

A Study of Taiwan University Students ' Awareness and Performance of t

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ABSTRACT

The speech act of making a request is a very important aspect of pragmatic competence, for one must, when making a request in English, carefully attend to the appropriate linguistic production with regard to politeness and norms preferred in the English-speaking countries. Therefore, it is essential to address the issue of Taiwanese university students ' pragmatic competence to find out if they, after seven or eight years of English learning, can appropriately adjust their use of request strategies in different situations. The present study attempts to investigate Taiwan university students ' awareness and performance of English speech acts of request, hoping to shed some light on their request behavior in both Chinese and English. The present study uses the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to examine Taiwan university EFL students ' requestive behaviors in given situations. It seeks to discover if the students have any preferences for their requestive acts and, furthermore, to find out why and how. The sample of the present study consisted of one hundred and ninety four participants: 30 native speakers of American English (NSAE) from a college in United States; 164 Mandarin speaking Taiwanese university students from four different universities—one is located in central Taiwan, three in Northern Taiwan. The Taiwanese students were divided into four groups: English major freshmen (EMF), non-English major freshmen (NEMF), English major seniors (EMSs) and non-English major seniors (NEMSs). The major findings of this study are: 1. A requestive utterance would consist of a nucleus—head acts, and two optional parts—alerters and supportive moves. 2. Sixty percent of the university students prefer using conventional indirect strategy with no alerters and with no supportive moves. 3. Social factors would decide on the choice of an appropriate requestive form. 4. The respondents of Taiwan university students are likely not to be aware of the influencing factors. 5. Supportive move types such as apologizing and thanking occur more frequently in Taiwan university students ' expressions than native speakers ' expressions. There is evidence of L1 pragmatic transfer in the EFL students ' performance. This study concludes with pedagogical implications for developing pragmatic competence, techniques for raising request-making awareness, and innovations in the EFL programs in Taiwan.

Keywords : speech act

Table of Contents

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Motivation.....	2
1.3 Significance of the Study.....	4
1.4 Framework of the study.....	5
1.5 Organization of the Study.....	6
Chapter II. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Communicative Competence.....	7
2.1.1 Hymes.....	8
2.1.2 Canale and Swain.....	10
2.1.3 Bachman.....	9
2.2 Speech Act Theory.....	11
2.2.1 Austin ' s SAT.....	11
2.2.2 Searle ' s SAT.....	13
2.3 Cooperative Principle.....	14
2.4 Indirect Speech Acts.....	15
2.5 Politeness Principle.....	16
2.6 Facework.....	18
2.7 Pragmatic Transfer.....	19
Chapter III. METHODOY	21
3.1 Participants.....	21
3.2 Instruments.....	22
3.3 Data Collection Procedure.....	26
3.4 The Establishment of Data Analysis Framework.....	27
3.4.1 The Coding Scheme.....	27
3.4.1.1 Alerters.....	27
3.4.1.2 Head Acts.....	28
3.4.1.3 Supportive Moves.....	30
3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis.....	31
3.4.3 Evidence for Mandarin Speaking Taiwanese University Students ' Pragmatic Transfer.....	32
Chapter IV. RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION	33
4.1 Quantitative Analysis.....	33
4.1.1 The Frequency Distribution in Alerters, Head Acts And Supportive Moves.....	33
4.1.1.1 Alerters.....	33
4.1.1.2 Head	

Acts.....	44	4.1.1.3 Supportive Moves.....	54
4.1.2 Results of One-way ANOVA Test.....	69	4.2 Summary of Taiwanese University Students ' Requestive Performances.....	71
4.3 The Findings for Each Research Questions of the Study and the Possible Explanations for Them.....	73	Chapter V. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION	
5.1 Pedagogical Implications.....	76	5.1.1 Developing Pragmatic Competence: A Neglected Aspect.....	76
5.1.2 Techniques for Raising Students ' Awareness of Request-making competence.....	77	5.1.3 Innovations in the EFL Programs.....	78
5.2 Limitations of the Present Study.....	79	5.3 Suggestions for the Further Research.....	79
REFERENCES.....	81	APPENDIX A Survey of Language Use.....	85
APPENDIX B-1 A Survey on the Speech Act of Request(Chinese-English Version).....	86	APPENDIX B-2 A Survey on the Speech Act of Request(English Version).....	90
APPENDIX C Strategies and Responses in Each Situation.....	94	APPENDIX D The Actual Language Use in the Respondents ' Requestive Utterances.....	100

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