

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In the exploration of refusal strategies used by English-majors in the first and fourth years and the determination of whether there is any significant difference between refusal strategies used by students in the two groups, certain procedures would be set and reported in this chapter. Such procedures include choosing subjects, developing the research instrument, measuring validity and reliability of the DCT questionnaire, evaluating validity and reliability of coding, collecting data, and analyzing the data. Details of these procedures are described below.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were two groups of English major students at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. These two groups of students were enrolled in the first semester of the year 2012. The first group included 50 first-year English major students who had just graduated from high school and were entering their first year of studies at university. It was then assumed that these students had less length of exposure to the English instruction than other English majors who had been studying English for a longer period of time.

The second group included 50 fourth-year English major students at the same university. In comparison with the first-year students, this study assumed that the fourth-year students had gathered and learned more knowledge since they had taken numerous English courses in grammar, reading, writing, and conversation in the span of 3 years.

Research Instrument

The DCT Questionnaire

In this study, the data were collected by a standard questionnaire called a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). It was a modified version of Beebe, et al.'s (1990) DCT, which was adapted by Mumsam in 2009 and employed in her study of refusal

strategies used by Thai EFL learners and American English native speakers. Since it had 12 request situations, which commonly occur in daily life, it was relevant to the purpose of the current study that was to find refusal strategies used in response to requests. In order to reduce problems of misinterpretation in answering the questions, the researcher maximized the details of the instructions for the DCT and changed some difficult words to simpler ones.

Structure of the DCT Questionnaire

The DCT consisted of 2 parts. The first part comprised instructions and explanations of how to respond to the questionnaires. The second part included 12 request scenarios where the students were required to write responses in English as they would produce verbally in real situations by making refusals after "You will refuse by saying." This is for making the subjects aware that they have to make refusals. In order to make the situations more realistic, the situations used in the questionnaire were divided into three types. These were four situations (3, 5, 7, and 12) of refusing to people of higher statuses, four situations (2, 6, 9, and 10) of refusing to people of equal statuses, and four situations (1, 4, 8, and 11) of refusing to people of lower statuses. The 12 request situations were described as follows:

1. a worker's request to take the weekend off
2. a friend's request to borrow lecture notes
3. a boss's request to spend an extra hour to finish up work
4. a student's request to postpone a midterm test
5. an instructor's request to turn in homework earlier than schedule
6. a friend's request to move to another town
7. a teacher's request to stay after school
8. a younger sister's request to borrow money
9. a friend's request to borrow a car
10. a roommate's request to borrow a dress for a wedding
11. a student's request to ask for a key to get inside a classroom
12. a boss's request to translate an English complaint

Validity and Reliability of the DCT Questionnaire

The DCT was reviewed and assessed to check its content validity and reliability by three experts, who were instructors of English at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. Two of the experts received a doctoral degree and one is an American native speaker.

After that, the DCT was rechecked and revised, based on suggestions from the experts and the thesis advisor. To assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire, relevance of its content, clarity of its instructions/ situations, ease of completion, and time required for completion, the DCT was piloted with 30 first-year and 30 fourth-year English major students in academic year 2011 at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. The students were chosen due to the fact that they had similar years of study to the subjects, and they had been taking similar courses since they were studying at the same university. Based on the 60 students' responses, a few changes were made to the questionnaire. In its final form, the questionnaire was printed on one (double-sided) A4 page; average time to complete the questionnaire was 50 minutes.

Validity and Reliability of Coding

In this study, two coders who did data coding were two American English native speakers, both of whom hold Master degrees from 2 different accredited universities in the United States. Before doing the coding, the coders were trained to understand what the study aimed to investigate and how to investigate them. That is, the coders received detailed instruction sheets that provide clearly explained categorization and examples for coding.

In order to verify that the data coding was valid, the coders independently classified the responses, based on Beebe, et al.'s (1990) refusal strategies, and entered classification codes of: FS1 (statement of regret), FS2 (wish), FS3 (reason), FS4 (statement of alternative), FS5 (set condition for future or past acceptance), FS6 (promise of future acceptance), FS7 (statement of principle), FS8 (statement of philosophy), FS9 (attempts to dissuade the interlocutor), FS10 (acceptance that functions as a refusal), FS11 (avoidance), FS12 (statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement), FS13 (statement of empathy or understanding), FS14 (pause filler), FS15 (gratitude), FS16 (performative verb), and FS17 (non-performative

statement).

In order to confirm that the data coding was reliable, intercoder reliability was used. For items on which there was disagreement, the coders carefully reviewed the coding guidelines to ensure the coding accuracy. For subsequent concerns, after the review of the coding guidelines, the coders consulted with the researcher and the thesis advisor to determine the final coding.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through the DCTs. In the first step, the researcher asked for permission to collect data from Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University, Phisanulok. Then, the DCTs were distributed directly to the subjects in the first semester of the 2012 academic year. The subjects were asked to complete the DCTs within 50 minutes and required to return the DCTs to the researcher after the given time. The DCT data were later coded and analyzed by the two coders.

Data Analysis and Statistical Devices

The data from the completed questionnaire were classified into 17 categories of refusal strategies based on Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification. The following was an example of analyzing the data from the questionnaire.

A: Can you stay after school to help me because it is an important reception?

B: I'm really sorry, I wish I could help you, but I have to leave now.

In the situation where the respondents had to refuse a teacher's request to stay after school, a response such as "I'm really sorry, I wish I could help you, but I have to leave now" was analyzed into 3 units and coded as consisting of 3 refusal strategies based on Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy, as shown below.

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| 1. I'm really sorry, = statement of regret | } | indirect refusal |
| 2. I wish I could help you, = wish | | |
| 3. but I have to leave now. = reason | | |

Since several strategies with slightly different details were represented under one strategy, a performance that could be interpreted as more than one strategy was grouped into one category. For instance, in FS9 (attempts to dissuade the interlocutor), there were four sub-categories: making the hearer feel guilty, criticizing the interlocutor, letting the hearer off the hook and a statement of self-defense. Thus, when the subject made a performance that could be interpreted as making the hearer feel guilty and as criticizing the interlocutor, these strategies were grouped into FS9. For more details, see Appendix B.

After the data had been analyzed and coded into the classification of refusal strategies, the data analysis was divided into 2 parts in order to answer the research questions as follows:

1. Descriptive analysis of refusal strategies used by the first- and the fourth-year students majoring in English.
2. Chi-square analysis for the relationship of refusal strategies in request situations by the first- and the fourth-year students majoring in English.

In order to answer the research question 1, the procedure of Sairhun (1999), Promsrimas (2000), and Mumsam (2009) were used to analyze the frequencies of refusal strategies. In each response, a score of "0" was marked when the response did not show refusal strategies while "1" was recorded for each response to a question when the subject responded with one or more refusal strategies. An example of this analysis was illustrated below.

Subject 1: No, thanks, but I have an appointment with my father.

No = non-performative statement (1) → direct refusal

Thanks = gratitude (1) → indirect refusal

but I have an appointment with my father = reason → (1) indirect refusal

In this response, "No", "Thanks," and "but I have an appointment with my father" were entered with the classification codes of FS17 (non-performative statement), FS15 (gratitude), and FS3 (reason), respectively. Since 3 refusal strategies were coded, the frequency of the illustrated refusal strategies was 3.

Subject 2: Sorry, I'm busy after class today.

Sorry = statement of regret (1) → indirect refusal

I'm busy after class today = reason (1) → indirect refusal

In this response, "Sorry" was entered with the classification code of FS1 (statement of regret) whereas "I'm busy after class today" was entered with the code of FS3 (reason). Since 2 refusal strategies were coded, the frequency of the illustrated refusal strategies was 2.

Subject 3: I loved it.

I loved it (0)

In this case, there is no refusal strategy. Consequently, "I loved it" was not entered by any classification codes, and the frequency of refusal strategies used was assigned with "0".

To check the classification of the refusal strategies, the intercoder reliability was measured. For items on which there was disagreement, the coders reviewed the coding guidelines and recoded the data until they came to a consensus. After that, the researcher computed the frequencies of all analyzed data and calculated them into percentages.

In order to answer the research question 2, Chi-square test was used to find any significant differences between the use of refusal strategies by students in the two groups. To answer this question clearly, the research reported similar and different characteristic of each refusal strategies made by the two groups.