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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: MALAY AND THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' REFUSALS TO REQUEST

Abstract
This paper examines intercultural communication of the speech act of refusals between Malay and Thai undergraduates at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. One question is addressed: what are the similarities and differences between Malays and Thais in the use of refusals strategies to requests. The corpus consists of responses to an open-ended questionnaire in the form of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) including three different situations. The main aim is to outline the preferred linguistic realizations or strategies used when refusing a request to someone older, someone the same age, and someone younger. The corpus is analyzed and categorized according to the refusal taxonomy by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) to determine the strategies used and the frequencies of their use. Results show variation in the frequency and the content of strategies used by the group in relation to age factor. Finally, this study supports the idea that speech acts are culturally laden and their understanding can hinder or encourage communication across cultures.

Key words: intercultural communication, speech act, speech act of refusal, discouse

Introduction

Intercultural communication is not a new concept. The need to study intercultural communication is increasingly important because people

constantly come into contact with each other, and therefore, there would be some need to communicate with people who speak a different language and organize their lives according to completely different norms and values (Pinto, 2000). However, what is new about intercultural communication is the systematic study of exactly what happens when cross-cultural contacts and interaction take place- when message producer and message receiver are from different cultures (Gao, 2006).

One of the challenges brought about by intercultural communication is the understanding of speech acts cross-culturally. Speech acts or the communicative acts (e.g. thanking, apology, request) vary cross-culturally and the appropriate use of a given speech act is subject to variation as the cultures differ. For example, in complimenting some one on her new dress, a positive acceptance of the compliment by appreciation, e.g. *Thank you*, is common in some cultures (e.g. the United States), while rejecting the compliment, e.g. *No, it's not new*, is more appropriate in some other cultures (e.g. India). Therefore, a successful intercultural communication requires the non-native speakers' knowledge of the meaning of a particular speech act in a given cultural setting. This present research is attempting this.

This study is an intercultural study of the speech act of refusal to request between Malay and Thai university students in Malaysia. The following sections will discuss a brief review of the literature on intercultural communication as well as the speech act of refusal, followed by methodology, data analysis and discussion and conclusion in sequence.

Review of literature

The review of the literature includes two parts: the first part will present a brief review on intercultural communication. The second part will discuss speech act theories.

Intercultural communication

There are different definitions of the concept. The word intercultural has been characterized by a certain terminological arbitrariness: 'intercultural',

'interethnic', interracial', 'and 'cross-cultural' often seem to be used in free variation. In 'intercultural communication', the notions 'culture' and 'communication' are very broad and vague (Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff, 1987, p.3). They might be regarded as everything that is a consequence of culture, and everything that communicates (ibid). This view is summarized in E.T. Hall's (1959) dictum "communication is culture, culture is communication" (cited in Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff, 1987, p.3). However, as Spencer-Oatey (2006) put it,

> "Intercultural communication is concerned with communication between people from different sociocultural groups. It focuses on the role played by cultural –level factors (in contrast to individual and universal factors), and explores their influence on the communication process" (p: 2537)

Studies in intercultural communication may have a great effect on speakers' mutual understanding and their expectation especially in a new cultural setting. Sometimes speaker's pragmatic incompetency leads into failure or breakdown into intercultural communication. According to Rintell and Mitchell (1989, cited in Lin, 2008), the misunderstanding and offence created was a result of intercultural communication which was be due to the learner's merely taking the literal meaning of the speaker's words without being able to give them an appropriate interpretation. However, pragmatic failure not only results into miscommunication and hinders effective communication, but could also lead to misjudgment of the person in a cross-cultural interaction (Chen, 1996). Therefore, intercultural communication studies on a given speech act would give a good understanding of speakers across different culture of how pragmatically different or similarly they behave in a similar situation.

Speech act of refusal

The speech act of refusal is identified as a response to four other speech acts; request, invitation, offer and suggestion (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz , 1990; Chen, Ye, and Zhang,1995) rather than as a standing and initiating act by itself (Geyang, 2007). Refusal is characterized as an act by which a speaker declines to engage in an action proposed by the

interlocutor (Chen, Ye, and Zhang, 1995). For example, in refusing to an invitation to go out, one might say, "Sorry, I have an exam tomorrow".

According to Tanck (2002), refusal occurs "when a speaker directly or indirectly says no to a request or invitation" (p.2). Refusal is a complicated act since it is affected by several factors including gender, age, level of education, power, and social status (Fraser, 1990; Smith, 1998, cited in Wannaruk, 2008).

In politeness theory, refusal is a face-threatening act since it contradicts listener/ requester / inviters' expectation and is realized through indirect strategies (Tanck, 2002). In cross-linguistic or cross-cultural communication, people are different in terms of the language they employ in each speech community. In these communities, pragmatic failure sometimes occurs when the speaker uses a face-threatening speech act (e.g. request, apology, refusal). According to Takahashi and Beebe (1987, p.133), "the inability to say 'no' clearly and politely …has led many non-native speakers to offend their interlocutors".

It can be concluded that research in intercultural communication would provide a good understanding of the differences and similarities of the pragmatic behaviour speakers of different languages use in speech acts.

Objective and significance of study

Although there are ample numbers of studies on the speech act of refusal, most of these studies targeted either Japanese or English (e.g. Morrow, 1995, Gass and Houck, 1999, cited in Yang, 2008) or Chinese (e.g. Liao, 1994; Chen, Lei Ye a, and Zhang, 1995, Chen, 1996, cited in Yang, 2008) populations, and the number of studies on Malaysian (e.g. Ching Hei, 2009) or Thai (e.g. Wannaruk, 2009) are rather lacking. Therefore, the significance of the present study is that no previous research was conducted on the intercultural communication between Malay and Thai students within this specific speech act. The objectives of this study are twofold: First to investigate the strategies used by Malay and Thai university students in their interaction to refuse the request. Second, it aims to examine the frequency of use of the strategies in refusing requests.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study were two groups of university students: twenty Malaysian university students at Universiti Sains Malaysia and twenty Thai university students at Multi Media Universiti and Universiti Sains Malaysia.

The demographic survey shows that the age of Malay respondents ranged from 20 to 25, 19 females and 1male and all of them were undergraduate university students. Table 1 and 2 (see appendix C) displays the demographic survey of respondent's self-evaluation of their level of language proficiency. In the area of language difficulty, 15% of Malay respondents reported English as a difficult language while 45% found it of average difficulty. With regard to Malay respondents' perception of their English language proficiency, 10% found their English near-native while 55% report their English as being 'good' and 35% found their English as 'fair'.

The demographic survey of Thai respondents shows that four respondents were male and sixteen respondents were female. Their ages ranged from 20 to 35 where the majority were between 20 and 25. Moreover, 45% of the respondents reported to find English language of average difficulty while 30% said that they didn't find the English language difficult. In the area of the evaluation of their present knowledge of English 50% percent reported it as good and 30% fair.

Instrument

The data were elicited through an open-ended questionnaire in the form of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part required respondents' biodata including age, sex, nationality, language spoken at home, level of education and program of study. Since the language of the questionnaire was in English, a self-language proficiency assessment adopted from Barron (2003) was also administered. The respondents were asked of their perception on their own level of language proficiency as well as their attitude toward the use of English language. The second part of the instrument was an open ended

questionnaire in the form of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This part included three situations targeted the speech act of refusal to request. The respondents were asked to read the situations and write down the words they might use in refusing the interlocutor's request in the questionnaire.

Discourse Completion Task

The open-ended questionnaire consists of three questions which the respondents were instructed to read and respond to as if they were in the real situation. The questionnaire presumes that the respondents are in a home-stay family program and in three situations s/he is requested for something from a member of the host family. The requester's age differs in the three situation as they are older, the same age and younger than the respondent. The same questionnaire was given to the two groups. However, Malay students were assumed to be in a home-stay program with a Thai family and Thai students were told they were in a home-stay program with a Malay family (see the questionnaire in the appendix).

Coding scheme

After data collection, responses were codified based on a coding scheme (see appendix) of a refusal strategy adopted from Blum-Kulka, et al. (1990). This coding scheme has been used extensively in most refusal studies. However, based on the data elicited from the subjects of the study, the classification was modified and 3 more substrategies were added to the original classification.

Data analysis

The data were entered into SPSS for further descriptive and statistical analysis after they were collected and codified based on the classification of refusal strategies.

The descriptive analysis was conducted based on individual item responses on each participant's DCT. The following sections analyzed data for each situation.

Situation 1

Table 3 shows the results of the frequency of the number of strategies in situation 1. The strategies used by the two groups are as follows:

"On Sunday morning, your Thai-host mother comes and says to you the following:

Host mother: I'm going out with my friends today. I'll come back a little bit late tonight, so could you take care of my son for the day?"

1. Statement of Regret: The findings show that in situation 1 35.30% (n=18) of Malay respondents used a statement of regret while 27.45% (n=14) of the Thai respondents used a statement of regret. Some of the examples of the responses are as follows:

Malay responses:

e.g. *I'm sorry; I'm extremely sorry; I'm very sorry.*

Thai responses:

e.g. *I'm sorry; Sorry sis; Sorry brother.*

2. Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness. 13.75% (n=7) of the Malay and Thai respondents used a strategy of negative willingness and ability in situation 1. Some of their responses are as follow:

Malay responses:

e.g. *I think I can't make it; I don't think I will be able to look after your child;*

Thai responses:

e.g. *I cannot take your son today; I can't manage to care of him.*

3. Excuse, reason, explanation: 37.25% (n=19) of Malay respondents used the strategy of presenting excuses, reasons and explanations to refuse the request while 35.30% (n=18) of their Thai counterparts used this strategy.

Malay responses:

e.g. *I have a group discussion with friends; I'm not really good at nursing a baby; I already have an appointment with a dentist.*

Thai responses:

e.g. *I have a lot of assignments I have to submit this week.*

4. Statement of Alternative / why don't you do X instead of Y: Among Thai respondents there was one instance of using a statement of Alternative by suggesting the "why don't you do X instead of Y" strategy..

Thai responses:

e.g. *Why don't you bring your son with you?*

5. Statement of Alternative/ solution, suggestion: This strategy was added to the original classification. Both Malay and Thai respondents showed one instance of the strategy of giving solutions and suggestions to refuse the request.

Malay responses:

e.g. *Why don't you take the child with you?*

Thai responses:

e.g. *If you don't think you can finish by tomorrow, I guess you'd better not go out with your friends.*

6. Promise of Future acceptance:

One Thai respondent used the strategy of promising future acceptance to refuse the request.

Thai responses:

e.g. *I will help you later.*

7. Alerters: This strategy was added to the original coding scheme. In situation 1 3.90% (n=2) of Malay respondents used alerters while 13.75% of their Thai counterparts used this strategy.

Malay responses:

e.g. ma'am, dude

Thai responses:

e.g. *Sis, mum, brother*

8. Adjunct to refusal: Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement: 7.85% (n=4) of Malay respondents used the strategy of statement of positive options, feelings or agreements in situation1 to refuse the request while Thai respondents used this strategy only twice.

Malay response:

e.g. *I would like to help, but I have an appointment with my supervisor.*

Thai response:

e.g. *Absolutely I really want to help you but…..*

Situation 2

Table 4 (see appendix C) shows the results of the strategies for the two groups of respondents.

"You are watching TV after school when your Thai-host sister (same age as you) comes in and asks you the following:

Host sister: I'm going out to see my friend but I have some homework that I don't think I can finish by tomorrow. Could you finish it for me?"

The strategies elicited from the responses are as follows:

1. Statement of Regret: The findings show that in situation 2 22.55% (n=12) of Malaysian respondents used a statement of regret while 22.22% (n=12) of their Thai counterparts used this strategy..

2. Statement of Alternative/ solution, suggestion: In situation 2 12.75% (n=6) of Malay respondents used solution and suggestion to reject the refusal while 20.37% (n=11) of the Thai respondents used this strategy.

3. Statement of Alternative / why don't you do X instead of Y: This strategy was used by 2.15% (n=1) of Malay respondents and by 3.70% (n=2) of Thai respondents.

4. Non performative statement: No: In situation 2 2.15% (n=1) of Malaysians used the non performative statement strategy by saying 'no' to refuse the request whereas 1.85% (n=1) of their Thai counterparts used this strategy..

5. Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness: 21.25% (n=10) of Malay respondents used the negative ability or willingness strategy in situation 2 to refuse the request while 12.96% (n=7) of their Thai counterparts used this strategy..

6. Excuse, reason, explanation: The findings show that in situation 2 29.80% (n=14) of Malay respondents used excuses, reasons and explanations to refuse the request whereas 24.10% (n=13) of Thai respondents used this strategy.

7. Set of conditions for future acceptance: The findings show that 1.85% (n=1) of Thai respondents used the future acceptance strategy to refuse the request in situation2. Malay respondents didn't resort to this strategy

Thai responses:

e.g. I would love to help you if I don't have any exam paper tomorrow.

8. Criticize the request/ requester: In situation 2, 1.85% (n=1) of Thai respondents used criticizing the request/requester to refuse the request. There is no elicitation of this strategy among Malay respondents.

9. Alerters: The findings show that 6.35% (n=3) of Malay respondents used alerters in the situation whereas 9.25% (n=5) of Thai respondents used this strategy.

10: Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement: The findings show that only 1.85% (n=1) of Thai respondents used this strategy in the situation.

Situation 3

Table 5 (see appendix C) shows the results of the strategies for the two groups of respondents. The situation is as follows:

"Your Thai-host brother (5 years old) comes in and says the following:

Host brother: Hey, I'm building a plastic model airplane right now but I can't do it very well. Can you help me? (You are not interested in building models.)"

The strategies elicited from the responses are as follows:

1. Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement: In this situation 6.25% (n=3) of Malay respondents used a statement of positive options, feelings or agreement to refuse the request while 6.25% of their Thai counterparts used this strategy.

2. Statement of Regret: 25% (n=12) of Malay respondents used statement of regret while 20.75% (n=11) of Thai respondents used this strategy.

3. Excuse, reason, explanation: The findings show that 37.5% (n=18) of Malay respondents used excuses, reasons or explanation to refuse the request while 26.40% (n=14) of Thai respondents used this strategy.

4. Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness: 8.30% of Malay respondents expressed their negative ability or willingness to refuse the request whereas 7.55% of their Thai counterparst used this strategy.

5. Set condition for future acceptance: 2.10% (n=1) of Malay respondents used setting conditions for future acceptance. There is no elicitation of this strategy among Thai respondents.

6. Promise of future acceptance: Thai respondent promised to help the requester by accepting their request in future. There is no elicitation of this strategy among Malay respondents.

7. Statement of Alternative: solution, suggestion: 4.15% (n=2) of Malay respondents offered suggestions and gave solutions to refuse the request whereas 13.20% (n=7) of their Thai counterparts used this strategy.

8. Statement of Alternative: why don't you do X instead of Y: 2.10% (n=1) of Malay respondents used this strategy to refuse the request while 1.90% of Thai respondents used this strategy.

9. Alerters: The analysis of the data indicates that 12.5% (n=6) of Malay respondents used alerters in whereas 16.95% (n=9) of Thai respondents used this strategy.

10. Leave-taking: 1.90% of Thai respondents used leave-taking in this situation.

Thai responses:

e.g. see you. Bye-bye.

11. Adjunct-pause filler: The findings show that 1.90% (n=1) of Thai respondents used an adjunct-pause filler in this situation.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has **attempted to highlight the strategies used among Malay and Thai university students when refusing a request** to someone older, someone the same age, and someone younger. With the small sample of subjects, it is not possible to make broad generalizations of the results that were mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, the results do provide a base for future studies.

The results of this study seem to reinforce the notion stated by Brown and Levinson (1987) that people cooperate in maintaining face in interactions. Refusals are face-threatening thus, these subjects employed indirect strategies when refusing a request. The preference for these indirect strategies, particularly the use of regret, explanation and alternatives could be explained by the subjects' tendency to politely mitigate the refusal to accept the request. However, it seems that subjects sensed that when refusing a request they needed to offer more than simply an apology, but an explanation as well, also showing willingness to rectify the matter by

suggesting alternatives in the form of solutions. This concern reflects the influence of their cultural background which is beyond the scope of the present study.

The use of direct strategies like 'no' was hardly ever employed by either of the groups. This can be explained, as indicated by Wannaruk (2008), because "The manner of avoiding saying 'no' is probably due to the fact that both groups consider the 'face' of the interlocutor of the most importance in an interaction (Brown and Levinson 1978). They do not want to hurt people's feelings or insult people by saying no". Instead both Malay and Thai subjects used 'negative ability'. Although 'negative ability' carries a degree of directness, it is less direct than 'no' in the respondents' opinions. They used 'negative ability' because they wanted to be direct, but were still able to sound polite. These linguistic forms, such as 'I don't think', 'maybe', and 'probably' are used to soften the illocutionary force of a statement (Félix- Brasdefer, 2006).

Therefore, in the light of the findings, there is no reason for concern regarding intercultural communication between Malay and Thai groups. For example, Thai students who study in Malaysia and interact with familiar local students and staff might not face a great chance of misunderstanding, miscommunication, and mismanagement since there are similarities in the perception of the strategies used when refusing requests.

Finally, this study indicates the possible impact and effect of culture on speech acts, in particular the face-threatening speech act of refusing requests. Though the results of the present study show more similarities than differences between the subjects under study, further research may provide us with a more global view of the cultural tendencies in the act of refusing requests among non native speakers like Thais and Malays.

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КОМУНИКАЦИЈА ИЗМЕЂУ РАЗЛИЧИТИХ КУЛТУРА: ОДБИЈАЊЕ МОЛБИ НА ПРИМЕРУ МАЛЕЗИЈСКИХ И ТАЈЛАНДСКИХ СТУДЕНАТА

Сажетак

Чланак се бави испитивањем комуиникације између припадника различитих култура (малезијских и тајландских студената Сајенс универзитета у Малезији) на примеру говорних чинова одбијања. У фокусу је питање: које су сличности и разлике између Малежана и Тајланђана у вези са коришћењем стратегија одбијања молби. Корпус сачињавају одговори на упитник отвореног типа а у вези са три различите ситуације. Главни циљ испитивања је да се скицирају префериране језичке реализације и стратегије које се користе при одбијању молбе упућене од стране старијих, млађих или говорника исте старосне доби. Корпус је анализиран и класификован према таксономији коју су разрадили Бебе, Такахаши и Улис-Велц (1990). Презентована је и фреквенција употребе. Резултати показују варијације у фреквенцији и садржају с обзиром на фактор старосне доби. Ово истраживање подржава чињеницу да говорни чинови имају јак културолошки набој и да њихово разумевање може отежати или олакшати комуникацију између говорника који припадају различитим културама.

Кључне речи: међукултурна комуникација, говорни чин, говорни чин одбијања, дискурс

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Classification of Refusal

I- Direct
   A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
   B. Non-performative statement
      1. "No"
      2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

II- Indirect

A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry…", "I feel terrible…")

B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you….")

C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")

D. Statement of alternative

    1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather do…""I'd prefer")

    2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have…")

F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time";" I promise I'll…" or "Next time I'll…"- using "will" of promise or "promise")

G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")

H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")

I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

    1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)

    2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")

    3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")

    4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.

    5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")

    6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can."

J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

    1. Unspecific or indefinite reply

    2. Lack of enthusiasm

K. Avoidance

    1. Nonverbal

        a. Silence

        b. Hesitation

        c. Do nothing

        d. Physical departure

2. Verbal
    a. Topic switch
    b. Joke
    c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
    d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
    e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

Adjuncts to refusals
    1. Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea…"; "I'd love to…")
    2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
    3. Pause filler (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "uhm")
    4. Gratitude/appreciation

Appendix 2: Questionnaire
This questionnaire was given to Malay respondents. The questionnaire for Thai respondents was alike except for the Thai which replaced with Malay in the open-ended questionnaire.
- Respondents' biodata:
    1. Gender: ……………
    2. Age:……………
    3. Level of study: Degree, Master, Doctorate, other :………
    4. Native language:…………….
    5. How difficult do you find English?

Very difficult ☐   Difficult ☐   Of average difficulty ☐

Of less than average difficulty ☐   Not difficult ☐

6. How would you rate your present knowledge of English?

Near-native ☐   Very good ☐   Good Fair ☐

Poor ☐   Very poor ☐

Dear respondent,

There are three situations described below. Please read the description of each situation and write what you say if you want to REFUSE their request. Please write down what you would say in that situation. Respond as you

would in actual conversation. Please note that you are an International student living with a home-stay family in Thailand.

1. On Sunday morning, your Thai-host mother comes and says to you the following:
Host mother: I'm going out with my friends today. I'll come back a little bit late tonight, so could you take care of my son for the day?
You:
2. You are watching TV after school when your Thai-host sister (same age as you) comes in and asks you the following:
Host sister: I'm going out to see my friend but I have some homework that I don't think I can finish by tomorrow. Could you finish it for me?
You:
3. Your Thai-host brother (5 years old) comes in and says the following:
Host brother: Hey, I'm building a plastic model airplane right now but I can't do it very well. Can you help me? (You are not interested in building models).

Appendix C: Tables

	Malay respondents		Thai respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Very difficult	0	0.0%	1	5.0%
Difficult	3	15.0%	2	10.0%
Of average difficulty	9	45.0%	9	45.0%
Of less than average difficulty	5	25.0%	2	10.0%
Not difficult	3	15.0%	6	30.0%

Table 1: Respondents' self evaluation of their language proficiency

	Malay respondents		Thai respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Near native	2	10.0%	0	0.0%
Very good	0	0.0%	3	15.0%
Good	11	55.0%	10	50.0%
Fair	7	35.0%	6	30.0%
Poor	0	0.0%	1	5.0%

Table 2: Respondents' evaluation of their language proficiency

	Malaysian respondents		Thai respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Statement of Regret	18	35.30%	14	27.45%
Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness	7	13.75%	7	13.75%
Excuse, reason, explanation	19	37.25%	18	35.30%
Statement of Alternative / why don't you do X instead of Y	0	0%	1	1.95%
Statement of Alternative/ solution, suggestion	1	1.95%	1	1.95%
Promise of Future acceptance	0	0%	1	1.95%
Alerters	2	3.90%	7	13.75%
Adjunct to refusal: Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement	4	7.85%	2	3.90%
Total	51	100%	51	100%

Table 3. Respondents' choice of strategy in situation 1

	Malaysian respondents		Thai respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Statement of Regret	12	25.55%	12	22.22%
Statement of Alternative/ solution, suggestion	6	12.75%	11	20.37%
Statement of Alternative / why don't you do X instead of Y	1	2.15%	2	3.70%
Non performative statement: No	1	2.15%	1	1.85%
Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness	10	21.25%	7	12.96%
Excuse, reason, explanation	14	29.80%	13	24.10%
Set condition for future acceptance	0	0%	1	1.85%
Criticize the request/ requester	0	0%	1	1.85%
Alerters	3	6.35%	5	9.25%
Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement	0	0%	1	1.85%
Total	47	100%	54	100%

Table 4. Respondents' choice of strategy in situation 2

	Malaysian respondents		Thai respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Statement of Regret	12	25%	11	20.75%
Excuse, reason, explanation	18	37.5%	14	26.40%
Non performative statement: Negative ability/willingness	4	8.30%	4	7.55%
Set condition for future acceptance	1	2.10%	0	.0%
Promise of future acceptance	0	0%	1	1.90%
Statement of Alternative: solution, suggestion	2	4.15%	7	13.20%
Statement of Alternative: why don't you do X instead of Y	1	2.10%	1	1.90%
Alerters	6	12.5%	9	16.95%
Leave-taking	0	.0%	1	1.90%
Statement of positive options, feelings or agreement	4	8.35 %	4	7.50%
Adjunct-pause filler	0	0%	1	1.90%
Total	48	100%	53	100%

Table 5. Respondents' choice of strategy in situation 3