

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

TRAN THI MY HANH

**THE SPEECH ACT OF CORRECTION IN
ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE:
AN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS STUDY**

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M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(A SUMMARY)

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Supervisor: Nguyen Quang Ngoan, Ph.D.

Examiner 1: Lê Tan Thi, Ph.D

Examiner 2: Associo.Prof.Dr. Tran Van Phuoc

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

The speech act of correction has been chosen for investigation in this study for several reasons. Firstly, corrections are socially complex even for native speakers. Secondly, some studies regarding the speech act of correction have been carried out in different languages and in the interlanguage of English learners of different language backgrounds, but not the Vietnamese background. The problems posed for Vietnamese learners of English have not yet been adequately investigated. In this study the aim is to compare the realization of the speech act of correction by Vietnamese learners of English and American speakers of English in order to fill in the gap in research in this area.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims of the study

The aims of the thesis “*The speech act of correction in English and Vietnamese: An interlanguage pragmatics study*” are:

- To find out how native speakers of English (in this case Americans) use their correction strategies in relation to the social factors assigned in the contexts studied.
- To find out how Vietnamese learners of English differ from American speakers of English in their use of correction strategies in the contexts studied.

- To examine the influence of Vietnamese upon English as a foreign language via the pragmatic transfer with reference to Vietnamese-English similarities and differences in correction.

1.2.2. Objectives of the study

This paper is designed to aim at the following objectives:

- To find out the common strategies of correction in English and Vietnamese relying on the socio-cultural factors.
- To give the communicators a sense of socio-cultural appropriateness so that they can achieve their communicative goals and avoid misunderstanding.
- To raise awareness of cross-cultural differences in communication among foreign language teachers and learners as well as other potential interactants of international communication.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study examines American and Vietnamese performance of the speech act of correction. By focusing on correction, we are not looking at opinions, but rather at situations where one person knows the other has made a factual error.
- The study especially discusses the use of politeness strategies that the speaker uses in order to make each correction less face-threatening (i.e., more polite and tactful). Besides, the study also conducts an investigation into the degrees of directness versus indirectness used in correction in Vietnamese and English language and culture.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the aims of the study the research questions below will be addressed:

- How is the use of corrections by American speakers of English and Vietnamese speakers of English different with respect to the choice of politeness strategies?
- How is the use of corrections by American speakers of English and Vietnamese speakers of English different with respect to the choice of directness and indirectness?
- To what extent do strategies of corrections reflect differences in social status and social distance in utterances of American speakers of English and Vietnamese speakers of English?

1.5. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 – “Introduction”

Chapter 2 – “Literature review and Theoretical background”

Chapter 3 – “Research Design and Methodology”

Chapter 4 – “Findings and Discussions”

Chapter 5 – “Conclusion and Implications”

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The speech act of correction and pragmatic transfer have been discussed in many foreign books and studies such as:

“*Interlanguage pragmatics*” by Gabriele Kasper and Shoshana Blum-Kulka [5].

“*Pragmatic failure in intercultural communication and English teaching in China*” (Mei-Xiao Lin, Foshan University, [25]).

“*Corrections in Turkish*” (Dogancay-Aktuna and Kasmisli, [13]).

“*On the organization of corrective exchanges in conversation*” by Neal R. Norrick [27].

“*Chinese EFL learners’ correcting strategies in classroom interaction*”, conducted by GAO Qi , LIU Shao-zhong [17].

“*Correction in talk between native and non-native speaker*” by Salla Kurhila [32].

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Interlanguage pragmatics and relevant concepts

2.2.1.1. Interlanguage

According Trosbog [39], the language system(s) developed by the learner on his/her path to acquire the target language is referred to as interlanguage. The notion is developed under the assumption that learners in this process follow a developmental route that is largely uninfluenced by such factors as the learner’s age, the first language (L1) background, or the context in which learning takes place, ect.

2.2.1.2. Pragmatic transfer

The influence of L1 in cross-cultural communication (pragmatic transfer) is often evident when “*native procedures and linguistic means of speech act performance are transferred to interlanguage communication*” [4, p. 10]. Transfer occurs in two ways, namely “negative transfer” and “positive transfer”. Negative

transfer or “interference” occurs where the two languages do not share the same language system, resulting in the production of errors whereas positive transfer or “facilitation” takes place where the two languages share the same language system and the target form is correctly transferred (Gass and Selinker [16]). Pragmatic error or failure occurs where speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from the L1 to L2 (Thomas [38]). Generally, cross-cultural studies focus on negative transfer because this is a source of misunderstanding or miscommunication.

2.2.2. Notion and classification of speech acts

Austin [1] defines speech acts as the actions performed in saying something. Finegan [15, p. 296] affirms: “Actions that are carried out through language are called speech acts” which is in accord with Yule’s statement [43, p. 47] states: “Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts”

Apart from Austin [1], Searle [35], and Yule [43], Bach and Harnish [2], based on pragmatics and communication, suggest four groups of speech acts; they are (1) Constatives, (2) Directives, (3) Commissives, and (4) Acknowledgments.

2.2.3. Positive politeness versus negative politeness

“Positive politeness (PP) is any kind of behavior (either verbal or non-verbal or both) that is intentionally and appropriately meant to show the speaker’s concern to the addressee, thus, enhancing the sense of solidarity between them.”, and

“Negative politeness (NP) is any kind of behavior (either verbal or non-verbal or both) that is intentionally and appropriately

meant to show that the speaker does not want to impinge on the addressee’s privacy, thus, maintaining the sense of distance between them.”

2.2.4. Directness versus indirectness

According to Saville-Troike [33, p. 36], *“Direct acts are those where surface form matches interactional function, as “Be quiet!” used as a command, versus an indirect “It’s getting noisy here” or “I can’t hear myself think”.*

ID is divided into two types. The first is *conventional indirectness* (1) which is understood as an act realized by systematic reference to some preconditions needed for its conventionalized realization and the second is *non-conventional indirectness* (2) which is realized either by partial reference to objects/components needed for its realization, or by contextual clues. Blum-Kulka [3] makes a comparison of conventional indirectness with non-conventional indirectness that in conventional indirectness, characteristics of an utterance play a very notable role, whereas in non-conventional indirectness, pragmatic context occupies the same position, or even more.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Metapragmatic Questionnaire (MPQ) and the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire are in use.
- Data collected from the MPQ and DCT are analyzed, described and interpreted by contrastive and comparative methods as well as

quantitative and qualitative methods, in which the priority is given to quantitative method.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

This is an investigation into English-Vietnamese similarities and differences and pragmatic transfer in correction. In order to collect data for the analysis, MPQ and DCT questionnaires were employed. First, MPQ was designed to test the validity and reliability of 12 situations in four activity areas: in the family, in the office, on campus and in public places. Informants were asked to give their assessments on the advisability of five different levels: 1- highly advisable, 2- advisable, 3- yes and no, 4- inadvisable, 5- highly inadvisable.

Second, the DCT questionnaire was composed with six situations, each of which was taken from one area in the MPQ and commented as highly advisable by both English and Vietnamese informants. Furthermore, these informants were asked to complete the six given situations, which were carefully selected by the author on the basis of consulting the supervisor and discussing with both Vietnamese and foreign teachers and colleagues. The DCT questionnaires were intended to elicit linguistic data for the analysis and discovery of how corrections would be realized in the given situations.

3.3. COMMENTS ON THE INFORMANTS

First, for the MPQ, two groups of informants (100 members) were selected. The first one consisted of 50 native speakers of Vietnamese (NSVs) living in Central Vietnam who completed the

questionnaire in Vietnamese. The second one comprised 50 native speakers of English (NSEs) who completed the questionnaire in English.

Second, for the DCT questionnaire, thirty NSVs, thirty Vietnamese speakers of English (VSEs) and thirty NSEs participated in the study. The native English participants in the survey come from America. They belong to many socio-economic backgrounds in the society. This varied social backgrounds were chosen to provide a cross sample of the speech practice. The Vietnamese speakers of English, in contrast, come from Danang and Duy Tan University in Central Vietnam. They are the 3rd and 4th - year- students doing English major at the universities. They all learn English for varied purposes, such as work, study, or promotion.

3.4. COMMENTS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In the MPQ, fifty American informants and fifty Vietnamese ones were requested to rank 12 situations in terms of their advisability for correction. A five-value likert scale was resorted to with five values ranging from 1 meaning “highly advisable” to 5 meaning “highly inadvisable”.

The DCT questionnaire comprised six situations taken from the MPQ which were rated as “advisable” or “highly advisable” by a majority of both English and Vietnamese informants (Table 3.2). The specific situations are:

How would you verbally correct someone in the following situation:

Situation 1 [Situation 2 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 47/50 NSEs and 43/50 NSVs

You and your elder sister are discussing about the famous singer- Celine Dion. And your sister says that Celine Dion is American. (In fact, she is Canadian.)

Situation 2 [Situation 4 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 40/50 NSEs and 37/50 NSVs

Your boss asks you to do some photocopying of a report on a new product whose origin is wrongly written. (Its origin must be Japan, but s/he wrote China instead).

Situation 3 [Situation 5 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 46/50 NSEs and 45/50 NSVs

Your secretary submits a summary of your company to you. In the summary, she writes the wrong date when the company was established.

Situation 4 [Situation 7 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 49/50 NSEs and 50/50 NSVs

You are a professor in a history course. During class discussion, one of your students gives an account of a famous historical event with the wrong date.

Situation 5 [Situation 9 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 43/50 NSEs and 40/50 NSVs

During the literature class, the professor gives a topic for group discussion; one of your group mate quotes a poem attributing it to the wrong poet.

Situation 6 [Situation 11 in the MPQ] rated as “(highly) advisable” by 14/50 NSEs and 38/50 NSVs

You meet a stranger who is older than you. She talks to you but calls you by your mother’s name.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 CORRECTION AS SEEN FROM METAPRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

In this study, the MPQ is designed for estimation of the frequency and advisability of the act of correcting in English and Vietnamese languages and cultures so that major similarities and differences are clarified. Moreover, it is needed for the choice of the most common situations for the design of the DCT questionnaire that follows it.

In the MPQ, twelve situations grouped into four areas of activity, namely familial, professional, academic and social activities are mentioned and investigated. The Vietnamese and American informants were asked whether they would perform their correction in these situations or not. Their evaluation of the advisability in each situation was rated by their ticking one of the five values in the likert scale, with 1 being the most advisable and 5 the least. These values are put in five columns as follows:

Column 1: Highly advisable (HA)

Column 2: Advisable (A)

Column 3: Yes/No (Y/N)

Column 4: Inadvisable (IA)

Column 5: Highly inadvisable (HIA)

1. Familial Activities

Table 4.1: Familial situations and their levels of advisability

Situations	Eng / Vie	HA	A	Y/N	IA	HIA
1. Correct your mother	Eng	10%	34%	40%	16%	0%
	Vie	16%	44%	24%	16%	0%
2. Correct your elder sister	Eng	38%	56%	6%	0%	0%
	Vie	22%	64%	12%	2%	0%
3. Correct your nephew	Eng	0%	0%	2%	76%	22%
	Vie	0%	10%	24%	48%	18%

2. Business Activities:

Table 4.2: Business situations and their levels of advisability

Situations	Eng/ Vie	HA	A	Y/N	IA	HIA
4. Correct your boss' report	Eng	20%	60%	18%	2%	0%
	Vie	50%	24%	20%	4%	0%
5. Correct your secretary	Eng	60%	32%	6%	2%	0%
	Vie	28%	62%	10%	0%	0%
6. Correct your boss' presentation	Eng	18%	26%	34%	22%	0%
	Vie	20%	28%	30%	12%	10%

3. Academic Activities:

Table 4.3: Academic situations and their levels of advisability

Situations	Eng/ Vie	HA	A	Y/N	IA	HIA
7. Correct your student	Eng	58%	40%	2%	0%	0%
	Vie	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%
	Eng	20%	24%	50%	6%	0%

teacher	Vie	16%	24%	52%	4%	4%
9. Correct your classmate	Eng	30%	56%	10%	4%	0%
	Vie	26%	54%	12%	6%	2%

4. Social activities:

Table 4.4: Social situations and their levels of advisability

Situations	Eng/ Vie	HA	A	Y/N	IA	HIA
10. Correct an acquaintance	Eng	0%	24%	52%	24%	0%
	Vie	6%	28%	44%	16%	6%
11. Correct a stranger	Eng	2%	26%	24%	46%	0%
	Vie	24%	46%	6%	16%	2%
12. Correct a friend	Eng	20%	54%	26%	0%	0%
	Vie	20%	34%	30%	14%	6%

In summary, based on the data above, a preliminary conclusion can be proposed that correcting as a speech act is frequently employed in both English and Vietnamese languages and cultures. Moreover, the similarities as well as the differences between the two cultures partly reveal in every given situation. The situation, which is highly worthy to correct in this culture, is either warmly or indifferently approved in another. However, for most situations, except for the last two ones, the advisability for correcting shows more similarities than differences in the two cultures, as is illustrated in table 4.5. Although most situations for which American speakers and Vietnamese speakers' perception was similar in ranking the advisability of the speech act of correction, the writer's aim is to compare the interlanguage of Vietnamese learners of English with English by native American speakers and cross-cultural similarities and differences in the language choices for corrections of native speakers of both languages.

4.2 POSITIVE POLITENESS AND NEGATIVE POLITENESS IN CORRECTING

4.2.1. Use of strategies of PP and NP in correcting

Table 4.6: Realizations of strategies in correcting

STRATEGIES	SUB- STRATEGIES
BALD ON-R	1. Flat correction (F.cor)
POSITIVE POLITENESS	2. Seeking agreement (S. agr)
	3. Offer – promise (O.pro)
	4. Suggestion – Advice (S.adv)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	5. Using in-group identity markers (U.gro)
	6. Question, hedge (Q.hed)
	7. Impersonalizing Speaker and Hearer (Imp)
	8. Using disclaimers preceded by apologies or positive remarks (U. dis)
OFF- RECORD	9. Using diminutives (U.dim)
	10. Over generalizing (O.gen)
	11. Rhetorical question (R.que)
NO FTA	12 Being ironic (B. iro)
	13. Keeping silent (K.sil)

4.2.2. PP and NP in correcting as seen from the participants' power

4.2.2.1. Choice of politeness strategy in high power settings (+P)

Table 4.7: The use of politeness strategies with respect to +P

Strategy	F. cor	S. agr	O. pro	S. adv	U. gro	Q. hed	Im p	U. dis	U. di m	O. ge n	R. qu e	B. ir o	K. sil

NS Vs	sit. 3	26.7	0	0	33.3	10	13.3	0	0	3.3	3.3	6.7	3.3	0
	sit. 4	26.7	6.7	0	26.7	0	13.3	13.3	3.3	0	0	0	0	0
VSEs	sit. 3	23.3	3.3	0	30	0	23.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	6.7	0	0
	sit. 4	20	0	0	10	3.3	16.7	10	23.3	0	6.7	3.3	6.7	0
NSEs	sit. 3	20	3.3	0	13.3	0	36.7	0	10	10	0	0	0	6.7
	sit. 4	10	6.7	0	0	0	33.3	0	43.3	6.7	0	0	0	0

*Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer

In sit.3, the NSEs seem to have made more efforts to soften their corrections than their Vietnamese counterparts. They tried, for instance, to soften the correction and make it the least face-threatening possible by using more *Question, hedge, and Using diminutives*. The VSEs also used similar formulas. However, they used *Question, hedge* and *Using diminutives* less often than the NSEs. That indicates pragmatic transfer influence as the NSVs also used those strategies. Similarly, in sit.4, many NSEs used a positive remark to start a correction to a lower-status person while just some VSEs and only one NSVs did the same. This, again reveals pragmatic transfer in the choice of politeness strategies in English by the VSEs. From what has been discussed, it may be concluded that in terms of politeness strategy choice, while Vietnamese speakers of English did not entirely behave culturally in an American English native speaker-like way, some Vietnamese speakers may have learnt to approximate such behavior or they may do so anyway in a Vietnamese cultural context.

4.2.2.2. Choice of politeness strategy in equal power settings (=P)

Table 4.8: The use of politeness strategies with respect to =P

Strategy		F. cor	S. agr	O. pro	S. adv	U. gro	Q. hed	Imp	U. dis	U. dim	O. gen	R. que	B. ir o	K. sil
NSVs	sit. 5	40	3.3	0	10	0	6.7	3.3	16.7	3.3	10	0	3.3	3.3
VSEs	sit. 5	33	3.3	0	6.7	0	26.7	3.3	13.3	3.3	6.7	0	3.3	0
NSEs	sit. 5	16.7	6.7	0	0	0	66.7	3.3	3.3	3.3	0	0	0	0

*** Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer**

In the settings where the Speaker has equal power with the Addressee, if *Flat correction* was used frequently by the NSVs, *Question, hedge* was the most common option by the NSEs. The VSEs' choice was somewhere between the NSVs' and the NSE' for both strategies; that is illustrated by the diagram of choosing *Flat correction*: NSVs > VSEs > NSEs and *Question, Hedge*: NSEs > VSEs > NSVs. This suggests that the ways Vietnamese speakers of English express their correction in English be influenced by the way they do in Vietnamese, which causes the inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from Vietnamese to English.

4.2.2.3. Choice of politeness strategy in powerless settings (-P)

Table 4.9: The use of politeness strategies with respect to -P

Strategy		F. cor	S. agr	O. pro	S. adv	U. gro	Q. hed	Imp	U. dis	U. dim	O. gen	R. que	B. ir o	K. sil
NSVs	sit. 1	40	0	0	3.3	16.7	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
	sit. 2	20	6.7	10	13.3	0	40	3.3	3.3	6.7	0	0	0	0
	sit. 6	53.3	0	0	0	3.3	6.7	0	20	0	0	10	0	6.7
VSE	sit.	56.7	0	0	3.3	10	16.7	6.7	0	0	0	3.3	3.	0

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s	1													
	sit. 2	30	3.3	6.7	3.3	0	26.7	3.3	26.7	0	0	0	0	0
	sit. 6	36.7	0	0	3.3	0	3.3	3.3	40	0	0	3.3	0	10
NSEs	sit. 1	26.6	10	0	0	0	56.7	6.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	sit. 2	10	20	16.7	0	0	46.7	0	0	6.7	0	0	0	0
	sit. 6	20	6.7	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	33.3

*** Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer**

In sit.1, the most frequently chosen strategies by the NSEs in sit.1 (i.e., correcting an elder sister), in order of decreasing frequency, range from *Question, hedge* to *Flat correction*, to *Seeking agreement* and *Impersonalising S and H*. Unlike the NSEs, the NSVs and VSEs chose the *Flat correction* strategy most often for their corrections. However, the NSVs and VSEs used other strategies such as *Suggestion-advice, Using in-group identity markers*, and most interestingly, the VSEs used *Rhetorical question*, and *Being ironic*, whereas no American speakers did the same. These reflect the pragmatic transfer influence on the VSEs. In sit.2, Americans seemed to be elaborating their correction by using more self-deprecating softeners with a greater variety to wording and a preference for the “[clause] + but...” structure such as “I may be wrong, but...” and “I’m not sure, but...”. Then, they say, “I think that...” The Vietnamese speakers of English tended to stick to short formulaic softeners, such as “I’m afraid...” “I think...” Their responses might

have been shorter and less varied possibly because they were using a foreign language. And the data show that the VSEs overuse “*I’m afraid*” when giving their corrections. Another interesting result that might be influenced by pragmatic transfer is that in sit.6 Americans tended to ignore to correct strangers, while both the VSEs and the NSVs seemingly tried to make their corrections clear by using *Flat correction* frequently. The diagram of using *Flat correction* and *Rhetorical question* by three groups is : NSVs > VSEs > NSEs.

4.3. DIRECTNESS – INDIRECTNESS IN CORRECTION

4.3.1. Use of strategies of directness - indirectness in correction

1. **Directness (D):** consists of one direct utterance, or an interjection/particle plus a direct utterance.

2. **Indirectness (ID):** consists of one indirect utterance or verbal off record, or an interjection/particle plus an indirect utterance. Indirect correcting is performed by variety of speech acts and communicative functions as well.

3. **Combination (COM):** consists of two or more utterances of various speech acts.

4. **Silence (SI):** from the data observation, comprises of cases in which the respondents sometimes chose not to say anything with the communicating partners.

4.3.2. D and ID in correcting as seen from the participants’ power

4.3.2.1. Choice of D and ID strategy in high power settings (+P)

Table 4.10: The use of D-ID strategies with respect to +P

Strategy		D (%)	ID (%)	COM (%)	SI (%)
NSVs	sit.3	53.3	23.3	23.3	0
	sit.4	40	30	30	0
VSEs	sit.3	46.7	23.3	30	0
	sit.4	30	23.3	46.7	0
NSEs	sit.3	86.7	3.3	6.7	3.3
	sit.4	26.7	6.7	66.7	0

* **Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer**

Although sharing the same settings (i.e., where an utterance is made by a person of a higher position to a person of a lower position), the two situations were marked with different choices of strategies. That may be due to contexts of utterances, which are influenced by social norms or cultures. In addition, the NSVs and the VSEs had nearly the same choices of strategies for both situations while the NSEs’ choices were more or less different, which reveals pragmatic transfer. In other words, the VSEs’ choices were somehow influenced by the way they thought they would do in their mother tongue (Vietnamese).

4.3.2.2. Choice of D and ID strategy in equal power settings (=P)

Table 4.11: The use of D-ID strategies with respect to =P

Strategy		D (%)	ID (%)	COM (%)	SI (%)
NSVs	sit.5	66.7	13.3	20	0
VSEs	sit.5	46.7	20	33.3	0
NSEs	sit.5	80	10	10	0

* **Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer**

Although the Vietnamese and American speakers seemed to be similar in their choices of strategy used for these =P settings, the frequencies with which they employed the strategies were more or less different. However, cross-cultural differences between the NSEs and the NSVs and pragmatic transfer caused by the VSEs are not quite clearly in this setting.

4.3.2.3. Choice of D and ID strategy in powerless settings (-P)

Table 4.12: The use of D-ID strategies with respect to -P

Strategy		D (%)	ID (%)	COM (%)	SI (%)
NSVs	sit.1	80	0	20	0
	sit.2	63.3	0	36.7	0
	sit.6	53.3	26.7	16.7	3.3
VSEs	sit.1	80	3.3	16.7	0
	sit.2	63.3	10	26.7	0
	sit.6	56.7	13.3	23.3	6.7
NSEs	sit.1	96.7	0	3.3	0
	sit.2	20	40	40	0
	sit.6	63.3	13.3	10	13.3

*** Cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer**

Generally, in the settings where the Speaker has less power than the Addressee, the Vietnamese and American informants were in favor of D. However, the frequency of using the strategies is different in each particular situation, and that might be affected by other social factors, especially the social distance. The significant differences among three groups are shown in sit.2 (chart 4.13). While the two groups of NSVs and VSEs tended to follow a similar trend (being direct) in the setting of correcting a boss, the American speakers preferred choosing a strategy that is less direct. Cross-

cultural differences and pragmatic transfer can be observed in the choice of D and ID of the respondents in this situation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

In general, the study has found out not only the degrees of advisability on whether or not to make correction in the given situations, but also the frequency of such correcting strategies as directness-indirectness and positive politeness-negative politeness under the influence of some social factors (i.e., relative power and social distance) of which the relative power is mainly focused. As a result, English-Vietnamese cross-cultural similarities and differences as well as pragmatic transfer in the realization of corrections are discovered.

5.1.1. Correcting as seen from metapragmatic perspective

The data analysis shows that the HA and A are highly supported by both groups of informants in all the situations except the third situation (i.e., correcting a nephew) The Y/N is strongly encouraged in the sixth situation (i.e., correcting a boss during his presentation), the eighth situation (i.e., correcting a professor), and the tenth situation (i.e., correcting an acquaintance on a bus). However, this Y/N holds a moderate proportion in the other situations. In addition, the IA has reasonable percentages with the highest taking 46% and the lowest 14% only in the public places. In the three areas left, it accounts for very small or no proportions. The HIA is rarely mentioned. It results from the findings that the act of

correction is strongly welcomed by both English and Vietnamese informants.

5.1.2. Positive politeness and negative politeness in correcting

In terms of correcting strategies, all the three groups (NSVs, VSEs and NSEs) use “*flat correction*”, “*question, hedge*” at high rates. Especially, the first strategy is used at the highest proportion by the Vietnamese informants in almost all the cases of the research, while the second accounts for the highest percentage by the NSEs possibly because, according to Brown & Levinson [8], it is a negative-politeness strategy, which is generally believed to be favored by Westerners. Surprisingly, it, however, also makes up the second highest proportion of strategies used by the NSVs and VSEs, who are commonly believed to prefer positive-politeness strategies.

The findings also reveal a surprising fact that the NSVs opt for another negative-politeness strategy, *Impersonalising S and H*, quite frequently with different types of communicating partners although they also pay much attention to some positive-politeness strategies such as *Using in-group identity marker* or *Suggestion – Advice*. Hence, the findings support the hypothesis that the Americans are more in favor of negative-politeness, but do not prove that the Vietnamese hold a strong preference to positive-politeness strategies. Alternatively, they show that the Vietnamese use positive-politeness strategies quite often but also employ a little bit more negative ones. It might be the case that in the specific investigated situations under the effects of the relative power, they try to make use

of all possible strategies so as to be polite or to avoid causing such a high FTA.

Moreover, from the data collected, it may come to a conclusion that in terms of strategy choice while the Vietnamese speakers of English do not entirely behave culturally in an American English native speaker-like way, some Vietnamese speakers may have learnt to approximate such behavior or they may do so anyway in a Vietnamese cultural context. As regards choosing politeness strategies to make corrections by Vietnamese and American respondents in the settings of unequal power, the VSEs usually search for the appropriate linguistic formulas or politeness marking according to the variable of power and distance of the Addressee, while American English speakers are allowed to make a considerably more active choices from a relatively wider range of possibilities. The data show that Americans seem to be elaborating their corrections by using more self-deprecating softeners with a greater variety to wording and a preference for the “[*clause*] + *but...*” structure such as “*I may be wrong, but...*” and “*I’m not sure, but...*”. Then they say, “*I think that...*” The VSEs tend to stick to short formulaic softeners, such as “*I’m afraid...*” “*I think...*” Their responses are shorter and less varied simply because they are using a foreign language.

Another interesting example is in the classroom context (i.e., a higher power setting between a professor and a student). American respondents seem to make more efforts to soften their corrections than their Vietnamese counterparts. They usually use a positive

remark to start a correction to students, while only some VSEs and one NSVs do so.

5.1.3. D and ID in correcting

An obvious finding is that with such a speech act, much more D is used than ID in both English and Vietnamese languages and cultures. In addition, with respect to the use of correction strategy, it is clear that the NSVs are more indirect than the American speakers particularly in high power situations. The VSEs and the American speakers, to some extent, are found to be similar in the choice of strategy used for their corrections in some situations under study. However, there is a clear indication that in some situations the Vietnamese approximation to native-speaker-like behavior is actually a case of negative transfer from L1 to L2, as the intended utterance meaning of the Vietnamese speakers seem to be different from that of the American speakers. In some cases where the choices of Vietnamese speakers are different from those of the American speakers, findings seem to suggest that the Vietnamese speakers lack the pragmatic knowledge of the appropriate strategies.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on production data asking what individuals would do in the given situations, corrections of the NSEs are different from those of the VSEs, though they do share some similarities. Parallel to the differences in culture, the NSEs and the VSEs also differ in the ways they correct their conversational partners. The NSEs are more direct in the ways they correct and employ more *Question*, *hedge*, more *positive remarks* than the VSEs. The NSEs and the VSEs show

the same number of strategies when they communicate with people of the three social statuses and social distances, but the VSEs are more sensitive to the social statuses and social distances of corrections. The differences reflect the pragmatic transfer in the interlanguage used by VSEs, as in most cases the NSVs make the same differences at corresponding proportions from the NSEs in choosing possible linguistic strategies for correction.

Students learning English should be aware that direct corrections are generally acceptable among Americans. Thus, they should not feel hurt when facing this situation. Without explicit knowledge about other cultures, communicators are prone to misinterpret the intentions of the interlocutors with different cultural backgrounds. Knowledge about diversity in sociolinguistic behaviors helps learners to regard the differences as differences, not as inferiority. A lack of understanding of sociolinguistic diversity in other cultures can lead to serious cross-cultural misunderstanding.

Finally, although great efforts have been made in making everything in the study as explicit as possible, shortcomings and mistakes are, no doubt, inevitable. Fully aware of those weaknesses, the author looks forward to constructive comments from the reader.