

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO
REFUSAL STRATEGIES TO REQUESTS BY
AMERICAN SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH
AND VIETNAMESE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

FIELD : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

CODE : 60.22.15

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

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Danang – 2011

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

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Examiner 1:

Examiner 2:

The thesis will be orally presented at the Examining Committee at
the University of Danang.

Time: July, 2011

Venue: Danang University

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE

English and Vietnamese are languages of two different cultural backgrounds, the potential for intercultural miscommunication through speech act performance in general and the speech act of refusal to requests in particular is also growing. As we all know, refusals may also be understood as dispreferred messages. They threaten the addressee's negative face, therefore, they are often realized through indirect strategies, which require a high level of pragmatic competence. If refusals are challenging for native speakers as they may involve lengthy negotiation moves, the situation becomes even more complex in interacting between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNs). Taking into consideration the importance of refusals in everyday communication, I have chosen, “ *An Investigation into Refusal Strategies of Requests by American Speakers and Vietnamese Learners of English*” as the topic of the present study. Based mainly on the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the politeness theory put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987) and some other supporting theories, this study will investigate the realization of refusal strategies by American speakers of English (AEs) and Vietnamese learners of English (VEs). By modifying a discourse comprehension test (DCT) developed by Bebee et al (1990) this study will provide a more broad understanding of the discrepancies

that can exist in performing the refusal strategies between AEs and VEs, helping, to some extent, resolve and simplify cross-cultural misunderstanding.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims

1.2.2 Objectives

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For the above aims of the study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the similarities and differences in refusal strategies for requests by American speakers of English and Vietnamese learners of English?
2. To what extent is the effect of social status and gender in the way American speakers of English and Vietnamese learners of English decline a request?

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five main chapters and one appendix.

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to the study, presenting the rationale for choosing the area for this study, the research questions and the scope of the study. A preview of the organization is also included to serve as an outline of the study.

Chapter 2 is devoted to addressing the theoretical background of the present study while reviewing the literature related

to the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), with the theoretical frame of the politeness theory put forward by Brown and Levinson and some other theories and concepts supporting for this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology issues including research method, data collection method, selection of subjects, the research procedure involving the DCT and the analytical framework.

Chapter 4 is the main of the study. This chapter presents and discusses the results of the data analysis. The first part describes and analyses different strategies to express refusals to requests in English between AEs and VEs. The second part presents the number and frequencies of refusal strategies directed at social status and gender. The third part presents and discusses the inter-lingual interference and the findings about problems Vietnamese speakers often have when dealing with refusals.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion, summarizing the main points discussed throughout the study and the major findings of the investigation as well as giving possible explanations to the similarities and differences between the two languages and providing implications for teaching and learning English as the second language. Some problems are also raised for further studies.

The following parts are references and one appendix.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 PREVIOUS RESEARCH RELATED TO THE TOPIC

2.1.1 Review of related studies on refusals worldwide

A great deal of research has been done on the speech acts of refusing in comparison to the mother tongue and the second. Some key contributions are:

- Takahashi and Beebe (1987) [33]
- Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) [5]
- Yet another refusal study, undertaken by Tickle (1991) [35]
- A recent study by Al-Eryani (2007) [1] on refusal

strategies of Yemeni EFL learners.

2.1.2 Review of related studies on refusals in Vietnam.

- The study by Pham Thi Van Quyen (2001) [27]
- A recent study by Nguyen Thi Minh Phuong (2006) [24]
- Another recent study by Duong Bach Nhat (2008) [22]

2.2 THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS

The notion of speech acts and its theory were initiated by the British philosopher Austin (1962) [2], and then were developed by others such as Searle (1969, 1976), Leech (1983) [20], Yule (1996) [36]. Their common point of view is that a speech act is a unit of communication. These units each perform a certain function such as complimenting, apologizing, refusing, offering, etc.

2.3 CONVERSATION PRINCIPLE: COOPERATION

Grice (1975) [12] enumerates the four following maxims, which characterize the Cooperative Principle: *Maxim of Quantity*, *Maxim of Quality*, *Maxim of Relation*, *Maxim of Manner*

2.4 POLITE THEORIES

2.4.1 Leech's theory

He presents six maxims for the Politeness Principle (Leech 1983, pp. 132-139) [20]: Tact maxim; Generosity maxim, Approbation maxim; Modesty maxim; Agreement maxim; Sympathy maxim

2.4.2 Lakoff's Principles of politeness in communication as do's and don't

Based on Grice's conversational principles, Lakoff (1983) [19, p.88] suggests three rules a speaker might follow in choosing to be polite: (1) **Don't impose**, (2) **Offer options**, (3) **Encourage feelings of Camaraderie**.

2.5 BROWN AND LEVINSON'S THEORY

2.5.1 The notion of "face"

2.5.2 Face-threatening act

2.5.3 Strategies to perform face-threatening acts

2.6 SPEECH ACTS AND POLITENESS

Indirectness has been associated with the levels of politeness by many Western researchers. These researchers assert that indirectness is the chief motivation for politeness and indirectness and the closely associated notion of politeness operate under universal principles (Searle, 1975; Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1983).

Brown & Levinson (1987) [8] argues that "indirect speech acts are universal and for most part are probably constructed in essentially similar ways in all languages".

Leech (1983) [20] also claims that "indirect illocutions tend to be more polite because: (a) they increase the degrees of option and (b) the indirect an illocution is, the more minimized and tentative its force tends to be".

2.7 SOME VIEWPOINTS ON POLITENESS IN VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

Vietnam culture has been strongly influenced by Confucianism from China owing to geographical proximity and political, cultural and economic contacts over centuries (Hoat, 1995).

As Crawford, A.C (1996) [10] comments, like many other Asian nations, the concept of face is extremely important to the Vietnamese. Individual is seen as secondary to the group - whether the family, school or company.

Another Vietnamese scholar Vinh (2000) [40] comments that in Vietnam respect for authority, tradition and social hierarchy is the norm regulating Vietnamese linguistic polite behaviour.

In Vietnam, politeness has also been studied by such researchers as Hoat (1995), Huong (2002) [39], etc. Hoat and Huong assume that Vietnamese politeness covers both aspects of politeness: strategic politeness of the Westerners and normative politeness of the Chinese and the Japanese.

Tran (2001) mentioned the Vietnamese value "tinh". In social interaction, Vietnamese people should act on the grounds of morality than reasonability.

2.8 DIRECT AND INDIRECT COMMUNICATION STYLE

Communication styles have been associated with cultural values: direct style with individualism and indirect style with collectivism (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1996) [13].

2.9 CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATIC TRANSFER

Kasper (1992) posits that “pragmatic transfer in inter-language pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information” [17, p.207].

2.9.1 Types of Kaplan’s diagrams

In his diagrams, people from English-speaking countries often use direct expressions and thought patterns, and Oriental people in general and the Vietnamese in particular, seem to prefer roundabout and indirect patterns.

2.9.2 Kaplan’s “cultural thought patterns

2.10 FACTORS AFFECTING DIRECTNESS AND INDIRECTNESS IN HUMAN INTERACTION

There are many socio-cultural factors affecting the directness-indirectness of utterances. Nguyen (1998) [26] proposes 12 factors that, in his view, may affect the choice of directness and indirectness in communication: *age, sex, residence, mood, occupation, personality, topic, place, communication environment, social distance, time pressure and position.*

2.11 SOCIAL STATUS AND GENDER

The role of social status in communication involves the ability to recognize each other’s social position (Leech 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995).

Gender and speech behaviour are also seen as two interwoven, interrelated variables (Lakoff 1975; Holmes 1995). In other words, speech behaviours depend on the gender relationship between interlocutors.

2.12 SPEECH ACT REALIZATION IN REFUSALS

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 METHODS OF THE STUDY

The study is carried out with the following methods: Qualitative quantitative methods, Analytic and Synthetic methods, Comparison and Contrast methods, Descriptive and Interpretive methods

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Data Collection Instruments

This study used a questionnaire in the form of Discourse Completion Task (DCT) for data collection.

3.2.2 Participants

Participants consist of 60 Vietnamese (30 male, 30 female) third-year and fourth-year students as EFL learners at Tay Nguyen University, Daklak in Vietnam, and 60 native American students (30 male, 30 female) at Francis University, California, USA.

3.2.3 Materials

The participants were provided with a questionnaire in English with two versions: one for male and one for female. The DCT consists of six different situations to elicit refusals for requests, varying in terms of social status with three levels: low (L); high (H); and equal (E) and gender with two levels: same (S) and opposite (O).

3.2.4 Content of the questionnaires

The content of the questionnaires is described in detail in Appendix.

3.3 PROCEDURES

3.3.1 Data Collection

The questionnaires were sent to two investigated groups of subjects: American students in Francis University, California, USA and Vietnamese students at Tay Nguyen University, Daklak, Vietnam.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

The refusal strategies gathered by this study are analysed based on a sequence of semantic formulae provided by Beebe and Takahashi (1990).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 THE TOTAL NUMBER AND FREQUENCIES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES IN EACH SITUATION.

4.1.1 Comparisons on Situation 1

4.1.2 Comparisons on Situation 2

4.1.3 Comparisons on Situation 3

4.1.4 Comparisons on Situation 4

4.1.5 Comparisons on Situation 5

4.1.6 Comparisons on Situation 6

Sub-conclusion

From the findings in each situation we could say that there was the co-existence of the similarities and differences in the use of refusal strategies between AEs and VEs. They seemed to explore the same kind of refusal strategies at the top rates.

However, under the impact of gender and social status, VEs differed greatly in using direct strategies between the male and the female. There was no difference in using direct strategies between male and female AEs. However, female AEs were not as direct as male AEs, they used more refusal strategies than males and their preferred sequence were often longer.

AEs tended to be more direct than VEs. For VEs, females avoided to use direct strategies and males used them carefully. It can be interpreted that Vietnam belongs to Asian culture so social status is an important factor, especially the interpersonal communication between a professor and a tutor. In such a hierarchy society, a person of lower status tends to be passive and self-restrained.

4.2 COMPARISONS ON THE FREQUENCIES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED BY AES AND VES IN EACH SITUATION

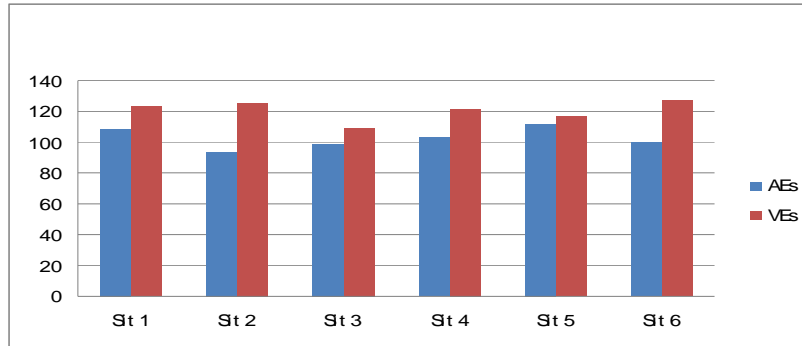


Figure 4.1. Comparisons on the total number of refusal strategies used by AEs and VEs in each situation.

It is apparently seen from the findings in each situation that there was a distinction in the way AEs and VEs made their refusals to a request. VEs always used more refusal strategies than AEs did in any case. In addition, VEs tended to be more indirect than AEs. This result should be discussed in two sides. Firstly, VEs were governed by the preference to indirectness because they were likely to enhance politeness and mitigate imposition on the requesters. Secondly, this feature might be explained by their “cultural thought pattern” (Kaplan 1972). Such Asian speakers with “circularity” are inclined to indirectness, which may result in lengthening the utterances with a greater number of refusal strategies while AEs with “linearity” tend to prefer directness, which may be the reason for shortening the way to reach their communication with a limited number of strategies.

4.3 THE TOTAL NUMBER AND THE FREQUENCIES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED BY AEs AND VEs

There were 617 strategies used in the US refusals. By far, the greatest number of strategies were identified as providing a reason or explanation for the refusals with 273. The second rank was *the statement of regret or apology*. It was used with 158 times. The strategy coded as *negative ability* was the third most-used strategy with $n=54$. There was a great distance in number between the second and the third by 103. *Flat “No”* was ranked fourth with $n=30$. Standing the fifth in number was *criticism and postponement* with $n=14$. Two strategies used least were *openers* and *rhetorical question* with only 2 times for each.

There were 725 strategies used by VEs in their refusals. The most common strategies used was *reason or explanation* with $n=273$. *Statement of regret* was recorded as the second with 250. Following *regret* was *negative ability* with $n=58$. The strategy of *alternative* stood at the fourth in frequency with $n=34$. The fifth most common strategy was *postponement* with $n=26$. *Condition for future acceptance* and *rhetorical question* became the least common used strategies with only 2.

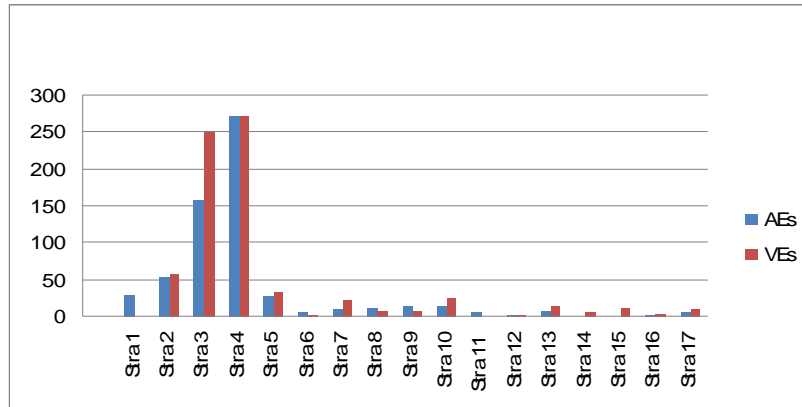


Figure 4.2. Comparisons on the number & frequencies of refusal strategies used by AEs & VEs.

Similarities

It is clear from figure 4.2 that the two most popular strategies used by both AEs and VEs were reasons and regret. They shared the same number of refusal strategy reason with 273 for each group. Regret was used with 158 for AEs and 250 for VEs (n=158 vs. n=250) respectively or over 1.5 times more than AEs.

Differences

We could see a broad tendency emerged from this figure that VEs employed the expressions of regrets to show their unwillingness to say “No”. This can be interpreted that Vietnam belongs to Asian culture, where value of face-saving acts should be carefully observed.

VEs used the greater number of strategies in making their refusals to requests with 725 strategies compared to 617 strategies (n=725 vs. n=617), more than 108 strategies. The number of almost

all strategies used by VEs were dominant compared with the number by AEs.

One distinguished feature was that flat “No” was the third popular strategy by AEs with n=30 while none was recorded by VEs. This sharp difference shows that AEs are much more direct than VEs. This might accounted for the highly structured and traditional society in Viet Nam. Etiquette and harmony are very important because it is “saving face”.

Another distinguished feature was that gratitude and willingness did not appear in the US refusals whereas 11 and 6 were identified in the Vietnamese refusals. Interestingly, none of the Vietnamese respondents were stated to use the strategy of self-defence while the US respondents used 5.

Besides the most frequently used strategies, they differed in using other strategies. For instance, AEs preferred to employ *criticism* (n=14 vs. n=8), *principle* (n=11 vs. n=7) and *self-defence* (n=5 vs. n=0) while VEs preferred *alternative* (n=37 vs. n=27), *postponement* (n=26 vs. n=14) and *positive opinion* (n=13 vs. n=7). All can be interpreted that the degree of threatening requesters’ face seemed to affect the respondents’ choice of refusal strategies. Apparently, AEs performed their refusals on the basic of social principles like law and order, in contrast, VEs tended to act on the basic of social harmony and “tinh”.

Sub-conclusion

The findings in this section indicates that two groups still have certain coincidences in using refusal strategies, however; VEs are inclined to be affected by the parameters in the investigated situations at a higher frequency than AEs. This result seems to reflect the community-oriented culture in Vietnam where the value of face-saving acts should be carefully observed. Therefore, they tended to be more indirect in the way they made their refusals.

4.4 THE TOTAL NUMBER AND FREQUENCIES OF STRATEGIES USED IN THE TERM OF SOCIAL STATUS (ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS)

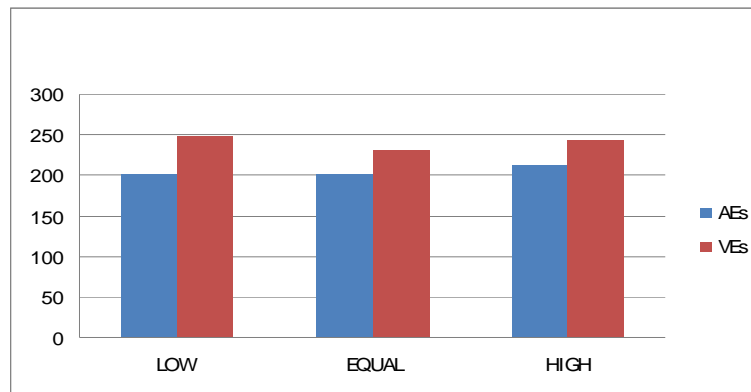


Figure 4.3. Comparisons on the total number of refusal strategies used by AEs & VEs

Similarities

AEs and VEs were the same in employing reasons and the statement of regret as their most common used strategies regardless their social status.

In two investigated groups, the respondents who had the equal social status with the requesters used the fewest number of refusal strategies for each group.

The higher status the respondents were in, the more direct strategies they used.

Differences

In term of social status, AEs differed from VEs in using refusals strategies. For AEs, high status respondents used the largest number of strategies to make their refusals. The reverse result was true for VEs, that is, the largest number of strategies was used by low status respondents.

AEs used more direct strategies than VEs. In other words, AEs were more direct than VEs.

Sub-conclusion

All findings above can be interpreted that Vietnam is a hierarchical society where teacher-student relationship is highly appreciated. This results from the fact that Vietnam has been strongly influenced by Confucianism from China owing to geographical proximity and political, cultural and economic contacts with this country over centuries (Hoat 1995, p55). It is no wonder that VEs of low status employed the largest number of refusal strategies when they made their refusals to a higher status person. They also used more regret and reason to show high respect for people of high status. On the contrary, AEs, influenced by individualism, actually did not care much about the social status of the requesters.

VEs of high status were sensitive to the status of requesters. Although they used the largest negative ability in their refusals, they often softened their directness by using positive (n=12), postponement (n=24) or alternative (n=11) to save face.

4.5 THE NUMBER OF STRATEGIES USED BY AEs AND VEs IN TERMS OF GENDER

4.5.1 Comparisons on the total number and frequencies of refusal strategies used by AEs and VEs.

Similarities

The female used the greater number of refusal strategies than the male.

The male and the female in two investigated groups preferred to apply *reason*, *regret* and *negative ability* as their most frequently used strategies, however, the female was always dominant in number.

Differences

The total number of direct strategies was used by AEs much more than by VEs (n=84 vs. n=57) or nearly 1.5 times than VEs. One striking feature was that none of flat “No” was used by VEs while 30 was used by AEs. It means that AEs tended to be more direct than VEs in making their refusals.

There was no great difference between AEs males and females in using direct strategies (n=45 vs. n=39). In contrast, the number of direct strategies used by Vietnamese males was twice as many as females did (n=38 vs. n=19).

Male AEs used more *promise*, *condition for future acceptance*, *principle* and *postponement* than female AEs. The reverse result was found for male and female VEs.

4.5.2 Comparisons on the number and frequencies of refusal strategies used by AEs and VEs in the term of gender

When refusing the requests from people in opposite gender, AEs used less refusal strategies than they did from those in the same gender (n=319 vs. n=299). The coincidence was also for male and female AEs when they made their refusals to people in opposite gender. The male used 140 compared 147 for the same gender (n=140 vs. n=147), and the female used 159 compared with 172 This was true for both male and female AEs (n=159 vs. n=172). The reverse result was found for VEs. In refusing people in opposite gender, VEs used more strategies with n= 375 in total compared with n=350 for same gender. It was found that refusal strategies used by female VEs outnumbered those by male VEs regardless of gender. In refusing people in same gender, the female used 186 compared with 164 by the male (n=186 vs. n=164), and in refusing people in opposite gender, the female used 202 compared with 173 by the male (n=202 vs. n=173). Moreover, they also tended to be more indirect than males. However, the degree of indirectness between male and female AEs were not as much as male and female VEs (n=39 vs. n=18).

Sub-conclusion

The findings highlight the impact of gender on the use of refusal strategies. First, although AEs and VEs tended to make

similar choice in using the most preferred strategies, they displayed two opposing trends in using the number of strategies to refuse the people in different gender. AEs used more strategies to refuse to same gender people than to opposite gender ones. The reverse result was found for VEs; the greater number of strategies was used to refuse opposite gender people instead of same gender ones. Secondly, it is admitted that AEs were likely to be more direct than VEs. Finally, the distinction in the degree of directness between male and female AEs was not as great as between male and female VEs. In other words VEs was strongly influenced by the gender.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

5.1 CONCLUSION

The findings in chapter IV provide a strong evidence for the co-existence of the similarities and differences in the use of refusal strategies made by AEs and VEs.

Not all refusal strategies in the category are explored by AEs and VEs. There were 15 and 16 out of 17 refusal strategies found by VEs and AEs with different proportions and manifestations respectively. Although AEs used less refusal strategies than VEs did, a certain number of refusal strategies were preferred by both groups. Both AEs and VEs tended to employ more *reason*, more *regret*, more *negative ability* and more *alternative* than the others. This confirms that two groups from different cultures still find certain coincidences in their using refusal strategies in the speech act.

It is noticeable that although indirect strategies were dominant in the refusals in both two groups, VEs still tended to be more indirect than AEs. As illustrated in the fact that not any *flat* “No” was used by VEs. It can be interpreted that VEs with “circularity” are inclined to indirectness. For this reason, VEs may find it difficult to use direct refusals, having difficulties acquiring expressions or language functions in English in which they have to be direct.

Criticism and *principle* used by AEs outnumbered those by VEs while alternative, postponement and positive opinion was used more than by VEs. Apparently, AEs performed their refusals on the basis of social principles like law and order, in contrast, VEs tended to act on the basis of social harmony and “tinh”.

5.1.1 The use of refusal strategies seen from the term of social status

With the regard as the number of refusal strategies, firstly, we could see that VEs used more than AEs did in any case. However, AEs and VEs were the same in employing reasons and the statement of regret as their most common used strategies regardless of their social status.

Secondly, in two investigated groups, the respondents who had the equal social status with the requesters used the fewest number of refusal strategies. And high status respondents in both groups were nearly similar in the way they used direct strategies. As illustrated that the higher status the respondents were in, the more

direct strategies they used. These highlighted the impact of social status on the use of refusal strategies of two investigated groups.

Thirdly, it is admitted that their use of refusal strategies are differently influenced. AEs differed from VEs in using the total number of refusals strategies. For AEs, high status respondents used the largest number of strategies to make their refusals. The reverse result was true for VEs, that is, the largest number of strategies was used by low status respondents.

Fourthly, with the regard of the degree of directness, AEs used more direct strategies than VEs. In other words, AEs were more direct than VEs. One possible explanation that people from English-speaking countries often use direct expressions and thought patterns, and Oriental people in general and the Vietnamese in particular, seem to prefer roundabout and indirect patterns. (Kaplan 1972, 2.9)

Finally, VEs of high status were sensitive to the status of requesters. Although they used the largest negative ability in their refusals, they often softened their directness by using positive (n=12), postponement (n=24) or alternative (n=11) to save face.

In conclusion, these findings can be interpreted that Vietnam is ranked by hierarchy essentially. Therefore social communication is influenced heavily by the social status. People in the inferior social status should be respectful to the one who is relatively in the superior social status. In social interaction, this respect is reflected by linguistic behaviour. The refusals include more semantic formula and more mitigate devices for the hope that they can achieve face-saving

act when the refused person 's social status is higher than the requesters. Thus, it is no wonder that VEs of low status employed the largest number of refusal strategies and also used more regret and reason to show high respect for people of high status when they made their refusals to a higher status person. On the contrary, AEs, influenced by individualism, actually did not care much about the social status of the requesters.

5.1.2 The use of refusal strategies seen from the term of gender

The findings in chapter IV provide evidence for the similarities and differences in making their refusals to a request between the male and the female in two investigated groups.

Firstly, the female in both groups tended to be more indirect than the male. They used more strategies than the male in almost all situations. It must be interpreted that the female, in general, are inclined to maintain and increase solidarity in their communication. (Holmes (1995) p.472) [35].

Secondly, with regard to the use of direct strategies there was no difference between American male and female compared with between Vietnamese male and female. This could be explained according to social hierarchy and beliefs in Vietnam where more expectations will be imposed on linguistic behaviour to social norms rather than to the individual's conscious wants.

Finally, they also differed in responses to people in same or opposite gender. When refusing a same-gender person VEs used more strategies than AEs. The reverse result was found for AEs.

5.2 IMPLICATION

The results of the present study throws more light on the necessity of providing Vietnamese learners with the awareness of various kinds of socio-cultural factors when they communicate. Moreover, the impacts of these factors on the efficiency in communicating plays an important role, helping learner raise communicative and pragmatic competence. Recognition of similarities and differences in the way AEs and VEs make refusals will provide mutual understanding and lead to appreciation of other cultures, lessening the effects of discrimination and prejudice. As a result, learners will certainly find it more confident to encounter real-life interaction.

It is necessary to prepare learners practice the target language in a variety of cultural context. In addition, the interactive classroom activities should be organized in the light of communicative approach. Both socio-cultural and sociolinguistic information should be introduced into English textbooks. Learners should be taught how to perform many different kinds of speech acts in an L2 in the situations designed in terms of social status and gender. It is highly advisable to present learners with materials about how appropriate refusals should be performed.

5.3 LIMITATION

It is understood that there are problems in the use of a DCT because eliciting DCT may differ from naturally- occurring data. There is the possibility that respondents will give answers that they may not use in a real life situation.

This study is restricted to verbal language, non-verbal language were not observed.

The results of this study cannot be generalized to all Vietnamese learners.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

With the scope limited to two social variables including social status and gender, further research should investigate other possible social variables such as age, social distance and level of formality. This study confines itself to the verbal aspect of refusal behaviour, the extension to paralinguistic factors such as facial expressions and gesture should be investigated.

In addition, the present study used DCT as a research tool which might yield data different from naturally occurring data. Future studies may study data from a corpus of natural spoken language or employ ethnographic methodology so as to broaden our standing of refusal behaviour in natural settings.

A longitudinal approach might be applied for a better understanding of the development of pragmatic competence by EFL learners.