Factor Analysis of Polite Refusal Strategies
in Multicultural Corporations

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Abstract

This study explored politeness strategies in refusal situations among Westerners and Asians within 22 multicultural corpo+rations located in Thailand. A questionnaire to examine seven politeness strategies was developed from Brown and Levinson's (1987) five politeness strategies. Co-workers of six different status levels, divided by social distance and power relations (Close Equal Co-workers, Not Close Equal Co-workers, Close Junior Co-workers, Not Close Junior Co-workers, Close Senior Co-workers, and Not Close Senior Co-workers), participated in this study. Data collected from 200 questionnaires were analyzed using the following tools: factor analysis, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), independent-Sample T-testing, and multiple regression. The triangulation of interview data was analyzed and divided into eleven categories. For types of politeness strategies, a factor analysis showed that indirectness was mainly used by all types of co-workers. Results of ANOVA showed that three significant differences in the politeness strategic use among all status levels were dinner invitations, offering a ride, and request for things. Dating invitation refusal situations were not statistically different due to the participants' accommodation of an opposite culture. A multiple regression revealed that among six variables (native language, social distance and relations, age, exposure to Thai culture, education, and work experience), social distance and relations was the most influential whereas native language and work experience were not powerful predictors. Although the independent-Sample T-test showed no significant difference between two cultures, the interview findings revealed the dissimilarities cross-culturally. Socio-cultural norms and communication accommodation theory clarified the

self-adjustment to another culture, and the influence of norms and society could be the most significant feature of the different types of politeness strategies among the status of each co-worker in multicultural corporations.

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยเรื่องนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจกลยุทธ์ความสุภาพในสถานการณ์ปฏิเสธ ของชาวตะวันตกและชาวเอเชียใน องค์กรที่มีความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม จำนวน ๒๒ แห่ง ที่ตั้งอยู่ในประเทศไทย การเก็บข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถาม เพื่อศึกษา การใช้กลยุทธ์ในการใช้ความสุภาพ โดยได้ครอบคลุมกลยุทธ์การใช้ความสุภาพ ในคุณลักษณะ ๗ ประการ ซึ่งพัฒนามาจากการใช้ กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพ ๕ ประการ ของ บราวน์ และ เลวินสัน (Brown & Levinson, ๑๙๘๗) เมื่อคำนึงถึง ระดับความสนิทสนม และ ระดับความสัมพันธ์ในองค์กร พนักงานองค์กร ซึ่งเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในการเก็บข้อมูล จะสามารถเป็นได้ ๖ สถานะภาพด้วยกัน คือ ๑) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพเท่ากันในที่ทำงาน สนิทสนมกัน ๒) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพเท่ากันในที่ทำงาน ไม่สนิทสนมกัน ๓) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพต่ำกว่าในที่ทำงาน สนิทสนมกัน ๔) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพต่ำกว่าในที่ทำงาน ไม่สนิทสนมกัน ๕) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพสูงกว่าในที่ทำงาน สนิทสนมกัน และ ๖) เพื่อนร่วมงานที่มีสถานะภาพสูงกว่าในที่ทำงาน ไม่สนิทสนม กัน สถานการณ์ที่ได้ทำการศึกษาการปฏิเสธ ได้แก่ การเชิญไปรับประทานอาหาร (Dinner Invitation) ค่ำ การขับรถไปส่ง (Offering a Ride) การนัดหมาย (Dating Invitation) และ การขอยืมสิ่งของในที่ทำงาน (Request for Things) ผลการศึกษาการ วิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบ (factor analysis) พบว่า พนักงานองค์กรทุกสถานะภาพที่ทำงานในองค์กรที่มีความหลากหลายทาง วัฒนธรรม ใช้การปฏิเสธทางอ้อมเป็นหลัก และมีการใช้กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติใน สถานการณ์ทั้ง ๓ ยกเว้น การนัดหมาย (Dating Invitation) เนื่องจากพนักงานชาวตะวันตกและชาวเอเชียในองค์การลักษณะนี้ มีการปรับตัว และ ทำความเข้าใจกับลักษณะทางวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่าง จึงใช้กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพในสถานการณ์นี้คล้ายคลึงกัน การวิเคราะห์การถดถอย พหุคูณ (Multiple Regression Analysis) พบว่า ตัวแปรที่มีผลต่อการใช้กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพที่แตกต่างกัน มากที่สุดคือ ความ ใกล้ชิด และความสัมพันธ์ทางสังคม (Social distances and relations) นอกจากนี้ ผลการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพด้วยการสัมภาษณ์เชิง ลึกกับตัวอย่างของกลุ่มเป้าหมาย พบว่า บรรทัดฐานทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรม และการปรับตัวให้เข้ากับวัฒนธรรมตรงกันข้ามกับตน มีอิทธิพลมากในการใช้กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพ

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์ความสุภาพ, สถานการณ์ปฏิเสธ, ทฤษฎีการปรับตัวทางการสื่อสาร, การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรม, องค์กรที่มีความ หลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม

Introduction

Communication is an important part of human life because an individual needs language to achieve reciprocal interactions with other members of society. As a result, having productive communication amongst people of mixed cultures, in order to keep the peace and reduce conflicts, is indispensable. Adapting politeness theory to every day interactions is an appropriate tactic to help us understand how humans encode in their social groups or in their multicultural societies, and how politeness strategies enable them to avoid intimidating their public face-images as well as others' face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Gu, 1990; Ide, 1982; Leech, 1977; R. Scollon & S. Scollon, 2001; Watts, 1989, 2003).

'Politeness' was introduced into linguistics more than thirty years ago with the universal belief of similar attributes among the set of politeness behaviors across cultures; however, subsequent politeness scholars have noticed that particular types of behavior may differ from culture to culture (Lakoff & Ide, 2005). A number of research studies on linguistic politeness involving various politeness strategies such as apologies, requests, gratitude, and refusals, as well as socio-cultural differences are considered to improve communication competence and to help communicative interactions (Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Henstock, 2003; Lee & park, 2011; Navratilova, 2005; Song, 2008; Wagner, 2004; Yang, 2008). It appears that the majority of people living in mixed-culture societies try to socially express politeness and cope with the dissimilarities between their own culture and those of other cultures. Nevertheless, underneath this harmonious look, there are many factors that affect people with different origins and cultures. This has led to frequent arguments on topics that cause conflicts and disagreement such as racism, work incompetency, language inequality, workplace behaviors, and relationship inconsistency. Consequently, understanding politeness theory is very important for anyone within almost any field.

With regard to disagreement management in the language and communication fields, famous thinkers on politeness theory have discovered several strategies and means

to deal with the incongruity of communicative interactions. It is obvious that the notion of 'face', especially face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) is an acceptable factor for language users to comprehend because their speech acts could have an impact on positive and negative face wants for both interlocutors. Originally, the concept of face-threatening acts was developed from earlier famous theorists: Erving Goffman's (1972) *Face-work* and Paul Grice's (1975) *Cooperative Principle* model. Especially in the latter theory, Grice (1975) pointed out that when a person uses language to convey his/her intended messages, he/she needs to follow the rules of four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner to determine how language is produced politely or impolitely, as well as to realize which situations interlocutors need to avoid so they do not irritate their addressees (Grice, 1991). Subsequent politeness theorists have expanded these conflict avoidance rules by adding more maxims or describing similar politeness rules in different names such as the maxim of Tact, the maxim of Generosity, the maxim of Approbation, the maxim of Modesty, the maxim of Agreement, and the maxim of Sympathy (Leech, 1977, as cited in Eelen, 2001). In fact, conflict prevention principles are ways to minimize speakers' face-loss and to facilitate their communicative interactions in their social groups. As a result, it is believed that people across cultures universally share these politeness strategies and rules.

Nevertheless, later scholars disagree with this universal framework of politeness models (Gu, 1990; Ide, 1982; R. Scollon & S. Scollon, 2001; and Watts, 1989). These scholars believe that such models could be explained only from a Westerner's perspective. Eastern ideology, on the other hand, could show different interpretations of each strategy and rule. Gu (1990) and Ide (1982) claim that politeness theory is not only a psychological event, but also associated with the social norms and morality of different cultures. To bear out the relations of politeness strategies and cross-cultural differences, more socially related maxims were created, such as Self-denigration and Address (Gu, 1990) and Volition and Discernment (Ide, 1982). These apparently reflect an Eastern perspective towards politeness strategies. Chinese and Japanese people, for instance, are more likely to denigrate themselves but elevate others during their formal or informal

conversations with each other, and they usually like to address people to show seniority and social appropriateness (Eelen, 2001). Ide (1982) explains that the honorific forms in the Japanese language are verb forms used to express proper respect to people (Eelen, 2001). In the Thai language, nouns and verbs could be differently qualified and used to recognize various status levels such as royalty, religious and lay people (Phawadee Deephuengton, 1992). The notion of using the right words with the right people at the right time is also consistent with 'Politic behavior,' according to Watts' (1989) politeness model. Watts (2003) points out that the attribution of (im) politeness might lead to either a positive or negative evaluation of the speaker's behavior. For Watts (2003), the speaker and his/her interlocutors would notice that certain social conditions within their relationship would direct them, during their ongoing interactions, towards the choice of which politeness strategies they might use. It seems that Watts' notion concerning a person's selection of a proper strategy in an ongoing interaction is totally different from the rational politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987) which claim to be comparable across cultures. Watts (2003) also disputed Brown and Levinson (1987)'s individualistic concept of face, which states that it is appropriate only within individualist societies, but not within collectivist ones. Consequently, it seems obvious that cultural difference is a key factor affecting the choices of politeness strategies within the communicative interactions among speakers.

An overview of the social interactions occurring among people from different cultures would show that some motivations for successful communication force them towards certain behaviors and actions. These would arise in the form of several behavioral alterations in order to assimilate with those of the other culture and become a part of that cultural group rather than remain in a separate group (Giles, 1973, as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Giles (1973) and his colleagues have developed a communication accommodation theory (CAT) which provides the theoretical framework to explain the interpersonal relationships in an intercultural communication context (as cited in Immanura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011). According to Giles, Coupland, & Coupland (1991), people are likely to adjust their behavior or accommodate their communication

events for the reason of getting approval or receiving positive feedback from their interactants (Immanura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011). How people choose to act in order to avoid being left outside a group discloses the relationship between those negative responses and the perception of negative motives and psychological outcomes (Gasiorek, 2013). Moreover, communication accommodation and linguistic competence were positively associated with relational solidarity which fully mediated the relationships between intergroup contact and cognitive and behavioral attitudes (Immanura, Zhang, and Harwood's (2011). According to Giles (1973), the two basic principles in CAT are convergence strategy and divergence strategy. Giles and Ogay (2005, as cited in Whaley & Samter, 2007) stated that for convergence, people try to achieve their goals to accomplish communication by adapting their communicative behavior in terms of a wide range of linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal features in order to become more closely alligned to their interlocutor's behavior. On the other hand, divergence strategy is the way a person determines to maintain his or her own style or action to remain different to his or her conversational interlocutor's style (Giles, 1973). The objectives for maintaining verbal or nonverbal differences between him/herself and the others are the desire to emphasize his or her own intergroup and to highlight his/her own identity. It is remarkable that the divergence strategy could be a very important tactic for displaying a valued distinctiveness from the other (Giles & Ogay, 2005, as cited in Whaley & Samter, 2007). Moreover, divergence is sometimes defined as a more appropriate strategy than convergence to be able to get appreciation from others of a different culture when engaging in over-accommodation might seem to imply descending from dignity or superiority. Therefore, understanding accommodation theory could insightfully result in people behaving or avoiding misbehavior when living in other cultures.

Indeed, the purpose of this study is to investigate differences in the use of politeness strategies employed in both verbal and non-verbal rejections of co-workers from different status levels and social distance in multicultural corporations in Thailand. The following four refusal situations - Dinner Invitation, Offering a Ride, Dating Invitation, and Request for Something – were chosen for the following reasons. First, as

politeness is always situation-specific (Yuling, 2008), the four specific situations were selected because they regularly occur in multicultural corporations where there is cultural variation amongst the co-workers. Moreover, refusal is face threatening and frequently occurs in the process of the four selected situations no matter how different or similar the co-workers' social status, social distance or social power. In fact, a refusal has the potential to 'threaten face' - either the positive or negative face of the interactants, depending on the reason behind the refusal (Ree & Knight, 2008). An investigation of such situations, consequently, would result in insight into the strategic use of politeness. Additionally, it is noted that in a dating invitation situation, the notion of dating is moderately different between Asians and Westerners. Sexual relationship might be a major part of the dating process for Westerners; however, sexual matters may be only of slight concern for Asians, especially on a first date. Dating is higher in number a value table in a cross-cultural marriage context (Marriage and Family Encyclopedia, 2012). Therefore, a deeper investigation of the refusals of dating invitations which happen in multicultural corporations could be most instructive. Moreover, this study focuses on examining the types of pragmatic strategies used for making polite refusals because these refusal strategies are essential for office workers employed in multi-cultural corporations. As Brown and Levinson (1987) mention, refusal is a Face Threatening Act which is intrinsically necessary in the context of people interaction. Though it is damaging, it is indispensable. Such a view can be held because refusal is about people's choice when confronted with the chance of executing a Face Threatening Act. Furthermore, much earlier research study has investigated the refusal strategies among EFL learners or students in academic and university settings (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Lee & park, 2011). Alternatively, this study examines the politeness strategies used in refusal situations of participants in a cross-cultural workplace atmosphere.

Objective

The objectives of this study are to investigate the differences in the use of politeness strategies among different refusal situations, to examine the use of politeness strategies amongst the different status levels and social distance of co-workers, and to investigate whether native language, social distance and relations, age, exposure to Thai culture, education, and work experience can predict the use of politeness strategies in multicultural corporations in Thailand. The study responds to the following research questions:

1) Which types of politeness strategies are used in refusal situations of speakers from different socio-cultural backgrounds in multicultural corporations?

2) Do differences exist in the use of politeness strategies in different refusal situations? If so, are there any differences among dissimilar status levels and social distance for each situation?

3) Do differences exist in the use of politeness strategies between Asians and Westerners?

4) In each situation, do native language, social distance and relations, age, exposure to Thai culture, education, and work experience affect the use of politeness strategies?

5) How are politeness strategies used?

Materials and methods

A survey methodology design was used in this study to collect data which mirrored Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies and three major factors (social distance, relative power, and absolute ranking of impositions) in order to explore factors for the politeness strategies used in refusal situations among employees in multicultural corporations. Furthermore, interviews were undertaken to form the qualitative dimension of the study and were used to examine Ide's (1982) cross-cultural model, Watts's (2003) politic

behavior theory, and R. Scollon and S. Scollon's (2001) Power and Distance. The interviews conducted with co-workers in a Thai multicultural corporation setting sought to examine the differences and similarities within a cross cultural environment. In cross-cultural circumstances, the universality of the face threatening acts of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is argued and disputed in terms of the different interpretations between how Eastern and Western people judge these strategies. Indeed, the universality of these politeness strategies is questioned. Moreover, communication accommodation theory is used as a framework to explain many of the adjustments which interview participants used to maintain, increase, or decrease social distance, as well as power relation, in their refusal interactions.

1. Setting and Participants

Two hundred participants from 22 leading multicultural corporations located in Bangkok and the perimeter areas of Thailand were asked to respond to a questionnaire. These participants were divided into 2 cultural groups. The Asian representatives consisted of 145 participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippine, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand; whereas the 55 Western nationalities represented America, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, New Zealand, and Sweden. As referenced, the unknown accurate number of sample size could be 80% confidence level at 163.84 respondents (Smith, 2013) and at least 200 cases for the recommendation of sufficient sample size of factor analysis solution (Guilford,1954). Therefore, the random sampling participants of this study were selected.

2. Instruments

Two main data collection instruments were used. First, a questionnaire was used to collect participants' information and responses on their use of refusal strategies in selected situations (Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation, Offering a ride Refusal Situation, Dating invitation Refusal Situation, and Request for Something Refusal Situation). The

first part of the questionnaire was adapted from Sifianou (1999)'s personal data collection. Whereas, the second part of the questionnaire detailed forty four refusal items categorized under 7 types: (1) Do the Face Threatening Act (FTA) on record without redressive action, (2) Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive action, (3) Do the FTA on record with negative politeness in redressive action, (4) The combination of Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions and Do the FTA on record with negative politeness in redressive actions, (5) Do the FTA off record, (6) The combination of Do the FTA off record and Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions', and (7), Don't do the FTA. These responses were taken from linguistic responses based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative and positive politeness strategies as well as from Henstock's (2003) refusal situations in the questionnaire of Japanese refusal requests. In each refusal situation of this study's questionnaire, eleven responses were listed. However, other responses desired by the participants themselves were also added in the blank field for each situation (see Appendix). In addition, the variables used to explore the socio-cultural data of the participants included six different status levels of the participants' interlocutors which were designed and adapted from Liu's (2004) nine pairs of three different statuses (Student, Professor, and Administrator) in disagreement and power relations. The six status levels used in this study were (1) Close-Equal Coworkers (Co-workers who have the same status, and a close relationship), (2) Not Close Equal Co-workers (Co-workers who have the same status, but not a close relationship), (3) Close Junior Co-workers (Co-workers who are lower in work status, and have a close relationship), (4) Not Close Junior Co-workers (Co-workers who are lower in work status, but do not have a close relationship), (5) Close Senior Co-workers (Co-workers who are higher in work status and have a close relationship), and (6) Not Close Senior Co-workers (Co-workers who are higher in work status, but do not have a close relationship). Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to evaluate the questionnaire's content validity. Secondly, in-depth interviews were also conducted and were one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with 19, or 9.5%, of all 200 participants (15 Asians and 4 Westerners). These 19

participants were selected because they had not only shared identities, such as social status levels, literateness, degrees of social interaction within multicultural co-workers, but they had also represented divergence in terms of native language use, professional categories, ages, and cultures. Each selected interviewee working in a Thai multicultural corporation was asked to sign a consent form in order to participate in the interviews. Five in-depth interview questions as open-ended interrogations were designed to collect information related to politeness strategies used for refusals (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). A digital recording was used as an aid in the interviews. Each one-on-one, face-to-face interview lasted approximately one hour, or dependent on the time availability of each informant.

Results

The findings of the study are outlined in detail under each research question:

Research question 1: *Which types of politeness strategies are used in refusal situations of speakers from different socio-cultural backgrounds in multicultural corporations?* A factor analysis was used to reduce the number of politeness strategies in cross-cultural contexts into key distinct types by grouping the similar ones together. According to Rietveld & Van Hout, 1993, it is acceptable to keep factors with eigenvalues larger than 1 for factor analysis. The eigenvalues were plotted (scree plot) while the cut off point for common factor loadings was at a value greater than .40 (Costello and Osborne, 2005). The interpretation of the factors as types of politeness strategic use of co-workers of six different status levels in multicultural corporations was based on the assumption that "co-occurring patterns of types of components reflect underlying shared communicative functions" (Biber, 2004: 46, as cited in Getkham, 2012). At least 3 variables were used to underline a number of measured variables for each factor (Raubenheimer, 2004).

The factor analysis results were reported in the six different status levels of co-workers, respectively. Heavy loadings greater than .40 were revealed as shown in an

example of factor analysis results of 'Close Equal Co-workers' (see Table 1). Thirteen out of 15 heavy loadings (greater than.40) in the first type (Type1+) were Indirectness Refusals for Conflict Avoidance as 'Do the FTA off record' (no. 10,19,21,30,32,41, and 43), 'Don' Do the FTA'(no.11, 22, 33, and 44), and 'the combination of Do the FTA off record' and 'Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions'(no. 9 and 42). Direct Refusal with Thanks as the second type (Type 2+) in this group of co-workers included three heavy loadings (18, 31, and 38). However, the negative loadings in the second type (Type2-) revealed that the Close Equal Co-workers hardly ever used 'Don't do the FTA' whenever they preferred direct refusals.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Refusal Strategies for 'Close Equal Co-workers'

No.	Items	Loadings
Type 1(+): 'Indirect Refusals for Conflict Avoidance'		
10	I have diarrhea, today. (dinner)	**.751**
43	Well, if I don't forget it. (request for things)	**.695**
30	I've got a stomach ache. (dating)	**.670**
9	I really wanna go, but have a late meeting tonight. (dinner)	**.599**
22	Saying nothing (riding)	**.579**
33	Saying nothing (dating)	**.575**
44	Saying nothing (borrowing)	**.572**
21	This evening, I have to go visit my mom. (riding)	**.560**
12	I can't go with you. (riding)	**.551**
11	Saying nothing (dinner)	**.547**
42	No problem, if only you had asked me earlier (request for things)	**.522**
41	Things have gone missing very often lately. I don't know why. (request for things)	**.495**
23	I cannot go with you. (dating)	**.493**
32	Today, I have a meeting with some old friends. (dating)	**.469**
19	I think I will stop by the grocery store. (riding)	**.465**
Type 2(+): 'Direct Refusals with Thanks'		
38	I don't have it right now. (request for things)	**.506**
5	I really can't go with you. I really appreciate it. (dinner)	**.490**
31	Thank you for asking me out. Lots of work to do tonight. (dating)	**.477**
18	I hope you don't mind me saying this. But, I can't accept your offer. Thank you very much. (riding)	**.406**
Type 2(-): 'Saying Nothing to Avoid Conflict'		
44	Saying nothing (request for things	**-.516**
33	Saying nothing (dating)	**-.501**
22	Saying nothing (riding)	**-.469**
11	Saying nothing (dinner)	**-.428**

The results of the factor analysis of each group of co-workers reveals several types of politeness refusal strategies used with different status levels in multicultural corporations (see Table 2). All of the first types of politeness strategic uses among the six status levels were indirect refusal strategies, which were generally used for conflict avoidance. The three status levels which were (1) Close Equal Co-workers, (2) Close Junior Co-workers, and (3) Not Close Junior Co-workers, all used strategies entitled as 'Indirect Refusal for Conflict Avoidance'. Two others, the Close Equal Co-workers and Not Close Equal Co-workers, used directness which was also an important key for refusals. The co-occurring patterns of high loading strategies used in both groups were direct refusals either with thanks or with apologies. 'Direct Refusals with Thanks' was defined as the second type used by the Close Equal Co-worker status, whereas 'Direct Refusals with Apologies' was labeled as the second type used in the Not Close Equal Co-worker status. For the 'Don't do the FTA' politeness strategy, it is noticeable that 'saying nothing' was not a common strategy in the refusals of the Close Equal Co-workers because the second type showed four negative loadings for this status. On the contrary, the 'Don't do the FTA' in terms of 'saying nothing' was positively high loaded in the second type used in the Not Close Senior Co-worker status. Thus, 'Saying Nothing to Avoid Conflicts' was defined as the co-occurring pattern for the Not Close Senior Co-worker status. Both direct and indirect refusals were highly loaded as the first type of both Close Senior Co-worker status and Not Close Senior Co-worker status because these strategies were used as face saving acts as well as underscoring the relation of power, distance, and rank of imposition of the speech acts.

Table 2: Types of Politeness Refusal Strategies Used with Different Statuses of Co-workers in Multicultural Corporations

Six Status Level Refusal Strategies of Co-workers in Multicultural Corporations					
Close Equal Co-workers	**Not Close Equal Co-workers**	**Close Junior Co-workers**	**Not Close Junior Co-workers**	**Close Senior Co-workers**	**Not Close Senior Co-workers**
Type 1+ (15 loadings) Indirect Refusals for Conflict Avoidance	**Type 1+** (7 loadings) Indirect Refusals & Saying Nothing for Conflict Avoidance	**Type 1+** (11 loadings) Indirect Refusals for Conflict Avoidance	**Type 1+** (11 loadings) Indirect Refusals for Conflict Avoidance	**Type 1+** (8 loadings) Indirect & Direct Refusals for Conflict Avoidance	**Type 1+** (3 loadings) Direct with Politeness and Indirect Refusals
Type 2+ (4 loadings) Direct Refusals with Thanks	**Type 2+** (4 loadings) Direct Refusals with Apology	**Type 2-** (4 loadings) Inappropriate Refusals		**Type 2+** (3 loadings) Indirect Refusals with Thanks	**Type 3 +** (4 loadings) Saying Nothing and Apology to Avoid Conflicts
Type 2- (4 loadings) Saying Nothing to Avoid Conflict	**Type 3+** (3 loadings) Direct Refusals with Apologies and Thanks	**Type 3+** (3 loadings) Direct Refusals with Apologies and Thanks **Type 3 –** (3 loadings) Direct Refusal without Thanks			

Research question 2: *Do differences exist in the use of politeness strategies in different refusal situations? If so, are there any differences among dissimilar status levels and social distance for each situation*? A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used with the results presented in Table 3:

Table 3: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for Four Refusal Situations and
Six Types of Co-workers

Situations	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation					
Between Groups*	5	17.360	3.472	3.894	**.002**
Within Groups	1194	1064.640	.892		
Total	1199	1082.000			
Offering a Ride Refusal Situation					
Between Groups*	5	26.574	5.315	4.906	**.000**
Within Groups	1194	1293.385	1.083		
Total	1199	1319.959			
Dating Invitation Refusal Situation					
Between Groups*	5	9.751	1.950	1.812	.108
Within Groups	1192	1282.664	1.076		
Total	1197	1292.415			
Request for Something Refusal situation					
Between Groups*	5	59.507	11.905	7.090	**.000**
Within Groups	1194	2004.330	1.679		
Total	1199	2063.837			

Note: *Between Groups represents the independent variables (the differences among the six co-worker groups)

Statistical significances were found between the use of politeness strategies and the different refusal situations (Table 3). There were significant differences between groups (the differences among the six status levels of co-workers) as determined by one-way ANOVA in three situations: Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation ($F_{5, 1194}$) = 3.894, p <.01), Offering a Ride Refusal Situation ($F_{5, 1194}$) = 4.906, p < .001), and Request for Something Situation ($F_{5, 1194}$) = 7.090, p <.001).   There was no statistically significant difference in Dating Invitation Refusal situation. It was noticeable that, from the quantitative results, the co-workers in the multicultural corporations responded equally in refusals for dating situations. Further analysis was carried out to better understand within which groups these significances were seen (see Table 4).

Table 4: Scheffe Post Hoc Tests for the Six Status Levels in Relation to Dinner Invitation Refusal Situations, Offering a Ride Refusal Situations, and Request for Something Refusal Situations:

Situations	Co-workers	Comparison with other groups of co-workers	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation	**Close Equal Co-workers**	Not Close Equal Co-workers	.18500	.09443	.573	-.1297	.4997
		Close Junior Co-workers	.18500	.09443	.573	-.1297	.4997
		Not Close Junior Co-workers	.20500	.09443	.452	-.1097	.5197
		Close Senior Co-workers	.41500	.09443	**.002****	.1003	.7297
		Not Close Senior Co-workers	.21000	.09443	.423	-.1047	.5247
Offering a Ride Refusal Situation	**Not Close equal co-workers**	Close Equal Co-workers	.06500	.10408	.996	-.2819	.4119
		Close Junior Co-workers	.18500	.10408	.675	-.1619	.5319
		Not Close Junior Co-workers	.23000	.10408	.431	-.1169	.5769
		Close Senior Co-workers	.40000	.10408	**.012***	.0531	.7469
		Not Close Senior Co-workers	.38500	.10408	**.018***	.0381	.7319
Request for Something Refusal Situation	**Close equal co-workers**	**Not Close Equal Co-workers**	.45000	.12956	**.035**	.0182	.8818
		Close Junior Co-workers	.23500	.12956	.655	-.1968	.6668
		Not Close Junior Co-workers	.42500	.12956	.057	-.0068	.8568
		Close Senior Co-workers	.49500	.12956	**.013***	.0632	.9268
		Not Close Senior Co-workers	.71500	.12956	**.000****	.2832	1.1468

*=p<.05   **=p<.01   ***=p<.001

As is evident in Table 4, the Scheffe Post Hoc Tests revealed significant differences in the six pairs of   co-workers among the three refusal situations. Most

significant difference was obviously found between the Close Equal Co-workers and the Not Close Senior Co-workers (*p<*.001) in Request for Something Refusal Situations. As the statistic results were insignificantly demonstrated for the dinner situations, a comparison between the groups were not exemplified.

Research question 3: *Do differences exist in the use of politeness strategies between Asians and Westerners*? At this point, an independent sample t-test was carried out. Table 5 illustrates the results:

Table 5: Politeness Strategies Used in Relation to Cultural Differences (N=1200)

Situations	**Cultures**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**T**	**df**	**Sig.**
Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation	Westerners	294	1.19	.89	-.268	1198	.788
	Asians	906	1.20	.97			
Offering a Ride Refusal Situation	Westerners	294	1.29	1.23	1.410	1198	.159
	Asians	906	1.19	.98			
Dating Invitation Refusal Situation	Westerners	294	1.19	1.34	.209	1196	.834
	Asians	906	1.18	.92			
Request for Something Refusal Situation	Westerners	294	1.25	1.54	.150	1198	.881
	Asians	906	1.24	1.23			

Table 5 illustrates that there was no significant difference in the use of politeness strategies between the two cultures when the use of politeness strategies was compared by specific refusal situations.

Research question 4: *In each situation, do native language, social distance and relations, age, exposure to Thai culture, education, and work experience affect the use of politeness strategies*? Linear multiple regressions were employed to examine the effect of the six predictor variables (see Table 6) upon the dependent variable: the use of politeness strategies. The summaries of the linear regression analyses are presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Politeness Strategic Use

within Six Social Variables for each situation

Situations	Predictor variables	β	R^2	$\triangle R^2$	p
Dinner Invitation Refusal Situation	(1) Native language	-.00	.028	.022	
	(2) Social distance and relations	-.09			**.004****
	(3) Age	**-.14**			**.000*****
	(4) Exposure to Thai culture	.04			
	(5) Education	.00			
	(6) Work experience	-.01			
Offering a Ride Refusal Situation	(1) Native language	-.05	.036	.031	
	(2) Social distance and relations	**-.14**			**.000*****
	(3) Age	-.13			**.000*****
	(4) Exposure to Thai culture	.01			
	(5) Education	-.03			
	(6) Work experience	.04			
Dating Invitation Refusal Situation	(1) Native language	-.03	.018	.013	
	(2) Social distance and relations	**-.08**			**.007****
	(3) Age	-.05			
	(4) Exposure to Thai culture	.07			**.027***
	(5) Education	-.06			**.042***
	(6) Work experience	-.03			
Dating Invitation Refusal Situation	(1) Native language	-.03	.028	.023	
	(2) Social distance and relations	**-.15**			**.000*****
	(3) Age	-.03			
	(4) Exposure to Thai culture	.04			
	(5) Education	-.06			**.039***
	(6) Work experience	.01			

Note: ***p <.001   **p <.01   *p <.05

According to the standardized regression coefficients (*ß*), the relative importance order of the four predictor variables highly affecting the use of politeness strategies in the four refusals was social distance and relations (*p*<.001), age (*p*<.001), exposure to Thai culture (*p*<.05), and education (*p*<.05). Among all of the predictor variables, social distance and relations had a high impact on the use of politeness strategies in all four

refusal situations, especially as the highest predictor of politeness strategies which was used in the Request for Something Refusal Situation (β = .15). The results from Table 6 also reveal that the highest numbers were those of social variables predicting politeness strategic use in Dating Invitation Refusal Situations. The variables were social distance and relations, exposure to Thai culture, and education (β = -.08, β = .07, and β = -.06, respectively). It is notable that native language and work experience had no significant influence on the use of politeness strategies in any refusal situation.

Research question 5: *How are politeness strategies used*? Five semi-structured interview questions were used. These were (1) Do you consider 'politeness' a really important issue in your workplace? Why? (2) How would you politely refuse these situations: dinner invitations, offering a ride, dating invitations, and borrowing something? (3) Will you consider using polite refusals with gratitude (Thank you) or apologies (Sorry) to your colleagues? How? (4) What do you think about telling a white lie or giving an indirect reason when you want to refuse your colleagues? And (5) Is 'saying nothing' an appropriate act to make a refusal in your culture? The responses of the in-depth interviews were analyzed and triangulated. The triangulation process was used in the explanation of the data collected in pinpointing certain aspects of the results (Sommer and B. Sommer, 2002). The semi-structured interviews containing a total of five questions took place in a private room, using a conversational, one-on-one fashion. They lasted an average of one hour per interviewee. The interviewees came from different specialized professions and positions such as interpreters, editors, directors, and managers, etc. in different multicultural corporations in Thailand. The average age of the participants was 40.2, and the average number of years working in their workplace was 12.4. The average number of Asian participants was 78.95 while the average number of Westerners was 21.05. Their educational backgrounds were comparable: 47 % had attained a Bachelor's Degree and 53% had earned their Master's Degree. Bachelor's degree was the overall lowest education level.

The contents based on the in-depth interviews were analyzed and classified into 11 categories namely (1) 'Do the FTA on record without redressive actions', (2) 'Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions', (3) 'Do the FTA on record with negative politeness in redressive actions', (4) 'The combination of 'Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions' and 'Do the FTA on record with negative politeness in redressive actions', (5) 'Do the FTA off record', (6) 'The combination of Do the FTA off record' and 'Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in redressive actions', (7) 'Don't do the FTA', (8) Discernment, (9) Volition, (10) Politic Behavior, and (11) Power and Distance

In summary, the interviews' findings reveal that, Asians, if their interlocutor was a friend, prefer to use direct refusals, whereas Westerners commonly use bold on record without redressive actions with both friends and those addressees who had higher power or position than they.   Thanks or gratitude was frequently added in invitational refusal statements (Dinner Invitation and Dating Invitation), especially with higher status interlocutors. For Westerners, positive politeness was commonly used with explanations of an appropriate reason. With regards to a hierarchical society, it was common to see Asian participants explaining with several reasons why they chose a refusal strategy related to their cultural principles as the discernment established in their minds.

Generally, indirectness in refusals seemed to be part of the Asian cultures. Findings from a Japanese participant; for instance, highlight that Japanese people spoke and acted similar to other Japanese as an in-group personality to avoid being called a 'black sheep' or an outsider of the group. On the other hand, Westerners seemed to be more self-determining than interdependent. In Asian countries, age and seniority are significant in society, especially at the workplace. However, age was differently perceived by Westerners. They were more likely to use the same level of language with everyone. Nevertheless, some Westerners living in Asian cultures would evaluate social and cultural symbols in each refusal situation and realize 'when' and 'why' to send messages for appropriateness or face-saving strategies (Watts, 2003).   Some could prioritize that the relationship was very important for their business. Therefore, building

a good relationship would bring advantages to their work. In terms of seniority, according to the interviewees, Asian bosses would notice how their subordinates behaved, such as using body gestures and polite language, etc. Western bosses, on the contrary, never consider this 'seniority' to matter. Based on the interviews, the concept of politeness was not only evaluated across time and place (Watt, 2003), but also assessed across the level of persons or professionals. As for power relations, the interview findings reveal that the aspect of power in relation to age and seniority were frequently found in Asian participants' actions and behavior which could be explained by looking at the culture without being clearly designated.

For Dinner Invitation Refusal Situations, most Asians and Westerners usually employed a 'Do the FTA on record with positive politeness in a redressive actions' strategy (gratitude) accompanied with good reasons mostly related to family and personal issues. However, Asians, in particular, were more concerned with the different social levels of co-workers than Westerners when making refusals. In addition, Asians were more likely to use both gratitude and apology with senior people like bosses or superiors.

Regarding the Offering a Ride Refusal Situation, Westerners were more likely to use directness in refusals. The bad traffic condition in Bangkok was a potential reason for not wasting others' time. Asian interviewees were more prone than Westerners to use gratitude prior to refusal of a ride offer. Uttering a necessary reason was a must with either senior or junior co-workers. In addition, for Asians, using a white lie as a 'Do the FTA Off Record' strategy was one of the strongest reasons in an Offering a Ride Refusal Situation. The reason given for this was to avoid face threatening acts if making a direct refusal.

Regarding Dating Invitation Refusal Situations, there were few examples related to making a refusal for dating invitations. One interview finding showed that the most used indirect reason given for the refusal was a white lie about kids or families in order to give an ambiguous hint to the interlocutor that dating acceptance was not likely to happen.

Based on Requests for Something Refusal Situations, the interview findings showed that unlike Asians, Westerners would not use both gratitude and apology for this

refusal situation because it would sound overly-polite. For Asians, saying nothing as a 'Don't Do the FTA' strategy could be an appropriate strategy when the person who borrowed something was a boss because only hesitating body language without words would make the boss feel less or not bad. In addition, a white lie would sound valid for Asians. On the contrary, the findings from Westerners revealed that saying nothing might break a relationship in borrowing cases. Giving a good reason was mostly an appropriate way to go for both cultures.

Discussion

This study reinforced the comprehension of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies by employing refusal situations in Thai multicultural corporations. The quantitative results reveal that directness or indirectness of the politeness strategies selected is linked to the level of hierarchy and closeness of belonging to co-workers. This was correlated to the universality of politeness theory in terms of the fact that a person usually chooses a strategy which belongs to his/her society in matters of social life (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Remarkably, indirect refusal strategies for conflict avoidance were highly engaged by Close Equal Co-workers. The indirectness used by this group is consistent with Ide (1982) in that polite manner is associated with discernment. According to Ide (1982), people are likely to be more concerned about the norms of society. The Asians and Westerners taking part in this study while representing various cultures and practices could independently represent a particular nation. However, the Asians in this study demonstrated some similarities such that they could be grouped together; for example, the use of English as their second or foreign language, points of view towards Westerners, etc. In the meantime, the Westerners in this study belong to various occidental nationalities which have shared similarities such as English as their native language and western cultural absorption. Both the Asians and Westerners who are Close Equal Co-workers working in Thai multicultural corporations acquire an awareness of Asian culture, and they could form the judgment that Thai people as Asians are

connected with discernment. The finding of indirectness of refusals is associated with the notion that 'the type of relationship between interlocutors is clearly a major factor in the choice of politeness strategies in intercultural communication' (Stadler, 2009, as cited in Kadar & Mills, 2011, p. 117). Nevertheless, for Close Equal Co-workers, Asians who were connected with Westerners as well as Westerners who were closely associated with Asians, overly-polite strategies are needless. These findings were reinforced by Giles, N. Coupland, and J. Coupland's (1991) communication accommodation theory in that people would adjust their behaviors or accommodate to get approval in cross-national intergroup communication. Thus, people try to achieve their business aims by adapting their verbal and nonverbal behaviors to form an intergroup relationship with their business partners in multicultural corporations. Additionally, based on the interview results, 'saying nothing' as a non-communicative message or a speechless message was likely to be judged as negative behavior by Westerners due to its ambiguity in spite of its being assessed as a positive approach to avoid threatening acts for Asians. With regards to Close Senior Co-workers, 'saying nothing' and indirectness with thanks were named as two factors with high loadings from the factor analysis due to the reason that the meaning of such answers could be deferred, depending on the hearers' interpretation. The distance between the speakers and their Close Senior Co-workers resulted in using 'Don't do the FTA' strategy. Saying nothing could be an unclear refusal answer or an attempt to avoid a conflict in the workplace. Felix-Brasdefer (2006) explains that various kinds of formulaic ritualized expressions to deal with refusal in an interaction with a person of higher status, such as a professor and a boss, are used to show respect. Even some Westerners living in Thailand for a long period of time often learn how to use the 'Don't do the FTA' strategy. Shigemasu and Ikeda (2006) indicate that the use of 'Don't do the FTA' was a benefit for fulfilling an individual's expectation for a positive outcome. Asians and Westerners might evidently show similarities according to their home nation, but in the level of an individual relationship, when the expectation of communication style was shared, the communication style would result in expected positive outcomes.

In addition, the study indicates that positive politeness strategies such as gratitude and thankfulness were used frequently as face saving methods with Close Senior Co-workers. Thanking was prone to be referred to as a negative politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987); however, it was employed as a positive politeness strategy with hierarchical interlocutors in refusal situations. Thanking was the utterance which the interlocutor preferred to assume reciprocity (inviting-thanking-refusing) for face saving. Evidence shows that the verb 'to thank' could be addressed by high executives while being used 'to express gratitude' as a higher degree of formality and politeness if a member speaks to his/her high executives (Navratilova, 2005).

The study also reveals that, amongst the different refusal situations, there was no statistical difference towards the use of politeness strategies in the Dating Invitation Refusal Situations among any levels of status of co-workers in multicultural corporations. According to Giles (1973), several behavioral alterations to assist assimilation with those of another culture in order to become a part of that cultural group could lead to similarities in any refusals of any status levels of co-workers, both Asian and Western. In this study, a Dating Invitation Refusal Situation was likely to be a sensitive issue which could cause a speaker to lose face if a threat appeared. Persons tended towards behavior which facilitated avoidance of becoming an out-group member. Therefore, similarities in politeness use among each status level of co-workers in dating refusal situations were found. Nevertheless, it was found that points of view on the issue of a sexual relationship in the dating situation have changed. Such a relationship is not an important commitment or responsibility issue for one party only. An examination into a cross-cultural perspective at work between Asians and Westerners around this issue revealed an understanding of equal power between the parties involved. Therefore, although dating could lead to marriage while other situations most likely would not, it tends to be more simply a cross-cultural communication situation occurring in work life.

Despite insignificant differences between two cultures emerging from the independent-Sample T-test's results, the regression analysis results revealed four significant predictors: social distance and relations ($p<.001$), age ($p<.001$), exposure to

Thai culture (*p*<.05), and education (*p*<.05). In other words, the interview results lend support to the notion that co-workers in Thai multicultural corporations need to find appropriate strategies to use in refusal situations due to their own cultures' customs and authentic social contexts. For instance, when making contact with people from another culture, their own cultural appreciation and identity absorption might play an important role on how to communicate with these people. To use a Thai contextual example, Thai language honorifics as well as formal Thai language use would very likely be selected for use in conversational contact according to the two parties' hierarchical levels. In addition, the study underscores that the concept of interdependence seems to hold more relevance than the concept of face-needs, indicating that Asian speakers always monitor the social requirements of an interaction (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988, as cited in Kadar & Mills, 2011). Westerners, on the contrary, are more concerned with how to save face independently, as individuals, in order to avoid conflicts (Lakoff and Ide, 2005). Whether the person is older or younger than him/herself, the language used is likely to be the same. Additionally, the social distance and relations between two persons also played a major role to predict how a person chooses his/her level of directness or indirectness for the strategic use of refusal. This behavior may indicate the influence of one or both parties' cultural power structures (Scollon and Scollon, 2001).

In sum, all groups of co-workers disclosed evidence that indirectness was generally employed. The findings indicate that not only were Asians most likely to use indirectness in their refusal strategies, but a certain percentage of Westerners with experience of living in Thailand were also aware of indirectness in refusal situations. Occasionally, directness was politely preferred, with the addition of either 'gratitude' or 'apology'. Obviously, while 'saying nothing' was inappropriate with Close Equal Co-workers, it was more appropriate with people in higher positions or Close and Not Close Senior Co-workers.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of cross-cultural communication in multicultural societies. In the context of instruction in academic courses for the English language, the findings tend to reinforce and support a scaffolding of teaching modules in subjects related to culture and language collaboration, such as Professional Experience in English, the Socio-cultural Backgrounds of English Speaking Countries, ASEAN studies, and Listening and Speaking in English. This study also reveals implications for a growth in mutual understanding between staff and their customers in a business negotiation situation. For example, knowledge of a strategic use of politeness in refusal situations within the context of multicultural corporations is highlighted. In addition, it is suggested that cultural workshops could be established within an organization to diminish incongruity caused by cultural dissimilarity, with positive outcomes of both the corporation and the multicultural people involved.

However, this study's focus was limited to an exploration amongst subjects working in multicultural corporations only in Bangkok and perimeter areas of Thailand. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate corporations of other developed or developing countries within the Asian region. Particulars, such as sites, interview questions and survey formats could be adjusted for different outcomes.

In conclusion, this study underlines that cultural norms and social customs still retain significant influence in the choice and use of politeness strategies amongst all six of the surveyed groups of co-workers in the Thai multicultural corporations. In addition, Westerners, associated with Asian colleagues and who live in Asian countries, are more likely than other Westerners to utilize indirectness as a positive strategy for conflict avoidance. Indeed, the study indicates that indirect refusals could be used to avoid conflicts even in close relationships and amongst equal level co-workers from different cultures. Nevertheless, Asians, as interdependent individuals, are shown to be more sensitive to seniority as well as any hierarchical levels of co-workers when dealing with refusals.

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