

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

NGUYEN TRUONG SON

**A STUDY OF
RESPONDING TO DISPRAISE
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

Field: The English Language

Code: 60.22.15

**M. A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(A SUMMARY)**

DA NANG, 2011

This thesis has been completed at College of Foreign Languages,
University of Danang.

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lư Quý Khương

Examiner 1: Trần Quang Hải, Ph.D.

Examiner 2: Assoc. Prof. Trương Viên

This thesis will be orally defended at the Examination Council at
University of Danang.

Time: 27 – 4 – 2011

Venue: University of Danang

** This thesis is available for the purpose of reference at:*

- Library of College of Foreign Languages, University of Danang
- The Information Resources Center, University of Danang.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

We know the fact that many Vietnamese learners of English (VLEs) may master English in terms of its grammar and vocabulary but have problems in communication, in other words, they may be unable to produce a language that is socially and culturally appropriate. As a preliminary study to understand the socio-cultural problems facing the VLEs, we have chosen to study in some details the responses of a dispraise in English and in Vietnamese. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, in everyday communication, people employ a variety of communicative acts, or *speech acts*, to achieve their communicative goals. Various speech acts such as *apologizing*, *inviting*, *requesting*, and *so on*, derive their uniqueness from the socio-cultural norms of the people participating in interaction [18]. Besides, there are important cultural differences in ways in which speech acts are performed. Different cultures have different ways of doing things with words. In addition, Rizk [32] points out that what is considered appropriate in one language might not be so in another. Praising a baby of being pretty, for instance, is considered a compliment in a Western community, while in a Vietnamese context it may be perceived as a taboo. Therefore, it is clear that different cultures have different perceptions and interpretations of appropriateness, and the target for learning a foreign language is to reach communicative success among different cultural backgrounds.

Secondly, in daily life, we all want to receive many compliments from others, just because they create motivation for

people to do things better as well as give them further momentum. However, we all have our little failure. Therefore, being dispraised by others is inevitable.

However, dispraising does not always mean threatening or hurting somebody's feeling. In most cases, its deep meaning is the precious lesson that we should approach respectfully. If the hearer receives a dispraise as a sensible dispraising expression, it may sound like advisable, sympathetic and recommendable, whereas if she/he receives it as just a comment, it may cause communication breakdown or unexpected reactions - even cultural shocks if realized in cross-cultural environments.

For these above mentioned reasons, the study is intended to investigate the similarities and differences in the use of strategies in responding to dispraises (RD) by the American and Vietnamese. In addition, our thesis on pragmatics might help us deal with this part of the English language more carefully so as to make a small contribution to pragmatics teaching and learning. It is hoped that this study will be useful for Vietnamese teachers and learners of English.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

1.2.1. Aims

- To investigate the ways of RD in English and Vietnamese in the given situations.
- To compare and contrast strategies for RD in the two languages and cultures to determine the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese.
- To raise interactants' awareness of cultural differences in RD between English and Vietnamese for avoidance of culture shock and communication breakdown.

1.2.2. Objectives

- To find out the common strategies of RD in English and in Vietnamese.
- To compare and contrast the strategies employed by American native speakers and Vietnamese native speakers in RD.
- To provide language teachers and students with an insight into the role of culture in communication and in foreign language teaching and learning, or to be more precisely, an insight into how to respond to dispraises in English and Vietnamese.

1.3. Research Questions

1. *How do American native speakers and Vietnamese native speakers respond to dispraises in the given situations?*
2. *Which politeness responding strategies are used and preferred by the ANSs versus those by the VNSs in the studied contexts?*
3. *What are the similarities and differences in dispraise responding strategies by the ANSs and VNSs?*

1.4. Scope of the Study

The study is confined to the verbal aspect of the act of RD.

The data for this study is restricted to the authentic dispraise responses in the two languages taken from one hundred questionnaires of 50 American males and females and by 50 Vietnamese ones (from 21 to 52 years of age).

The study especially discusses the PP, NP and Combination strategies used in RD in American and Vietnamese languages and cultures.

1.5. Organization of the Study

The thesis consists of five chapters and two appendices.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Previous Researches Related to the Topic

A lot of studies have been done on different speech acts. Researchers provide readers with a full understanding of speech acts in intra-cultural and cross-cultural communication. However, the speech acts of dispraising and responding to dispraise have been rather under-researched. Tracy, *et al.* [44] investigated the characteristics of good and bad criticisms as perceived by people from different cultural backgrounds via an open-ended questionnaire. Toplak and Katz [43] focused on the communicative effects of direct and indirect sarcastic comments.

In Vietnam, Nguyễn Quốc Sinh [29] studies and contrasts the uses of hedging strategies in dispraising in everyday verbal interaction between the Vietnamese and English. Phạm Đình Tường [31] attempts to generalize the structural forms manifesting in the utterances denoting criticism made by English and Vietnamese. Lê Thị Băng Tâm [22] investigates the semantic and pragmatics features of negative comments in English and Vietnamese. Yet, we can hardly find any research, which fully studies the topic of dispraising.

The literature on responding to dispraises seems scarcer than that on dispraising. Nguyễn Thị Hoàng Yến [56] examines several negative responses to dispraise in communication in Vietnamese.

2.2. Theoretical Background

2.2.1. Theory of Politeness

Politeness is a common word that means “*having or showing that one has good manners and consideration for other people*” [16,

p.893]. It is similar to ‘civility’, ‘courtesy’, and ‘good manners’. However, politeness also means that “*behaving or speaking in a way that is correct for the social situations you are in, and showing that you are careful to consider other people’s needs and feelings*” (Longman Dictionary Online).

Politeness is one of the most popular branches of contemporary pragmatics, and a widely used tool in studies of intercultural communication [9, p.1]. The best-known approach to the study of politeness is found in Brown & Levinson’s work [6]. ‘Face’ is an important feature of their theory. Brown & Levinson’s interpretation of the term derives from Goffman [10] and from the English folk terms ‘*losing face*’ and ‘*saving face*’.

2.2.1.1. *The Notion of Face*

Based on his observational research, Goffman [10] claims that there are three features of a person’s face: *a person desires to be seen as consistent, as having worth and as worthy of respect*. He claims that there are two basic rules of social interaction: *be considerate* and *be respectful*, both of which exist for the maintenance of face.

Following Goffman’s views on face and face-work, Brown & Levinson [6] offer a descriptive analysis of the strategies used by interactants to maintain their respective faces in social interaction. They assume that all competent adult members of a society have (and know each other to have) ‘face’, which they define as “*the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself*” [6, p.61]. For Brown & Levinson, face is something that is “*emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction*” [6, p.61].

Brown & Levinson [6] propose that the concept of face can be described as having two components:

- (a) *Negative face*: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.
- (b) *Positive face*: the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants. [6, p.61]

2.2.1.2. *Politeness Strategies*

According to Brown & Levinson’s model, there are certain (speech) acts that intrinsically threaten the face wants of either the speaker or the addressee. These are called Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). FTAs, which may be targeted at either positive or negative face wants, will tend to be avoided or at least minimized and appropriate strategies used. In the framework that they develop, politeness is defined as a redressive action taken to counter-balance the disruptive effect of face-threatening activities. Acts that appear to impede the addressees’ independence of movement and freedom of action threaten their negative face, whereas acts that appear as disapproving of their wants threaten their positive face. They further state that, under normal circumstances, all individuals are motivated to avoid conveying FTA and are motivated to minimize the face-threat of the acts they employ. Thus, individuals must often prioritize three wants, *the want to communicate the content of a FTA, the want to be efficient, and the want to maintain the hearer’s face*. These three wants altogether produce five strategic choices that speakers must make [6, p.60]:

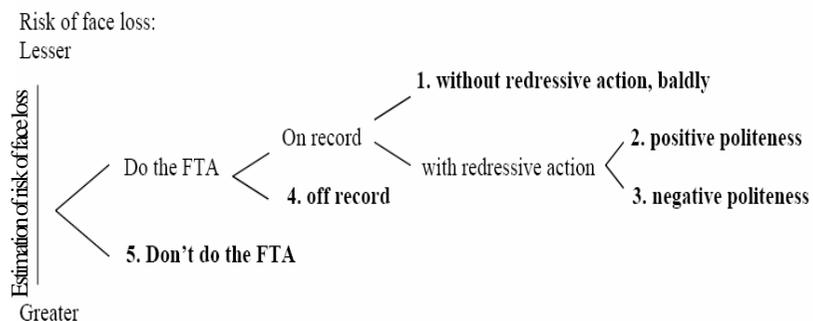


Figure 2.1: Circumstances Determining Choice of Strategy

2.2.1.3. Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness

‘Positive politeness’ is “redress directed to the addressee’s positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/value resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable” [6, p.101].

‘Negative politeness’ is “redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” [6, p.129].

2.2.1.4. Politeness across Cultures

2.2.2. Theory of Speech Acts

2.2.2.1. Classification of Speech Acts

Philosophers and linguists (Austin 1962; Searle, 1979; Yule, 1996...) have tried to classify speech acts and put them under certain categories.

Austin [1, p.151] had originally classified speech acts into: *Verdictives, Exercitives, Commisives, Expositives and Behabitives*.

Starting from the seminal essays of Austin [1], Searle [38] develops a well-founded theory of speech acts. He distinguishes five speech act classes: *Assertives* (or *Representatives*), *Directives*, *Commissives*, *Expressives* and *Declarations* (or *Declaratives*).

Following Searle [38], Yule [50, p.55] summarizes the five general types of speech acts with their key functions as below:

Table 2.1: General Functions of Speech Acts

Speech Act Type	Direction of Fit	S = Speaker; X = Situation
Declarations	Words change the world	S causes X
Representatives	Make the words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	Make the words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	Make the words fit the world	S wants X
Commissives	Make the words fit the world	S intends X

Speech acts are further classified into *direct* and *indirect* speech acts based on the direct and indirect relationships between their structures and functions.

2.2.2.2. The Speech Acts of Dispraising and Responding to Dispraise

The concept of dispraising herein employed means “to disparage” [24, p.151], or “to comment on with disapproval” [25, p.257], and “to express disapproval or condemnation of” [7, p.420]. So, in the light of the speech act theory, dispraising can be considered as *an act of disparaging, commenting on with disapproval and expressing disapproval or condemnation*.

Based on the above definition of the dispraising speech act, the speech act of responding to dispraise in this present study is defined as *a verbalized reaction to a given dispraise*.

2.2.2.3. Responding to Dispraises Across Cultures

Since the focus of the study is on the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese, so responding to dispraises across cultures should be understood as that in the cultures of English speaking countries and Vietnam. It is stereotypically believed that

English-speaking countries, especially the U.S, are highly individualistic, while Vietnam, an Oriental society, is highly collectivistic. Fundamentally, individualism refers to the tendency of emphasizing individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group obligations, and individual achievements over group concerns. On the other hand, collectivism refers to the tendency of being more concerned with group identity over individual identity, group obligations over individual rights, and in-group-oriented concerns over individual wants and desires [15]. In interpersonal interaction, individualism is conveyed by the use of direct verbal assertions and upfront emotional expressions. Collectivism, in contrast, is expressed through the use of indirect verbal expressions and discreet emotional disclosures in communication process. It is also held that individualism-collectivism is perhaps the most important dimension of cultural differences in behavior across the cultures of the world [15].

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1. Research Methods

This study aims at studying English-Vietnamese similarities and differences in RD. In order to achieve this aim, we carry out our investigation based on the combination of several methods, namely *qualitative*, *quantitative*, *statistic*, *descriptive*, *contrastive*, and *analytic*. Among them, the *descriptive* and *contrastive* methods are the dominant ones which are most frequently used in the thesis.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

We use DCT as the primary means of eliciting data. The DCT questionnaires are designed in English and Vietnamese with the same

content for English and Vietnamese native speakers, respectively.

3.3. Informants and Sampling

Two groups of informants were recruited: ANSs and VNSs. Each group comprised 50 respondents. The questionnaires in English are administered to the Americans who are living in the United States and the ones in Vietnamese to the Vietnamese living in Nha Trang City.

3.4. Procedures of Data Collection

After the two groups of informants completed the questionnaires in the pilot study, we discussed with them to validate the situations and establish the reliability of them and to reconstruct the questionnaire. Then, the researcher emailed to American informants. For Vietnamese informants, the researcher directly handed out the questionnaire and explained the purpose of this questionnaire to them. In late July 2010, 117 questionnaires (52 in English and 65 in Vietnamese) were returned to us. We sifted and sorted out 100 (50 in English and 50 in Vietnamese) for the analysis.

3.5. Analytical Framework

The coding scheme to categorize dispraise responses, adapted from Higara and Turner [12] and the coding scheme for PP and NP, backgrounded by Brown & Levinson's paradigm of politeness strategies [6], were used.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Ways of RD in American English and Vietnamese

4.1.1. Realization of All Strategies Used to Respond to Dispraises

4.1.1.1. Keeping Silent (K.Sil.)

4.1.1.2. Agreement (Agr.)

- 4.1.1.3. *Offer of Repair* (O.Rep.)
 4.1.1.4. *Seeking Help* (S.Hel.)
 4.1.1.5. *Thanking* (Tha.)
 4.1.1.6. *Reassignment* (Rea.)
 4.1.1.7. *Questioning* (Que.)
 4.1.1.8. *Joking* (Jok.)
 4.1.1.9. *Explanation* (Exp.)
 4.1.1.10. *Qualification* (Qua.)
 4.1.1.11. *Disagreement* (Dis.)
 4.1.1.12. *Returning of a Dispraise* (R.Dis.)
 4.1.1.13. *Statement of Negative Feeling or Opinion* (N.Fee.)

Table 4.1: Realization of All Strategies Used to Respond to Dispraises

Strategies		American		Vietnamese	
		n	%	n	%
OPTING OUT	1. Keeping Silent	86	4.30	45	2.18
ACCEPTANCE	2. Agreement	179	8.94	127	6.15
	3. Offer of Repair	148	7.39	92	4.45
	4. Seeking Help	238	11.89	78	3.78
	5. Thanking	216	10.79	51	2.47
MITIGATION	6. Reassignment	58	2.90	83	4.02
	7. Questioning	187	9.34	189	9.15
	8. Joking	171	8.54	129	6.24
	9. Explanation	244	12.19	459	22.22
	10. Qualification	247	12.34	360	17.42
RESISTANCE	11. Disagreement	143	7.39	286	13.84
	12. Returning of a	0	0	43	2.08
	13. Negative Feeling	85	4.25	124	6.00
Total Results		2,002	100	2,066	100

4.1.2. Data Analysis of RD Strategies in English and Vietnamese

4.1.2.1. *Use of RD Strategies as Seen from Communicating Partner's Parameters*

4.1.2.2. *Use of RD Strategies as Seen from Informants' Parameters*

4.1.3. Similarities and Differences between Two Languages in Terms of Strategies Used to Respond to Dispraises

4.1.3.1. *Similarities:*

- 12 out of 13 strategies appear in both American and Vietnamese data.
- Both American and Vietnamese informants use mitigating strategies at the highest rate.
- The most favorable strategies used at the highest rates by both American and Vietnamese informants are *Explanation* and *Qualification*. Besides, the other two strategies *Disagreement* and *Questioning* are also much resorted by both American and Vietnamese informants in nearly all cases.
- Both American and Vietnamese informants do not use *Returning of a Dispraise* and *Negative Feeling* when communicating with their superiors, not only with the older but with the younger as well.
- Compared with the male informants of the two groups, the females resort to *Qualification* at higher rates but to *Joking* at lower ones.
- It is also obvious that the single of the two groups use *Seeking Help* and *Explanation* more frequently than the married do.
- Compared with techno-scientific groups, social groups of both American and Vietnamese informants use more *Questioning*, but employ *Agreement* less frequently.

- Generally, both groups of informants are not much in favor of *Returning of Dispraise*.

4.1.3.2. Differences:

- The Vietnamese informants make use of more strategies than the American ones (13/13 vs. 12/13).
- As far as *Explanation* and *Qualification* are concerned, the distribution of these two strategies in the American and Vietnamese informants is greatly different from each other.
- Although the sixth frequently used strategy in both groups is *Agreement*, the Vietnamese informants use this strategy twice as much as the American ones do.
- *Seeking Help* and *Thanking* strategies are employed at relatively high rates by both American male and female informants, whereas Vietnamese ones are not favor in these strategies.
- While Vietnamese married informants employ *Thanking* nearly as much as the Vietnamese female, American men use this strategy far more than the American women.
- In summary, the differences can be clearly seen in the following table:

Table 4.14: Ranking of Occurrence of RD in E and V

American English		Most preferred	Vietnamese	
Strategies	%		%	Strategies
Qualification	12.34	1	22.22	Explanation
Explanation	12.19	2	17.42	Qualification
Seeking Help	11.89	3	13.84	Disagreement
Thanking	10.79	4	9.15	Questioning
Questioning	9.34	5	6.24	Joking
Agreement	8.94	6	6.15	Agreement

Joking	8.54	7	6.00	Negative Feeling
Offer of Repair	7.39	8	4.45	Offer of Repair
Disagreement	7.14	9	4.02	Reassignment
Keeping Silent	4.30	10	3.78	Seeking Help
Negative Feeling	4.25	11	2.47	Thanking
Reassignment	2.90	12	2.18	Keeping Silent
Returning of Dispraise	0	13	2.08	Returning of Dispraise
		Least preferred		

4.2. Positive Politeness - Negative Politeness in RD

4.2.1. Realizations of PP and NP Strategies

4.2.1.1. *Positive Politeness*: consists of responses that satisfy at least one of the 15 PP strategies by Brown & Levinson [6].

4.2.1.2. *Negative Politeness*: consists of responses agreeing with at least one of the 10 NP strategies by Brown & Levinson [6].

4.2.1.3. *Combination*: People sometimes use both positive and negative politeness markers in one utterance.

Table 4.15: Realizations of Politeness Strategies to Respond to Dispraises

Strategies	American		Vietnamese	
	n	%	n	%
POSITIVE POLITENESS	346	29.37	513	42.89
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	518	43.97	303	25.33
COMBINATION	74	6.28	237	19.82
Bald on R	154	13.07	98	8.19
No FTA	86	7.30	45	3.76
Total Results	1,178	100	1,196	100

4.2.2. Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Communicating Partner’s Parameters

4.2.2.1. American Findings

Table 4.16: Choice of Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Communicating Partners’ Parameters in American

Strategy Informants	PP %	NP %	Combination %
Close friends	31.46	55.06	8.43
Disliked People	12.56	33.63	1.79
Colleague (SASS)	32.88	40.41	8.22
Colleague (SAOS)	28.13	53.13	5.00
Relatives (Older)	42.42	34.34	11.11
Relatives (Younger)	20.44	47.45	3.65
Superiors (Older)	45.53	42.28	7.32
Superiors (Younger)	38.39	45.53	8.93
Total (%)	251.80	351.82	54.45

4.2.2.2. Vietnamese Findings

Table 4.17: Choice of Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Communicating Partners’ Parameters in Vietnamese

Strategy Informants	PP %	NP %	Combination %
Close friends	44.07	22.03	23.73
Disliked People	16.75	42.36	8.87
Colleague (SASS)	35.11	25.95	29.77
Colleague (SAOS)	39.86	20.98	31.47
Relatives (Older)	51.90	17.72	25.95
Relatives (Younger)	21.05	45.86	11.28

Superiors (Older)	77.44	9.02	13.53
Superiors (Younger)	72.03	11.02	16.10
Total (%)	358.22	194.95	160.70

4.2.3. Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Informants’ Parameters

4.2.3.1. American findings

Table 4.18: Choice of Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Informants’ Parameters in American

Strategy Informants		Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Combination
Age	>30	30.86	42.57	5.86
	<30	28.47	44.82	6.54
Gender	M	31.52	42.22	5.84
	F	27.71	45.33	6.63
Marital Status	Ma	33.69	41.69	5.89
	Si	23.84	46.90	6.78
Occupation	So	30.75	44.31	5.07
	Tech	23.11	42.45	11.79

4.2.3.2. Vietnamese findings

Table 4.19: Choice of Politeness Strategies in RD as Seen from Informants’ Parameters in Vietnamese

Strategy Informants		Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Combination
Age	>30	45.50	25.00	17.63
	<30	40.63	25.63	21.72
Gender	M	45.89	25.44	17.21
	F	41.38	25.28	21.13

Marital Status	Ma	43.65	25.15	19.61
	Si	41.30	25.71	20.26
Occupation	So	43.88	25.45	20.66
	Tech	39.30	24.90	16.73

4.2.4. Similarities and Differences between Two Languages in Terms of Politeness Strategies Used to Respond to Dispraises

4.2.4.1. Similarities

- There is a very high frequency in the use of NPS by both American and Vietnamese informants when they address to *older relatives* and *older superiors*.
- When addressing to *the younger relatives* and *the dislike people*, informants from both groups seem to incline to NPS.
- Both American and Vietnamese people appear to be more positively polite than its opposing one: the *older relatives* compared with the *younger relatives*.
- In both American and Vietnamese findings, the *over 30*, the *male*, the *married* and the *social* use more PPS than the *under 30*, the *female*, the *single* and the *techno-scientific*, respectively.

4.2.3.2. Differences

- The most distinguishing feature is that the Americans informants use more NPS than PPS when communicating with most kinds of communicating partners, except for those who are *10 years older (superiors and relatives)*, whereas the Vietnamese ones employ far more PPS than NPS in most cases, except for those who are the *younger relatives* and the *dislike people*. As the result, the disparities in using PPS, NPS and CS in the Vietnamese cases are much bigger than in the American ones.

- People *under 30 years* of age use more NPS than those *over 30 years* in American but less PPS than those *over 30 years* in Vietnamese.
- The *single* used more NPS than the *married* in American while the latter use PPS than the former do in Vietnamese.
- The inequality in the scale of PPS, NPS and CS is much greater in Vietnamese than in American in almost all cases as seen from Informants' Parameters.

These differences can be clearly seen in the following tables:
Table 4.20: The Scale of PPS, NPS and CS in E and V as Seen from Communicating Partners' Parameters

	In English	In Vietnamese
Highest Percentage of PPS	33.69%	45.89%
Lowest Percentage of PPS	23.11%	39.30%
Highest Percentage of NPS	46.90%	25.71%
Lowest Percentage of NPS	41.69%	24.90%
Highest Percentage of CS	11.79%	21.72%
Lowest Percentage of CS	5.07%	16.73%

Table 4.21: The Scale of PPS, NPS and CS in E and V as Seen from Informants' Parameters

	In English	In Vietnamese
Highest Percentage of PPS	45.53%	77.44%
Lowest Percentage of PPS	12.56%	16.75%
Highest Percentage of NPS	55.06%	45.80%
Lowest Percentage of NPS	33.63%	9.02%
Highest Percentage of CS	11.11%	31.40%
Lowest Percentage of CS	1.79%	8.87%

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. A Summary of the Study

Being aimed at highlighting the similarities and the differences of using responses strategies and of being polite in RD, much time and continuous effort have been put into doing the main work – collecting responses strategies from the survey questionnaires and parse them according to the categorization framework adapted from classifications of Higara and Turner [12]. In the previous chapter, we examine 13 sub-categories of the four main strategies, namely *opting out*, *acceptance*, *mitigation* and *resistance* strategies. We also discuss the social status and the social distance that influence the choice of those strategies. In addition, we parse them according to the politeness classifications of Brown and Levinson [6]. The results of the data analysis show that the frequency of use of RD by ANSs is different from that by VNSs, though they do share some similarities.

As being characterized by belonging to categorization framework, when addressing to interlocutors, both the American and Vietnamese respondents expressed their reaction of being dispraised more *Mitigation strategies*, in which *Explanation* and *Qualification* are the most preferred. It shows that responding to dispraise sometimes cannot be made bluntly in many specific situations. As a matter of fact, it needs some mitigations to modify face-threat, to keep communication going, and to maintain and promote H's face and relationships between interactants. However, VNSs produced more "*Resistances*" and fewer "*Acceptances*" than the ANSs, a tendency that differs from the conversational norms and politeness [6], [20].

Another notable finding was a larger number in the VNSs' choice of dispraise response strategies compared with the ANSs (13 vs. 12). While none of the ANSs made use of "*Returning of Dispraise*" when communicating to their partners, 2.08% of the VNSs used this strategy. Furthermore, while the ANSs inclined to accept rather than to resist the interlocutors' dispraises, the VNSs preferred resistance. This significant difference may seem contradictory to the arguments on collectivism and individualism claimed by Triandis & Singelis [47, p.36] that "*East Asian collectivists are especially eager to maintain harmonious relationships while individualists from the U.S.A. are more concerned with clearly giving opinions.*" In other words, the two findings both disprove the fact that Vietnam is more collectivistic than the U.S. [42].

Regarding the issue of politeness, the study uncovers that the American behave more negative polite to their interlocutors. By contrast, the Vietnamese incline towards positive politeness. In addition, the rate of CS used by the Vietnamese is also much higher than the American (19.82% vs. 6.28%). The results additionally reveal that Vietnamese informants are very positively polite to their superiors while the distinction in American informants is much smaller. The findings concur with Hofstede's 1974 investigation, which shows that power distance (manifested in language use) in individualistic cultures is smaller than that in collectivistic cultures. One more thing that needs attention is that *age play a significant role in choosing politeness strategies*.

In conclusion, the expression of dispraise always has both negative and positive facets. Constructive and honest dispraise helps

foster creativity, correct wrong-doings and redirect behaviors while destructive and confrontational dispraise threatens relationship between individuals. Moreover, it is certainly that American and Vietnamese people have a variety of various reactions to the same dispraise because dispraising someone is a very complicated act. Hence, when facing to dispraises, tactful responses of each person is one of extremely indispensable matter.

Expressions of dispraises and responding to dispraises are FTAs in almost every culture. However, the reality has shown that they are crucial parts in everyday communication. In order to achieve communication targets, people from different cultures choose different politeness strategies to mitigate the face-threatening nature of these communicative acts. This study on response and politeness strategies in responding to dispraises used by American and Vietnamese people has achieved the aims set at the beginning. By discovering the strategies mostly used by the two groups, clarifying the similarities and differences between them, as well as checking whether differences of ‘age’, ‘gender’ and ‘power status’ influence their choice of response strategies or not, the research can be a verbal communication reference for numerous beneficiaries who involve in cross-cultural interactions in which Vietnamese and American people participate.

5.2. Implications of the Study

5.2.1. Theoretical Implications

The present study makes a number of contributions to the body of speech act research. From a linguistic perspective, by drawing on the preconditions of dispraise and dispraise responses, this study provides a more detailed and fuller definition of these speech acts

than previously available and thus probably distinguishes them more effectively from similar speech acts. In the present study, dispraises were identified based on four preconditions such as “*H’s inappropriate action*”, “*undesirable consequences of this action for H or public*”, “*S’s dissatisfaction with this action*”, and “*S’s hope for a change in H’s future action*”. The second precondition distinguished “dispraises” from “complaints”, while the three remaining preconditions were shared by both two speech acts. Specifically, dispraises were made not because H’s action was seen as being a cost to S. This was, however, the case for complaints. Dispraise responses were defined as the verbalized reaction to the dispraises given. This study is also among the first to provide a detailed typology of realization strategies for responding to dispraises.

From the perspective of pragmatics, the present study is, to the best of my knowledge, the first to investigate how dispraise responses are used by the American and the Vietnamese. Although dispraise responses are observed to occur frequently in real life and are found to be challenging even by NSs, little is known about how this speech act is used, and thus the findings of the present study are significant.

5.2.2. Pedagogical Implications

The results of the data analysis show that the frequency of use of RD as well as the choice of politeness strategies by ANSs are different from those by VNSs, though they do share some similarities. The areas that are different between the two languages may pose difficulties to the learners. With respect to the purpose of helping VLEs in achieving ability to interact effectively with the use

of RD, the study places learners in real situations of expressing dispraise responses to get success in communication process. Through several situations and discussions, learners are also made aware of contextual variables such as interlocutor's gender and relative status that might influence use of responses to dispraises.

The results of the study also points out that language and culture should not be taught separately. EFL teachers should show the learners how to appropriately respond to an English dispraise. Besides, they should teach students to be aware of pragmatic factors of the target culture in order to interpret speakers' utterances appropriately and understand their illocutionary meaning. As a consequence, students know how to maintain effective interaction with interlocutors of the target culture.

Also, some activities of are suggested here to help students master cross-cultural pragmatics as a whole. A teacher may select any activity applicable to his/her classroom. (See Appendix)

To conclude, students should be taught to feed themselves, instead of being fed at all the time. Specifically, they should be on the alert to find more information about the cultural backgrounds of their interlocutors, for those who speak English do not always have or realize the culture of English native speakers. Here is some food for thought: *“In Japan people smile when they are sad, happy, apologetic, angry, or confused. In traditional Korean culture, smiling meant that a person was foolish or thoughtless. On the island of Puerto Rico, a smile can have many positive meanings: “Please”, “Thank you”, and “You’re welcome”* [37, p. 313].

5.3. Limitations

The thesis has been completed with my greatest efforts and to the best of my knowledge and understanding. Such is my hope that the thesis is useful and helpful in raising interactants' awareness of similarities and differences of RD in English and Vietnamese. However, it is obvious that shortcomings and inadequacies are unavoidable. The writer wishes with sincere gratitude to receive constructive and insightful comments from the readers.

5.4. Suggestion for Further Studies

Focusing on the cross-cultural study of responding to dispraises, the present thesis is explicitly restricted in scope. There remain many interesting aspects worth further researches as follows:

- Investigation into the effects of modality, address forms, non-verbal aspects, paralinguistic and extralinguistic factors in RD.
- Directness – Indirectness in RDs.