started by emphasising her close relationship with the giver and her positive comment on the giver's decision. Then, quite paradoxically, the recipient added she would keep the money for her niece for the time being, which is interpretable as accepting the gift. Another good example is 平昔相知, 自当效力, 何劳厚赐? 暂时领受, 容他日璧还 'Friends should help each other. Why do you give me so much money? I'll take it for now and give it back another day' in accepting an instrumental gift.

In the second type of responses, the recipient invariably attributed her acceptance to the offerer's hospitality and sincerity before accepting the offer by understating the imposition (e.g. 暂 'for the time being') or by using a hedging device (e.g. 勉 'grudgingly'). Consider the following example:

(49)

[房德] 向前作揖道: '恩相见了房德, 如何不唤一声, 反掉转头去? 险些儿错过!' 李勉还礼道: '恐妨足下政事, 故不敢相通。' 房德道: '说那里话, 难得恩相至此, 请到敝衙少叙。' 李勉此时, 鞍马劳倦, 又见其意殷勤, 答道: '既承雅情, 当暂话片时。'

Walking up to Li Mian, Fang De said ‘My benefactor, why didn’t you just call out instead of turning your back when you saw me? I almost walked past you.’ Returning the greeting, Li Mian said, ‘I just didn’t want to put you to any inconvenience in your work. So I dared not call you.’ Fang De said, ‘Nonsense! God sent you here! Please come to my home for a little talk.’ As Li Mian was tired from the journey and found Fang De to be so sincere, he replied, ‘Since you are so kind, I’ll be happy to go and talk with you *for a while.*’

Li, the invitee, in this example was an upright official who resigned because he set free the inviter, Fang, who he believed was innocent in a criminal case in the past. Li did not know the whereabouts of Fang, let alone the fact that the ‘suspect’ had later become a magistrate before the unexpected meeting. The above invitation occurred when Li and his servant accidentally met Fang in his county on their way to a city. As suggested above, Li’s acceptance was mitigated by an understater (*italics*).

6.2.1.5 Implicit acceptance

Despite the rich realisations and degrees of implicitness (cf. Clark 1979; Blum-Kulka 1987; B&L 1987; Skewis 2003), implicit acceptance in my data were formulated in two ways. Firstly, in an instrumental offer the recipient stated her willingness to comply with the offerer’s request, hence implying her acceptance. Among others, the innkeeper’s response in example (27) is a case in point. That is, the recipient accepted the gift money implicitly/indirectly by expressing his willingness to look after the offerer’s sick friend as requested.

The other manifestation appears to be similar to an indirect refusal using the micro strategy of avoidance to the extent that only in the context can the response be interpreted as acceptance or refusal. Consider the following example.

(50)

定哥也不答应他的说话，向身边钞袋内摸出十两一锭的银子，递与贵哥道：‘我把这银子赏赐你，拿去打一双镯儿戴在臂膊上，也是伏侍我一场恩念。你不可与众人知道。’贵哥叩头接了银子，对定哥道：‘一丝为定，万金不移。夫人既酬谢了媒婆，媒婆即着人去寻女待诏，约那人晚上到府中来。’

Ignoring her remarks, Dingge took out a ten-tael ingot of silver from her purse and, giving it to Guige, said, ‘This is a reward for you. Have a silversmith make a pair of bracelets out of it and wear them on your wrists. It’s a token of my gratitude to you. Don’t breathe a word of this to anyone.’ Guige kowtowed, took the silver, and said, ‘Once a commitment is made, there is to be no change of mind. Since this go-between has got the thank-you gift, I’ll send for the hairdresser and have her bring the man here tonight.’

In this excerpt from an extended conversation, the gift was offered by the mistress to her maidservant. Verbally, the recipient kept talking about the romantic affair she had been arranging for the giver and hence superficially appeared to decline the offer by avoiding a direct response. However, with the assistance of her non-verbal moves such as kowtowing and taking the money, Guige’s response could be safely interpreted as implicit/indirect acceptance of the silver.

6.2.1.6 Expressing pleasure

In a few responses, the speaker expressed pleasure as a strategy of accepting the offer, which was normally accompanied by positive or appreciative comments about the offerer. As part of the evidence, responses using this strategy were always prefaced with an explicit descriptor for pleasure such as *无限欢喜* ‘extremely excited’ in the text, as illustrated below.

(51)

张员外看罢, 举手加额, 道: ‘郑家果然发迹变泰, 又不忘故旧, 远送礼物, 真乃有德有行之人也!’

Clapping a hand over his forehead in joy after reading the letter, Squire Zhang said, ‘Mr. Zheng has indeed achieved great success in life! He does not forget his old friend and sends me gifts from afar. Truly a man of honour!’

If divorced from the context, the above response that mainly commented on the gift-giver positively would be interpreted differently. Nonetheless, the preceding narrative text tells us that the recipient was expressing his joy of receiving the gift from an old friend. It is interesting to note that all pleasure-expressing responses occurred in ‘mediated’ rather than face-to-face interactions (Goffman 1967). Of the three instances, two were made upon receiving gifts from an old friend’s friend and the other one expressed pleasure when receiving two jars of fine wine from the offerer’s servant.

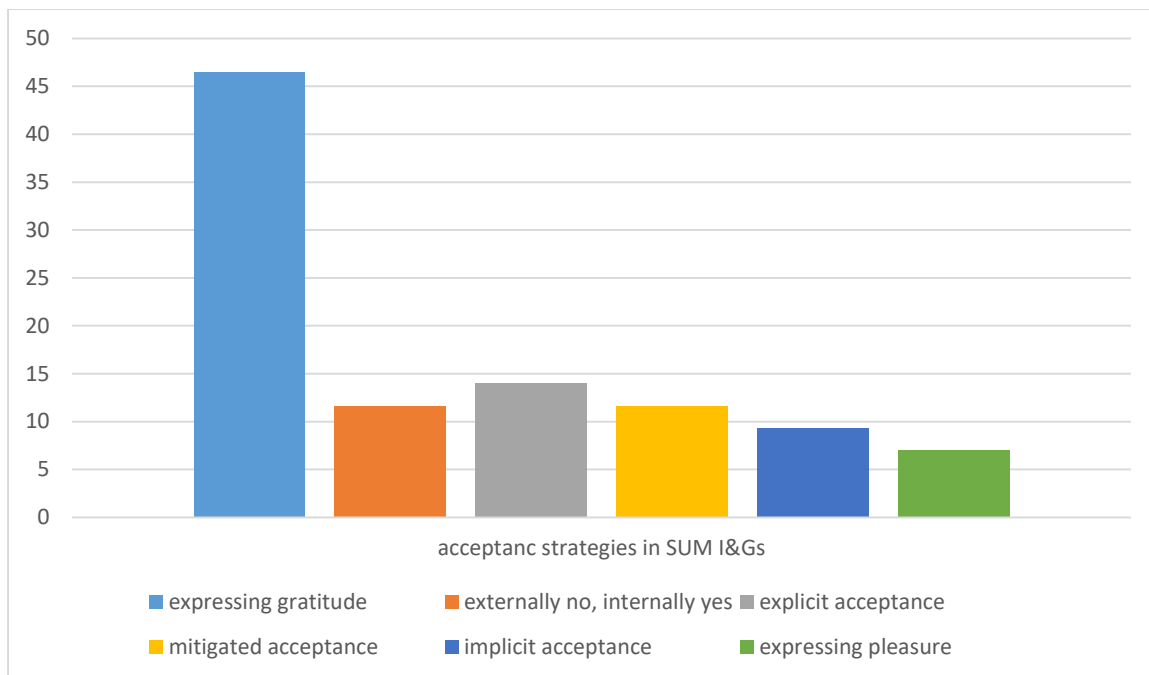


Figure 4: The distribution of acceptance strategies in SUM I&Gs

To sum up, as demonstrated in Figure 4, the use of six acceptance strategies differed considerably in frequency. Most strikingly, expressing gratitude was predominant, accounting for nearly about half of the acceptance responses. While the difference between the other strategies is not noticeable, it is interesting to note that explicit acceptance appeared to be second most popular and expressing pleasure, or ‘expressing gladness’ (Al-Khatib 2006) was least preferred in my data.

6.2.2 Refusal strategies

As noted at the outset of this section, unlike previous studies (e.g. Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000; Koutlaki 2002; Grainger *et al* 2005), a considerable proportion of I&Gs (38.6%) were refused without sequential elaboration. Drawing on previous studies on offers, invitations, gift-giving and refusals (2.4.3.2), 27 responses were distinguished between *conventionalised*, *indirect*, *direct refusal with modification* and *blunt/angry refusals*, each consisting of varying numbers of micro strategies.

6.2.2.1 Conventionalised refusals

As indicated by the acceptance response ‘I really shouldn’t disturb you’ above, the distinction between ritual and substantive refusals made in notable studies such as Chen *et al* (1995) and Kasper (1995) depending entirely on the parameter of cost did not appear to be adequate in my data (2.4.3.2). Thus, a strategy called conventionalised refusal was used in this study without using the inadequate term ‘ritual’. Such a refusal expressed the adverse impact the offer would have on the offerer, typically inconvenience, trouble, imposition and cost of money. This is perfectly illustrated by the following example.

(52)

三巧儿道：‘我家与你相近，不耐烦时，就过来闲话。’婆子道：‘只不敢频频打搅。’三巧儿道：‘老人家说那里话。’

Sanqiao said, ‘Our house is so close to yours. Just come over for a chat whenever you feel annoyed.’ Grandma said, ‘But I wouldn’t presume to disturb you too often.’ Sanqiao said, ‘nonsense!’

Issued by the hostess to a visitor while they were sipping wine, this invitation took place after the visitor expressed her annoyance with the noise at home made by her son who was a butcher. Highlighting the disturbance her acceptance would cause to the inviter’s life is evidence that the old woman’s response was a conventionalised refusal. This became more evident in the inviter’s formulaic refutation ‘nonsense’ (Ch.5), which was not followed up by the invitee. Given the high conventionality of both the invitee’s response and the inviter’s refutation, the above example appeared to exemplify an ostensible invitation that is widely viewed as a phatic communication.

6.2.2.2 Indirect refusals

As in many previous studies (Chen *et al* 1995; Felix-Brasdefer 2003/2008; Komter 2005; Yang 2008; Hong 2011), indirect refusal was dominant in my data. Four indirect strategies emerged from my analysis, which are explained and illustrated respectively as follows.

6.2.2.2.1 Reason

Providing reasons, explanations or excuses for non-compliance with the offer is one of the indirect refusal strategies. For example, an invitee explained *我得了饭* ‘I’ve already had my meal’ in responding to a friend’s offer to treat him in a restaurant. Example (31) also exemplifies this strategy as the recipient responded to the emperor (in writing) by stating a hermit’s disinterest in women while expressing gratitude for giving the gifts/beauties. Below is another contextualised example:

(53)

遇着一个相识叫做包九, 在仪真闹上当夫头, 问道: ‘支大哥, 你抛的是甚么东西?’ 支助道: ‘腌几块牛肉, 包好了, 要带出去吃的, 不期臭了。九哥, 你两日没甚事, 到我家吃三杯。’ 包九道: ‘今日忙些个, 苏州府况钟老爷驰驿复任, 即刻船到, 在此趲夫哩!’ 支助道: ‘即如此, 改日再会。’

Zhi ran into an acquaintance called Bao, a foreman at Yizhen Floodgate. Bao asked, ‘Elder brother Zhi, what did you just throw away?’ Zhi said, ‘Just a few pieces of salted beef. They were wrapped up for a trip, but have gone bad. Elder brother Jiu, if you’re not busy these days, come to my house for a few drinks.’ Bao said, ‘*I’m busy today. Prefect Kuang Zhong of Suzhou is traveling back to this post, and his boat will be arriving any time now. So I*

have to gather together some people to serve him.' Zhi said, 'In that case, let's meet up another day.'

In this unexpected encounter between two acquaintances, Zhi issued an invitation after answering his friend's question. The recipient declined it because he was busy and hence did not meet the inviter's condition (Ch.5). Then the inviter, according to Goffman (1956:479-480), showed deference by promising to treat the invitee later. Interestingly, the inviter's failure to insist and the vague concession or postponement show that the invitation was ostensible or ritual in nature (cf. Isaacs & Clark 1990; Kasper 1995; Scollon & Scollon 1995). In its broader context, the inviter was involved in a murder and the so-called 'salted beef' was actually a dead baby (he murdered). Thus his offer appeared to be phatic communication than a sincere invitation while he had been holing up in his home.

6.2.2.2.2 Postponement

By using this strategy, the recipient refused the invitation indirectly by postponing her attendance till a later date. In a few instances, the invitee attributed her postponement to lateness in the day, which appears to be a good reason/excuse for refusal. In addition to example (26), the following invitation is illustrative:

(54)

那妇人道: '奴家只在箭桥双茶坊巷口, 若不弃时, 可到寒舍拜茶, 纳还船钱。' 许宣道: '小事何消挂怀。天色晚了, 改日拜望。'

The woman said, 'This slave's house is at the entrance to Shuangchafang Lane at Jianqiao. If it's not beneath you, you can come to my humble home for tea, so that I can repay the

money.’ Xu Xuan said, ‘Don’t worry about such a trifle. *It’s getting late now. I’ll come for a visit another time.*’

This is a hospitable offer made by a woman to a man she met for the first time and had been chatting with on a boat trip. It took place after Xu paid the fare at the woman’s request and helped her go ashore in heavy rain. In responding to the invitation, Xu started by refuting the post-grounder and then turned her down by proposing a future visit with a seemingly good excuse (italicised).

It is important to note that the response *不消得, 改日扰你罢!* ‘No need, I’ll impose on you another day’ was preceded by a direct and explicit refusal (cf. 6.2.2.3). Moreover, it is interesting to note that the postponement in example (55) below was followed by a returning offer. Perhaps more important is the exclusive use of this strategy in refusing invitations.

6.2.2.2.3 Returning offer

Just as a compliment sometimes receives a returning compliment (Homes 1986/1988; He 2012a/b), an invitation in my data was declined by issuing an invitation

(55)

李勉道: ‘李某日夜在心, 安有不识之理? 请到敝衙少叙。’ 义士道: ‘咱另日竟诚来拜, 今日不敢从命。倘大人不弃, 同到敝寓一话何如?’ 李勉欣然相从...

Li Mian said, ‘You are in my thoughts day and night. How can I not recognise you? Please come to my office for a little talk.’ The knight answered, ‘I’ll come and pay my respects to you another day, but not today, sir. If you don’t think it beneath you, would you please come to my humble house for a chat?’ Li Mian agreed (with pleasure) and followed him...

This invitation occurred in the street after a short greeting between an official and a knight who had saved the official's life in the past. As noted in the preceding subsection, the recipient first declined the invitation explicitly by proposing a later visit to the offerer. Interestingly, the knight proceeded to invite the official to his own house.

6.2.2.2.4 Inappropriate offer

As noted by previous studies such as Yang (1994), some gifts offered on certain occasions may be inappropriate due to various reasons. Komter (2005:52) observed that a gift may even be experienced as 'offensive and embarrassing' although it is not necessarily intended as such by the offerer. Interestingly, saying that what is offered is inappropriate has been found to be a refusal strategy in many cultures, especially in Japanese (Ueda 1974; Rubin 1983). Due to the closeness between Japanese and Chinese, it is not surprising that this strategy was also used in my data, as illustrated below:

(56)

晏、普二人星夜回到阳羨,拜见了哥哥,将朝廷所赐黄金,尽数献出。许武道:‘这是圣上恩赐,吾何敢当!’教二弟各自收去

Yan and Pu hurried back to Yangxian County, and after saluting their elder brother Wu, offered him the entire amount of the gold bestowed by the court. Wu said, ‘*This is what His Majesty gave you. How would I presume to take it?*’ He then told his brothers to keep the gold for themselves.

The participants in this gift-giving were three brothers, the younger Yan and Pu and the eldest Wu. It took place when Yan and Pu returned home after resigning as ministers in the court

following the advice of their brother Wu, who had resigned earlier from a similar post to look after his younger brothers. As demonstrated above, the gift of gold was judged by Wu as inappropriate because, according to him, what was offered by the emperor could not be given away as gifts. Further analysis shows that Wu's assessment of the gift and the order that the gold be taken away could be partly explained by his seniority: *比时风俗淳厚, 乡党序齿, 许武出仕已久, 还叫一句‘长文公,’ 那两个兄弟, 又下一辈了, 虽是九卿之贵, 乡尊故旧, 依旧称‘哥’* 'in those days social customs were devoid of pretentiousness. Even though Xu Wu had been appointed as a court official long ago, he was still addressed by his courtesy name, Master Changwen, as determined by his rank of seniority among the villagers. His two younger brothers were still called Older brothers, even though they had attained the high status as court officials.' In other words, the recipient's use of this strategy was at least due partly to the social hierarchy valued in the speech community.

6.2.2.3 Direct refusals with modification

Direct refusal is defined by Chen *et al* (1995:126) as 'direct denial of compliance without reservation' (see also Campillo *et al* 2009:141). In my data, however, a direct and explicit refusal was always made alongside other elements such as gratitude, reasons and postponement that may downgrade or upgrade the force of refusal (cf. 'adjuncts to refusals', Chapter 2). This strategy was thus named 'direct refusal with modification' in the present study to capture the above distinctive feature. Moreover, the use of this strategy was not uncommon in my corpus. Consider the following invitation.

(57)

陆婆道: '大爷吃茶去便好。只是家间齷齪, 不好屈得贵人。' 张荇道: '茶到不消, 还要借几步路说话。'

Madam Lu said, ‘Have a cup of tea before you go, Young Master. But my house is filthy, not appropriate for a distinguished guest like you.’ Zhang Jin said, ‘*Tea is not necessary*, but I need have a word with you in private.’

This invitation took place at the gate of the inviter’s house after the old woman and the young man had been chatting all the way there following their chance meeting. It was apparently refused by the recipient directly and explicitly (*italicised*). However, unlike the construal of direct refusal in many previous studies (see above), the recipient added he needed to talk with the inviter, without which the refusal was more likely to be perceived to be too blunt. Interestingly, rather than insisting on her offer, the old woman, while uttering 少待 ‘a second’, entered her house and re-emerged after leaving her basket inside. This very fact seems to suggest that her invitation was ritual in nature (6.2.2.1).

Moreover, unlike the above direct refusal that was more or less mitigated by the excuse, some refusals using this strategy appeared to be highly face-threatening although the offer was apparently sincere or substantive, as illustrated below.

(58)

众人道：‘看这位老兄，是个厚德君子，料必不要你报。不若请到酒肆中吃三杯，见你的意罢了。’那后生道：‘说得是。’便来邀施复同去。施复道：‘不消得！不消得！我家中有事，莫要担阁我工夫。’转身就走，那后生留之不住。

The bystanders said, ‘This brother looks like a *kind person* who would never accept a reward. Why don’t you just invite him to a pub for a few cups of wine to show your gratitude?’ Saying ‘Good idea’, the young man invited Shi Fu to to drink together. Shi Fu said, ‘*No*

need! No need! I have work to do at home. Don't waste my time.' With that, he turned to leave, ignoring the young man's insistence.

This invitation was issued by the young man to express his gratitude to Shi Fu for returning his lost money. The recipient started by refusing the offer directly and explicitly. He then went on to provide the reason, viz. he was busy at home and for this reason the offer/insistence was perceived by the recipient to be wasting his time. The recipient's verbal response and the fact that he left ignoring of the inviter's insistence appeared to be highly face-threatening. However, in his ensuing conversation with the bystanders, the young man commented that 'I have no idea there was such a good man in the world' while one of them depicted Shi Fu as an idiot. Therefore, for the inviter there was nothing inappropriate in the recipient's response.

6.2.2.4 Angry refusals

Somewhat like the strategy scrutinised in the preceding subsection, quite a few offers in my corpus were refused in a blunt, often angry manner. Moreover, the use of this strategy seems to be equally recurrent in invitations and gift-giving. The following example suffices to illustrate this highly face-threatening refusal strategy.

(59)

酒至数巡, 赵公开言道: '老汉一言相告: '小女余生, 皆出恩人所赐, 老汉阖门感德, 无以为报。幸小女尚未许人, 意欲献与恩人, 为箕帚之妾, 伏乞勿拒。' 公子听得这话, 一盆烈火从心头掇起, 大骂道: '老匹夫! 俺为义气而来, 反把此言来辱我。俺若贪女色时, 路上也就成亲了, 何必千里相送。你这般不识好歹的, 枉费俺一片热心!'

After rounds of wine, Squire Zhao said, "This old man has a few words to say: My entire family appreciates you for giving my little daughter a new lease of life, but we have nothing

to offer you. Fortunately, my little daughter is not yet engaged. I would like to offer her to our saviour as a dustpan and brush wife. Please do not turn me down.” On hearing this, Young Master Zhao flew into a rage, cursing, *‘You old fool! I came here out of a sense of loyalty and honour, only to be subjected to such an insult! If I were a lecherous man, I would have made her my wife somewhere along the road. Why would I have escorted her all the way here? I shouldn’t have wasted my goodwill on people who can’t tell good from bad!’*

Like examples (28), (30) and (38) in which people from the lower social class were offered as gifts, the offerer in the present example presented his daughter as a gift to the young man who rescued her from a group of gangsters and escorted her home after overcoming all sorts of challenges on the thousand *li* long journey. Multiple ‘politeness’ strategies such as the preparator and display of modesty were used in the offerer. However, the recipient was extremely offended by the offer and perceived it to be insulting. This is because, according to the recipient, he was completely misunderstood by the offerer who assumed the young man’s kindness in helping the daughter to be motivated by his interest in the girl. Moreover, the story shows that on their journey back the young man did decline the girl’s attempt to give herself to him on several occasions as a way to show her gratitude and the girl never dared to try again after her saviour threatened to leave without her if she insisted.

In addition, there were at least three more similar responses in my corpus. Moreover, it turned out that the context (incl. the recipient’s character and change of his/her identity) and the additional information surrounding the head act exerted a decisive impact on the recipient’s perception of the offer. One of them is *似你短行薄情之人, 禽兽不如! 可怜负了鸾小姐一片真心, 皇天断然不佑你!* ‘Such a heartless man is worse than a beast! You betrayed the poor girl’s love! No blessings for you from heaven’, which was cursed by the recipient when he

stormed out of the offerer's house in a rage after throwing the gift money to the ground angrily. While the head act 白银五钱权充路费 'Here are five mace of silver to cover your travel expenses' itself appeared to be quite conventionalised (Ch.5), the context, including external moves appeared to be the cause of (to be able to account for) the recipient's angry and emotional response.

Precisely, the offerer flushed and did not even greet the visitor, the servant of the offerer's fiancée who came to visit him with a letter from afar two years after the offerer's move to a new place. Taking the letter, the host went into the house, without even inviting the visitor whom he knew very well. Before long, a pageboy emerged to speak to the visitor on his master's behalf. He began by revealing his master's marriage with another girl, and then asked the visitor to take back a copy of the old marriage contract his master signed with the visitor's mistress when they lived next door. Interestingly, the pageboy went on to say that his master could not keep the visitor for a meal fearing that he might be questioned by his father. Perhaps more interestingly, the pageboy issued the precaution 下次更不劳往返! 'You need not come again!' and brought the offer to an end.

To summarise briefly, refusals were predominantly expressed indirectly, by using four strategies. Nonetheless, directness with modification was used in about one quarter of the refusals. Perhaps more noteworthy are several occurrences of angry responses to I&Gs, which is to be discussed in Chapter 7.

6.3 Refusals at the initial and insistence stages of SM I&Gs

This section analyses responses identified at the ‘initial interaction’ and the ‘ritualised middle’ of I&Gs, focusing in particular on the refusal strategies. It is important to note here that, as detailed below, the number of responses identified at three interactional stages are different.

6.3.1 Refusal strategies at the initial stage

The aim of this subsection is to explain and illustrate conventionalised refusals, indirect refusals and direct refusals with modification and, if any, their subsuming strategies of the total 46 responses identified at this interactional stage.

6.3.1.1 Conventionalised refusals

6.3.1.1.1 ‘How (would I) dare...’

As suggested in 6.2.1.2 above, the negative form of the modal verb 敢 ‘dare’ was sometimes used to accept an offer, which defies the previous assumption to its association with only refusal. The rhetorical question 岂敢 ‘how (would I) dare...?’ was found to be used as a conventionalised refusal as illustrated by the following invitation.

(60)

衙内不敢抬头：‘告娘娘，崔亚迷失道路，敢就贵庄借宿一宵。来日归家，丞相爹爹却当报效。’只见娘娘道：‘奴等衙内多时，果蒙宠访，请衙内且入敝庄。’衙内道：‘岂敢辄入！’再三再四，只管相请。衙内唱了喏，随着入去。

Without daring to raise his head, Cui said, ‘Madam, I am Cuiya. As I have lost my bearings on a hunting trip, I wonder if I could stay in your honourable home overnight. My father, the prime minister will sure reward you after I return home tomorrow.’ The young lady said,

‘This humble woman’s been waiting for you for a long time. And now, here you are, finally doing me the honour. Please just come into the humble house.’ Cuiya said, ‘*How would I dare come straight in!*’ After the lady made the offer again and again, he gave a chant for consent and followed her in.

This invitation was issued by the lady from a house the invitee came across after he got lost in the late evening in a remote woodland. According to previous studies (e.g. Hong 2002:67), 岂/何敢 + VP ‘how (would I) dare +VP’ is a conventional structure for expressing the speaker’s humbleness by pretending to hesitate about performing the action mentioned therein. This is clearly evidenced by the very fact that the recipient’s acceptance was postponed without providing any reason until after the offer was reiterated several times despite his explicit request of the accommodation.

6.3.1.1.2 Feeling indebted

Expressing one’s emotional state of feeling indebted was sometimes intended to decline an offer although it exhibits semantic and syntactic similarity to the acceptance strategy of ‘expressing indebtedness’ in SUM I&Gs. As illustrated below, there was interactional evidence for my interpretation of such a response as a refusal.

(61)

[尼师] 愀然曰: ‘老身在施主家, 渡江归迟, 天遣到此亭中与娘子相遇, 真是前缘。娘子肯从我否?’ 素香曰: ‘妾身回视家乡, 千山我水; 得蒙提挈, 乃再生之赐。’ 尼师曰: ‘出家人以慈悲方便为本, 此分内事, 不必虑也。’ 素香拜谢。

[The nun] said sympathetically, ‘I was late in crossing the river on my way back as I was delayed by a benefactor’s hospitality. Heaven sent us at this pavilion. There is predestined

bond between us. Will you be willing to follow me?’ Suxiang said, ‘*Look in the direction of my hometown, and I know but it lies hundreds of miles away. Your help would give me a new lease of life.*’ The nun said, ‘Loving kindness is the guiding principle for us nuns. I just do what I should. Don’t worry.’ Suxiang kowtowed in gratitude.

The recipient of this invitation was a woman who survived her husband in a robbery on his way to assume office. Hearing the response (italicised), the offerer reassured the recipient that there was nothing to feel indebted for. More importantly, it was not until then that the recipient accepted the offer, which is evidenced by the invitee’s kowtow. Similarly, as the response to an invitation by a rich man who had just adopted one of the sons of a poor carpenter/invitee, *只是又来相扰, 小子心上不安* ‘But if I put you to trouble again, this little man would feel uneasy!’ can be arguably interpreted as using the strategy under discussion. It was refuted by the inviter who said they were already a family, whereupon the offer was accepted.

6.3.1.1.3 Inconvenience

The recipient sometimes appeared to insincerely decline an invitation before accepting the offer. As in studies such as Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Grainger *et al* (2015), one of the strategies was to express her concern that accepting the offer would put the host to inconvenience.

(62)

李承祖道: ‘多谢婆婆美情! 恐不好打搅。’ 老姬道: ‘说那里话! 谁人没有患难之处。’

遂向前扶他进屋里去

Li Chenzu said, ‘*Many thanks for your kindness, Granny! I’m afraid that would inconvenience you.*’ The old woman said, ‘Nonsense! Who doesn’t have to go through a difficult period of time?’ So saying, she helped him to move into her house.

In the preceding conversational turn, Li was invited by the old woman to her home when he was found lying ill on her doorstep. The offer was made after the invitee revealed that he had been waiting for his servant, who the old woman believed had deserted Li with all their money and luggage. By expressing his concern about the imposition of staying in her home, Li ritually refused the invitation while appreciating the old woman’s kindness. Also, the invitation response 若得如此, 甚好。只是打搅不当 ‘That would be nice, but we shouldn’t presume to put you to such inconvenience’ bears a striking resemblance with the above example (see also example (13)). Moreover, these responses appeared to be ritual in nature because the invitee(s) accepted the offer in both instances following the inviter’s conventional refutation, typically ‘nonsense!’ (5.3.2.2).

6.3.1.1.4 Wasting money

Many previous studies (Gu 1990; Mao 1992; Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995; Zhu *et al* 2000) show that a response emphasising the cost to the offerer, including, for example, time, money or effort that an offer may have incurred is essentially ritual. As reproduced below, the response identified in my data used the financial cost of the offer as excuse of refusal.

(63)

夫人一见, 便道: 出家人如何烦你坏钞?

No sooner had she caught sight of them than Mrs Chen said, ‘*How could a nun be made to go to such expense?*’

This is the hostess/recipient's first response to her friend at the moment the offerer came into view with apparent gifts (see example (12) for more details). By asking the rhetorical question about the reason of spending money on gifts, the recipient intended to decline the (non-verbal) offer as a 'politeness ritual'.

6.3.1.1.5 Linking to relationship

A couple of responses linked the gift to the recipient's relationship with the offerer (cf. Zhu *et al* 2000:97). Such a response, as illustrated below, did not appear to provide a substantive reason for her refusal and hence was essentially ritual/conventional (Chen 1995; Kasper 1995).

(64)

金满取出五两银子, 送与刘云道: '些小薄礼, 先送阿哥买果吃, 待事成了, 再找五两。'

刘云假意谦让道: '自己弟兄, 怎么这样客气?' 金满道: '阿哥从直些罢, 不嫌轻, 就是阿哥的盛情了。' 刘云道: '既如此, 我权收去再处。'

Jin took out five taels of silver and, handing them to Liu, said, 'This is a small gift, just for you to buy some sweets with. I'll give you five taels more after this thing works out.'

Pretending declination, Liu Yun said, 'We're brothers. Why stand on such ceremony with me?' Jin said, 'Elder brother, just be direct. It would be so kind of you if you don't take it to be paltry.' Liu said, 'In that case, I'll keep it for now.' So saying, he slipped the money up his sleeve.

This gift-giving took place at table between two friends working in the personnel office. The context shows that Jin treated his superior Liu to a meal at home and made the above offer as he wanted Liu to help secure his transfer to the lucrative treasury. Pointing out their brotherhood

and questioning Jin's kindness of giving the money seemed to suggest that Liu's declination was ritual. Interestingly, this is how the response perceived by the giver – it was judged by Jin as not being direct in saying what Liu meant. With Jin's insistence, he finally accepted the money, still with seeming reluctance (cf. 6.4.1).

It is important to note that, as suggested by the label, this strategy was only used by a recipient who had a close relationship with the offerer. Moreover, the two instances were both found in instrumental gift-giving.

6.3.1.2 Indirect refusals

Indirectness was apparently the dominant refusal strategy at the initial stage as it was found in more than 60% of the responses. Moreover, as detailed below, seven strategies were used to refuse the offer indirectly.

6.3.1.2.1 Reason

To begin with, giving a reason or explanation was one of the initial refusal strategies. Apart from 'use of excuses', the recurrent use of the micro strategy 'third party', i.e. putting blame on the third party figures in my data (cf. Chen *et al* 1995:127). To illustrate, in example (8) Ziqi refused Boya's invitation by claiming that he had parents to look after at home. Interestingly, the strategy was supported by a Confucian saying that promotes filial piety. Similarly, the following example illustrates this strategy equally well.

(65)

尼姑坐在舂桶上道：‘小姐，你到初八日同奶奶到小庵觀一觀，若何？’小姐道：‘我巴不得來，只怕爹媽不肯。’

Sitting on the night commode, the nun said, ‘Would you like to come to my nunnery with your mum on the eighth of the month?’ The young lady said, ‘*How I wish I could come! But my parents may not allow me to.*’

This offer followed immediately example (29), in which Mrs Chen said she could not guarantee her daughter’s visit to the nunnery. The nun in the present example thus invited the young mistress behind Mrs Chen’s back while pretending to be using the toilet in the mistress’s room. Interestingly, like Mrs Chen her daughter adopted the same polite strategy by saying that it was her parents who made the decision while expressing her wish (italicised). To mention briefly, ‘third party’ was only found in invitations.

6.3.1.2.2 Avoidance

On quite a few occasions, the recipient avoided responding to the offer, namely ‘the proposed course of action directly’ (cf. Chen *et al* 1995:129). Moreover, this strategy, called avoidance, was achieved by employing one of the two techniques, i.e. topic switch and being attentive to the request or to different aspects of the offer. To begin with, the recipient sometimes switched to a seemingly different topic rather than providing a direct response to the offer. Very often a question was raised by the recipient. In an instance of gift-giving, for example, the recipient asked 敢问老翁高姓大名? 府上那里? ‘May I venture to ask your honourable name? And where is your honourable residence?’ Unlike this illustration, the following response picked up the topic discussed before the invitation.

(66)

到巳牌时分, 偶然走至外边, 忽见一个老儿庞眉白发, 年约六十已外, 来到门首, 相了一回, 乃问道: ‘这里可是施家么?’ 施复道: ‘正是, 你要寻那个?’ 老儿道: ‘要寻你们家

长,问句话儿。’施复道:‘小子就是。老翁有甚话说? 请里面坐了。’那老儿听见就是家主,把他上下只管瞧看,又道:‘你真个是么?’

Before noon Shi happened to walk out and saw an old man approaching his house, who was in his sixties with grey eyebrows and white hair. After looking around for a while, the old man asked, ‘Is this the Shi residence?’ Shi said, ‘It is. Whom are you visiting?’ The man said, ‘The master of the house. I have a question for him.’ Shi said, ‘I am the master of the house. What do you need to talk with me about, sir? *Please I come in and take a seat?*’ The old man looked him up and down and said, ‘*Are you really the master?*’

Excerpted from an extended conversation, this invitation took place between two strangers (see the reoffer in 5.3.1.2). After being invited into the house by the master, the unexpected visitor went on to check the inviter’s identity (italicised). Dwelling on the topic raised prior to the invitation was tantamount to declining the offer indirectly.

Secondly, some responses declined the offer by selectively dealing with the ‘additional materials’ (Zhu *et al* 2000:88) that were not closely related the core of the offer or the head act (Ch.5). Evidence shows that the grounder/reason, if any, of the offer was often subject to the recipient’s refutation. By way of illustration, Li Yuan’s response in example (5) was apparently intended to question the inviter’s claim that ‘My father was a good friend of your honourable father’s when issuing the invitation’.

6.3.1.2.3 Requesting justification/clarification

As suggested in 5.3.2, requesting clarification or justification was a recurrently used strategy in refusing the initial offer. Most of these refusals were phrased as an interrogative question. Among those that have been presented in the preceding chapters, the old man’s refusal of Shi’s

initial offer of buns in example (41) illustrates this well. Interestingly, this strategy was also employed by Shi's servant in responding to the old man who gave him back these two buns he received from Shi:

(67)

[老儿]口中便说,却去袖里摸出那两个馒头,递与施复家人道:‘大官宅上事忙,不留吃茶了。这馒头转送你当茶罢。’施家人答道:‘*我官人特送你老人家的,如何却把与我?*’薄老道:‘你官人送我,已领过他的情了。如今送你,乃我之情,你不必固拒!’家人再三推却不过,只得受了...

So saying, [the old man] retrieved the two buns from his sleeve and handed them to Shi Fu's servant, saying, ‘Sir, you are too busy at home, so I won't keep you for tea. Just take these buns for tea.’ The servant responded, ‘*They are what my master specially gave-you. How can they be regifted to me?*’ The old man said, ‘Your master gave them to me and I was grateful for his kindness. Now I give them to you as a token of my goodwill. Don't decline adamantly.’ After rounds of refusal, the servant yielded and could only accept the offer.

This gift was offered when the old man was escorted home by Shi's servant. As noted above, the buns were initially Shi's gift to the old man. Thus, when given back to the servant as a substitute for tea, the recipient appeared to have some reason in asking for justification (italicised). The offerer's justification was very interesting as it highlighted the symbolic function of gifts.

6.3.1.2.4 Alternative

A response in my data refused the gift by ‘suggesting an alternative course of action’ (Chen *et al* 1995:127), viz. the recipient requested something else rather than what was offered to him.

Precisely, the King of Chu presented Boya, a visiting minister of the Jin, with gold, silks and a four-horse carriage at the end of his visit. As detailed below, the carriage was declined by the diplomat by requesting a boat instead.

(68)

[伯牙] 乃假奏楚王道: ‘臣不幸有犬马之疾, 不胜车马驰骤, 乞假臣舟楫, 以便医药’

[Boya] therefore dishonestly said to the king of Chu, ‘This humble minister has *an unfortunate affliction and cannot cope with, -the rapid speed of carriage. I humbly request a boat instead, which would make it easier for me to undergo treatment.*’

While requesting an alternative gift, the recipient provided an excuse for his preference for a boat over a carriage. The context shows that Boya attributed this to his illness dishonestly because he wanted to enjoy the natural beauty along the river by which he was brought up.

6.3.1.2.5 Conditional no

My data shows that an invitee made it clear whether or not he could finally accept the offer was contingent on the distance of the inviter’s house. It was implied in the response that the offer would be accepted only if the house was close by. Following Ueda’s (1972) sixteen ways to avoid saying ‘no’ in Japanese, this strategy was named ‘conditional no’ in the present study (cf. Houck & Gass 1999:12).

(69)

老婆婆老眼朦胧, 看见了这小官人, 清秀可喜, 便留他家里吃茶。徐继祖道: ‘只怕老娘府上路远。’ 婆婆道: ‘十步之内, 就是老身舍下。’

With blurry vision, the old woman found the young man to be pleasant and refined-looking and thus invited him for tea at home. Xu Jizu said, *‘But Granny, I am afraid your honourable house might be too far from here.’* The old woman said, ‘Within ten steps is this old woman’s humble house.’

This invitation was offered when the fifteen-year old scholar asked the old woman by a well for some water on his journey to the capital. As implied in his response (italicised), Xu indeed accepted the invitation after the inviter’s house turned out to be just steps away. It is interesting to note briefly that Xu’s use of this refusal strategy and his final acceptance after being reassured about the closeness seem to provide the rationale of the grounder ‘short distance’ in invitations (Ch.5).

6.3.1.2.6 Offering payment

In two instances of gift-giving the recipient proposed to pay for the gift. Evidence shows that the use of this strategy was due partly to the unusual generosity of the givers. In one case, the giver offered his adopted son to his benefactor who gave back a large sum of money he lost on a business trip. The offer was made after the recipient turned out to be childless at the moment while the offerer had a daughter and the abovementioned son he bought years before. The recipient declined the offer by proposing to pay for the boy, i.e. 若肯相借, 当奉还身价 ‘if you would be willing to lend him to me, I’ll surely pay you the full price.’

The other instance of this strategy took place in gift-giving between an old man and a Daoist priest hunting for a hermitage. The Daoist came to the old man’s village and found a piece of land to be an ideal place for practicing Daoism. Following a woodcutter’s advice, the priest visited the old man known as ‘venerable Mr. Jin’ who owned the land. After exchanging

greetings, the priest introduced himself to Mr. Jin and expressed his wish to buy a house for the purpose of spiritual cultivation. The ensuing offer and response were excerpted as follows:

(70)

金公曰：‘第恐此地褊小，不足以处许君，如不弃，并寒庄薄地数亩悉当相赠。’真君曰：‘愿订价多少？惟命是从。’金公曰：‘大丈夫一言，万金不易，愚老拙直，平生不立文券。’

Mr Jin said, ‘I am only afraid that the land is too small for Mr. Xu’s purposes. If you would not disdain my offer, I’d like to give you several acres of the poor land around my humble cottage.’ The sage said, ‘*How much would you ask? I’ll accept whatever price.*’ Mr Jin said, ‘A true gentleman never goes back on his word for ten thousand taels of gold. This old man is straightforward and never has a need to draw up a document.’

Mr. Jin made the offer with humbleness and deference towards the sage. In responding to the perhaps unexpected offer, the priest expressed his readiness to pay any price Jin would ask (italicised). In so doing, he indirectly declined the gift. His proposal, however, was dismissed by the offerer as going back on his words and personal integrity (cf. 5.3.2.2).

6.3.1.2.7 Checking sincerity

While checking or questioning the offerer’s sincerity might be implicit in most responses to an offer (cf. Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Leech 1983/2014), in my data this strategy was used explicitly on at least two occasions. To illustrate, one of them is Gui’s question ‘Are you joking?’ in responding to his friend Shi’s offer of a generous sum of money (cf. example (9)). As already noted, the recipient proposed to write a loan agreement and promised to pay back even after being reassured about sincerity. Then, as discussed in 6.4.1 below, the offer was

finally accepted by expressing gratitude after the idea of repayment was dismissed by the offerer as being unacceptable. Finally, it is interesting to note that, as demonstrated in turn 3 in example (75) below, an offerer sometimes emphasized her sincerity as an insistence strategy rather than postponing it till the recipient's questioning.

6.3.1.3 Direct refusal with modification

A fairly considerable percentage of initial offers were refused rather directly. Nonetheless, as already noted, the refusals were all made alongside a reason or the recipient's principle of behaviour that was inconsistent with compliance. Above all, this strategy is exemplified by the initial response in example (75) below. The gift was judged to be useless by the recipient, who was one of the giver's colleagues' next-door neighbour. More directly, the giver was urged, albeit 'politely' (note the UIPM *qing*), to take back the gift immediately. Nevertheless, like all other responses using this strategy, this direct and highly face-threatening refusal was preceded by the recipient's denial of a knight, which justified his refusal. More importantly, the recipient was consistent in using this strategy in rejecting the reoffer and the final offer (despite this offerer's insistence).

Likewise, this strategy was also employed in the initial response in example (44), i.e. 'I would never take it', which, again, was made after an extended explanation for the refusal (see also example (34)). Among others, the following example is especially interesting as the UFP 罢 was employed in the direct refusal utterance as a negotiation tool.

(71)

后生道: '...不期到在敝乡相会, 请里面坐。' 施复道: '多承盛情垂念。便有几个朋友, 在舟中等候火去作晚食, 不消坐罢。'

The young man said, ‘... I never expected to see you in the humble village. Please take a seat inside!’ Shi Fu said, ‘Thank you for thinking of me, but some friends of mine are waiting in the boat for me to or take back fire to cook supper with. No need to sit, I’m a fraid (UFP)’

This is the initial offer and response to the invitation, the insistence and final stages of which have been discussed in 5.3.1.1.2. The invitation was refused by the recipient who laid the ‘blame’ on his friends. To mention briefly, the use of the UFP 罢 *ba* in this refusal is peculiar because, as detailed in the preceding chapter, politeness markers were normally used in an imperative head act.

6.3.2 Refusal strategies at the insistence stage

This section analyses 25 refusals at the reoffer/insistence stage. Like initial refusals, they were categorised into conventionalised/ritual, indirect and direct strategies with modification. The findings are respectively detailed below.

6.3.2.1 Conventionalised refusals

Two conventionalised refusals were identified and both linguistic conventions were found only at this stage. Firstly, the reoffer discussed at the first paragraph in 5.3.1.1 was assessed by the recipient as 岂有此理! ‘Nonsense!’ Secondly, 只是领赐不当 ‘And I wouldn’t presume to take your money’ in example (37) is also a ritualised/conventionalized refusal although Qin Zhong’s response also dealt with the ‘additional materials’ (Zhu *et al* 2000).

6.3.2.2 Indirect refusals

In total six micro indirect refusal strategies were employed (presented under four subheadings).

As detailed below, the first four micro strategies appeared to be shared by the two interactional stages while the remaining two occurred only at this stage of interaction.

6.3.2.2.1 Reason

Giving reasons was one of the most frequently used indirect strategies. Further analysis shows that all instances occurred in gift-giving, namely three in instrumental offers and one in affective offer. To begin with, in responding to the nun's justification of gift-giving in example (12), the recipient refuted it and hence declined the offer by assessing her own earlier gifts for the nun as trifles. Similarly, Guige's response to the hairdresser's threatening insistence offer in example (43) illustrates well the use of this strategy in instrumental gift-giving. That is, by arguing for the challenge of matchmaking, she intended to give an excuse of her refusal of the gift.

6.3.2.2.2 Avoidance

Three recipients were found to avoid responding to the gift-giving directly. Two of the avoidance responses occurred in instrumental gift-giving, one of which is reproduced below:

(72)

女待诏道: ‘这宝环、珠钏, 不是别人送你的, 是那辽王宗干第二世子, 见做当朝右丞, 领行台尚书省事, 完颜迪古老爷央我送来与你的。’ 贵哥笑道: ‘那完颜老爷不是那白白净净没髭须的俊官儿么?’

The woman hairdresser said, ‘These items of jewellery are from none other than Wanyandigu, the second son of the Prince of Liao and the current assistant director of the

department of state affairs and deputy director of the imperial secretariat. It is the lord who asked me to give you the gifts.’ Guige said with a smile, *‘Is Lord Wanyandigu the beardless handsome prince with fair skin?’*

Excerpted from an extremely long conversation, the response (italicised) was intended to check the identity of the actual giver of the gifts. In so doing, the recipient avoided a direct response to the offer. Then, as detailed in example (73) below, the offerer’s confirmation about the real offerer’s identity prompted the recipient to request the hairdresser to justify the offer of gifts.

6.3.2.2.3 Requesting justification

Like reason, this strategy appeared to occur with equal frequency, but exclusively in instrumental gift-giving between acquaintances or strangers. The response in turn 4 in example (75) below exemplifies this strategy as the recipient asked the magistrate to explain the unexpected offer of generous gifts. In addition, the following example is equally illustrative:

(73)

女待诏道：‘正是那俊俏后生官儿。’贵哥道：‘这到希奇了！他虽然与我老爷往来，不过是人情体面上走动，既非府中族分亲戚，又非通家兄弟，并不曾有杯酌往来。若说起我，一面也不曾相见，他如何肯送我这许多首饰？’

The woman hairdresser said, ‘Exactly the handsome young prince.’ Guige said, ‘How strange! He does associate with my master, but just at the level of formality. He’s neither a member of the clan nor an intimate family friend, and he’s never been invited to dinner. As far as I am concerned, we’ve never even met before. Why would he be so generous to me?’

As the giver, albeit a prince, turned out to be just an ordinary friend of the recipient's master, whom she did not know at all, Guige asked for justification by assessing the gifts as expensive and unexpected.

6.3.2.2.4 Alternative, promising repayment/reciprocation, and returning offer

These indirect strategies were all used in my data, but infrequently. Promising repayment was employed in two offers while alternative and returning offer each occurred only once. The response that requested alternative gifts has already been presented in example (38), in which the recipient asked whether more gifts/girls could be provide for him to select from after expressing gratitude to the offerer. Then, the strategy of promising repayment can be perfectly illustrated by Gui's suggestion of writing out a receipt in turn 4 in example (9). Finally, as reproduced below, returning offer is notable as the only instance occurred in the last and most generous offer of money in a succession of gift-giving by the same benefactor (cf. examples (18) and (25)).

(74)

子春道：‘承老翁前后共送了四十三万，这等大恩，还有甚报得？只是狗马之心，一毫难尽。若老翁要宅子住，小子卖契尚在袖里，便敢相奉。’

Zichun said, ‘The money you’ve given me already amounts to four hundred thirty thousand taels. How can I ever repay you, for such immense kindness? There is no word in the language strong enough to describe my gratitude for you. If you need a house, the agreement of my house sale is still in my sleeve. I’d like, if I might be so bold, to offer it to you.’

Feeling much indebted to the giver, the recipient offered his house to the benefactor, which, as shown in the ensuing conversation, was declined with a hearty laugh. It is important to note

that all three micro strategies discussed in this subsection were found only in offers of affective gifts.

6.3.2.3 Direct refusals with modification

Direct refusals with modification occurred fairly frequently at this stage (cf. 6.2.2.3), especially in instrumental gift-giving. Since several instances were actually embedded in offers that have been analysed in some detail, it would suffice to re-analyse two of the responses for illustration purposes.

- (a) ‘既承仁兄盛情, 衣服便勉强领下。那银子断然不敢。’

‘Since you are so generous, I’ll take the clothes against my inclinations. As for the silver, I definitely can’t take any.’

- (b) ‘不消得! 不消得! 老汉家中做这项生意的, 日逐自有, 官人留下赏人罢!’

‘No need! No need! This old man is in this line of business, making buns every day. Sir, keep them for other people (UFPM).’

As detailed in example (34), (a) was the recipient’s response to his cousin’s insistence on offering the personally motivated gifts. The refusal was mitigated in the sense that one of the gifts, i.e. clothes, was accepted, although with a seeming reluctance. However, his refusal of money was direct, explicit and determined, which was evident in the use of ‘absolutely can’t take any’. A similar analysis applies to (b), an excerpt from the affective offer in example (41). Despite the host’s insistence, the recipient refused the buns directly and explicitly by using emphatically a ‘denying lexical item’ (Chen *et al* 1995:126) in duplication. Nonetheless, the recipient proceeded to provide his reason of refusal and with a softening tone, i.e. the UFPM *ba*, to advise that the buns be used to reward others.

To recapitulate briefly, more than half of the refusals at this stage were made using an indirect strategy. While only a couple of conventionalised refusals were identified, the strategy of direct refusal with modification was adopted in nearly one quarter of the refusals.

6.4 Response strategies at the final stage

My analysis of the 57 final responses shows that the overwhelming majority of them accepted the offer whereas about one in ten eventually turned down the hospitality. Nonetheless, as in the preceding sections, only the performative 20 responses produced by the characters were analysed and it appears important to note that 18 of them occurred in gift-giving.

6.4.1 Strategies of final acceptance

16 final responses accepted the offer, by expressing gratitude or showing acceptance with varying degrees of explicitness and mitigation. As detailed below, expressing gratitude (4), mitigated acceptance (5) and implicit acceptance (5) shared roughly similar popularity while explicit acceptance (2) was the least favoured strategy.

To begin with, four acceptance responses used one of the three means of expressing gratitude discussed in 6.2.1. Among others, the short phatic utterances of *罪过! 罪过!* and *多谢了!* in example (41) all expressed gratitude for the offer after initial declinations. Similarly, in his final acceptance of money in example (9), the recipient promised to visit the giver's home to offer thanks to him. Moreover, with the offerer standing by as the intended hearer, the recipient's pledge to the Bodhisattva statue can be interpreted as showing his gratitude for

the offer. Similarly, 若得岳父扶持, 足感盛德 ‘..., I would really appreciate your sublime virtue’ was the response to the only invitation that received appreciation.

Secondly, explicit acceptance was best illustrated by example (35). That is, Shifu eventually agreed to come to the inviter’s house despite his initial declinations, in one of which his friends were ‘blamed’.

Thirdly, mitigated acceptance, along with implicit acceptance, appeared to be the most popular strategies. Qianqing’s acceptance of clothes in example (a) in 6.3.2.3 is illustrative as he claimed that accepting the offer was against his natural inclination (see example (34) for more details). Equally notable is the co-occurrence of 既如此 ‘in that case’ and 权 ‘for now’ in three mitigated responses. By using these mitigation or hesitation devices, the recipient appeared to be trying to convey the message to the giver that she made concessions in accepting the offer. *‘In that case, I’ll keep it for now’* in example (64) is a typical example.

The last strategy was the use of implicit acceptance on five occasions. Strikingly, four of the instrumental offers were accepted by the recipient agreeing to comply with the request. For example, the last rhetorical question in example (42) was intended as a strategy of complying with the offerer’s request and more of accepting the money. In the only response to an affective offer (see example (12) for details), the recipient eventually switched to a different topic, hence implying her acceptance of the gift by giving up her argument that nuns did not need to spend money on gifts.

More importantly, it was found that use of acceptance strategies varied depending on the social function and type of offer. Expressing gratitude and explicit acceptance were exclusively used

in affective I&Gs. In contrast, all the offers accepted with mitigation and four in five offers accepted implicitly were instrumental in nature. Regarding variation across the types of offers, the two invitations were respectively accepted with gratitude and explicitly. This suggests that mitigation and implicitness were characteristic of accepting instrumental gift-giving at the final stage.

6.4.2 Strategies of final refusal

Of the four responses that eventually turned down the offer after a ‘seesaw battle’, three adopted the strategy of direct refusal with modification in addition to one indirect strategy (i.e. giving reasons). The two strategies are respectively illustrated below with an affective invitation and instrumental gift-giving.

To begin with, the only indirect refusal was already detailed in the invitation between two sworn brothers in example (8). That is, by explaining why a promise to visit Boya, if made, could not be honoured due to his parents’ objection, Ziqi refused indirectly the invitation of Boya, who, following Ziqi’s line of thought, also alluded to a Confucius quote. Then, the direct refusal strategy with modification was employed in all three instances of instrumental gift-giving. This is perfectly illustrated as follows.

(75)

- 1 房德: 些小薄礼, 特献义士为斗酒之资, 望乞哂留。
- 2 义士: 咱乃闺阁无赖, 四海为家, 无一技一能, 何敢当义士之称? 这些礼物也没用处, 快请收去!
- 3 房德: 礼物虽微, 出自房某一点血诚, 幸勿峻拒。
- 4 义士: 足下蓦地屈身匹夫, 且又赐恁般厚礼, 却是为何?

5 房德: 请义士收了, 方好相告。

6 义士: 咱虽贫贱, 誓不取无名之物。足下若不说明白, 断然不受!

...

15 房德: 多感义士高义! 某当秉烛以待。事成之日, 另有厚报。

16 义士: 咱一生路见不平, 拔刀相助, 那个希图你的厚报? 这礼物咱也不受。

1 Fang De: Honourable knight, this humble gift is specially presented to you to buy a cup of wine. Please accept it.

2 Knight: I'm just a vagrant rascal in the community. Taking the world as my home, how does a good-for-nothing deserve the title 'honourable knight'? And this gift is no use. Please put it away immediately.

3 Fang De: The gift is humble, but it's offered out of my sincerest sentiment. Please do not decline so harshly.

4 Knight: Sir, you kowtowed so unexpectedly to Everyman and presented such a lavish gift. Why?

5 Fang De: You must take it before I tell you.

6 Knight: Although poor and lowly, I've vowed never to take anything without a good reason. If you don't tell me, I will never take it.

... *[focuses on the request]*

15 Fang De: Thank you very much for being such a champion of justice! I will stay up by the lamp till your return. I will give you a handsome reward after the job is done.

16 Knight: I've never hesitated to draw my sword to help a victim of injustice. Who covets your handsome reward? I can't take the gift, either.

The magistrate's offer of money, perceived by the recipient to be 'lavish', was finally refused by the knight. Hence this extended gift-giving intertwined with a big request was brought to an end. As in rebuking the magistrate's promise of a generous reward through the use of a rhetorical question, the knight refused the gift directly and firmly. By stating his principle of behaviour, the recipient not only gave a reason of refusal but also reassured the offerer of his agreement to help. Moreover, this example was especially noteworthy as the refusal was consistently direct and harsh throughout the interaction regardless of the considerable humility, respect and sincerity shown by the official/offerer.

Finally, the choice of strategies appeared to be closely associated with social distance between participants and the function and type of offer. To be brief, among the four offers under scrutiny, all three direct refusals, albeit with modification, occurred between strangers or acquaintances, as opposed to the brotherhood between Ziqi and Boya in the invitation that was declined indirectly. Moreover, these refusals were all found in gift-giving and two in three of them were instrumental.

6.5 A comparison of response strategies

Building on the above findings, this section analyses responses from a comparative perspective. The first two subsections compare acceptance strategies in SUM and SM I&Gs. The second subsection makes a comparison between final refusals in SUM and SM I&Gs. The final section focuses on comparing refusal strategies at three different interactional stages of SM offers.

6.5.1 Similarities and differences between acceptance strategies in SUM and SM I&Gs

A comparison of findings presented in 6.2.1 and 6.4.1 shows some interesting differences and similarities between acceptance responses in SUM and SM I&Gs. To begin with, four strategies, namely expressing gratitude, explicit, mitigated and implicit acceptance were shared by all I&Gs no matter whether or not the offer was sequentially marked (Figure.5). Hence they served as the core strategies of accepting an offer in my corpus

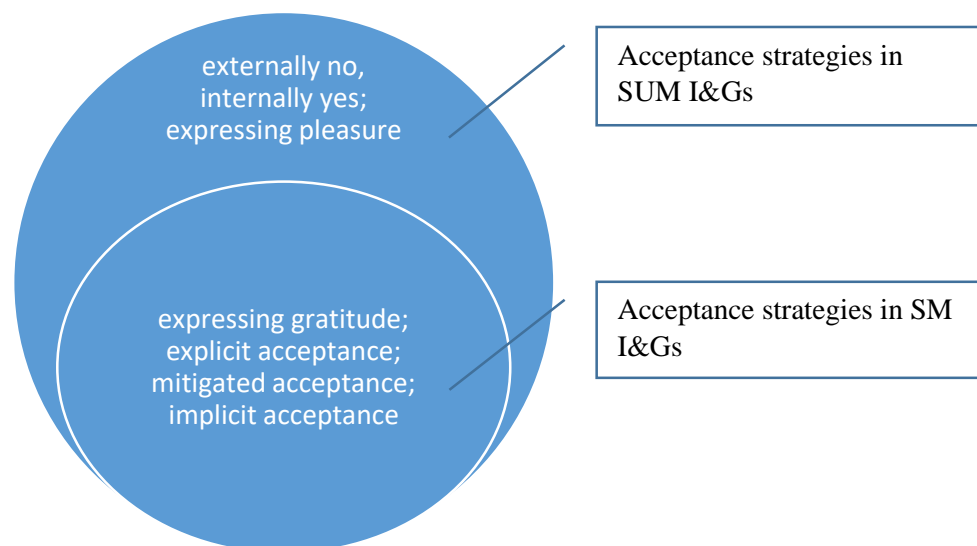


Figure 5: A comparison between acceptance strategies in SUM and SM I&Gs

Similarities are also noticeable in the way in which the choice of acceptance strategies was affected by the social function and type of offer. Most striking is perhaps the exclusive use of mitigated and implicit acceptance in (mostly instrumental) gift-giving as opposed to explicit acceptance in invitations regardless of sequential complexity. At the micro level, promising to reciprocate and expressing indebtedness were strategies of accepting gifts although expressions of thanks were used to accept both invitations and gifts.

Then, two differences were found to be particularly noteworthy. The first difference lies in the range of strategies at the recipient's disposal. As shown in Figure 5, 'externally no, internally yes' and expressing pleasure only occurred in SUM. Thus, recipients who accepted an offer more readily had a larger repertoire of strategies than those who intended to delay their acceptance. The presence/absence of these two strategies appears to be extremely important. For one thing, these responses, which bear a striking resemblance to ritual refusals on the surface, were highly equivocal such that their pragmatic meaning can only be pinned down in context, especially by examining the recipient's non-verbal move (6.2.1.2). Moreover, the two strategies were used fairly frequently as they combined to account for about more than one fifth of the total refusals in the SUM offers.

Another noticeable difference was found in the patterns of strategy preference. Above all, the variation of frequency between strategies was conspicuously more considerable in SUM than in SM offers. Most strikingly, expressing gratitude was predominant in SUM offers while it was only used in about a quarter of SM offers. Interestingly, however, the combination of mitigated and implicit acceptance, which were equally frequent, accounted for nearly two thirds of the final acceptance responses in SM offers. This finding is thus at odds with previous findings that 'expressing thanks' is a fairly frequent strategy of refusing an invitation in Chinese (e.g. Hong 2008:127).

6.5.2 Similarities and differences between refusals in SUM I&Gs and final refusals in SM I&Gs

Similarities and differences have also been found between refusals in SUM I&Gs and final refusals in SM I&Gs. Perhaps most importantly, like acceptance analysed above, two macro

refusal strategies, i.e. indirect refusal and direct refusal with modification were used in both SUM and SM offers (Figure 7).

More noteworthy are two differences in refusal strategies. To begin with, conventionalised and blunt/angry refusals were only found in SUM I&Gs. That is to say, refusal strategies in offers without ritual ‘battle of politeness’ were more varied than the final refusals in offers with a certain amount of initial negotiation. Unexpectedly, over a fifth of the responses in SUM I&Gs refused the offers bluntly or angrily as opposed to its total absence in SM offers. This finding has important implications for our understanding of (im)politeness manifested in I&Gs as the use of this strategy provides clear evidence that what counted as an appropriate offer varied from individual to individual. Moreover, direct refusal with modification was the predominant strategy at the final interactional stage in SM offers (Figure 7) while responses using this strategy just added up to less than one third of the total refusals in SUM offers.

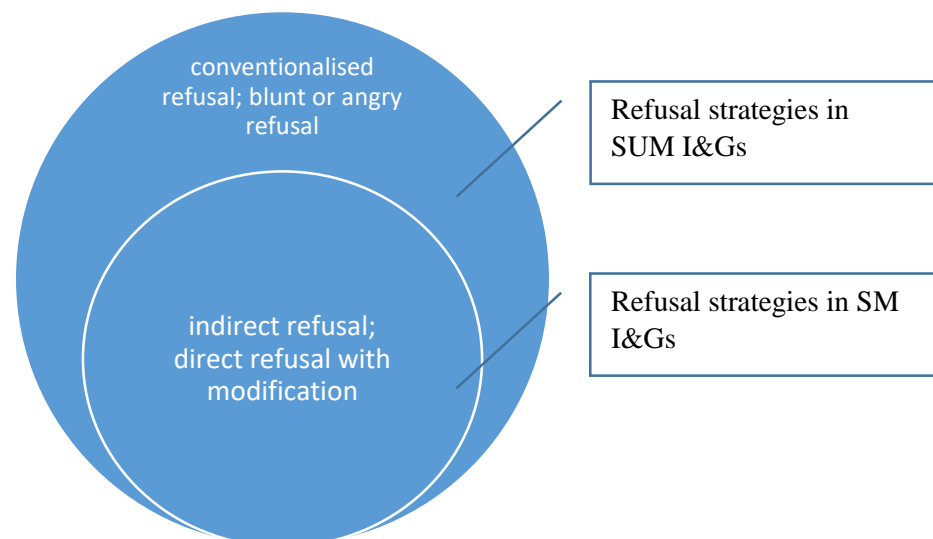


Figure 6: A comparison between macro refusal strategies in SUM and SM I&Gs

Secondly, despite the occurrence of highly face-threatening blunt/angry refusals, indirect refusals dominated in SUM offers. This is in sharp contrast with the use of modified directness in three quarters of the final refusals in SM offers. As further discussed below, this partly resulted from the fact that all the SM offers receiving this response were (mostly instrumental) gift-giving.

6.5.3 Similarities and differences between refusals at different stages of SM

I&Gs

This subsection aims to show similarities and differences between refusals at different interactional stages of the offer. My analysis focuses on comparing three macro refusal strategies, micro strategies and the impact of variables such as the social function of offer on the choice of refusal strategies.

6.5.3.1 Similarities and differences at the macro level

Figure 7 demonstrates the convergence and divergence of three macro refusal strategies used at different interactional stages. To begin with, the overall distribution of strategies at the first two stages is similar. That is, three strategies were used to refuse initial and insistence offers and more importantly difference in frequency between them, especially indirect refusals, does not appear to be significant. Nonetheless, while the first stage tended to use more conventional refusals the second stage was more likely to refuse an offer directly with modification.

The final stage, however, displays a different distributional pattern of use. The most striking feature is the predominance of direct refusals with modification and the total absence of conventionalised refusals. This contrasts sharply with the dominance of indirect refusals and more balanced distribution across the other two strategies at the earlier stages of interaction.

To mention briefly, the lack of conventionalised refusals at the final stage seems to be well accounted for by the ritual nature of this strategy.

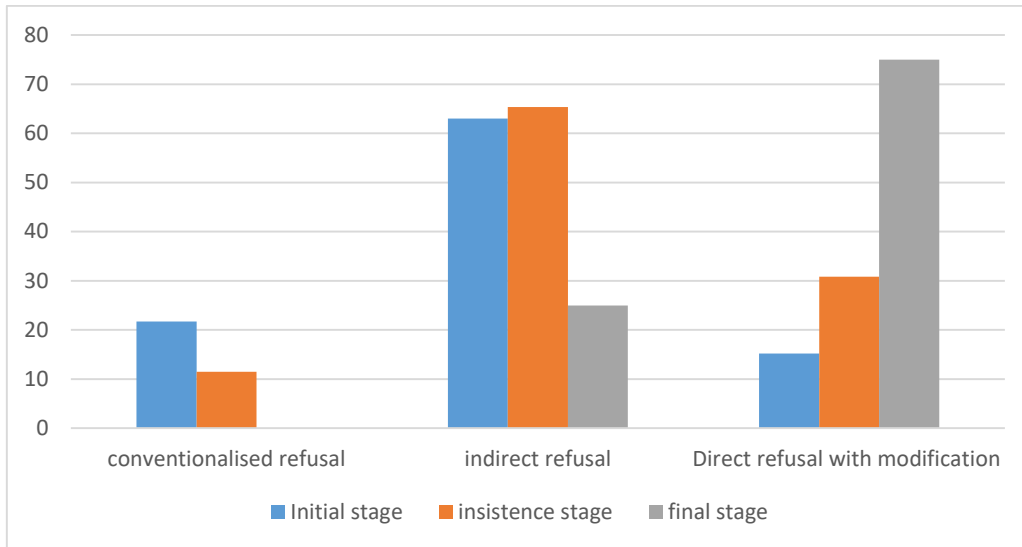


Figure 7: A comparison between refusal strategies at three stages of SM I&Gs

6.5.3.2 Similarities and differences at the micro level

Regarding similarities and differences at the micro level, it is clear from *Table 7* that the overall pattern of difference at the macro level appeared to have mapped onto the micro level. That is, striking similarities seemed to be shared by the initial and reoffer/insistence stages. Precisely, four in nine indirect strategies identified in my data were used to refuse both initial offers and reoffers. Moreover, it is worth noting that responses adopting these strategies account for about more than three quarters of the respective data sets.

Table 7: Indirect refusal strategies at three interactional stages of SM I&Gs

Indirect refusal strategies	Initial stage	Reoffer/insistence stage	Final stage
1. Reason	+	+	+
2. Avoidance	+	+	-

3. Requesting justification or clarification	+	+	-
4. Alternative	+	+	-
5. Conditional no	+	-	-
6. Offering payment	+	-	-
7. Promising repayment or reciprocation	-	+	-
8. Checking sincerity	+	-	-
9. Returning offer	-	+	-

When it comes to differences, the high degree of similarity between the first two interactional stages means that the final stage was apparently distinctive as only one indirect strategy, i.e. reason was used. In addition, as demonstrated in the table, conditional no, offering payment and checking sincerity were only found at the initial stage whereas promising repayment/reciprocation and returning offer occurred exclusively in refusals at the reoffer/insistence stage.

6.6 Summary

The summary centres on three different points of focus, namely, the characteristics of responses in SUM and SM offers, similarities and differences between responses in SUM and SUM offers and also those within SM offers.

To begin with, most SUM offers were accepted by using one of the six mutually exclusive strategies with varying degree of explicitness and mitigation. Most strikingly, expressing gratitude emerged as the predominant strategy. The other five strategies, roughly in descending order of frequency, are explicit acceptance, ‘externally no, internally yes’ and mitigated

acceptance, implicit acceptance and expressing pleasure. Thus, explicit acceptance became the second most frequently used strategy while expressing pleasure appeared to be the last choice in my data.

Some of the aforementioned (sub)strategies were found to be highly equivocal. The equivocation of expressing indebtedness and ‘externally no, internally yes’ appears to be especially remarkable as the speaker meanings of responses using these strategies tended to be diametrically opposite in different contexts. This explains well the different labels ‘expressing indebtedness’ and ‘feeling indebted’, which were meant to imply acceptance and refusal respectively (SUM vs. SM) although their propositional meanings appear to be identical. In a similar vein, ‘externally no, internally yes’ was such labelled as an effort to avoid being mixed up with conventionalised/ritual refusals.

As regards refusals, the very finding that approximately more than one third of the SUM offers were refused would enable us to gain a better understanding of I&Gs. Moreover, my data shows that four strategies were employed, namely conventionalised refusals, indirect refusals, direct refusals with modification, and blunt/angry refusals. Indirect refusals were used most frequently and the overwhelming majority of them provided a reason or explanation for the recipient’s inability to comply with the offerer’s proposed course of action (Chen *et al* 1995). Interestingly, the use of other three indirect strategies was restricted to the type of offer. That is, postponement and returning offer were only found in invitations while only an offer of gifts was perceived to be inappropriate. Moreover, blunt and angry responses occurred as nearly frequently as direct refusals with modification in SUM offers. This finding is very important because it is best evidence that perceptions of the offerer and recipient about an appropriate offer differed considerably.

Secondly, responses in SM I&Gs appeared to be more complex due partly to their distribution at different interactional stages. Above all, some striking similarities were shared by refusals at the initial two stages. First, three strategies, i.e. conventionalised and indirect refusals and direct refusals were all used at the initial and insistence offers. Among them, indirect refusals occurred with almost the same frequency although the first stage tended to use more conventionalised refusals while more direct refusals with modification occurred at the insistence stage (Figure 8). At the micro level, the recipients had a similar range of indirect strategies at their disposal and four out of the nine strategies were found at both stages. In contrast, however, the final stage differed greatly from the earlier two. Most strikingly, direct refusals with modification dominated the final responses and no conventionalised refusal was identified.

Finally, striking similarities and differences were identified between responses in SUM and SM I&Gs. To begin with acceptance, expressing gratitude, explicit, mitigated and implicit acceptance were used in all offers regardless of sequential complexity. However, ‘externally no, internally yes’ and expressing pleasure were restricted to SUM I&Gs (Figures 5 and 7). Thus, the range of acceptance strategies appeared to be broader in SUM than in SM offers. Another important difference lies in the weight of core strategies. Precisely, expressing gratitude was used in nearly half of the acceptance responses in SUM offers, as opposed to its occurrence in about one quarter of final responses in SM offers, in which mitigated and implicit acceptance was found to be most frequent. Furthermore, explicit acceptance was used fairly frequently in SUM offers whereas it was least favoured in SM offers.

Differences between refusals in these two types of offers were even more notable. Above all, two of the macro refusal strategies in my data, i.e. conventionalised and blunt/angry refusals were totally absent in SM offers. Moreover, direct refusal with modification was the predominant strategy at the final interactional stage in SM offers (Figure 7) while responses using this strategy just added up to less than one third of the total refusals in SUM offers.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to show the contributions made by the present study. To this end, a comparison is made between the present and previous findings and more importantly, the convergence and divergence are discussed in relation to empirical I&G studies and the two approaches to (im)politeness. The findings on the interactional structures, strategies of I&Gs and responses, and similarities and differences between I&Gs of different types and functions are respectively discussed in four sections. The major contributions to knowledge and its significance for politeness theorisation are summarised in the final section.

7.2 Interactional structure of I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

It emerged from a comparison of the present and previous findings that the interactional structure of I&Gs from *Sanyan* exhibited some distinctive features. Most notably, an overwhelming majority of the offers in the present corpus terminated without ritual refusals, whereas offers that were accepted or refused with initial declinations just accounted for slightly over one quarter of the total (cf. Figure 1). In other words, generally the structure of I&Gs in the vernacular stories was much less elaborate than previously suggested. Thus, it seems that the interactional structure of I&Gs observed by Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Zhu *et al* (2000) is limited to only contemporary Chinese. For instance, this divergence could be interpreted as evidence that the so-called tripartite schemata of Chinese invitations and hence the ‘battle of politeness’ (Leech 2007/2014) were not ‘prototypical’ in *Sanyan* as claimed by Gu and Mao (cf. 2.3.4). Moreover, the same can be said for gift-giving because accepting a

gift, according to Mao (1992) and Zhu *et al* (2000), was always prefaced with declinations. Hence, (im)politeness in most offers from *Sanyan* was realised in one talk exchange, in stark contrast to its clearer tendency ‘to emerge in the sequential unfolding of interaction’ (Haugh 2007a:295) in contemporary Chinese.

A more nuanced analysis indicates that the interactional elaborateness of I&Gs in *Sanyan* varied considerably across contexts. This can be largely seen in the contrast between the extremely varied and diversified contexts in the present study and the limited and homogeneous settings in previous studies. Regarding interpersonal relationship, for instance, participants in the invitations examined by Gu (1990) and Mao (1992/1994) were all friends or relatives. Furthermore, without exception the recipient was invited to dinner rather than to various social events. Thus it can be argued that at best their structure-related findings and claims can characterise ‘dinner invitations between friends in contemporary Chinese’ rather than Chinese invitations in general, not to mention I&Gs in the history of Chinese. In contrast, the dataset scrutinised in the present study is substantially broader in scope and nature. In terms of social distance between participants, for instance, relationship pairs such as family members, friends, acquaintances and total strangers were all represented in the corpus. As regards the sociological variable power that fundamentally affects participants’ judgement about (im)politeness (Watts 2003; Locher 2004), the offerer-recipient dyads cover the whole spectrum of relationships, ranging from equals (e.g. friend-friend) to unequals with a gulf of power difference (e.g. emperor-subject). As such, my findings would be able to characterise I&Gs in the genre of text under study and hence presumably approximate I&Gs in pre-modern Chinese. More importantly, the distribution of three interactional patterns in the present study can be, in a sense, viewed as the result of participants’ negotiation of power and distance in a wide range of contexts.

Moreover, as demonstrated in the preceding three chapters, the structural complexity of offers, particularly invitations, varied along the ostensible (ritual) and sincere (or substantive) dimension. To be brief, ostensible or ritual invitations, which occurred fairly frequently in *Sanyan*, were normally refused without ritual elaboration. On some occasions (e.g. examples (52) and (53)), they were issued only to show “feeling of ‘involvement’, a way of telling someone that you have enjoyed spending time with them and you would not mind doing it again” (Scollon *et al* 2012:11). On other occasions, invitations were extended merely for the sake of showing ‘ostensible/ritual hospitality’ to someone at the doorstep (e.g. examples (26) and (57)), which appeared to be obligatory in the vernacular literature and intuitively in present-day China. Unsurprisingly, they were all refused immediately, often with ‘ostensible excuses or reasons’ (Isaacs & Clark 1990:496). All the above offers share the common feature that the offerer did not persist or insist on the invitation while ‘for genuine invitations, it is often polite for A to issue an invitation several times before B accepts’ (Isaacs & Clark 1990:501; see also Mao 1992/1994 and Leech 2014). In a word, the nature of ostensible invitations as part of phatic small talk (Wolfson 1981/1983/1989) or ‘the kind of chit-chat that people engage in simply in order to show that they recognise each other’s presence’ (Coupland *et al* 1992:209-210) seemed to preclude the necessity to engage in a lengthy negotiation of face (cf. Isaacs & Clark 1990; Pinto 2007; Scollon *et al* 2012).

Perhaps more importantly, the interactional structure of I&Gs was closely associated with the presence/absence of solicitation and the mode of communication, i.e. face-to-face/immediate or mediated encounters. Overall, solicited offers and those made in mediated interactions (Goffman 1967) tended to be simple in structure and both occurred fairly frequently in my data. To begin with, unlike ritual refusal to an unsolicited one as has been extensively explored (e.g.

Mao 1992/1994), refusing a solicited offer would be judged by the offerer as being hypocritical. For instance, one can imagine that the recipient in desperation in examples (14) and (15) would be negatively perceived to be placing higher value on face than on life itself (Ho 1987:873; Goffman 1967:19) if she had refused the offer. On the contrary, as suggested by examples (15) and (16), appropriate acceptance such as expressing gratitude appears to be the default response to many solicited I&Gs.

Secondly, I&Gs made in mediated communication such as written invitations were normally accepted or occasionally refused without interactional complexity. This is because, unlike immediate offers, the offerer's sincerity, which is often the focus of negotiation in invitations (Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Leech 2014; Grainger *et al* 2015), had been built into the text. Moreover, this could be well accounted for by Goffman's (1967:33) argument that mediated encounter 'is likely to be more attenuated, with each participant's line being gleaned from such things as written statements and work records'. In other words, other things being equal, face concern in mediated and immediate I&Gs varies greatly. Therefore, the finding that immediate offers normally terminated without reiterative offers and refusals provides counterevidence to the blanket claim that to be polite ritual refusals are socially required in accepting an offer in Chinese.

Finally, the interactional structure of I&Gs in my corpus varied considerably according to the type and function of offers. Precisely, contrary to previous assumptions and claims about the homogeneity of invitations and gift-giving and of affective and instrumental gift-giving (Mao 1992; Lii-Shih 1994), invitations displayed a much higher tendency to use Pattern A whereas gift-giving tended more to be realised in an extended conversation (cf. Figure 2). It can be

argued that this is due partly to the difference in the amount of facework invested in these two types of offer.

Firstly, all other things being equal, gift-giving appeared to engage in more facework than invitations. As further discussed below, this is partly supported by the finding that while the offerer's ulterior motive normally laid dormant in an invitation, the private motivation of instrumental gift-giving was often perceived by both participants at the time of making the offer. Moreover, the above difference in facework is presumably associated with the fact that gift-giving normally involved the immediate transfer of the ownership of something valuable on the spot and hence was handled with more courtesy. However, extending an invitation, especially a written one, was yet to be materialised sometime after the offer. For instance, the recipient could change her mind and decide not to attend the invitation with excuses even if it had been accepted just as it could be cancelled by the inviter by providing an excuse. This argument finds some support from Leech (2014:186) observation that 'Offers, it appears, can be a fairly empty gestures of politeness until someone 'cashes them in' and accepts the value of the offer'. Thus, again, Goffman's (1967) argument concerning the difference of face and facework in immediate and mediated encounters seems to equally apply in the way invitations differed from gift-giving.

Secondly, along the same line of argument, the greater likelihood of lengthy instrumental gift-giving is largely determined by the embedding of request in offers. In B&L's (1987) terminology, gift-giving and request can both threaten the recipient's negative face. At the same time, gift-giving, albeit dubbed 'face-satisfying act' by Lii-Shih (1994; See also B&L 1987:129), like invitations, puts the offerer's positive face at risk as it needs to be endorsed by the recipient. Interpreted in Leech's (2007/2014) terminology, gift-giving is beneficial to the

recipient (but see my argument in 7.4), whereas request incurs cost to the requestee. Either way, the added structural complexity of instrumental gift-giving is due to the higher amount of facework required by the juxtaposition of two speech acts in one encounter.

In the final analysis, the present findings on the interactional structure of I&Gs diverges considerably from previous studies. At the macro level, a substantial majority of I&Gs in *Sanyan* terminated without reiterating the offer or making ritual refusals, which contrasts with the previous characterisation of I&Gs in contemporary Chinese as ‘tripartite’ in structure. At the micro level, the interactional elaborateness of I&Gs in the present study was highly context-bound. It varied considerably along a number of dimensions, ranging from the horizontal and vertical distance, through the presence/absence of elicitation, the mode of communication and the social function and type of offers, to whether the recipient was in a desperate situation and whether the offer was essentially ostensible.

As such, drawing any sweeping conclusion about the structure of I&Gs, as in previous studies adopting the modern approach to politeness, would run into a simplistic overgeneralisation. Rather, the interactional elaboration was the outcome of the participants’ judgement based on the aforementioned interconnected variables. On the one hand, ritual politeness as manifested in the form of ritual refusals, was not as essential to an offer as previously assumed. On the other hand, accepting or refusing a SUM offer was not necessarily impolite or inappropriate as theorised or claimed in previous studies. This is because, as further argued below, (im)politeness is a discursive concept subject to participants’ contextual evaluations.

7.3 Strategies of I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

This section discusses my findings on the strategies of I&Gs in relation to (im)politeness, focusing on pre-offer strategies in one subsection and then head act and modification strategies, and their variations in the other. Following the discursive approach to (im)politeness, I shall argue that the participants' selection of different strategies depending on contexts is evidence of their perception of (im)politeness as a concept that is subject to judgement and evaluation.

7.3.1 Pre-offer strategies in relation to (im)politeness

By comparing my findings with those of previous investigations, this subsection aims to show how the present study is able to bring to the fore the crucial role played by pre-offers in I&Gs. Moreover, I shall argue that the richness of pre-offer strategies and their variation across contexts are good evidence for the dynamic and discursive nature of (im)politeness.

Most of the recurrent pre-offer strategies in *Sanyan* seem to differ from previous observations. Hence the present study is able to broaden our understanding of how I&Gs are executed in different contexts. According to Wolfson (1981:12), the most common pre-invitation strategy in AmE is 'by expressing a desire for a social commitment without mentioning such specifics as time or place'. Then, checking or enquiring about the recipient's availability has been found to be the second most common strategy of invitation lead (cf. 2.4.1). Regarding Chinese, the pre-offer 'I wonder if you are free this evening' is embedded in one of the illustrative invitations in Mao (1992:81). Unfortunately, however, it is not discussed in any detail in the study and consequently there is little understanding of the use of pre-offers (cf. 2.4.1). Therefore, the present research sheds some fresh light on the I&G literature by exploring systematically for the first time pre-offer strategies in Chinese. More importantly, below I shall argue that as a

recognisable element of ‘the flow of events in the encounter [offer]’ (Goffman 1967:7), pre-offers are of profound importance in I&Gs.

There is wide consensus that politeness is associated with what the speaker said before issuing an invitation and, by implication, offering a gift. For instance, returning to what can be conveniently called ‘availability checking strategy’, questions such as ‘Are you doing anything tonight?’ are interpretable as polite as they enable the participants to ‘abort a projected interaction sequence in which conflict, disagreement, or rejection might emerge’ (Goodwin & Heritage 1990:297; see also Lerner 1996:306; Terasaki 2004:180). In a similar vein, Schegloff (1990:60-61) noted that ‘‘one job presequences are designed to do is to explore the likelihood that the utterance being prefaced and the action(s) it will do, will not be responded to in a dispreferred way – will not, for example, be rejected.’ More importantly, the underlying motivation, according to scholars such as Leech, is the consideration of politeness:

Surely all these characteristics of dispreferred responses are caused by responders’ reluctance to perform the dispreferred speech act. But why the reluctance? Often it is because of the reply’s face-threatening nature, thwarting the conversational goals of the other speaker. In other words, the motivation is politeness, or more precisely the mitigation of impoliteness. (Leech 2014:31-32)

Thus, by using the pre-offer, the speaker’s face is saved from not explicitly formulating an invitation ‘if there is a hint from the addressee that the invitation might be turned down’ (Bowles 2006:336). Moreover, the speaker’s face is enhanced if the addressee shows interest in the social commitment or transactions and encourages her to specify the details.

A similar argument applies to some, if not all, of the seven pre-offer strategies analysed in section 4.3 despite the absence of ‘availability checking strategy’ in my data. To take a specific example, the speaker in example (20) started by checking whether the addressee was happy if she proposed a certain course of action that might be face-threatening. As in making requests, by securing such a pre-commitment before making the offer, the speaker not only avoided offering the motivational gift ‘out of the blue’ but also enhanced the possibility of her offer being accepted (cf. Trosborg 1995:216-217). Equally important, with the pre-commitment, the speaker would have a face-saving way out in the event that the recipient felt offended.

Moreover, a pre-offer constitutes an essential component of many offers because whether the transaction is successful depends largely on the recipient’s response. It is noted by Wolfson (1981:16) that the ‘lead’ is evidence of the ‘emergent character of the interaction’ and invitations ‘are negotiated by BOTH parties’ (emphasis original). Surprisingly, this sociolinguistic view is consistent with the discursive view of politeness or face as interactionally achieved (Goffman 1967; Clark 1996; Eelen 2001; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Haugh 2007a; Arundale 2006/2010) regardless of their respective focus on the way social commitments such as invitations are arranged and the (im)politeness arises in social interaction.

(Im)politeness as interactional and emergent in interaction appears to be particularly evident in strategies 1, 2, 4 and 5 illustrated in section 4.3. For instance, unlike the stereotypical offer-response structure, gift-giving was sometimes verbally initiated by the recipient, thereby exhibiting a reversed sequence. The recipient’s ‘proactive’ response in these cases appeared to be ritual as no specific reason was provided in the response (cf. Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). Such as response is evidence that “in the host-guest relationship, the host demonstrates *ke qi*,

‘politeness,’ by doing everything to make the guest ‘feel at home’” (Gao 1998:175). Perhaps more importantly, the proactive strategy, like an invitation ‘lead’ (Wolfson 1981), served as a precursor to the ensuing negotiation of face and hence constitutes an essential part of the ‘battle of politeness’ (Leech 2007/2014).

Moreover, the employment of a broader repertoire of strategies in *Sanyan* and the context-dependent selection of strategies provide evidence that pre-offers were used by participants as a tool for their negotiations of face and politeness at the preliminary stage of the interaction. As detailed in subsection 4.3, a range of factors such as the type (invitation vs. gift-giving) and function of offer (affective vs. instrumental), vertical and horizontal distance between participants and perceived moral obligation to offer all exerted an impact on the choice of strategies. As suggested by the above proactive strategy, to be polite, participants need to make judgements appropriate to the context. One can easily imagine how embarrassing it would be for both participants if this strategy was used by a lecturer to a student coming into her office for an appointment. Perhaps more importantly, it can be argued that the interpretation of an offer sometimes depends largely on the presence or absence of a pre-offer and this appears to be especially true in solicited/unsolicited and affective/instrumental offers.

7.3.2 Head act and modification strategies in relation to (im)politeness

This subsection aims to show how the present study contributes to the existing literature by characterising, for the first time, I&Gs in Chinese in terms of head acts and modifications. Moreover, following discursive theorists such as Eelen (2001), Mills (2003/2011), Watts (2003) and Locher & Watts (2005) I shall argue in favour of reconceptualising (im)politeness as a discursive phenomenon by challenging some of the key elements of the modern approach to

politeness, particularly their theorisation about the intimate association between indirectness, modesty and politeness and the distinction between positive and negative politeness.

7.3.2.1 Head act strategies and (im)politeness

I&Gs in *Sanyan* used all three head act superstrategies, i.e. preference, directive and execution initially identified by studies such as Barron (2005) (cf. 5.2). This finding not only provides empirical evidence of the hybrid nature of I&Gs as argued in subsection 2.3.1, but also indicates that I&Gs in Chinese are much more complex than previously appreciated. Moreover, this finding, I shall argue, is new evidence from two particular speech events that indirectness is not necessarily associated with politeness as assumed by B&L (1987).

The part-directive nature of I&Gs means that offers may threaten the recipient's negative face as they 'put some pressure on H to accept or reject them, and possibly to incur debt' (B&L 1987:66). Face-redressive actions are thus required to make the offer less imposing. In this sense, the use of over a dozen preference head acts in my corpus seems to support B&L's theory of politeness because this superstrategy, by phrasing the offer as suggestions, appeared to give the recipient 'freedom of action and freedom from imposition' (B&L 1987:61), or simply to 'give options' (R. Lakoff 1973:298) (but see below). To put it another way, in these head acts the conditional nature of the offer was foregrounded while the directive nature was backgrounded.

However, consistent with discursive theorists' emphasis on contexts in perceptions of (im)politeness, Ji (2001:1059) argues that 'for face to operate as a motivating factor for

politeness at all, it must be related to every one in a community as a self-image'. Thus, whether I&Gs are face-threatening or face-enhancing varies, for example, across individuals and situations. Furthermore, even the perceptions of face threat or (im)politeness of the same individual may vary across time and space (Eelen 2001; Mills 2003). For instance, several I&Gs in my data were perceived by the recipient to be face-threatening and received angry reactions (cf. 6.2.2.4). Surprisingly, a gift offer was even experienced by the recipient as 'insulting' and the offerer was judged to be an old fool who could not tell good from bad although for the modern approach to (im)politeness the offer is interpretable as polite since it was intended to show gratitude, modified by several face-saving strategies such as the use of a preparator and a great amount of respect and modesty was shown. Moreover, the above gift-giving shows that unlike Gu's (1990) argument the Chinese notion of negative face does not differ essentially from B&L's (1987) conceptualisation (cf. 2.2.1) because, as further argued below, (im)politeness is always subject to participants' judgments.

Invitations may also threaten the speaker's positive face because the offer may be refused by the hearer. While criticising B&L's (1987) concept of negative face, Gu (1990:255) maintains that 'for an inviter to issue an invitation is to present his positive face to the invitee for his approval'. According to the author, the inviter's face is damaged if the offer is refused. This entails the need to protect not only other-face but self-face, which, according to Barron (2005:143), 'may lead the speaker to mitigate the force of the illocution by realising it in an indirect manner'. One of the indirect strategies, as noted by Leech (2014:181), is to use volitional questions, corresponding to preference head acts in the present study (but see below).

On the other hand, offers ‘demonstrate S’s good intentions in satisfying H’s positive-face wants’ (B&L (1987:125) and gift-giving is considered as a ‘classic positive-politeness action’ (B&L 1987:129). Similarly, it is believed that invitations can express the inviter’s approval and liking of the invitee (Garcia 1999:61; Bella 2009:245). The above quotation from Gu also suggests that the inviter’s positive face can be enhanced if the offer is accepted. The potential of I&G for boosting the face of both participants may motivate the preference for directness over other superstrategies (Barron 2005:143). Hence, my finding about the dominance of directive and execution head acts in *Sanyan* suggests that, most I&Gs, albeit imperative and direct, were appropriate to the context. I&G head acts in the present corpus thus, generally speaking, appeared to be positive-politeness oriented. If this was indeed the case, politeness strategies used at different interactional stages in my data differ from the previous findings that the initial stage of invitations in contemporary Chinese (and Spanish) is negative/deference-politeness oriented while the final ‘wrap-up’ the positive/solidarity-politeness oriented (Mao 1992; Garcia 1999/2008).

7.3.2.2 Modification strategies and (im)politeness

The significance of the present study lies partly in the fact that the importance of modifications in Chinese I&Gs were brought to the fore for the first time. More important is, I shall argue, that my findings are able to help refine the existing theories by contributing to the current debates over some of the core theoretical notions of politeness.

Positive-negative politeness dichotomy and I&Gs in Chinese

Among a broad range of modifications used in *Sanyan*, understaters, conditionals, honorifics and grounders were shared by offers using different head act superstrategies. Hence in a sense

they constituted the core modification strategies in my data although, as suggested by example (7), their use in an offer was not obligatory. Interestingly, while they are interpreted as negative politeness strategies in many previous studies (Garcia 1999; Bella 2009), my analysis raised some difficulties with assigning strategies with reference to B&L's (1987) dichotomy between negative and positive face/politeness. For instance, with respect to conditionals, Barron (2005:161) asserted that "offers are *arguably always of benefit for the hearer*. More important is the fact that this modification *represents a negative politeness strategy* – by communicating that the speaker does not expect the hearer to except [sic] the offer unless s/he wants to, the speaker gives the hearer 'a real out' (B&L 1987:72). In other words, the force of a particular offer is mitigated by underlining its conditional nature" (italics added).

However, my data does not seem to support the author's assertion for several reasons. For one thing, contrary to the author's claim that offers are always beneficial to the recipient, some I&Gs in my data were perceived to be offensive, even insulting (cf. 6.2.2.4). This is because, as argued in more details in subsection 7.4.2, the judgment about whether an offer is of benefit of the recipient depends on many factors, including, among others, the perceived private motivation in instrumental I&Gs. For instance, it can be argued that refusals such as 'your house might be too far away from here' suggest that the invitation could be accepted only if not too much effort was required on the part of the invitee (cf. example (69)). For another thing, unlike conditionals in English the function of most conditionals in my corpus, especially those used in preference I&Gs seemed mainly to show modesty or humbleness rather than mitigating the force of the offer. Instead, it appears that most conditionals in the present study including 'if you don't think my humble home is beneath your dignity used in an invitation' (cf. 5.2.1.2.2) focus on self-face or self-politeness by showing a humble image, which is traditionally viewed as positive in Chinese (cf. R. Chen 2001). Moreover, in the Chinese cultural context the

conditional in an offer is likely to be perceived as ‘impolite’, ‘not being a good host’ or ‘hypocritical’. This ‘principle of hosting a guest’ is even encoded in the idiom 问客杀鸡 (‘asking the guest before slaughtering the chicken’) as explicated as follows:

我们中国人把‘问客杀鸡’的行为看做是不礼貌的，而西方人把‘不问客就杀鸡’看作是不礼貌的。(S. Chen 2004:18)

For the Chinese, it is impolite to ‘ask the guest before slaughtering the chicken’. Conversely, for Westerners it is impolite to ‘slaughter the chicken without asking the guest’.

In light of the discursive view of (im)politeness, the above emic interpretation sounds too ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ because the answer to the question of whether it is (im)polite for the host to ask about the guest’s opinion before preparing the food is intuitively subject to situational variations. Despite this, the above quote conveys the clear message that contrary to Barron’s echoing of Lakoff’s (1973) politeness rule ‘give options’ and Leech’s (2014:181) emphasis on the optionality factor, people’s judgements about optionality in relation to (im)politeness, may vary considerably, for example, across cultural groups or communities of practice.

The above finding poses a challenge to sweeping claims such as ‘*Chinese are positively oriented only as far as offers are concerned*, rather than that they are positively oriented in general’ (Chen 2001:94; italics added). Similarly, my finding about the unclear boundary between positive and negative face/politeness strategies in I&G calls into question claims such as “While ‘negative politeness’ strategy seems to have reigned over the first two rounds of the

invitational discourse, this final round of exchange is oriented towards ‘positive politeness’ strategy, fostering a sense of intimacy and solidarity” (Mao 1992:88).

More importantly, the above difficulty with strategy assignment raises issues with the applicability of B&L’s (1987) binary opposition of positive and negative face/politeness in empirical research (cf. Meier 1995a:384; Bella 2009:243; Leech 2014:13). This is because, as argued by scholars such as Chen (2001), Terkourafi (2005) and Haugh (2006), a speech behaviour could be simultaneously awarded a positive and negative value. Presumably the limited applicability of this distinction in empirical analysis can be attributed to their ‘diluted’ representation of Goffman’s ‘sophisticated notions of face and face-work’ (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003:1453; See also Locher & Watts 2005).

Modification strategies and participants’ perception of (im)politeness

Mitigation devices arguably play an important role in participants’ perception of (im)politeness. B&L’s theory bears out this point. That is, at the most general level, the five hierarchical super-strategies of politeness (i.e. bald-on-record, positive, negative, off-record, and silence) formulated by B&L (1987:60) are ranked ‘according to the degree of face-redress that they can afford, from less (regard for positive face) to more (regard for negative face)’ (Terkourafi 2005:239; see also Sifianou 1996). Nonetheless, one of the strongest criticisms levelled against this theory is their theorisation of the relationship between mitigation and politeness. For instance, it is argued that:

Brown and Levinson's definition of politeness is largely focused around the notion of mitigation of face threat, and whilst politeness is clearly used to avoid threatening others' face, it is clear that politeness has many different functions. (Mills 2011:24)

Thus, like Locher (2005:734) who 'make[s] no claim that any given linguistic form is inherently polite or impolite', mitigation was used as a purely technical term in the present study. In the remaining part of this subsection, I will argue how my findings are able to shed some light on explicating the complex relationships between mitigations and (im)politeness.

The majority of I&Gs using mitigation devices appeared to pass 'unnoticed' and hence can be categorised as 'appropriate' or 'politic' (Watts 1992/2003; Meier 1995b; Locher 2006; Locher & Watts 2005) (cf. 7.4.2). The major findings thus deserve full discussion. To begin with downgraders and mitigating moves, the finding that preference head acts were most likely to be modified by conditionals is very interesting since both underlined the conditional nature of the offer. If giving options was indeed perceived as polite, these offers, all else being equal, could be viewed as the most polite of the three categories of I&Gs. Regarding directive head acts, a majority of them were directive and hence appeared to be face-threatening. Nonetheless, a number of them were mitigated by UIPMs, UFPMs or tone-softeners (reduplication of verbs), among other devices. A comparison with previous findings shows that these downgraders are rarely used in the studies of Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Zhu *et al* (2000).

As to upgraders and aggravating moves, the finding that a large range of modifications were used came as a surprise. First, it appears that aggravating moves never occurred in Venezuelan Spanish (Garcia 1999:39) and no mention is even made of these modifications in other studies. Given that the data source of the present study (i.e. vernacular literature) differs from those

analysed in the previous studies (i.e. FDCTs in Barron 2005; role plays in Garcia 1999/2008 and Bellia 2009; observations in Zhu *et al* 2000 and telephone conversations in Mao 1992), this finding has some methodological implications. To be brief, upgraders and aggravating moves are not very likely to occur in the contexts examined by the above studies. In addition, the difference between the present and previous studies may suggest that some diachronic changes have taken place in the way in which invitations are issued and gifts presented.

Moreover, the upgraders and aggravating moves were perceived as appropriate in the specific context despite their high degree of face-threat as theorised by B&L (19987). Among others, participants' perceptions about offers' self-elevation especially deserve some more comment as they provide clear counterevidence against the maxim view of politeness (Leech 1983/2014; Gu 1990). For instance, modesty or humbleness has long been viewed as a pivotal cultural value in China (R. Chen 1993) such that it is treated as a major maxim of politeness in Gu's (1990) theory. According to Gu (1990:246), elevating self in Chinese "is construed as being 'arrogant', 'boasting', or 'self-conceited'". However, elevating self was not rare in my data and most instances appeared to pass unnoticed and were arguably appropriate (cf. example (23) and (28)). More importantly, the recipient of some offers explicitly expressed his agreement with the offerer's positive assessment of the gift (cf. examples (30) and (31)). In a word, contrary to the modern approach's *a priori* and static view of (im)politeness, the above positive evaluations about self-elevating offers are evidence of participants' dynamic judgements as to whether the offer was (im)polite.

7.4 Responding to I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

This section aims to discuss the significance of my findings regarding I&G response strategies. It will be shown that despite some similarities the differences between the present and previous

findings in the use of acceptance and refusal strategies came as a big surprise and hence the present study makes important contributions to the existing scholarship. On this basis, I shall argue that my findings provide evidence of (im)politeness as discursive concept, the meaning of which is negotiated between participants.

7.4.1 Acceptance strategies of I&Gs and (im)politeness

This subsection starts by highlighting differences in accepting I&Gs between the present and previous findings. It then discusses how the present study is able to make contributions to I&Gs and the wider politeness scholarship.

Some notable differences emerged in a comparison of acceptance strategies in *Sanyan* and previous reports. Most surprisingly, expressing gratitude or appreciation dominates the six strategies as it was used in nearly half of the acceptance responses in my corpus (cf. Figure 4). This finding diverges greatly from previous findings in several respects. First, in most studies of refusing offers including invitations (Beebe *et al* 1990; Yang 2008; Chang 2009; Wu *et al* 2012), normally based on DCT data, gratitude serves as an adjunct to refusals rather than accepting the offer. Second, some invitees in Bella's (2011) study, both native and non-native speakers of Greek, expressed gratitude in refusing the offer in the role plays. Third, it is mentioned in passing in previous studies of I&Gs in Chinese such as Mao (1992), Zhu *et al* (2000); Lii-Shih (1994) (cf. 2.4.3.1). Hence, questions about its frequency and how this macro strategy may vary at the lower level remain untapped. Finally, thanking and appreciating was found to accounts for half of the total broken-down components of acceptance responses in Jordanian Arabic (Al-Khatib 2006).

Therefore, the present study bridges an important research gap by characterising a range of (six) acceptance strategies in descending order of frequency and their variation across contexts. It not only provides evidence of the most frequently used strategy but also analyses in detail the typology of expressing gratitude.

The remainder of this subsection discusses my theoretical contribution by showing how (im)politeness was manifested as a discursive phenomenon. To begin with, strategies of accepting SUM offers appeared to be more implicit and ambivalent than their counterparts in modern/contemporary Chinese. Most strikingly, contrary to ‘accept[ing] an invitation/offer *clearly* and *directly*’ and tokens of acceptance or agreement such as ‘okay’ in Taiwan Chinese (Lii-Shih 1994:314; italics added), the intention of strategies such as ‘externally no, internally yes’ and implicit acceptance in my data was neither clear nor direct and hence can only be pinned down in specific contexts, for example by linking it to the accompanying non-verbal behaviour. These responses, if taken out of context, would be interpreted as refusing the offer, as in previous studies such as Chen *et al* (1995) that interpret their data within the modern approach to (im)politeness. Given that this strategy and implicit acceptance combine to account for about one fifth of the acceptance responses, it seems reasonable to assume that *hanxu*, the ‘mode of communication (verbal and nonverbal) that is contained, reserved, implicit and indirect’ (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998:37), was indeed an important style of interaction when executing I&Gs in pre-modern Chinese.

However, as argued by discursive theorists (Eelen 2001; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Locher 2012), the above style of Chinese interaction does not suggest that politeness can be equated with indirectness. This is partly because that explicit acceptance and expressing pleasure were used fairly frequently and the transactions were all smooth and successful. Put differently, an

agreement could be reached in their negotiation of meaning, without engaging in a battle of ritual politeness that is assumed to be essential by the major I&G studies (Gu 1990; Mao 1992/1994; Zhu *et al* 2000). Arguably the participants from the same ‘community of practice’ shared similar norms of (im)politeness or ‘habitus’ emphasised by discursive theorists (Mills 2003/2011; Watts 2003; Terkourafi 2005). Hence, these strategies, albeit explicit and direct, were apparently taken as appropriate or polite. In the light of this new evidence, we can safely conclude that indirectness, to say the least, is not as closely associated with politeness as assumed by B&L (1997).

Moreover, the use of mitigated acceptance, which occurred only in instrumental gift-giving between friends, is especially interesting because of its paradoxical nature and emphasis on the offerer’s hospitality and sincerity. A paradoxical response always started with a reason for the refusal, typically by pointing out the close relationship between participants and was then immediately followed by explicit acceptance with some mitigation devices. This strategy is open to interpretation as polite mainly because by attributing her acceptance to the offerer’s hospitality and sincerity, the positive face of the offerer was boosted. That is, in so doing, his hospitality and sincerity were evaluated as ‘positive attributes’ (Goffman 1967; Spencer-Oatey 2007). At the same time, the recipient’s face was protected by suggesting she accepted the offer not because she was greedy. The strategy thus saves both other-face and self-face, which, as argued by R. Chen (2001), cannot be accounted for by modern theories such as B&L (1987) focusing exclusively on ‘other-oriented politeness’.

Finally, as suggested above, expressing gratitude can be in a sense interpreted as characteristic of accepting I&Gs in *Sanyan*. It can be argued that the notions of ‘balance’ and ‘debt’ are useful in explaining the prevalence of this strategy. The belief that China is a debt-sensitive culture

seems to have a direct bearing on politeness behaviour. Above all, I shall argue briefly that B&L's assertion about the cross-cultural differences in debt-sensitiveness is problematic. It is asserted that for people from non-debt-sensitive cultures such as England offers are not very face-threatening acts whereas they are highly face-threatening for speakers from debt-sensitive cultures such as China and Japan (B&L 1987:247). However, as a cultural insider, this appears to be counterintuitive – quite the opposite seems to be the case. This is because their observation of 'In Japan an offer as small as a glass of ice-water can occasion a tremendous debt...' was misinterpreted as resulting from imposition, which is found to be nearly irrelevant in such a situation (Matsumoto 1988). Rather, the folk notion of *huanli*, 'return politeness' (Gu 1990; Feng 2011) or the principle of balance (Gu 1990; Leech 2014), seems to explain this adequately:

An eighth characteristic of politeness is its tendency to preserve a balance of value between the participants A and B. This is particularly clear in the case of thanks and apologies, two speech acts that may be described as remedial, because they seek to rectify the sense of debt that one participant has to the other. (Leech 2014:8)

Along this line of argument, the debt in accepting I&Gs can be understood as arising from the transfer of the value of the offer from one participant to the other. Consequently, to be polite accepting an offer cannot be taken for granted. Expressing gratitude thus becomes part of the recipient's effort to 'repay the debt in words' (Leech 2014:8). In so doing, at least a symbolic balance sheet is achieved. In the present study, this is perhaps most evident in the finding that the 'value' or 'debt' involved in promising reciprocation and expressing indebtedness was often perceived as higher than that in appreciation tokens. This argument seems to be supported by the finding that this strategy was normally used in affective rather than instrumental I&Gs,

in the latter of which the debt was paid partly through the recipient's compliance with the offerer's request. Moreover, this partly explains the lower frequency of expressing gratitude and higher frequency of mitigated and implicit acceptance at the final stage of SM I&Gs, most of which were instrumental.

To sum up, the findings about acceptance strategies make important contributions to the I&G scholarship and the debate between the two major approaches to (im)politeness. The finding that, at the most general level, acceptance was the preferred/default response to I&Gs stands in stark contrast to nearly all previous empirical findings. Thus, unlike previous assumptions by Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994), Zhu (2000) and Leech (2014), battles of politeness were not at all characteristic of I&Gs in *Sanyan*. Moreover, surprisingly expressing gratitude was the most frequently used acceptance strategy. While B&L's explanation of debt in terms of imposition was found to be very weak for accounting for this politeness phenomenon, this can be well explained by the emic notion of 'returning favour' and/or 'principle of balance'. More importantly, all acceptance strategies, despite differences in the degree of (in)directness and implicitness or explicitness, were all perceived by the participants as contextually-appropriate. Therefore, by questioning B&L's assumed link between politeness and indirectness, this study demonstrates that (im)politeness is 'discursively disputable aspect of social practice' (Locher & Watts 2008:84).

7.4.2 Refusal strategies to I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

This section discusses my findings regarding refusals to I&Gs in two subsections, respectively focusing on refusals in SUM and SM offers. I shall argue that contrary to many assumptions by the modern approach to (im)politeness, my findings are clear evidence that (im)politeness manifested itself in participants' judgement about offers.

7.4.2.1 Refusals in SUM I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

Above all, the contrast between non-occurrence of final refusals in studies such as Mao (1992) and Zhu *et al* (2000) and the frequent use of this strategy in my data constitutes one of the present study's most important contributions to knowledge. Furthermore, it is assumed that for the sake of politeness when invited 'if he cannot or does not want to attend the party, he will probably say 'no' right away, accompanied by an explanation, and perhaps, a 'regretting' facial expression. This will give the inviter a legitimate 'out' either to close the invitational activity or to switch to a different topic" (Mao 1992:82; see more in 6.2.2). However, refusing an offer and hence the emic conceptualisations of (im)politeness in *Sanyan* were far more complex than such an assumption. This is the focus of my discussion in this subsection.

The face-threatening nature of refusing requires that the recipient of an offer phrase her response in a way that is appropriate to the context. Of the four macro refusal strategies identified in my corpus, direct refusal with modification bears the closest resemblance to Mao's speculated strategy (cf. 6.2.2). Nonetheless, this strategy occurred far less frequently than the above assumption. More importantly, as demonstrated in example (58), in addition to the apparently face-threatening component of direct refusal ('no need! No need!'), some refusals of this type contained still another element that appeared to threaten the offerer's (positive) face, i.e. the offer was perceived by the invitee to be wasting his time while he had work to do at home. Moreover, the face threat seemed to be further intensified by the invitee's non-verbal behaviour – he ignored the offerer's insistence of treating him in a pub.

However, contrary to the above interpretations within modern theories of politeness, the invitee was positively perceived by the offerer as ‘such a good man in the world’. According to discursive theorists such as Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Locher & Watts (20005), the above comment is evidence of the offerer’s evaluation of the inviter’s response as appropriate to the interaction. Hence the responses, verbal and non-verbal, were clearly not taken as face-threatening. Instead, they are ‘open to a polite reading’ (Locher & Watts 2008:21). This can only be understood in the larger context. Briefly, the invitation was intended to show the inviter’s gratitude to the invitee, a stranger who found and returned a large sum of money. Further, the invitation occurred after the invitee refused the inviter’s earlier reward. Thus, the invitee’s refusal to the invitation, albeit bald-on-record, should be interpreted as showing his kindness of not taking (any portion of) the money he found, a rule of moral conduct called *Shijin bumei* ‘find money without pocketing it’ in the Chinese culture.

On the other hand, indirect refusals were used most frequently. Moreover, conventionalised refusals were in essence indirect. A wealth of literature has criticised the link between indirectness and politeness (Wierzbicka 1985; Locher 2012). For instance, it has been claimed that indirectness has no place in performing directive speech acts in an eighteenth-century novel (Skewis 2003) and contemporary Chinese (Lee-Wong 1994) (cf. 2.2.1 and 2.4.2.1). However, as suggested by the finding that in requests ‘the two notions (indirectness and politeness) do not represent parallel dimensions; indirectness does *not necessarily* imply politeness’ (Blum-Kulka 1987:131; italics added), indirectness can indeed be linked to politeness sometimes. Félix-Brasdefer (2006:66) also observed that ‘the notions of indirectness and politeness play a crucial role in the negotiation of face during the realisation of speech acts such as requests’. According to these studies, indirect refusal strategies in my corpus, including both conventional and indirect refusals, appear to be interpretable as appropriate or polite

although the use of direct refusals, which were judged by the participants to be appropriate, indeed poses a challenge to B&L's (1987) assumption of the necessary link between indirectness and politeness. This discussion leads to the conclusion that a refusal can be direct or indirect and whether it is (im)polite depends on the participants' judgement.

Finally, the finding that quite a few SUM I&Gs were refused angrily and this strategy appeared to occur roughly as frequently as direct refusals with modification is extremely important as it is empirical evidence of how folk interpretations of (im)politeness may diverge from the theoretical concept(s) of the modern approach to (im)politeness. For instance, according to Leech (2014:90), 'in order to be polite, *S* expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to *O* or associates an unfavourable value with what pertains to *S* (*S*= self, speaker)' and the degree of politeness is partly determined by the 'weightiness of transaction' or 'cost-benefit scale' (in addition to the vertical and horizontal distance) (Leech 2014:11).

However, as argued by Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003), such a modern view of politeness is conceptually biased towards speech production, at the expense of the hearer's active attribution of meanings. Consequently, "what may have been originally interpreted [by the modern approach] as '(im)polite' behaviour is always open to evaluative remodification as the interaction progresses" (Watts 2003:23). This explains why gift-giving such as example (59) was experienced as insulting. Moreover, the offerer was perceived as 'an old fool' because judgement is 'not just concerned with the judgement of utterances but also with the affective responses to individuals' (Mills 2011:48). Put differently, contrary to previous assumptions (Leech 1983; Gu 1990) (cf. 2.2.1) and the above theorisation, this strategy provides evidence

that I&Gs are not (intrinsically) polite. Rather, whether an offer is beneficial to the recipient is a matter of judgement, which varied across individuals and contexts.

7.4.2.2 Refusals in SM I&Gs and perceptions of (im)politeness

In consistence with the preceding (sub)sections, I shall mainly argue for the discursive nature of (im)politeness by making two arguments.

To begin with, the initial and final stages of invitations in Chinese have been respectively labelled as negative-politeness and positive-politeness oriented (Mao 1992; see also Garcia 1999/2005 in Spanish). R. Chen (2001:90) went further, claiming that ‘If I were to study offers in Chinese, I could conclude that Chinese are positively oriented only as far as offers are concerned’. As argued in subsection 7.3.2, it is nearly impossible to label a head act positive or negative politeness oriented, not to mention a certain stage or even all offers in Chinese due to the usual co-occurrence of positive and negative politeness devices. For instance, honorifics, which are widely believed to anoint the addressee’s negative face (but see Matsumoto 1988; Cook 2011), were embedded in most of directive/imperative head acts, a ‘typical’ positive politeness device. On the contrary, a preference head act, a negative politeness strategy in B&L (1987), is sometimes modified with devices such as orthographic emphasis that instantiate positive politeness in the face-saving model. Due to this complex interconnectedness, labelling a response, stage or an offer in terms of positive- or negative-politeness distinction would inevitably caricature the true nature of the speech behaviour. Moreover, this provides further evidence for the inapplicability of B&L’s (1987) distinction in both cross-cultural (Meier 1995a; O’Driscoll 1996; Haugh 2006) and culture-specific studies.

Secondly, a refusal at early stages of I&G interactions is not necessarily ritual as previously assumed. Rather, as argued above, whether a refusal is ritual or (im)polite depends completely on how its meaning is negotiated by participants in a specific setting. This appears particularly clear in some strategies such as explicitly checking the offerer's sincerity in offers to one in desperation. 'Are you joking?' in example (9), for instance, cannot be purely ritual given the high value of the gift and the rather distant relationship between the participants. More importantly, refusals that were used throughout different interactional stages can only be accounted for by interpreting them as 'substantial' (Chen *et al* 1995; Kasper 1995). That is, they were not (mainly) intended to show politeness and any other explanations would be hard to justify why the offer was finally refused.

Then how can we account for this within the current (im)politeness scholarship? The answer is that determining what counts as (im)polite is a matter of judgment about social appropriateness (Eelen 2001; Locher & Watts 2005; Spencer-Oatey 2005/2007). Returning to example (75)), for instance, the gift was refused directly and consistently throughout the whole extended interaction and more importantly the offerer did seem to be offended at all. This was due partly to the knight's presentation of self as one who upheld the principle of justice. Accepting the offer would go against what was expected of a knight. Regarding the offerer, as the context shows, he was niggardly and only hoped to enlist the knight's help without cost. In this sense, he was not sincere as he claimed in making the offer to a stranger. Moreover, the knight finally agreed to help without taking even a penny. Thus, it is not hard to understand why all refusals, albeit direct, were perceived by the offerer as appropriate, which apparently contradicts the modern theories of politeness and previous studies of politeness in Chinese.

7.5 Summary

To sum up, this research is able to make contributions to a better understanding of the two types of offers that have been investigated. My findings on the interactional structure, pre-offer strategies, strategies of I&Gs and responses to these offers differ, to varying degrees, from previously reported findings despite some similarities. To begin with, the finding that most offers in *Sanyan* were sequentially-unmarked may suggest that linguistic ritual refusals and hence ‘battle of politeness’ did not seem to be as important as shown by previous studies based on data from contemporary Chinese. Secondly, findings on pre-offer strategies are equally important. They served multiple functions. For example, many of the solicited offers were accepted without ritual declination as the recipient would be perceived to be hypocritical if she rejected a solicited offer. Some other pre-offers such as getting a precommitment, similar to enquiry about availability, functioned as a strategic face-saving strategy and also a precursor to the negotiation.

Thirdly, this research represents the first attempt to examine the way in which I&Gs were executed in terms of head acts and modifications. My findings could contribute to some of the central debates in politeness research. For instance, execution and directive/imperative head acts were used far more frequently than preference that would be interpreted as the most polite among the three types of head acts by the traditional or ‘indirect’ approach to politeness (c.f. 2.2). Moreover, the finding that positive- and negative -politeness strategies were often intermingled in one offer provides empirical evidence of the inadequacy of this distinction formulated in B&L’s (1987) theory. With respect to I&G scholarship, this seems to show the difficulty with labelling a certain interactional stage of I&Gs as either positive- or negative-politeness oriented.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The present study (re)examined I&Gs in Chinese, with the aim of throwing fresh light on some of the most important assumptions, conceptual bias and claims found in the modern theories of (im)politeness as well as the concepts of modesty and rituality that have been stereotyped as an essential part of politeness in Chinese. These objectives have been achieved by addressing the overall research question of how I&Gs were perceived by participants in relation to (im)politeness in pre-modern Chinese. This question was answered by examining a set of sub-questions, focusing respectively on the interactional structure, strategies of executing and responding to I&Gs, and their variations along three major dimensions. Precisely, 210 I&Gs were identified from Feng Menglong's (1574-1646) three-volume *Sanyan* vernacular stories. Then, in line with the discursive approach to (im)politeness, the corpus was analysed using the pragmaphilological approach to historical pragmatics proposed by Jacobs & Jucker (1995).

8.2 Contributions

Most findings from my quantitative and qualitative analyses came as a surprise in comparison with previous studies. Hence the present study, as argued in the preceding chapter, contributes significantly to our knowledge about I&Gs and has theoretical implications. The major contributions are thus worth highlighting here.

Firstly, in terms of interactional structure, most I&Gs in *Sanyan* were sequentially unmarked. In other words, the majority of the offers terminated after only one conversational exchange, sometimes followed by a comment from the offerer. This finding contrasts sharply with

previous studies such as Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Zhu *et al* (2000) in which I&Gs are characterised as tripartite-structured. The present study thus provides a window into the real dynamics of I&G interaction that take place in extremely diversified contexts. Given the above divergence and representativeness of my data, we may conclude that the ‘battle of politeness’ – the bizarre and ritualised aspect of politeness (Leech (2007/2014) was not the norm in pre-modern Chinese as previously claimed. Moreover, as further noted below, politeness is essentially a matter of judgement and on most occasions negotiations of meaning between participants does not have to engage in an extended interaction.

Secondly, the present study filled an important research gap by carrying out a systematic investigation into the strategies of executing I&Gs in Chinese in terms of pre-offers, head acts and modifications. To begin with, six pre-offer strategies figured prominently in *Sanyan* and all had a fundamental impact on participants’ perceptions of (im)politeness. Some of them such as the presence/absence of pre-offer solicitation determined both interactional elaboration and response strategies. Theoretically, the use of pre-offer strategies challenges the modern conceptualisation of (im)politeness as arising in isolated utterances and its conceptual bias towards the speaker. Rather, what counts as (im)polite is negotiated in contexts and a pre-offer functions as the natural lead to the subsequent negotiations.

Then, my findings about head act superstrategies and modifications have much to offer us to understand I&Gs and theorise about (im)politeness. It has been demonstrated for the first time that three head act superstrategies, i.e. execution, directive and preference, in descending order of frequency were used in my corpus. This indicates that in executing I&Gs indirectness, all other things being equal, is not as closely linked to politeness as assumed by B&L (1987); On

the other hand, the use of preference head acts questions the sweeping claim that indirectness is irrelevant in Chinese politeness (Lee-Wong 1994/1999; Skewis 2003).

The present study also makes contributions by characterising modifications of I&G head acts. Among others, the usual juxtaposition of positive- and negative politeness devices in an offer poses challenges to the applicability of B&L's (1987) positive- and negative-politeness distinction in empirical studies. Moreover, some highly face-threatening modification strategies were perceived by the recipient as appropriate whereas some offers that were interpretable as polite within the modern approach to politeness were actually experienced as offensive. However, these 'incidents' can be adequately accounted for by reconceptualising (im)politeness as participants' judgment about the speech and the speaker.

Thirdly, my findings about responses to I&Gs, in a sense, make the most important contribution of the present study because they provide clear evidence of the recipient's judgement about the offer regardless of head and modification strategies. Unlike previous findings that all I&Gs were accepted after initial refusals, most I&Gs in my corpus were accepted or refused without ritual politeness battles. Moreover, SUM offers, including those modified by self-elevating devices, were more likely to be accepted than being refused. Thus, contrary to the assumption by Gu (1990), Mao (1992/1994) and Zhu *et al* (2000), ritual politeness is not obligatory and self-elevation is not necessarily evaluated negatively in I&Gs. Rather, it is the participant's assessment of the contexts that determines her judgements about (im)politeness.

The significance of my findings concerning refusals lies partly in the fairly frequent use of direct refusal with modifications and angry responses. These results provide counter-evidence to the assumed association between indirectness and (im)politeness and how I&Gs, which are

assumed to be inherently polite (Leech 1983; Gu 1990), are subject to the recipient's evaluations. The finding about the consistent use of direct refusals in extended gift-giving is especially notable since it shows how the apparently face-threatening response was perceived by the offerer to be appropriate.

Finally, unlike previous studies, all the above aspects of I&Gs examined in the present study varied considerably depending on a range of variables, including, among others, type and function of offers, mode of communication, interactional stages in SM offers, and whether the invitation was ostensible or whether the recipient was in desperation. Thus, rather than claiming to be universal (B&L 1987), (im)politeness researchers, as noted by scholars such as Watts (20003) need focus on describing and interpreting such considerable variations in judgements.

8.3 Future research

The remainder of this chapter outlines projects on the future research agenda that can use the present study as a springboard. To begin with, further research needs to explore the issue of how (im)politeness was negotiated through interaction beyond I&Gs in pre-modern Chinese. Ideally, this needs to be a collaborative project partly because such a joint enterprise could more effectively address some of the methodological limitations discussed in subsection 3.4.4. For instance, if co-investigators each locates data independently, the project would elegantly solve the paradox that the second rater's substantial contribution, for example coding I&Gs in one or more volumes of *Sanyan* or even deeper involvement, could jeopardize a doctorate candidate's compliance with the requirement of carrying out independent research. Ultimately, the inter-rater agreement would ensure the validity of the data and hence the reliability of research findings.

Moreover, by extending the scope of research to a wider range of (im)politeness behaviour, rather than focusing on a limited set of speech acts, the project would be able to characterise more accurately and comprehensively the (im)politeness phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, to maximise the representativeness of findings, the new project should extract its data from varied sources including, for example, fictional and non-fictional texts of different genres (e.g. epistolary writings and trial proceedings), rather than relying solely on a single data source.

Secondly, it would be worthwhile for a larger scale project to investigate the diachronic dimension of (im)politeness by addressing so-called ‘hearer-beneficial face satisfying acts’ (cf. footnote 2). This would, of course, include I&Gs. By pinning down how the notion of (im)politeness may have changed over time, the project would not only complement the ongoing synchronic study perfectly but also provide a valuable companion to Pan & Kadar’s (2011) study, which adopts a diachronic perspective but focuses narrowly on ‘hearer-cost face threatening speech acts’ such as requests.

8.4 Concluding remarks

I&Gs in *Sanyan* differ significantly in several ways from previous studies of the same politeness phenomenon. In challenging a set of major assumptions and claims by the modern theories of (im)politeness and studies of Chinese politeness, the present study contributes to a better understanding of I&Gs and (im)politeness theorisations by demonstrating how I&Gs were perceived to be (im)polite by participants based on their judgments of contexts.

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