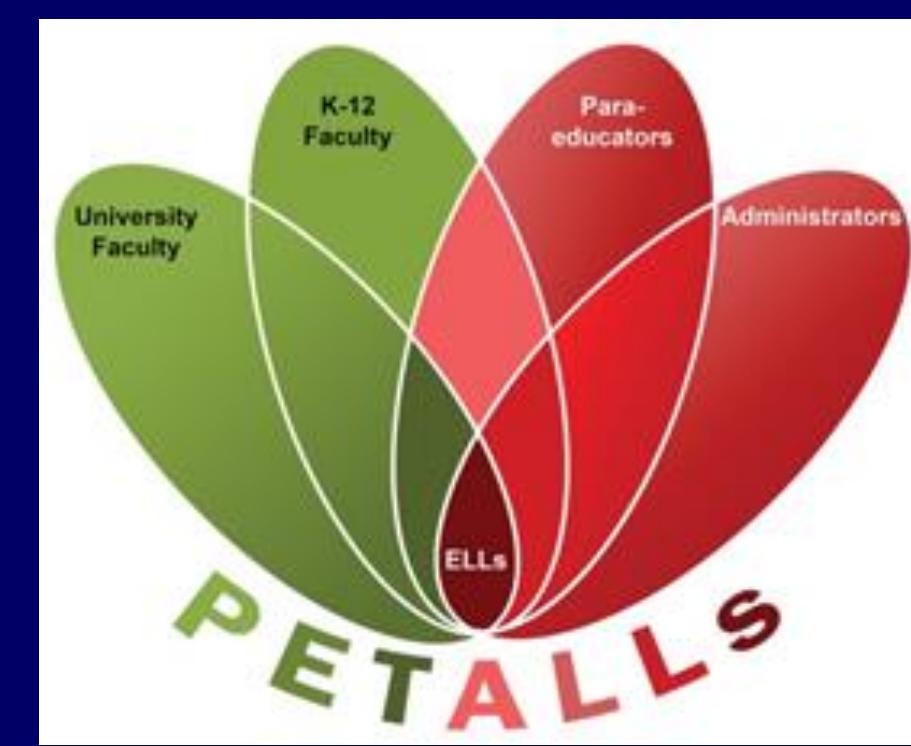


Examination of Compliment Speech Act Responses

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if native Chinese speakers, while attending university in the United States, change their method of compliment responses in their new environment and if so is their language proficiency the defining factor.

A case study was conducted with six Chinese university students from graduate, undergraduate and Intensive English non-credit programs (IEP) at a state university with their time in the United States ranging from less than a year to over two years.

APPROACH or STRATEGY or TOOL

Participant Data Worksheet

Three short answer responses:

Please describe something

- you know how to do very well.
- about your personality.
- that is yours, a possession.

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Four scenarios, each with a compliment given that required a response

- You have just finished cooking your favorite meal for your family and are sitting down to eat.
 - Family member: This is really good. You are a great cook!
- Your teacher sees you in the shopping mall with your parents.
 - Teacher: Your daughter/son has such a great attitude. She/he is always smiling, never misses a homework assignment and helps whenever I ask. You should be very proud!
- You are sitting on the bus and your friend sits down next to you
 - Friend: You got your haircut. I like it.
- You and your girlfriend/boyfriend are going to the movies. You both arrive at the same time and she/he notices you have a cellphone
 - Girlfriend/boyfriend: You got a new cellphone? I love the color!

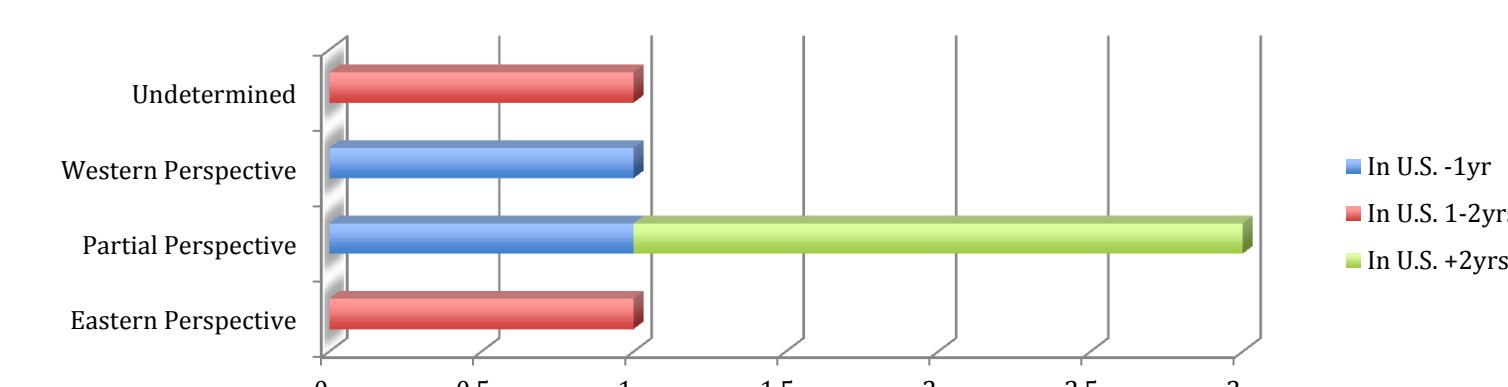
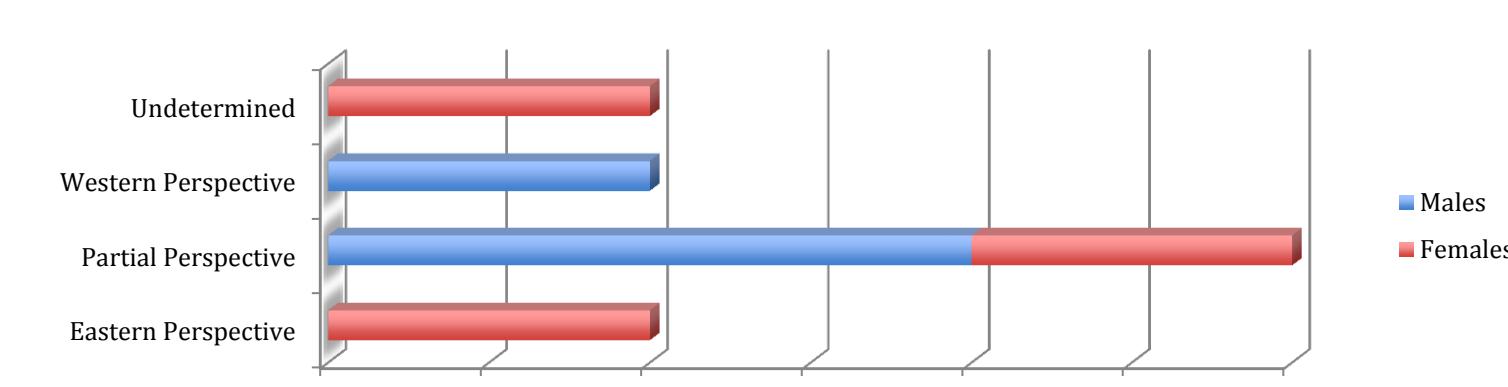
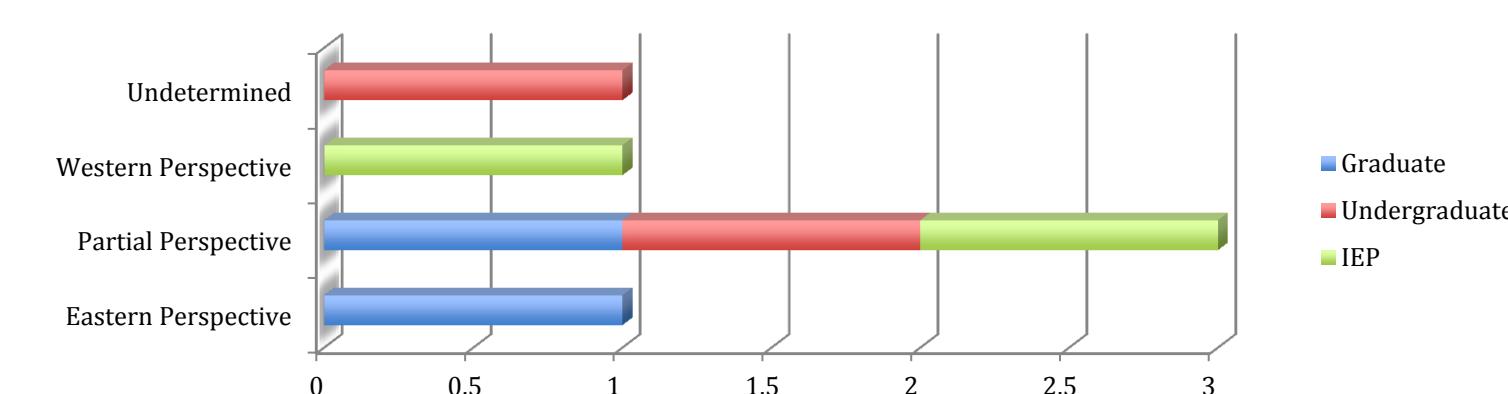
DESCRIPTION

Each participant completed a worksheet and DCT. Program level, time in US, and gender were equally distributed.

Participant	Gender	Program	Months in U.S.	Age
#1	F	Graduate	16	24
#2	F	Graduate	4	23
#3	M	Undergraduate	28	23
#4	F	Undergraduate	16	21
#5	M	IEP	52	21
#6	M	IEP	4	19

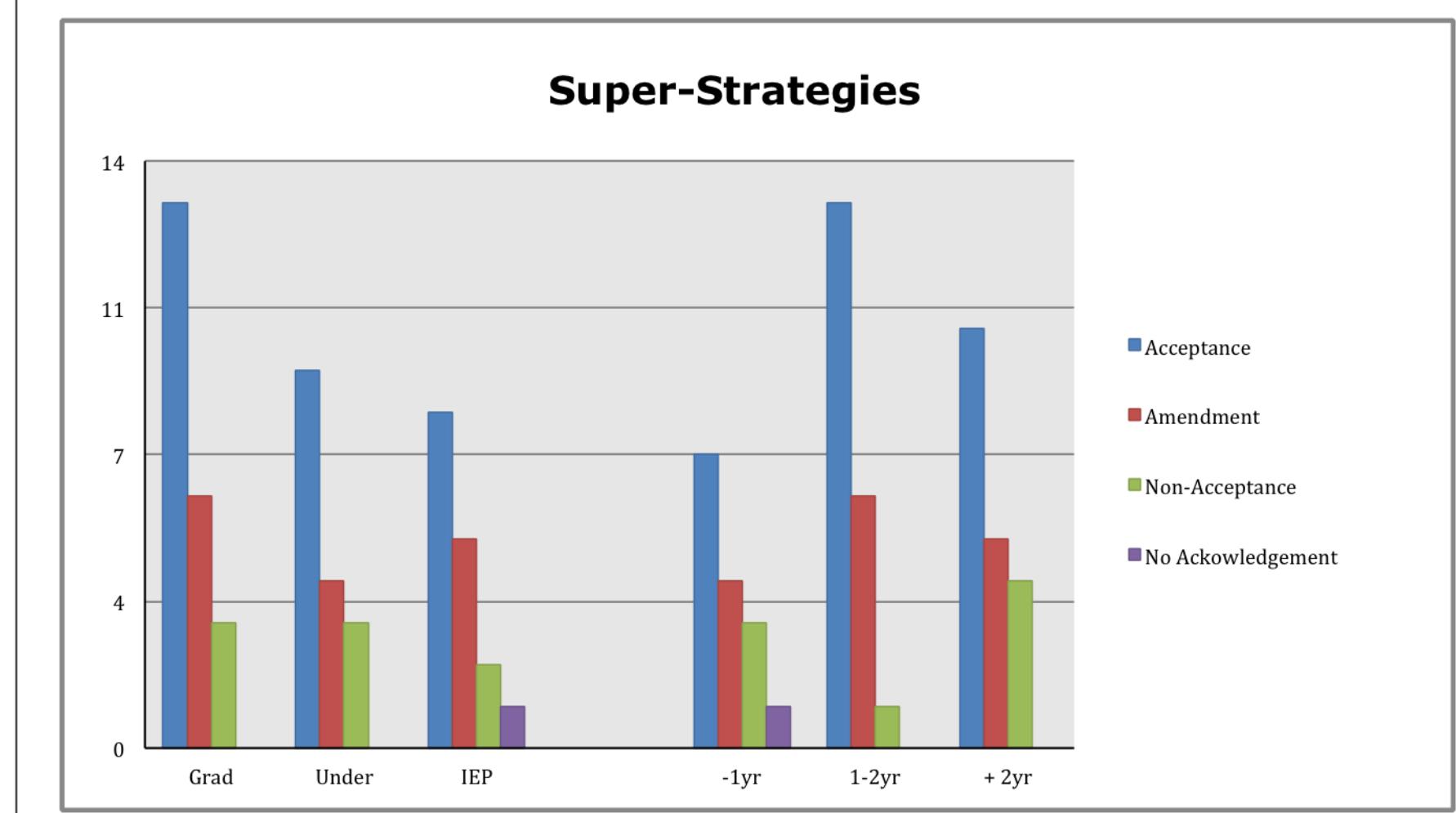
Table 5. Participant personal data

The participant data worksheet responses suggest a shift has begun to a Western compliment response perspective with 50% of participants on the cusp in each category.



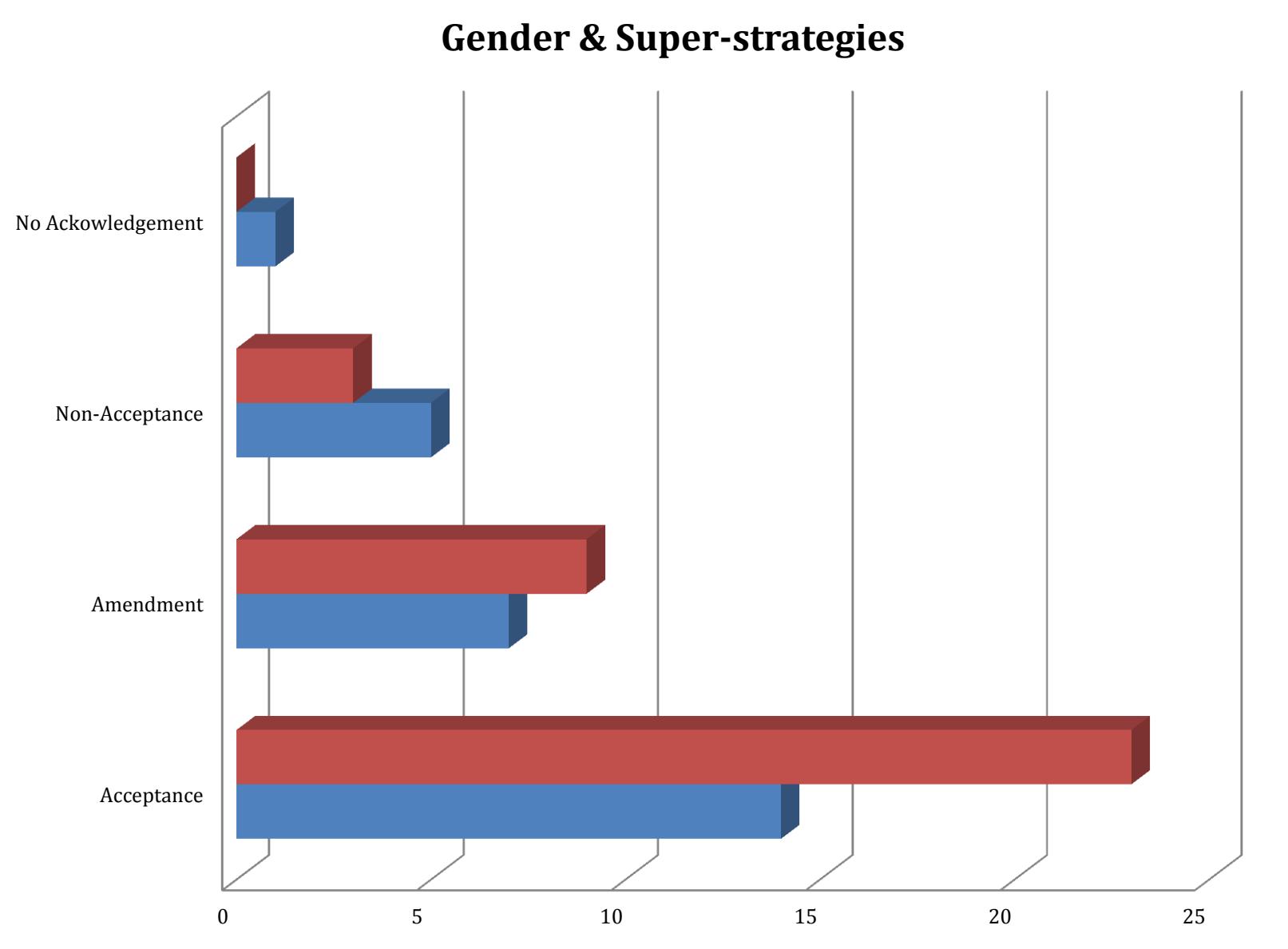
Super-strategies:

Non-Acceptance super-strategies should top the chart as the greatest number of responses but they significantly lag behind *Acceptance* and *Amendment* super-strategies, supporting a shift toward American English speakers' response patterns of utilizing *Acceptance* (accepting and agreeing sub-strategies) super-strategies most of the time.



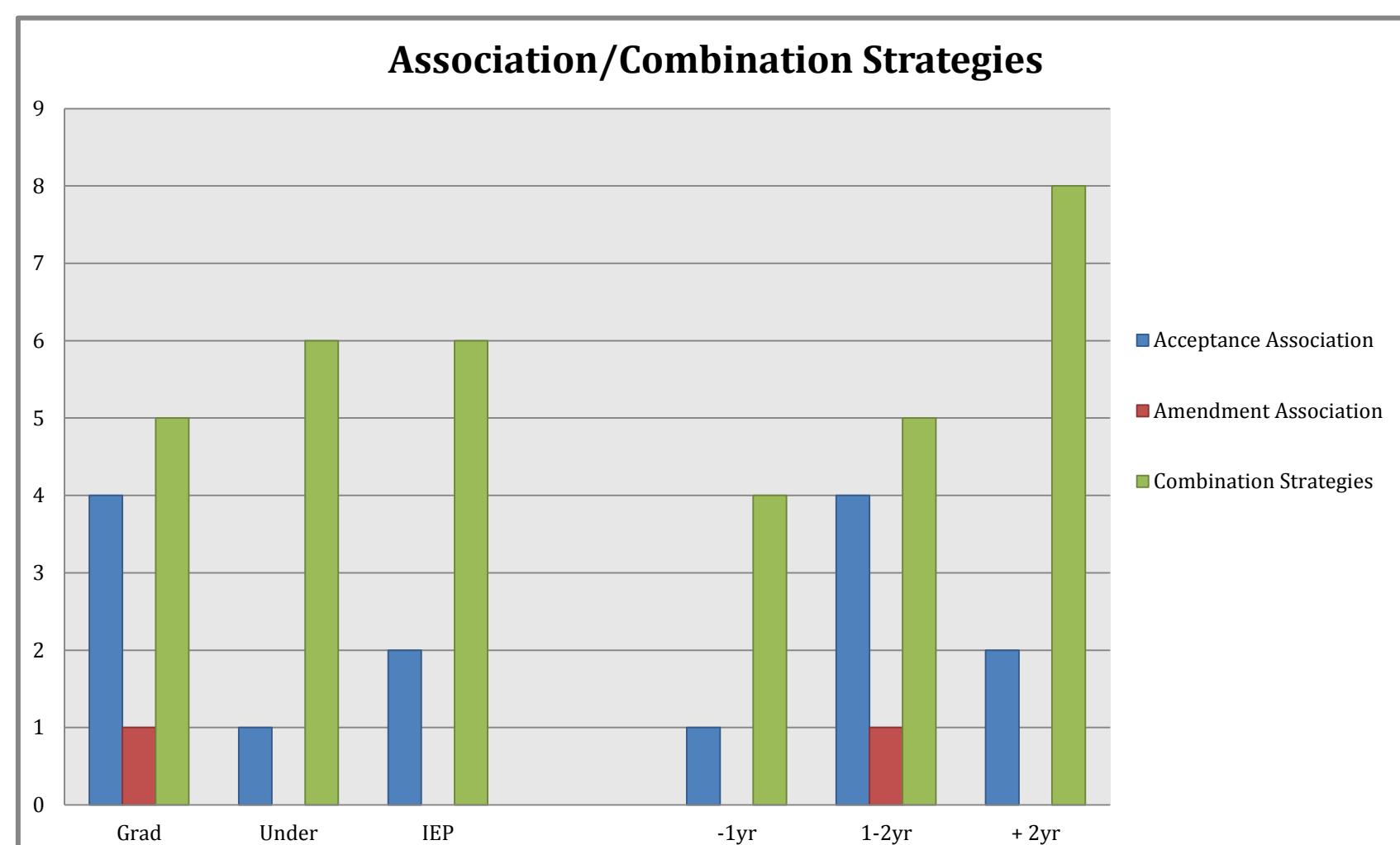
Super-strategies:

Females were more receptive to *Acceptance* and *Amendment* super-strategies, while males clearly dominate *Non-Acceptance* and *No Acknowledgment* super-strategies.



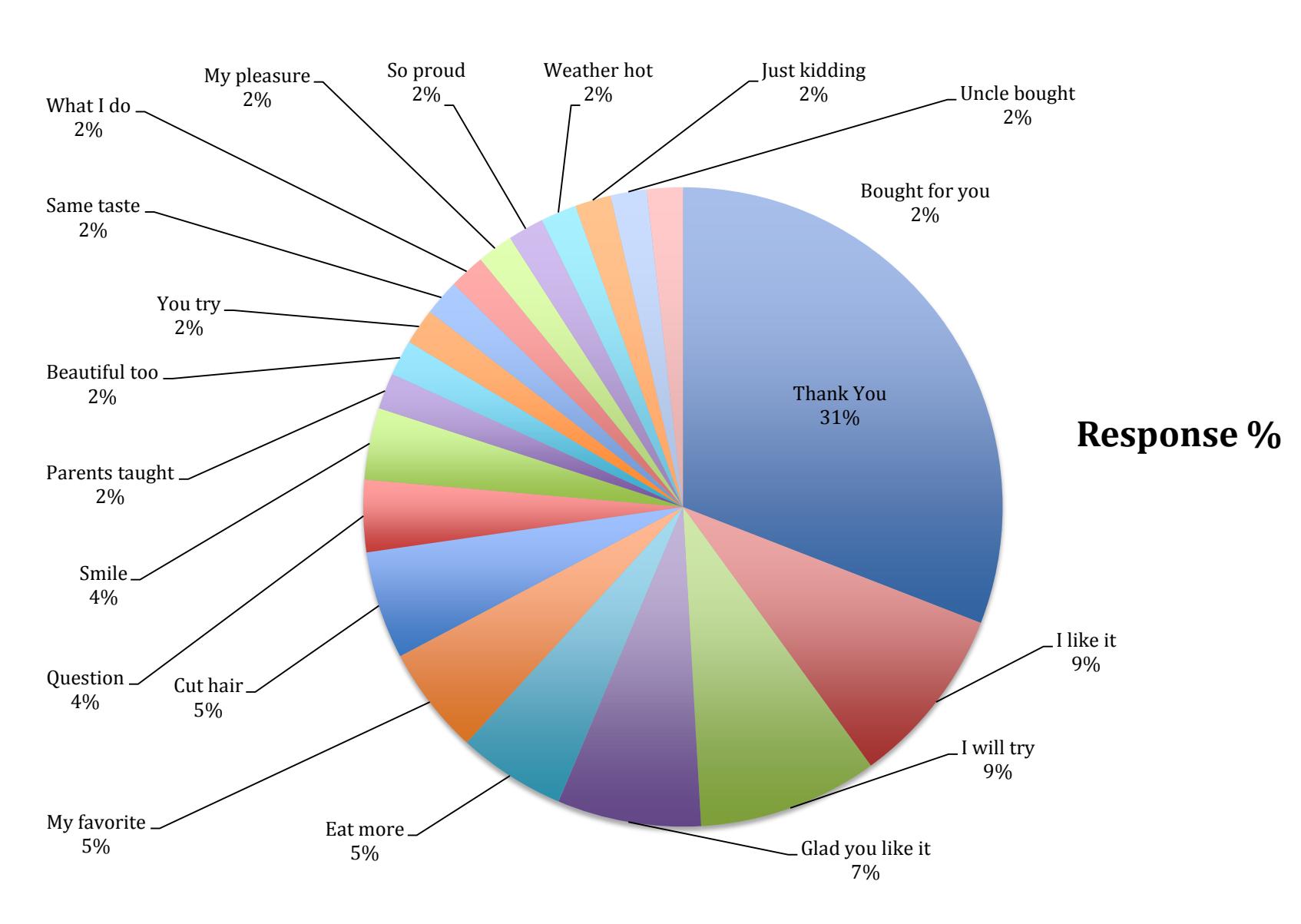
Super-strategies:

Even more impressive are the number of *Association* and *Combination* super-strategies used across the board.



Sub-strategies:

The most frequent was the *Appreciation Token* sub-strategy of 'Thank you' accounting for 17 CRs, followed by the *Agreement* sub-strategy of 'I like it' accounting for 5 CRs, and finally the *Pleasure* sub-strategy of 'I'm glad you like it' accounting for 4 CRs. These three sub-strategies alone represented 48% of the total individual CRs in this analysis.



APPLICATION

For the TESOL instructors, it is an opportunity to establish solidarity between the instructor and student. Instructors must be cognizant of differences that exist from culture to culture and being conscious of the Chinese concept of 'face', or the notion of public and private self-image is crucial. Understanding the difference between the Eastern and Western CR perspectives helps teachers work with students who lack the aptitude to express their thoughts or explain their responses, while recognizing that some students may not wish to abandon their cultural norms. It is vital for the academic future of the students to grasp the deeper meanings and implications that a simple conversational exchange may have and aspire not to mismanage the communicative relationship.

If there is indeed a shift in compliment speech act responses among Chinese university students as the data suggest, and it is universal to the situation, status, gender and compliment type, then the benefits can be seen globally. As the world becomes Americanized in its business practices, Chinese speakers of American English can adapt more quickly to a conversational atmosphere driven by Western standards. Familiarity with Western CRs alleviates stress in employment, educational and social opportunities.

Relevant resources Acknowledgements

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