CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was conducted for two purposes. The first was to investigate refusal strategies used by the first- and the fourth- year English major students at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand. The second was to examine the differences between refusal strategies used by these two student groups in order to determine whether or not the number of study years had an impact on refusal strategies used. Therefore, related literature and research, which are crucial to the design and analysis of this study, are reviewed.

This chapter provides a review of literature associated with speech act theory, direct and indirect speech act, speech act of refusals, adjacency pairs and refusals in request situations, politeness and face, discourse completion test, English language learning and teaching in Thai context, language proficiency levels measured by the number of years of English study, cross-sectional study design, and related studies conducted both in Thailand and abroad.

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory was originally developed by J. L. Austin in 1962 and was later modified by John R. Searle in 1969. Speech act theory starts from the principle that the minimal units of human communication are not linguistic expression, but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts, namely, speech acts (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989). A speech act is normally a sentence, but it can also be a word or phrase as long as it signifies the speaker's intention (Thammo, 2005). Speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only the knowledge of the language but also the appropriate use of that language within a given culture to minimize misunderstanding, particularly when the speaker's intention and sentence are different (Mumsam, 2009).

According to speech act theory, saying something contains three separate but related speech acts, namely, locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

Locutionary act refers to the act of saying something (Cutting, 2002) or the literal meaning of an utterance. For example, when someone says in a classroom "It's hot here," the basic meaning would concern the warm temperature of the classroom.

Illocutionary act is associated with the speakers' intention or the speaker's utterance meaning. This is also known as the illocutionary force of an utterance and more commonly known as speech acts. Take the previous example (It's hot here.), this utterance can have the illocutionary force of a request, an offer, an explanation, or a complaint. That is to say, the illocutionary force can have many meanings, such as turn up the air conditioner, turn down the heat, or just comment on the weather. Since a particular utterance may have different meanings, one has to consider the context in which it is made. This is for understanding the illocutionary force of such utterance.

Perlocutionary act refers to the effect the act has on the listener or the result of the words (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000). This is also known as the perlocutionary force of an utterance. In making a statement as "It's hot here.", if the utterance leads to the action of turning down the air conditioner in the classroom, the perlocutionary force of that utterance would be greater than if the requirement were ignored (Xiujun, 2011).

Among the three acts, Yule (2010) claims that the illocutionary act is considered as the most important. This may be because it is what the speaker wants to accomplish through the action of uttering the sentence. In 1976, Searle classified illocutionary act into 5 different types of speech acts (declaratives, representatives, commissives, expressive, and directives) according to how they affect the social interaction between speakers and hearers (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000), as follows.

Declaratives are speech acts that the speaker uses to change the condition of an object or situation such as "I bet", "I decree". Some good example of such declarative speech acts that are presented in Cutting, 2002, p. 17 are "I hereby pronounce you man and wife", which turns two singles into a married couple, and "This court sentences you to ten years' imprisonment", which puts the person into prison.

Representatives are speech acts that the speaker uses to state the fact or the truth such as claiming, hypothesizing, and predicting. For example, "The earth is round." which is the statement of fact, "Speech acts deal with language use" which is the assertion, and "It's hot here" which is the description.

Commissives are speech acts that the speaker uses to commit him/herself to, or free him/herself from, some future action, such as promising, guaranteeing, threatening, and refusing (Yule, 1996 as cited in Xiaoning, 2004). For instance, "I promise I'll pay you the money", or "I'll be back."

Expressives are speech acts that the speaker performs to state his/her feeling such as apologizing, complaining, and congratulating. For example, "I'm really sorry," "Thank you for giving me the money," or "Congratulations!"

Directives are speech acts that the speaker uses to make someone to do something such as suggesting, requesting, and commanding. These speech acts can be positive or negative, such as, "I order you to lend me a pen.", or "Could you lend me a pen, please."

Direct and Indirect Speech Act

Since speech acts concern the use of words to accomplish something, they can be performed either directly or indirectly. Searle (1969) said that when what we mean is actually in the form of the words uttered, it is described as a direct speech act. For example, when we ask someone to provide information, we usually use an interrogative form that has the function of a question such as "Can you swim?", "Who fixed the computer?", or "Which flower do you like best?"

On the other hand, Searle (1969) explained that when what we mean is not actually in the form of the words uttered, it is described as an indirect speech act. For instance, when we request someone to do something for us, we normally use an interrogative form that has the function of a request such as "Could you get me one please?" or "Would you open this?" That is to say, while performing indirect speech acts, we expect not only an answer but also an action.

As mentioned above, the classification of utterances in categories of direct and indirect speech acts is not an easy task, because much of what we say operates on both levels, and utterances often have more than one of the marco-functions

(representatives, commissives, directives, expressive, and so on) (Cutting, 2002). Thus, to classify utterances into such categories, many factors such as situation, social distance, and cultural differences should be taken into account. This is because the same utterance may represent a different meaning according to people, place, and time. In other words, it depends on context.

Speech Act of Refusals

Refusals are defined by Beebe, et al. (1990) as a kind of speech acts that occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says "no" in response to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. Among several speech acts, refusals are face-threatening acts to the listeners/requesters/inviters because they contradict their expectations and are often realized through indirect strategies (Tanck, 2002). According to Beebe, et al. (1990), refusal speech acts are divided into 2 categories, that is, direct refusals and indirect refusals which include 17 strategies, as follows:

Direct Refusals:

Direct refusals are direct strategies in which denying words or phrases are used explicitly by the refuser. Direct refusals are divided into two main categories, namely, using performative verbs and non-performative verbs as follows:

1. **Performative verb**

Leech (1983) stated that performatives are self-naming utterances, in which the performative verb usually refers to the act in which the speaker is involved at the moment of speech.

Ex. I refuse., I deny.

2. **Non-performative statement**

In this strategy, the word "no" and/or some expressions which contain negations "not" are performed directly.

Ex. No., I can't., I won't., I don't think so., I really can't today.

Indirect Refusals:

Indirect refusals are indirect strategies in which denying words or phrases do not occur in utterances. The refusee can understand the refusals by considering the context. Indirect refusals are divided into 15 strategies as follows:

1. Statement of regret

While the refuser feels bad about refusing, he/she uses a word or phrase to express sorrow such as "Sorry", "I'm so sorry", and "I feel terrible…"

Ex. I'm sorry, but I have many things to do.

2. Wish

In some situations, the refuser indirectly refuses the interlocutor by indicating a wish.

Ex. I wish I can do it for you, but I have a headache.

3. Reason

In this category, the refuser indirectly refuses to do something by providing an explanation to show the need for refusing.

Ex. I'm so sorry, but my children will be home that night.

4. Statement of alternative

In this strategy, the refuser indirectly refuses his/her interlocutor's requirement by suggesting or offering other choices to his/her interlocutor.

Ex. What about asking Jim to do it for you?

Why don't you ask someone else?

5. Set condition for future or past acceptance

The refuser indirectly refuses the interlocutor by using a hypothetical condition as an explanation for refusing.

Ex. If you had asked me earlier, I would give you that weekend off.

6. Promise of future acceptance

Some refusers would like to refuse to do something at the moment but accept to do it in another time.

Ex. I'll do it next time., I promise I'll…, Next time I'll…

7. Statement of principle

The refuser indirectly refuses some requirement by indicating a statement which he/she has followed for a long time. If he/she accepts to do it at that time, he/she might break the principle.

Ex. I never lend money to strangers., I don't believe in fad dieting.

8. Statement of philosophy

The refuser rejects the interlocutor's need by indicating his/her ideas as well as beliefs about the meaning of life.

Ex. One cannot be too careful.

Heaven never helps the men who will not act.

9. Attempts to dissuade the interlocutor

The refuser indirectly refuses the interlocutor by making threat or statement of negative results that could affect the interlocutor if he/she accepts to do the task.

Ex. If you don't see me then, you will miss out.

9.1 The refuser makes the interlocutors know or feel that they have done something wrong.

Ex. Have you ever thought about the effect of acting this way?

9.2 The refuser criticizes the interlocutor or creates a statement of negative feeling, opinion, or insult attack.

Ex. Who do you think you are?, That's a terrible idea!

9.3 The refuser lets the interlocutor off the hook.

Ex. Don't worry about it., That's okay., You don't have to.

9.4 The refuser uses statement of self-defense.

Ex. Sorry, I can't help you. I'm doing all I can do.

10. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

10.1 The refuser uses an unspecific or indefinite reply.

Ex. I'm not sure., I don't know.

10.2 The refuser uses lack of enthusiasm.

Ex. So what?

11. Avoidance

The refusers can avoid using a refusal statement in five ways as follows:

11.1 The refuser avoids speaking a refusal statement by using nonverbal.

Ex. silence, hesitation, doing nothing, physical departure

11.2 The refuser uses topic switching to shift the interlocutor's intention.

Ex. Oh! What is this? It looks so delicious.

11.3 The refuser repeats part of the interlocutor's statement.

Ex. After class?, Borrow my notes?

11.4 The refuser uses postponement without giving a specific time.

Ex. I'll think about it., Let's talk about it later., Let's think it over.

11.5 The refuser uses hedging.

Ex. Let me try it, but I can't guarantee anything.

12. Statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement

Sometimes the refuser uses statements such as "I'd love to..." and "It's very nice" to express a refusal in a polite way as well as to make the interlocutor feel good, even if he/she was rejected.

Ex. I'd love to help, but...., It's good, but...

13. Statement of empathy or understanding

The refuser tells the interlocutor that he/she understood that feeling, but he/she insisted to refuse.

Ex. I realize you are in a difficult situation.

14. Pause filler

The refuser uses interjection to express refusal.

Ex. uh, oh, well.

15. Gratitude

The refuser uses a word or phrase that contains a verb like "Thanks," "Thank you" while making refusal.

Ex. Thanks for your confidence in me...

In sum, there are many ways people use when refusing to do something. In some situations, some prefer using indirect strategies while others prefer employing direct ones. Like other kinds of speech acts, a refusal occurs after a certain kind of speech act such as request and invitation. In other words, the refusal in the organization of a conversation cannot stand alone (Nugroho, 2000). This occurring relation between acts is known as adjacency pairs, as explained in the following section.

Adjacency Pairs and Refusals in Request situations

Conversation Analysis (CA) defines adjacency pairs as a relation between acts appearing frequently in conversation patterns and in contiguous pairs of utterances. CA says that the acts, by different speakers, are ordered with a first part and a second part, for example, greeting-greeting ("Hello, how are you?"-"Fine, thanks"), farewell-farewell ("Bye"-"Bye"). Moreover, CA states that each first part is followed by a second part containing a preference structure. In other words, the second part can be either preferred or dispreferred response. Other typical examples of adjacency pairs can be seen in the table below.

Table 1 Adjacency Pairs of Conversation Analysis

1st Part	2sd Part	
	Preferred Response	**Dispreferred Response**
Request	Compliance	Refusal
Offer / Invitation	Acceptance	Decline
Assessment	Agreement	Disagreement
Blame	Denial	Admission
Question	Expected Answer	Unexpected answer / Non-answer

Scheloff and Sack (1973 as cited in Nguyen, 2006) mentioned that to produce adjacency pairs successfully, the speaker has an important role as the listener. This may be because the listener will produce a second part if he/she can understand the speaker's first part. Thus, if the speaker produces their first part unclearly or ambiguously, the listener will fail to complete the adjacency pair because he/she cannot understand what the speaker aims to communicate. Finally, offensive or face threatening may occur.

In terms of pragmatics, Nguyen (2006) stated that requests and refusals are automatic sequences consisting of a first part and a second part of the conversation. Requests are pre-event and refusals are post-event. Since refusal refers to the speech act of saying "no," it is deemed to be dispreferred response to an offer, an invitation,

and a request etc. In request situations, particularly, if someone gives a flat refusal, it may not only be interpreted as more than just the refusal itself but can also create a feeling of discomfort in both the requester and requestee, (Nguyen, 2006).

Even though refusal in request situation can make both the requester and the requestee feel uncomfortable, everyone cannot avoid refusals in real-life situation. Some researchers have investigated refusals in request situation for exploring their relationship and influence in selecting refusal strategies (Beebe, et al. 1990; Nelson, et al., 2002; Liao and Bresnahan, 1996). Such researchers commented that a situation or a communicative environment is one of the factors that influence the determination of refusal strategies' selection (Mumsam, 2009).

As indicated above, it seems that both requesting and refusing are relevant to each other since they are speech acts that threaten both the speaker's and the hearer's face. In order to determine how such speech acts are relevant to each other, one should understand the concept of politeness and face, as described below.

Politeness and Face

Brown and Levinson published politeness theory in 1978 and revised this theory in 1987. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is based on the concept that politeness has a close relationship with face. Indeed, they mentioned that people have a public self-image or face wants. Under politeness theory, face can be classified into two separate but related aspects, namely, positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the human's desire to be accepted or treated as a group member. Negative face, on the contrary, refers to the human's desire to be independent or to have freedom of action. That is to say, politeness strategies will differ depending on whether a person is dealing with another person's positive or negative face (Garcia, 2011).

When an act, verbal or non-verbal communication, runs contrary to the speaker's or the hearer's expectation, Brown and Levinson (1987) call this behavior a face threatening act (FTA). The FTA can be either positive or negative politeness. This is because when it occurs, the politeness strategy used will depend largely on the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. An example of a speech act that threatens the hearer's negative face would be a request, because this means that the

speaker is impeding on the hearer by asking the hearer not to do what the hearer wants, but rather to do what the speaker wants (Fasold, 1990 as cited in Longcope, 1995). In contrast, a speech act that threatens the hearer's positive face would be a contradiction or expression of disagreement, which means the speaker thinks there is something wrong with an opinion held by the hearer (Fasold, 1990 as cited in Longcope, 1995).

To enter into social relationships, Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that certain strategies are used by the speakers. Indeed, such strategies used will depend on the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In order to avoid FTAs, such strategies could be performed in four types, as listed from the least to the most face threatening:

1. Performing an FTA indirectly or off-record
2. Performing an FTA with negative politeness
3. Performing an FTA with positive politeness
4. Performing an FTA baldly or on-record

Brown and Levinson (1987) elaborated that when the speaker uses indirect language and removes him/herself from any imposition, the speaker is performing the FTA indirectly or off-record. For example, someone saw a cup of pens on a teacher's desk, and he/she wanted to use one so he/she requests the teacher indirectly by saying, "I definitely could use a black pen right now." In this case, it could be seen that the speaker removes him/herself from any imposition by giving hints that it would be nice if the teacher gives him/her the black pen without directly asking the teacher to do. However, if the speaker cannot avoid an FTA because he/she knows that he/she is impinging on the teacher's time by saying something like "I'm sorry to bother you, but I just wanted to ask you if I could use one of those pens?", he/she is performing the FTA with negative politeness. In this case, it could be seen that the speaker pays attention to the teacher's negative face and wants to show respect by using apology and hesitation, and offering a question rather than the opportunity to say no. In fact, negative politeness can be expressed in several ways, as follows:

1. Apologies for interfering or transgressing
2. Hedges on force of the speech act
3. Questioning rather than asserting

4. Impersonalizing mechanisms that distance the act from both the speaker and the hearer, like passiveness

5. Softening mechanisms that give the addressee out if they do not want to comply.

Nevertheless, if the speaker tries to minimize the distance between him/her and the teacher by saying something like "Is it O.K. if I use one of those pens?", this means that he/she is performing the FTA with positive politeness. According to politeness theory, positive politeness is used when the speaker pays attention to the hearer's positive face and makes other people feel good. We can find this strategy in situation where the speaker is at least familiar with the hearer, such as group of friends or people who have demonstrative closeness and solidarity. Positive politeness is shown in the following acts:

1. Claiming shared goals
2. Claiming reciprocity
3. Seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement
4. Use of in-group address forms and endearments
5. Expression of interest
6. Expression of approval
7. Joking
8. Giving of gifts, both concrete and linguistic, such as sympathy, understanding, and cooperation

Finally, concerning the context where someone saw a cup of pens on a teacher's desk, if the speaker directly says something like "I want to use one of those!", this means that he/she is doing an FTA baldly or on-record. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy is used when an expression has one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur. Since this strategy provides no effort to minimize threats to the hearer's face, it is commonly found in situations where the speaker and the hearer know each other fairly well such as among intimates, family and those who are very comfortable in their environment such as employees. However, since the concern for the other's face is less complex, the hearer may be shocked or embarrassed by this strategy (Mumsam, 2009).

From the above-mentioned theories of politeness and face, it can be said that refusals are speech acts that impose on the hearer or addressee more than the speaker or addresser. This may be because whenever refusals were made, they involve face threatening. In other words, when refusals are expressed, the hearer has no option than to accept them as they are (Sarfo, 2011).

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

One way to collect the data for a study of refusal strategies used by a large group of participants is to use a Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

DCT is a written questionnaire used to elicit data in sociolinguistic research. It includes several brief described situations, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for eliciting a particular speech act (Kasper and Dahl, 1991). Subjects are asked to read and write a response that they think fits into the given situations in the slot. Thus some information, such as tone of voice, facial expression, gesture, and nonverbal cues are not observed in DCT. However, Gass and Neo (1995) agreed that this does not mean that DCT is useless for assessing speech acts.

Although the DCT method has been criticized in its inabilities to fully reflect the real speech act and the authenticity of the situations, it is observed that the DCT tasks have been used widely in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) (Kasper, 2000). Lin (2010) argued that it is an efficient instrument to collect a large amount of relevant data in a short period of time (Beebe and Cummings, 1996; Beebe, et al., 1990; Cohen and Olshtain, 1993; Johnston, et al., 1998; Wolfson, 1989), obtain prototypical responses needed for a cross-cultural comparison, (DeCapua, 1998; Hill, et. al., 1986; Kasper, et al, 1989; Kwon, 2004; Rintell and Mitchell, 1989) and gather a consistent body of data within the contextual factors (Blum-Kulka, et al, 1989; Johnston, et al, 1998; Kasper, 2000; Kwon, 2004).

English Language Learning and Teaching in Thai Context

In Thailand, English is not a second language. It has been taught as a foreign language since its inception. English is deemed as an important subject. Thai students are required to study English as part of the curriculum requirement from grade one in elementary school to undergraduate level.

At Naresuan University, the students are required to study advanced English courses. As indicated in the introduction section, acquiring only the linguistic competency or the pragmatic competency alone does not help to achieve success in cross-cultural interactions. Students, particularly English majors, are required to take English for communication courses for at least three courses. These are, for instance, Basic Oral Skills, Conversation and Discussion, and Oral Presentation and Public Speaking. That is to say, in the span of four years, the students are expected to be proficient in not only grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, language skills in English but also English culture. Since some of these are a requisite of higher education, all students must pass this English component in order to receive an undergraduate degree. However, due to the fact that they do not have a chance to use English in real-life contexts as they have used English only in the English class, using English correctly and appropriately can be difficult and even more difficult when students have to speak in refusal situations (Mumsam, 2009).

Language Proficiency Levels Measured by the Number of Years of English Study

One of many factors (e.g. sociocultural norms, being a native or non-native speaker) that could influence the student's performance of speech acts is individual differences in personal characteristic, namely L2 proficiency. Language proficiency refers to the skill or ability of an individual to perform in a particular language (Jbjelland, 2009) for various purposes, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Language proficiency is generally measured by using tests of language proficiency. However, it is observed that language proficiency could be measured by employing other criteria.

In the literature in ILP and second language acquisition (SLA), researchers have used different criteria for measuring and describing levels of language proficiency. These are, for example, local placement tests, standardized scores, placement in language courses, lengths of residence in the L2 environment, enrollment in a L2 university, lengths of L2 study, or a combination of these factors (Thomas, 1994 and Bardovi-Harlig, 2004 as cited in Felix- Brasdefer, 2009). Examinations of proficiency difference have revealed that the length of time for L2 education have been used to determine proficiency level more frequently than any other criteria

(Cedar, 2004). Although Gass and Selinker (1994 as cited in Cedar, 2004) argued that these criteria are only very rough measures, they have long been used in studies on SLA for measuring L2 proficiency.

Cross-Sectional Study Design

According to Kasernsin (2006, p. 56), "a cross-sectional design, sometimes referred to as a pseudo longitudinal design (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996), allows the researchers to collect and compare data from participants at different developmental stages or proficiency levels (Cook, 1993)".

Since this study was designed to examine refusal strategies employed by EFL students with different proficiency levels or years of undergraduate study, the scope of examination seemed to be consistent with the cross-sectional study design. This may be because this study design guarantee that the same procedure will be employed to collect data from different groups of students. Indeed, it offers a control over variables which are the number of years of study. Using this method, Kasernsin (2006) stated that data can be compared across the groups and the answers to the research questions can be founded.

Related Research Conducted outside Thailand

A number of studies have been conducted on the topic of refusal strategies in various languages as follows:

The first study to be reviewed here is by Bardovi-Hartford (1991) who investigated refusals used by 7 native subjects and 39 non-native subjects of English during 39 audio-taped academic advising sessions. The researcher found that the native subjects were able to reject an advisor's suggestion and still maintained the balance of their status, while the non-native subjects were less able to do that. Moreover, it was found that status preserving strategies used by the two groups included both linguistic strategies (e.g. the use of non-present tense as a play-down "I've been thinking") and non- linguistic strategies (e.g. the use of appropriate timing). In addition, the most commonly used strategy of both groups was giving an explanation whereas giving an alternative was the second most commonly used strategy for native subjects, and avoidance was the second most commonly used

strategy for non-native subjects. Some of the most common explanations used included: repetition of courses at the same institution ("I have taken that."), schedule conflicts ("That's the one that conflicts with what I have to take"), lack of availability ("Yeah, but in Spain they don't offer courses in the structure of language outside the European family"), and ability ("Yeah, but the books are probably in German, and my German isn't good").

In another study, Ikoma and Shimura (1993) replicated Beebe, et al.'s study (1990) in order to investigate whether or not pragmatic transfer occurs in American Japanese foreign learners' refusals. In this study, the subjects were separated into 3 groups. The first group comprised 10 Japanese native speakers speaking Japanese. The second group comprised 10 American speakers speaking English. The last group comprised 10 fourth-year advanced-level American learners of Japanese at the University of Hawaii. The data were collected via a DCT consisting of 12 scenarios; 3 requests, 3 invitations, 3 offers, and 3 suggestions, based on Beebe, et al., 1990. The researchers found evidence of pragmatic transfer in the frequency of semantic formula employed by the last group. Moreover, it was reported that there was no difference between the three groups in terms of specificity in refusals.

Investigation into the refusals made by American and Taiwanese students can be found in Liao and Bresnahan's (1996) study. The subjects of this study were 570 undergraduate students at Feng China University in Taiwan and 516 students at the University of Michigan. The study employed a DCT consisting of 6 scenarios; a teacher's request to students for help in preparing a reception, a tardy classmate's request to borrow class notes, a longtime friend's request for help in moving, a friend's request to borrow a car for vacation, a friend request's to borrow a substantial amount of money to buy a textbook, and a family member's request to borrow a substantial amount of money. The result indicated that both the Taiwanese and Americans uttered the politeness markers of apology (e.g. "duibuqi" in Chinese and "excuse me" or "I'm sorry" in English) in the similar frequency. In terms of strategies and social status, it was found that both Chinese and American subjects used vague reasons to refuse people of higher status, while the Chinese subjects gave more specific reasons to reject a person of higher status. Additionally, Chinese were less likely to refuse a family member, while Americans were less likely to refuse a friend.

Moreover, Liao and Bresnahan (1996) found that women tended to apply more refusal strategies than men in refusing a person of higher status.

In 2000, Nugroho also studied the importance of situations related to refusal strategies in response to invitation and offer situations. The researcher used a DCT consisting of 10 different situations to elicit refusal data from 25 American English students and 26 senior Indonesian students who had been learners of English for more than three years. The researcher found that the five most-frequently-used strategies by the Americans and the Indonesian were apologizing, showing interest, giving reason, thanking and directing strategies, respectively.

Later on, Nelson, et al. (2002) studied refusal strategies used by 25 Egyptian Arabic speakers and 30 American English speakers. They used a modified version of the DCT developed by Beebe, et al. (1990) to investigated similarities and differences between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusal strategies. In order to collect data, the subjects were asked to respond verbally on audiotape after an interviewer read each situation. Findings from the study showed that Egyptian subjects had 300 refusals and American subjects had 358 refusals. In making refusals, both the Americans and Egyptians used similar refusal strategies with similar frequency. However, the Egyptians tended to use more direct refusals strategies than the Americans. Americans often used indirect strategies which included regret, apology, excuse, etc. for request situations. In terms of gender differences, American males or females employed indirect strategies while refusing a person of either higher or lower status.

In order to investigate the influence of social status, Felix- Brasdefer (2003) used a DCT containing 6 different situations to gather data from 10 American English native speakers. The result indicated that the subjects tended to be sensitive about social status, both equal and unequal status. For instance, the Americans tended to express "Thank you" at the end of the statement of people with equal status. However, they did not do that with other of unequal status. In addition, they used excuse strategies in response to request situations and typically began by expressing a positive opinion or feeling about the request or requester. Moreover, the use of refusal strategies depended upon the interlocutor's status. For example, Americans expressed

regret or apology with people of equal status. However, the factor of pragmatic transfer was not directly mentioned by the researcher.

Chinese college EFL learners' use of politeness strategies in request and refusal can be found in Xiaoning's (2004) study. With written DCT and retrospective interviews as the study's instrument, the researcher examined the effect of contextual variables and language proficiency on strategy choice. The subjects were 63 English majors from Yangzhou University who were divided into two groups: freshmen and juniors. The researcher found that the learners preferred indirect strategies both in requests and refusals. Moreover, contextual variables and language proficiency had little effect on learners' strategy choice. In terms of language proficiency, significant differences were not found between the two groups in their overall use of politeness strategies, and contextual variables did not affect the strategy use of the two groups. Based on these findings, Xiaoning (2004) suggested that consciousness-raising and systematic instruction should be adopted to improve the pragmatic competence of Chinese college EFL learners, especially their ability to choose appropriate politeness strategies in speech act performance.

In another study of refusals, Al-Eryani (2007) investigated the refusal strategies of Yemeni EFL learners and compared them to those by native speakers of Yemeni Arabic and native speakers of American English. The subjects of the study were 20 Yemeni learners of English, 20 Yemeni Arabic native speakers and 20 American English native speakers. In order to elicit data, the researcher used a written DCT questionnaire modified from that of Beebe, et al. (1990). Then, the data were analyzed in terms of semantic formula and were categorized according to the refusal taxonomy developed by Beebe, et al. (1990). The data collected from the learners were compared with those collected from native speakers of their first language, Yemeni Arabic, and with those collected from native speakers of English. Findings from the study showed that there were differences in the strategies used by the Yemeni learners of English and native speakers of English. Particularly, the frequency, the order, and the content of the semantic formulas used by the two groups were different. However, both groups avoided using direct refusal. Due to their high proficiency, the Yemeni learners showed pragmatic competence in the target language in all three areas: order, frequency, and content of the semantic formulas. However, they sometimes displayed

some of their native speech community norms, falling back on their cultural background when formulating refusals.

Related Research Conducted in Thailand

A number of studies have been conducted on the topic of refusal strategies in Thai context, as described follow:

Sairhun (1999) conducted a study on English refusal strategies used by Thai EFL learners. Sairhum's study aimed at finding out whether pragmatic transfer could occur. A DCT was used as a tool for collecting data from 50 American students and 50 Thai students. The DCT included 12 situations: 6 requests and 6 offers. The result of the study revealed that Thai's refusal strategies differed significantly from those employed by the American. That is, Thai students used indirect refusal while American employed direct refusal in both situations. Moreover, the Thais used the expression "That's OK." / "Alright." Or "I can do it myself." in greater quality than the Americans. Besides, they often used intensifiers such as "really" and "greatly" in their apologies and appreciation, while the Americans hardly did so. In terms of pragmatic transfer, it was found that the Thai students performed refusals in English in a similar way as they performed them in their native language. Also, it was found that social status played an important role in refusals in Thai and in English used by the Thai students, particularly when the refusers were in lower social status. Sairhun concluded that social status seemed to influence the strategic choices made by the American students to a lesser extent than those made by the Thai students.

Another important study was conducted by Promsrimas (2000) who looked at the refusal strategies used by Thais in response to favour-expression speech acts which include suggestions, invitations, and offer. Moreover, the researcher investigated the effects of the social status of the interlocutor as well as analyzed the role of "face". The data were collected by using a questionnaire consisting of 2 parts: DCT for collecting linguistic strategies and an inquiry on the speaker's concern about face. The subjects of this study differed from Sairhum's study. That is, they were 50 Thai speakers from various occupations aged between 20 – 40 years. The study found that there were 18 linguistic strategies used by Thais in refusing favour-expressing speech acts which were divided into direct and indirect types. The direct strategies were

divided into 2 strategies: performative verb and non-performative verbs. In the indirect strategies, there were 16 refusal strategies: reasoning, thanking, comforting the addressee, apologizing, hesitating, congratulating and well-wishing, suggesting, stating desire and feeling, asking for favour, complimenting, postponing, regretting for being unable to comply, expressing desire to comply, offering an alternative, semi-accepting and joking. Besides, the choice of the strategies was related to the social status of the interlocutors. In this point, Promsrimas concluded that Thai speakers tended to use different refusal strategies while taking into account the role and the power of conversation participations. In terms of the analyzing of the role of "face", Promsrimas found that the speakers were more concerned with the listeners' face than with their own face. However, the choice of the strategies was not related to the concern about face because the same strategy could be used in all cases.

In another study, Songsukrujiroad (2005) examined the content and ordering of semantic formulas in refusals used by American native English speakers and Thai EFL students. In this study, the subjects were divided into 2 groups. The first group included 15 Thai native speakers who were third-year student majoring in English at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat Universiy. The other group comprised 15 American English native speakers who lived in Thailand for 3-6 years. The subjects were teachers in Ubon Ratchathani Educational institutes and other neighboring provincial universities. The study used a DCT as a tool and "Mode" as the statistics. The result revealed that order and contents of refusal formats between the two groups were quite different. Thai students tended to be affected by L1 transfer.

In finding the similarities and differences in the refusal strategy use, Wannaruk (2008) examined whether or not pragmatic transfer from Thai to English was evident in the English language spoken by Thai EFL learners. The subjects were 40 Americans, 40 Thai native speakers, and 40 Thai EFL learners. All of them were graduate students studying a variety of academic majors in different universities in their own countries. Data were collected through a DCT with four kinds of speech acts; invitations, suggestions, offers, and requests. The results showed that overall all three groups shared most of the refusal strategies and that pragmatic transfer existed in the choice and content of refusal strategies. Moreover, awareness of a person of a

higher status and the characteristic of being modest in L1 culture motivate pragmatic transfer. Language proficiency was an important factor in pragmatic transfer as well.

The last study to be reviewed in this section is the influential study by Mumsam (2009) who compared the language patterns used to make refusals by Thai EFL learners and American English native speakers. The subjects of this study were 50 fourth-year English Major students at Udonthani Rajabhat University and 50 American English native speakers in Washington D.C. The study aimed at investigating the similarities and differences in using refusal strategies. In this study, the subjects were asked to fill out a DCT which contained 12 request situations. The result of the study revealed that Thai EFL students and Americans were not significantly different in refusing. Moreover, the two most-frequently-employed refusal strategies used by the Thai and the American subjects were "offering reason" and "statement of regret" whereas the "gratitude" strategy was not used to refuse any of the requests in the DCT. However, Mumsam noted that although the Thai students possessed fairy good knowledge about refusal speech acts and cross-culture, they still used different strategies from those used by the American English native speakers.

The above review of the related literature of the speech act of refusals shows that the studies of refusals can be classified into three categories. The first category includes studies that examined speech acts within one specific language (Promsrimas, 2000; Xiaoning, 2004). The second group of studies examined speech acts in two or more languages comparing with first language that is not Thai (Bardovi-Hartford, 1991; Ikoma and Shimura, 1993; Liao and Bresmhan, 1996; Nugroho, 2000; Nelson, et al., 2002; Felix-Brasdefer, 2003; Al-Eryani, 2007). The third group of studies focused on examining speech acts produced by American native speakers and Thai speakers (Sairhun, 1999; Songsukrujiroad, 2005; Wannaruk, 2008; Mumsam, 2009). Moreover, the speech act of refusals were investigated in many fields such as pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 (Beebe and Takahashi, 1987; Ikoma and Shimura, 1993; Al-Eryani, 2007; Wannaruk, 2008), the relationship of situations (Liao and Bresmhan, 1996; Nugroho, 2000), and the role of status (Nelson, et al., 2002; Felix-Brasefer, 2003).

Regarding a review of related literature and research, it can be summarized that people from different cultures perceive the interlocutor's status in different ways. As a result, they always choose different strategies for the same speech act in general and the speech act of refusals in particular. Many researchers have proposed that in order to reduce the problem of making inappropriate refusal strategies, non-native speakers and/or EFL learners have to study the culture of the target language, as well as speech act of refusals which include 17 strategies. Understanding these strategies can help native speakers and non-native speakers understand the purpose of each other, which leads to effective communications.

In conclusion, speech acts are vital for proper communication, teaching, and learning languages. Many studies have examined speech acts in Thailand, especially refusals. However, these studies have failed to take into consideration the subject's lengths of English study and/or look into refusal strategies of EFL learners with different year levels. This oversight manifests itself as problematic for Thai EFL learners who wish to develop their English skills. Moreover, it is questionable whether or not the number of years of English study influences their choice of refusal strategies. Focusing on these problems, this study was designed to employ the cross-sectional study method to analyze different refusal strategies among EFL students, whose first language is Thai, and in different years of an undergraduate study.