

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS25/H03/15 _____ (please insert ref. above)
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report

(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within six months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within 12 months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Expression of refusals by Cantonese Preschoolers

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Professor LEUNG, Cheung-shing Professor and Head	School of General Education and Languages / Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)	Dr WONG, Yuen-fan Lornita, Former Assistant Professor	Department of Early Childhood Education/The Education University of Hong Kong
Others		

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	01-01-2016	N/A	N/A
Project Completion Date	30-06-2018	31-12-2018	31-05-2018
Duration (<i>in month</i>)	30	36	31-05-2018
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	N/A	31-12-2019	N/A

Part B: The Final Report**5. Project Objectives**

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. *Study the developmental trend of refusal strategies in Cantonese-speaking pre-school children;*
2. *Investigate the variation of refusal strategies used by children in different contexts;*
3. *Examine the linguistic devices adopted in realizing refusals in Cantonese*

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change:

- 1.
- 2.
3.

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

On the whole, the project was carried out successfully without major difficulties, and the objectives were realized.

In this project, a full-time research assistant had been recruited and trained in January 2016. He helped with the piloting the project as well as collecting first and second sets of data. He was helped with part-time RAs in the transcription of the data. Unfortunately he resigned because of personal issue after finishing the contract of two years. There was a delay in the final analysis as we needed to hire and train a new RA to help with the project.

As mentioned in the proposal, we intend to disseminate our findings in conferences and in journal papers. To date, three papers had been presented in major international conferences on pragmatics within the grant period (i.e., the 3rd International Conference of the American Pragmatics Association in 2016; 15th International Pragmatics conference in 2017; the 4th International conference of the American Pragmatics Association in 2018). We are also planning to present a paper in the upcoming 6th International Conference on Linguistics and Language Studies to be held at Tunghai University in Taiwan in June 2020.

We received very useful feedback and comments on our last presentation in November 2018, especially in the analyses and interpretation of data. In our original plan, we aimed to submit 2 papers at the end of the completion of the project. We are very sorry that we have to postpone submitting the journal papers as we need to re-code and re-analyze some of the data in the past year. We intend to submit the two papers, one in June 2020 to *Journal of Pragmatics*, and one in August 2020 to *Chinese Language and Discourse*. We will send a copy to RGC for record once we have submitted them.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	Addressed <i>(please tick)</i>	Percentage Achieved <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. Study the developmental trend of refusal strategies in Cantonese speaking pre-school children;	✓	100%
2. Investigate the variation of refusal strategies used by children in different contexts;	✓	100%
3. Examine the linguistic devices adopted in realizing refusals in Cantonese	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome *(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)*

The main aim of the project is to examine the development of refusals in Cantonese speaking children in Hong Kong. Below we highlight the major findings related to the research questions.

1. Developmental trend in expressing refusals in Cantonese-speaking preschool children (age 3 to 5)

- Two main types of refusal strategies had been commonly used by all the respondents regardless of their age,
 - i) Type 1: direct refusal strategy containing “No only”; and
 - ii) Type 2: direct refusal strategy + indirect refusal strategy (“No + reason or explanation)

- The use of Type 1 strategy (No only) tended to drop as age increased; i.e. 92.1% in kindergarten 1 (K1, aged 3 in time 1) had dropped to 79.3% when the same group of children were tested in time 2 (promoted to K2, aged 4). The drop in the use of Type 1 strategy was also observed among K2 (aged 4 in time 1) children, i.e. 52.6% in K2 (time 1) dropped to 21.2% in K3 (aged 5 in time 2).
- The use of Type 2 refusal strategy (No + reason) by K1 children (aged 3, time 1) was slightly increased from 5.3% in K1 to 18.3% in K2 (aged 4). However, the same refusal strategy for K2 children (aged 4 in time 1) was raised almost two times from 31.3% to 60.3% in K3 (aged 5).

2. Variations of refusal strategies used in different contexts

- Variations of refusal strategies used by Cantonese speaking preschool children in different contexts (i.e. 16 scenarios containing 4 categories of initiating acts which included 4 requests, 4 offers, 4 invitations & 4 suggestions initiated by interlocutors [i.e. new classmate, best friend, adult stranger & mother] were examined.
- In all the 16 scenarios, all respondents, regardless of the age difference, Type 1 direct strategy (simple negation) and Type 2 (No + reason) were the two main categories of refusal strategies observed.
- Other forms of indirect strategy such as regret, alternative statement, dissuading interlocutors remain rare, accounting for less than 10%.
- The use of Type 1 (direct) refusal strategy by K1 (aged 3 in time 1 & aged 4 in time 2) in all the 16 scenarios remained on the high side, about 80%.
- The drop in the use of Type 1 (direct) refusal strategy used by K2 (aged 4 in time 1) in the 16 scenarios was significant when children were promoted to K3 (aged 5 in time 2) (i.e. 52.6% in K2 dropped to 21.2% in K3 in the initiating acts of requests, 54.5% in K2 dropped to 33.3% in K2 in the initiating acts of offers, 59.6% in K2 dropped to 30.1% in K3 in the initiating acts of invitations, and 50.6% in K2 dropped to 30.1% in K3 in the initiating acts of suggestions.)
- On the other hand, K2 children (aged 4 in time 1) showed a higher percentage (an average of 45%) in the use of Type 2 (No + reason) refusal strategy in all scenarios as compared to younger children at age 3. When the K2 children were promoted to K3 (aged 5, time 2), the increase in the use of Type 2 refusal strategy in all 4 categories of initiating acts (i.e. requests, offers, invitations & suggestions) was significant.

3. Linguistic realization of refusal strategies

- Type 1 (Direct refusals) was realized using negation in Cantonese; e.g. NEG + V/Particle: 唔得; 唔可以; 唔借; 唔要; 唔好
- The order of the semantic formula for Type 2 was mainly: [NO + REASON].
e.g. a) 唔得, 因為我要玩; b) 唔飲, 因為我唔口渴;
c) 唔好喇 (laa3), 因為我有嘢要做
- There were a very small number of cases, usually at age 5, where the order was reversed: [REASON + NO]

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action
(*Maximum half a page*)

The data collected for the project provided an interesting source for the study of pragmatic competence of Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking children. The project focuses on making “refusals” by young kindergarten children, and it shows that by the age of 5, young children are able to express the refusals competently, especially in giving reasons for refusing requests. They are also sensitive to the social contexts involved.

In the field of speech and language disorders, we have available tests on Cantonese vocabulary, syntax and phonology. The findings from the use of refusals by children will be able to provide insight in developing items in testing pragmatic competence of the children.

To enhance our better understanding of children’s use of refusals, we could further explore the use of refusals in peer play among children, and in daily interaction between children and their parents.

7. Layman’s Summary

(*Describe in layman’s language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words*)

This study aims to investigate making refusals by young children (ages 3 to 5) attending local kindergartens in Hong Kong. A total of eighty children in local kindergartens participated in the study. Children were asked to join an oral role-play with the support of a puppet and pictures. Our findings show that most of the young children at age 3 were able to say no in responding to different contexts (requests, offers, invitations and suggestions). However, as age increases, the children were able to add a reason or explanation to their negative responses. The findings from the project indicate that the ability in expressing refusals clearly with reason or explanation may be a major milestone in language development for children. Findings from this project can be used in helping to design a test in assessing the pragmatic ability of Cantonese-speaking children.

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
N/A	N/A	N/A	2 papers are under preparation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
November 2016, Bloomington, USA	Expressing refusals in child Cantonese: A pilot study	The 3 rd International conference of the American Pragmatics Association (AMPRA)	December 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes
July 2017 Belfast, U.K.	Expression of Refusals in Child Cantonese	15th International Pragmatics Conference	December 2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
November 2018, Albany, NY, USA	The use of refusals by Cantonese-speaking preschoolers	The 4th International Conference of the American Pragmatics Association (AMPRA)	December 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning
(Please elaborate)

The research findings and the data of the project have been incorporated in teaching the general education module GEE 5406 Language, Culture and Society at our Institute.

In addition, the principal investigator has shared the findings at guest lectures given on language development and children with language problems with students attending a PDGE module on Supporting Students with Specific Learning Disabilities at the Education University of Hong Kong.

11. Student(s) Trained

(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A			

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

N/A

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
					Type	No.
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	0	3	0	0	0	0

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons