

Part IV Pragmatics

1. Pragmatic Transfer and Refusal Strategies in Thai English

2. Structures and Strategies of Request in Thai English

Intercultural or Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

Intercultural or Cross-Cultural Pragmatics have become a topic of interest among applied linguists. Since applied linguistics extends its scope beyond descriptive linguistics to prescriptive linguistics.

Prescriptive linguistics gives guidelines to the use of language in communication.

Pragmatics, which is the new branch of linguistics, deals with the use of language in certain communicative contexts.

Intercultural or Cross-Cultural Pragmatics (continue)

Cross-Cultural or Intercultural Pragmatics emerged from the problems of miscommunication between people coming from different cultures, not necessarily that they speak different language. They may be speaking the same language but have a lot of differences in terms of their values, social and economic background, presupposed beliefs and attitudes.

Intercultural or Cross-Cultural Pragmatics (continue)

In this information age where people communicate more with the help of information technology. Second Language or Foreign Language Education have paid a lot of attention to Intercultural Studies. Especially in how people who speak different language communicate.

The topics studied in Intercultural Pragmatics cover pragmatic transfer, differences in pragmatic structure of different speech acts, different strategies used in different cultures.

Refusal Strategies in Refusing a Request

This first section on the pragmatic aspect of Thai English is on Refusal strategies in refusing a request.

The pragmatic transfer and strategies in American English and Thai English are studied using questionnaires with Discourse Completion Task or DCT.

Data Collection

The data collection of this research on Intercultural Pragmatics between American and Thai (Sairhun 1999) is done by using the Discourse Completion Task-DCT.

The subjects are 50 American university students who have never been exposed to the Thai culture and 50 Thai university students.

The DCT composed of 10 different situations for the subjects to think and complete the answer to the question in each situation where they have to act as if they have to refuse a request.

Refusal Strategies

There are 8 strategies found in this study. The examples given are from the refusal of requests.

1. **Using refusal expression** , for example:

I couldn't, I am sorry.

2. **Giving reason** , for example:

I am sorry, I am really busy today.

3. **Showing hesitation** , for example:

Probably not today.

4. **Giving positive remarks** , for example:

I'd like to but we are in a different way.

Refusal Strategies (continue)

5. **Giving alternatives**, for example:

Can we do it another time?

6. **Direct refusal**, for example:

I really can't today

7. **Giving suggestion**, for example:

I think Peter is going that way.

8. **Blaming the person who requests**, for example:

I wish you would have asked prior to me making plan for the weekend.

The Percentage of Strategies used in Refusal of Requests in American English and Thai English

	American	Thai
1. Using refusal expression	26	28
2. Giving reason	35	35
3. Showing hesitation	3	10
4. Giving positive remarks	5	6
5. Giving alternatives	12	9
6. Direct refusal	14	11
7. Giving suggestion	4	1
8. Blaming the person who requests	1	none

Refusal of Requests in Thai and American English

It can be concluded from the table that both American and Thai students share most of the refusal strategies.

The main differences in refusal strategies are that Thai students use “**Hesitation**” a lot more (10 % to 3%). This is a polite way of hedging in Thai English. **Blaming** is not found at all in the Thai subjects. This can be considered very impolite in Thai. **Giving Suggestion** and **Direct Refusal** are also found less in Thai English compared to American English.

It is also found that Thai students resorted to Indirectness and hedging when they refuse requests while American preferred Directness.

Thai also used a lot of Intensification in refusal strategies, for example

“I am extremely sorry”

“Yes, of course, but I do need to leave now. There is an urgent call from my grand mom.”

From the last example, the reason given is related to the speaker's family. This phenomenon is found a lot in Thai English but not American English. Another example is as follows:

“I really want to help you but I have to do some shopping for my mom on the way home.

Part IV Pragmatics

1. Pragmatic Transfer and Refusal Strategies in Thai English

2. Structures and Strategies of Request in Thai English

Structure and Strategies of Request in Thai English

This second section on the pragmatic aspects of Thai English is on the structures and strategies of request in Thai English (Wiroonhachaipong 2000).

This study is a contrastive pragmatic study. The result found in the differences between the structures and strategies of request in Thai and English give a prediction of pragmatic transfer and strategies in Thai English.

Data Collection

The data collection of this research on Contrastive Pragmatics between American and Thai (Wiroonhachaipong 2000) is also done by using the Discourse Completion Task-DCT.

The subjects are 50 American university students who have never been exposed to the Thai culture and 50 Thai university students.

The DCT composed of 9 different situations. There are 450 requests found in each group. The subjects are to act as if they have to request.

Structures of Request

There are 5 types of structures found in this study of American and Thai request.

The structures are composed of

1. **The Head Act** or the linguistic form of request, for example, “**May I borrow your book?**”.
2. **The Supportive Moves** which are not the request forms. For example: “**Professor Jones, May I borrow your book? It would help me a lot with my term paper**”

The 5 Types of Request Structures

1. Head Act only, represented with []
[Give me the book, will you?]
2. Head Act followed by Supportive Move, represented by [] ()
[May I borrow your mobile?] (I just got a page to phone home immediately.)
3. Supportive Move followed by Head Act, represented by () []
(Professor Jones.) [May I borrow your book?]
4. Supportive Move followed by Head Act and then followed by the Supportive Move again, represented by () [] ()
(Excuse me,) [I was wondering if I could borrow your book for the weekend.] (It would help me a lot with my thesis.)
5. Supportive Move only, represented by ()
(Mr. Jones), (excuse me). (Is there any public phone around here). (I could not find it.) (I have an urgent matter from my mom to phone home now.)

Contrastive Study of the Structures of Request

Thai

American

1. HA []	5%	1. HA []	33%
2. HA + SM (1-5)	16%	2. HA + SM (1-3)	22%
3. SM (1-5) + HA	37%	3. SM (1-3) + HA	32%
4. SM (1-5) + HA+ SM (1-5)	39%	4. SM (1-5) + HA+ SM (1-5)	13%
5. SM (3-6)	3%	-	none

From the table in the former slide. It can be concluded that Thai speakers use very little direct strategies with Head Act only (5%) compared to American speakers who use a lot of direct strategies (33%).

The other way round, it can be concluded that Thai speakers prefer the indirect and hedging strategies with lots of Supportive Moves () [] (). There are 39% of this structure found in Thai speakers but only 13% are found in American speakers.

The act of request without any Head Act () is only found in Thai speakers. They do not even say the request form. in there request.

It is also very interesting to find that out of the 450 requests found from the DCTs in each group of speakers. The total number of Supportive Moves in Thai Request is a lot higher than that found in American request.

In Thai, there are 1,094 Supportive Moves. But there are only 488 Supportive Moves found in the American Request.

Request Directed to People with Different Status

This study also design the DCTs to cover the situations where the request is directed to the speakers of equal status, lower status, and higher status.

It is found that in Thai speakers when the Request is directed to the speakers of higher status, indirectness is prominent. On the contrary, when Request is directed to speakers of lower status or equal status degree of indirectness decreases.

In American speakers, it is found that the conventional stylized forms of request are used in high percentage. Indirectness is also found but there is no clear differences in the structures and strategies used when Request is directed to people of different status.