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*Expressing thanks in Chinese: the influence
of age and personality on speech act
behavior*

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Abstract

Gratitude speech acts play a vital role in communication, as they help maintain social harmony and reflect cultural values. The study of gratitude speech acts is crucial in pragmatics because it reveals how individuals navigate social relationships and express politeness. Understanding how gratitude is expressed in different contexts highlights the underlying social norms and personal traits that influence language use, making it a significant area of research in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. Despite the importance of gratitude, there is limited research on how individual traits, such as age and personality, affect the choice of gratitude strategies. This gap leaves room for a deeper exploration of inter-personal variability in the expression of thanks in the same cultural context. This study aims to examine the similarities and differences in gratitude expressions among Chinese adults of varying age groups (young vs. mature) and personality traits (introverted vs. extroverted), focusing on whether these personal traits affect the use of politeness strategies and adherence to cultural norms. To achieve this end, 80 Chinese participants were recruited and divided into four groups based on their age and personality: 20 introverted young adults; 20 extroverted young adults; 20 introverted mature adults and 20 extroverted mature adults. Through discourse completion tasks, which represented gratitude-eliciting scenarios, thanking speech acts were elicited and analyzed, with particular attention given to the use of direct and indirect strategies, specific gratitude strategies, titles, and (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns. The results show that age influenced the formality of language, with older participants favoring more formal expressions. Personality played a significant role in strategy choice, with extroverts tending toward direct and efficient communication, while introverts favoring more structured and reflective approaches. Across all the groups, there was a general trend toward a low use of indirect strategies, suggesting a preference for efficient communication in modern contexts.

Keywords: Gratitude, Speech acts, Chinese, Personality, Age

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Research motivation

Thanking is a common speech act. Its form and content, however, vary significantly depending on the cultural context in which it is performed, as revealed in cross-cultural studies (Ebsworth & Bodman, 1986). In Chinese culture, thanking is not just a simple “thank you.” It reflects deeper social relationships and reveals the norms and rituals within the culture (Gu, 1990; Chen & Yang, 2010). Indeed, its expression is influenced by various factors, including the speaker’s identity, the listener’s identity, and the social context.

As a Chinese student living and studying in Italy, I have had the opportunity to teach Chinese part-time at a local school. During this experience, I noticed that Italian students often used “thank you” to express gratitude, but also that they struggled to grasp the more complex ways of expressing thanks in Chinese culture. This reflects a common issue in language learning and teaching: students focus on the form of the language but often miss the cultural nuances (Chuang et al., 2013; Li, 2004) and Chinese language teaching emphasizes grammar and vocabulary but often neglects cultural and ritual aspects (Byram, 1997). As globalization continues and China’s influence on international affairs grows, more people are learning Chinese, yet many still face challenges in appropriately expressing gratitude, or other attitudes and communicative functions, due to cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Schwartz, 2020; Morgan & Gulliford, 2021). Understanding how to express gratitude in Chinese is crucial, as it would help learners not only improve their language skills, but also navigate Chinese social norms and avoid communication barriers caused by cultural misunderstandings (Morgan & Gulliford, 2021).

It has been pointed out that, in Asian cultures, people often express gratitude in formal and indirect ways (Floyd et al., 2018). But research on Chinese gratitude shows that these expressions can change based on social status, relationships, and the situation.

For example, how close people are or how formal the occasion is can affect how they show thanks (e.g., Li & Li, 2017). This complexity suggests that gratitude in Chinese culture is not just about politeness but plays a crucial role in maintaining social networks.

For instance, Gu (1990) discusses how in Chinese society, gratitude is expressed differently depending on the hierarchical or symmetrical relationship between interactants and the (in)formality of the situation. In a formal setting, such as between a boss and an employee, a subordinate might use formal and respectful language to express thanks such as the phrase like “谢谢您给予我这个机会” (‘Thank you for giving me this opportunity’). Here, the use of the respectful pronoun “您” (‘you’, a formal honorific pronoun) shows deference to the superior. In contrast, the boss might use less formal language to express thanks to the employee, such as “辛苦了” (‘You’ve worked hard’), which conveys appreciation while safeguarding the speaker’s authority. In contrast, Chen & Yang (2010) highlight that in informal settings, such as among peers or family, the expression of thanks is often less structured and more casual, reflecting the symmetrical relationship between the interactants. For example, friends might say “谢谢你帮我” (‘Thanks for helping me’), using the informal pronoun “你” (‘you’). Additionally, in close relationships, there may even be instances where gratitude is implied or downplayed, as formality can be seen as unnecessary between family members or close friends (Chen, 2019).

Additionally, in my daily observations, I have noticed that in Chinese culture, expressions of gratitude are influenced not only by cultural and social contexts but also by the speaker’s age and personality traits, social variables that are sometimes taken into consideration in pragmatics research on language use. For instance, older adults tend to follow more traditional and formalized methods of expressing thanks, such as writing thank you notes or offering verbal thanks in structured social settings, while younger individuals are more likely to express gratitude through casual, quick interactions, often in digital formats like text messages (Levine & Norenzayan, 2011).

Also, extroverts typically prefer to express their thanks in a more enthusiastic and direct manner, while introverts tend to use more restrained, brief, and formal expressions (Oberlander & Gill, 2004; Zaswita, 2022).

Some studies have looked at how personal differences affect speech acts. For instance, Freitas et al. (2011) found that, as people get older and gain social experience, they tend to express gratitude in more polite and thoughtful ways. However, there is not much research on how age and personality affect how gratitude is expressed in Chinese culture. Studying this further could help us understand how cultural and personal factors shape the way Chinese speakers use language. This knowledge could also help language learners better handle cultural differences in real-life communication.

1.2 Research objectives

This study aims to explore the similarities and differences in the expression of gratitude speech acts among Chinese adults across different age groups and personality traits, so as to determine whether these social factors affect language use. By collecting and analyzing data from people of different age groups (i.e., younger and older adults) and personality traits (i.e., introverts and extroverts), the study seeks to gain an understanding how these variables influence the choice of gratitude strategies and their formulation. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the research on variational pragmatics in the Chinese context, by considering the interplay of a social, directly observable, variable and a personal, less accessible, variable.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis will be structured into five chapters. In this first chapter, I introduce the research motivation and objectives. In the second chapter, I provide a review of the pragmatic literature relevant to politeness in Chinese, especially with regard to gratitude speech acts, and analyze their application and differences across various cultural contexts. In the third chapter, I outline the research method adopted. The

fourth chapter presents the results of the data collected. Finally, in the fifth chapter, I interpret and discuss the findings, draw implications from them, identify the study's limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on politeness, in particular, the cultural notion of gratitude, and with a specific focus on the speech act of thanking in Chinese. Section 2.2 delves into the historical theory and research on politeness in China, while Section 2.3 explores the concept of gratitude in China and other countries. Section 2.4 provides the latest research findings on the speech act of gratitude in various languages, including Chinese. Section 2.5 outlines theories put forward to account for cultural differences, and describes key traits usually ascribed to Chinese culture. Implications from the research considered are drawn in Section 2.6.

I looked for studies on Chinese politeness, Chinese gratitude and the speech act of thanking and Chinese culture in the online catalogue of Padua University (i.e., *GalileoDiscovery*), within the 1973-2023 time span, and using the following word combinations as my search words for relevant titles: *Chin** AND *polit**, *polit** AND *grat**, *polit** AND *thank**, *Chin** AND *grat**, *Chin** AND *thank**, *grat** AND *thank** AND *speech act* AND *thank**, and *speech act* AND *grat**, *cultur** AND *dimension*, *cultur** AND *Chin**, *dimension* AND *Chin**.

2.2 Chinese etiquette

Chinese etiquette has a long history. It originated before the Xia Dynasty (i.e., before the 21st century BC) and became popular during the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou dynasties (21st century BC to 771 BC). It can be traced back to ancient Confucianism, which placed great emphasis on the harmonious coexistence of people and the maintenance of social order. This was especially relevant in a slave society, where social classes were stratified. With the development of modern society, Chinese etiquette has also evolved, with some traditional etiquette norms gradually fading under the influence of Western culture, but with others, like self-deprecation and respecting others, still remaining at the core of Chinese politeness. Besides

maintaining social order and consolidating colonial rule and authority as a code of conduct, Chinese etiquette is also a cultural tradition and social norm that regulates behavior, aiming to cultivate personal moral character.

2.2.1 Research on Chinese politeness

The earliest books on etiquette in ancient China were compiled in the Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC to 771 BC) by Zhougong “周易” (‘Zhou Rites’), “仪礼” (‘Rituals’), and “礼记” (‘Book of Rites’). Later generations called these three books “礼经” (‘The Scripture of Rites’), which became the political and legal system and behavioral norms of a Chinese society based on slavery. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (771 BC to 221 BC), Confucianism, that is, the teachings of philosopher Confucius, contributed to developing Chinese etiquette. Confucius proposed the concept of “仁” (‘Humanity’) based on “礼记” (‘Book of Rites’). He believed that “不学礼，无以立”，that is, that ‘without learning etiquette, there will be no place to stand’. Confucius asked people to use the norms of etiquette to restrain their behavior, and he emphasized that people should care for, and respect, one another, and also learn to be grateful to life for their blessings.

During the 1901-1949 period, China experienced a semi-colonial and semi-feudal social phase. However, gradually, after the Chinese Revolution of 1911, Western etiquette had a profound impact on China’s traditional etiquette system, which abandoned some of the old norms, and, at the same time, adapted western ideas such as those of freedom and equality, aiming at social rights for all citizens.

Etiquette, which refers to a set of rules or guidelines that dictate the expected behavior in a given situation, is part of politeness, the behavior for demonstrating good manners in social interactions. In modern China, many scholars have conducted linguistic research on politeness. Gu (1992) traced its history from the social hierarchy and slavery system of the Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC to 771 BC). The author identified four elements of politeness that align with China’s national

conditions: respect (self-respect and appreciation of others), modesty (devaluing oneself and respecting others), enthusiasm (sympathy, concern, hospitality), and gentleness (proper and generous conversation and behavior). Drawing on Leech's Politeness Maxims (1983), which are not fully suitable to the Chinese context, the author put forward five Chinese politeness principles that align with China's national conditions and characteristics, namely, the principle of self-deprecation, the principle of address, the principle of elegance, the principle of agreement, and the principle of attainment, speech, and conduct. The principle of self-deprecation comprises depreciating oneself, respecting others, and treating them as people with higher rights than oneself. The principle of address refers to how people are addressed based on the social relationships in interpersonal interactions. The principle of elegance involves using elegant words and avoiding profanity. The principle of agreement consists in paying attention to the other person's face, trying to maintain harmony with them, and trying to satisfy the desires of both parties. The principle of attainment, speech, and conduct has to do with maximizing the interests of others and minimizing the efforts of others in conversations.

Xu (1992) presented an understanding of the phenomenon of politeness on the basis of the principle that macroscopic phenomena are the result of the integration of relationships between subsystems. He suggested that politeness involves promoting the relationship between oneself, the addressee, and a third party, following these maxims: Pay attention to your own tone and attitude; Respect the other party; and Show consideration for whether your behavior will affect the third party. Politeness strategies include Positive strategies, that is, saying moderately modest, respectful or polite words, and Negative strategies, that is, saying moderately neutral words.

Another Chinese scholar who has worked on politeness is Qian (1997). He proposed 11 politeness strategies that are tailored to Chinese culture: expressing gratitude and declining compliments; complimenting by first criticizing, treating the other party as a third party; treating oneself as a third party; conveying one's views through the mouth

of a third party; applying a variety of speech acts with polite strategies; utilizing authority, evasion and superficial agreement while denying the facts; and responding with words instead of actions. The author stated that the goal of these strategies is to achieve a more comprehensive view of communication.

Chen X. R. (2019) examined the “family culture” in Chinese Politeness by analyzing classic dialogues in the Chinese novels *Morning in Shanghai*, *Mountain Villagers in Cities*, *Football Youth Camp*, and *Puzzles, Knowledge and Life*. The author suggested that China is a collectivist country based on the organizational system of labor or work unit, and that it has a “family culture” that makes society more united and complete. The author presents four maxims relevant to Chinese culture: the “Maxim of Addressing Closeness based on 一家亲 (‘family closeness’),” the “Maxim of Attitudinal Warmth based on 一家亲 (‘family closeness’),” the “Maxim of Familial Deference based on 家族 (‘family clan’),” and the “Maxim of Interactional Harmony based on 和为贵 (‘harmony is the most precious’).” The author observes how Chinese people believe that family members will “tolerate” each other and do not need to pay special attention to politeness while interacting with each other. Therefore, when talking to people who are not related to each other, communications participants treat each other as pseudo-family members (e.g., by calling them relatives), and express “politeness” and “warmth” by saying “不用客气” (‘don’t stand on ceremonies’). The author emphasizes that, according to the “Maxim of Addressing Closeness”, it is polite to show warmth and concern for people outside one’s family’s social circle. At the same time, Chinese people tend to comply with requests, suggestions and the like, from friends, colleagues, relatives, and family members as much as possible to maintain harmony. According to the “Maxim of Attitudinal Warmth”, it is polite to show warmth to relatives, friends, and other acquaintances and, in turn, to express gratitude for the hospitality one has received. Also, using kinship terms to show respect triggers the “family” based norm of familial respect, which indicates that it is courteous to intentionally demean oneself, exalt others, or both, in the family. Finally, the author suggests that “family culture” is an integral part of

polite behavior in China, although foreigners may easily misunderstand it as impolite.

Lee (2020) explored the cultural basis of polite speech in modern Chinese, which is derived primarily from Confucian teachings. Chinese culture traditionally places great emphasis on rites and decorum, and showing politeness and respect by elevating others or disparaging oneself is a common linguistic practice in line with social expectations. The author noted that the Chinese have developed quite a complex vocabulary for expressing politeness and deference in formal discourse and writing, which Chinese people learn in school at a young age and reflects the importance of propriety and protocol in Chinese society. Therefore, honorifics (i.e., terms that elevate the other party) and humble terms (i.e., derogatory terms about oneself) are the two major resources to this effect. They are regularly employed in formal verbal communication and correspondence. For example, if you call another person's mother “令堂”¹ ('your mother+honorific'), it means that she has a higher status than you. Instead, if you call her “你妈” ('your mother'), it suggests that their status is not higher than yours. Finally, to show modesty, you should refer to your mother as “家母”, which means 'the mother at home'. The author pointed out that the use of polite language not only demonstrates good breeding, but also shows sophisticated linguistic competence. The author also observed that, although polite speech has been simplified and refined in present-day Chinese, it can be bewildering and perplexing to learners, who need to familiarize themselves with the Chinese cultural background to achieve successful intercultural communication.

Suo (2001) proposed a universal principle that can account for the social needs covered by Leech's "Politeness Principle" and Grice's "Cooperative Principle", which he called the "Tact principle." The Tact principle requires that the speaker should consider their own identity (including age, gender, occupation), the identity of the addressee and the context of interaction (including language and social environment)

¹ “令堂” is a Chinese word used as an honorific title for someone else's mother. “令” is used as a respectful word and is used to praise the addressee.

to determine: how to address the other party, which words to use, and which topics to discuss so as to minimize harm to others and maximize benefits to others. The Tact principle includes the maxims of politeness, humor, and restraint. The politeness maxim includes appropriate communication strategies to show respect towards the interlocutor, thus achieving communicative effectiveness. The maxim of humor consists in expressing funny aphorisms to entertain the target audience. The maxim of restraint involves not reprimanding others outright, but rather expressing dissatisfaction or blame towards others in a restrained manner.

Goh and Lii (2017) carried out an empirical study on the manifestations of Chinese politeness. They conducted interviews and group discussions with 32 MA students studying Business Administration in Taiwan on how to address superiors in the workplace and whether to use honorifics. The participants were divided into two groups. The authors presented all participants with hypothetical scenarios of supervisor-subordinate interactions in the workplace, and asked participants to respond to them as they presumably would in real life. The participants with lower positions said they needed to address their superiors with titles and surnames, but rarely used honorifics. The participants with higher positions believed the decision had to be based on the situation. Thus, they reported that if the supervisor's level was not very different from their own, or if the supervisor was of similar age, and if they were in informal situations, they would use the everyday second-person address “你” (‘you’). Instead, in formal situations or when a third person was present, they would show consideration for the leader's face and use the honorific “您” (‘you’+honorific). Most participants also stated that, in China, the frequency of use of honorifics needs to be appropriate, since an excessive use of honorifics can create a sense of alienation and quickly lead to misunderstandings in communication. Moreover, the authors suggested that, nowadays, more young leaders now prefer to interact with their subordinates in a friendly manner, freeing their subordinates from the use of honorifics. However, from a polite perspective, low-level employees should learn to observe and use their judgment to decide whether to use honorifics in conversations.

At the same time, all participants stated that politeness is an essential requirement in Chinese society. The author concluded that in China's official environment, social hierarchy still rules in some ways. That is, it is the person in power who decides how others have to address and interact with him/her while subordinates have to comply with the superior's request. However, it is important to maintain basic, rather than excessive, politeness.

2.2.2 Conclusion

Confucianism has played a significant role in China's culture for over five thousand years. It is not focused on developing skills for making a living, but on promoting good moral character and conscience. Therefore, etiquette, as people's moral code of conduct, has always been emphasized by Confucianism. There are nine core ideas in Confucianism: “仁” (‘Humanity’), “义” (‘Righteousness’), “礼” (‘Etiquette’), “智” (‘Knowledge’), “信” (‘Integrity’), “恕” (‘Tolerance’), “忠” (‘Loyalty’), “孝” (‘Filial piety’), “悌” (‘Fraternal duty’). Among them, “仁” (‘Humanity’), “义” (‘Righteousness’), “忠” (‘Loyalty’) and “孝” (‘Filial piety’) are the most important. Modern Chinese scholars have extensively studied the concept of politeness to align it with their cultural values of respect, humility, enthusiasm, and gentleness. Through empirical research, the Chinese “family culture” has been explored in depth, emphasizing the importance of respect in social interactions, highlighting the significance of solid social hierarchies, and illustrating how politeness can be conveyed through honorifics and modesty. In essence, Chinese etiquette is constantly evolving, merging traditional values with modern adaptations and reflecting the complexity of a dynamic and culturally rich society.

2.3 The Chinese culture of gratitude

The Confucian culture has been an integral part of Chinese society for centuries, and its influence on the people is hard to overstate. Among the many values this culture promotes, gratitude stands out as fundamental. Gratitude is expressed in all aspects of life and goes beyond the experience of a positive reactive attitude towards a

benefactor. Gratitude is the basis for practicing all norms, that is, a quality everyone must possess. In the nine core ideas of Confucianism, both “仁” (‘Humanity’) and “孝” (‘Filial piety’) are expressions of gratitude. For instance, through loyalty, people repay the kindness of monarchs, while filial piety is used to honor parents who gave us life. Similarly, righteousness is used to acknowledge the companionship of friends.

In modern times, people divide gratitude into four types according to the objects of gratitude. The first type is gratitude to nature, country, and society, the second is gratitude to ancestors, the third is gratitude to parents, and the fourth is gratitude in interpersonal relationships. This means that, in China, gratitude does not just appear when reacting to someone that does you a favor; rather, it means having a grateful attitude for everything we have, and which may involve making free contributions to society. Consequently, gratitude becomes a way of life expressed in many ways, including art, literature, and music. Today, the spirit of gratitude remains an essential part of Chinese culture, a reminder of the importance of appreciating the good things in life.

2.3.1 Chinese gratitude

Given that gratitude and reciprocation are two significant moral values in China, and indeed central aspects of social upbringing, it is not surprising that scholars have described their nature and role in interpersonal relationships.

Yang (2009) argued that individuals cannot exist in isolation, but only survive within society and through interpersonal interactions. As such, it is inevitable for people to receive gifts, help, and support from other individuals or society or the environment around them in their daily lives. Therefore, people should be grateful for the favors and assistance provided to them by society, others, and nature. The author uses poems and stories from the Chinese tradition (e.g., “Sheep have the kindness to kneel down to breastfeed, and crows have the kindness to feedback”, i.e., ‘Lambs will kneel down to express gratitude to their mothers when drinking milk, and crows will forage for

their parents when they grow up’) to explain the ancient Chinese gratitude records. The author emphasizes that Chinese students should become better individuals by manifesting gratitude to parents, the motherland, teachers, society and nature, learning to be grateful under favorable and correct circumstances.

Wang (2014) highlighted the importance of expressing gratitude towards parents and ancestors in mainstream education promoted by the upper aristocratic class in ancient China, but also in contemporary family education. In a study conducted by the author, 1,200 questionnaires were sent out to students from eight universities in Guangzhou to assess whether they expressed gratitude towards their parents and, if so, how they showed it. The results showed that most students were grateful to their parents, and that their families taught them to be grateful from an early age. However, it was observed that college students relied excessively on their parents and believed that studying hard was the best way to show their gratitude. The author noted that Chinese parents tend to impose their ideas on their children without communicating with them on an equal footing, and that this approach often results in their children being unable to express their gratitude using their own ideas. To address this issue, the author suggested that schools should guide college students to learn how to express gratitude effectively, and encourage parents to become positive role models for their children by strengthening their education.

Yang and Li (2008) discussed the Qingming Festival, which holds immense importance in Chinese culture. Often called the “Thanksgiving Day” of China, it provides an occasion for people to remember and pay respect to their loved ones who have passed away. This festival also serves as an opportunity for the Chinese to: honor the revolutionary martyrs, clean the graves of their deceased relatives, express their gratitude for the sacrifices made by those who fought for peace and the care given to them by their loved ones, take walks in nature to appreciate its beauty and give thanks for its gifts, and carry out ancestor worship activities to teach the younger generation about the significance of gratitude. The author observes that the customs and

traditions associated with the Qingming Festival can help young people cultivate a sense of gratitude from an early age, which can positively impact their lives and society as a whole.

Yang and Li (2010) explored the importance of gratitude education for college students, following the Chinese government's guidelines. Such education serves to enhance the moral development, and foster the social adaptability of college students, and also develop a healthier mindset and a stronger sense of responsibility, which are crucial for future success, especially as future leaders. Therefore, incorporating gratitude education into the final stage of college education is considered vital prior to entering society.

Dai (2013) provided an insightful summary of the famous Moving China TV program, which showcased successful cases of social gratitude education in China. The author pointed out that the primary focus is to instill in individuals the virtues of gratitude and filial piety towards their parents, remaining kind, and making valuable contributions to the country and society. Expressing gratitude towards all the individuals who contribute to one's life, even in small ways, helps people to appreciate and acknowledge others' efforts, leading to a more positive and harmonious society.

2.3.2 Research on Chinese gratitude

Theoretical discussions on the essence and role of gratitude in Chinese society have been complemented by empirical research on manifestations of gratitude in China.

Li and Li (2018) surveyed college students at a university in Guangzhou to investigate their level of gratitude awareness with relevance to four contextual factors: Homeplace, Homeplace and Family Members, Gender and Homeplace, and Grades. The authors made several observations: 1) students from rural areas were found to have a lower level of awareness regarding gratitude than urban students; 2) urban

students reported higher life satisfaction than their rural counterparts, suggesting that urban lifestyles promote greater happiness and gratitude; 3) urban students expressed a stronger desire to thank their “parents” than rural students; 4) urban students showed higher levels of gratitude towards their parents than rural students, especially those having siblings; 5) girls were found to be more grateful to their alma mater than boys, and 6) urban students expressed more gratitude towards their alma mater than rural students. In summary, the authors noted that males appeared to be more rational but careless, while females more sensitive and considerate; they also observed that urban students, who typically enjoy better living conditions than their rural counterparts, were found to have a more optimistic worldview and to be more grateful than rural students.

Chen W. (2019) conducted a comprehensive questionnaire survey among college students from five universities in Chongqing to gain an understanding of their recognition of the culture of “filial piety” in gratitude. Furthermore, the author interviewed some participants to delve deeper into the students’ perspectives. The author revealed that most college students (especially those majoring in literature and history and senior ones) clearly understand filial piety, consider it a vital aspect of Chinese culture, and actively practice it. However, a minority of students lack a rational understanding of filial piety and tend to be rebellious and stubborn. The author also emphasized that college students’ ability to distinguish right from wrong is limited, and that their self-control and self-discipline are not yet fully developed. Therefore, it is imperative for colleges and universities to provide proper guidance and strengthen gratitude education for their students.

Liu et al. (2023) studied the impact of gratitude on family intimacy by administering a questionnaire to 1,027 Chinese college students. The authors found that gratitude can regulate family intimacy, make the family harmonious, and alleviate social anxiety. The authors also found that students with a high level of gratitude have higher family intimacy and a lower probability of depression than students with a low level of

gratitude.

Cao (2019) conducted a survey on the understanding and perception of gratitude among 472 Chongqing college students. The author observed that most Chinese college students possessed a strong sense of social responsibility and were eager to contribute to society; that they willingly volunteered to support the country during times of need and to take active measures to protect the environment; and that they were also generous in donating to disaster areas, showcasing their gratitude towards the nation. However, it also appeared that almost half of the students only befriended people who could favor their interests. Additionally, when their friends needed assistance, they would first consider whether it would infringe on their own interests before offering help. Furthermore, the study revealed that half of the students believed that their university's culture of gratitude was weak and primarily based on theoretical indoctrination. The author observed that students' gratitude to society comes from the state's propaganda, so the sense of social gratitude is strong. However, it was also pointed out that a lack of emphasis on gratitude education in schools leads to cognitive deviations in college students' gratitude for friendship.

2.3.3 Research on gratitude in other cultures

Empirical investigations of gratitude have been carried out in a number of countries.

Morgan et al. (2021) conducted a study investigating the views and experiences of gratitude among adolescents and adults in Australia and the United Kingdom. The study found that British people emphasized gratitude as a way to alleviate guilt, while Australians tended to express gratitude out of appreciation. Furthermore, the author found that teenagers in both countries expressed gratitude more often than adults under similar circumstances. In general, Australian teenagers were more likely to express gratitude than British teenagers. Despite sharing similar social backgrounds, the authors highlighted that there are cultural differences in how gratitude is understood in the UK and Australia, suggesting that these differences may stem from

different educational environments and socialization practices. The authors also emphasized the need for a greater cross-cultural understanding of gratitude, as even in cultures that share similar backgrounds, there may be variations in the significance and reasons for expressing gratitude.

Floyd et al. (2018) collected and analyzed the data from the informal, everyday language use of people in social interactions by placing unattended cameras in home and community settings, with the aim of understanding cultural differences and practices of gratitude in different cultures. The authors found that people were often more likely to use reciprocal behaviors to show appreciation than explicit verbal thanks; that English and Italian speakers expressed verbal thanks more frequently than speakers of non-Western languages; and that, in Lao culture, verbal expressions of gratitude were uncommon and could also be considered weird. According to the authors, it is incorrect for Western researchers to think that the experience of Western people is a broad human experience.

Bono et al. (2017) conducted a four-year longitudinal study to explore how the development of gratitude affects anti-social (e.g., hostile, aggressive) behavior in adolescents. The authors found that, as adolescents developed gratitude, their anti-social behaviors decreased. According to the authors, gratitude comes from interpersonal interactions among adolescents, such as receiving compliments from classmates, and receiving more understanding and recognition from their parents. The authors emphasized that gratitude is a moral emotion that not only reduces the antisociality of adolescents, but also helps them make positive contributions to society and improve overall well-being.

Elwood (2008) compared English expressions of gratitude in Irish and New Zealand corpus data. The authors found that the word “thanks” was used twice as often in spoken language data in Ireland as in New Zealand, and conversely, twice as often in writing in New Zealand as in Ireland. The authors indicated that, when expressing

gratitude, Irish speakers tended to state the name or title of their benefactor in spoken interaction, whereas New Zealand speakers did the same in writing.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Gratitude is highly valued in China, where it is relevant to nature, society, the country, one's family, ancestors who sacrificed themselves for future generations, and those who offer assistance. The Chinese government places great importance on encouraging gratitude education for people of all ages, utilizing various methods. The festival of honoring ancestors (similar to the Day of the Dead in the West) is celebrated as a form of Thanksgiving, encouraging people to remain grateful. Gratitude education is also mandatory in Chinese schools. In contrast, Western countries, where individualism is the norm, gratitude is associated with tangible favors such as friend's help and parental care. These cultural differences result in the Chinese being more inclined to express connected gratitude, while Westerners tend to display concrete gratitude.

2.4 The speech act of thanking

Expressing gratitude is an essential speech act steeped in profound cultural significance and traditional values, which involves conveying appreciation for a past action performed by another party, typically the addressee. This speech act is socially important, as it enables individuals to restore the balance of their moral debts and credits: by acknowledging favors received and expressing appreciation, beneficiaries verbally reciprocate the benefits received, thereby fostering a harmonious society. Although we may think of the phrase "thank you" as a standard, routinized formula for conveying gratitude, gratitude can actually be conveyed in a variety of ways. That is, the content, strategies and form of thanking speech acts can vary widely depending on the situational and cultural context in which gratitude is expressed. In the following sections, I highlight findings from the literature on the speech of gratitude in Chinese and other languages.

2.4.1 Studies on the speech act of gratitude in Chinese as an L1 and an L2

Here, I report the findings of research conducted over the last 20 years on the speech act of thanking in Chinese as an L1 and an L2.

Xie and Liu (2020) discussed the similarities and differences between expressions of gratitude, and responses to gratitude, in Chinese and English, observing how manifestations of gratitude serve not only to express gratitude, but also to promote communication between people. The authors identified the following differences in gratitude expression between Chinese and English: 1) in formal written contexts, the Chinese use “thank you”, while the English use “I appreciate your help”; 2) the Chinese usually express gratitude indirectly, while English speakers are likely to express gratitude directly; 3) The English word “thank you” can be used in almost all situations, while the Chinese add degree adverbs to the word for ‘thank you’ to signal different degrees of gratitude (for example: “十分”, ‘quite,’ “非常”, ‘very’ et); 4) “Thank you” in English can be said to anyone, while in Chinese, different expressions of gratitude are used with different addressees, according to their age and status (e.g., “辛苦了”, ‘Thank you for your hard work’; 5) When Chinese people respond to gifts and blessings, they use words of appreciation (e.g., “您有心了,” ‘you understand my needs very seriously’), while in English, a simple “thank you” will suffice. Moreover, when responding to gratitude, the English directly say “You are welcome,” while the Chinese respond in a way that belittles themselves (e.g., “谬赞”, ‘I do not deserve such praise’). The authors also observed that English “Thank you” is not only used for gratitude, but also to express other communicative functions such as apologies, rejections, sarcasm, while, in such cases, Chinese people usually say “thank you” first and then explain the reason for their true communicative intention. In summary, the authors noticed that the Chinese express gratitude in complex and diverse forms, while English speakers are generally relatively concise.

Liang and Kiang (2018) conducted a study on gratitude expressions among Chinese children and adolescents aged 7 to 14. The authors found that older Chinese children

were more likely to express connected gratitude (being able to situationally judge appropriate ways of being grateful, e.g., considering the benefactor's feelings and wishes), while all the expressions of gratitude remained stable across ages. They also observed that older children were less likely to express their gratitude by tangibly reciprocating benefits received (e.g., buying things for others) compared to younger children. Furthermore, children who wished to be harmonious were more likely to express connected gratitude, while children with hedonistic aspirations tended to express specific gratitude. The authors noted that Chinese parents tend to cultivate their children's strong agency and self-reliance, which may contribute to the manifestation of connected gratitude among Chinese children. Overall, the study suggests that Chinese children's gratitude is influenced by cultural values and parental socialization goals.

Yin (2014) analyzed gratitude expressions found in the texts and exercises in the New Practical Chinese Textbook, classifying them into direct and indirect. Direct expressions of gratitude were usually accompanied by words of thanks, such as “谢谢” (‘thank you’), which are straightforward and explicit. Indirect expressions of gratitude, on the other hand, were conveyed through other means, such as apologies and other polite gestures. The author pointed out that expressions of gratitude have several pragmatic functions, including expressing appreciation, politely refusing offers, and conveying sarcasm. The author observed that, in ancient China, the phrase “谢绝” (‘thanks, but I refuse’) was commonly used to express gratitude while declining an offer, but he also revealed that words that literally encode thanks could serve to express sarcasm, that is, to convey complaints, which can embarrass the other party. Furthermore, the author conducted interviews with international students from various countries who were studying in China to investigate their understanding and use of Chinese expressions of gratitude. The author found that most international students tended to use direct expressions of gratitude and rarely used more complex expressions. This lack of knowledge about Chinese expressions of gratitude is said to lead to misunderstandings between native Chinese speakers and international

students.

Chuang and Hsieh (2013) investigated expressions of gratitude in Mandarin Chinese and English, from a sociolinguistic and semantic perspective, on the basis of the Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese and the Lancaster BNC web. The authors noticed that *xie4xie4* (“谢谢” ‘thank’) in Mandarin Chinese appears in more varied sentence positions than *gan3xie4* (“感谢” ‘thank,’ ‘thanks,’ and ‘thank you’) and is associated with a broader range of compliment response strategies, including rejection and appreciation. Conversely, it appeared that English speakers generally rely on “thank you” and “thanks” to respond to compliments, commonly practicing the “accepting” strategy only. The authors posited that cultural values, attitudes toward life, and social behaviors considerably influence the linguistic phenomena observed in both languages.

Li (2004) analyzed expressions of gratitude from Chinese movies and in outstanding Chinese literary works, observing how such expressions of gratitude vary in tone, including statements (e.g., “谢谢您送给我这么漂亮的花” ‘Thank you for giving me such beautiful flowers’), exclamations (e.g., “在此, 我特向大家表示衷心的感谢!”, ‘Here, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone!’), rhetorical questions (e.g., “我该怎么感谢你才好?”, ‘How can I thank you?’), and repetition of the gratitude expression (e.g., “多谢, 多谢!”, ‘Thank you, thank you’). Therefore, ways of expressing gratitude in Chinese are divided into two categories: direct and indirect. The latter, which are used more often, are associated with varied functions, including the expression of concern (e.g., “谢谢您送给我这么漂亮的花” ‘Thank you for your beautiful flowers’), apologies (e.g., “您太破费了, 我心里过意不去。”, ‘You spent so much money, I feel sorry about it.’), praise (e.g., “你做得太好吃了, 简直可以和大厨媲美了。”, ‘What you cook is so delicious, it’s almost as good as a chef.’), promises (e.g., “以后有什么需要我帮忙的尽管开口。”, ‘If you need any help from me in the future, just ask.’), hypotheses (e.g., “要不是你我找不到这么好的工作。”, ‘If it

weren't for you I wouldn't have been able to find such a good job.'). blame (e.g., “不用花那钱给我买东西，下次再买我可生气了。”, 'Don't spend that money to buy me something. I'll be angry if you do it next time.') and subjective feelings (e.g., “能得到您的指教，我真幸运。”, 'I am so lucky to have your guidance.').

Li (2019) analyzed the speech act of thanking in various sources, including Chinese TV dramas, novels, and public articles netizens written on social media platforms. The author suggested that expressing gratitude is influenced by subjective and objective circumstances, which ultimately affect the sincerity of gratitude. The author concluded that the goal of expressing gratitude is to maintain a balance in interpersonal relationships. When a person receives a favor from someone, they incur a moral debt, which can be repaid by giving thanks.

The author identified four ways of expressing gratitude in Chinese, each with its unique discourse mode and language pattern. The first way involves acknowledging the person who did the favor and expressing appreciation for their actions, for example: “肖，多亏了你的帮助，我才能找到这本书。” ('Xiao, thanks to your help, I was able to find this book.'). The second way of expressing gratitude involves praising the person who did the favor. This choice is made when addressing someone who has gone out of their way to help you, for example: “舅舅，你真好！” ('Uncle, you are so kind!'). The third option involves offering rewards or compensation to the benefactor to restore the balance in the relationship. The fourth strategy involves showing appreciation for the time and effort put in by the benefactor to provide a benefit. This is expressed by “showing that you are sorry for disturbing + stating what the benefactor did”, for example: “您帮忙签了字，给您添麻烦了” ('You helped sign for me, it is troublesome for you'). The strategies mentioned above can also be used in combination to express more sincere and intense gratitude.

Huang (2021) conducted interviews with classmates, friends, and family members about how they express gratitude online. The author found that expressing gratitude

online appears to serve an entertaining function, and that is why people tend to use emoticons to express gratitude with combinations of text and pictures (“谢谢” + a picture, ‘thank you’ + a picture). The pictures used in emoticons are divided into two styles: cute type (usually cartoon characters or small animals) and exaggerated type (usually spoof pictures). The author emphasized that also on the Internet, Chinese people express gratitude directly and indirectly. The direct expression is “thank you” + pictures. The indirect expressions include showing love (e.g., “爱你” ‘love you’), expressing worship (e.g., “膜拜大佬” ‘Worship the boss’), expressing praise (e.g., “你真是个小仙女” ‘You are such a little fairy’), offering compensation (e.g., “给你fafa” ‘give you flower’), expressing care (e.g., “辛苦了” ‘you are tired’), and apologizing (e.g., “给你添麻烦了” ‘Sorry for causing trouble to you’).

Li (2023) delved into the importance of expressing gratitude in interpersonal communication in Chinese culture by drawing examples from classic literary works and TV series. The author suggested that “thank you” is a polite gesture to acknowledge the other person’s contribution, which establishes a positive relationship with them and helps to maintain a sense of balance between individuals. The author further suggested that the level and strategies of gratitude expressions may vary depending on the degree of imbalance in the relationship. Moreover, the author emphasized that the sincerity of the tone and attitude is crucial in showing gratitude, especially when the relationship is strongly imbalanced.

Overall, the studies show that in Chinese there are many strategies for expressing gratitude, and that these may be lexico-semantically rich and complex. In general, it appears that native Chinese speakers are keen on combining different gratitude strategies and tend to express gratitude indirectly. Some scholars have also instead investigated language learners’ mastery of the speech act of thanking in Chinese. Below I summarize some these studies.

Sun and Xuan (2020) empirically investigated the expressions of gratitude used by 70

Chinese learners worldwide and 60 native Chinese speakers. The author found that intermediate and advanced international students had mastered a particularly complex structure of gratitude, and more than half of the international students used “direct gratitude + auxiliary explanation” to express gratitude. Instead, the Chinese native speakers used more indirect expressions of gratitude and chose different gratitude strategies based on the objects of gratitude. The most common indirect speech act of gratitude used by native Chinese speakers consisted of showing concern for the benefactor and making a commitment to them, while the Chinese learners usually only used direct expressions of gratitude strategies. The author found that most of these intermediate and advanced Chinese language learners understood that Chinese has a variety of thanking strategies, but they were prone to errors in their use, such as failing to control the use of gratitude markers, as a result of which they tended to express thanks directly.

2.4.2 Research on gratitude in other languages as L1s and L2s

Expressions of gratitude have been studied in other languages besides Chinese. Here, I report the results of the research carried out over the last 20 years on the speech act of thanking in English and other languages-cultures as an L1 and L2.

Schwartz (2020) analyzed other scholars’ research on expressions of gratitude in English, and discussed additional made-up examples of expressions of gratitude in English. The authors proposed that the phrase “thank you” is used to adhere to social norms of politeness in an effort to promote decency, rather than as a genuine expression of gratitude, and in particular as an act that enhances the status of others. The authors also suggested that the actual function of “thank you” should be determined on the basis of the response it receives from the addressee.

Najim (2017) discussed various made-up examples of the speech act of thanking in English, considering their possible contextual functions. The author observed that the expression “thank you” can be used not only to convey gratitude, but also to open or

close the interaction or to express agreement, and more generally to enhance the rapport between the interlocutors. She also pointed out that the speech act of expressing gratitude does not necessarily abide by the conversational maxim “Be truthful”.

Komorowska (2021) examined the speech act of thanking in Polish on the basis of corpus data, which revealed various techniques for conveying gratitude. The author suggested that in order to express gratitude more effectively, “thank you” and expressions of appreciation should be combined with adverbs of degree. In addition, the author emphasized that it is also essential to follow the thank you words with a brief explanation of the reasons for gratitude. This can ensure that the speech act of gratitude makes the recipient feel sincere, polite and respected.

Cheng (2010) examined how native English speakers express gratitude on the basis of data collected in interpersonal conversations, movies, and literary works. The author identified six thanking strategies: thanking (e.g., “thank you”), appreciation (e.g., “If you don’t want to be public about it and will tell me later, I’d appreciate that”), non-gratitude (e.g., “Thank goodness”), combinations (e.g., “Thank you dear. Very kind of you”), thanking a third party (e.g., “It falls uh to me on your behalf uh to thank uh, Gary Glick for a talk”), and formal speech (e.g., “I thank you, Pam, because I think the committee’s done a great job”). Interestingly, the study revealed that the phrase “thank you” served a plethora of other functions beyond thanking, including expressing relief, declining an offer, greeting, showing politeness, or ending a conversation.

Freitas et al. (2011) examined how gratitude is handled by Brazilian children and adolescents. The authors asked children aged 7 to 14 years to answer the following questions: “What is your greatest wish?” and “What would you do for the person who granted you this wish?”, and then analyzed the responses to the second question, classifying their content into three types of gratitude: verbal, concrete, and connective

gratitude. Verbal gratitude is saying “thank you” in some way. Concrete gratitude appears when children repay kind gestures they have received with something valuable for themselves, but not necessarily beneficial for the benefactor, which reflects their egocentric attitude. Connective gratitude creates a spiritual relationship with the benefactor. In this case, repayment is either something of value to the benefactor or an expression of feelings. The authors found that individuals of all ages expressed verbal gratitude, while the frequency of concrete gratitude decreased, and that of connective gratitude increased, as age increased.

Scholars have also investigated English learners’ mastery and use of English thanking speech acts. Al-Ghazo (2023) administered a questionnaire among English learners at the National University of Ajlun, Jordan, to explore how they expressed gratitude across various situations. The author found that the participants used many types of gratitude expressions, which included: thanking (e.g., “thank you”), appreciating (e.g., “Thank you! My appreciate!”), expressing positive feelings (e.g., “thank you for your help!”), apologizing (e.g., “I am sorry!”), recognizing the imposition on the addressee (e.g., “I try not to ask for extra time, but this time I need it!”), and repayment (e.g., “Next time I will treat you”). The author also observed that, instead, English native speakers did not use all these varied expressions, (i.e., they only used “thank you”). The author suggested that future studies should focus on the difficulties and challenges EFL learners face in using speech correctly in context, and put forward strategies to overcome them.

Tajeddin and Momenian (2012) conducted a study on high-IQ and low-IQ Iranian university students at an intermediate level of English. They were asked to complete Discourse Completion Tasks focused on the expression of gratitude. The authors found that, due to their limited understanding of the cultural norms underpinning the English-speaking countries, no discernible difference was found between the two study groups; both groups demonstrated a desire to express their gratitude directly to mitigate the possibility of misinterpretation. Consequently, the authors concluded that

cultural intelligence does not significantly contribute to the ability to express gratitude. However, the authors considered that this conclusion is limited to gratitude expressions and does not extend to the broader relationship between cultural intelligence and pragmatic competence or the potential impact of enhanced cultural intelligence on speech act production in general.

Studies have also been conducted on how learners of other languages deal with the speech act of thanking. Gkouma et al. (2023) conducted a study on speakers of different L1 backgrounds learning Greek as a L2. They were asked to complete a DCTs relevant to the expression of gratitude. Later, they were interviewed about how they express gratitude in specific situations. The study revealed that L2 learners of all proficiency levels lacked pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic skills, which resulted in their inability to differentiate their thanking performance according to the social parameters of each scenario they were asked to consider. Therefore, the authors concluded that L2 learners need to receive explicit guidance on social and practical aspects of language use so as to improve their pragmatic awareness.

2.4.3 Comparative studies of the speech act of gratitude in different languages

Comparative studies on the speech act of gratitude have also been carried out. I first report on those involving Chinese and some other language, and then those comparing thanking patterns in other pairs of languages, focusing my attention on the past 20 years.

House and Kádár (2021) studied how expressions of thanks and greetings may be used not only to convey their default meanings and carry out their default functions, but also be put to less conventional use. On the basis of corpus data, the authors found that the expression “Thank you” in English is often used to express other meanings, such as a complaint (e.g., “Come again, Fred?” - “I said stupid bastards!” - “Well thank you, mate.”) or to end a conversation. Instead, Chinese “Thank you” can also be used to serve a different function only if accompanied by another expression (e.g., in

Chinese one needs to say the words ‘the end’ after the ‘thank you’ to finish the conversation). The authors suggest that future research should investigate the reason why in some languages ‘thank you’ can be used by itself for functions other than thanking, while others require accompanying material.

Wang et al. (2015) conducted a study on gratitude expressions among children aged 7 to 14 years in medium-sized cities in the southeastern United States and metropolitan areas in southern China. In particular, the authors analyzed the children’s responses to the question, “What would you do for someone who fulfills your wish?”. The study found that, as children age, they expressed more connective gratitude, which involves considering the needs and preferences of the person being thanked. The authors highlighted that Chinese society is perceived as more interconnected than American society, affecting children’s expressions of gratitude, while the United States is viewed as a hedonistic society centered around personal interests. Consequently, American children tend to demonstrate more concrete gratitude, expressing thanks based on their individual preferences, while Chinese children show more connected gratitude. The authors also found that the stronger the desire for hedonism in children, the less likely they are to exhibit connective gratitude, which suggests that individualistic values may hinder the expression of gratitude in children. The authors concluded that, regardless of their geographic origin, teenagers who express more gratitude had better grades and had fewer symptoms of depression than those who expressed less gratitude.

Hosseinpour and Mosavy (2019) conducted a study on how gratitude is expressed on Instagram. They examined 200 English and 200 Persian posts containing gratitude-related keywords, such as “thank*”, and found that there were no significant differences in the use of gratitude strategies between male and female Instagram users in either English or Farsi. The authors found that Instagram users tended to use new and creative words, such as “soooooo” or “dies” to emphasize their tone of gratitude, while the phrase “thank you” was rarely used by itself. Additionally, the authors

observed that Instagram users tended to create new words, making them become popular expressions. This phenomenon appears to reveal a way of thinking and using language that goes against traditional practices, transcending different languages and cultures. The authors concluded that, even in languages as divergent as English and Persian, people express gratitude in similar ways.

2.4.4 Conclusion

The expression of gratitude is a critical mode of social communication that reflects the values and social patterns of individuals from varying cultural backgrounds. Research has demonstrated that people from different cultures exhibit gratitude differently. For instance, Americans may prioritize personal interests and tend to express gratitude based on their personal preferences and in a more specific manner. Conversely, Chinese people, who place a high value on social connections and interpersonal relationships, emphasize the importance of gratitude in their communication. Moreover, research indicates that cultural customs, upbringing, and social surroundings impact individual expressions of gratitude. As globalization brings together individuals from different cultural backgrounds, understanding how people express gratitude theoretically and practically is becoming increasingly vital.

2.5 Culture in China

The different ways in which gratitude is expressed across contexts and cultures – as reported in the studies summarized above – reflect, highlight and assert cultural differences. In this section I outline theories that have been put forward to describe culture and account for cross-cultural differences. I will conclude by tracing the cultural characteristics salient in Chinese society, which is ethnically and culturally diverse.

2.5.1 Cultural theories

Hofstede (1980) developed his cultural dimensions theory from his analysis of workplace interactions. He researched over 100,000 employees in various divisions of

IBM, a global computer manufacturing company, across 50 countries, developing a framework for understanding dimensions of cultural variation. Hofstede's theory includes six categories: Power Distance Index, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Femininity vs. Masculinity, Short-Term vs. Long-Term Orientation, Restraint vs. Indulgence. The Power Distance Index measures a culture's tolerance for inequality and power differences. A high index indicates acceptance of bureaucracy and authority, whereas a low index reflects a preference for letting everyone have equal power. Individualism emphasizes an individual's needs, whereas collectivism emphasizes the group's needs. The Uncertainty Avoidance Index measures how people deal with unfamiliar situations and unforeseen events. A high score suggests less tolerance for uncertainty and more adherence to rules. A low score indicates more tolerance for ambiguity and less adherence to rules. The masculinity vs. femininity dimension examines how much a society values traditional masculine and feminine roles. Masculinity includes distinct gender roles, assertiveness, courage, strength, and competition. Femininity includes fluid gender roles, modesty, nurturance, and concern for quality of life. Long-term orientation values future outcomes, while short-term orientation focuses on prompt results. Indulgent societies allow free gratification, while restrained societies suppress gratification of needs through social norms. This theory provides a high reference value for subsequent scholars studying cross-cultural fields.

Hall (1976) explored the role of culture and context in the processing and management of complex information. The author said that culture constructs our perception of reality and sifts through the center of gravity of our lives, which helps protect our nervous system from processing too much information. By using examples from many history books, the author proposed that individuals interact with their environment, that the environment and cultural background of individuals determine people's behavior and thinking, and that in communicating with others, we should not only care about the need to convey information, but also consider the role that the context of situation plays in determining the understandability and appropriateness of

the communicative exchange. Therefore, the author put forward the notions of high context and low context as relevant to communication.

High-context communication relies heavily on shared cultural norms, histories and relationships between groups, shared knowledge, and context to convey meaning, and is characteristic of collective cultures. Conversely, low-context communication focuses on clear, direct, and unambiguous verbal messages; it does not require guesswork or hidden meaning, does not need to be interpreted according to the context, and is often seen in groups that focus on individualism. The author pointed out that China is a high-context country, and thus that, if you want to understand the Chinese language, you must understand China's thousand-year history, strict legal system and stable social order.

Argyle (1982) proposed that cultural differences will cause culture shock and communication barriers when people interact socially in different cultural environments. Therefore, the author proposed that in cross-cultural communication, we should study and learn about other groups' language habits, gestures, gift-giving practices, social relations, family relations, transactional practices, food preparation and eating habits, time concepts, religion, gender concepts, and the like, so as to improve the efficiency and harmony of social interaction. The author argued that China, as a developing country, has very close and vital family relationships. The author argued that China is a collectivist country, where the individual is subordinate to their community and one person's actions represent a group rather than an individual. In addition, Chinese people are face-conscious, so they tend to express their demands or emotions indirectly, such as using fingers to tap gently on the table to express gratitude when having meals instead of expressing it verbally.

2.5.2 Studies on Chinese culture

In this section, I will present the findings of empirical studies that have specifically investigated Chinese culture.

Wu (2023) stated that Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions may suffer from limitations due to several reasons: it is based on a static research method; it does not include data from socialist countries; and significant changes have taken place in the politics and economics of many countries in recent decades. Therefore, the author argues that culture, a dynamic combination of people's behavior patterns, attitudes, and materials, which can be called context culture (Hall), has to be approached more holistically. To address the above issues, the author conducted interviews with 385 Chinese people of different ages and genders to explore their level of contextual culture, and also to explore whether such culture should be included as part of the consideration of cultural dimensions. The author found that females in China have a higher level of context culture than males and that as people grow older, their contextual culture grows with them. Still, there is no significant difference in any group's context culture level. Therefore, the authors argue that this experiment's results are insufficient to prove that context culture should be added to Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions

João Pires (2020) explored the concept of culture and communication in Chinese society by analyzing scientific literature that discusses Asiacentrism (Hofstede 1980; Miike 2014). Asiacentrism is a paradigm that, focusing on Asians as agents, defines Asianness as a blend of human commonality, cultural particularity, hybridity, living traditions, and innovative methodologies. The author stated that the Chinese communication style is indirect, values restraint and caution, avoids expressing desires and emotions, and relies heavily on the listener's ability to understand the context. The author concluded that China is a highly collectivist country where people prefer closed group networks, are aware of hierarchical social relationships, viewed as self-explanatory, and know that social norms restrict actions, with little focus on leisure time.

Scollon and Scollon (1994) proposed that culture encompasses a group's daily

practices, customs, worldview, language, kinship, social organization, and other aspects often taken for granted. These unique characteristics are what sets a group apart from others. The authors specifically highlighted China's emphasis on its rich and continuous history, which has shaped the worldview of its people. They also noted that in a collectivist society, kinship holds significant importance, with individuals being seen as part of a larger hierarchy of relationships. For example, a son's primary motivation is often to bring honor to his parents and ensure the security of his offspring. The authors pointed out that the Chinese place great value on hierarchy, maintaining certain boundaries when communicating as a sign of respect and courtesy. They found that the Chinese prioritize creating a better future over enjoying the present, resulting in a hardworking and industrious society. However, the authors cautioned against forming stereotypes based on cultural characteristics.

Chen and Starosta (2000) assessed the interactional skills of 414 college students regarding attention, self-esteem, impression rewarding, self-monitoring, and empathy. The participants were later asked to complete a questionnaire on their cross-cultural sensitivity. The authors revealed that individuals who displayed intercultural sensitivity were more attentive and empathetic and possessed high levels of self-esteem and self-monitoring skills. They also knew how to reward positive impressions during intercultural communication. These findings showed that interculturally sensitive individuals were more effective in intercultural interactions and displayed more positive attitudes toward intercultural communication.

2.5.3 Conclusion

There are different ways of approaching a description of culture. The main theories put forward by scholars suggest that the cultural landscape of China is characterized by a high reliance on context, which emphasizes collectivism and the importance of hierarchical relationships. Compared to Western nations, Chinese society is characterized by a high-context culture; it is more regulated, thus constraining individual behavior.

2.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I outlined the evolution of etiquette and politeness in Chinese culture, which play an essential role in cultivating a culture of gratitude among Chinese people. I also examined the research conducted over the last two decades on the use of expressions of gratitude in Chinese and different languages.

Research on gratitude in China indicates that Chinese people usually prefer indirect expressions of gratitude, which often appear in combinations; that Chinese exhibits a rich diversity in its lexicon of expressions of gratitude; that different words are employed for specific occasions, even when the intended meaning of “thank you” remains unchanged; that gratitude education is highly valued in Chinese schools; that urban dwellers tend to be more grateful than those living in rural areas; that, as they grow older, children understand gratitude more and more comprehensively, including connected gratitude; and finally, that many new popular words or pictures that convey gratitude have emerged on the Chinese internet.

Research conducted in other languages and cultures has shown that even when different countries share the same cultural context and speak the same language, different approaches to gratitude education may lead to significant differences in gratitude sensitivity and strategy selection.

I also reported research conducted over the past two decades on the multi-facetedness of gratitude. Expressing gratitude has functions beyond just showing appreciation (e.g., it can also be employed to save face and leave a good impression on others); its manifestation in a given language is influenced by the speaker’s/writer’s native culture; and finally, it may be expressed in novel ways on the Internet.

Finally, to better understand the conceptualization of gratitude in Chinese society, I explored China’s cultural attributes in different dimensions. Research indicated that China is a collectivist country with a strong focus on hierarchy, that Chinese language

use is highly dependent on context, that gratitude is a general attitude towards life and not merely a reaction to favors, and that the expression of gratitude strongly takes into account situational variables. Research on Chinese gratitude in the past 20 years has analyzed in detail the ways in which gratitude is expressed, showing its sensitivity to social context, as well as its evolution over time, including across generations, that is, with younger generations embracing new ideas while older generations cling to traditional values.

At the same time, China is renowned for its culturally diverse and rich ethnic society. This may result in varied types of interactions when people from different regions and ethnic backgrounds. However, limited attention has been paid to how the speech act of thanking is realized by different groups of Chinese people, that is, its possible variation across social contexts (Li 2009). Also, most of the research on gratitude in Chinese has considered individual examples drawn from the literature, from which generalisations are drawn, instead of systematically examining corpus data. Finally, existing research mainly focuses on the formulations and strategies used to express gratitude that people usually use, but there is no research on how speakers with different characteristics use gratitude strategies in different situations.

One can expect people of different ages, from different social situations and belonging to different cultures to vary in their manifestation of gratitude, as is the case for many other manifestations of language use. In particular, one social variable that has not been taken into consideration yet is the personality profile of speakers, that is, whether, how and to what extent their different personalities may affect how they express gratitude (e.g., if there are differences in communicative practices between extroverts and introverts). Clearly, more research is needed to investigate how gratitude is expressed in China, exploring possible intra-cultural and intra-linguistic variation.

In this work, I aim to investigate how Chinese people of different ages and personalities express gratitude, paying attention to their use of politeness strategies

and the degree to which they adhere to traditional cultural values vs modern popular cultural modes. The goal is therefore to examine possible social variation in the expression of gratitude.

In the following chapter, I introduce in detail the research approach used to study manifestations of social variation in Chinese gratitude expressions.

CHAPTER 3: Method

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will outline the methods and experimental design used in this study to explore the possible co-variation between introverted and extroverted personalities in thanking discursive practices among Chinese speakers. In Section 3.2, I will report on the research on the differences in language use among people of introverted or extroverted personalities. In Section 3.3, I will introduce the research questions and describe how I operationalized them. In Section 3.4, I will describe the recruitment process and characteristics of the participants to the study. In Section 3.5, I will describe the data collection tools and explain the process of data collection and analysis. In Section 3.6, I will outline the procedure adopted to analyze the experimental data. In Section 3.7, I will draw some conclusions and introduce the topic of Chapter 4.

3.2 Personality and language use

Personality is the set of cognitive, emotional and behavioral traits that characterize an individual's attitude towards the world around them. This construct is influenced by both innate and environmental factors, which also manifests themselves in the way people communicate (Hou, 2002).

Research has shown that extroverts and introverts use language differently. Oberlander and Gill (2004) analyzed 210 emails written by 105 native English-speaking college students, including extroverts, moderates (i.e., neither extroverted nor introverted), and introverts. The authors found that extroverts used more verbs, adverbs, pronouns and conjunctions in their writing than introverts. The author suggested that extroverts are more expressive, outgoing, and communicative in their language use. In contrast, introverts used more prepositions, past participles, adjectives, and nouns in their writing, which showed their preference for more descriptive, precise, and analytical language. Furthermore, the author found that

people with a more moderate personality had no particular preference, and would mix words of all parts of speech equally.

Zaswita (2022) administered a personality test to students from two 6th-grade classes, categorizing them as introverts or extroverts, and then had them take an English-speaking test to explore possible differences in their language learning abilities. The author found that the extroverted students outperformed the introverted students, exhibiting a more extensive vocabulary, speaking more fluently, and using more authentic language, and that, when they were unsure of a certain word, they would find a flexible way to express it. In contrast, the introverted students only chose fixed collocations taught in books, generally struggled with vocabulary, and frequently experienced hesitancy while speaking. The author therefore concluded that personality plays a role in students' language learning ability.

In conclusion, research indicates that personality significantly influences language use and learning ability. Extroverts tend to be more expressive and fluent, whereas introverts are typically more precise and analytical (Oberlander and Gill, 2004). Building on these findings, I aim to investigate whether the distinct personalities of introversion and extroversion affect the thanking behavior of Chinese speakers.

3.3 Research questions and data analysis procedure

I addressed the following research questions:

1A. What thanking strategies are used by introverted and extroverted young and mature Chinese adults?

2A. How frequently are different thanking strategies used by introverted and extroverted young and mature Chinese adults?

I then operationalized my research questions as follows:

1B. Which of the thanking strategies listed in Chen (2008) and Li (2019) are exemplified in the data collected from the study participants?

2B. In how many of the gratitude messages elicited from the participants are the thanking strategies listed in Chen (2008) and Li (2019) exemplified?

There exist various classifications of thanking strategies in Chinese. Two relatively recent such classifications are those put forward by Chen (2008) and Li (2019), who analyzed the speech act of gratitude in Chinese literary works.

Chen's (2008) classified gratitude strategies into superficial ones, relative to the event itself, and deep ones, relative to the benefactor's behavior. Superficial gratitude strategies include the following:

1. Direct gratitude: using words/expressions that explicitly encode gratitude, e.g., “谢谢” ('thank you');
2. Indirect gratitude: mentioning the benefits to the beneficiary, e.g., “还好有你帮我这个忙，我这个项目才能顺利展开。” ('Fortunately, thanks to you, I can do this project smoothly.')

The deep gratitude strategies include the following:

3. Praising the benefactor for their qualities or behavior (e.g., “你真是太善良了，这次真的多亏了你” 'You are so kind ['praising the benefactor's qualities']. Fortunately, you help me this time' ['praising the benefactor's behavior']);
4. Providing compensation: committing to reciprocating the benefactor (e.g., “下次有机会一定请你吃饭。” 'I will definitely treat you to dinner next time I have the opportunity.' ['promise to reward the benefactor']) or highlighting the cost suffered by the benefactor in providing the benefit (e.g., “你为我花了这么多时间，真是辛苦你了。” 'You spend so much time on me ['highlighting the cost suffered by the benefactor'], which makes you tired.')

Li (2019) analyzed the speech act of gratitude exemplified in Chinese TV series, novels, and public articles written by netizens on social media platforms, focusing on two components: the favor received, that is, the benefit, and the benefactor's

investment in performing the favor, that is, the cost incurred.

The author identified two strategies relevant to the benefit:

1. Acknowledging the benefactor's beneficial action and its positive effects (e.g., “肖，多亏了你的帮助，我才能找到这本书。” (‘Xiao, thanks to your help [‘benefit provided by the benefactor’], I was able to find this book.’ [‘positive effects’]))
2. Praising the benefactor's character and beneficial behavior. e.g., “舅舅，你真好！” (‘Uncle, you are so nice!’ [‘praising the benefactor's qualities’]); e.g., “你把我房间打扫得真干净” (‘You cleaned my room [‘a combination of benefit provided by the benefactor’] so well.’ [‘praising the benefactor’]))

The author also identified two strategies focused on the benefactor's investment in performing the favor:

3. Offering compensation for the benefit received, usually in the form of a promise; e.g., “下次有机会一定请你吃饭。” (‘I will definitely treat you to dinner next time I have the opportunity. [‘promise to reward the benefactor’]’);
4. Acknowledging the cost of the benefit to the benefactor in the form of an apology for the trouble they had to go to to provide the benefit. e.g., “不好意思，给您添麻烦了” (‘I am sorry [‘a clear apology’] to cause trouble for you [‘cost to the benefactor’]’);
5. Acknowledging the cost of the benefit to the benefactor in the form of blame, which shows the beneficiary's expectations about and care towards the benefactor who engaged; in behavior that is detrimental to oneself (i.e., investing time, effort or resources for providing the benefit); e.g., “干嘛乱花钱给我买衣服。” (‘Why [‘blame through questioning’] are you wasting money [‘cost to the benefactor’] buying me clothes?’).

Chen (2008) analyzed direct and indirect gratitude strategies, while Li (2019) analyzed indirect strategies. Therefore, I combined their gratitude strategies into a complete taxonomy so as to be able to cast a wide net on the classification of the communicative strategies exemplified in my data. At the same time, I re-labelled

Chen’s strategies aiming to render them more clear in their intended functions.

In addition, a preliminary observation of a subset of the data considered (see Section 3.6), revealed that some participants used titles, including names, endearment terms and nicknames (i.e., to the exclusion of pronouns)², as part of their communication strategies in role-playing contexts. Also observed that, when expressing gratitude, some individuals consistently used formal language, while others tended to express themselves more informally, for instance through rhetorical devices (such as exaggeration and metaphor), homophones, or jokes.

Therefore, to analyze Chinese thanking behavior, I also considered two additional dimensions of language use: “formality” and “use of titles”, the latter subdivided it into “use of normal titles”, “use of special titles”³ and “no use of titles”. Normal titles include a person’s name or title, e.g., “贝莹” ‘Beiying [Name]’ or “妈妈” ‘mom [Relationship Title]’. Special titles, are nicknames or joking terms which are used to express closeness and signal a relaxed atmosphere, e.g., calling a mother “老太太” ‘old madam’.

Overall, my classification of gratitude expressions comprises direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategies include the following:

a) The Explicit thanks strategy (“谢” ‘Thank you’). For example, in the scenario of a subordinate expressing gratitude when a superior gives them a gift in a family setting: one participant wrote “谢主隆恩” (‘thank [‘Explicit words of thanks’] host⁴ [‘address term’]).

² In traditional Chinese culture, using such personal pronouns is often considered impolite, although this is not universally regarded as important.

³ In Chinese culture, to be polite when talking to others, you need to address them with a title. The title may identify a professional role like doctor or professor, or it can be a nickname or a combination of a title and surname.

⁴ The word *host* is the title of the ancient emperor. Since hold the highest status in the family, they are often jokingly address by comparing them to the emperor.

b) The Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy (“谢” ‘Thank you’) + motivating gratitude by mentioning the benefit. For example, in the scenario where a leader receives tea from his subordinates, a participant wrote “小陈，谢谢你的茶” (‘Little Chen [‘Normal address term’], thank you [‘Explicit words of thanks’] for your tea [‘Explanation’]).

Then the indirect strategies include the following:

a) The Acknowledgments of benefits strategy: that is, describing the benefit. For example, in the scenario of how a subordinate would express gratitude when a superior cleans the room for them in a family setting, one participant remarked, “一回家我就看到家里干净了” (‘When I got home, I saw that the house was clean [‘the benefit received’].’)

b) The Praise strategy: appreciating the benefactor’s behavior. For example, in the scenario where the subordinate expresses gratitude to the superior when receiving a gift from the superior in a family setting, one participant wrote: “你们真好” (‘You guys are so nice [‘praising the benefactor’s qualities’].’)

c) The Promise strategy: promising to repay the benefactor. For example, in the scenario where one is sick at home and receives a medicine from a friend, one participant wrote: “改天请你吃饭” (‘I’ll treat you to dinner some other day [‘promise to reward the benefactor’].’)

d) The Apology strategy: describing the cost incurred by the benefactor in terms of time, money, energy invested, whether or not this involves using explicit apologetic words. In the scenario where a colleague helps a peer to prepare the material for a meeting, a participant chose to express gratitude by saying “打扰你了” (‘sorry [‘apology words’] to bother you [‘cost to the benefactor’] you’).

e) The Blame strategy: showing a caring attitude towards an individual by criticizing

or reprimanding them for their generous, but costly, behavior. For example, in the scenario where parents receive gifts from their children on birthdays, one participant wrote: “你干嘛浪费那些钱?” (‘why [‘blaming through questioning’] are you wasting that money [‘cost to the benefactor’]?’)

For texts containing multiple gratitude strategies, my choice was to classify and record these strategies separately. For example, in the scenario where one is promoted by the leader and given a job opportunity, one participant wrote: “谢谢领导对我工作的肯定，以后我一定用更好更积极的工作态度报答领导对于我的信任” (‘Thank you, leader, for your recognition of my work. In the future, I will definitely repay the leader’s trust in me with a better and more positive work attitude’). Here “谢谢” (‘thank you’) is a thanking word and “肯定” (‘recognition’) is an explanation of the reason for gratitude. Instead, “In the future, I will repay the leader’s trust in me with a better and more positive work attitude,” is a promise.

3.4 Participants

In this study, I wanted to explore the similarities and differences in expressing gratitude between Chinese adults of different ages (young adults and mature adults) with two different personality traits (introversion vs extroversion). Therefore, I recruited participants so that I could later divide them into four groups: Young introverted Chinese adults; Young extroverted Chinese adults; Mature introverted Chinese adults; and Mature extroverted Chinese adults.

Young adults are individuals within the age range of 18-34. They are no longer in school, and some have not reached complete their psychological maturity; also, many have not yet begun to bear crucial family responsibilities. Mature adults are those aged 35-70. They have a certain amount of personal and professional experience, have assumed family responsibilities, and have a high level of psychological maturity and emotional stability.

Extroverts are individuals who are energetic, sociable, and enjoy social activities. They usually derive energy from interacting with others, and are willing to participate in group activities and express themselves. Introverted individuals prefer to be alone. They are thoughtful, and engage in independent activities. They usually recover energy from being alone and are willing to focus on their personal interests and engage in deep thinking.

The participants were recruited from among friends, relatives, friends of relatives, classmates, colleagues, through messages posted on social networks (i.e., *WeChat*, *Xiaohongshu*, and *Douyin*) by myself and my parents from 27/05/2024 to 19/06/2024.

WeChat is a messaging service that allows people to exchange text and voice messages on their mobile devices. Widely used in China, it is similar to *WhatsApp*. *Xiaohongshu* is a Chinese social platform where users share and document their lives through text, pictures, and videos. It has a large user base in China, and is similar to *Instagram*. *Douyin* is China's largest short video platform, which spreads information to the public through very short videos. It is similar to *TikTok*. On *WeChat*, I mostly recruited friends and relatives. On *Xiaohongshu* and *Douyin*, instead, I primarily recruited strangers. The users of *Xiaohongshu* and *Douyin* are Chinese people of various ages, but having different operating philosophies. *Xiaohongshu* emphasizes civilized communication and mainly uses text content, which may be appreciated by introverted users. In contrast, *Douyin* emphasizes open communication and mainly uses video and voice, which may appeal more to extroverted users.

To collect the data I needed, I crafted different copywriting for the three platforms I was going to use (i.e., *WeChat*, *Xiaohongshu*, and *Douyin*) based on their prevalent styles. Of note is that the content posted on *Xiaohongshu* and *Douyin* might not conform to conventional politeness - due to the use of buzzwords and abbreviations - but it would not cause offense or discomfort to readers.

The message sent to relatives and friends on *WeChat* was the following: “不好意思打扰了，请问您可以在闲暇时间帮我填写一份对我硕士论文非常有用的调查问卷（二维码）吗？这份问卷只需要您大约 10 到 15 分钟的时间，这如果方便的话，可以转发给您身边的朋友和家人一起填写吗？十分感谢您的合作。”，(‘Sorry to bother you, could you please help me fill in a questionnaire (QR code or the link: <https://www.wjx.cn/vm/hwR6Cv7.aspx>) that is very useful for my master’s thesis in your free time? This questionnaire only takes about five minutes. If it is convenient, can you forward it to your friends and family to fill in? Thank you very much for your cooperation’). I also posted this note on *Xiaohongshu*: “各位 uu 们，问卷填写，用于毕业论文，不会泄露个人隐私，请大家不要乱填，谢谢大家!!!”，(‘UUs (‘Dear friends’), please fill in the questionnaire <https://www.wjx.cn/vm/hwR6Cv7.aspx>. It will be used for your graduation thesis. Your privacy will not be revealed. Please don’t fill it in randomly. Thank you all!!!’). On *Douyin*, I posted a video of a dancing kitten with the caption: “救救可怜的大学生吧，论文不易，猫猫卖艺。好心人帮忙填一下问卷 <https://www.wjx.cn/vm/hwR6Cv7.aspx>.”，(‘Save the poor college students, it’s not easy to write a paper, the kitten is performing. Kind people, please help fill out the questionnaire <https://www.wjx.cn/vm/hwR6Cv7.aspx>.’).

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 The data collection instrument

I employed a written questionnaire to collect data, which I later analyzed on the basis of the taxonomy outlined in Section 3.4.2. The questionnaire was divided into four parts.

The first part served to gather personal information about respondents: their gender, age, place of origin, occupation, highest level of education, personal interests, and amount of time spent on the Internet on a daily basis.

The second part of the questionnaire had 12 open-ended discourse Completion Tasks

(DCTs)⁵. Each DCT had a scenario (situation description), and the opening lines of a dialogue (prompts). Scenarios represented situations from daily life, likely to be familiar to respondents, which were supposed to elicit expressions of gratitude from people in different types of role-relationships with their addressees, namely as superiors, subordinates and equals. Participants were to react to the prompts in writing on the basis of their personal life experiences. In addition, they could provide reasons for their answers.

The objects of gratitude represented in each scenario were of two types: for gifts received and for help received. Illustrative examples of the DCT prompts are given below: (1) and (3) are about receiving a gift from a superior vs a subordinate, respectively, in a family situation; (2) and (4) are about receiving a benefit from a superior vs a subordinate, respectively, in a family situation; (5) and (6) are about receiving a gift vs benefit from a peer in a family situation; (7) and (9) are about receiving a benefit from a superior vs a subordinate, respectively, in a social situation; (8) and (10) are about receiving a gift from a superior vs a subordinate, respectively, in a social situation; and (11) and (12) are about receiving a gift vs benefit from a peer in a social situation. Here are illustrative examples of the DCTs used (see the Appendix for the complete list).

Example 1): thanking a superior for a gift in a family situation

When you come home from work/school on Friday, you see a very nice gift box on the table in the living room. There is a note on the box that says: “Dear son/daughter, Mom and Dad are traveling. You stay at home by yourself and take care of yourself. This is a gift from us. Open it, and do not miss us too much.” You open the gift box and find that it is clothes that you have been wanting for a long time but could not afford because of their high price. You are very happy. You open *WeChat* to send a

⁵ Typically, DCTs consist “of scripted dialogue representing various scenarios, followed by short prompts for a description of the background and situation. Prompts often include social distance between participants and pre-event background information to help participants structure the scene” (Ogiermann, 2018). DCTs serve to quickly and easily collect large amounts of data, while controlling critical contextual variables.

message to express gratitude to your parents. What do you write?

Example 2): thanking a superior for a benefit in a family situation

You work as a shop assistant in a shoe shop. You have been busy all day without having any time off, and you are finally able to drag your tired body home late at night. When you get home, you find that your parents were there during the day, when you were at work, and that they cleaned your place and prepared dinner for you and put it in the rice cooker to keep warm, before going back to their home. You feel very touched when you see this. You open *WeChat* to express your gratitude to your parents. What do you write?

Example 3): thanking a subordinate for a gift in a family situation

Today is your birthday, and you feel that you are old enough that you don't have to celebrate it in any way, so you go to work/school as usual. When you are about to get off work/school, you suddenly receive an express package. When you open it, there is a greeting card and a gift. The greeting card says: "Happy birthday, dad/mom/brother/sister, I love you forever." You feel touched. You did not expect that your children/younger siblings would remember and value your birthday, so you open a chat window with them and send them a message to say thank you. What do you write?

Example 4): thanking a subordinate for a benefit in a family situation

Your children/younger brothers/younger sisters are staying at your home to celebrate the Labour Day holiday with you. The day before the holiday ends, you suddenly receive a message stating that you have to go to the community service center to register housing information and attend the owners' meeting. You go, and while you are there, you receive a message from your children/younger siblings:

"Dad/Mom/Brother/Sister, I'm going home early. I can't catch the train.⁶ I'll come and visit you next time I have a chance." You didn't expect that your Labour Day

⁶ The expression "I can't catch the train" is a standard excuse used in Chinese to say goodbye.

celebration would end so suddenly. When you finally get home from the meeting, you find that your children/younger siblings have tidied up the house for you. You feel so touched that you want to send them a *WeChat* message to say thank you. What do you write?

In the third part of the questionnaire, I aimed to gather data on participants' personality traits, referring to the most popular 16-type personality MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) test, which allows you to determine the participants' personality type (introversion or extroversion) and their behavioral traits.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) draws from the psychological type theory of Carl G. Jung, and is a widely recognized self-report personality assessment test that gauges and characterizes individuals' psychological activity patterns and personality types in information acquisition, decision-making, and coping with life. The MBTI test (<https://www.16personalities.com/ch>) consists of a series of questions designed to measure preferences in four dichotomies: Extroversion (E) vs. Introversion (I), Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N), Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F), and Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P). Consisting of 93 questions, which take 5 to 10 minutes to complete, it assigns test takers to one of 16 personality types, each represented by a combination of the four letters corresponding to the individual's preferences.

The personality test was placed in the third part of the study, to avoid influencing participants' responses, that is, to ensure that participants' concerns about their personality types would not affect their performance on the DCTs. Those who already knew their test results simply had to directly fill them in. Those who did not, instead, had to complete the test first and then submit the results.

The test results describe test takers' overall personality tendencies, but since I was only interested in the traits called *Extroversion* (E) and *Introversion* (I), I asked participants to provide results only on these two dimensions. More specifically, in the

questionnaire, I first asked participants to specify their personality type (i.e., Introverted or Extroverted) and then to indicate the degree of their introversion and extroversion tendency, that is, as a percentage value. The *Wenjuan Star* platform provides question templates in various styles. So I inserted a sliding scale distribution question when designing the questionnaire. This question format comes with a bar and a button for sliding left and right so as to select a numerical range from 0 (extreme left, indicating maximum introversion) to 100 (extreme right, indicating maximum extroversion), where participants could easily indicate the value of their introversion/extroversion as emerged from the MBTI test.

In the fourth part of the questionnaire, participants could make comments on the content of the questionnaire, if they chose to do so.

Using different styles of questions (i.e., Multiple choice questions; fill-in-the-blank questions; sliding scale distribution questions) was meant to relieve participants' visual fatigue and relax their fingers due to long-term text input. In addition, I implemented an automatic progress save function on the *Wenjuan Star* platform where the questionnaire was uploaded. This feature allowed participants who did not complete the questionnaire in one session to save their responses and then come back to it.

3.5.2 Data processing

I originally gathered responses from 129 people, including 31 extroverted Chinese young adults, 41 introverted Chinese young adults, 26 extroverted Chinese mature adults, and 31 introverted Chinese mature adults. But I had to exclude 18 questionnaires, which contained irrelevant responses.

Indeed, some participants did not really answer the questions. They merely copied a random text from other pages and filled it in the blanks of each question. Other participants did not answer the questions directly, but because my questionnaire set a

mandatory option, they only filled in the number “1” or “0” in all the blanks.⁷ I classified these types of answers as invalid data, and I then excluded from analysis all the questionnaires that contained one or more invalid answers to ensure that all questions had the same number of valid answers. Then I counted the number of all valid data and divided them into four groups (Young introverted, Mature introverted, Young extroverted, Mature extroverted).

Therefore, I collected 31 questionnaires compiled by young extroverted individuals, 40 by young introverted individuals, 23 by mature extroverted individuals, and 24 mature introverted individuals, totaling 111 valid questionnaires.

To ensure a balanced comparison between groups and control the variables under analysis, I selected 20 questionnaires from each group, using systematic sampling in statistics. This method helped to avoid unevenness that may occur with random sampling and improved the sample’s representativeness. To select 20 samples from each group, I used the sampling interval formula, $k=N/n$, where N is the total number of questionnaires and n is the number of samples to be drawn. Using this formula, I selected one questionnaire for every k questionnaire from the beginning until the required number of samples was reached. For mature extroverted Chinese adults, mature introverted Chinese adults, and young extroverted Chinese adults, the required interval number of questionnaires was $k=1$, meaning every other questionnaire was selected until the required number of samples was reached. For young introverted Chinese adults, the required interval number of questionnaires was $k=2$, that is, one questionnaire was selected for every two questionnaires until the required number of samples was reached. This allowed me to collect data from four balanced groups of participants (i.e., 80 total, with 20 in each group; see Table 3.1).

In the end, I therefore extracted 20 questionnaires compiled by young extroverted

⁷ Numbers “1” or “0” are often used in China when people are too lazy to fill in the answers but have to fill in the answers, so they have no specific meaning and cannot be considered.

individuals, 20 by young introverted individuals, 20 by mature extroverted individuals, and 20 mature introverted individuals, totaling 80 valid questionnaires. These participants included 10 Chinese government officials, 20 educators, 15 technology and engineering practitioners, 7 finance and business practitioners, 15 media and art practitioners, 13 students, and a few representatives from other industries.

Table 3.1 Number of study participants

Participants	Number of individuals	Males	Females
Young extroverted adults	20	14	6
Young introverted adults	20	5	15
Mature extroverted adults	20	4	16
Mature introverted adults	20	17	3
Total	80	40	40

Notes: Young adults are those aged between 18 and 34, and mature adults are those aged 35-70.

To process the responses obtained from the questionnaire, I utilized China’s *Wenjuxing* online crowd sourcing platform. The platform’s backend provided me with statistical results and data screens for the questionnaires collected, including the content of the answers, and, if applicable, the frequency with which a given answer/formulation might recur.

3.6 Data analysis

I conducted a qualitative analysis of each response according to the classification of Chinese gratitude strategies outlined in Section 3.3, which I detail below more systematically for ease of reference:

I considered the Explicit thanks strategy those that only included the explicit thanking words (e.g., “ 谢 ”, ‘Thank’) or thanking words with titles for addressing the interlocutor, without other components.

I considered the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy (i.e., motivation for the gratitude expressed) those that included the word(s) “谢” (‘Thank’), as well as indications of the benefit provided by the benefactor (e.g., “礼物”, ‘the gift’);

I considered the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy those expressions that did not include any thanking words, but only expressed the benefactor’s beneficial behavior (e.g., “我看到你给我的礼物了”, ‘I saw the gift you gave me.’);

I considered instances of the Praise strategy move those text units that did not include any thanking words, but only expressed a positive quality of the benefactor. (e.g., “你人真好”, ‘you are so nice’);

I considered instances of the Promise strategy move those expressions which encoded promises or invitations (e.g., “改天请你吃饭”. ‘I’ll treat you to dinner some other day’);

I considered instances of the Apology strategy move those expressions that included explicit apologetic words (e.g., “不好意思”, ‘Sorry’) or manifested concerns about the time and money spent by the benefactor (e.g., “让你破费了”, ‘It cost you money’);

I considered instances of the Blame strategy those expressions through which the thanker blamed others for something they should not have done, sometimes in the form of statements (e.g., “你不该做这些”, ‘You shouldn’t do this’).

After identifying the gratitude strategies in the participants’ responses to the DCTs, I analyzed the style of all sentences:

I checked if a sentence contained no title (e.g., “谢谢” ‘Thank you’), or a normal title such as a job title (e.g., “领导, 谢谢你” ‘Leader, Thank you.’), or a special title such as a nicknames or a joke name (e.g., “老太太, 你竟然打扫了我的房间” ‘Old lady, you cleaned my house.’)

I considered a sentence informal if it used jokes, homophones⁸, and Internet buzzwords (e.g., “你救了我的狗命” ‘You saved my dog’s life.’), while I considered formal if it did not.

I then classified each text collected from each study participant according to my analytical scheme, that is, I marked the type of gratitude expression (i.e., whether the answer was direct or indirect); the category of gratitude strategy (i.e., “Explicit thanks”; “Explicit thanks + Explanations”; “Acknowledgments of benefits”; “Praising”; “Promising”; “Apologizing”; “Blaming”); and the style (i.e., “Use of a normal title”; “Use of a special title”; “Use of no title”; “Formal sentence”; “Informal sentence”).

Using the filter⁹ function in Excel, I was able to sort my data according to various parameters (i.e., type of gratitude, gratitude strategies, (non-)use of titles, the (in)formal style of sentences) so as to see how frequently given choices were made by the four groups of respondents considered across various situations. My goal was to identify formal and strategic patterns in their gratitude behavior, and to determine to what extent it might vary depending on their personality traits and their context of communication.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how I recruited participants for the study, and described the data collection instrument. I also outlined the method of my research,

⁸ Chinese people like to use homophones to make jokes or metaphors. Generally, homophones will not appear in formal sentences.

⁹ Excel’s filtering feature helps users quickly sort and view data that meets specific criteria.

specifying my research questions, reporting the data collection procedure, and explaining the data analysis procedure with illustrative examples. In the next chapter, I will present the data collected and analyze their co-variation.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the results collected through the questionnaire described in Chapter 3. In Section 4.2, I will report on the general frequency of occurrence of the macro types of gratitude strategies used by the participants both in general and across contextual variables. In Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, I will do the same for the specific gratitude strategies, the titles and the (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns of the texts under examination. Finally, in Section 4.6, I will briefly summarize the results.

4.2 Direct vs indirect types of gratitude strategies

With the questionnaire described in Section 3.5, I collected 960 responses (i.e., thanking speech acts), that is, 240 responses from each group of participants: young and mature introverted and extroverted Chinese questionnaire compilers. In this section, I will report on the frequency of occurrence of direct and indirect gratitude strategies in these elicited texts both in general and with reference to specific contextual variables.

4.2.1 Overall frequency

In this section, I report on the general frequency of occurrence of the direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies exemplified in the data.

Figure 4.1 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies in general. All participants used direct strategies more often (648 people; 64%) than indirect strategies (361 people; 36%).

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively. All groups used direct strategies more often than indirect strategies, but

not to the same extent. More specifically, participants in the mature groups used direct strategies more frequently (354 people; 69.5%) than those in the young groups (294 people; 59%). In the two mature groups, 178 of the extroverts (74%) and 176 of the introverts (65%) preferred direct strategies. Instead, in the two young groups, the introverts (155 people; 61%) used direct strategies slightly more often than the extroverts (139 people; 56%).

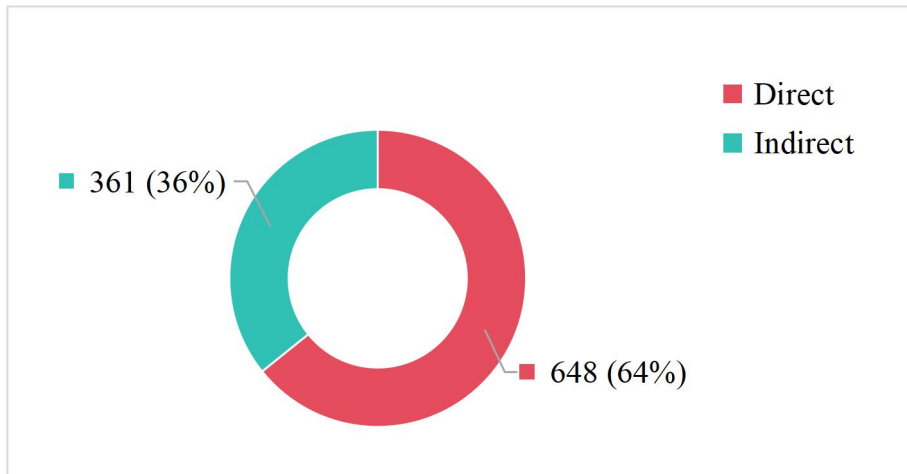


Figure 4.1 Overall frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies

Notes: Red: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

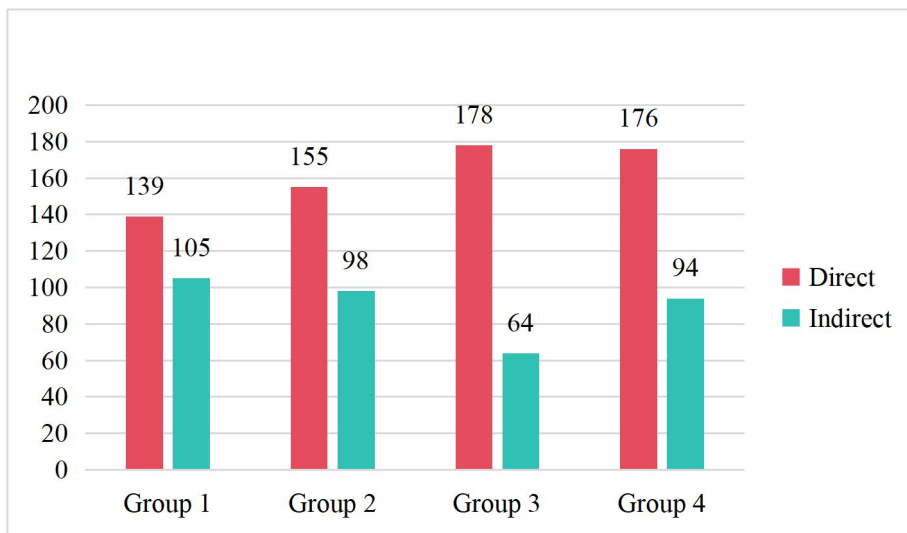


Figure 4.2 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

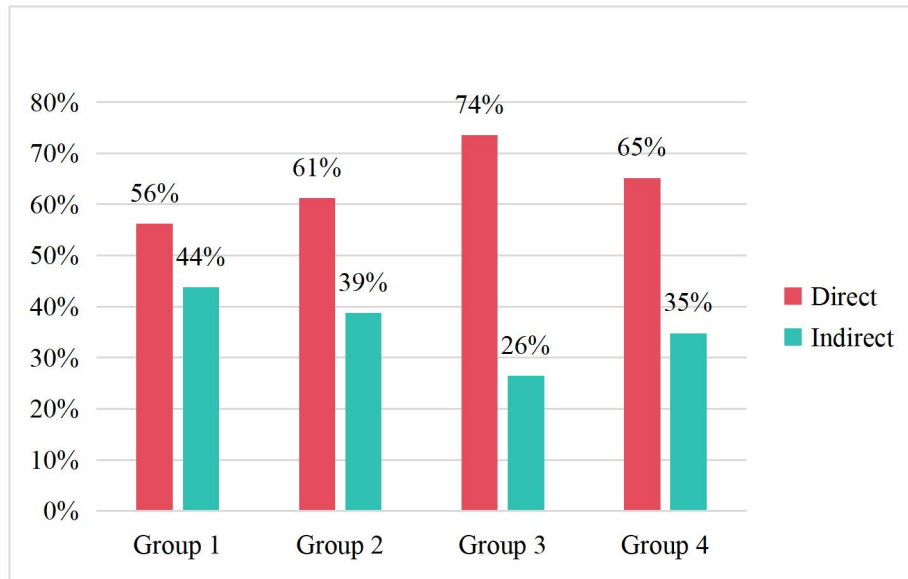


Figure 4.3 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

4.2.2 The benefit variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies under different benefit conditions (i.e., Receiving gifts and Receiving favors).

4.2.2.1 Receiving gifts

Figure 4.4 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies when expressing thanks after receiving a gift. All participants used direct strategies much more often (344 people; 66%) than indirect strategies (178 people; 34%).

Figures 4.5 and 4.6 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when receiving gifts. All groups used direct strategies more often than indirect strategies. More specifically, participants in the mature groups used direct strategies more frequently (186 people; 71%) than those in the young groups

(158 people; 61%). In the mature groups, 91 of the extroverts (74%) and 95 of the introverts (68%) preferred direct strategies. Instead, in the young groups, the introverts (91 people; 65%) used direct strategies more often than the extroverts (67 people; 56%).

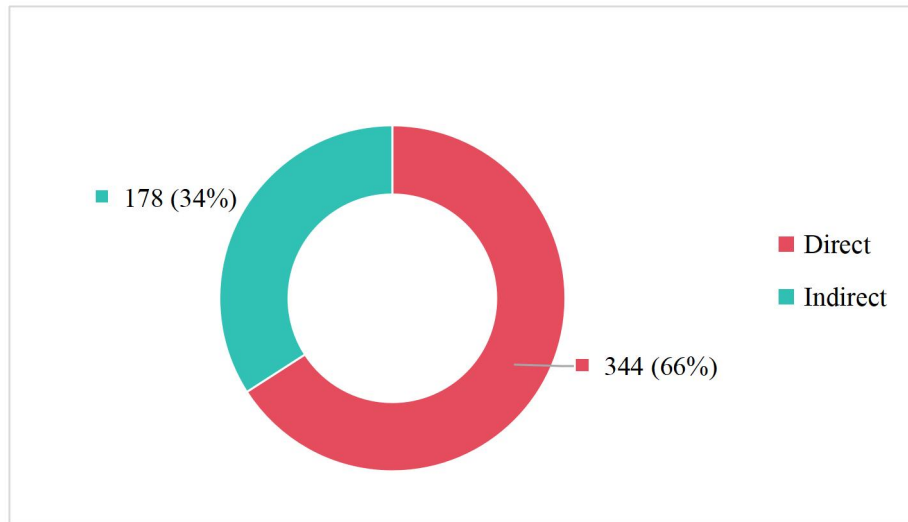


Figure 4.4 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies in response to a gift received
Notes: Red: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

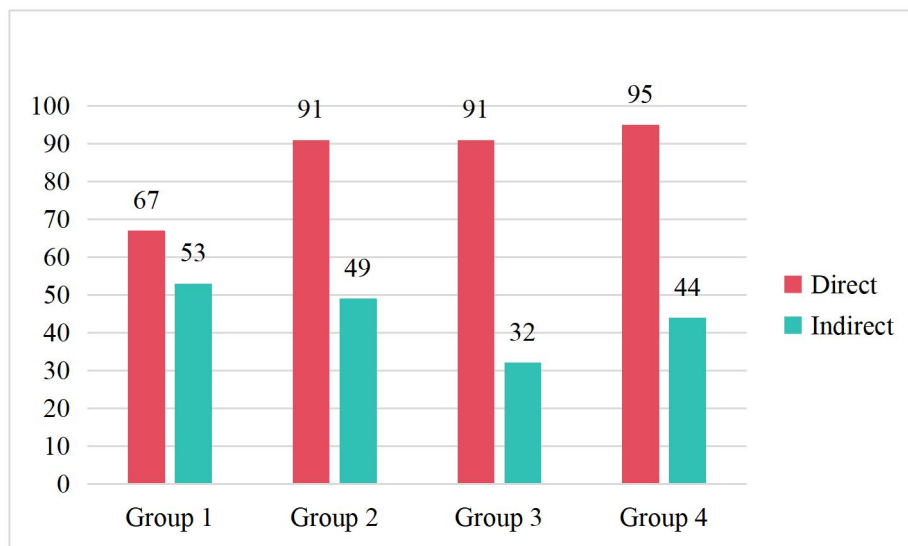


Figure 4.5 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in response to a gift received in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

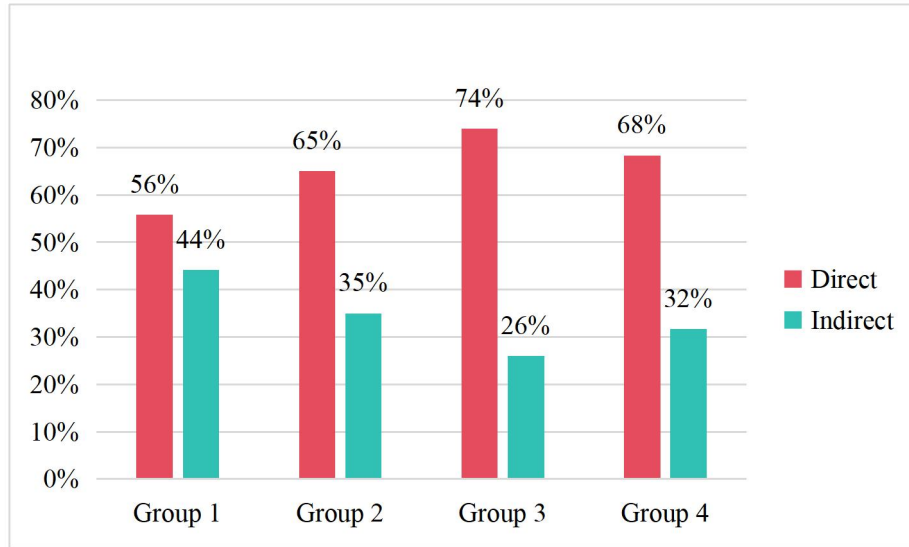


Figure 4.6 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in response to a gift received in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

4.2.2.2 Receiving favors

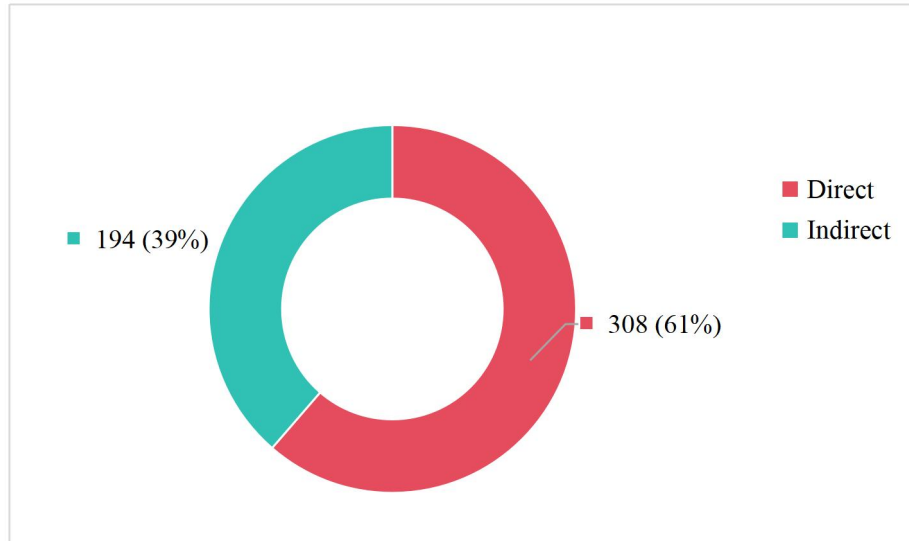


Figure 4.7 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies in response to a favor received
Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figure 4.7 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies in thanking speech acts produced in reaction to receiving a favor. All participants used direct strategies more often (308 people; 61%) than indirect

strategies (194 people; 39%).

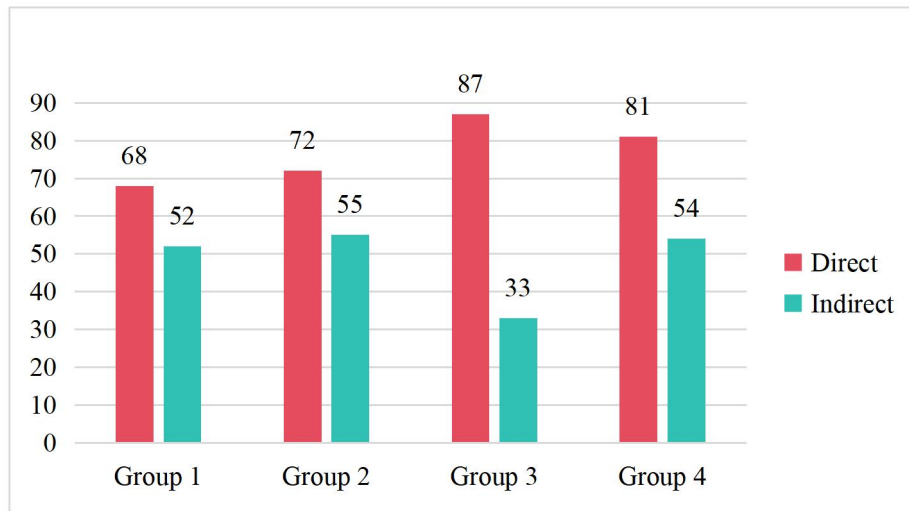


Figure 4.8 Frequency of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in response to a favor received in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

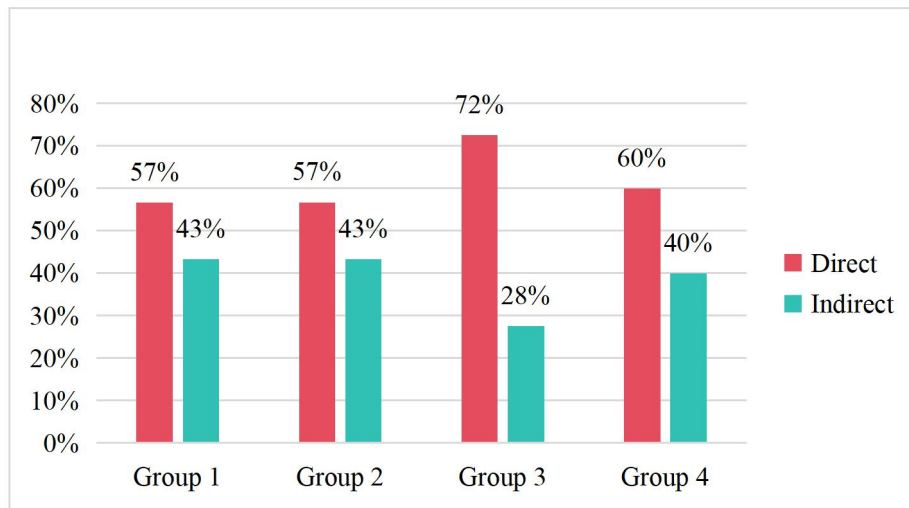


Figure 4.9 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in response to a favor received in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figures 4.8 and 4.9 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage

values, respectively, when reacting to receiving favors. All groups used direct strategies more often than indirect strategies. More specifically, participants in the mature groups used direct strategies more frequently (168 people; 66%) than those in the young groups (140 people; 57%). In the two mature groups, 87 of the extroverts (72%) and 81 of the introverts (60%) preferred direct strategies. Instead, in the two young groups, the extroverts (68 people; 57%) used direct strategies as often as the introverts (72 people; 57%).

4.2.3 The interactional context

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies under different types of settings, (i.e., Family settings and Social settings).

4.2.3.1 Family settings

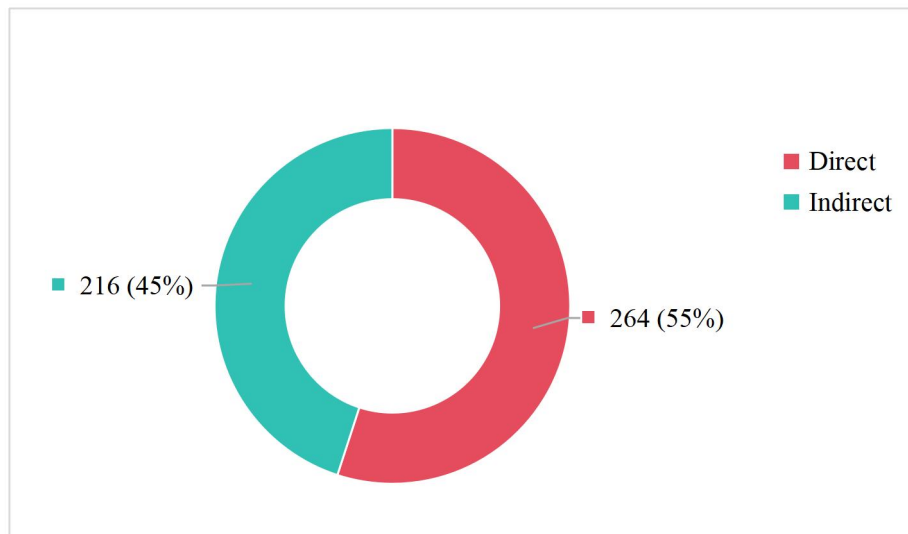


Figure 4.10 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies in family setting
Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figure 4.10 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies in the context of a family setting. All participants used direct strategies more often (264 people; 55%) than indirect strategies (216 people; 44%).

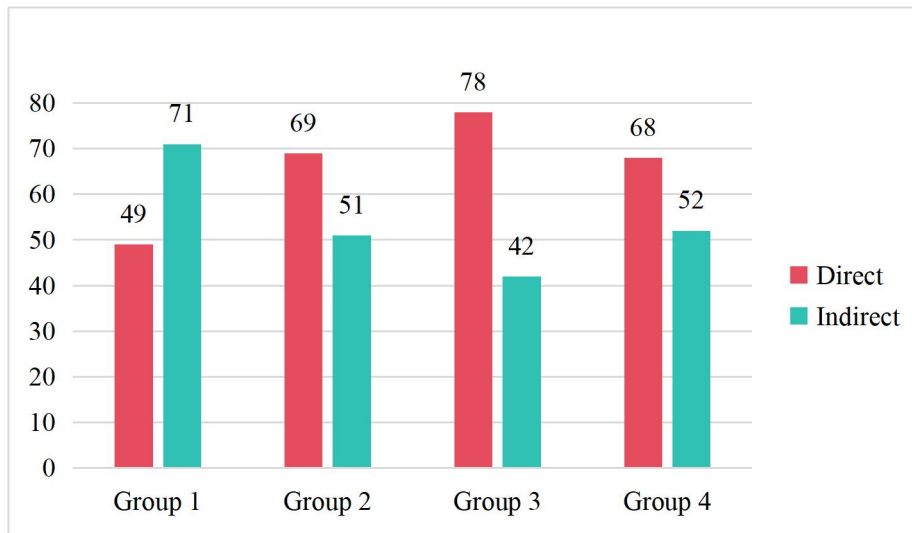


Figure 4.11 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in a family setting in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

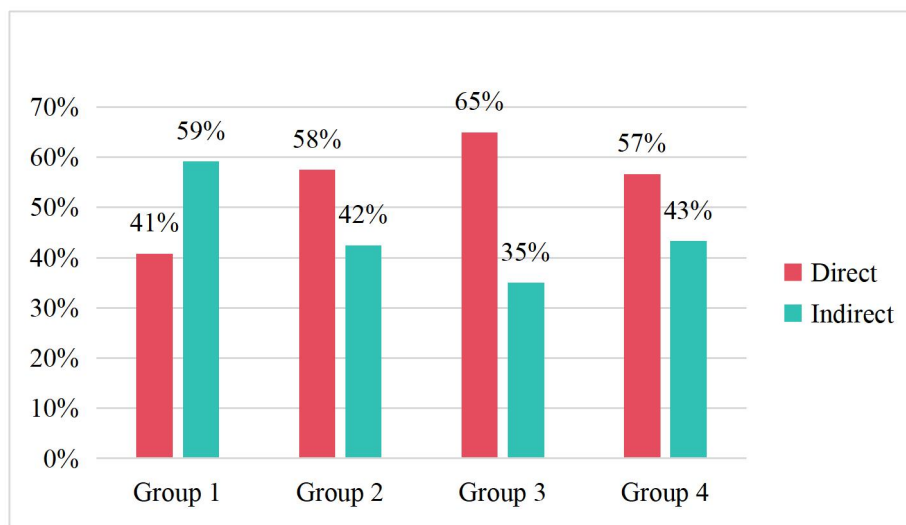


Figure 4.12 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in a family setting in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, in the context of a family setting. Only in the young extrovert group, did more participants use indirect strategies (71 people; 59%) than direct

strategies (49 people; 41%); the other three groups used direct strategies more often than indirect strategies, but not to the same extent. More specifically, the young introverts (69 people; 58%) used direct strategies more often than the young extroverts (49 people; 41%). Instead, 68 of the mature introverts (57%) and 78 of the mature extroverts (65%) preferred direct strategies.

4.2.3.2 Social settings

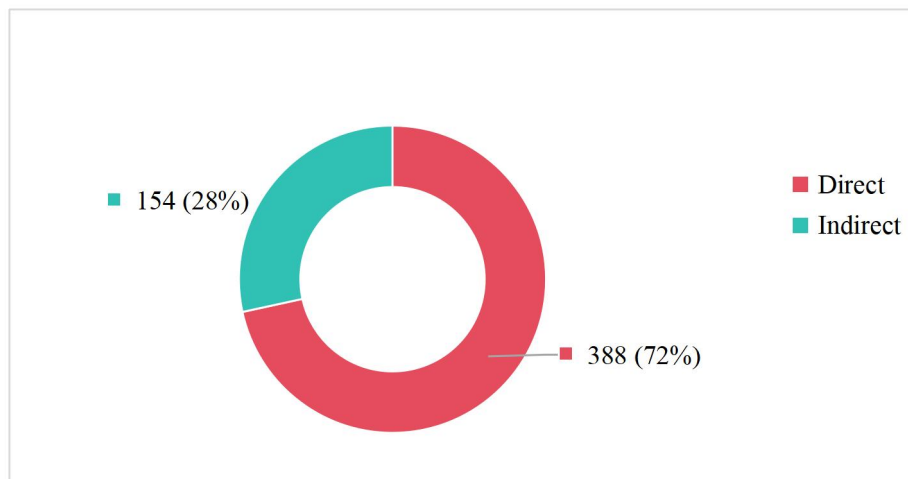


Figure 4.13 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies in a social setting

Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figure 4.13 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies expressed in the context of social settings. All participants used direct strategies more often (388 people; 72%) than indirect strategies (154 people; 28%).

Figures 4.14 and 4.15 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, in the context of social settings. All participants used direct strategies more often than indirect strategies, but not to the same extent. That is, participants in the mature groups used direct strategies more frequently (208 people; 75%) than those in the young groups (180 people; 68%). Also, participants in the extroverted groups used direct strategies more frequently (186 people; 76%) than those in the introverted groups (202 people; 67%). More specifically, 100 of the

mature extroverts (81%) and 108 of the mature introverts (70%) preferred direct strategies. Instead, the young extroverts used direct strategies slightly more often (86 people; 72%) than the young introverts (94 people; 65%).

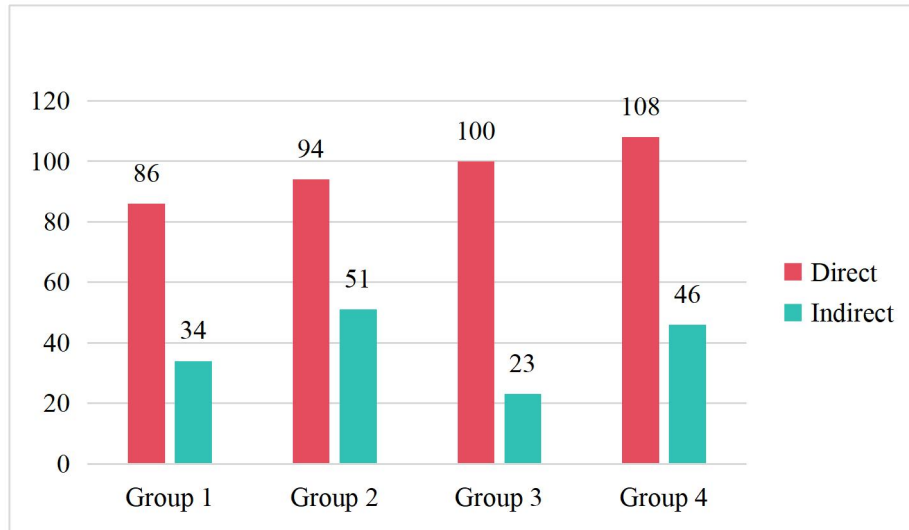


Figure 4.14 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in a social setting in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

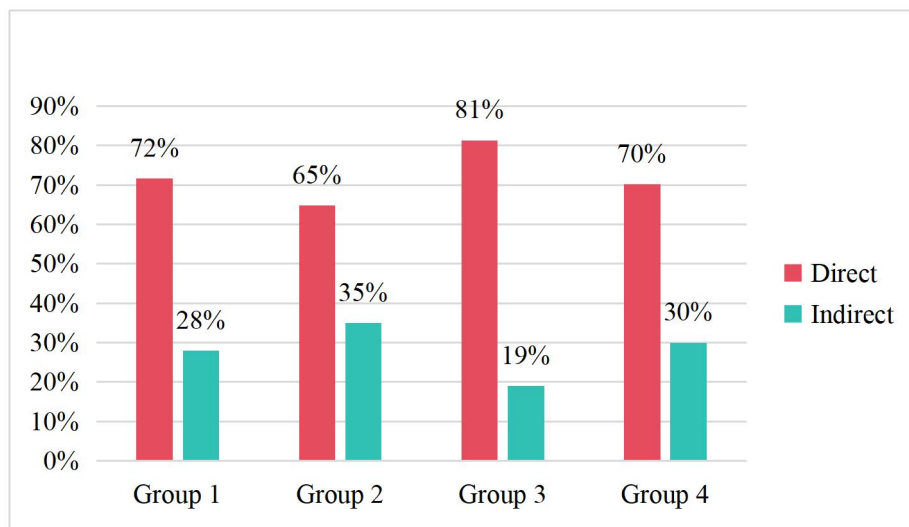


Figure 4.15 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in a social setting in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

4.2.4 The status variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies when interacting with people of different social status (i.e., Superiors, Subordinates, and Peers).

4.2.4.1 Subordinates addressing superiors

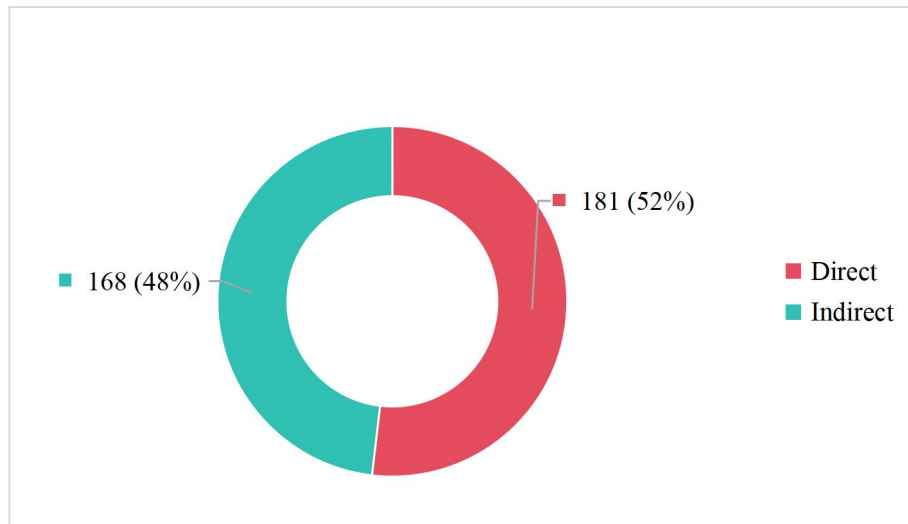


Figure 4.16 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies to a superior

Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figure 4.16 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies when expressing gratitude to a superior. All participants used direct strategies slightly more often (181 people; 52%) than indirect strategies (168 people; 48%).

Figures 4.17 and 4.18 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a superior. Participants across all four groups exhibited a general tendency to employ both types of strategies to a similar extent (i.e., about 50% of the time). This balanced use of the two macro strategies was evident in three groups, that is, except among the young introverts. More specifically, 44 of the young extroverts (55%) and 50 of the mature introverts (51%) preferred indirect strategies over direct strategies; and 53 of the young

introverts (60%) and 44 of the mature extroverts (53%) preferred direct strategies over indirect strategies.

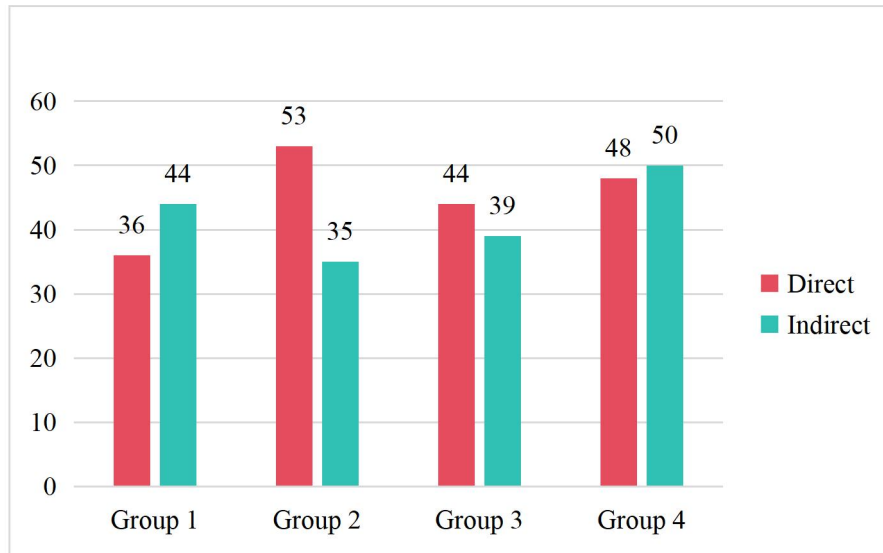


Figure 4.17 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a superior in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

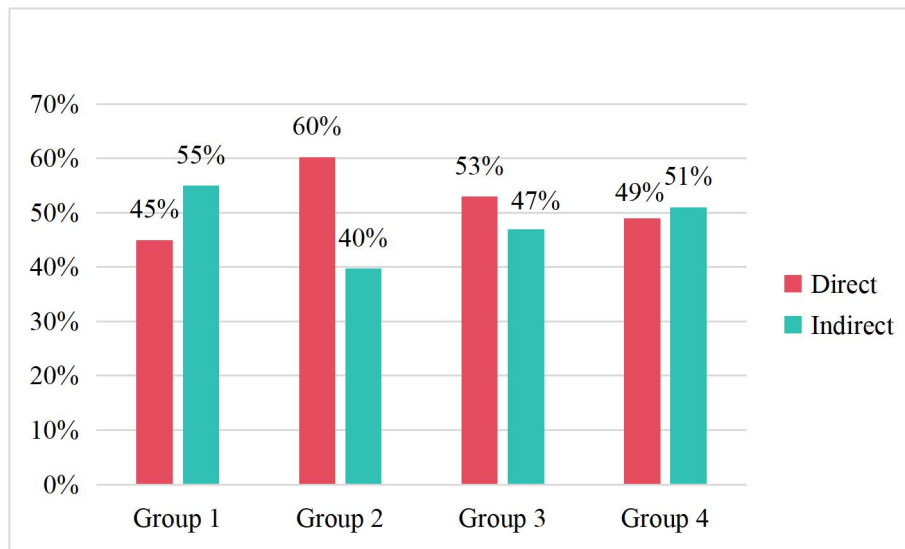


Figure 4.18 Frequency of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a superior in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

4.2.4.2 Superiors addressing subordinates

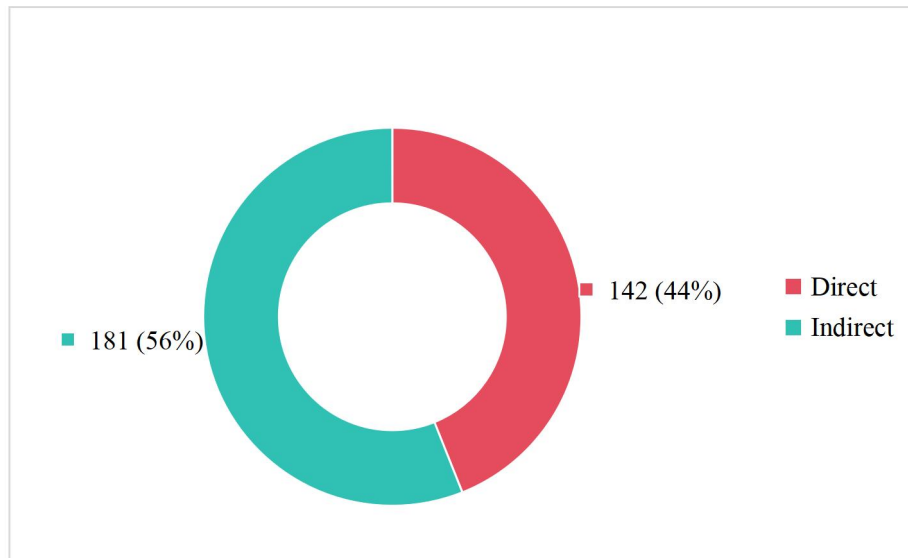


Figure 4.19 Frequency of direct and indirect gratitude strategies to a subordinate

Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figure 4.19 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. All participants used indirect strategies more often (181 people; 56%) than direct strategies (142 people; 44%).

Figures 4.20 and 4.21 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. In the mature extrovert group, more participants used direct strategies (51 people; 64%) than indirect strategies (29 people; 36%); the other three groups used indirect strategies more often than direct strategies, but not to the same extent. More specifically, participants in the introverted groups used indirect types of strategies more frequently (110 people; 67%) than those in the extroverted groups (71 people; 44%). In the two young groups, 56 of the extroverts (67%) and 42 of the introverts (53%) preferred indirect strategies. Instead, in the two mature groups, the introverts (54 people; 67%) used direct strategies more often than the extroverts (29 people; 36%).

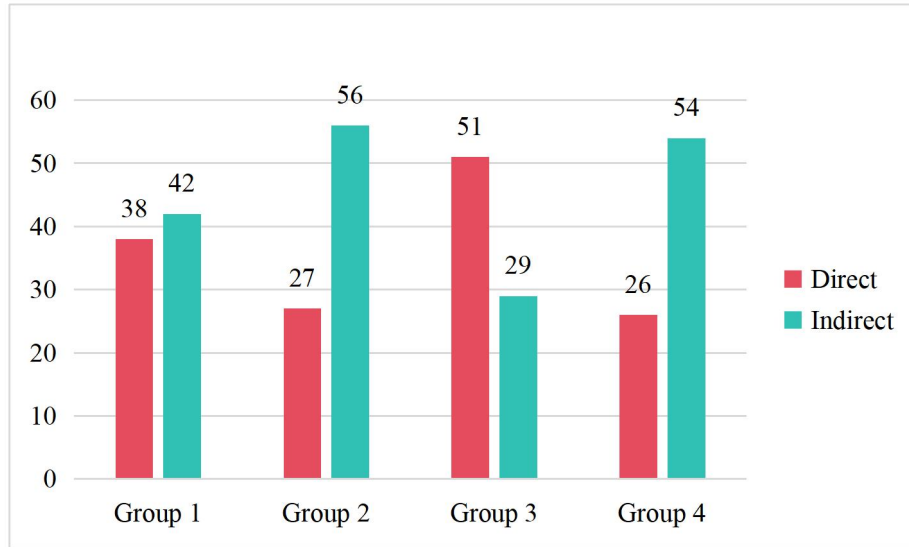


Figure 4.20 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a subordinate in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

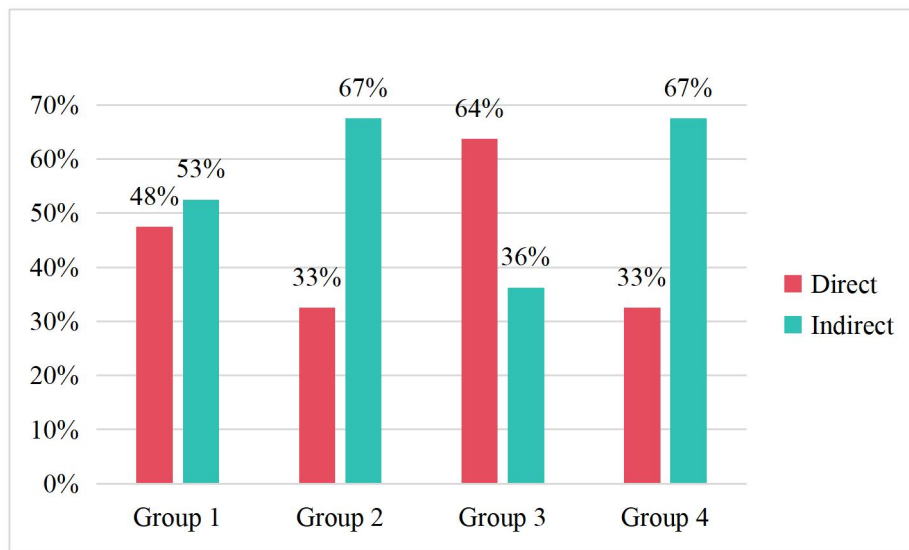


Figure 4.21 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a subordinate in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

4.2.4.3 Peers addressing peers

Figure 4.22 shows the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude

strategies when expressing gratitude to a peer. The number of participants who used the direct strategies (168 people; 50.45%) was almost the same as the number of those who used the indirect strategies (165 people; 49.55%).

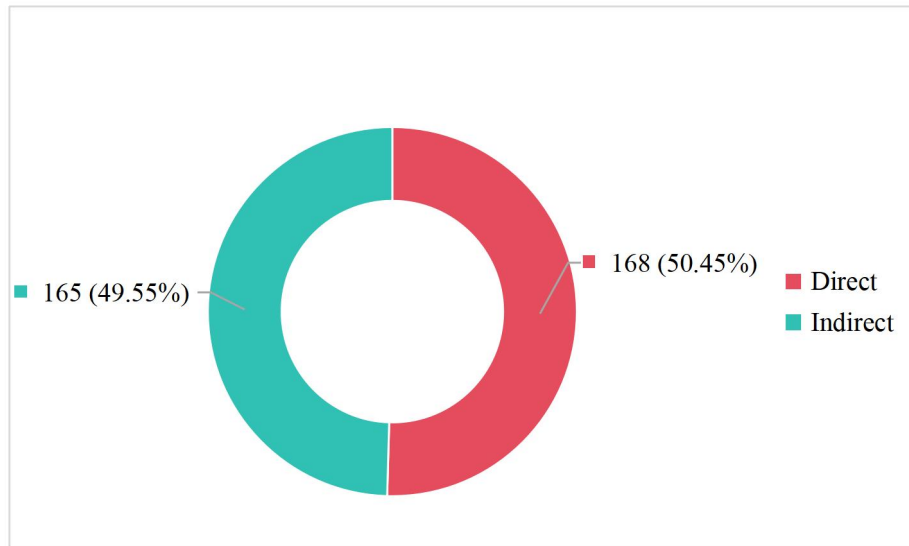


Figure 4.22 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies to a peer

Notes: Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

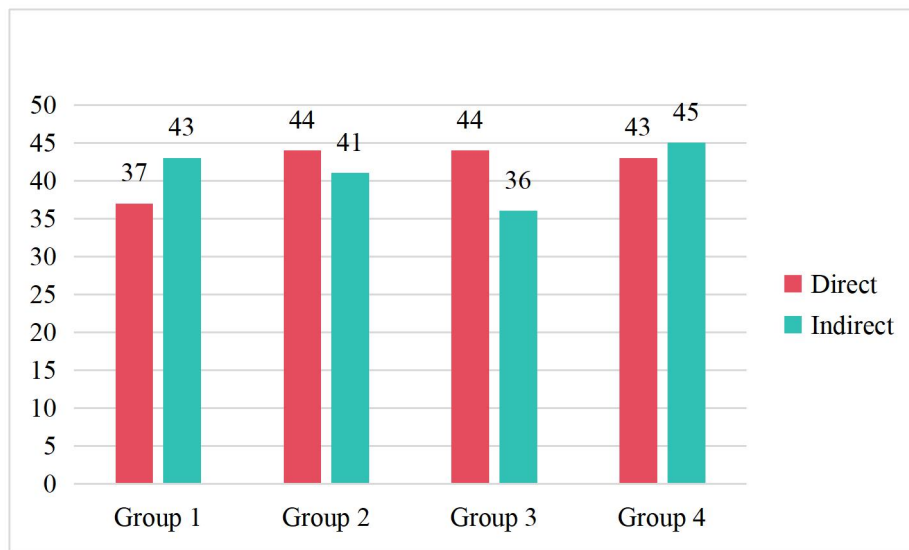


Figure 4.23 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a peer in raw figures

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.



Figure 4.24 Frequency of use of direct and indirect gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants to a peer in percentage values

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Direct strategies; Cyan: Indirect strategies.

Figures 4.23 and 4.24 illustrate the frequency of use of direct and indirect types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a peer. Participants across all four groups tended to use both types of strategies to a similar extent. Specifically, 43 of the young extroverts (54%) and 45 of the mature introverts (51%) used indirect strategies slightly more often than direct strategies; 44 of the young introverts (52%) and 44 of the mature extroverts (55%) used direct strategies slightly more often.

4.3 Specific types of gratitude strategies

In this section, I will report on the frequency of occurrence of the specific types of gratitude strategies instantiated in the texts elicited from the four groups of participants, both in general and with reference to specific contextual variables.

4.3.1 Overall frequency

In this section, I report on the general frequency of occurrence of the specific types of gratitude strategies exemplified in the data.

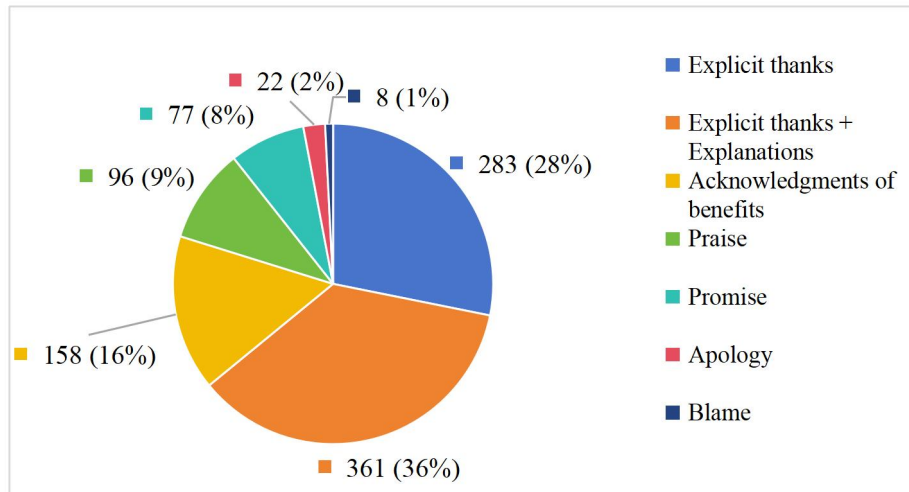


Figure 4.25 Overall frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

As Figure 4.25 shows, all participants used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (361 people; 36%). Other relatively frequent strategies were the Explicit thanks strategy (283 people; 28%), the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (158 people; 16%). Together, they account for 80% of the data. The Praise strategy (96 people; 9%) and the Promise strategy (77 people; 8%) were infrequent. Finally, only a few people chose the Apology strategy (22 people; 2%) and the Blame strategy (8 people; 1%).

Figures 4.26 and 4.27 illustrate the frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies across the 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively. All 4 groups used a variety of specific gratitude strategies, but not to the same extent. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy (277 people; 57%) more frequently than all other strategies, while the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (325 people; 62%). More specifically, in the extroverted groups, 120 young people (50%) and 157 mature people (65%) adopted the Explicit thanks strategy; in addition, the young people also used the Praise strategy (50 people; 21%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (35 people; 15%); finally, a small number of the mature people used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (31 people; 13%). In the introverted groups,

151 young people (60%) and 174 mature people (64%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, while 62 young people (25%) and 30 mature people (11%) used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy.

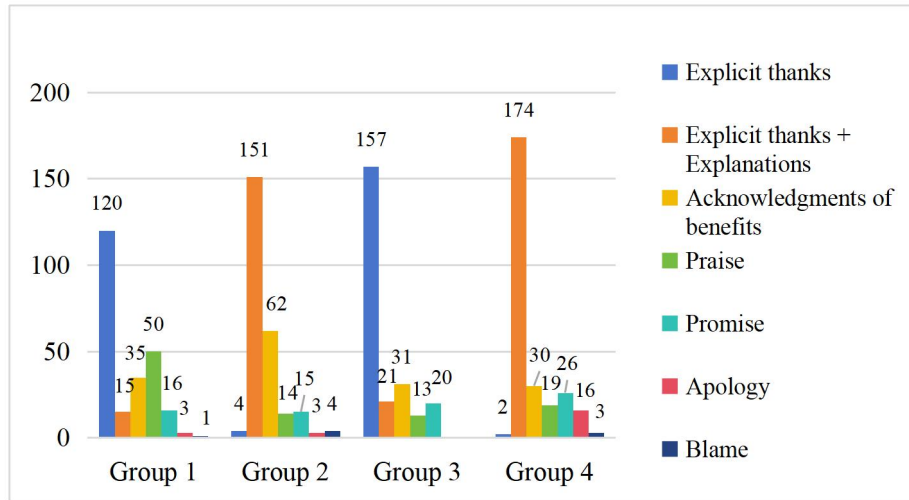


Figure 4.26 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

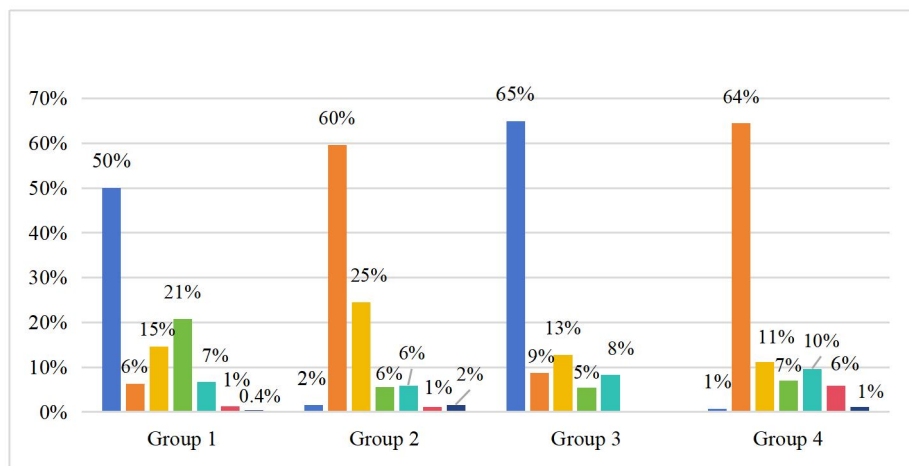


Figure 4.27 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.2 The benefit variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the specific types of gratitude strategies under different benefit conditions (i.e., Receiving gifts and Receiving favors).

4.3.2.1 Receiving gifts

Figure 4.28 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when expressing thanks after receiving a gift. All participants used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (193 people; 37%); the second and third most frequent ones were the Explicit thanks strategy (151 people; 29%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (71 people; 14%). Together, these three account for 80% of the data. The Promise strategy (56 people; 11%) and the Praise strategy (48 people; 9%) were attested less often. Only a few people chose the Apology strategy (2 people; 0.4%) and the Blame strategy (1 person; 0.2%).

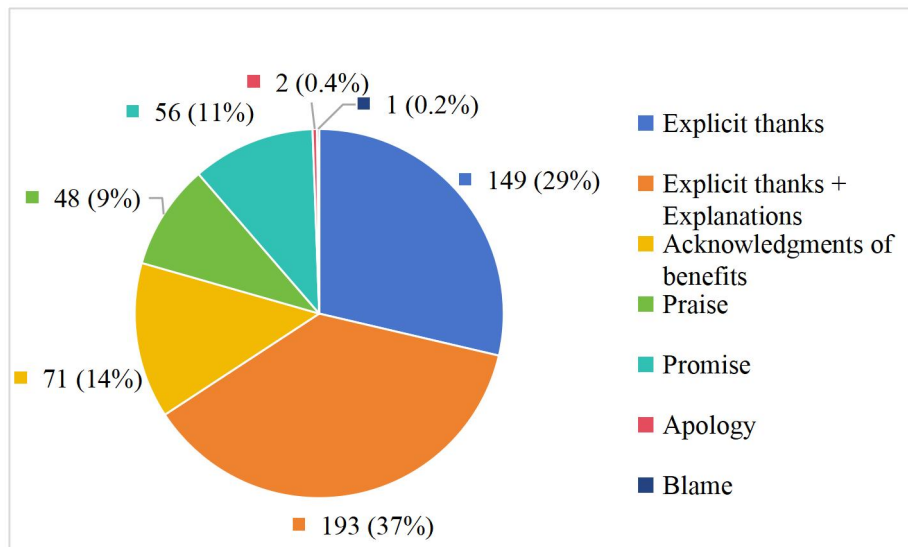


Figure 4.28 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies in response to a gift received

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.29 and 4.30 illustrate the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when receiving a gift, across 4 groups of participants, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively. The 4 groups employed a variety of specific gratitude

strategies, but not to the same extent. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy more frequently (146 people; 60%) than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (181 people; 65%). Specifically, among the extroverted groups, 64 young people (53%) and 82 mature people (67%) preferred the Explicit thanks strategy; additionally, the young people also used the Praise strategy (24 people; 20%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (19 people; 16%), and a few mature people used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (14 people; 11%) and the Promise strategy (14 people; 11%). Among the introverted groups, 87 young people (65%) and 94 mature people (64%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy; at the same time, the young people also used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (24 people; 20%); finally, a few mature people used the Promise strategy (27 people; 18%) and the Praise strategy (15 people; 10%).

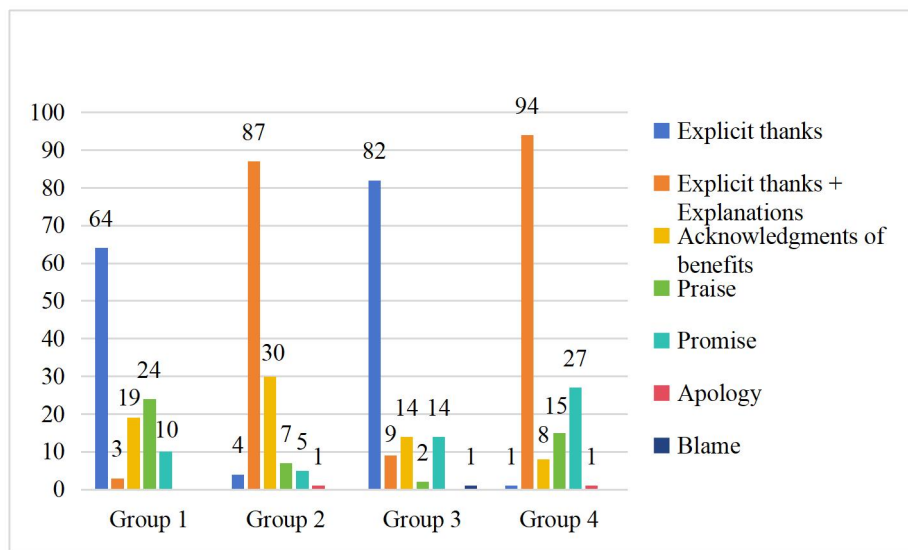


Figure 4.29 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies in response to a gift received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

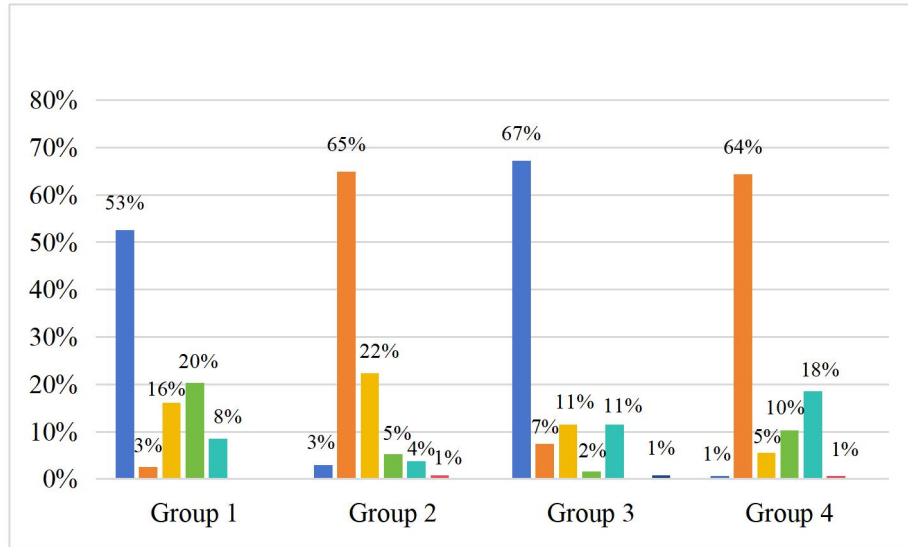


Figure 4.30 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies in response to a gift received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.2.2 Receiving favors

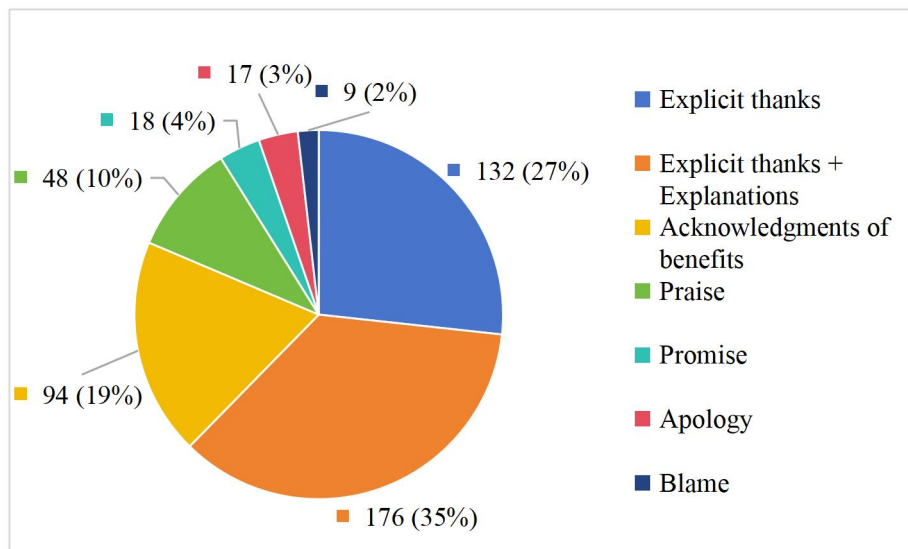


Figure 4.31 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies in response to a favor received

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figure 4.31 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when expressing thanks after receiving a favor. The Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy

was used the most frequently (176 people; 35%). Other relatively frequent strategies were the Explicit thanks strategy (134 people; 27%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (94 people; 19%). Together, these three strategies account for 81% of the data. The Praise strategy (48 people; 9%) was infrequent. Finally, only a few people chose the Promise (18 people; 4%), the Apology (17 people; 3%) and the Blame strategies (9 people; 2%).

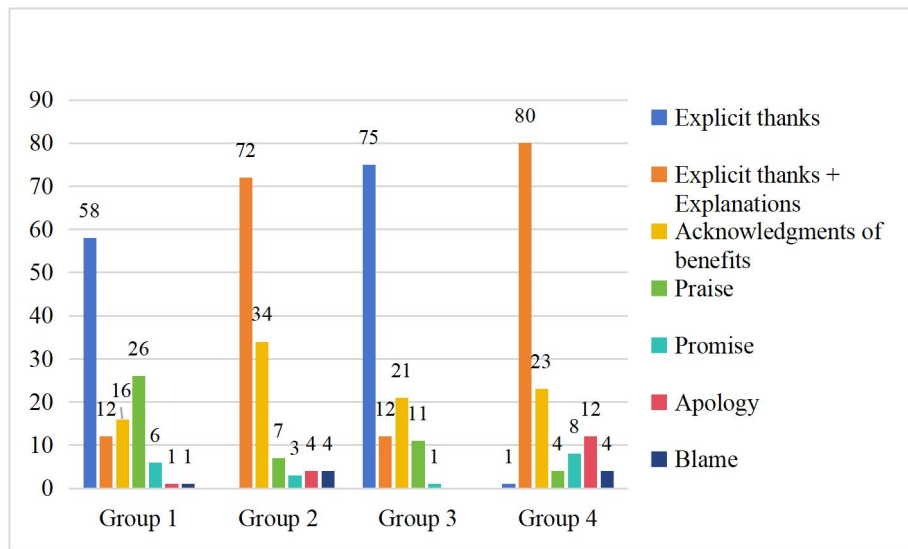


Figure 4.32 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies in response to a favor received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.32 and 4.33 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies adopted when receiving a favor across 4 groups of participants. All the specific gratitude strategies are attested in all the groups, but not with the same frequency. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy (133 people; 55%) more frequently than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (152 people; 59%). Specifically, among the extroverted groups, 58 young people (58%) and 75 mature people (63%) preferred the Explicit thanks strategy; in

addition, the young people also used the Praise strategy (26 people; 22%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (16 people; 13%), finally, a small number of the mature people used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (21 people; 18%). Among the introverted groups, 72 young people (58%) and 80 mature people (61%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, while 34 young people (27%) and 34 young people (27%) and 23 mature people (17%) used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy.

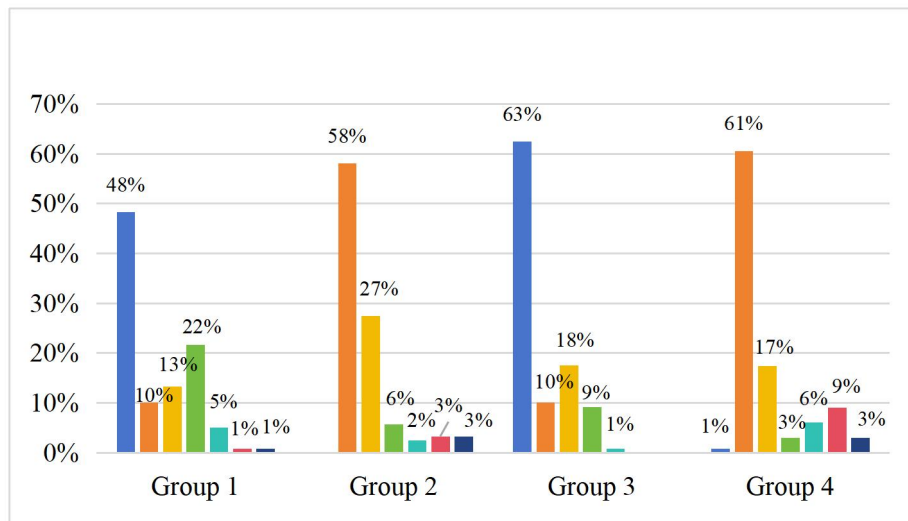


Figure 4.33 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies in response to a favor received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.3 The interactional context

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the specific types of gratitude strategies under different types of settings, (i.e., Family settings and Social settings).

4.3.3.1 Family settings

Figure 4.34 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies in the context of a family setting. The Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy (141 people; 29%), the Explicit thanks strategy (123 people; 26%) and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (106 people; 22%) were the 3 most widely used strategies. Together,

they account for 77% of the data. The Praise strategy (62 people; 13%) was infrequent. Finally, only a few people chose the Apology strategy (22 people; 5%); the Promise strategy (16 people; 3%) and the Blame strategy (10 people; 2%).

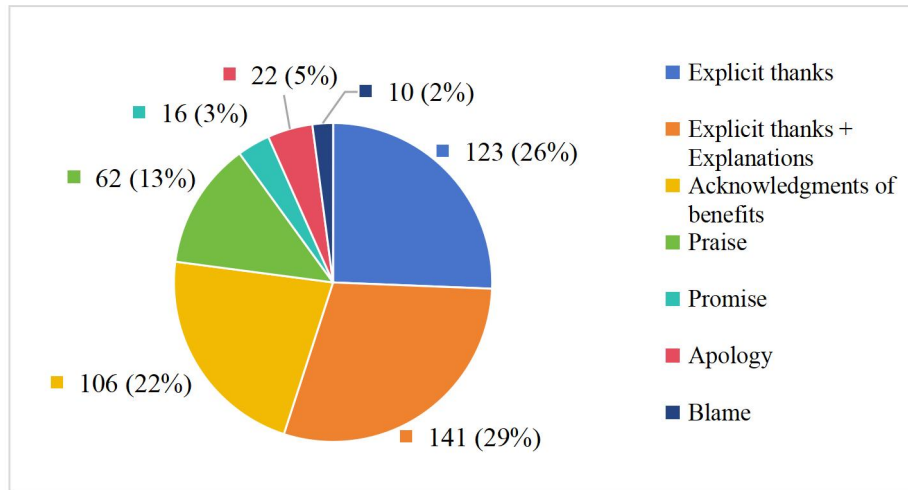


Figure 4.34 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies in a family setting

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

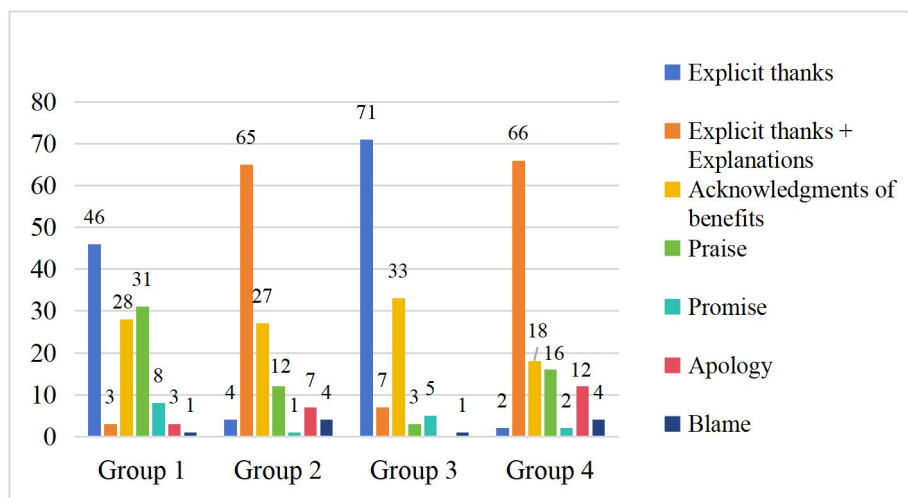


Figure 4.35 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies in a family setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.35 and 4.36 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of

participants in the context of a family setting. All 4 groups employed a variety of specific gratitude strategies, but not to the same extent. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy (117 people; 48%) more frequently than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (131 people; 55%). More specifically, in the extroverted groups, 46 young people (38%) and 71 mature people (59%) preferred the Explicit thanks strategy; additionally, the young people used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (28 people; 23%) and the Praise strategy (31 people; 26%) with similar frequency, and 33 mature people (28%) used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy. In the introverted groups, 65 young people (54%) and 66 mature people (55%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy; at the same time, the young people also used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (27 people; 23%) and the Praise strategy (12 people; 10%), while mature people used with a similar frequency the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (18 people; 15%); the Praise strategy (16 people; 13%) and the Apology strategy (12 people; 10%).

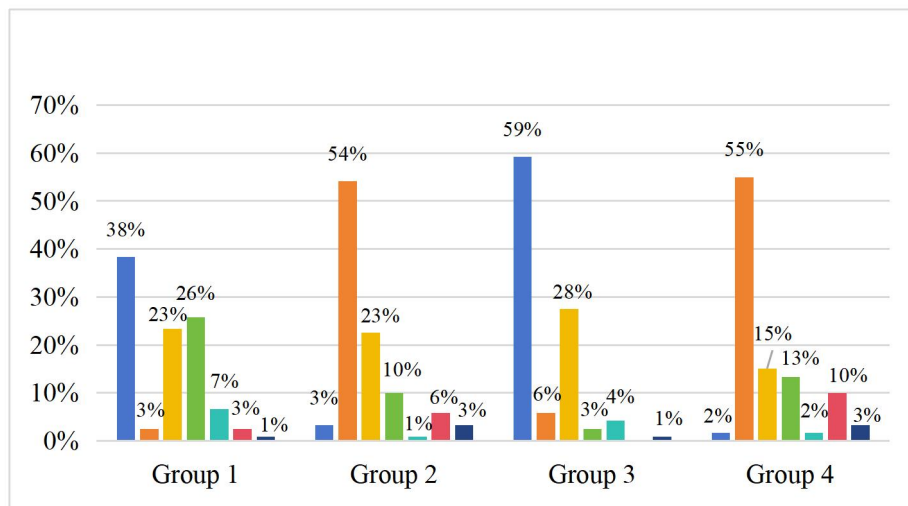


Figure 4.36 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies in a family setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.3.2 Social settings

Figure 4.37 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies in the context of a social setting. All participants used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (228 people; 42%), the second most frequent one was the Explicit thanks strategy (160 people; 29%). Together, these two account for 71% of the data. The Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (59 people; 10.9%) and the Promise strategy (57 people; 10.5%) were attested less often. Only a few people chose the Praise strategy (34 people; 6%) and the Apology strategy (5 people; 1%).

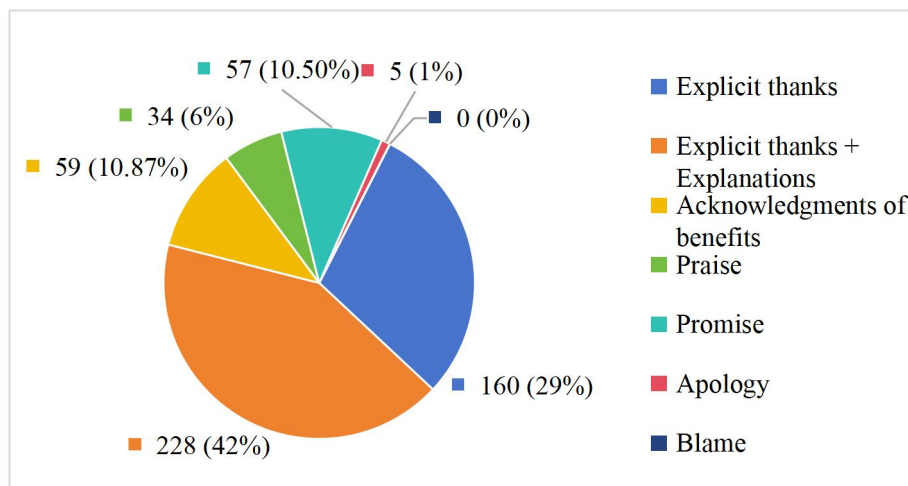


Figure 4.37 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies in a social setting

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.38 and 4.39 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants in the context of a social setting. The 4 groups used a variety of specific gratitude strategies in their texts. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy (160 people; 66%) more frequently than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (202 people; 67%). More specifically, among the extroverted groups, 74 young people (62%) and 86 mature people (70%) adopted the Explicit thanks strategy; in addition, a few young people used the Praise strategy (19 people; 16%) while 12 young people (10%) and 14 mature people (11%) used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy.

In the introverted groups, 94 young people (64%) and 108 mature people (70%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy; at the same time, the young people also used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (37 people; 25%), and the mature people also used the Promise strategy (26 people; 17%).

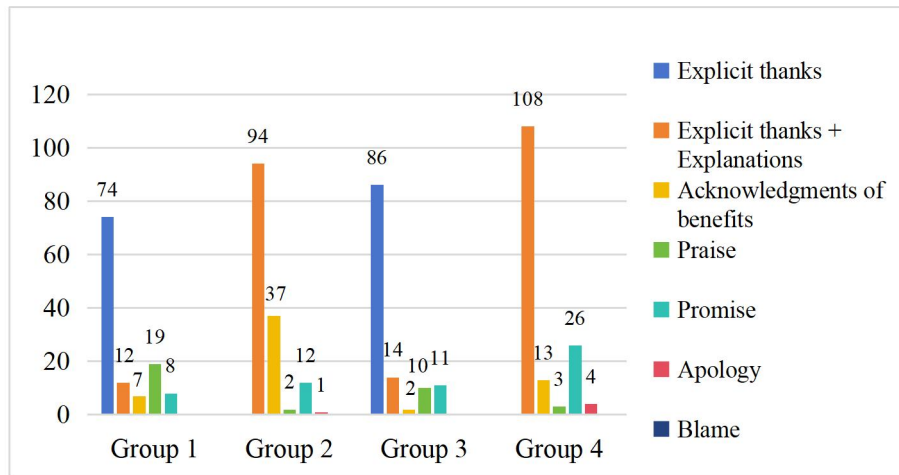


Figure 4.38 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies in a social setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

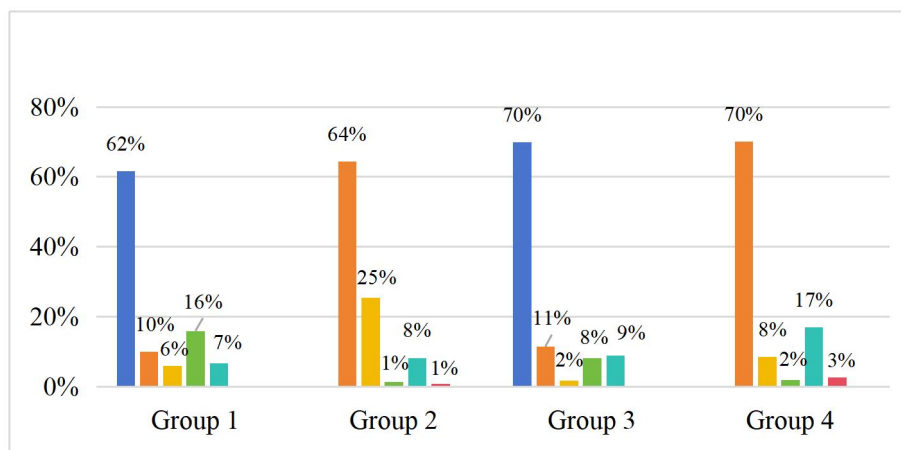


Figure 4.39 Frequency of use (in percentage value) of specific gratitude strategies in a social setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.4 The status variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the specific types of gratitude strategies when interacting with people of different hierarchical levels, (i.e., Superiors, Subordinates, and Peers).

4.3.4.1 Subordinates addressing superiors

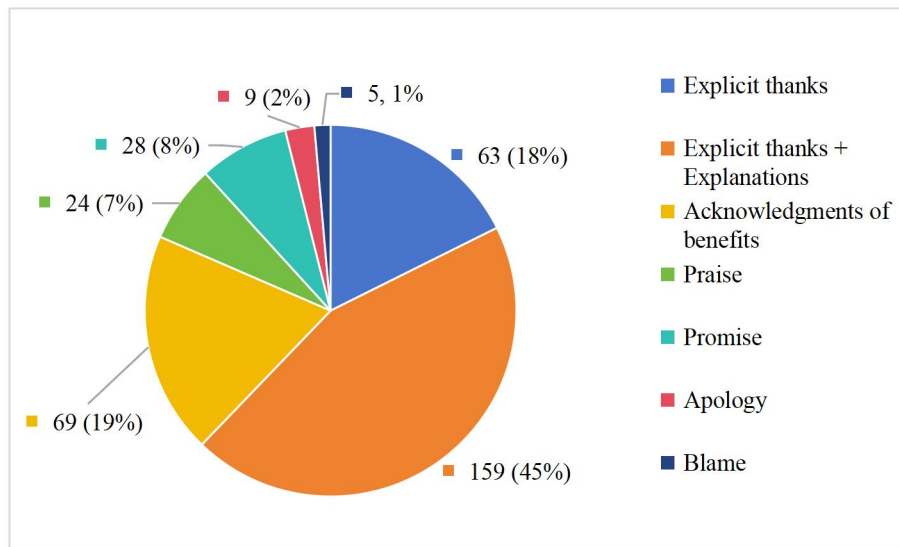


Figure 4.40 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies to a superior

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figure 4.40 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when expressing gratitude to a superior. All participants employed the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (159 people; 45%). Two more strategies were used less frequently: the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (69 people; 19%) and the Explicit thanks strategy (63 people; 18%). Together, these three account for 82% of the data. The Promise strategy (28 people; 8%) and the Praise strategy (24 people; 7%) were attested much less often. Only a few people chose the Apology strategy (9 people; 2%) and the Blame strategy (5 people; 1%).

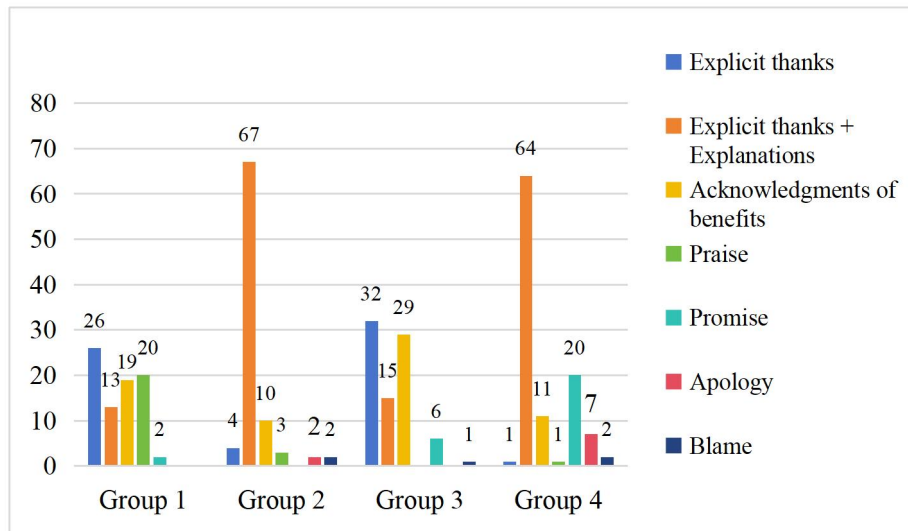


Figure 4.41 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

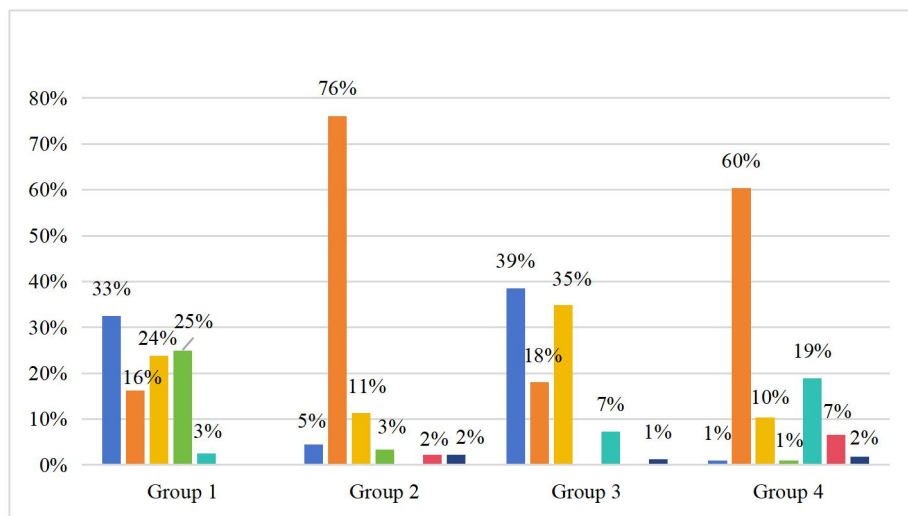


Figure 4.42 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.41 and 4.42 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants when expressing gratitude to a superior. In the extroverted groups, several

strategies were used with a similar frequency of occurrence. In particular, 26 young people (33%) and 32 mature people (39%) preferred the Explicit thanks strategy; 19 young people (24%) and 29 mature people (35%) used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy, while 13 young people (16%) and 15 mature people (18%) adopted the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy; additionally, a part of the young people also used the Praise strategy (20 people; 25%). Instead, in the introverted groups, 67 young people (76%) and 64 mature people (60%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, while 10 young people (11%) and 11 mature people (10%) adopted the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy; finally, the mature people also used the Promise strategy (20 people; 19%) and the Apology strategy (7 people; 7%).

4.3.4.2 Superiors addressing subordinates

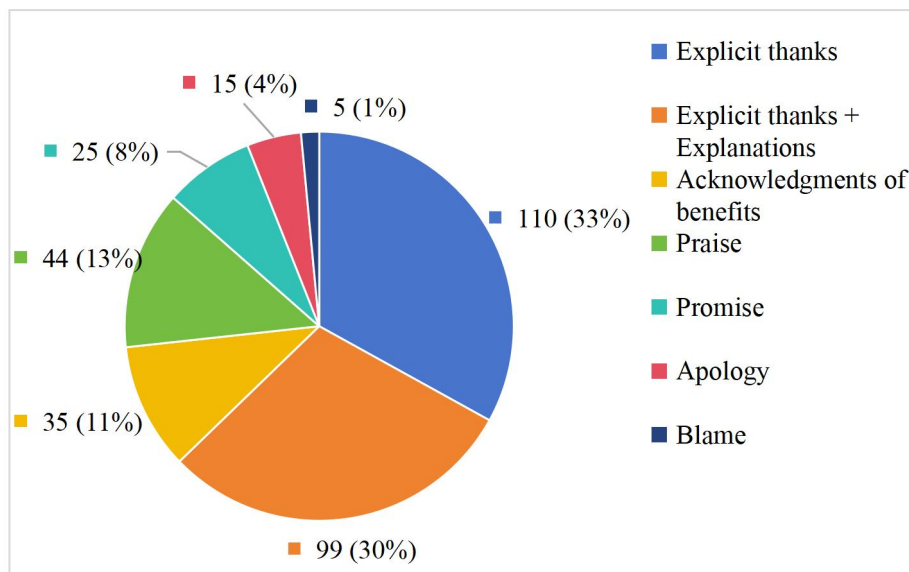


Figure 4.43 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies to a subordinate

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figure 4.43 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. All participants used two strategies with a similar frequency of occurrence, namely the Explicit thanks strategy (110 people; 33%) and the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy (99 people; 30%). Two more strategies were used much less frequently: the Praise strategy (44 people; 13%) and

the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (35 people; 11%). Finally, only a few people chose the Promise strategy (25 people; 8%); the Apology strategy (15 people; 4%), and the Blame strategy (5 people; 1%).

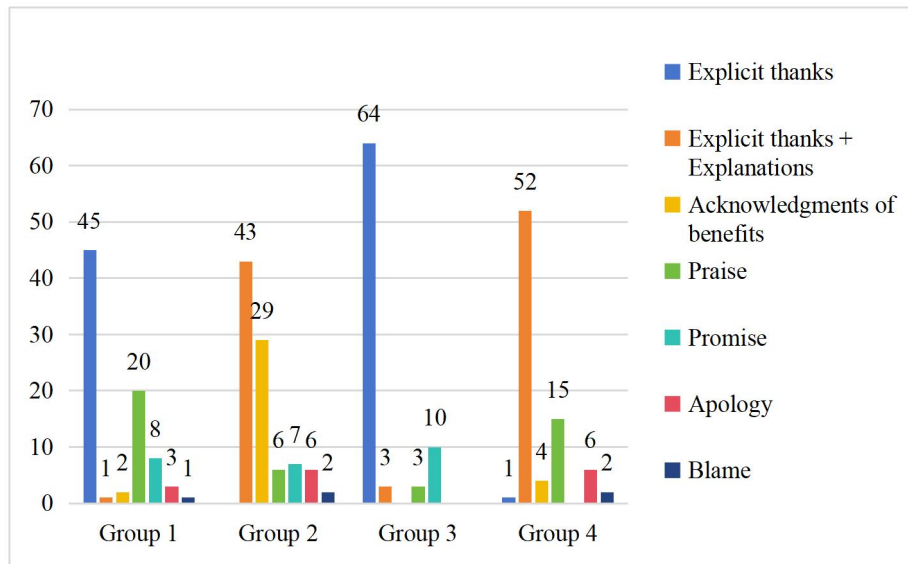


Figure 4.44 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.44 and 4.45 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. All 4 groups used all the strategies in their texts. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks strategy (109 people; 68%) more frequently than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (85 people; 49%). More specifically, among the extroverted groups, 45 young people (56%) and 64 mature people (80%) preferred the Explicit thanks strategy; in addition, a part of the young people used the Praise strategy (20 people; 25%) and a few mature people (10 people; 13%) used the Promise strategy. Instead, in the introverted groups, 43 young people (46%) and 52 mature people (65%) adopted the Explicit thanks + Explanations

strategy; at the same time, the young people also used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (29 people; 31%) and the mature people used the Praise strategy (15 people; 19%).

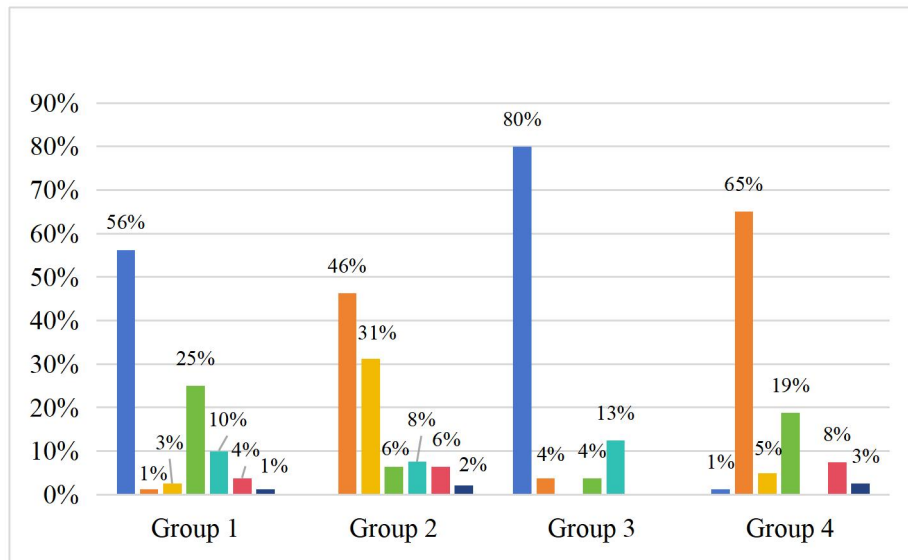


Figure 4.45 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.3.4.3 Peers addressing peers

Figure 4.46 shows the frequency of use of specific types of gratitude strategies when expressing gratitude to a peer. All participants used two strategies with an almost equal frequency of occurrence, namely the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy (111 people; 33%) and the Explicit thanks strategy (110 people; 33%). Two more strategies were used much less frequently: the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (61 people; 18%) and the Praise strategy (28 people; 9%). Finally, only a few people chose the Promise strategy (20 people; 6%) and the Apology strategy (3 people; 1%).

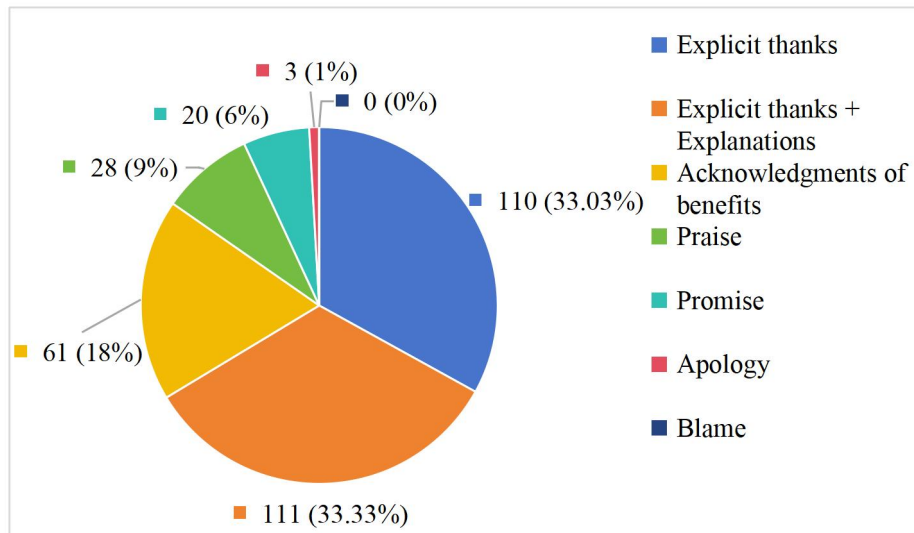


Figure 4.46 Frequency of use of specific gratitude strategies to a peer

Notes: Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

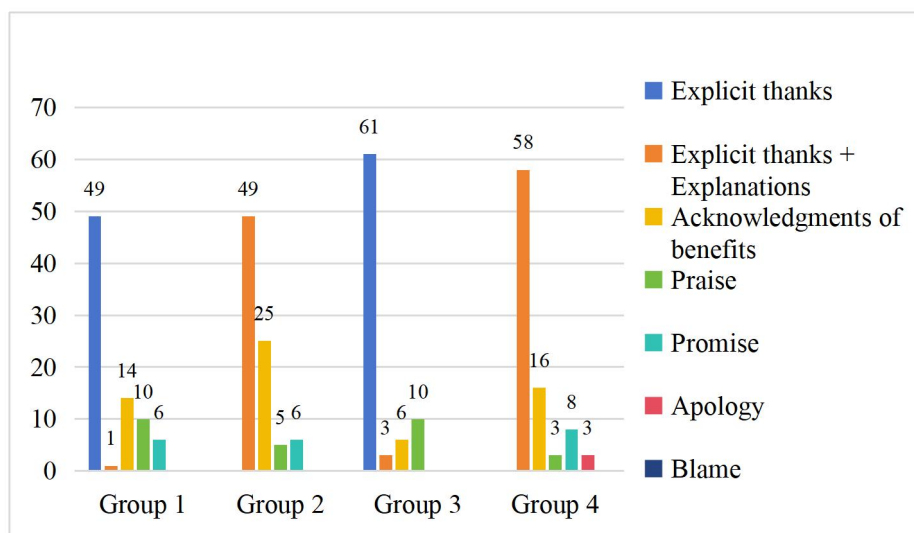


Figure 4.47 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of specific gratitude strategies to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

Figures 4.47 and 4.48 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of specific types of gratitude strategies across 4 groups of participants when expressing gratitude to a peer. All 4 groups employed all the gratitude strategies in their texts. The extroverted groups used the Explicit thanks

strategy (110 people; 69%) more frequently than other strategies, and the introverted groups used the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy the most frequently (107 people; 62%). More specifically, in the extroverted groups, 49 young people (61%) and 61 mature people (76%) adopted the Explicit thanks strategy; additionally, the young people also used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy (14 people; 18%), while 10 young people used the Praise strategy (13%) as often as the mature people (10 people; 13%). In the introverted groups, 49 young people (58%) and 58 mature people (66%) preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, while 25 young people (29%) and 16 mature people (18%) used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy.

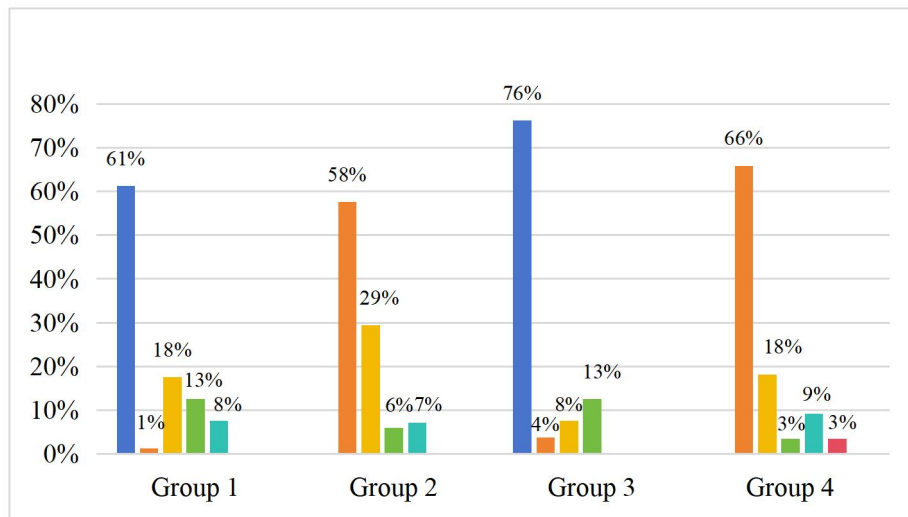


Figure 4.48 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of specific gratitude strategies to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Blue: Explicit thanks; Orange: Explicit thanks + Explanations; Yellow: Acknowledgment of Benefits; Green: Praise; Cyan: Promise; Red: Apology; Dark blue: Blame.

4.4 Titles

In this section, I will report on the frequency of occurrence of the titles occurring in the texts produced by the 4 groups of participants, both in general and with reference to specific contextual variables.

4.4.1 Overall frequency

In this section, I report on the general frequency of occurrence of the titles exemplified in the data.

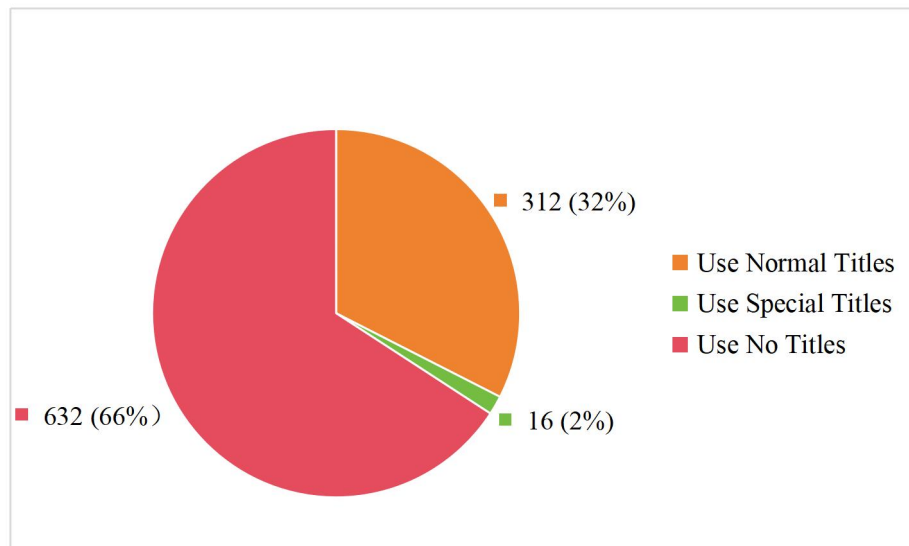


Figure 4.49 Overall frequency of use of the titles

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figure 4.49 shows the frequency of use of the titles in general. All participants used No titles more often (632 people; 66%) than Normal titles (312 people; 32%) and Special titles (16 people; 2%).

Figures 4.50 and 4.51 illustrate the frequency of use of titles by the 4 groups of participants in raw numbers and percentage values, respectively. Only the young introverted group had the highest frequency of Normal titles (178 people; 74%); the other three groups used No titles more frequently than they used Normal titles, but not to the same extent. More specifically, the extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (436 people; 91%) than the introverted groups (196 people; 41%), in a similar way among mature people (221; 92%) and young people (215; 90%). Only 10 young extroverts (4%) used Special titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (136 people; 57%) used No titles more frequently than the young people (60 people; 25%).

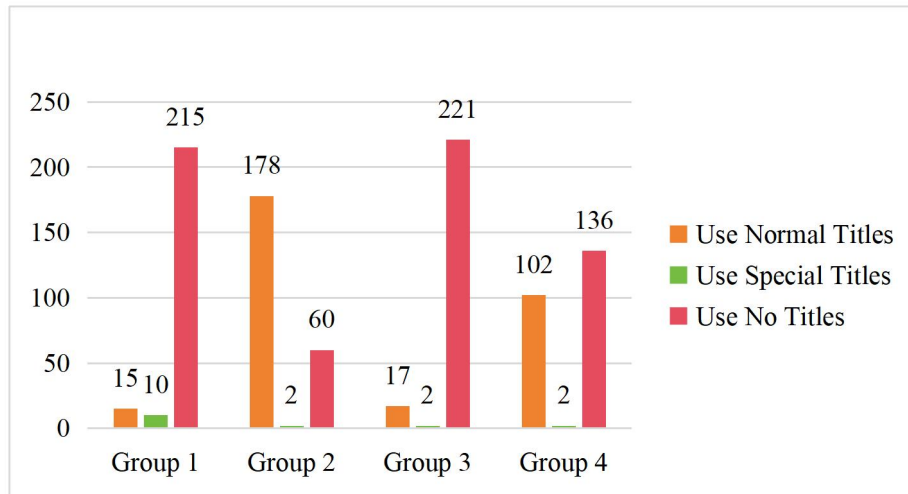


Figure 4.50 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of the titles across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

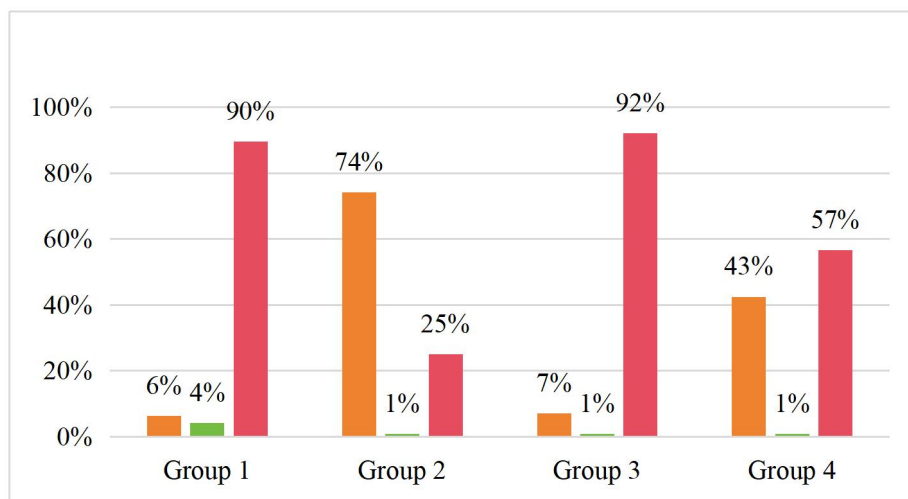


Figure 4.51 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of the titles across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.4.2 The benefit variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the titles under different benefit conditions (i.e., Receiving gifts and Receiving favors).

4.4.2.1 Receiving gifts

Figure 4.52 shows the frequency of use of the titles when expressing gratitude after

receiving a gift. All participants used No titles much more often (332 people; 69%) than Normal titles (139 people; 29%) and Special titles (9 people; 2%).

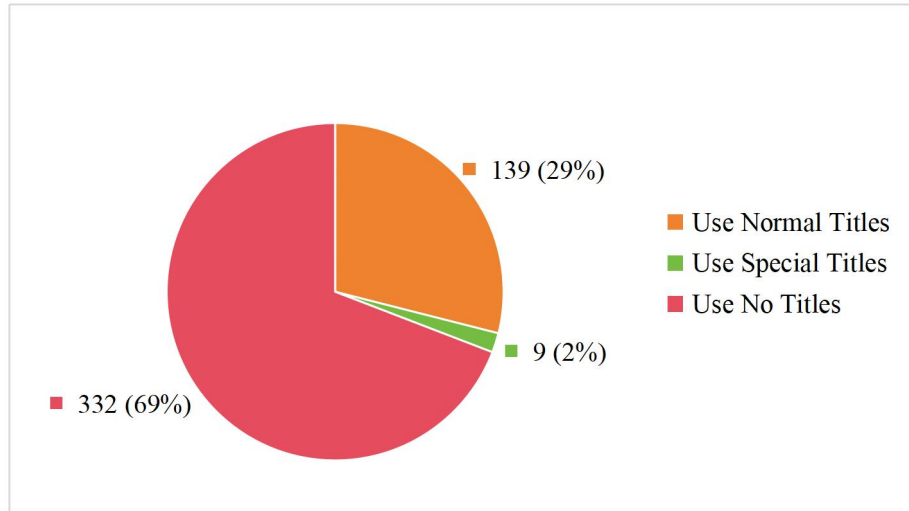


Figure 4.52 Frequency of use of the titles in response to a gift received

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

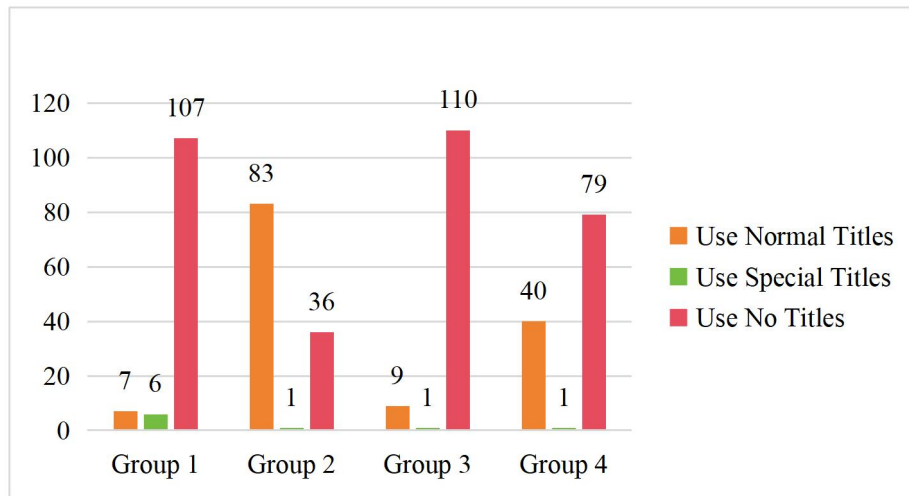


Figure 4.53 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of the titles occurring in thanks produced in response to a gift received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.53 and 4.54 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of the titles across 4 groups of participants when receiving a gift. Only the young introverted group had the highest frequency Normal titles (83 people;

69%); the other three groups used No titles more frequently than Normal titles in their texts. More specifically, participants in the extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (217 people; 90%) than those in the introverted groups (196 people; 48%), with only 6 young extroverts (5%) used Special titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (79 people; 66%) used No titles more frequently than the young people (36 people; 30%).

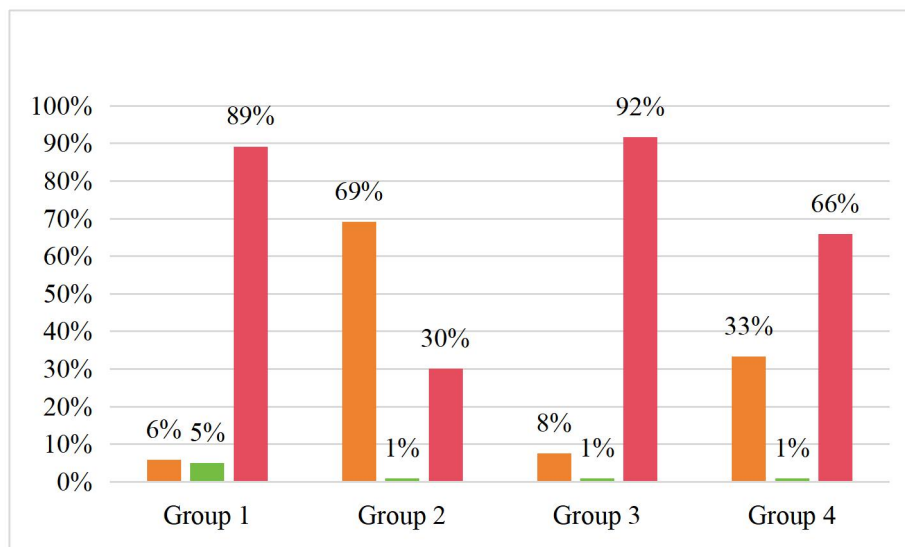


Figure 4.54 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of the titles occurring in thanks produced in response to a gift received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.4.2.2 Receiving favors

Figure 4.55 shows the frequency of use of the titles when expressing gratitude after receiving a favor. All participants used No titles more often (300 people; 63%) than Normal titles (173 people; 36%) and Special titles (7 people; 1%).

Figures 4.56 and 4.57 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of the titles across 4 groups of participants in thanks produced when receiving a favor. The extroverted groups preferred No titles (219 people; 91%), and the introverted groups Normal titles (157 people; 65%) more often than No titles.

More specifically, within the extroverted groups, 108 young people (90%) and 111 mature people (93%) preferred No titles, while only 4 young extroverts (3%) used Special titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the young people (95 people; 79%) used Normal titles more frequently than the mature people (62 people; 52%), while the mature introverted group showed a similar frequency in the use of Normal titles and No titles.

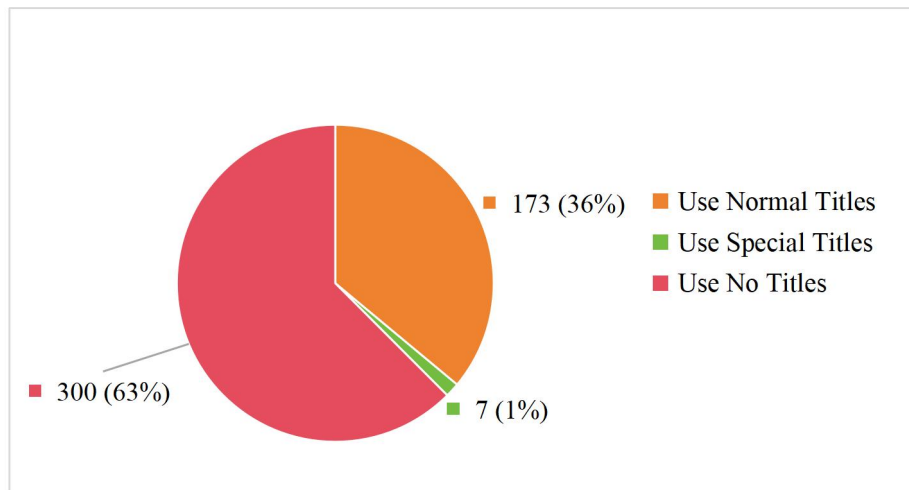


Figure 4.55 Frequency of use of the titles occurring of thanks produced in response to a favor received
Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

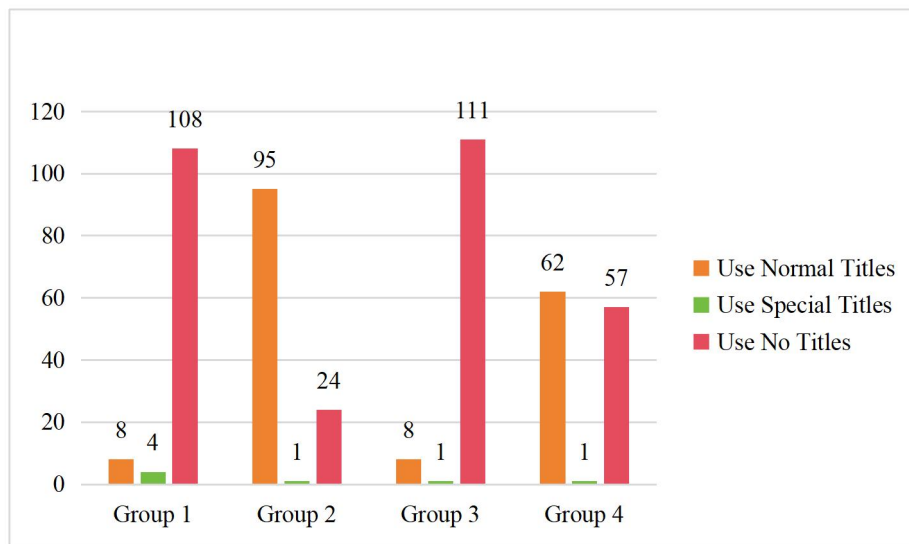


Figure 4.56 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of the titles in response to a favor received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

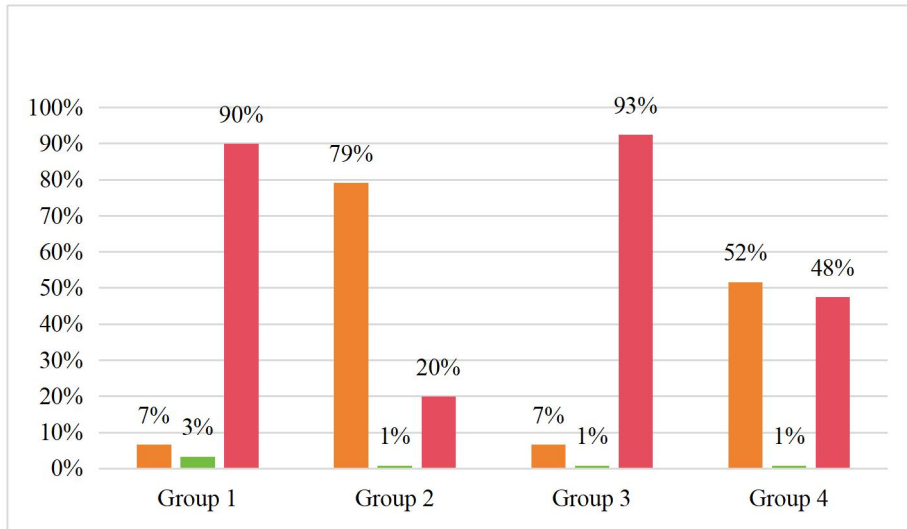


Figure 4.57 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of the titles in thanks produced in response to a favor received across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.4.3 The interactional context

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the titles under different types of settings, (i.e., Family settings and Social settings).

4.4.3.1 Family settings

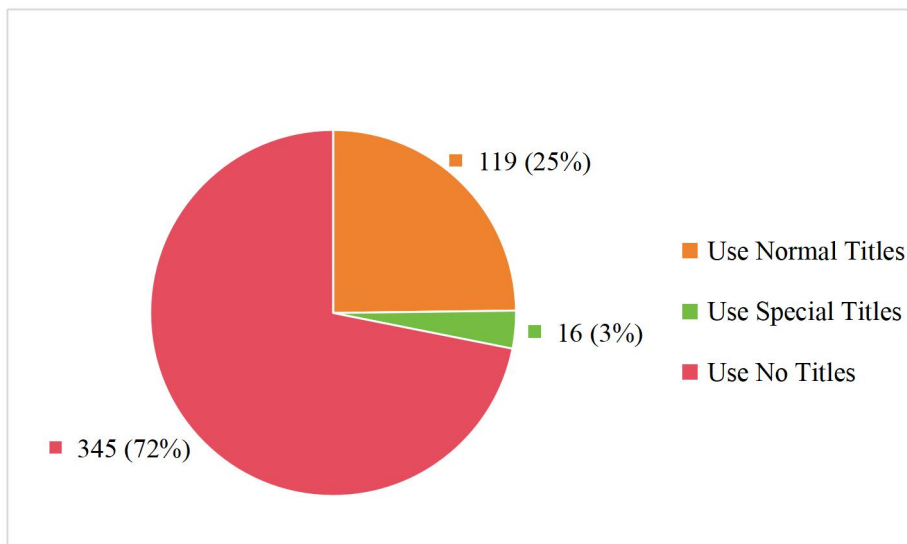


Figure 4.58 Frequency of use of the titles in thanks produced in a family setting

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figure 4.58 shows the frequency of use of the titles in thanks produced in the context of a family setting. All participants used No titles more often (345 people; 72%) than Normal titles (119 people; 25%) and Special titles (16 people; 3%).

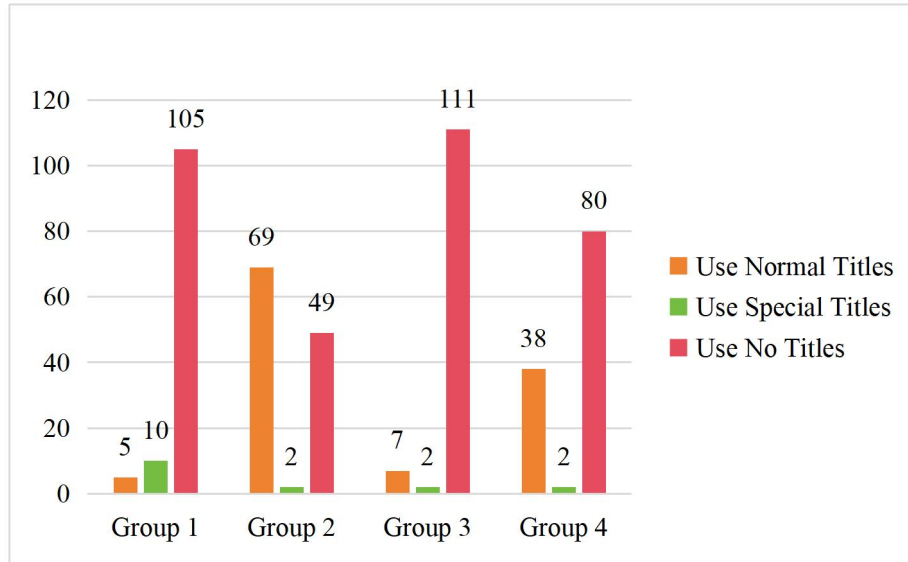


Figure 4.59 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of the titles in thanks produced in a family setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.59 and 4.60 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of the titles occurring in thanks produced in the context of a family setting across 4 groups of participants. The young introverted group had the highest frequency of use of Normal titles (69 people; 58%); the other three groups used No titles more frequently than Normal titles. More specifically, the extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (216 people; 90%) than the introverted groups (196 people; 54%). In the extroverted groups, 111 mature people (93%) and 105 young people (88%) preferred No titles, and only 10 young people (6%) used Special titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (80 people; 67%) used No titles more frequently than the young people (49 people; 41%).

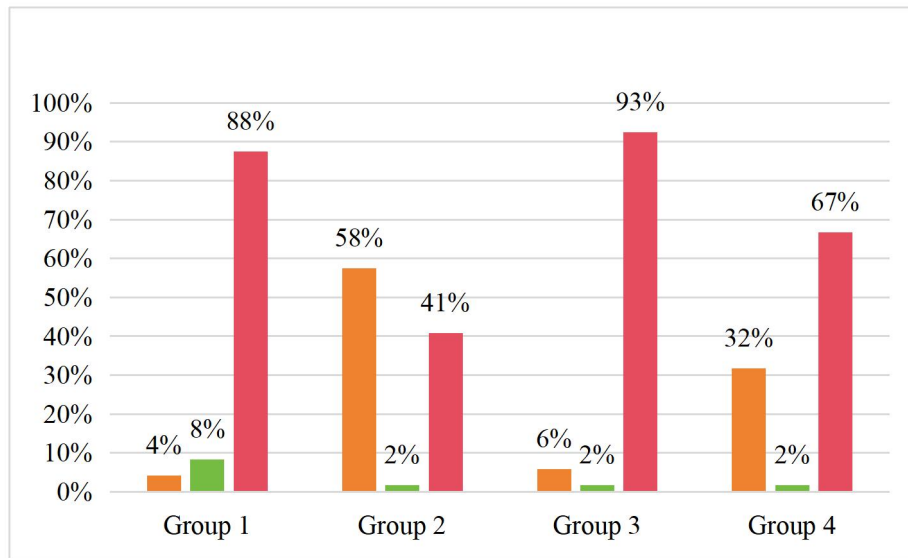


Figure 4.60 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of the titles occurring in thanks produced in a family setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.4.3.2 Social settings

Figure 4.61 shows the frequency of use of various types of titles in thanks produced in the context of a social setting. All participants used No titles more often (280 people; 60%) than Normal titles (193 people; 40%).

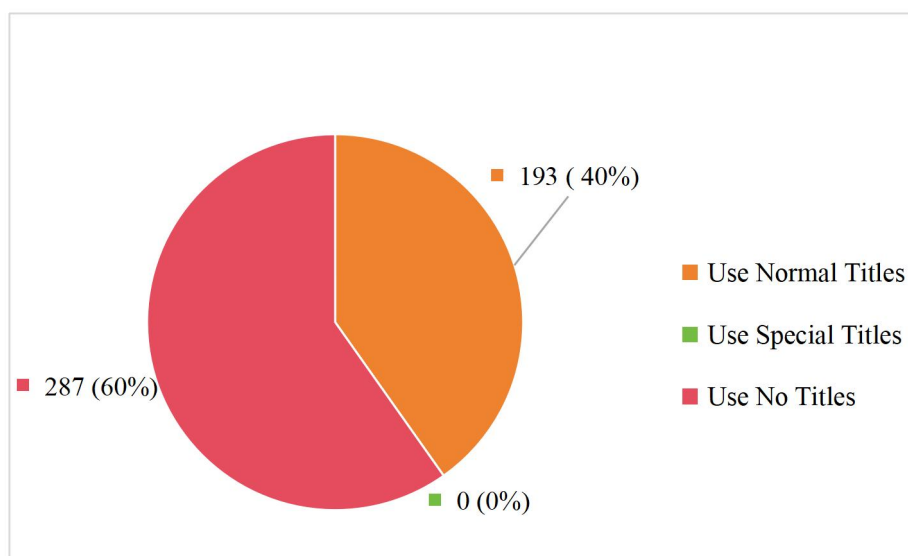


Figure 4.61 Frequency of use of titles in thanks produced in a social setting

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

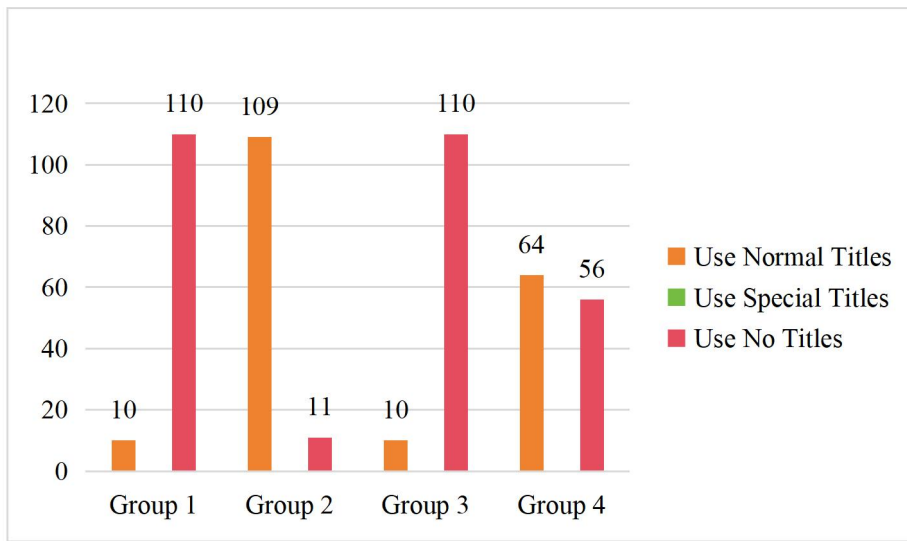


Figure 4.62 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of the titles in thanks produced in a social setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

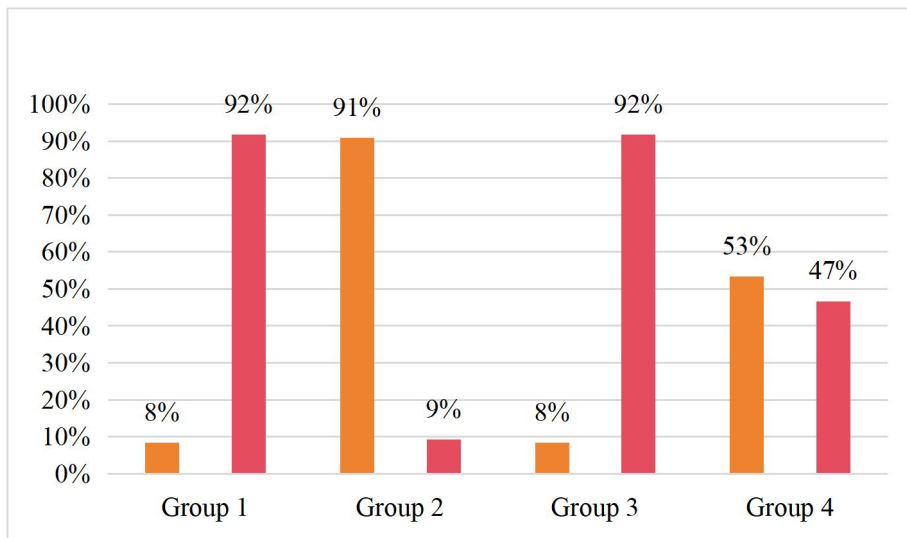


Figure 4.63 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of titles in thanks produced in a social setting across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.62 and 4.63 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of the titles used in thanks produced across 4 groups of participants in the context of a social setting. The extroverted groups preferred No

titles (220 people; 92%), and the introverted groups used Normal titles more often than No titles (173 people; 72%), while the mature introverted group tended to employ both Normal titles and No titles to a similar extent. More specifically, in the extroverted groups, both the young people (110; 92%) and the mature people (110; 92%) used No titles to the same extent. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the young people (109 people; 91%) used Normal titles more frequently than the mature people (64 people; 53%).

4.4.4 The status variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of the titles when interacting with people of different social status (i.e., Superiors, Subordinates, and Peers).

4.4.4.1 Subordinates addressing superiors

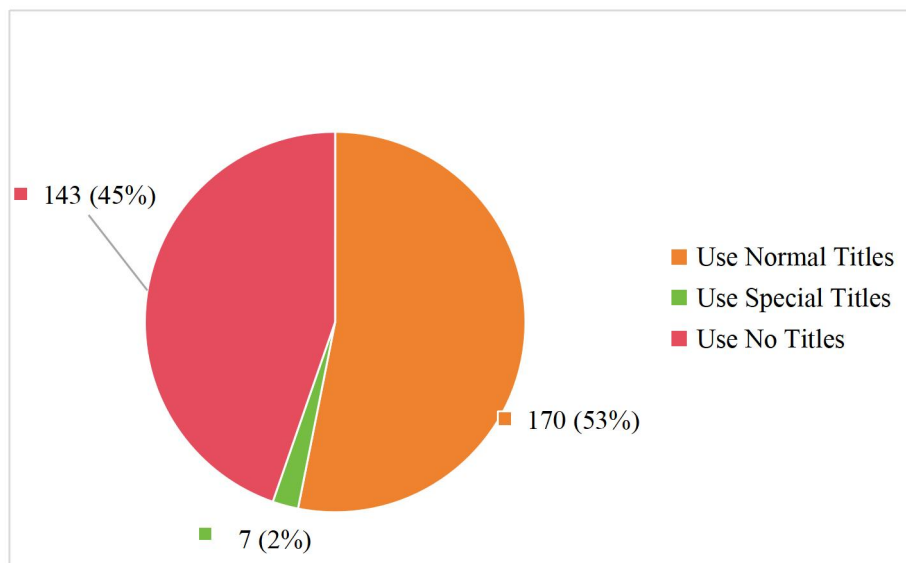


Figure 4.64 Frequency of use of titles in thanks produced to a superior

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figure 4.64 shows that, when expressing gratitude to a superior, normal titles (170 people; 53%) and No title (143 people; 45%) were used with a similar frequency of occurrence, while only a few participants used Special titles (7 people; 2%).

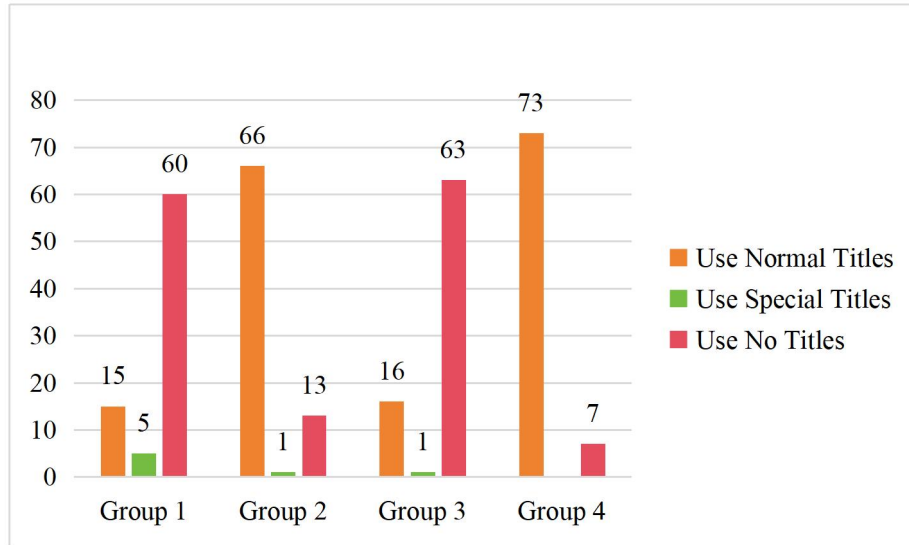


Figure 4.65 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of titles in thanks expressed to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

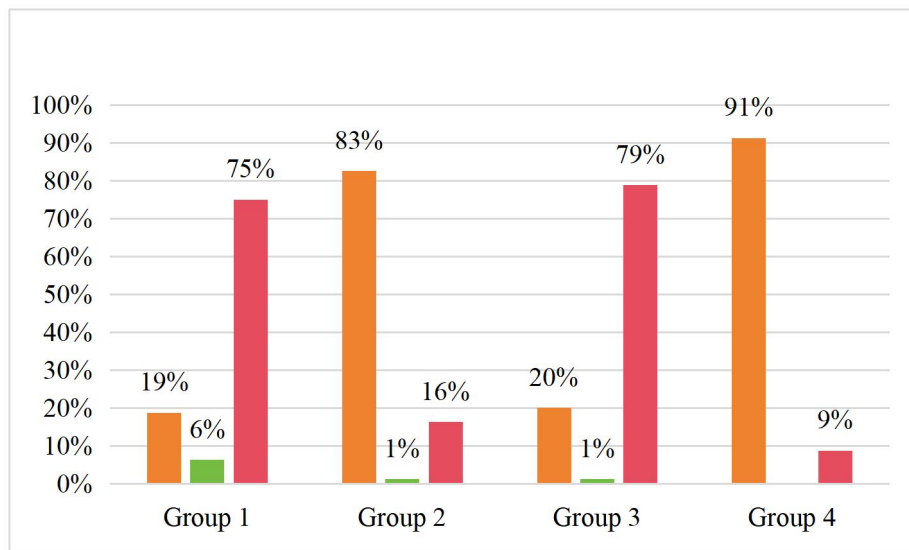


Figure 4.66 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of titles in thanks addressed to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.65 and 4.66 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of the titles across 4 groups of participants when expressing

gratitude to a superior. The extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (157 people; 98%) than Normal titles, while the introverted groups used Normal titles (139 people; 87%) more frequently than No titles. More specifically, in the extroverted groups, 63 mature people (79%), 60 young people (75%) preferred No titles, and 5 young extroverts (6%) used Special titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (73 people; 91%) used Normal titles more frequently than the young people (66 people; 83%).

4.4.4.2 Superiors addressing subordinates

Figure 4.67 shows the frequency of use of titles when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. All participants used No titles more often (218 people; 69%) than Normal titles (95 people; 30%) or Special titles (3 people; 1%).

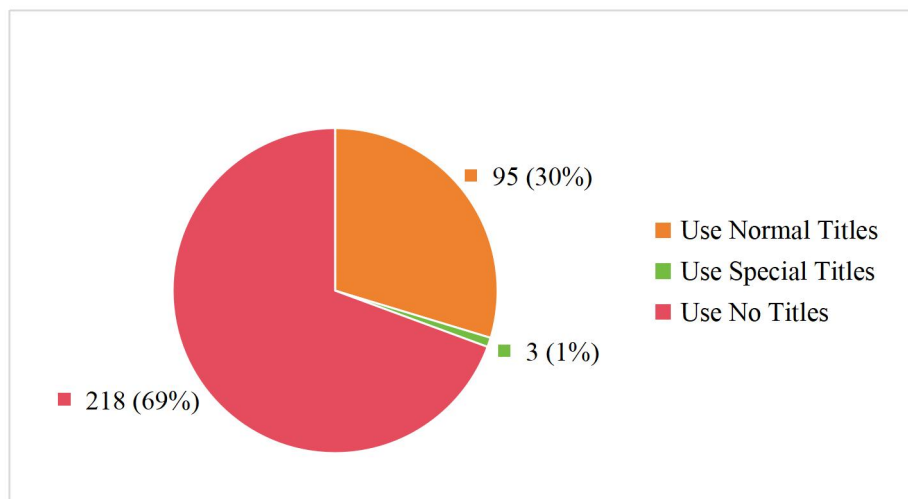


Figure 4.67 Frequency of use of titles in thanks addressed to a subordinate

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.68 and 4.69 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of titles occurring produced across 4 groups of participants when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. Participants in the extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (156 people; 98%) than those in the introverted groups (66 people; 37%). In the extroverted groups, 79 mature people (99%) and 77 young people (96%) preferred No titles, while only 3 young extroverts (4%) used Special

titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (56 people; 70%) used No titles more frequently than the young people (10 people; 13%); the latter group used Normal titles the most often (70 people; 88%).

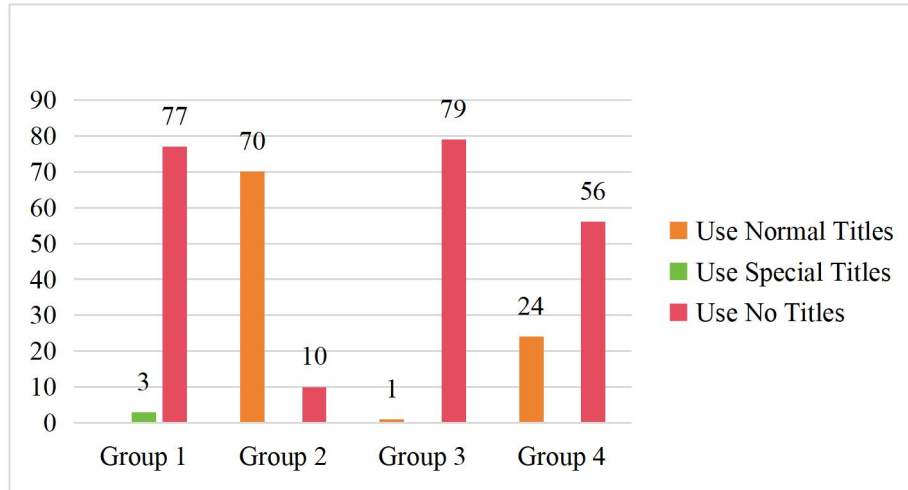


Figure 4.68 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of titles in thanks addressed to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

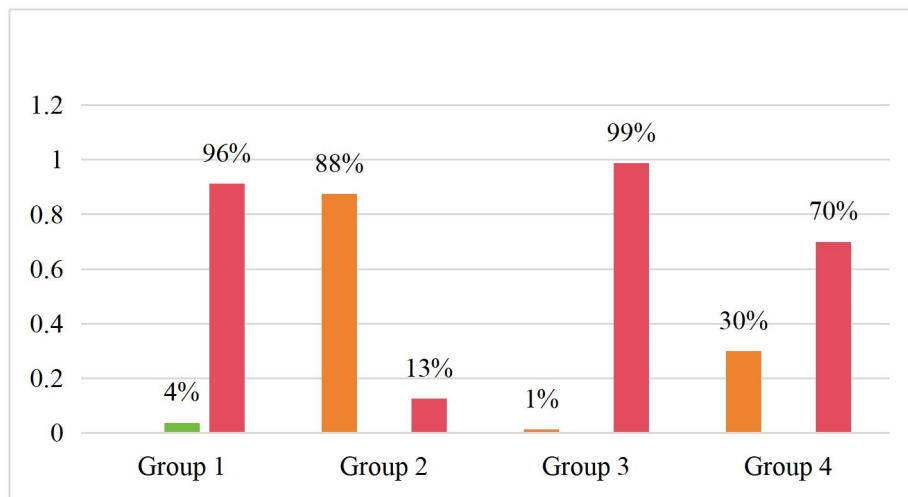


Figure 4.69 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of the titles in thanks addressed to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.4.4.3 Peers addressing peers

Figure 4.70 shows the frequency of use of titles when expressing gratitude to a peer. All participants used No titles the most frequently (267 people; 83%). Normal titles (47 people; 15%) and Special titles (6 people; 2%) were used much less frequently.

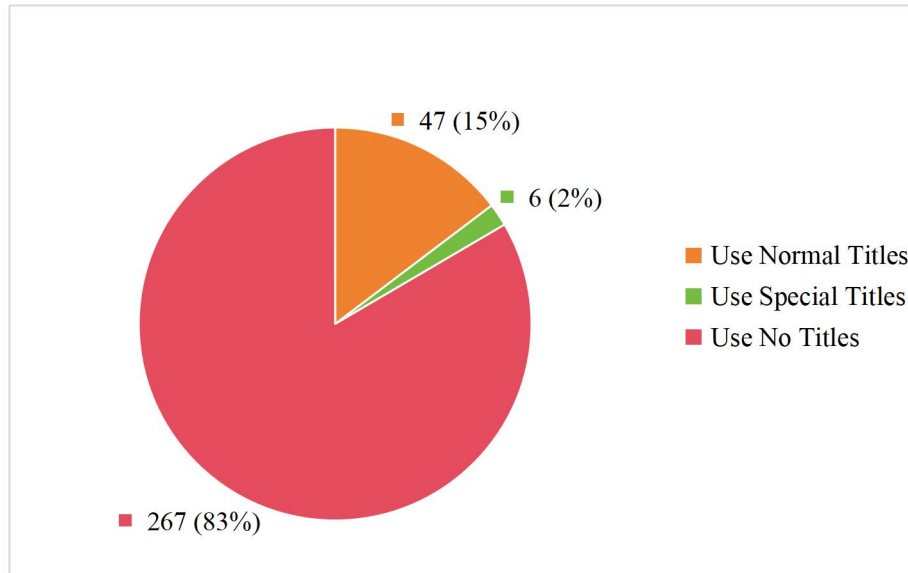


Figure 4.70 Frequency of use of titles in thanks addressed to a peer

Notes: Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

Figures 4.71 and 4.72 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of various types of titles across 4 groups of participants when expressing gratitude to a peer. Only the young introvert group showed a general tendency to employ both Normal titles (42 people; 53%) and No titles (37 people; 46%) to a similar extent, while the other three groups used No titles more frequently than Normal titles, but not to the same degree. More specifically, the extroverted groups used No titles more frequently (157 people; 98%) than the introverted groups (110 people; 68%). In the extroverted groups, 79 mature people (99%) and 78 young people (98%) preferred No titles. In contrast, in the introverted groups, the mature people (73 people; 91%) used No titles more frequently than the young people (37 people; 46%).

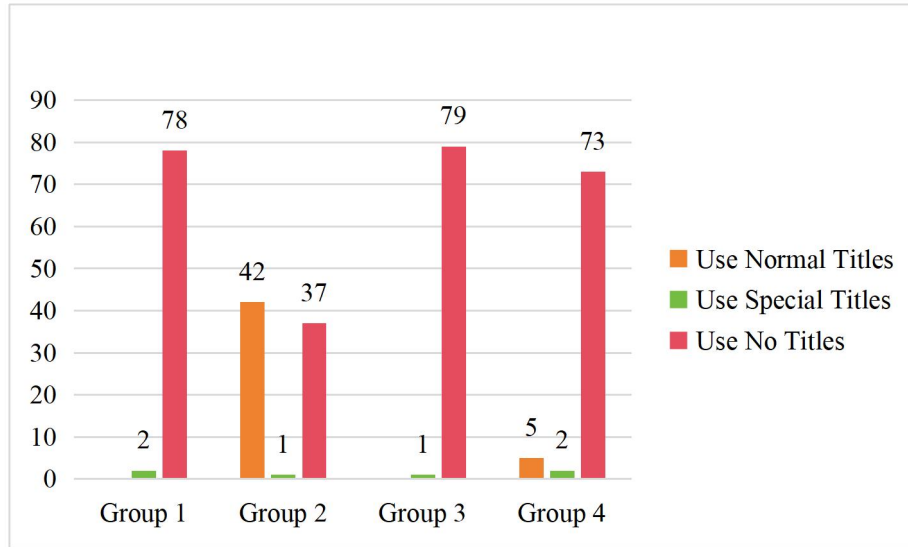


Figure 4.71 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of titles in thanks addressed to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

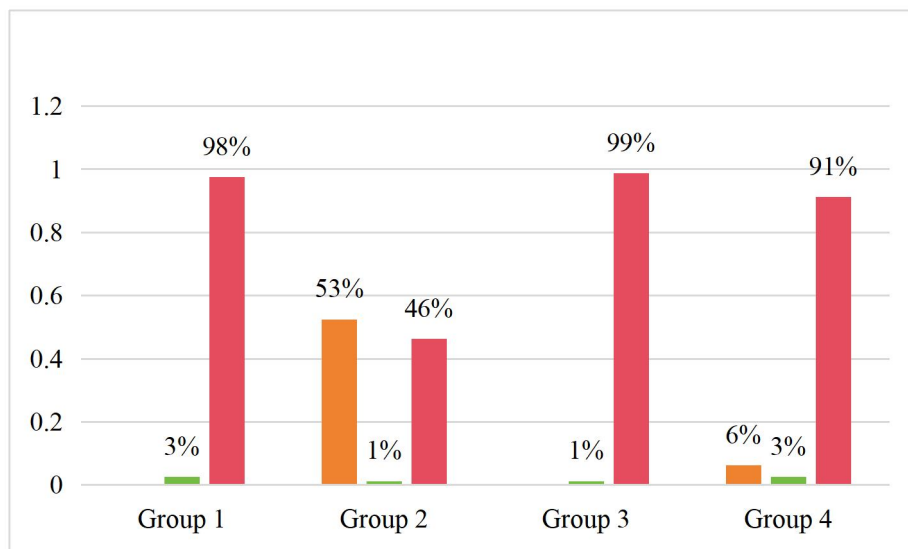


Figure 4.72 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of titles in thanks addressed to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Orange: Use Normal Titles; Green: Use Special Titles; Red: Use No Titles.

4.5 (In)formal lexico-syntactic patterns

In this section, I will present the frequency of occurrence of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in the elicited texts, both in general and in relation to specific

contextual variables.

4.5.1 Overall frequency

In this section, I report on the general frequency of occurrence of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude as exemplified in the data (see Figure 4.37). All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more often (687 people; 72%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (273 people; 28%).

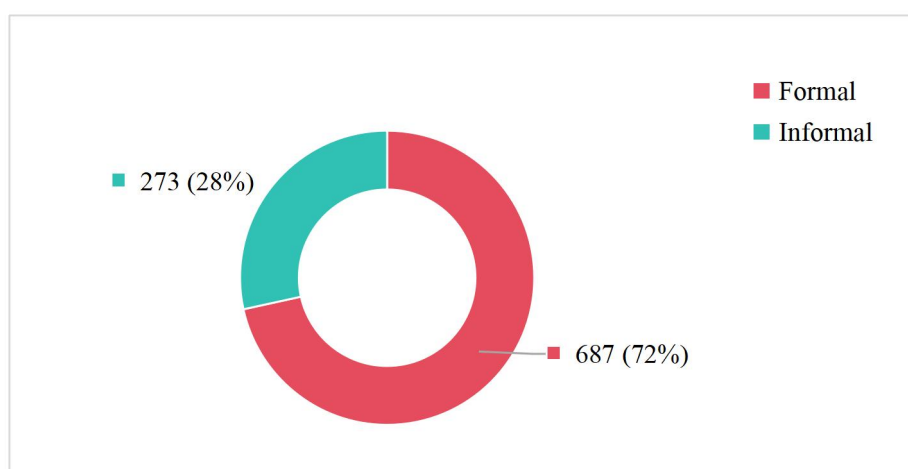


Figure 4.73 Overall frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figures 4.74 and 4.75 illustrate the frequency of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns used by the 4 groups of participants, presented in raw numbers and percentage values, respectively. Only in the young extroverted group did more participants use informal lexico-syntactic patterns (182 people; 76%) than formal lexico-syntactic patterns (58 people; 24%); the other three groups favored formal lexico-syntactic patterns over informal ones, although not to the same extent. Specifically, young introverts (188 people; 78%) used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than young extroverts (58 people; 24%). Furthermore, 237 mature introverts (99%) and 204 mature extroverts (85%) exhibited a clear preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns.

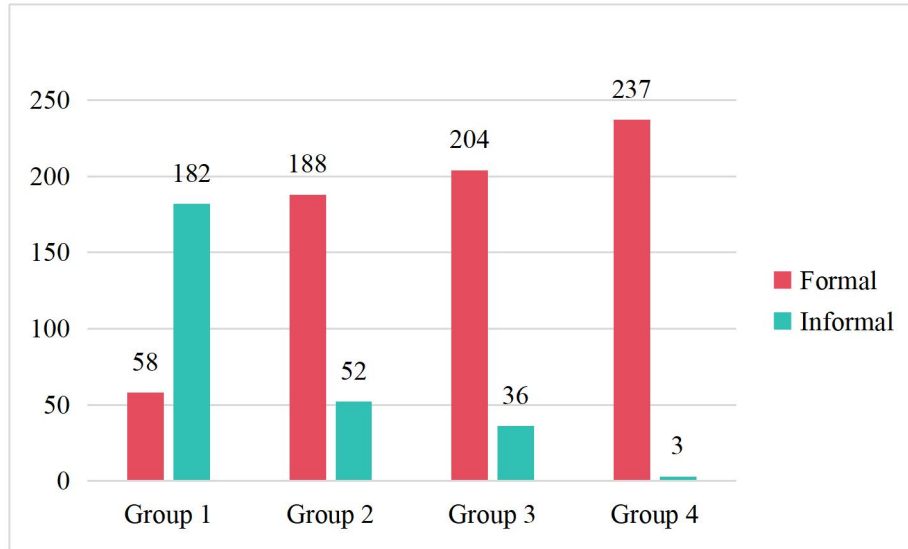


Figure 4.74 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

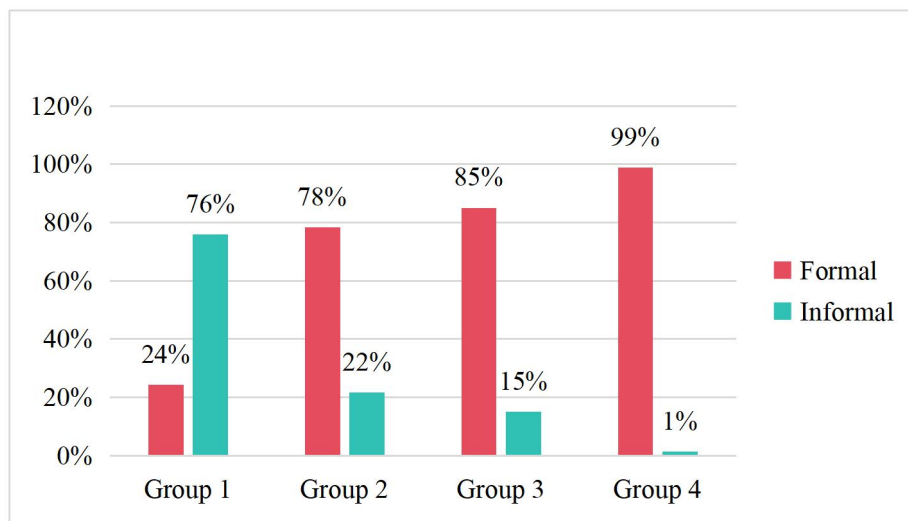


Figure 4.75 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.2 The benefit variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns under different benefit conditions (i.e., Receiving gifts and Receiving favors).

4.5.2.1 Receiving gifts

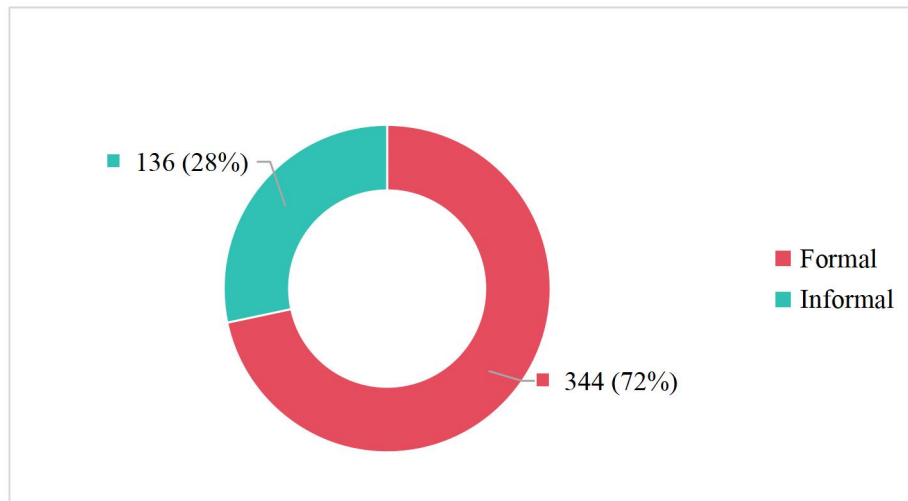


Figure 4.76 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a gift received by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figure 4.76 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude after receiving a gift. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more often (344 people; 72%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (136 people; 28%).

Figures 4.77 and 4.78 illustrate the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants, presented in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing thanks after receiving a gift. Only in the young extroverted group did more participants employ informal lexico-syntactic patterns (94 people; 78%) than formal lexico-syntactic patterns (26 people; 22%); the other three groups employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than informal ones, albeit not to the same degree. Specifically, the mature groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently (220 people; 92%) than the young groups (124 people; 52%). In the mature groups, 117 of the introverts (98%) and 103 of the extroverts (86%) preferred formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Similarly, within the young groups, the introverts (98 people; 82%) employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than the extroverts (26 people; 22%).

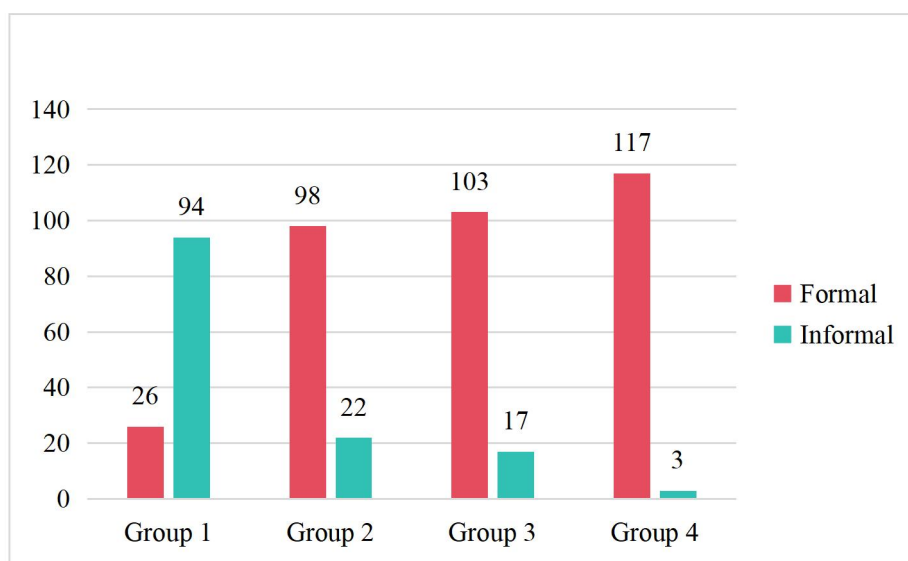


Figure 4.77 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a gift received by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

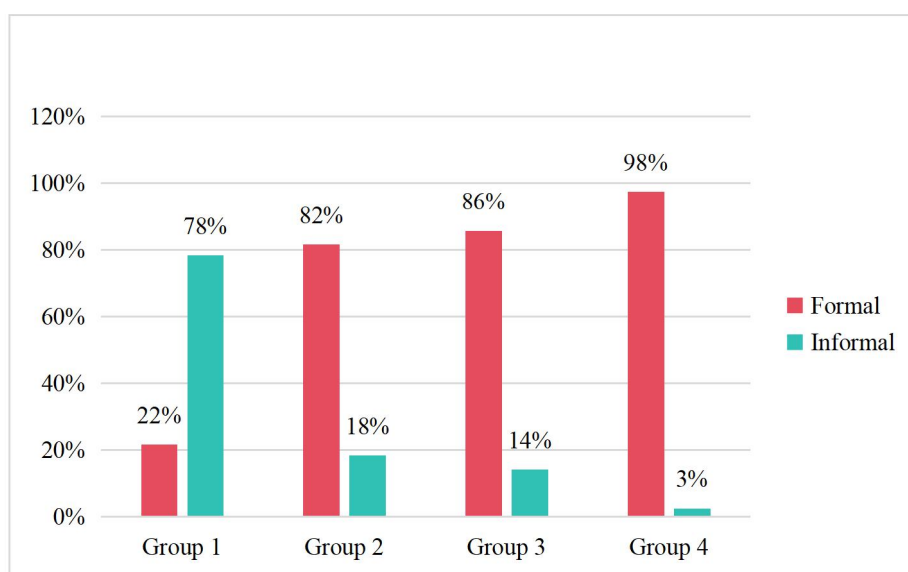


Figure 4.78 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a gift received by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.2.2 Receiving favors

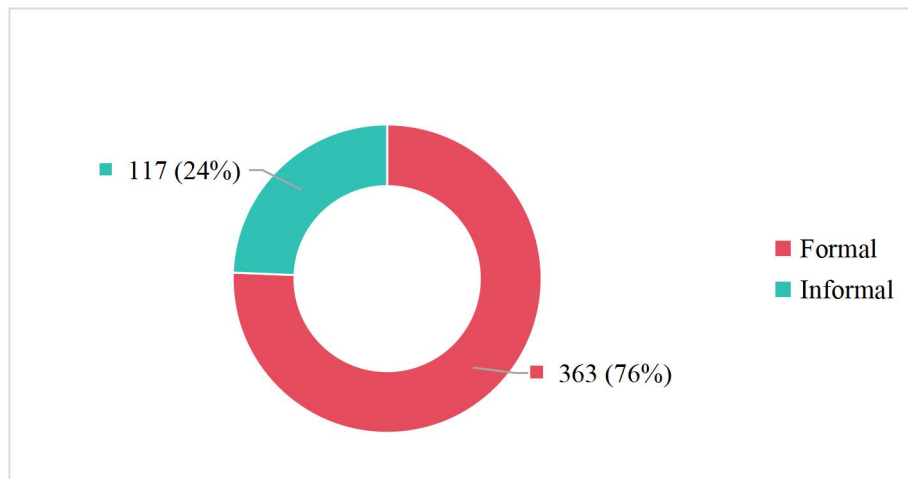


Figure 4.79 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a favor received by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figure 4.79 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude after receiving a favor. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns much more often (363 people; 76%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (117 people; 24%).

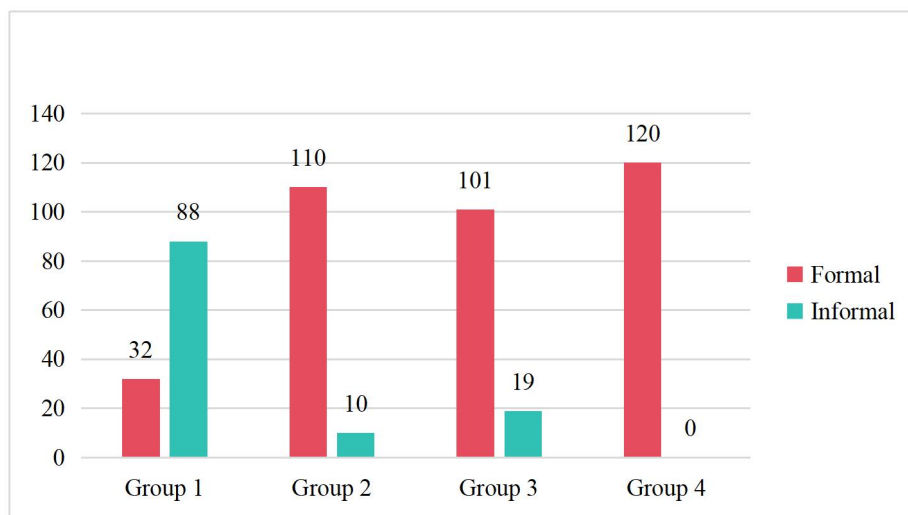


Figure 4.80 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a favor received by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

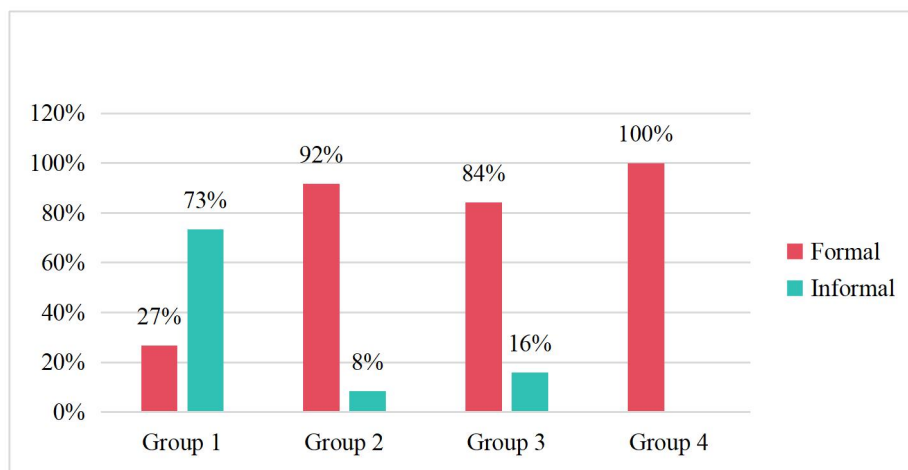


Figure 4.81 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in response to a favor received by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figures 4.80 and 4.81 illustrate the frequency of use, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants when expressing thanks in response to receiving a favor. Only in the young extrovert group did more participants employ informal lexico-syntactic patterns (88 people; 73%) than formal lexico-syntactic patterns (32 people; 27%), the other three groups employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than informal ones, albeit not to the same extent. More specifically, participants in the mature groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently (221 people; 92%) than those in the young groups (142 people; 60%). In the mature groups, all the introverts (120 people; 100%) and 101 of the extroverts (84%) preferred formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Within the young groups, the introverts (110 people; 92%) employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than the extroverts (32 people; 27%).

4.5.3 The interactional context

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns under different types of settings, (i.e., Family settings and Social settings).

4.5.3.1 Family settings

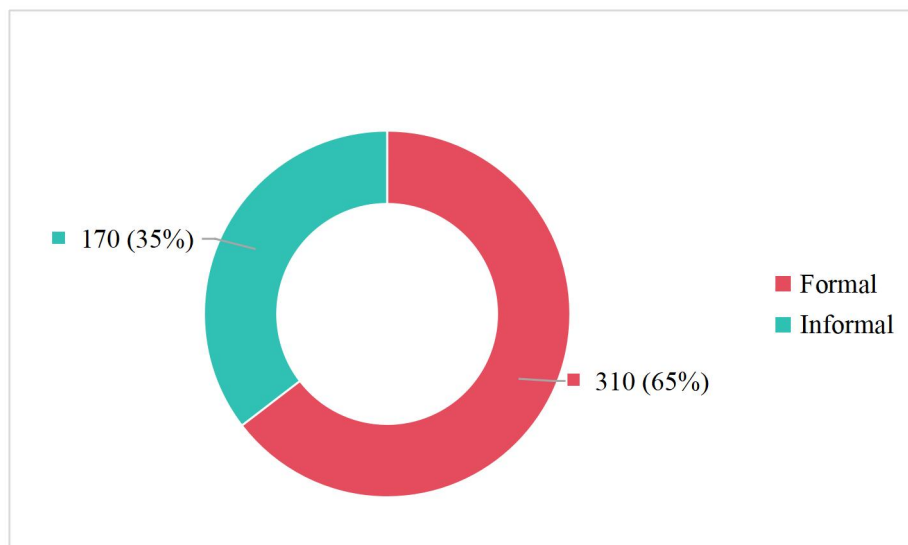


Figure 4.82 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a family setting by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figure 4.82 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns instantiated in thanks produced in the context of a family setting. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more often (310 people; 65%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (170 people; 35%).

Figures 4.83 and 4.84 report the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic pattern usage across 4 groups of participants, presented in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, within the context of a family setting. Only in the young extrovert group did more participants employ informal lexico-syntactic patterns (103 people; 86%) than formal lexico-syntactic patterns (17 people; 14%); the other three groups exhibited a preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns over informal ones, albeit to varying degrees. Specifically, participants in the introverted groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently (209 people; 87%) than those in the extroverted groups (101 people; 42%). Within the introverted groups, 117 mature participants (98%) and 92 young participants (77%) favored formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Conversely, in the extroverted groups, the mature participants (84 people;

70%) used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more often than the young participants (17 people; 14%).

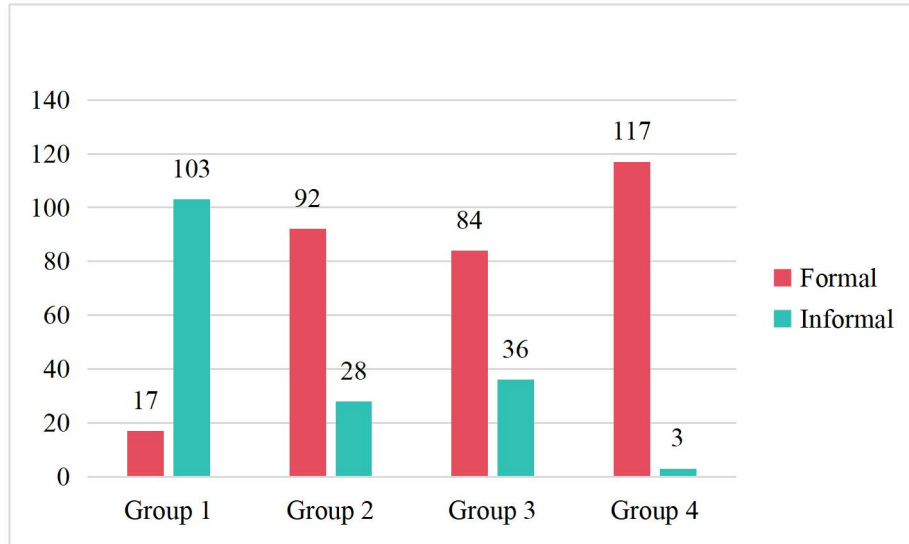


Figure 4.83 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a family setting by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

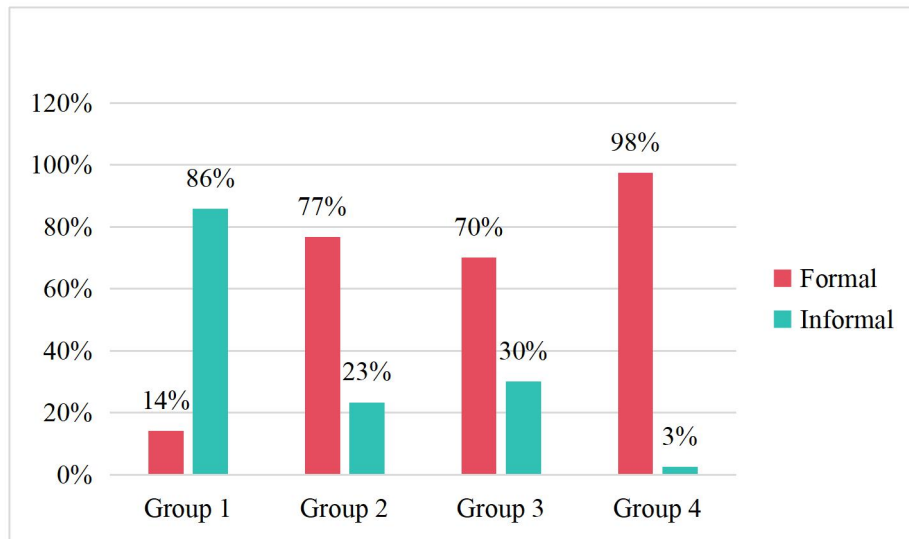


Figure 4.84 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a family setting by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.3.2 Social settings

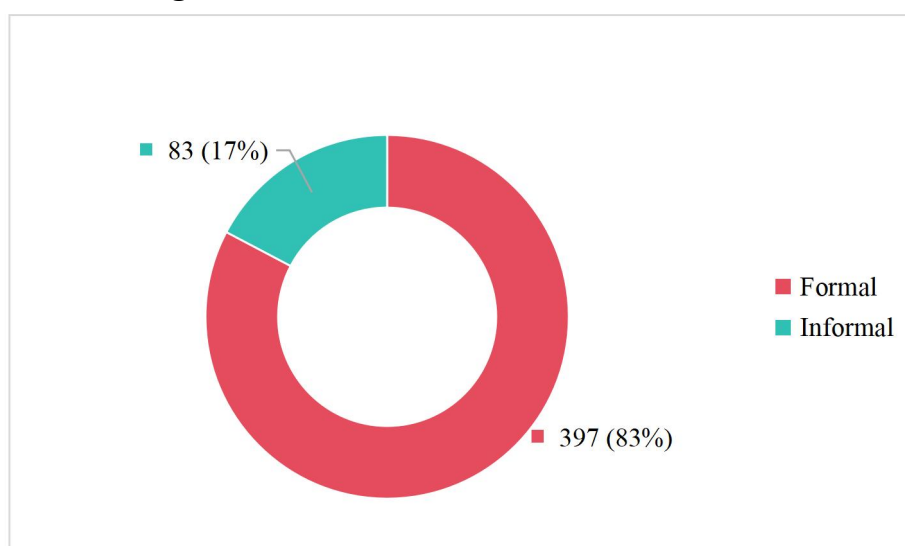


Figure 4.85 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a social setting by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figure 4.85 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns instantiated in thanks produced in the context of a social setting. All participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns much more often (397 people; 83%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (83 people; 17%).

Figures 4.86 and 4.87 illustrate the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, in the context of a social setting. Only in the young extrovert group did more participants employ informal lexico-syntactic patterns (79 people; 66%) than formal lexico-syntactic patterns (41 people; 34%); in the other three groups, nearly all participants employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns. More specifically, the mature groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently (240 people; 100%) than the young groups (157 people; 65%). In the mature groups, all the introverts (120 people; 100%) and all the extroverts (120 people; 100%) showed a preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Within the young groups, the introverts (116 people; 97%) employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently than the extroverts (41 people; 34%).

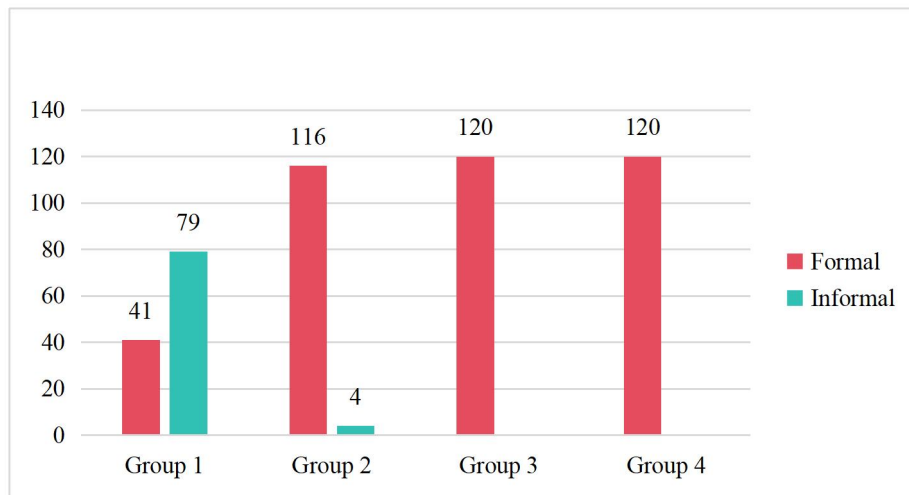


Figure 4.86 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a social setting by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

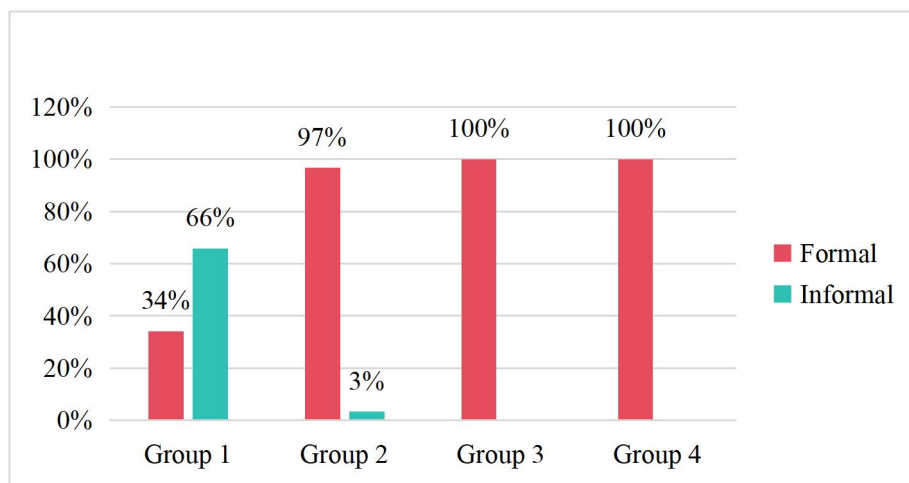


Figure 4.87 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced in a social setting by 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.4 The status variable

In this section, I report on the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks produced when interacting with people of different status levels (i.e., Superiors, Subordinates, and Peers).

4.5.4.1 Subordinates addressing superiors

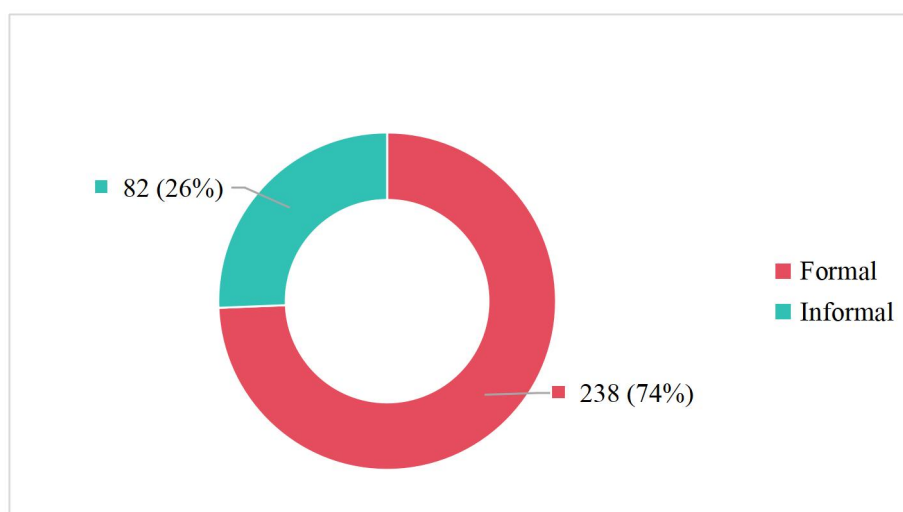


Figure 4.88 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a superior produced by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figure 4.88 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude to a superior. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns much more often (238 people; 74%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (82 people; 26%).

Figures 4.89 and 4.90 report the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants, presented in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a superior. The introverted groups exhibited a stronger preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns (157 people; 98%) over informal patterns. The extroverted groups, however, demonstrated a balanced tendency to employ both (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Specifically, within the introverted groups, all the mature participants (80 people; 100%) and a significant majority of the young participants (72 people; 90%) favored formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Conversely, within the extroverted groups, mature participants (44 people; 55%) and young participants (42 people; 53%) used formal lexico-syntactic patterns with nearly equal frequency.

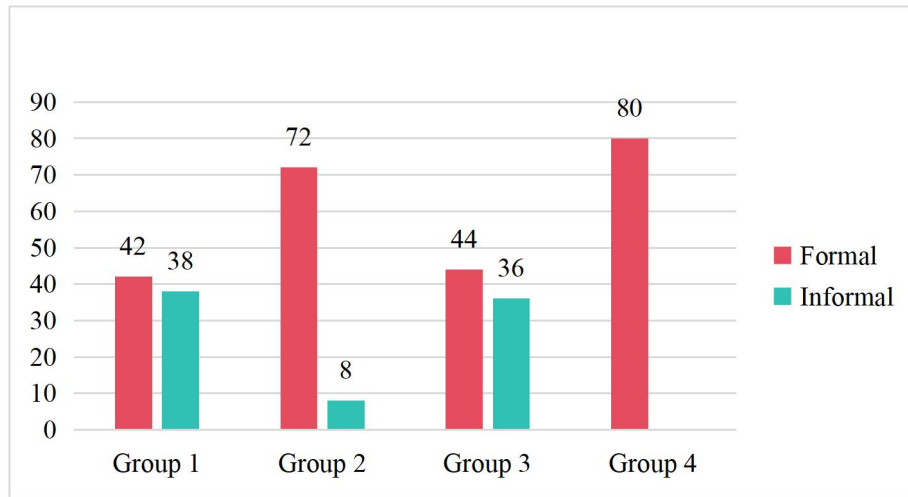


Figure 4.89 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

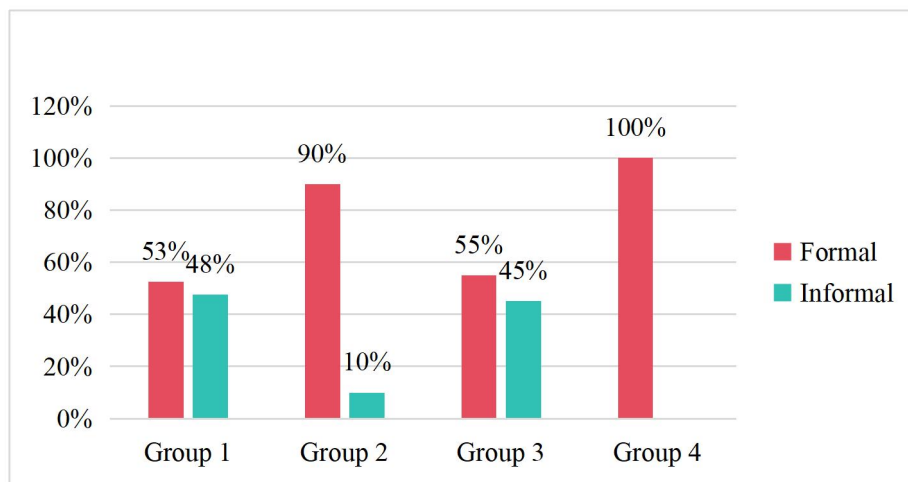


Figure 4.90 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a superior across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.4.2 Superiors addressing subordinates

Figure 4.91 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns much more often (259 people; 78%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (70 people; 22%).

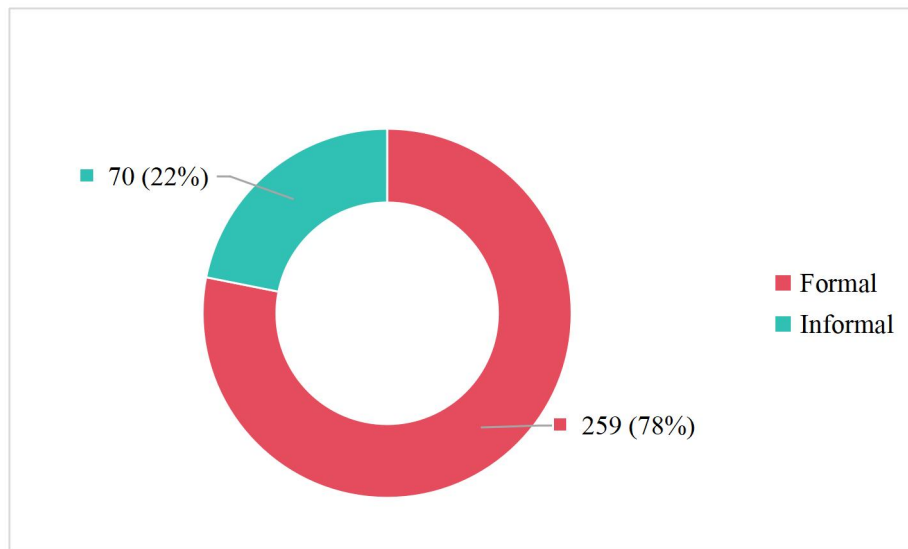


Figure 4.91 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a subordinate produced by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

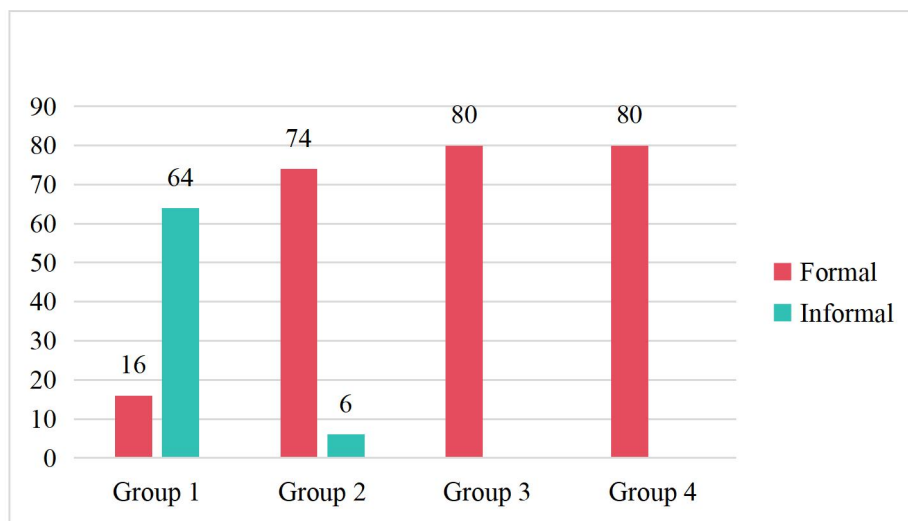


Figure 4.92 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figures 4.92 and 4.93 illustrate the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants, in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a subordinate. Only in the young

extroverted group did a greater number of participants employ informal lexico-syntactic patterns (64 people; 80%) compared to formal lexico-syntactic patterns (16 people; 20%); in the other three groups, nearly all the participants employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns. More specifically, all the participants in the mature groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns (160 people; 100%), while slightly over half of those in the young groups (90 people; 56%) did. Within the mature groups, both the introverts (80 people; 100%) and the extroverts (80 people; 100%) exhibited a uniform preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns. Conversely, within the young groups, the introverts (74 people; 93%) employed formal lexico-syntactic patterns much more often than the extroverts (16 people; 20%).

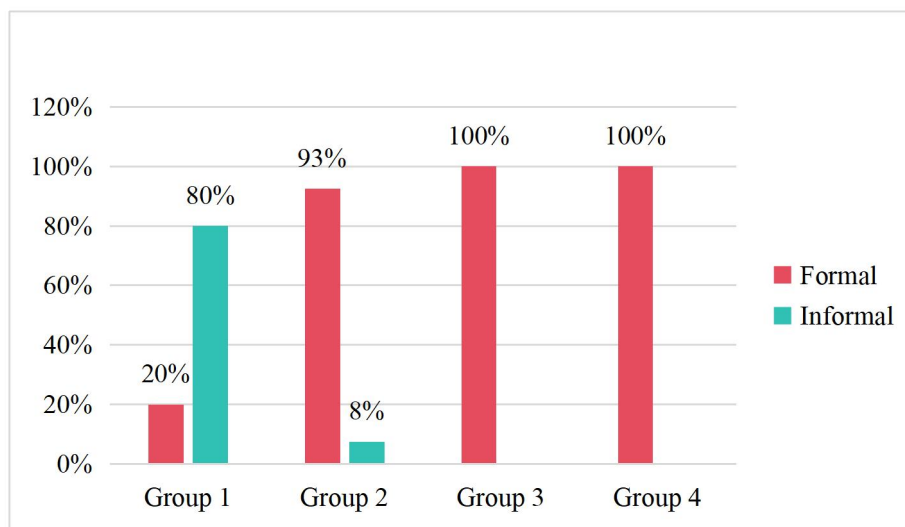


Figure 4.93 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a subordinate across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.5.4.3 Peers addressing peers

Figure 4.94 shows the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns when expressing gratitude to a peer. All the participants used formal lexico-syntactic patterns more often (219 people; 68%) than informal lexico-syntactic patterns (101 people; 32%).

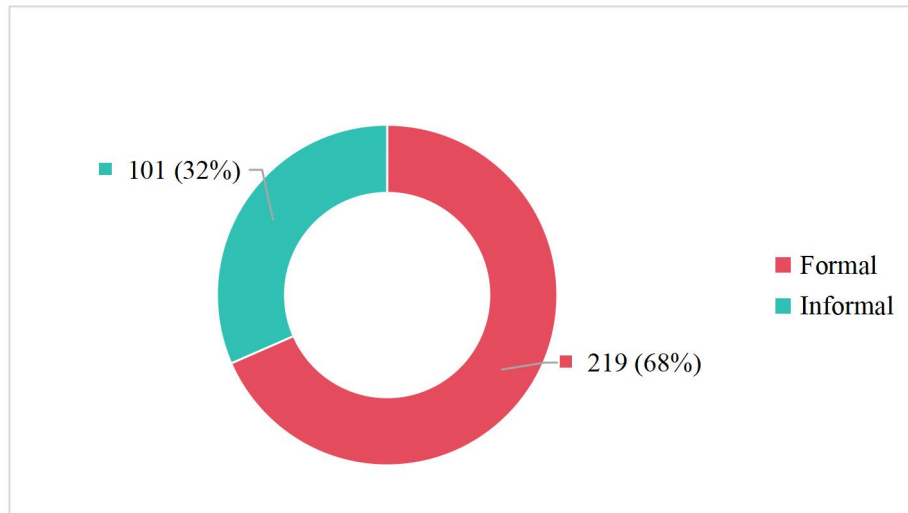


Figure 4.94 Frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a peer produced by all participants

Notes: Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

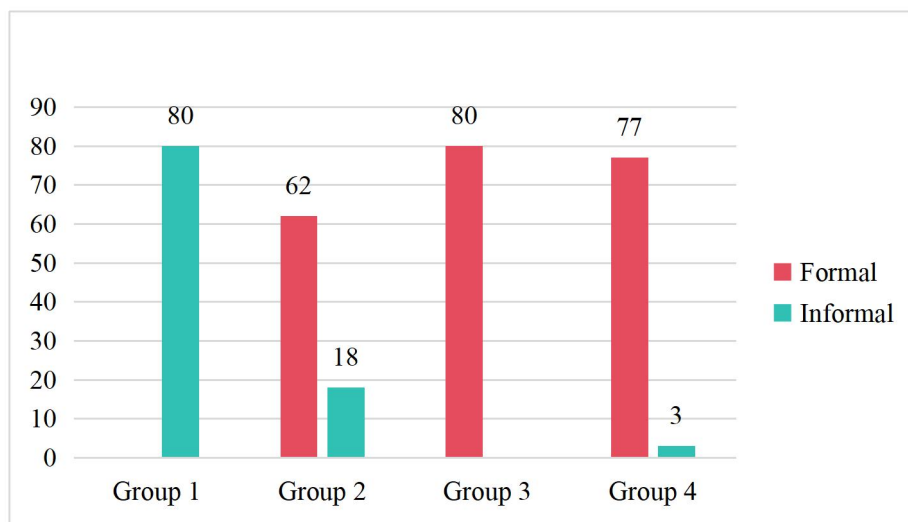


Figure 4.95 Frequency of use (in raw figures) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

Figures 4.95 and 4.96 illustrate the frequency of use of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns across 4 groups of participants in raw figures and percentage values, respectively, when expressing gratitude to a peer. The young extroverted group employed informal lexico-syntactic patterns (80 people; 100%); in contrast, the other three groups favored formal lexico-syntactic patterns over informal ones, albeit to

varying degrees. Specifically, participants in the mature groups utilized formal lexico-syntactic patterns more frequently (157 people; 98%) than the young groups (62 people; 39%). Within the mature groups, 77 of the introverts (96%) and all the extroverts (80 people; 100%) preferred formal lexico-syntactic patterns, and the young introverts (74 people; 93%) also exhibited a strong tendency to use formal lexico-syntactic patterns.

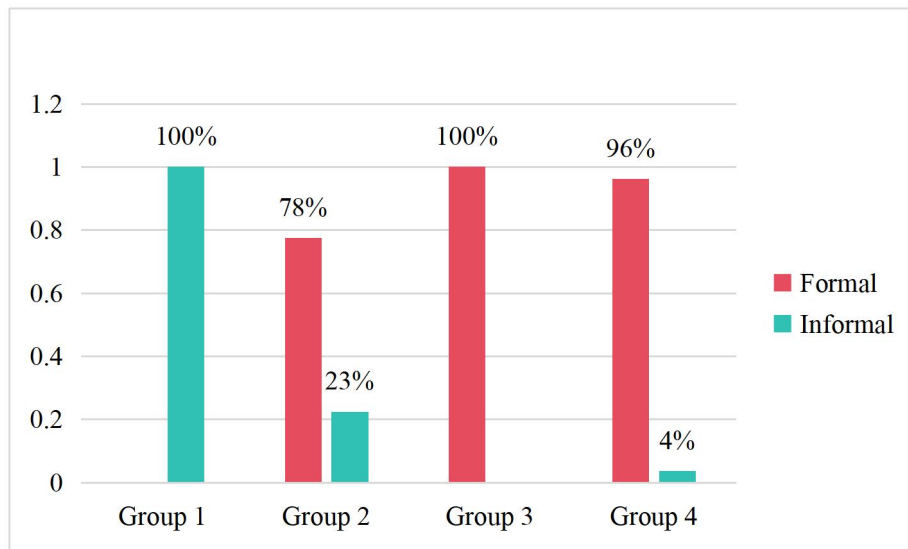


Figure 4.96 Frequency of use (in percentage values) of (in)formal lexico-syntactic patterns in thanks addressed to a peer across 4 groups of participants

Notes: Group 1: Extroverted young Chinese adults; Group 2: Introverted young Chinese adults; Group 3: Extroverted mature Chinese adults; Group 4: Introverted mature Chinese adults; Red: Formal lexico-syntactic patterns; Cyan: Informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

4.6 Conclusion

The findings revealed a few key trends. Firstly, the mature groups exhibited a stronger tendency to employ direct gratitude strategies more frequently compared to the young groups. Also, in expressing gratitude, the mature groups were notably more inclined to use No titles than the young groups. Furthermore, mature groups demonstrated a pronounced preference for formal lexico-syntactic patterns, whereas the young groups showed a greater inclination towards informal expressions. However, variations in preferences were observed within the same age groups, contingent upon different personality types.

With regard to personality, the introverted groups consistently preferred the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy over other strategies, although they also occasionally used the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy. When expressing gratitude, the introverted groups were more likely to employ Normal titles and to prefer formal lexico-syntactic patterns overall. On the other hand, the extroverted groups tended to favor the Explicit thanks strategy. The young extroverts occasionally used the Praise strategy, and showed a strong preference for No titles in various contexts, highlighting their inclination towards more informal lexico-syntactic patterns.

A few usage patterns have emerged too. The most frequently used strategy was the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, especially among the introverts, while the Explicit thanks strategy was more common among the extroverts. The choice of using No titles was the most commonly used form of address, particularly among the extroverts, while Normal titles were only favored by the young introvert group. Formal lexico-syntactic patterns were predominant, while informal patterns were more prevalent among the young extroverts in various contexts.

In the next chapter, I will discuss and draw the implications from the findings.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss and draw implications from the data collected through the questionnaire. In Section 5.2, I will comment on the results across the four groups considered, (Young extroverts; Young introverts; Mature extroverts and Mature introverts) assessing the impact of the Age and Personality variables on gratitude expression. In Section 5.3, I will point out the contributions and limitations of this study, and present future development prospects.

5.2 Discussion of the results

In this section, I will analyze the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire. I will start by reflecting on and motivating the discursive patterns identified specific to each group of study participants. Then I will comment on the more general patterns, focusing on the impact of given situational variables on participants' choices.

5.2.1 Expressing gratitude

In this section, I discuss the data for the 4 groups (Young extroverted group; Young introverted groups; Mature extroverted group and Mature introverted group) when expressing gratitude.

5.2.1.1 The young extroverted group

The young extroverted group generally preferred Direct strategies, with the Explicit thanks strategy being the most frequently utilized. This preference reflects their inclination for straightforward and transparent appreciation, allowing them to immediately acknowledge the benefit received, which aligns with typical extrovert characteristics. This behavior is consistent with studies, such as Freitas et al. (2011), which suggested that extroverts tend to use more expressive and direct forms of communication to maintain interpersonal relationships.

Although the group primarily relied on Direct strategies, they occasionally employed Indirect strategies, such as the Praise strategy and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy, particularly in more personal or informal settings. These strategies indicated that the young extroverts valued reinforcing the emotional or material benefits of the favor, adding an extra layer of appreciation. The use of the Praise strategy not only highlighted the social skills of the young extroverts but also their desire to maintain and strengthen relationships by boosting the recipient's sense of self-worth. This was in line with Alexis and Peirchyi's (2017) research on leader-follower interactions, where praise served as an important tool in maintaining positive relationships in Chinese culture. This flexibility in strategy use, although not as common as direct expressions, indicated that young extroverts were capable of adjusting their communication based on the context, ensuring their expressions of gratitude were appropriately aligned with the situation. However, their infrequent use of Indirect strategies suggested that the young extroverts favored efficiency and clarity over more elaborate forms of gratitude expression. This finding aligned with Al-Ghazo's (2023) research, which indicated that younger individuals, especially extroverts, preferred more direct and straightforward communication styles in modern, informal settings.

The young extroverted group also exhibited a consistent preference for Informal lexico-syntactic patterns, which aligned with their sociable and relaxed communication style. Their typical choice of No titles further reinforced this informal approach, suggesting they preferred egalitarian social interactions, particularly among peers. This informal tendency allowed them to build closer, more casual relationships, which was characteristic of their extroverted nature. However, when addressing superiors, they balanced the Formal and Informal lexico-syntactic patterns, reflecting their awareness of status dynamics and the need to adapt their communication style accordingly. This shift from casual to formal language when interacting with superiors mirrored Chen and Yang's (2010) findings on politeness in Chinese society, where the expression of gratitude changed depending on the social rank of the recipient.

Although the young extroverts' use of informal patterns supported ease of communication, it may sometimes have undermined the perceived sincerity or depth of gratitude expressions in formal settings. This may have suggested a limitation in their ability to navigate more complex social situations that required tact and subtlety. The lower use of Indirect strategies might have indicated a preference for transparency over nuance, which could have limited their effectiveness in more status or formal settings where a greater degree of deference and indirectness might have been expected. Gu's (1990) research on politeness in Chinese interactions suggested that indirectness often played a key role in maintaining social harmony, especially in more formal contexts, which may not have been fully addressed by the young extroverts' communication style.

These findings were largely consistent with my initial expectations. However, the slightly lower-than-expected use of Indirect strategies could have been explained by the increasing informality and openness in communication among younger generations, as noted by Scollon and Scollon (2001). This informality reflected broader societal trends where efficiency and directness were increasingly valued, particularly in social media and digital communication, where brevity was key.

5.2.1.2 The young introverted group

The young introverted group predominantly favored Direct strategies, with the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy as their primary choice, and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy being the second most utilized. This preference for direct strategies indicated that young introverts were more comfortable providing clear and structured expressions of gratitude, which aligned with their more introspective and reflective nature. The combination of the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy and the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy suggested that they were focused on maintaining clarity and providing context in their social interactions, ensuring that their gratitude was well understood and appreciated. This approach suggested that young introverts placed great importance on the content and

structure of their communication, which aligned with previous research by Argyle (1982), who found that introverts often prioritized clarity and depth in their interpersonal interactions.

Furthermore, although young introverts' reliance on direct strategies may have suggested an adaptation to modern communication styles, the lower usage of indirect strategies could have reflected a deeper cultural or personal resistance to the informalization of communication, and it could also have been viewed as a protective mechanism, helping introverts manage social interactions within clearly defined boundaries, as noted by Gu (1990), who emphasized the importance of maintaining traditional politeness structures in formal settings.

The young introverts' consistent preference for Formal lexico-syntactic patterns, along with the use of Normal titles, further underscored their cautious and deliberate approach to social communication. This formality may have been tied to a desire to present themselves as respectful and considerate, especially in social settings where the use of formal language and titles could convey a sense of politeness and respect. According to Chen and Yang (2010), the emphasis on formality in Chinese society was often linked to a deep respect for hierarchy and social order, which could have explained why young introverts were inclined to use these patterns consistently.

The findings were largely consistent with my initial expectations, though the consistent use of formal patterns was slightly more pronounced than anticipated. This could have been due to the introverts' need to maintain a sense of control and predictability in their social interactions, which was often achieved through the use of formal language and structured strategies. Research by Komorowska (2021) supported this notion, indicating that introverts were more likely to adopt formal communication styles to ensure they were perceived as thoughtful and respectful.

5.2.1.3 The mature extroverted group

The mature extroverted group showed a strong inclination toward Direct strategies, with the Explicit thanks strategy being the most frequently used. This reflected their preference for clear and open communication, typical of extroverted individuals, who are generally more comfortable expressing gratitude in a straightforward manner. Additionally, the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy was also employed, particularly in family settings or when addressing superiors. Their use of this strategy suggests that the extroverts were also aware of the importance of highlighting the tangible benefits or effects of their gratitude in more formal contexts. This finding is supported by the findings of Alexis and Peirchyi (2017), who observed that in Chinese society, gratitude expressions often adapted depending on the social context and the relationship between the individuals involved.

From a more critical perspective, while the reliance on Direct strategies may have indicated an efficient and clear communication style, it also suggests that the mature extroverted group may have lacked flexibility in adapting their communication style to more formal or hierarchical contexts. That is, the limited use of Indirect strategies may have indicated a reduced sensitivity to situations that required a more nuanced or indirect approach, which might have affected their ability to navigate more complex social dynamics. This observation is consistent with Gu's (1990) research, which emphasized the importance of indirectness in Chinese social interactions, especially in preserving face and managing hierarchical relationships.

The mature extroverts' consistent preference for No titles across different settings, even when communicating with superiors or family members, indicated their inclination toward informal social relations. This behavior contrasted with their use of formal lexico-syntactic patterns, suggesting that, while they preferred informal interactions at a surface level (e.g., by not using titles), they still maintained a level of respect and structure in their communication through more formal language use. This combination of informal title usage and formal language may have reflected a

balancing act between their extroverted tendencies to connect with others on an equal footing and societal expectations of formality in specific contexts. As noted by Chen and Yang (2010), such behavior could be indicative of how extroverted individuals in Chinese society navigated between maintaining relationships and adhering to cultural norms of respect.

The results aligned with my initial expectations, particularly regarding the preference for Direct strategies. However, the consistent use of No titles was slightly more pronounced than expected, which could have been due to the increasing informalization of social relations, even among mature individuals. The slight underuse of Indirect strategies, compared to what I initially predicted, might have been attributed to the group's general comfort with open communication, reducing the need for more nuanced or subtle forms of gratitude expression. This trend finds a parallel in Al-Ghazo (2023), who highlighted that in more informal environments, individuals, especially extroverts, were less likely to resort to indirect expressions of gratitude, preferring more direct and explicit communication.

5.2.1.4 The mature introverted group

The mature introverted group consistently preferred Direct strategies across all situations, with the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy being the most commonly used. This reflected their tendency to prioritize clarity and structure in their communication, which aligned with introverted individuals' more reflective and thoughtful nature. The Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy allowed them to express gratitude in a clear, detailed manner, ensuring that their message was fully understood. This was consistent with research by Freitas et al. (2011), who found that introverts often preferred more structured communication to ensure their feelings were accurately conveyed. In addition to the primary strategy, the Acknowledgment of benefits strategy was also frequently used when responding to favors. This suggested that the mature introverts valued showing appreciation for tangible benefits received, which further supported their preference for explicit, direct communication.

The use of the Promise strategy, particularly when reacting to gifts received, indicated that they may have felt a sense of obligation or reciprocity when receiving something. This aligns with Chen and Yang's (2010) research on Chinese politeness, where gratitude expressions often involved a commitment to future action, especially in social settings. This contrasts with the patterns exhibited by younger introverts, who tended to be less formal and more exploratory in their communication, as noted by Freitas et al. (2011). The mature introverts' tendency to use more formal patterns reflected their heightened sensitivity to social expectations and their preference for maintaining clear boundaries in social interactions. Despite the preference for Direct strategies, which points to the mature introverts' clarity and thoroughness in communication, this may have also indicated a lack of spontaneity or adaptability in less structured, informal social interactions. This finding echoed Komorowska's (2021) analysis of introverted individuals, who often struggled with adapting to spontaneous or rapidly changing social contexts due to their preference for planned, deliberate interactions.

Regarding other linguistic patterns, the mature introverts consistently used No titles in most social interactions, showing a preference for informal social structures. However, when addressing superiors, they shifted to using Normal titles, highlighting their awareness of and respect for social status. This behavior recalls Alexis and Peirchy's (2017) findings, which showed that while introverted individuals may have preferred consistency in their communication style, they also acknowledged and responded to societal norms of respect and formality when necessary. Interestingly, the mature introverts' near-exclusive use of formal lexico-syntactic patterns suggests a significant commitment to conventional communication norms, arguably the most pronounced among all groups. This might have been viewed as a double-edged sword: while it underscored respectfulness and appropriateness, it could also have been perceived as overly rigid or lacking in warmth. Lin et al. (2016) highlighted that excessive formality, especially in gratitude expressions, may have sometimes been misinterpreted as distant or impersonal, a potential limitation for mature introverts in

highly relational or informal contexts.

The results aligned with my initial expectations, as mature introverts were predicted to favor structured and formal expressions of gratitude. However, the relatively higher use of the Promise strategy in reaction to gifts received was somewhat unexpected. This may have been due to the cultural expectation of reciprocity in Chinese society, where receiving a gift often entailed a future obligation, as highlighted by Gu (1990). The relatively lower frequency of more casual strategies, such as using No titles in all scenarios, suggested that the mature introverts' formal nature outweighed their desire for informal interaction, even in less formal settings.

5.2.2 The impact of non-linguistic variables

In this section, I discuss the impact of non-linguistic variables (Age and Personality) on the participants' discursive behavior when expressing gratitude.

5.2.2.1 Age

Age significantly influenced the use of Titles and the (In)Formal lexico-syntactic patterns in expressing gratitude. The mature adults were generally more inclined to use No Titles in most situations, only switching to Normal Titles when addressing superiors. This behavior could be attributed to a cultural shift in modern Chinese society toward less formal, more egalitarian social interactions. The use of No Titles reflects the broader trend toward reducing social hierarchies in everyday communication, influenced by globalization and the increasing informality promoted by modern media. However, when faced with authority figures or in status settings, the mature adults retained the traditional use of Normal Titles, which suggests a continued respect for societal norms deeply rooted in Confucian values. These values, as noted by Gu (1990), emphasize respect for seniority and authority, maintaining formality in situations where it is culturally expected. This selective use of titles indicates that older individuals were navigating between traditional values and modern, informal communication trends.

The young adults, particularly the young introverts, showed a greater tendency to use Normal Titles, which may have suggested an internalized respect for status despite the more informal context. This behavior may have stemmed from the younger generation's balancing act between the desire to adopt modern egalitarian norms and their awareness of the social expectations that still govern professional and formal interactions. This trend reflected Alexis and Peirchy's (2017) findings, where younger individuals often demonstrated a nuanced understanding of hierarchy and equality in formal settings. Interestingly, the young adults still favored No Titles in peer interactions, reflecting the influence of digital communication platforms that prioritize informality. This blend of No and Normal title usage suggests that the younger generation was navigating a transitional space between tradition and modernity, where both respect for status and a preference for egalitarianism coexist.

The results aligned with my initial expectations, especially regarding the tendency of mature adults to use No Titles unless in the presence of authority figures. This reflects the increasingly informal communication norms in modern Chinese society, while still upholding respect for social status in status settings. Similarly, the young adults' preference for Normal Titles when addressing peers or superiors met my predictions, particularly for the young introverts, who tend to be more cautious and reflective in social interactions. However, the younger generation's balance between using No Titles and Normal Titles further emphasized their flexibility in adapting to both traditional and modern communication expectations.

5.2.2.2 Personality traits

Personality, specifically the distinction between introverts and extroverts, strongly impacted the choice of the specific gratitude strategies. Extroverts were more inclined to use the Explicit thanks strategy, which emphasized straightforwardness and clarity in expressing gratitude. This preference for directness may be motivated by the extroverts' social and expressive nature, where the need for immediacy and clarity in

communication was paramount. Freitas et al. (2011) similarly showed that extroverts often preferred clear and simple communication to maintain strong interpersonal relationships.

The introverts, on the other hand, consistently favored the Explicit thanks + Explanations strategy, which provided them with a more structured and detailed way to express gratitude. The introverts tended to reflect more on their communication, and this strategy allowed them to convey not only gratitude but also context and reasoning, ensuring their message was thoroughly understood. Komorowska (2021) demonstrated that introverts often used more complex communication strategies to account for their reflective nature and to manage social interactions carefully. Furthermore, the introverts were more likely to use combination strategies in social settings, blending various forms of gratitude to ensure a more comprehensive expression of appreciation.

Interestingly, the extroverts tended to use single strategies, which highlighted their focus on efficiency and clarity in communication, while the introverts preferred combination strategies in social settings. The reason for this may be found in the nature of extroverts, who value clear and immediate feedback, whereas introverts favor depth and reflection. Chen and Yang (2010) observed a similar pattern in Chinese communication, where more reserved individuals, like introverts, often employed multi-layered strategies to navigate complex social relationships, ensuring both clarity and politeness were achieved.

The influence of personality on the choice of strategies generally aligned with my initial predictions, especially regarding extroverts' preference for direct and straightforward gratitude strategies and introverts' tendency to use more structured, detailed approaches. However, one unexpected finding was that, regardless of age or personality, the use of Indirect gratitude strategies was relatively balanced across all groups and occurred with low frequency. This could have been due to the modern

communication environment, where efficiency and clarity were increasingly valued, reducing the reliance on more nuanced or indirect expressions of gratitude. Al-Ghazo (2023) noted that in informal and fast-paced settings, individuals, especially younger generations, tend to prefer more direct communication, which might explain the lower-than-expected use of indirect gratitude strategies across the board. Another unexpected finding was that the introverts and the extroverts differed in the number of strategies they used in a conversation. This unexpected result may also have been linked to introverts' greater sensitivity to social dynamics and the desire to avoid misunderstandings by providing additional context and explanation in their gratitude expressions.

5.2.3 Global trends

To sum up, the young extroverted group stood out for their clear preference for Informal lexico-syntactic patterns, which created a striking contrast with the other three groups, who leaned more toward formal language use. Additionally, the young introverted group showed a strong inclination toward using Normal Titles, which contrasted sharply with the other three groups, who instead predominantly favored No Titles.

Overall, the data in this study primarily showed that the expression of gratitude among Chinese adults was influenced by both age and personality, but in different ways. Age mainly influenced the use of Titles and (In)Formal lexico-syntactic patterns, with older adults preferring more formal structures. On the other hand, personality had the strongest impact on the choice of specific gratitude strategies, where the extroverts tended to use more straightforward approaches, while the introverts preferred more detailed and reflective strategies.

5.3 Research implications

In this section, I draw attention to the contributions and limitations of this study, considering the relevance of its findings to pragmatics. I will also hint at possible

practical applications of my conclusions to fields such as cross-cultural communication and language teaching. Finally, I will suggest avenues for further research.

5.3.1 Contributions of the study

The findings of this study contribute to the field of pragmatics by highlighting the similarities and differences in how Thanking speech acts are expressed among Chinese adults across different age groups and personality types.

First, the study's dual focus reveals a nuanced understanding of communication dynamics by exploring both social (age-related) and individual (personality-related) aspects of language use. It shows that both variables play significant roles in shaping discursive choices, but also that neither consistently dominates. This suggests that communication is shaped by a complex interplay of social and personal factors, whose relevance and weight vary depending on the context and participants involved.

Then, the research explored three aspects or components of thanking speech acts, namely Thanking strategies, the use of titles and lexico-syntactic patterns, examining how these are influenced by Chinese social norms. This multi-perspective approach provided a detailed analysis of how formal encoding, structure, and societal expectations intersect, thereby enhancing our understanding of Chinese communication practices from a pragmatic perspective.

Finally, the study's findings are relevant to Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) since they offer a multi-faceted understanding of the pragmatic factors involved in gratitude expression. They show that there is no one-to-one relationship between language form and language function, but rather that language use is shaped by cultural and social variables which language learners should become aware of. Therefore, TCSL curricula should integrate notions deriving from applied research into their content (e.g., topics covered, sample texts) and goals (e.g., tasks for

engaging learners in interaction). Educators could thus design activities that highlight the role of both age and personality in communication, helping students to adapt their expressions of gratitude to different social contexts and to develop a flexible, context-sensitive approach to language, fostering more confident and appropriate communication. Tailoring teaching materials and scenarios to reflect these factors helps students recognize when to prioritize directness or indirectness in their expressions, and allows them to engage in personalized learning experiences. This can ultimately improve their ability to navigate diverse cultural and interpersonal situations with authenticity and effectiveness.

5.3.2 Limitations of the study and future prospects

The findings of this study offer some insights into the ways in which age and personality influence the expression of gratitude expression among Chinese adults. However, they have to be interpreted with caution, considering their limitations, and additional directions for future research can also be considered.

First of all, the sample size of 80 participants, while sufficient for an exploratory study, limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger, more diverse sample would allow for more robust conclusions and help capture a wider range of gratitude expressions. Additionally, the study relied on simple frequency and percentage analyses to interpret the data, without using more detailed statistical methods such as measures of dispersion (e.g., variance or standard deviation). Future research could incorporate more comprehensive, inferential statistical methods to better understand the variability of language use within each group and to assess the influence of individual differences more accurately.

The study used discourse completion tasks (DCTs) to gather data. Although DCTs are a useful tool for examining hypothetical language use, they may not fully capture the complexity of real-life interactions. Participants' responses to hypothetical scenarios may differ from their spontaneous language use in naturalistic settings, potentially

affecting the ecological validity of the results. Future studies could consider incorporating naturalistic observation or role-playing scenarios to gather more naturalistic data on gratitude expressions.

Furthermore, the study focused on only two personality dimensions, introversion and extroversion. However, personality is a multi-faceted construct, and factors such as how individuals approach situations rationally or emotionally may also play important roles in shaping language use. Future research could benefit from incorporating a broader range of personality traits, such as emotional intelligence or openness, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of individual differences in the expression of gratitude.

Moreover, the cultural specificity of the study should be noted. The findings are based on Chinese participants, which means that the results may not be applicable to other cultural contexts. Manifesting gratitude expression is highly culture-bound, and future studies should consider cross-cultural comparisons to better understand how different cultural norms shape language use. Conducting similar research in different cultural settings could help identify universal versus culture-specific trends in gratitude strategies.

Finally, the study reported a relatively low frequency of indirect gratitude strategies. This may be due to the nature of the data collection method adopted or the types of scenarios presented in the DCTs. Indirect strategies might be more prevalent in complex or formal social settings, which were not fully explored in this study. Future research could explore how different social contexts impact the choice of gratitude strategies, particularly in more nuanced or high-stakes interactions.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

尊敬的参与者¹⁰:

您好，我叫邓美雅，作为一名语言学研究生就读于帕多瓦大学，我正在进行一项关于不同年龄段和性格的中国成年人表达感谢的差异的研究，在第一部分中，您需要指定一些个人信息。在第二部分中，您将阅读对情况的描述，并且您将必须写下您认为如果您遇到这些情况您会写下的话，并解释您这么说的理由。在第三部分中，您需要提供您的 MBTI 测试结果以判断您的性格分类。在第四部分中，我会希望您可以提出您对这份问卷的评论。

感谢您抽出宝贵的时间参与此次调查，您的意见对于推动语言学的研究和发展将起到积极的作用。如果您在填写问卷的过程中有任何疑问或需要进一步的解释，请随时联系我。

再次感谢您的支持与合作！

祝好，

邓美雅

2024 年 05 月 27 日

¹⁰ The original questionnaire was only in Chinese, but for clarity's sake, it is here accompanied by its translation into English.

Dear Participants,

My name is Meiya Deng, and I am a graduate student in linguistics at the University of Padua (Italy). I am conducting a study to investigate how people use language in a range of hypothetical situations. To this end, I invite you to complete the following questionnaire. In the first part, you are asked to specify some personal information. In the second part, you will read descriptions of situations, and you will have to write what you think you would write if you were involved in those situations, and explain your reasons for saying that. In the third part, you will need to insert the outcome of your MBTI test (if necessary, you will first access the MBTI website via a link). In the fourth and final part, you can provide comments on this questionnaire, if you wish.

I thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your honest responses will help me to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of language use. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential, treated anonymously and used for research purposes only.

If you have any questions or need further explanations about this questionnaire, or more generally my research, feel free to contact me via email (meiya.deng@studenti.unipd.it).

Sincerely,

MEIYA DENG

27/05/2024

一、个人基础信息

Part I. personal information

1.你的性别

1. Your Gender

- 男性 Male
- 女性 Female
- 未知 Other/Not declared

2.年龄

2. Age

- 18-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-50
- 50+

3.您是哪里人

3. Which province are you from?

4.职业

4. What is your current job?

- 医疗 Medical
- 政府工作人员 Government
- 法律 Law
- 教育 Education

- 技术与工程 Technology and Engineering
- 金融与商业 Finance and Business
- 媒体与艺术 Media and Arts
- 服务 Service employee
- 学生 Student
- 其他 Other

5.学历

5. Educational qualifications

- 初中 Junior high school
- 高中 High school
- 大专 College
- 本科 University
- 其他 Other

6.您每日浏览社交软件的时长

6. How much time do you spend online every day for your personal interests?

- 小于 30 分钟 Less than 30 minutes
- 31-60 分钟 31-60 minutes
- 1-2 小时 1-2 hours
- 3-4 小时 3-4 hours
- 5-6 小时 5-6 hours
- 6 小时以上 More than 6 hours

二、情景问答

Part II. Language use across contexts

请您根据自身实际情况填写

Read the following scenarios. For each, write what you think you would do if you found yourself in that situation. Imagine you are addressing the person/people whose behavior is reported in the scenario.

1/12 星期五您下班/放学回到家，您看到客厅桌面上放着一个精致的礼物盒，盒上贴着一张便签，上面写着：“亲爱的儿子/女儿，爸爸妈妈去旅游啦，你一个人在家好好的，这个是我们送你的礼物，快打开看看，不要太想我们哦！”您打开礼物盒发现是您喜欢了好久却因为价格昂贵没有舍得买的衣服，您很开心，打开微信要给父母发消息表示感谢，请问您会怎么写下您的话呢？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

1/12 When you come home from work/school on Friday, you see a very nice gift box on the table in the living room. There is a note on the box that says: “Dear son/daughter, Mom and Dad are traveling. You stay at home by yourself and take care of yourself. This is a gift from us. Open it, and do not miss us too much.” You open the gift box and find that it is clothes that you have been wanting for a long time but were not willing to buy because of their high price. You are very happy. You open WeChat to send a message to express gratitude to your parents. What do you write?¹¹

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

2/12 您没有休息的忙了一整天，深夜您终于能够拖着疲惫的身子回家了，回到家，您发现您的父母在您不在家的时间到过您的家，并且帮您把屋子打扫干净，在给你做好了一桌子丰盛的晚餐放在保温箱里之后他们回去了自己的家，您

¹¹ This scenario is about a subordinate thanking a superior for a gift in a family situation.

看到这些觉得非常感动，打开微信要给父母表示感谢，您会怎么写呢？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

2/12 You work as a shop assistant in a shoe shop. You have been busy all day without having any time off, and you are finally able to drag your tired body home late at night. When you get home, you find that your parents were there during the day, when you were at work, and that they cleaned your place and prepared dinner for you and put it in the rice cooker to keep warm, before going back to their home. You feel very touched when you see this. You open WeChat to express your gratitude to your parents. What do you write?¹²

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

3/12 今天是您的生日，您觉得自己已经到这个年纪不必在如何庆祝生日因此您和往常一样上班/上学，正要下班/放学时您突然收到一个快递包裹，您打开一看，有一张贺卡和一个礼物，贺卡上写着：“爸爸/妈妈/哥哥/姐姐，生日快乐，我永远爱你”，此时您很感动，没有想到您的孩子/弟弟妹妹会记得并且重视您的生日，于是您打开和他们的聊天窗口，打算给他们发一条消息表示感谢，您会如何写下您的话呢？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

3/12 Today is your birthday, and you feel that you are old enough that you don't have to celebrate it in any way, so you go to work/school as usual. When you are about to get off work/school, you suddenly receive an express package. When you open it, there is a greeting card and a gift. The greeting card says: "Happy birthday, dad/mom/brother/sister, I love you forever." You feel touched. You did not expect that your children/younger siblings would remember and value your birthday, so you open a chat window with them and send them a message to say thank you. What do you write?¹³

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

¹² This scenario is about a subordinate thanking a superior for a benefit in a family situation.

¹³ This scenario is about a superior thanking a subordinate for a gift in a family situation.

4/12 劳动节假期，您的孩子/弟弟妹妹到您家留宿和您一起过节，您在假期结束前一天突然收到消息要去社区服务中心办理房屋信息登记以及参加业主会议，会议期间您收到来自您的孩子/弟弟妹妹的消息：“爸爸/妈妈/哥哥/姐姐，我先回家啦，快赶不上火车啦，下次有机会再来找你玩。”您没有想到您的假期会以这种方式突然结束，有些不舍。当您终于结束会议回到家，您发现您的孩子/弟弟妹妹帮您把家里的卫生收拾好了，您不需要再花时间整理任何东西，你突然觉得很感动，于是想要给他们发一条消息感谢一下，您会写些什么？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

4/12 Your children/brothers and sisters are staying at your home to celebrate the Labour Day holiday with you. The day before the holiday ends, you suddenly receive a message stating that you have to go to the community service center to register housing information and attend the owners' meeting. You go, and while you are there, you receive a message from your children/younger siblings: "Dad/Mom/Brother/Sister, I'm going home early. I can't catch the train.¹⁴ I'll come and visit you next time I have a chance." You didn't expect that your Labour Day celebration would end so suddenly. When you finally get home from the meeting, you find that your children/younger siblings have tidied up the house for you. You feel so touched that you want to send them a WeChat message to say thank you. What do you write?¹⁵

(Please briefly explain your reasons if you like.)

5/12 您的好友在国庆假期期间去了哈尔滨旅行，他/她看到了一个特别漂亮的冰箱贴，觉得您一定会喜欢，于是他/她买了一个寄给您，您打开收到的快递，那正是当下网上最流行的哈尔滨纪念品，你很喜欢，于是您打开微信，想要给您的朋友表示感谢，您会写些什么？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

¹⁴ The expression "I can't catch the train" is a standard excuse used in Chinese to say goodbye.

¹⁵ This scenario is about a superior thanking a subordinate for a benefit in a family situation.

5/12 Your friend traveled to Harbin¹⁶ during the National Day holiday. He/she saw a lovely refrigerator magnet and thought you would like it, so he/she bought one and sent it to you. When you opened the express delivery, you saw that it was the most popular Harbin souvenir on the Internet. You like it very much, so you open WeChat and want to express your gratitude to your friends. What do you write?¹⁷

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

6/12 您独自一人在外地工作/上学，有一天您突然生病了，您告诉了您最好的朋友之后您就躺下休息了，她立刻打开外卖软件下单了一位跑腿小哥给您买药。您睡梦中听到门铃在响，开门发现，是朋友给您买的药到了，您吃过药以后感觉身体好多了，于是您决定发一条消息感谢一下您的朋友，请问您会写些什么？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

6/12 You are living alone away from your family. One day, you suddenly fall ill. You tell your best friend, and lie down to rest. Meanwhile, your friend places an order for an errand man to buy you medicines. The delivery man delivers the medicine to you, you take it and then you feel much better. You decide to send a message on WeChat to thank your friend. What do you write?¹⁸

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

7/12 有一天领导/教授给您发了一封工作邮件，邮件是这么写的：“XX，你最近的工作完成的很不错，接下来有一个项目给你来接手，这是一个很好的机会，可以跟行业领头人一起合作。如果完成的好，给你升职。”您认为这是一次非常好的机会，不仅能够证明自己的价值还能够拓宽人脉实现能力的提升，于是您决定给领导回一封邮件表示感谢，请您会如何写这封感谢邮件？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

¹⁶ Harbin is located in the northeastern part of China, in Heilongjiang Province, near the border with Russia.

¹⁷ This scenario is about a person thanking a peer for a gift in a family situation.

¹⁸ This scenario is about a person thanking a peer for a benefit in a family situation.

7/12 One day, your boss sends you this email: “XX, you have done a good job in your recent work. There is a project for you to take over next. This is a good opportunity for you to cooperate with the most authoritative person in our field. If you do well, you will be promoted.” You think this is a perfect opportunity not only to prove your value, but also to broaden your network and improve your capabilities, so you decide to write a thank you email to your boss. What do you write?¹⁹

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

8/12 还有一周就要放春节假了，有一天，您的领导/老师给您发了一条微信消息：“马上过年了，你今年表现得非常不错，我给你申请了一万块钱奖金，希望你明年也能继续努力。”您很感激领导/教授的鼓励，于是决定回复领导/老师以表达您的感谢。请问您会如何发送这条感谢消息呢？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

8/12 The Spring Festival holiday will be in one week. Your boss/teacher sends you a WeChat message: “The New Year is coming soon. You have performed very well this year. I will give you a bonus of 10,000 yuan. I hope you can continue to work hard next year.” You are very grateful for the encouragement from your boss/teacher, so you decide to reply to the boss/teacher to express your gratitude. What do you write?²⁰

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

9/12 这天，您和平常一样在公司/社团工作，您突然收到了一封来自下属/学弟学妹的邮件，内容是这样的：“亲爱的主席，您好，这是我最新季度的工作报告，请您查收，同时我还给您发送了一份我的自我季度总结以及接下来一个季度的工作计划。”您在查看报告后发现，您的下属/学弟学妹把他们的工作

¹⁹ This scenario is about a subordinate thanking a superior for a benefit in a social situation.

²⁰ This scenario is about a subordinate thanking a superior for a gift in a social situation.

完成的非常好，这给你的工作起到了很好的辅助作用，于是决定您给她们回复一封邮件表达感谢，请问您会怎么写？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

9/12 Today, you are working in your company/community as usual, and you suddenly receive an email from your subordinates/underclassmen. It reads as follows: “Dear Chairman/Chairwoman, hello, this is my latest quarterly work report. Please check it. I have also sent you my quarterly summary and work plan for the next quarter.” After checking the report, you find that your subordinates/underclass (wo)men completed their work very well, perfectly supporting you in your role at work, so you decide to reply to them, expressing your gratitude. What do you write?²¹

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

10/12 这是一个周末，你正在家和家人们聊天，突然您收到了一个快递包裹，您打开包裹看到里面有一张字条和两盒茶叶，字条上写着：“领导/学长学姐，新年快乐，给您提前拜个早年。这是我老家前几个月新出的龙井，给您两盒尝尝。祝你们一家新年快乐，身体健康！”收到礼物您觉得应该表示感谢，于是您打开微信找到这位下属/学弟学妹的联系方式，给他发了一条感谢消息。请问您会怎么写？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

10/12 It's the weekend, you are chatting with your family at home, and suddenly you receive an express package. You open it, and see a note and two boxes of tea inside. The note reads: “Happy New Year, Boss/Senior, Happy New Year to you in advance. This is the new Longjing²² from my hometown that I just picked up a few months ago. These two boxes are for you to try. I wish your family a happy new year and good health!” You feel that you should express your gratitude for receiving the gift, so you open WeChat, find the chat window for this subordinate/underclass(wo)man, and send him/her a message of thanks. What do

²¹ This scenario is about a superior thanking a subordinate for a benefit in a social situation.

²² Longjing, also known as Dragon Well tea, is a famous variety of green tea from Hangzhou, China, known for its high quality, flat leaves, and delicate, sweet flavor.

you write?²³

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

11/12 今天是您的生日，您开完会之后回到您的工位/教室座位，您发现桌上放了一杯奶茶，奶茶上贴了一张纸条，上面写着：“我在花名册上看到过，今天是你的生日，请你喝杯奶茶，生日快乐！”落款是您的隔壁座的同事/同学，你很惊喜他/她竟然知道您的生日还给您准备了奶茶，于是您决定给他/她发消息表示感谢，您会怎么写？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

11/12 Today is your birthday. After attending a work meeting, you return to your workstation/classroom seat. You find a cup of milk tea on the table. There is a note attached to the milk tea, which reads: “I saw it on the roster; today is your birthday. I bought you a cup of milk tea. Happy birthday!” The note is from your colleague/classmate sitting next to you. You are surprised that he/she knew it was your birthday and happy he/she prepared milk tea for you, so you decide to send him/her a WeChat message to say thank him/her. What do you write?²⁴

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

12/12 您因为请假没有到公司/学校，然而您的老板/老师要求您去领取周五活动需要使用的材料，于是您不得不拜托您的同事/同学帮您去领取，您的同事/同学领取完材料后给您发了一条消息：“东西我已经拿回来了，放你抽屉里了。”收到消息的您要给他/她发送一条消息表示感谢。请问您会如何写呢？（如果可以请简要解释一下您的理由。）

12/12 Today you didn't go to work/school because you had a permit or leave of absence. Since your boss/teacher had asked you to pick up the materials needed for Friday's activities, you had to ask your colleague/classmate to pick them up for you. After picking up the materials, your colleague/classmate sends you a

²³ This scenario is about a superior thanking a subordinate for a gift in a social situation.

²⁴ This scenario is about a person thanking a peer for a gift in a social situation.

message: “I have got the things back and put them in your drawer.” When you receive that message, you send your colleague/classmate a message to express your gratitude. What do you write?²⁵

(Please briefly explain your reasons, if you like.)

三、互动偏好和习惯

Part III. Interactional preferences and habits

1. 请您提供一下您的 MBTI

1. If you have already taken the test, and know its outcome, please provide it below

2. 请提供您的内向程度和外向程度的百分比。(滑动分配比例题)

2. Please provide the percentage of your introversion and extroversion. (Sliding scale question)



注：如果您没有做过 MBTI 测试，（如果已经知晓自己的 MBTI 即可忽略此题）麻烦您花费 5 到 10 分钟点击以下这个网站进行测试。这是一个专业的人格测试网站，网站绿色安全，没有不良引导。网站的右上角可以切换成简体中文方便您的阅读。谢谢您的配合！MBTI 网站链接：<https://www.16personalities.com/ch>

Note: If you still need to take the MBTI test, please take it here: <https://www.16personalities.com/ch>. The upper right corner of the website can be switched to Simplified Chinese for your convenience. It will take only 3 to 5 minutes to complete the test. Thank you for your cooperation!

²⁵ This scenario is about a person thanking a peer for a benefit in a social situation.

四、问卷评价

Part IV. Final comments

1.你对本次调查问卷有别的意见或者想法吗？

1. Do you have any other comments or thoughts about this questionnaire?

非常感谢您抽出宝贵的时间参与本研究的调查，您的热情参与对于本研究至关重要。是您的支持让这项研究得以顺利进行。在整个调查过程中，得到了许多宝贵的意见和反馈，这将为我后续的研究提供重要的参考也为我的研究提供了重要的数据和见解。如果您对我的研究有任何疑问，请写邮件至 meiya.deng@studenti.unipd.it.

Thank you very much for taking your valuable time to participate in this study. Your enthusiastic participation is vital to this study. It is your support that makes my study possible. The valuable comments and feedback received through the survey will provide key input for my subsequent research and essential data and insights for my study. If you have any questions about my research, please write to meiya.deng@studenti.unipd.it.

Acknowledgments

The summer comes with gentle breezes and the chirping of cicadas, while winter covers the pine trees with snow. As I write these final words, the completion of this thesis marks the end of my time at school and the beginning of a new chapter in my life. Life is a journey filled with meetings and farewells, and while I find myself reluctant to leave, I also look forward to the adventures that lie ahead. In this moment of reflection, I am overwhelmed with gratitude.

In Chinese culture, the metaphor of apricot rain symbolizes a teacher's guidance and grace. Having been bathed in the rain of apricot blossoms, I will forever remember the grace of my professors. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Professor Sara Gesuato. Her rigorous teaching style, precise logic, profound knowledge, and responsible work ethic have benefited me immensely, both academically and personally. From helping me select my thesis topic to guiding me through revisions and formatting, her careful review and patient corrections have supported me at every step. Her high standards and dedication will continue to serve as a model for me in my future endeavors. I also wish to extend my gratitude to all the professors who taught me during my two years of graduate study. They imparted valuable knowledge and provided great encouragement throughout my learning journey. I offer them my sincerest thanks and wish them continued success and happiness.

Parental love cannot be drowned by water, nor extinguished by fire. I am deeply grateful to my parents for over two decades of nurturing and encouragement. Every step of my journey has been supported by their unwavering love. Because of them, I was able to step outside my country, experience different cultures, and broaden my horizons. I will never forget their kindness, and I wish them good health and eternal happiness. I would also like to express my gratitude to my brother, Hanwei Tang, who provided invaluable assistance while I was abroad. Many research resources were

inaccessible to me, but he lent me his account, allowing me to access vital materials that provided a strong foundation for my thesis. I sincerely hope he successfully receives an offer from his desired graduate school.

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Lastly, I would like to thank myself—for not giving up during difficult times, for all the hard work and progress I have made over these two years, and for constantly striving to surpass my own limits and become a better version of myself. Whether moments of joy or sadness, every experience has been a gift, and every encounter has been a treasure. The future stretches ahead, and I am still young. The road will be long, and the climb steep.

My final words of gratitude go to all those who have loved me, even knowing that I am not perfect.