A Study of Pragmatic Strategies of English of Thai University Students: Apology Speech Acts

by

Siriruck Thijittang
B.A. (English) (Hons, 1st), M. Ed. (TEFL)

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian government’s Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.
ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is about language in use. It is concerned with the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. In order to communicate successfully, language users should have pragmatics competence which is the ability to use language forms suitably to sociocultural context. Consequently, language users need to acquire not only linguistic rules but also sociolinguistic rules of language use to perform the speech acts appropriately. Apology, among other speech acts, has received great attention in pragmatics research as politeness is essential in human interaction. Though being polite is preferred universally, the connotation of politeness might differ across culture. In intercultural communication, lack of apology awareness, could lead to offense or misunderstandings, both in producing the appropriate apology and perceiving the intended meaning from other speakers. This study is aimed at examining cross-cultural pragmatics by focusing on apologies in Thai and English and investigating the production of interlanguage apologies of Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in terms of different sociolinguistic variables. The study focussed on two main aspects: a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and qualitative data from an interview.

Previous studies were analyzed and contrasted to find the similarities and differences of apologies in Thai and English as the native Thai speakers and native English speakers’ pragmatic norms. The quantitative eliciting data was collected through a DCT questionnaire from 160 Thai undergraduate students of various disciplines at a university in Thailand while the qualitative data was gathered from an individual interview with nine of the original 160 students in order to find the apology strategies use and the views toward significance of apology and apology teaching in language learning. The contrastive findings showed that there are more strategies for apologizing in English than in Thai. Also, universality and culture-specificity co-exist in the act of apologizing in Thai and English. The interlanguage data revealed the influence of sociolinguistic factors: social distance, social status and severity of offense.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCT</td>
<td>Discourse Completion Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSA</td>
<td>Face-saving act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Face-threatening act</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFID</td>
<td>Illocutionary force indicating device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Interlanguage pragmatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNES</td>
<td>Non-native English speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

“…” directly reported speech of participants (interviewees) translated into English,

[] silence, pause, or other non-verbal expressions,

rrr non-verbal expressions used while participants (interviewees) think of what to say

…. abandon irrelevant/unnecessary information in the focused categories.