

# THE USE OF REQUEST STRATEGIES BY THAI AND FILIPINO TEACHERS

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## **Abstract**

This present study aims at investigating the English request strategies used by 30 Thai and 30 Filipino teachers, as well as the differences in their request strategies regarding directness levels based on Schauer's (2009) taxonomy. By using a triangulation approach, two methods of data collection – Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) and interview – were utilized to investigate request strategies and additional complications that might affect the use of these strategies. The results revealed that Thai teachers used direct as much as indirect requests, while Filipino teachers mostly used indirect requests. There were significant differences between the groups of Thai and Filipino teachers in their use of six different strategies. In terms of the social aspect of making a request and other related information, both groups had high awareness of the social status and social distance. From the interview, it was found that although Thai teachers had more difficulties in making requests caused by the lack of English proficiency, differences in English proficiency did not significantly affect request strategy proficiency choice, except for the use of imperatives for direct requests. The present study's significance lies in the fact that in the linguistic field of pragmatics, people from different cultures showed their verbal behavior differently, especially request strategies due to various factors, such as pragmatic proficiency, pragmatic awareness, and interlanguage competence.

**Keywords:** Request strategies, Pragmatic competence, Social status, Cultural differences, Linguistic competence

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## 1. Introduction

In pragmatics, people in different cultures show their verbal behavior rather differently for various reasons, such as pragmatic proficiency, pragmatic awareness and interlanguage competence. A lack of these reasons may cause misunderstandings and communication breakdowns, especially when intercultural communication takes place. According to Thomas (1983) and Wolfson (1989), requests are important speech acts that can be susceptible to misunderstanding. Native or fluent English speakers consider pragmatic errors to be more severe than syntactic or phonological errors.

Moreover, another speech act theory of direct and indirect was also employed by Labov and Fanshel (1977). They emphasized that indirect requests inquiring about the speakers' ability to perform the desired action, such as those mentioned above, 'Can you pass me the salt?' were more conventional than direct ones. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) further developed the aspect of conventionality in request utterances, which formed the basis of the request strategy scheme used in the present study.

The importance of requests and the reasons for their appropriate use, mentioned above, are evident in everyday utterances between interlocutors. They have to be aware and use request strategies carefully. In particular, in the workplace or on a daily basis, for example, between Thai and Filipino teachers in a private catholic school, there are always communication breakdowns. According to Clyne (1996), intercultural communication breakdowns in the workplace occur at both the discourse and pragmatic levels. In summary, misunderstandings between interlocutors occur because of a lack of pragmatic competence rather than language structure.

Many cross-cultural studies (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Takahashi, 1996; Hill, 1997) have investigated particular speech acts in various languages to find differences in request strategies in native and non-native speakers. A few studies have compared request strategies or pragmatic competence between non-native speakers in some workplaces. Many studies have focused on the production of speech acts across different proficiency groups, the effects of proficiency on speech acts, the impact of proficiency on learners' appropriate production of pragmatic functions and the relationship between proficiency and pragmatic comprehension. These cross-cultural studies have revealed mixed findings in various aspects. For example, Jalilifar (2009) investigated the request strategies used by Iranian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and Australians who speak English natively. The findings showed that the EFL learners with a higher proficiency often overused indirect requests, the native group used a more balanced strategy and the learners with a lower proficiency overused direct requests. Not enough knowledge was acquired with regard to the social status of the Iranian EFL learners; therefore, their social behavior was not demonstrated.

Simultaneously, Tawalbeh and Al-Oqaily (2012) compared directness and politeness in Saudi Arabic speakers' requests with American English speakers. The findings revealed that native Saudi Arabic speakers used varied kinds of request strategies, while American speakers had a higher tendency to use conventional indirectness. These studies are examples of cross-cultural studies that investigated both EFL and native English speakers. However, it is worth investigating whether or not different Thai and Filipino teachers' English requests are another aspect of the difference between EFL and English as a second language (ESL) speakers. These studies recommended that the importance of contextual factors in learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence should be considered for further research (Kasper & Rose, 2001).

Over a three-month period, the researcher observed obstacles in making requests between Thai and Filipino teachers at the Maryvit Sattahip School in Thailand, including some interesting aspects. When Thai teachers asked Filipino teachers to do something or for information, it appeared that the lack of pragmatic competence and verbal behavior caused problems. For example, when a Thai teacher asked a Filipino teacher to sign some school documents, they said, 'sign this

paper'. This utterance made Filipino teachers feel like they were forced to do the action while Thai teachers were not aware of how to use language to make requests in English appropriately. The worst-case scenario as a result was the intercultural and interaction traps in the workplace, causing frustrations at the communication. This example showed that it was difficult for non-native speakers, especially Thais, to understand English's appropriate language or pragmatic use.

Moreover, when a Filipino teacher asked a Thai teacher to do something, such as check documents or reschedule a meeting, or asked for help, the Thai teacher would misunderstand and need the requested to be further. The worst-case scenario was a misunderstanding, leading to communication breakdown. Previous studies have found that possible factors leading to communication breakdowns consist of speakers' language proficiency, cultural differences and interpersonal variables.

Therefore, This study aims to investigate the request strategies of Thai and Filipino teachers to find the patterns of requests used among colleagues in the workplace and how they use such strategies with regard to directness level.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review includes a theoretical background of pragmatics with a special focus on the important issues for speech acts, especially in request strategies, politeness theory, cultural differences and workplace communication. Additionally, studies related to request strategies – single language, pragmatic interlanguage and cross-cultural studies – are included.

### 2.1 Request strategies by Schauer (2009)

Schauer's (2009) directness categories slightly modified the classifications to clarify better data, based on Blum-Kulka (1989), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Trosborg (1995). In the locutionary act's directness, a request utterance can be assigned to one of three major categories, from most to least direct requests – direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect requests – which will be discussed in more detail in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Overview of request strategies by Schauer (2009)

<b>Direct requests</b>	
1. Imperatives	"Speak louder, please."
2. Performatives <i>Unhedged</i>	"I ask you to close the door."
3. Performatives <i>Hedged</i>	"I want to ask you the way to school."
4. Want statements	"I would like to enter the room."
5. Locution derivable	"Where is the St.Stephen building?"
<b>Conventional Indirect requests</b>	
6. Suggestory formula	"How about lending me some of your records?"
7. Availability	"Do you have time to finish this questionnaire for me?"
8. Prediction	"Is there any chance that we can meet another time?"
9. Permission	"Could I borrow those books that you are using, please?"
10. Willingness	"Would you mind filling in a questionnaire for me?"
11. Ability	"Can you open the door for me please?"
<b>Non-Conventionally indirect requests</b>	
12. Hints	"I have to meet someone in this school."

#### Direct request

1. Imperatives are the most direct forms of requests because they leave little room for misunderstanding and show that the speakers do not want to persuade their interlocutor or give reasons.

2. Unhedged performatives, for example, "I ask you to close the door" or "I'm asking you if you could give me some more advice on where to sit." The second example shows unhedged performatives, which be softened by past tense modals such as could. Like imperatives, unhedged performatives are not modified by the inclusion of downtoning elements.

3. Hedge performatives also contain a performative verb. However, their illocutionary force is softened by a verb immediately preceding the performative verb. The illocutionary verb denoting the requestive intent is modified by using modal verbs or verbs expressing an intention.

4. Want statements are used to explicitly state speakers' desire, wish or need that the interlocutors carry out the requested action. Schauer's study categorized want statements as direct strategies and follow the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP).

5. Locution derivable request is defined in the CCSARP as utterances, which directly derivable from the locution's semantic meaning. In Schauer (2009), the majority of requests in this category are requests for directions. The illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution. The speaker uses a locution derivable strategy in making his request. It seems from the use of modal "have to, should to" in the sentence. The function is to create politeness and derive the semantic meaning of the request.

#### Conventionally indirect requests

6. Suggestory formulae can be realized through different structures or specific languages. The illocutionary intent of the request utterance is phrased as a suggestion.

7. Availability category addresses the interlocutors' possible other commitments by enquiring about their temporal availability. By using this strategy, speakers show consideration toward their interlocutors because they provide a possible reason to reject the request-lack of time.

8. Prediction categories are frequently employed by speakers to distance themselves from the request by formulating the utterance in an impersonal way. In this category, lower-status interlocutors often use requests toward higher status interlocutors, as their content signals that the hearer can predict probability.

9. Permission is drawn the attention of speakers because they are the focus of request. The speakers soften the request's illocutionary force by clearly conveying to the interlocutors that they are in the position of power to grant permission. The illocutionary force can be further reduced by including downtoning devices, such as politeness markers.

10. Willingness is used to indicate that the speakers are aware that no obligation exists on the hearer's part to carry out the desired action.

11. Ability concentrates on the hearers' ability, which addresses their mental or physical capacity to perform the action referred to in the utterance. The illocutionary force can again be decreased using downtoning devices, such as politeness markers or past tense modals.

#### Non-conventionally indirect request

12. Hint strategy is used to indicate that the speaker intends to get the hearer to carry out some implied requested act in such a way that the recognition of his or her intention will not be grounded in the utterance meaning of the hint (Weizman, 1989). Hints are the least transparent forms of request which take the interlocutor longer to decode than the more direct and obvious strategies. Compared to direct and conventionally indirect requests, hints are also more likely to be misinterpreted or not recognized as a request.

Each strategy consists of two aspects: Head acts refer to the main expression for making the request, and supportive moves refer to reason expression of the requestor other supportive information or politeness markers. For example, "Excuse me, "Can I borrow your pencil?". "Excuse me" is a supportive move, and "Can I borrow your pencil?" is the head act of this sentence.

In addition, in these strategies, the speakers have their mitigating of the request, which can be internal, such as request perspective, syntactic and other downgraders and upgraders and external such as adjuncts to the head act (Blum-Kulka and Olshain, 1984, p. 203-205) which were reviewed in the next section below as modification devices.

## **2.2 Cross-cultural studies**

Hilbig's (2009) study attempted to investigate Lithuanian and British English speakers' request strategies using the principle from Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP. The data was collected from both groups of speakers using a Discourse Competition Test (DCT) and open-ended questionnaires. The findings revealed that both groups tended to use conventionally indirect requests; however, Lithuanian speakers used more direct strategies.

As indirectness and politeness are essential aspects in cross-cultural studies, many researchers have been drawn to this field of study. For instance, Tawalbeh and Al-Oqaily's study (2012) compared directness and politeness in requests of Saudi Arabic speakers with American English speakers. The findings revealed that native Saudi Arabic speakers used varied kinds of request strategies, while American speakers tended to use conventional indirectness more.

Despite these previous studies, there is a gap in the research concerning the speech act of request. Few studies have investigated the cross-cultural differences of English request strategies between Thai and Filipino teachers with differing English and intercultural pragmatic competence backgrounds. In ESL and EFL contexts in particular, such as with Thai and Filipino teachers, the differences in English language use are additional aspects that support the previous studies in one way or another.

## **3. Research Methodology**

By using the triangulation approach, both a quantitative – Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) – and qualitative – interviews – approach were used to investigate request strategies and additional information that might affect the use of it by the participants. The WDCT applied both Schauer's (2009) and Pinyo's (2010) concepts of pragmatic competence in the request framework, and the explanation of request strategies selection was based on Schauer's (2009) coding scheme of directness framework.

Regarding the quantitative approach, the frequency of occurrence of request strategies was counted, and a percentage formula was used to investigate the strategies. A t-test was conducted to investigate the differences in the request strategies of Thai and Filipino teachers. In order to investigate the effect of English proficiency on request strategies employed by both groups of teachers, the strategies and proficiency of both were compared to the average variance within the groups using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Other than the qualitative approach, a Semi-structured interview was employed to find answers to three questions. The first question was asked whether the interlocutors' social status influenced their utterance in each situation. The second question was whether the interlocutors' social distance influenced their utterance in each situation and how it did. The third question was asked whether they have any problem with requesting to focus on why each group of participants use particular request strategies and elicit other related information based on the WDCT form.

### **3.1 Participants**

The study's corpus consisted of 30 Thai and 30 Filipino teachers at the Maryvit Sattahip School. The Thai teachers included those who teach English at any level or use English on a daily basis. They have different levels of teaching experience and English. While they all have experience with the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), their scores ranged from 300–800 points.

The 30 Filipino teachers teach English at all levels and they have a minimum TOEIC score of 600 in accordance with Thailand's Ministry of Education's requirement for non-native foreign teachers. They also have different levels of teaching experience.

### **3.2 Research instruments**

#### **1. Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)**

The present study employed a WDCT, which requires respondents to write and read what they would say in each situation. The WDCT contained 16 questions in specific workplace communication for the speech act of requests. Each test item was designed with social status in mind, and social distance was indicated.

#### **2. Semi-structured interview**

The interview included three questions. The first was whether the interlocutors' social status influenced their utterances in each situation. The second was whether and how the interlocutors' social distance influenced their utterances in each situation. The third asked if they had a problem with asking why each group of participants used particular request strategies and elicited other related information based on the WDCT form.

### **3.3 Data collection**

WDCT forms were given to each participant during October–November 2020. Before beginning the form, the researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the research. Once the participants' verbal consent was obtained, they began the WDCT. The participants wrote down their request in the free provided space following each scenario in the English language. The time limit for the test was 1 hour. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants after the WDCT, which focused on why each group of participants used particular request strategies and the aspects of social status and social distance and elicited other related information based on the WDCT form.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The answers were coded to find the differences in request strategies between the two groups using descriptive statistics. Each strategy was counted every time it was used. If the same strategy was used more than once, the frequency of its occurrence was also counted. In order to determine if the request strategies of the groups of teachers were different, the t-test was used to identify any differences in request strategies. The interview data focused on why each group of participants used particular request strategies and the social aspects of all three questions. All the information was recorded in written forms and analyzed utilizing a descriptive approach. For investigating the effect of English proficiency on the request strategies employed by both the Thai and Filipino teachers, the request strategies and English proficiency were compared to the average variance within the groups using ANOVA.

## 4. Results

Part I: Types and frequency of occurrence of request strategies used by Thai and Filipino teachers

Table 2. Frequencies and percentage of occurrences of the request strategies used by Thai teachers

Rank	Request Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ability	234	48.75
2	Imperatives	90	18.75
3	Permission	47	9.79
4	Want statement	39	8.13
5	Willingness	30	6.25
6	Performatives Unhedge	10	2.08
	Locution derivable	10	2.08
7	Availability	6	1.25
8	Hints	5	1.04
9	Performatives Hedge	4	0.83
10	Suggestory formula	3	0.63
11	Prediction	2	0.42

Table 3. Frequencies and percentage of occurrences of the request strategies used by Filipino teachers

Rank	Request Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ability	149	31.04
2	Permission	94	19.58
3	Willingness	78	16.25
4	Performatives Unhedge	51	10.63
5	Want statement	38	7.91
6	Hints	21	4.38
7	Suggestory formula	16	3.33
8	Imperatives	12	2.5
9	Prediction	8	1.67
10	Availability	6	1.25
11	Locution derivable	5	1.04
12	Performatives Hedge	2	0.42

According to Tables 2 and 3, in the first six frequency ranks of occurrence, Thai teachers used direct as much as indirect requests. In contrast, Filipino teachers mostly used indirect requests according to Schauer's (2009) taxonomy. In particular, in the non-conventional indirect category, Filipino teachers used hint strategy in the first six frequency ranks, while Thai teachers used direct as much as conventional indirect requests. In the second-highest frequency used by Thai teachers, they used the imperative strategy much more than the Filipino teachers.

The most-employed request strategies by the Thai and Filipino to respond to the direct strategies of the request was the conventional indirect request; however, the Thai teachers, rather than the Filipino teachers, used direct requests. The apparent difference in non-conventional indirect requests was the hint strategy.

The second highest frequency between Thai and Filipino teachers was direct requests and conventional indirect requests. Thai teachers mostly used the imperative strategy to make requests, which could be explained by questions 1 and 11. These required the participants to ask the school director to speak louder and their colleague to move the car, and they used requests such as 'please speak louder' and 'please move your car.' However, Filipino teachers mostly used the permission strategy.

Part II: Differences of request strategies between the Thai and Filipino teachers utilizing the t-test

Table 4. T-test results for request strategies used by Thai and Filipino teachers

Request Strategies	Thai teachers		Filipino teachers		T	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
<b>Direct requests</b>						
1. Imperatives	3.00	3.248	.40	.724	4.279	.000 *
2. Performatives Hedge	0.13	.434	0.07	.365	.644	.522
3. Performatives Unhedge	.33	.661	1.70	2.602	-2.789	.009 *
4. Want statement	1.30	1.179	1.27	1.258	.106	.916
5. Locution derivable	.33	.844	.17	.379	.986	.330
<b>Conventional indirect request</b>						
6. Suggestory formula	0.10	.305	.53	1.167	-1.968	.057
7. Availability	.20	.551	.20	.407	.000	1.00
8. Prediction	0.07	.254	.27	.583	-1.722	0.93
9. Permission	1.57	1.633	3.13	2.474	-2.895	.006 *
10. Willingness	1.00	1.486	2.60	2.444	-3.064	.004 *
11. Ability	7.80	3.624	4.97	3.275	3.177	.002 *
<b>Non-conventional indirect request</b>						
12. Hints	.17	.379	.70	1.264	-2.214	.034 *

\*p<0.05



Table 4 showed that under the requests related directness levels, there were significant differences between the Thai and Filipino teachers in six strategies: imperatives, performatives unhedged at the direct level, permission, willingness, ability at conventional the indirect level, and hints at the non-conventional indirect level. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the other strategies in the coding scheme of Schauer's (2009) taxonomy of the directness framework at the .05 level.

Therefore, it could be concluded that there were differences in the Thai and Filipino teachers' request strategies. Interestingly, the significance of the differences lies in the fact that in the aspect of pragmatism, people in different countries show their verbal behavior rather differently because of various reasons such as pragmatic proficiency, pragmatic awareness, and interlanguage competence.

### Part III: The reasons for each group of participant's use of particular request strategies, social aspects, and the effect of English proficiency.

The first two semi-structured interview questions were used to elicit answers regarding social status and social distance. From the two questions, the participants were asked to indicate one of the three scales – no, uncertain, and yes – seen in Tables 3 and 4. The final question focused on why each group of participants used particular request strategies and elicited additional related information based on the WDCT form, especially English proficiency.

#### Social aspects

Table 5. Consideration of the interlocutor's social status and social distance by the Thai teachers

N	Question	No	Uncertain	Yes
30	1	-	8	22
30	2	5	8	17

Based on the interview information, for question one, eight Thai teachers reported that they were uncertain whether their requests were socially appropriate for the given scenarios. The other 22 indicated that they took the social situation into account when creating their utterances. For question two, five Thai teachers did not consider social distance before requesting, while eight Thai teachers were uncertain. However, 17 Thai teachers indicated that they considered the interlocutor's social distance.

Table 6. Consideration of the interlocutor's social status and social distance by the Filipino teachers

N	Question	No	Uncertain	Yes
30	1	7	8	15
30	2	7	8	15

Tables 5 and 6 showed the differences in the social aspect between both groups of participants. The Thai teachers considered social aspects much more than the Filipino teachers; however, there was some ignorance regarding social distance. Even though both groups were uncertain about social aspects, based on the first two questions, the Filipino teachers had a higher tendency to ignore the social aspect than the Thai teachers.

To focus on why each group of participants used particular request strategies and elicit other related information based on the WDCT form, both the Thai and Filipino teachers were asked how the hearer's social status and social distance in each given scenario influenced their requests. Both groups gave somewhat similar explanations in this regard.

Participant 8 (Thai teacher)

*'I have to use formal utterance when we make the request with the older or higher status, but I can use informal utterance for those who were in an equal or lower status.'*

Participant 12 (Filipino teacher)

*'Regarding social status and social distance, I think I have to be formal with people whose social status is higher than mine or social distance is large. I think I can use informal utterances with people whose social status is the same as me or social distance is small.'*

However, some participants did not consider the social aspect. In particular, the Thai teachers who ignored the interlocutor's social distance explained that social distance is less important than social status when they make a request in a workplace situation, as the example below demonstrates.

Participant 20 (Thai teacher)

*'I think I can use the same utterance to everyone whomever people whose status is higher than mine or people whose social distance is small.'*

Moreover, some Filipino teachers did not consider either the interlocutor's social status or social distance when making requests. They explained that the request should be made in a polite manner, regardless of status or distance, as the example below demonstrates.

Participant 27 (Filipino teacher)

*'Whoever it is, your boss or your close friends, I always ask politely because you are asking a request or favour.'*

#### English proficiency

This study also investigated the effect of English proficiency on request strategies employed by Thai and Filipino teachers. From the participants' responses, especially the Thai teachers, it is clear they encountered difficulties while making requests, including not being able to recall some vocabulary items or construct grammatically correct sentences. This lack of language proficiency is due to the participants' insufficient linguistic ability, which limited what they wanted to express, as the explanation below shows.

Participant 16 (Thai teacher)

*'The problem is that I was unable to recall appropriate requests from my background knowledge when I do the test.'*

Participant 28 (Thai teacher)

*'I rarely use it, so I couldn't think of what I wanted to say and how to use it appropriately.'*

According to the personal information and educational background from the WDCT, the participants of both groups

provided the standard test score for the TOEIC, which is categorized into four levels of English proficiency: Elementary, Intermediate, Working and Advanced working proficiency, adapted from Rogers (2003, p.5), Rymniak (1997, p.11) and the TOEIC Examinee Handbook (p.39).

Table 7. the categories of English proficiency of Thai and Filipino teachers by TOEIC score

Level	Thai teachers	Filipino teachers
1. Elementary proficiency (200-395)	4	
2. Intermediate proficiency (400-595)	16	
3. Working proficiency (600-795)	8	10
4. Advanced working proficiency (800-990)	2	20

In order to investigate the effect of English proficiency on the request strategies employed by the Thai and Filipino teachers, both groups were compared to the average variance within the groups using ANOVA.

Table 8. The effect of English proficiency on the request strategies employed by the Thai and Filipino teachers

ANOVA

Strategies	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. Imperatives	193.368	3	64.456	15.746	.000*
2. Performatives Hedge	.462	3	.154	.966	.415
Performatives Unhedged	14.766	3	4.922	1.240	.304
4. Want statement	1.125	3	.375	.247	.863
5. Locution derivable	.199	3	.066	.148	.930
6. Suggestory formula	2.804	3	.935	1.241	.304
7. Available	.390	3	.130	.551	.650
8. Prediction	.532	3	.177	.842	.477
9. Permission	31.554	3	10.518	2.265	.091
10. Willingness	29.885	3	9.962	2.270	.090
11. Ability	51.678	3	17.226	1.268	.294
12. Hints	2.501	3	.834	.894	.450

The ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant difference ( $F=15.746$ ,  $P<.000$ ) between English proficiency and the imperatives strategy in direct request only. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in other strategies despite differing English proficiency levels.

According to the participants' explanations from the semi-structured interview and the result from the statistical test by using ANOVA, it could be concluded that both groups had a high awareness of social aspects of English use of requesting. However, some of the participants have different perspectives of social aspects between two groups of the participants.

Moreover, Thai teachers had more difficulties in making the request. It was due to the lack of sufficient linguistic ability to express their utterances. Lastly, the English proficiency difference did not affect Thai and Filipino teachers' request strategies except imperatives strategy at direct request.

## 5. Discussion

The findings showed that both groups used varied request strategies and tended to use conventionally indirect requests. However, Thai teachers tended to use more direct strategies, in particular the imperative strategy. In general, of all request strategy types investigated in this study, ability had the highest frequency in both groups. This supported previous studies' findings on requests (e.g., House & Kasper, 1987; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Woodfield, 2008;). This finding also aligned with both Tawalbeh and Al-Oqaily (2012) and Daskalovska et al. (2016), who explained that the most frequently used request strategy of both ESL and EFL speakers was conventional indirect. This finding concurred with Jalilifar (2009) that conventional indirectness was the most frequent strategy used by the participants, conveyed by only one indirect sub-strategy: query preparatory, which belongs to ability and willingness. This strategy constituted more than half of all requests produced by the participants.

In summary, according to Pinyo (2010), a possible explanation for these differences could be linked to the cultural differences and pragmatic competence of the participants. The contributing factor to pragmatic competence is exposure to English. The participants' educational backgrounds, teaching experience and daily activities in which they use English might also affect their pragmatic competence.

In comparing the differences in the request strategies employed by Thai and Filipino teachers, the results indicated significant differences in six strategies: imperative, performative unhedged, permission, willingness, ability and hints. The results were in line with Hilbig's (2009) findings that both groups tended to use conventionally indirect requests; however, Thai teachers used more direct strategies as the EFL speakers, while the Filipino teachers used less imperative in every given situation as the ESL speakers.

There were significant differences in three strategies in a conventional indirect request: permission, willingness, and ability. Both group's considerable use of the conventionally indirect strategy may be due to English usage in daily life concerning speech act theory. Previous studies (Searle, 1969; Leech, 1983) have mentioned that indirect speech acts correlate with politeness in Western cultures because Western language usage is fundamentally associated with negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Interestingly, in a non-conventional indirect request, the Filipino teachers used the hint strategy much more than the Thai teachers. For example, the response to scenario 16 was often a hint strategy, such as 'I think there is something wrong with my salary.' The speaker intends to get the hearer to carry out some implied requested act in such a way that the recognition of his or her intention will not be grounded in the utterance meaning of the hint. According to Weizman (1989), in using a hint for the realization of a request, the speaker intends to get the hearer to carry out some (implied) requested act in such way. The recognition of his or her intention will not be grounded in the utterance meaning of the hint.

In determining whether or not social status and social distance affect the request strategies used by the Thai and Filipino teachers, the finding was consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) study and Pinyo (2010). They contended that relative social aspects play a significant role in determining certain aspects of politeness in linguistic fields. For instance, requests and responses are greatly affected by the social aspects of speakers. Regarding the role of social status and social distance – consisting of higher, equal, lower, close colleagues and not familiar colleagues in the WDCT scenarios – the findings revealed

that both groups had a high awareness of the social aspects of English requests. However, some of the participants in both groups had different perspectives of these social aspects.

The findings also suggested that Filipino teachers tend to value equality while Thai teachers value social hierarchy. Filipinos may use the same request strategy to make the utterances an interlocutor of a higher, equal, or lower status. In other words, Thai teachers are more sensitive to social rank than Filipinos. This is probably because Philippine society is considered a unique blend of eastern and western cultures resulting from trade and conquest in earlier times (Quisumbing, 2004), while any country has never colonized Thailand. It is also imply that Thai teachers still maintain their traditional culture and norms compared with Filipino teachers. One of the core values of Filipino personhood is equality. "Kapwa" implies a moral obligation to treat others as equals. That is, "people are just people despite their age, clothes, diplomas, color or affiliations" (De Guia, 2008). On the other hand, Thais place great value on respectful behavior and submissiveness (Knutson, 1994). In addition, "Thais are taught to obey and respect people with higher status by birth, education, or knowledge and age" (Nakata and Dhiravegin, 1989).

From the perspective of the effect of English proficiency on the request strategies employed by both groups of teachers, both groups' request strategies and English proficiency were compared to the average variance within the groups using ANOVA. The findings showed that differences in English proficiency did not significantly affect the request strategies used by the Thai and Filipino teachers, except the imperative strategy in direct requests.

According to Jalilifar (2009), concerning the correlation between the complexity of request strategies and the level of language proficiency in EFL participants, the findings of the previous studies, following other studies in this field (Harlow, 1990; Francis, 1997; Parent, 2002), support the notion that the request development of learners goes from direct to indirect and from being simple to complex. On the one hand, there is a positive correlation between indirect strategy types and English proficiency level. In other words, the higher proficiency group used more indirect strategy types – both conventionally and non-conventionally indirect strategies – than learners with lower language proficiency. Thus, this present study found that differences in English proficiency did not affect request strategies, with the exception of the imperatives strategy in direct requests. This is probably due to their TOEIC score, which is categorized into four levels. Interestingly, despite the many differences in proficiency between both groups, they did not affect most of the strategies used.

On the other hand, there was a statistically significant difference in imperative strategy in direct requests. The Thai teachers, in particular, encountered difficulties while making requests from the interview. This supports both Pinyo's (2010) and Jalilifar's (2009) findings that lower proficiency learners are probably not sufficiently competent to use as wide a variety of strategies as proficient learners. Thus, they mainly rely on the imperative strategy.

## **6. Conclusion**

This present study may help disclose the differences between the Thai and Filipino teachers, the factors affecting their pragmatic competence, social status, and related factors in their utterance production. The following implications are made.

1. Thai and Filipino teachers used varied request strategies and tended to use conventionally indirect requests, but Thai teachers had a tendency to use more direct strategies, especially the imperative strategy. A possible explanation for these differences could be linked to the participants' cultural differences and pragmatic competence. The contributing factor to pragmatic competence is exposure to English, for example, the participants' educational backgrounds, teaching experience, and daily activities in which they use English.

2. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the teachers in the six strategies. The significance of the present study lies in the fact that in the aspect of pragmatism, people who use English in different countries show their verbal behavior rather differently for various reasons, such as pragmatic proficiency, pragmatic awareness and interlanguage competence. As Gudykunst and Kim (2003) state, human cultural development is made possible through communication, which transmits culture from one generation to another in the relationship between culture and language.

3. In focusing on the reasons that each group of participants used particular request strategies, as well as elicit other related information based on the WDCT form, the findings revealed that both groups had a high awareness of social aspects of the English use of requesting, with both groups providing similar explanations. Even though both groups were uncertain about social aspects simultaneously, the Filipino teachers tended to ignore the social aspects much more than the Thai teachers in the first two questions. This implies that the feature of their native language influenced them. This finding was also reported by Wannaruk (2005), who found overly-polite expressions from EFL participants, such as Thai teachers.

4. Based on the responses to the third interview question, some Thai teachers encountered difficulties while making requests. Therefore, the present study also investigated the effect of English proficiency on Thai and Filipino teachers' request strategies. It was found that the differences in English proficiency did not significantly affect request strategies, except for the imperative strategy at the direct level. This implies that the lack of language proficiency is due to the participants' insufficient linguistic ability, limiting what they wanted to express. Therefore, linguistic deficiency correlates with the directness level of a request strategy, such as the imperative strategy by Thai teachers much more than Filipino teachers.

#### 8. Recommendations for future research

1. This study employed WDCT scenarios to collect data among a limited population and only included teachers who worked in one school. Therefore, future research should include a more diverse range of the target population, which would truly reflect the entirety of request strategies and provide a wide range of situations that can be applied to both the male and female perspectives.

2. Since the present study focused only on the speech act of request, future research should investigate EFL or ESL teachers' pragmatic attitudes in other speech acts, such as apologies and complaints.

3. It would be interesting if future research investigated the pragmatic usage of English in other aspects, such as movies, textbooks and social media, in terms of both quantity and quality.

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Appendix A  
Discourse Completion Test

**Part 1 Personal information and Educational background**

Please tick / in the box  and provide your personal details

1. Gender  Male  female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Nationality

Thai  Filipino

4. At what educational Level did you graduate? (Highest education)

Bachelor's degree, major \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Master degree, major \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor degree, major \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. At present, at what educational level do you teach? (can answer more than 1 item.)

Primary  Lower secondary  Upper secondary

Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

6. At work, do you have a chance to use English in workplace?

Yes  No

7. Standard English Test

TOEIC  TOEFL  IELTS  Others \_\_\_\_\_  None

Score/Level \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2 Please read the following situations and write what you would response in each situation.**

1. You are attending a meeting. The school director is explaining a new policy, but you cannot hear him very well. You ask him to speak louder.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. This is the first time that you have a meeting at Maryvit School, Pattaya. You are standing in front of the academic office. Your meeting is taking place in the St. Stephen building, but you do not know where St. Stephen building is. The **school director** is walking towards you. You ask him for directions to the St. Stephen building.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. You are running a project for which you would like **your principal** to complete a lengthy questionnaire. She is a very busy person, but the questionnaire is essential for your project. At the end of your class, you go up to the principal's desk and ask her to complete the questionnaire for you.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Your mother will be visiting from out of town and you want to pick her up at the airport. However, her flight arrives at 3:00 PM, but you have to work until 5:00 p.m. How do you ask your **school director** to let you out of work early?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. At work, you want the **head of your department** who always seem very busy to recheck an important academic document for you. You ask the head of your department to recheck and give it back to you within three days because you have to send it back to the academic office within one week. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. You are assigned to teach a new subject in the next semester, but you have no experience teaching this subject. **The head of academic affair** who has been teaching this subject for more than 5 years. You ask him/her for some advice and suggestion about this new subject.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. You had a car accident and you needed to be responsible for any damage of another car for 50,000 baht, but you do not have enough money. You ask the **school director** for a loan because the school has an emergency loan policy for teachers. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. At the end of the academic year, the school provides a pay raise for all teachers except you. You are skeptical about your salary. You want to know the reason why you didn't receive a pay raise even though you have worked in this school more than one academic year. You ask your **principal** for an explanation. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. In the monthly meeting, the mobile phone of one of your colleague rings. You want to ask her/him **who you are not familiar with**, to turn off the mobile phone. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. You have an appointment with your doctor tomorrow afternoon, but you have classes for teaching. Your **close colleague**, who is in the same level with you, is available tomorrow afternoon. You ask her to substitute for your classes tomorrow afternoon.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. You need to go outside of the school for some personal business, but your colleague **whom you are familiar with** has parked his/her car in blocking yours. You cannot go if he/she does not move her car. You ask him/her to move the car.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. You are called to meet the principal. When you arrive at her door, two of your colleagues, **whom you are not familiar with**, are standing in front of her office and are blocking the door. You ask them to move aside.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. While you are giving some test to your students, you forgot your book in another classroom, where your friend is in. You cannot go because this is an important test of your students and you have to make sure that they will not cheat. You ask **your colleague who is younger than you** to get the book for you by your telephone call.

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. At school, something is wrong with your computer. You have to finish some work which is due tomorrow. One of your colleague is very skillful in fixing computers. **You do not know him/her**. However, you want to ask him/her to fix your computer. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. At the annual sport day, you are responsible for cheer activities and you have to collect 100 baht from **every teacher who you are not familiar with** in your team for the cheer activities. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. At the end of academic year, the school provides a pay raise for all teachers and you are skeptical about your salary. You want to know how much raise your **friends who have worked the same period of employment** received. What would you say?

You say: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix B  
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. During the WDCT, did you take into account the interlocutor's social status in the given situation before you made the utterance? How?
2. During the WDCT, did you consider the interlocutor's social distance in the given situation before making the utterance? How?
3. During the WDCT, did you have any problems with making requests in English from the given situations?

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