
THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH FILMS ON THAI EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATICS COMPETENCE*

Korrakod Panpoom¹ and Burajt Phoodokmai²

¹⁻²Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Udonthani Rajabhat University, Thailand

Email: korrakod.pa@udru.ac.th

Abstract

This research study delves into the effect of films on the pragmatic competence of Thai students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The focus is specifically on refusal speech acts, which previous research has not explored extensively. Despite the widespread use of films in language instruction across various educational settings, there is a significant gap in research concerning their influence on refusal speech acts. This gap is particularly noticeable in the context of Thai EFL learners, a group that has not been the focus of many studies in this area. The objectives of this research were 1) to investigate the impact of films on the pragmatic competence of Thai EFL students, specifically in the context of refusal speech acts, and 2) to explore the effectiveness of using films as a teaching tool in enhancing students' engagement and language skills. This research employs an action research design, allowing for a more practical and participatory approach. The study participants are five students from Grade 5 at a school in Northeast Thailand. The choice of a smaller group allows for a more detailed and in-depth analysis of each student's progress and response to the teaching method. Several research instruments are used in this study to gather data, including semi-structured interviews. Observation forms for student and teacher

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behaviours are also used. These forms help record and evaluate the interactions, engagement levels, and general behaviours during the learning process, offering insights into the effectiveness of the teaching method and the student's progress. Post-teaching interviews are also conducted, allowing the research to capture students' reflections and thoughts after completing the teaching process. The preliminary findings of this study suggest that films can serve as rich, authentic resources for pronunciation and pragmatic instruction. The students exhibited enthusiasm and showed improved skills through film-based learning. These observations indicate that film can be a motivating and effective educational tool, facilitating an active learning environment and contributing to better student engagement. Hence, the results revealed that films are valuable, authentic resources for teaching pronunciation and pragmatic skills. The students demonstrated increased enthusiasm and improved abilities through film-based learning, suggesting that films can be a motivating and effective tool for creating an active learning environment and enhancing student engagement.

Keyword: English Films, Pragmatic Competence, EFL Learners, Language Acquisition, Thai Learners

Introduction

The concept of pragmatics contains the theory of Speech act. Austin (1962, cited in Devitt & Hanley, 2003) developed the three-fold classification of utterances into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the acts of saying something, i.e. the actual words uttered. The illocutionary and perlocutionary acts involve what is done by saying something, i.e. the effect of the

illocution on the hearer. Some linguists have attempted to classify illocutionary acts by grouping the speech according to their common functional characteristics. This taxonomy comprises five significant categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Introducing films within language instructional settings has garnered considerable scholarly attention in recent years, owing to their perceived efficacy in augmenting diverse linguistic proficiencies such as vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and cultural appreciation (Daniela et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2016). However, extant literature exhibits a noticeable absence in the study of the separate impact of films on pronunciation skills, particularly within the cohort of Thai learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As an integral facet of effective communication, pronunciation is a formidable challenge in language acquisition (Valdeon, 2010). Consequently, a comprehensive examination of the results of film-based pedagogical interventions on the pronunciation proficiencies of Thai EFL learners becomes imperative.

Prior investigations emphasize the advantages inherent in multimodal input and synchronized captions as instrumental components in enhancing pronunciation in second language acquisition contexts (Feng, 2019; Leona et al., 2021). The merger of visual and auditory stimuli, constituting multimodal input, has effectively reinforced learners' phonological representations and refined phonological updating processes within the cognitive lexicon (Valeria et al., 2023). Synchronized captions, elucidating target lexical units during auditory processing, produce audiovisual synchronization, thereby facilitating precision in pronunciation (Vanderplank, 2016). Nevertheless, a gap exists in the current scholarship, requiring further inquiry into the applicability and efficacy of these methodologies, particularly within discrete linguistic and cultural settings.

Considering the target speech act of the current study, the refusal speech act will be selected as the critical point of the research for two reasons. First, the

interventional studies on refusals are rarely conducted compared with other speech acts, e.g. requests, apologies, and suggestions. Second, refusal is a relatively small number of speech acts that respond to another act, e.g., refusal to requests, invitations, and suggestions. Films distribute great sources for language students, which provide native dialogues, cultural contexts, and stimulated materials for language learners. Films can take the students to an environment with rich visual exposures that offer various experiences, including nature discourse, accents and dialects, slang and colloquialisms, body and gesticulatory language, and cultural customs. From the language teaching perspective, the film is the direct resource that can deliver the language and culture in the learning process. However, taking the movie in an English classroom can encourage the students to pay attention to the language actively; the movie can provide rich input, which can help improve learners' communicative skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Accordingly, the purpose of the study will be to explore deeply the impact of films on L2 learners' proficiency. This study's main aim is to examine films' effects on Thai EFL learners' oral pragmatic competence on refusals.

Research Question

What are the effects of films on Thai EFL learners' oral pragmatic competence on refusals?

Objectives

1. To observe the students' behaviours during their learning procedures
 2. To investigate the teacher's acts and classroom procedures.
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Literature Review

Pragmatics of fiction introduces the systematics within the mixed areas of pragmatics and fictional data. It refers to the study of relevant literature in such areas as stylistic, literary pragmatics or the pragmatic literature on drama and tele-cinematic discourse. Fictional language happens in various distinctive shapes (Jucker & Locher, 2017), which are extended from novels and theatre plays to cinematic films and radio or TV dramas. Moreover, pragmatics gives many diverse viewpoints for examining all these forms and their impacts on readers or watchers. Hence, the investigated field of the pragmatics of fiction is vast and different. Moreover, the sentences which show up in fictional texts are the same as the sentences that show up in other sorts of texts. In any case, fictional texts regularly are aesthetic, and they have numerous functions such as stylistic, educational, social, and enthusiastic.

The conceptualization of pragmatics mainly incorporates the social setting in which communication takes place, which alludes to the level of extradiegetic communication between the composer of fictional content and recipients and the level of the intradiegetic communication between the characters delineated inside fictional compositions. Appropriately, social pragmatics depend on relevant information about conversational records, their connections and the setting where the communication occurs. In conclusion, the field of pragmatics of fiction is vast and varied, offering multiple perspectives to examine the impact of various forms of fictional language on readers or viewers. Despite their aesthetic, educational, social, and emotional functions, the sentences in fictional texts resemble those in other types of texts, demonstrating the richness and diversity of fictional language.

Audiovisual translation (AVT) refers to the conversion of the verbal languages related to audiovisual works and products (i.e., films, TV shows, stage productions, musicals, operas, websites, computer games). AVT is defined as a functional element of translation which involves the transmission of multimedia

and multimodal texts into another language and culture (Gonzalez, 2009: 3). In conclusion, Audiovisual translation (AVT) plays a crucial role in the interplay of languages and cultures in various forms of media, including films, TV shows, stage productions, musicals, operas, websites, and computer games. It serves as a functional element in the process of translating multimedia and multimodal texts, enabling a broader reach across different languages and cultures.

Communicative competence, or communication competence, refers to the innate understanding of a language and the capacity to use it efficiently. This concept, introduced by Noam Chomsky (1960) as linguistic competence, has been expanded upon by many researchers who view linguistic competence as a component of communicative competence. Hedge (2014) states that effective communication relies on mastering specific competencies. Linguistic competence encompasses understanding the language code, its grammar, vocabulary, and written conventions. This includes phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics knowledge. Sociolinguistic competence involves understanding sociocultural usage rules, such as how to use language appropriately based on the communication setting, topic, and interpersonal relationships, and cultural norms and taboos. Discourse competence involves the ability to produce and understand oral or written texts in different forms by organizing words, phrases, and sentences into a cohesive and coherent text. Lastly, strategic competence involves identifying and rectifying communication breakdowns, using strategies like repetition, clarification, slower speech, gestures, or taking turns in conversation. These competencies enable a speaker to maintain open communication channels despite interruptions or misunderstandings.

In conclusion, communicative competence, initially introduced by Noam Chomsky as linguistic competence, is an integral part of language proficiency. It

involves understanding and using language effectively, which requires mastery of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. These competencies allow a speaker to comprehend language rules, use language appropriately in varied contexts, produce and understand cohesive and coherent texts, and maintain communication despite misunderstandings or interruptions.

Communication is characterized as inherently multimodal, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various symbolic resources in creating meaning within specific contexts. This understanding aligns with contemporary linguistic theories that highlight the integrated nature of verbal and non-verbal cues in communication (Gardner and Smythe, 1975). The sophisticated nature of communication is inherently multimodal, as various symbolic resources interconnect to create meaning within a given context. This interconnectedness underscores the indispensable role of both verbal and non-verbal cues in the comprehensive interpretation of information. The significance of these cues extends to language learning, where motivation plays a key role in determining the effort, resolution, and ultimate success of foreign language learners (Ushioda, 2009). A seminal theoretical framework in this domain is the second language social education model developed by Gardner and Smythe (1975), constituting an influential perspective in adult and youth education for English as a foreign language.

Sherman (2003) and Webb & Rodgers (2009) delve into the pedagogical implications of audio-visual elements in language learning. These studies explore the effectiveness of incorporating multimedia resources, including movies, in language teaching. By providing insights into how educators can leverage audio-visual materials to enhance vocabulary acquisition, these studies bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in language education. In addition, Kaiser's (2011) research is particularly relevant as it specifically investigates the impact of audio-visual elements on vocabulary expansion. The

study explores how exposure to rich audio-visual content contributes to a more diverse and nuanced vocabulary among learners. This research aligns with the argument presented in the text regarding the positive influence of screen media on vocabulary acquisition, emphasizing the multisensory nature of learning through audio-visual stimuli.

In summary, the discussion on screen media and vocabulary acquisition is enriched by a diverse array of studies. These investigations not only validate the theoretical foundations, such as Paivio's dual-coding theory, but also offer empirical evidence supporting the positive influence of visual representation, eye-tracking technology, and audio-visual elements on children's attention, word recognition, and vocabulary expansion. The collective findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how screen media can be effectively harnessed as a tool for language learning and vocabulary development.

The study of refusal speech acts is a crucial aspect of pragmatic research. The refusal is a negative response to an action or speech act, with sociocultural factors influencing how it is expressed and interpreted. Previous studies have shown that cultural context and language proficiency play significant roles in the usage of refusal speech acts (Al-Kahtani, 2015). In teaching English as a foreign language, films have been found to be effective in enhancing both pronunciation and pragmatic competence, including using refusal speech acts. Films provide authentic input and cultural context, which can aid in the understanding and practice of refusal speech acts in various scenarios (Daniela et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2016). However, despite its potential benefits, the use of films in teaching refusal speech acts among Thai EFL learners is an area that has been relatively under-researched. Therefore, further studies exploring this pedagogical approach

could provide valuable insights into its effectiveness in improving pragmatic competence in refusal speech acts among Thai EFL learners.

Related Studies

Permataningtyas and Sembodo (2018) studied the refusal actions and approaches used in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets films are investigated in this study. It aims to figure out what kinds of rejection actions the movie actors use and how they articulate themselves in the films. The information was gathered from the two films. In the movies, there were a total of 91 refusals and 12 adjuncts. According to the findings, indirect refusals were used more often (65%) than direct refusals (35%). However, negative reluctance is the most widely used direct strategy (26%), followed by indirect strategies: Attempt to distract interlocutor (21%) and Reason/Explanation (14%) (18%). The results show that characters in the Harry Potter films communicate their refusals indirectly, such as by persuasion and explanation.

Based on the previous study, the pragmatics of fiction were explored in the case study, which investigated the strategy of using the target language in fiction, the significance of using fiction in a language classroom, and the pragmatics exploration through audiovisual translation, according to many researchers who studied about the audiovisual translation in the view of the pragmatics of fiction. The researchers mostly study subtitling in films, aiming to collect data about difficulties in the translation process, distinguished modes of cinematic discourse, and translation. Al-Jabri, Allawzi, and Abushmaes (2021) study about three types of taboos that create difficulties in the translation process. The taboos were delivered by subtitles from Netflix and MBC4, along with the translation strategies. Guillot (2020) conducted a study that concentrates on film subtitles as a distinguished mode of cinematic discourse and translation. The pilot study shows the scope of subtitling among comparatively different languages. The aims of this study are to

explore the differences and ingenuity of subtitling as a mode of discourse and to continually explore how various languages should make use of their own particularities for the needs and challenges of interlingual subtitling. The research also qualitatively explored the representation of source dialogues across languages (e.g., French, Italian, Spanish, English, German) from a diverse cross-cultural pragmatic perspective. Valdeon (2020) reported the research on the translation of Spanish swearwords in AVT. Accordingly, four different series, 47 episodes in total, were analyzed to show that AVT in Spanish not only defends the emotional force of the original texts but also shows the frequency of the frequency of swearwords, which has increased. Locher (2015) explored the exploration of rational studies of im/politeness in English fans' subtitles of Korean dramas, which are under the fields of pragmatics of fiction and audiovisual translation. Moreover, some studies investigated the use of fictional language as sources for pragmatics analysis. These studies can affirm the arguments that the fictional language can provide the same source as the literary-use language. Jucker (2015) explore the case study about the literary use of uh and um in sci-fi, namely Hitch Hickers' Guide to the Galaxy. The findings affirm that fictional language provides rich data for pragmatists, and fiction can be illustrated as a specific form of communication with its own characteristic features. Additionally, Ryan and Granville (2019) studied the suitability of film for modelling the pragmatics of interaction, in which the dialogues from 20 popular English-language movies were analyzed to reveal the findings about the authenticity in the pragmatics of sequence. Rolls and Rodgers (2017) studied about science-specific technical vocabulary which showed the results that science-specific technical vocabulary can improve incidental learning of science-specific vocabulary because it gives students the chances to expose approximately 500,000

words of science-specific vocabulary and serve general literacy to scientific for L2 learners who expose to the extensive reading.

Accordingly, scholars have explored the contributions of using fictions in language classrooms under the umbrella of the pragmatics of fiction. Wawra (2015) studied about how the analysis of political cartoons can be applied as a critical reading learning activity in English lessons in secondary and higher education. According to Arbrams (2014) research, it was identified the linguistics tools which the language learners gain after watching movie containing native information. The research Show that using films as a pragmatics source can help the learners to indicate the aim of conversations and recognize norms of interaction among group of young people. Moreover, Peter, Heynen, and Puimege (2016) established the audiovisual with subtitles and captions to the vocabulary class. The investigation shows the result that, the participants can learn more using their vocabulary remains. Also, the caption had a positive improvement compared to using the L1 subtitle.

Methodology

The action research was adopted for being the research design of this study. Accordingly, the researcher needs to explore about the behaviours of the students to identify the effects of films on Thai EFL learners' oral pragmatic competence on refusals.

Participants/ subjects

The study participants consist of 5 students who are currently in Grade 5. These students were selected using a convenient sampling method where an intact class was chosen. This means that the selection was based on what was easiest and readily available, rather than a randomized selection. The school where these students are studying is located in a rural area in the Northeast of Thailand, which could potentially influence their exposure to English language and

culture. This context may provide unique insights into the effectiveness of film-based learning for EFL students in similar settings.

In addition to the stated steps, the researcher reviewed the recorded observations and interviews to analyze the students' responses and behaviors in relation to the film-based teaching method. The researcher also took notes during the observation and interview stages to capture any immediate insights or observations. These notes were then used to supplement the analysis of the recorded data. The researcher also sought feedback from the teacher about the effectiveness of the lesson plan and teaching method, as well as any challenges encountered during teaching. This feedback was considered in the analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process. Once the analysis was complete, the researcher compiled the findings into a report, highlighting the impact of films on the students' pragmatic competence in refusal speech acts.

Research procedures

The researcher first prepared and conducted the necessary research instruments. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with the participants to learn about their favourite types of film. Following this, the teacher implemented the lesson plan and taught the participants. During the learning process, the researcher observed the students' behaviours. After the completion of the teaching process, the researcher conducted post-teaching interviews with the students. The students' behaviours were then observed again through recordings. Finally, the researcher analyzed the collected data.

Research Instrument

1. Semi-structured interview form: This tool provides open-ended questions that allow participants to express their thoughts freely. It's designed to create a

relaxed environment for participants, encouraging honest and comprehensive answers.

2. Student's behaviors observation form: This instrument is used to record and evaluate students' behaviors, engagement levels, and interactions during the learning process. It helps identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement in student behavior.

3. Teacher's behaviors observation form: This tool is used to evaluate the teacher's performance in terms of instructional delivery, interaction with students, and management of the learning environment. The data collected from this instrument supports the research by providing insights into teaching methods and their effectiveness.

Data Analysis

In this paper, content analysis is used as a method to interpret meaning from the content of text data. This involves a systematic coding and categorizing approach, which seeks to determine trends, patterns, and emphases within the text data. The process starts with the creation of a coding framework or scheme based on the research questions and objectives. This coding scheme will include categories or themes that are relevant to the study. Each piece of text data is then analyzed by assigning codes according to the coding scheme. This can be crucial for ensuring the reliability and validity of the analysis. After coding, the coded data can be quantified and statistically analyzed, providing a numerical description of the trends, patterns, and emphases within the text data. This process allows for the text data to be interpreted in a more objective, systematic, and reliable manner.

Results

Table 1 The teacher and students' behaviours during the procedures.

Teacher's behaviours	Students' behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher provides students a chance preparing about the vocabulary which will be shown in the movie. - Teacher shows the example of refusal acts. - Teacher briefly introduce about the movie namely Harry Potter. - Teacher asks the learners to answer the stimulate situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are enthusiastic to pronounce, spell, repeat, and tell the meanings of the words. - Students brainstorm about how to refuse persuasions. - The students number the jumble scenes and note down the refusal acts. - The students discuss what they'd noted and show their notes.

The data shown in table 1, the teacher and students' behaviours. The data which was investigated from the observation forms, provide the information about the teacher and students' behaviors. Accordingly, from the teacher's behaviors, the teacher tries to prepare and guide the students about what to focus on. This can help the students detect about the refusal strategies and enjoyably watch the movies.

The examples of participants speech act

Direct Refusal

Could you draw me a picture please?

'No, I cannot.'

Direct Refusals with Reasons

Excuse me. Could you help me complete my homework please?

'I cannot ... I not finish uhh my homework.' 'No... no... errrr I not ... intelligent.'

Pardon me, could you lend me money please?

'No ... I (am going to) ... borrow borrow you.' —the phrase in the parentheses is Thai version.

Indirect Refusals with Reasons

Excuse me. Could you help me complete my homework please?

'Sorry, ... I haven't finished my homework yet.'

Pardon me, could you lend me money, please?

'Sorry, ... I err just buy (Kai-Pop) ... err I don't have.'

The study outcomes revealed that learners primarily employed indirect refusals supplemented with reasons to articulate their negative responses. Additionally, the students' attitudes towards the utilization of short clips from the Harry Potter movies in their English classes were predominantly positive. They expressed that these clips provided them with numerous instances of refusal sentences, thereby enhancing their understanding of their usage.

One participant notably mentioned, "I observed numerous examples of refusal expressions used by Haary. Sometimes, I could even see him shaking his head as a form of refusal" (translated version). This statement underscores the effectiveness of visual cues in augmenting the learners' comprehension of refusal sentences.

The students further articulated their enjoyment and enthusiasm towards watching movies in their English classes. They found the experience engaging and entertaining. One of the students shared, "I thoroughly enjoyed watching Harry" (translated version). Another student expressed fascination with the magic spells in

the movie, stating, "I was intrigued by the scene where Professor McGonagall cast a spell to transform a bird into a glass" (translated version).

These sentiments suggest that integrating films into English language instruction not only enriches the learning experience but also enhances student engagement and interest.

Discussion

The research findings revealed that films significantly impact Thai EFL learners' oral pragmatic competence, particularly in the realm of refusal speech acts. A key takeaway was the pivotal role that teacher guidance played in assisting students to identify refusal strategies. This bolstered their comprehension of pragmatic language usage and enriched their overall experience of watching films. These observations align with Abrams' (2014) research, which argued that films as a pragmatic source can aid learners in grasping the objectives of conversations and the norms of interaction (Abrams, 2014).

Further, the study found that students primarily utilized indirect refusals with reasoning. This trend mirrors the findings of Permataningtyas and Sembodo's (2018) research, suggesting that learners are exposed to and imitate indirect refusals from the films they watch (Permataningtyas & Sembodo, 2018). This imitation of language use from films demonstrates that films can provide a realistic and relatable context for learners to comprehend complex pragmatic aspects like refusals.

The positive attitudes exhibited by students towards the incorporation of films in English instruction underscore the educational value of films as pragmatic contexts. Incorporating films into language instruction engages students by

providing a more immersive and authentic language-learning experience. These findings resonate with the theories of Paivio (1986, 2008) and Gardner and Smythe (1975), which emphasize the role of multimodal communication and audiovisual teaching strategies in language learning (Paivio, 1986, 2008; Gardner & Smythe, 1975).

Paivio's Dual Coding Theory postulates that learners process and understand information more effectively when it is presented with both verbal and visual stimuli (Paivio, 1986). Similarly, Gardner and Smythe's Socio-Educational Model highlights the importance of motivation in language learning, which can be enhanced by using engaging and relatable materials like films (Gardner & Smythe, 1975).

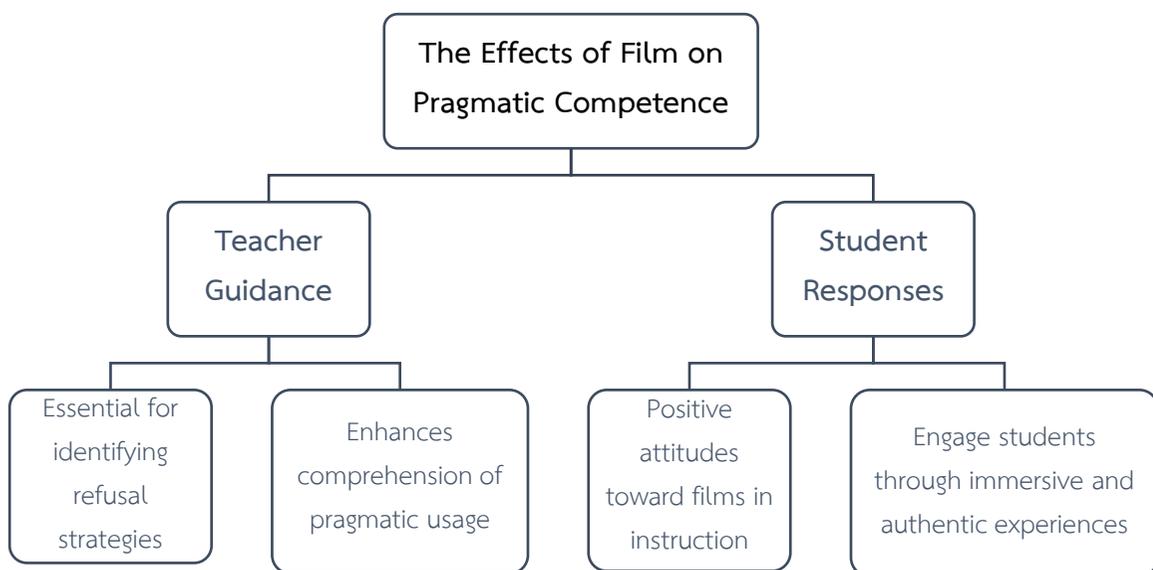


Diagram 1: The synthesis of research finding

In conclusion, this study underscores the potential of films as an effective tool for enhancing oral pragmatic competence among EFL learners, corroborating the premise set in the study's rationale. However, it is crucial to note that the teacher's role in guiding students to identify and understand pragmatic aspects in films is central to this process. The research further validates the need for studies exploring this pedagogical approach to provide valuable insights into its effectiveness in improving pragmatic competence in refusal speech acts among Thai EFL learners, as mentioned in the study's rationale.

Recommendations

Further research is needed to explore the pedagogical approach of using films in teaching English, particularly in the context of improving pragmatic competence in refusal speech acts among Thai EFL learners. It could be implied that future studies could explore different films, audiences, or refusal strategies. It might also be beneficial to examine how different teaching techniques or lesson plans could impact students' learning experiences and outcomes.

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