

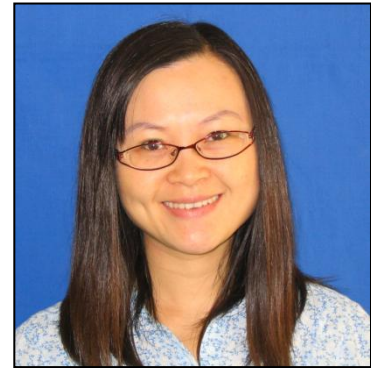


**Title of Project:**

Effects of Pragmatic Task Features, English Proficiency,  
and Learning Setting on Chinese ESL/EFL Learners'  
Spoken Performance of Requests

**Researcher:**

Lixia Cheng  
Purdue University  
[clixia@purdue.edu](mailto:clixia@purdue.edu)



Lixia Cheng

**Research Supervisor:**

Dr. April Ginther

---

**Project Overview:**

Previous research on task difficulty in second language (L2) assessment has mostly considered the effects of psycholinguistic dimensions of task characteristics (e.g., familiar/unfamiliar information) and performance conditions (e.g., length of pre-task planning time) on response characteristics (e.g., accuracy, fluency, complexity). This dissertation, however, draws on speech act theory and manipulates pragmatic task features in hopes of detecting the impact of pragmatic conditions on task performance and test score variability. Specifically, it examines whether the social/situational variable, PDR (i.e., additive effects of Power, Distance, and Imposition) of pragmatic elicitation tasks has differential effects on Chinese learners' oral production of requests in English. In addition, the study examines the extent to which PDR interacts with learners' proficiency level and learning context: English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

A mixed-methods design will be employed. Quantitative analyses will include two repeated measures factorial ANOVA tests with temporal measures such as speech initiation latency and speech rate as dependent variables and a non-parametric test comparing native speaker ratings of the appropriateness of task responses as an additional dependent variable. Qualitative analyses will include a detailed discourse analysis of the Chinese participants' speech productions in comparison to those of native English speakers.

This empirical research into task variability from a sociolinguistic perspective is an important contribution that the present study will make to the L2 assessment literature. Additionally, the detailed discourse analysis conducted in this study will have practical implications for pedagogical instruction and materials development in L2 pragmatics.