

Politeness Strategies of Airport Information Staff in Refusing Passengers' Requests

กลวิธีการใช้ภาษาสุภาพของเจ้าหน้าที่ประชาสัมพันธ์ท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิ ในการปฏิเสธคำร้องขอจากผู้โดยสาร

- ◆ Apichaya Nakavetin
Lecturer, Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok
Chakrabongsebhuvanarth Campus, E-mail: Rapunzelii@hotmail.com
อภิชญา นาคะเวทิน
อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก
วิทยาเขตจักรพงษ์ภูวนารถ
- ◆ Chanut Klaysuwan
Lecturer, Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok
Chakrabongsebhuvanarth Campus, E-mail: Chachanut@hotmail.com
ชญช คล้ายสุวรรณ
อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก
วิทยาเขตจักรพงษ์ภูวนารถ
- ◆ Intira Nawasamrit
Lecturer, Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok
Chakrabongsebhuvanarth Campus, E-mail: Intira_mmccu@hotmail.com
อินทิรา นวสัมฤทธิ์
อาจารย์ ดร. ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล
มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก วิทยาเขตจักรพงษ์ภูวนารถ
- ◆ Siripong Sukhanthachan
Lecturer, Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok
Chakrabongsebhuvanarth Campus, E-mail: Siripong.suca@gmail.com
ศิริพงษ์ สุคันธจันทร์
อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก
วิทยาเขตจักรพงษ์ภูวนารถ

◆ Watcharee Janhom

Lecturer, Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok

Chakrabongsebhuvanarth Campus, E-mail: Janhom0717@hotmail.com

วัชรีย์ จันท์หอม

อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารสากล มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก

วิทยาเขตจักรพงษ์อนุารณ

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the politeness strategies used by information staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport when refusing passengers' requests in English, as well as examine the seriousness of situations that affected the use of politeness. This study uses a qualitative process to explore quality answers, this study consisted of two phases of collecting data. The first phase was the pilot study, while the second phase was the main study. The responses from the audio-recording, DCT questionnaire, and personal interviews were analyzed within the framework of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. The overall results suggest that airport information staff used nine politeness strategies which are 1.) Offer, promise 2.) Be optimistic 3.) Give reason 4.) Give gifts for hearer 5.) Be conventionally indirect 6.) Questions 7.) Give deference 8.) Apologize 9.) State the FTA as a general rule when In terms of the relationship between the use of politeness strategies and the level of seriousness situation, the findings showed that the seriousness of situations affected the use of politeness. That is, politeness strategies in very serious and complicated situations were used more than in serious situations in both amount and variety. What this tells us is that refusals in very serious and complicated situations could greatly impact the hearer's problems. Therefore, the information staff used a variety of politeness strategies to minimize the imposition and face threatening act to attempt to avoid any situations where passengers might feel upset or dissatisfied.

Keywords: Refusal, Politeness Strategies, Airport Information Staff, Face Threatening Act

บทคัดย่อ

จุดประสงค์ของบทความวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อศึกษาพฤติกรรมการใช้ภาษาสุภาพโดยเจ้าหน้าที่ประชาสัมพันธ์ ทำอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิในการปฏิเสธคำร้องขอจากผู้โดยสารรวมถึงศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการนำพฤติกรรมการใช้ภาษาสุภาพต่อผู้โดยสารในสถานการณ์ที่ซับซ้อนต่างกัน ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้บทความวิจัยได้แบ่งสอง

ช่วงคือ ช่วงที่หนึ่งคือการศึกษานำร่องและที่ช่วงที่สองการศึกษาหลักโดยเก็บข้อมูลจากการบันทึกเสียงแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ภายใต้กรอบทฤษฎีของบรานและเลวินสัน ผลการวิจัยพบว่าในสถานการณ์ที่คับขันเจ้าหน้าที่ประชาสัมพันธ์ใช้กลวิธีความสุภาพ 9 วิธีดังนี้ 1) Offer, promise 2) Be optimistic 3) Give reason 4) Give gifts for hearer 5) Be conventionally indirect 6) Questions 7) Give deference 8) Apologize 9) State the FTA as a general rule ตามลำดับ ในการปฏิเสธคำขอของผู้โดยสารในสถานการณ์ที่ตึงเครียดและซับซ้อน ทั้งนี้ในสถานการณ์ที่ตึงเครียดและซับซ้อนกลวิธีความสุภาพอาจส่งผลกระทบต่อปัญหาของผู้ฟังได้และการปฏิเสธอาจเป็นการคุกคามหน้าของผู้ฟังมากกว่าการปฏิเสธคำขอร้องในสถานการณ์ปกติ ดังนั้นเจ้าหน้าที่ประชาสัมพันธ์จึงใช้กลวิธีความสุภาพอย่างหลากหลายลดการคุกคามหน้าและพยายามหลีกเลี่ยงสถานการณ์ต่างๆเพื่อจะทำให้ผู้โดยสารไม่พอใจ

คำสำคัญ : การปฏิเสธ กลวิธีความสุภาพ พนักงานท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิ การคุกคามทางหน้า

Introduction

In communication, a speech act is very significant because an utterance is an effective way to convey a speaker's meaning, whether it's a request, an apology, a complaint or a refusal. In addition, people use utterances to manage social interactions and interpersonal relationships. However, an utterance can also lead to communication problems. There's a risk that the speaker's utterance could be misinterpreted. Therefore, it is important to avoid miscommunication (Song, 2012).

Refusing a request is a type of speech act that speakers might use when they are unable to respond to the needs of their listeners. According to Sadler and Eroz (2001), for instance, refusals are an especially sensitive speech act that may lead to offence or miscommunication. In this information age, a speech act might be more likely to threaten the listeners' face. One of the most important ideas behind Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is the concept of the Face Saving Act (FSA), which examines different methods for 'face saving' or saving the self-image of the listener. The efficiency of their politeness strategies entails understanding about the relationships between politeness and face. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that face is the public self-image that we want others to see and respect. Face is very significant for human interaction and social acceptance. In the theoretical part of their work, Brown and Levinson introduced the notion of face in order to illustrate politeness in a broad sense (Kitamura, 2001).

Politeness is one of the most important elements in business communication, especially customer service since staff have to continually meet customers' needs to keep them

satisfied. Customers always expect to be completely satisfied from the service that they receive (Agbor, 2011). As such, refusing customers' requests becomes difficult in view of the fact that the customer is the king in the service business because this speech act may cause the relationship problems between staff and customers.

Information staff at the Suvarnabhumi Airport need to communicate face-to-face with passengers in English every day. Their responsibilities include providing information, solving passengers' problems, and responding to passengers' needs and requests to make them satisfied. However, when staff are unable to avoid refusing passengers' requests, politeness strategies become necessary to make passengers feel less threatened and frustrated when they are confronted by Face Threatening Acts (FTAs).

As stated earlier, given the use of politeness in face-to-face communication, the level of politeness norms of information staff – who have to interact with passengers in English – is more important than others who speak English in informal situations. It is necessary to study how airport information staff refuse requests in English. The findings of this study will shed light on the use of politeness strategies that play a significant role in interactional service communication. Specifically, the findings will examine the patterns in politeness strategies used by information staff to save the face of passengers, as well as the strategies staff choose when performing face threatening acts in English. In addition, this research seeks to explore how politeness strategies and varying levels seriousness in situations can affect the selection of politeness strategies used to refuse a passenger's requests.

Objectives

1. To discover politeness strategies that occur when Thai airport information staff refuse the requests of passengers.
2. To find out how the severity of the situation affects the way in which Thai airport information staff use politeness strategies.

Research Questions

The study poses the following research questions:

1. What politeness strategies does the participant use when refusing passengers' requests in English?
2. How does the participant use politeness strategies to refuse passengers' requests in very serious and complicated situations?

Literature Review

Politeness is one of the most important elements in communication; it helps people maintain and develop their relationships. Within politeness research, there are many strategies used for analyzing and investigating the concepts of politeness. According to Brown and Levinson's theory, FTAs are utterances that should be avoided. In the case that FTAs are unavoidable, the speaker needs to use politeness strategies carefully to minimize a possible threat or offence in order to maintain each other's face. This is called a face saving act (FSA).

Brown and Levinson (1987) also claimed that when speakers use politeness, they should consider particular social factors to help them select appropriate politeness strategies, which will minimize the likelihood of any threat or offence. The social variables that play important roles in the level of politeness are indicated as follows:

In performing politeness, Brown and Levinson propose five levels of politeness strategy to deal with FTAs, which include baldness on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, baldness off record and avoiding FTAs.

1) Bald on record (Do FTA without redressive action):

The speaker wants to express the maximum efficiency of the purpose more than they want to make the listeners satisfied, like in an urgent situation. Therefore, this strategy has a higher risk of threatening's the face of the listener.

2) Positive politeness (Do the FTA with redressive action):

This strategy is a way to express utterances with redressive action. It focuses on the closeness of the speaker and the hearer. In other words, the speaker makes an effort to show friendliness, solidarity and familiarity to the listener (Srisurak, 2011). There are fifteen strategies in positive politeness, which are as follows: 1) Notice/attend to the listener's wants, 2) Exaggerate interest/approval, 3) Intensify interest, 4) Use in-group identity markers, 5) Seek agreement, 6) Avoid disagreement 7) Presuppose/assert common ground 8) Joke, 9) Assert knowledge of listener's wants 10) Offer, promise, 11) Be optimistic, 12) Include both S (Speaker) and H (Hearer) in the activity, 13) Give (or ask for) reasons, 14) Assume/ assert reciprocity, and (15) Give gifts to listener.

3) Negative politeness (Do the FTA with redressive action):

This strategy is a way to express utterances with redressive action to perform in a way in which the speaker pays respect and does not want to threaten or impose upon the

listener's negative face. This strategy is often used when the speaker and the listener are separated by social distance. Therefore, a form or pattern of the act is quite formal. The strategies which could save negative politeness are as follows: 1) Be conventionally indirect, 2) Question, 3) Be pessimistic, 4) Minimize imposition, 5) Give deference, 6) Apologize, 7) Impersonalize, 8) State the imposition as a general rule, 9) Nominalize, and 10) Go on record as incurring a debt

4) Baldness off record (Do the FTA):

This strategy is a way in which the speaker expresses indirect utterances. That is to say, the speaker does not communicate directly and does not say what he or she really wants to say. Thus, the listener needs to interpret the real meaning. Therefore, this strategy could lead to miscommunication due to the potential for misunderstanding. The strategies for this main strategy are: 1) Give hints/clues, 2) Give association clues, 3) Presuppose, 4) Understate, 5) Overstate, 6) Use tautologies, 7) Use contradiction, 8) Be ironic, 9) Use metaphors, 10) Use rhetorical questions, 11) Be ambiguous, 12) Be vague, 13) Over-generalize, 14) Displace listener, 15) Be incomplete, use ellipsis.

5) Do not do the FTA:

This strategy means that the speaker says nothing to the hearer to avoid threatening the hearer's face. However, he/she does do something to convey his/her purpose. This strategy could help the speaker avoid any offense.

Srisurak (2011) studied politeness and pragmatic competence in Thai speakers of English. She investigated the language usage and the use of politeness in requests, complaints, and disagreements by Thai speakers of English. The participants were hotel and travel agencies and students from Rajabhat University. The data were collected by through role-play activities and Discourse Completion Tests (DCT). The findings indicated that all the groups used negative politeness the most often followed by baldness on record and positive politeness. The researcher suggested that the participants used both negative and positive politeness to avoid confrontation. Furthermore, the results showed that the social variables of power and social distance affected the level of politeness.

Methodology

Phase 1: Pilot Study

Since there has been no research about airport information staff, this pilot study was conducted as pre-test research to discover primary information about refusal situations, strategies employed by information staff for developing the questionnaire, and questions for the interview. The pilot study was also conducted to find and select participants who had the best experiences to share in terms of communicating in English with passengers in an area of refusing requests, to gather a richness of information that would be suitable for the research details.

1.1 Participants

For the pilot study, sixty information staff were selected.

1.2 Instruments

Unstructured interviews were used to find an appropriate sampling of participants who were frequently confronted with complicated and serious situations.

1.3 Data Collection Procedure

Sixty information staff were identified by using unstructured interview techniques: asking open-ended questions.

Phase 2: Main Study

2.1 Participants

The participants in this main study contained a unique sampling of participants selected from the pilot study through unstructured interviewing techniques. A participant in the study, she is a senior staff member who manages other staff, as well as resolves staff- and passenger-related problems.

2.2 Instruments

Data were collected using three methods: audio recording, Discourse Completion Tests (DCT), and semi-structured interviews.

The DCT questionnaire was adapted from Thaithae (2012). The situations in the questionnaire came from the pilot study. Sixty airport information staff were asked about their everyday experiences dealing with common passenger requests to examine possible situations in which refusals occur most frequently. The results showed that there were ten passenger request situations that staff were most commonly confronted with. In each

situation, staff had to refuse the passenger's request. The ten situations were divided into two levels of seriousness: serious situations and very serious and complicated situations (in which other staff opinions were requested)

ผู้โดยสารหญิงชราท่านหนึ่งต้องการขอให้โทรศัพท์ที่เคาน์เตอร์ประชาสัมพันธ์เพื่อโทรติดต่อญาติ แต่เนื่องจากโทรศัพท์ภายในเคาน์เตอร์เป็นเบอร์ภายใน จึงสามารถติดต่อได้เฉพาะหมายเลขภายในท่าอากาศยานเท่านั้น ทำให้ไม่สามารถให้ผู้โดยสารใช้ติดต่อญาติได้ และตามระเบียบท่านไม่สามารถใช้มือถือของตนเองในขณะที่ปฏิบัติหน้าที่ได้ ท่านจะกล่าวปฏิเสธผู้โดยสารอย่างไร

ผู้โดยสาร: ฉันจะขอให้คุณช่วยโทรศัพท์ติดต่อญาติให้มารับที่สนามบินหน่อย ฉันมีเบอร์โทรศัพท์แต่ไม่มีโทรศัพท์มือถือ ฉันยืนรอญาติมาครึ่งชั่วโมงแล้ว

ท่าน:

An example of a serious situation

ในกรณีที่คุณโดยสารขอร้องให้ท่านติดต่อกับสายการบิน แต่เมื่อท่านติดต่อไปยังสายการบิน ปรากฏว่าเคาน์เตอร์สายการบินปิดแล้ว และไม่สามารถติดต่อเจ้าหน้าที่สายการบินได้ แต่ผู้โดยสารยังขอร้องให้ท่านหาวิธีติดต่อกับสายท่านอีกหลายครั้ง ท่านจะมีการกล่าวกับผู้โดยสารอย่างไร

ผู้โดยสาร: ไม่ว่าอย่างไรผมก็ทั้งยานี้ไม่ได้ ผมต้องการติดต่อกับสายการบิน รบกวนคุณช่วยหาทางติดต่อกับสายการบินให้ได้ ผมจะไม่ไปไหนและคุณจะต้องติดต่อกับสายการบินให้ผมจนกว่าผมจะได้คุยกับเจ้าหน้าที่สายการบิน

ท่าน:

An example of a serious and complicated request situation

The DCT was an open-ended questionnaire consisting of two parts: personal data and ten situations. However, the serious, and very serious and complicated situations were mixed into the questionnaire to hide the purpose of the study from the participants. The serious situations were listed as situations 1, 2, 4, 5, and 10, while the very serious and complicated situations were listed as situations 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The questionnaire was written in Thai to ensure that the participants understood the situations correctly before answering the questions.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

1. Audio recording

Participants were informed that conversations between the participants and passengers would be recorded. However, participants were not informed as to what would be examined in their conversation to ensure real and authentic results.

2. Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Questionnaire

Another method used was a questionnaire. Discourse completion tests (DCT) were questionnaires used to get valuable responses, which could not be obtained through the audio-recording method.

3. Interviews

The final way that data was collected was through personal interviews. Interviews were conducted last to ensure that participants were not aware of the primary purpose of the study until the audio-recording had been completed. Secondly, it was necessary to collect the data from the questionnaire first to have background knowledge about each participant from the DCT, which could then be used to fill in the information that might be lacking in the audio recording and the DCT.

The data collection for the study was performed through a semi-structured interview, which provided reliable data. Each question asked in the interview was open-ended and related to background information and the use of politeness strategies when dealing with face threatening acts in a varieties of situations.

Data Analysis

The responses from the audio-recording, DCT questionnaire, and personal interviews were analyzed within the framework of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. All responses were differentiated into five categories of politeness strategy by matching a particular response with a specific politeness strategy.

1. Bald on record
2. Positive politeness
3. Negative politeness
4. Bald off record:
5. Do not do a face threatening act.

Responses were divided into two groups: (1) serious situations and (2) very serious and complicated situations. Firstly, the responses from five serious situations were analyzed to investigate the strategy used for politeness.

In addition, the frequency of specific politeness strategies was measured – which occurred in both the DCT and the audio recordings – to investigate the strategies used most frequently by the participants when refusing passengers' requests.

For the analysis of the interviews, the analysis examined and identified how and why the participants expressed politeness strategies during refusals.

Result

The analysis of politeness strategies in refusing passengers' requests

Firstly, the research focused on the overall use of politeness strategies in refusing passengers' requests offered by the participants. From the analysis of politeness strategies through the responses in the discourse completion test (DCT), which consisted of ten situations and audio recordings of 10 situations, data suggested that there were both positive and negative politeness strategies employed, which were differentiated into the following 9 categories:

Frequency of politeness strategies in refusing passengers' requests

Table 1

Politeness Strategies	Amount		Total
	DCT Questionnaire	Record	
1. PP 10- Offer, promise	4	2	6
2. PP 11- Be optimistic	3	3	6
3. PP 13- Give reason	10	8	18
4. PP 15- Give gifts for H	3	-	3
5. NP 1- Be conventionally indirect	9	5	14
6. NP 2- Question	6	4	10
7. NP 5- Give deference	4	1	5
8. NP 6- Apologize	9	2	11
9. NP 8- State the FTA as a general rule	6	1	7

PP stands for Positive politeness and NP stands for Negative politeness

According to the politeness strategies in refusing passengers' requests from the discourse completion test (DCT) and audio recordings, the participants used negative politeness strategies more frequently than positive politeness strategies. However, participants also used the give a reason strategy (18) more frequently than other strategies. The participants used the give a gift to the hearer (3) strategy the least often. The strategies were examined and discussed through the perspective of the participants from the interviews. The following example in each strategy illustrates one of the responses which is related to the point of the strategy:

1) Positive politeness (PP10)- Offer, promise

The speaker took the form of offer to show that the speaker could not respond to the interlocutor's request. Instead, he/she attempted to help the hearer in other ways.

For example:

Situation 3 *"Sorry, I'm just information staff. I don't have enough money. I think it's easy if you call to your parent. But if cannot, I'll call the embassy for you again."*

According to the interview, in Situations 3, the participants used offer strategies to refuse the request of the passenger to show that even though the participant could not respond to the passengers' requests, she or he attempted to do other things to help the participant by using the utterance 'I will' to help reduce the anxiety and negative feelings of the participants.

2) Positive Politeness (PP11)- Be optimistic:

For this strategy, the speaker used specific utterances to show willingness. The speaker assumed that the hearer was willing or able to do something to ensure a positive outcome. For example:

Situation 4 *"This one instruction how to connect wifi easily. You can follow protocol step by step by the picture."*

From the interview, the participant attempted to show her belief that the passenger or the participant could do something.

3) Positive politeness (PP13)- Give a reason

The giving reasons strategy was used to explain why the speaker could not accept the hearer's request. The request could have a negative impact on the hearer. Therefore, the request was something that the participant was unable to do. Also, the speaker avoided a direct refusal without a redressive utterance, which may have threatened the hearer's feelings. For example:

Situation 1 *"Sorry madam, I can't help you call from my telephone because it is only for internal call reason."*

From the interview, the participant explained the reasons by giving details of the problems to make the hearer understand the situation. By giving a reason, she could establish a refusal that seemed more reliable.

4) Positive politeness (PP15)- Give gifts for H (goodness, sympathy, and understanding)

Expressing sympathy to the hearer is a strategy used when a speaker attempts to show that he or she understands the hearer's feelings. For examples:

Situation 6 “*Sorry sir, I understand this item is important for you but airline said that they can't help you”*

From the interview, the participant claimed that she used the utterance to show that she cared for and understood the passenger's feelings. She also felt the same as the passenger. This strategy might make passengers feel less angry and more relaxed even though the participant has refused the requests.

5) Negative politeness (NP1)- Be conventionally indirect

Using conventionally indirect statements, such as ‘could you’ or ‘would you,’ was a strategy widely used to show politeness when making requests. For example:

Situation 6 “*Could you talk to airport security supervisor to handle this, please? I'm just information staff who has no power to help you.”*

The participant claimed that she uses this strategy when she cannot directly respond to a request. Thus, she gave the passenger another choice in the form of a conventionally formal question. In addition, by using a formal question, the participant paid respect to the passenger.

6) Negative Politeness (NP2)- Question

By asking a question to the hearer, participants were able to show that they were actively attempting to find a way to help the passenger. For example:

Situation 10 “*If you can't do it by yourself. How about booking travel agency? I think they can do it for you.”*

In Situation 10, the participant refused the passenger's request since she could not use the computer to book a new ticket for the passenger. However, she offered the passenger a choice by using ask the question ‘How about.’

7) Negative Politeness (NP5)- Give deference

The giving deference strategy was used when speakers wanted to show respect to the hearer, while remaining humble. For example:

Situation 3 “*Sorry, I'm just information staff. I don't have enough money.”*

From the interview, the participant claimed that the giving deference strategy was one of the most significant strategies in a customer service career, especially when refusing requests. The participant used this technique to reduce or lower her position in the eyes of the passenger, so that she could help the passenger to understand and sympathize.

8) Negative Politeness (NP6)- Apologize

The apology strategy was used to show that the speaker felt regretful or sorry since she was unable to meet the needs and requests of the passenger. For example:

Situation 6 "*I'm sorry. For security reason, liquid item more than 100 ml. are not allowed.*"

In Situation 6, the participant apologized to the passenger when refusing the passengers' requests. From the interview, the participant apologized to show that it was her fault, and she felt regretful for not being able to respond to the request. An apology was stated at the first utterance to minimize the face threatening act when refusing.

9) Negative Politeness (NP8)- State the FTA as a general rule

The speaker used this strategy to reduce the imposition and face threatening act by stating a rule or policy. For example:

Situation 8 "*Sorry, this is Thailand immigration policy. I think you should pay for fine because you can't avoid. If you have no way to find money, I'll call embassy to you.*"

From the interview, the participant used this strategy to show that it was neither the passenger's fault nor the participant's fault. Rather, it was a rule or policy of the airport, which everyone has to follow.

Considering all the strategies used, participants expressed both positive politeness and negative politeness through direct speech acts with redressive utterances. In addition, the findings indicated that the use of politeness strategies from the discourse completion tests and the audio recordings were similar.

The relationship between the use of politeness strategies and the level of seriousness in a situation

Comparison of politeness strategies between serious situations and very serious and complicated situations

Table 2

Politeness Strategies	Serious	Very serious
1. PP 10- Offer, promise	-	4
2. PP 11- Be optimistic	2	1
3. PP 13- Give reason	5	5
4. PP 15- Give gifts for H	-	3
5. NP 1- Be conventionally indirect	4	5
6. NP 2- Question	3	3
7. NP 5- Give deference	-	4
8. NP 6- Apologize	4	5
9. NP 8- State the FTA as a general rule	2	4

When comparing the politeness strategies that occurred in serious situations with the very serious and complicated situations, the results suggest that the level of seriousness in a situation affects the use of politeness when refusing passengers' requests. That is, the participants used both positive and negative politeness, which consisted of nine different strategies. Negative politeness occurred in five of the strategies 1) Be conventionally indirect 2) Question 3) Give deference 4) Apologize 5) State the FTA as a general rule and positive politeness occurred in four of the strategies which are 1) Offer, promise 2) Be optimistic 3) Give reason 4) Give gifts for H There were six strategies that the participants used in serious situations, and all six strategies i.e. 1) Be optimistic 2) Give reason 3) Be conventionally indirect 4) Question 5) Apologize 6) State the FTA as a general rule were employed in very serious and complicated situations as well. However, the participants expressed nine politeness strategies in very serious and complicated situations.

Additionally, three politeness strategies, which occurred only in very serious and complicated situations, indicated that the participants attempted to offer sympathy, understanding, and kindness toward the passenger to minimize a face threatening act and any kind of offense. In addition, and in return, the participants - when refusing a request - used utterances to show humbleness to receive sympathy from the passenger.

Conclusion

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies were used to analyze the data in this study. From the analysis of the refusals in this study, it was concluded that nine strategies

were used to refuse requests. Likewise, the study also focused on the relationship between the use of politeness strategies and the level of seriousness within situations, which Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed played an important role in the use of politeness strategies.

The findings of the analysis indicated that six politeness strategies in very serious and complicated situations were similar to politeness strategies in serious situations. The results are listed as follows: positive politeness be optimistic, positive politeness give reason, negative politeness be conventionally indirect, question, hedge, apologize, and state the FTA as a general rule.

The results found for the use of politeness strategies in very serious and complicated situations are as follows: positive politeness offer, positive politeness give reason, be conventionally indirect, give deference, apologize, and state the FTA as a general rule appeared very often, followed by positive politeness give gifts for hearer, positive politeness be optimistic appeared the least often in this level of situations.

According to the use of politeness strategies in very serious and complicated situations, I found that there were three specific politeness strategies that occurred in the following situation: positive politeness 10-Offer, promise, positive politeness 15-Give gifts for hearer (sympathy, understanding), and negative politeness 5-give deference.

Discussion

This study indicated that Thai airport information staff utilized a variety of politeness strategies to refuse passengers' requests. Positive politeness and negative politeness were used when information staff needed to express direct refusal utterances by providing relevant and clear information to avoid miscommunication. However, redressive acts were expressed to reduce the possibility of threatening or offending the passenger. The strategy that appeared the most frequent was positive politeness 13-give reason. The main reason this strategy occurred the most frequently was to provide information and an explanation for the refusal. In addition, staff attempted to show that they were not unwilling to refuse the request, yet there was a reason that the staff could not respond to the hearer's want. Therefore, this strategy could help the hearer to better understand and acknowledge the reason for the refusal.

Recommendation

1. Further study could examine politeness strategies used by airport staff since culture is a valuable factor which may cause differences in politeness.
2. The data in this study was collected by using discourse completion tests (DCT), audio recordings, and interviews. However, there are many interesting methods for collecting data, which could be used to study this topic, such as video recording to investigate the reaction of the passenger when staff refuses a request.
3. The results from the research could be apply for airport authority to improve the performances of airport staff.

References

- Agbor J.M., (2011). *The Relationship Between Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality : A study of Three Services Sectors in Umea* (Unpublished master degree dissertation.) Umea University, Umea.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chakorn, O. (2006). Persuasive and politeness strategies in cross-cultural letters of request in the Thai business context. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 16(1), 103-146.
DOI: 10.1075/japc.16.1.06cha
- Chiravate, B. (2011). Perception of politeness in English requests by Thai EFL learners. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 17(2), 59-71.
- Kádár D. Z., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Kádár D. Z., & Mills, S. (2011). *Politeness in East Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Kitamura, N. (2001). *Politeness Phenomena and Mild Conflict in Japanese Casual Conversation*. Sydney: University of Sydney. European Asian and Middle Eastern Languages and Studies.
- Leech, G. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness*. New York: Oxford university press.
- Pratiwi, E. H. (2013). *Politeness Steategies used in complaint by indonesian EFL learners in Muhamadiyah University of Surakarta*.
- Ratnawinata, E. (2014). *A Cross Sectional Study On The Perception Of (Im) Politeness Used In Complaint By Indonesian Efl Students*. Skripsi thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.

- Sadler R.W., & Eroz, R. (2001). "I refuse you!" An Examination of English Refusals by Native Speakers of English Lao and Turkish. *The Arizona Working Papers in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching* 9, 53-80.
- Song, S. (2012). *Politeness and culture in second language acquisition*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Srisurak, P. (2011). *Politeness and Pragmatic Competence in Thai Speakers of English*. (Unpublished doctor degree dissertation.) Newcastle University, Newcastle
- Thaithae, S. (2012). *The politeness Strategies of refusal towards airline passengers' requests: A case study of customer service agents of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited*. Retrieved from http://dric.nrct.go.th/bookdetail.php?book_id=259128
- Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Apichaya Nakavetin, Master of Arts, English for Professional Development, National Institution Development Administration is currently an English lecturer at Rajamankala University of Technology Tawan-ok Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus.



Chanut Klaysuwan, Master of Arts, English for Professional Development, National Institution Development Administration is currently an English lecturer at Rajamankala University of Technology Tawan-ok Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus.



Dr. Intira Nawasamrit, Master of Education, Educational Linguistics, Srinakharinwirot University and Doctor of Philosophy (Buddhist Studies), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University is a former Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Rajamankala University of Technology Tawan-ok Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus.



Siripong Sucantajan, Master of Arts, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Thammasat University is currently an English lecturer at Rajamankala University of Technology Tawan-ok Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus.



Watcharee Janhom, Master of Arts, Business English for International Communication, Srinakharinwirot University is currently an English lecturer at Rajamankala University of Technology Tawan-ok Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus.