CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the study were divided into two sections. Section one reports refusal strategies used by the first- and the fourth-year English major students. Section two describes similar and different characteristics of each strategy made by these two student groups.

The responses of the two subject groups obtained from the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) were computed and presented in frequency and percentage. The numbers of refusal strategies employed by the first- and the fourth-year English major subjects were 1,529 and 1,597, respectively. Below are the results together with discussion of the results from the studies on Thai students' use of refusal strategies in English, presented in comparison according to the research questions. Since the participants often employed more than one strategy to perform refusals, each strategy was analyzed and counted independently, as described in the data analysis in Chapter III.

Research Finding One

In response to the first research question (What are the refusal strategies used by the English-major students in the first and fourth years?), the results were demonstrated in terms of frequency and percentage as follows:

Table 2 The Frequency of the First-Year English Major Students' Responses to Using Refusal Strategies in Request Situations

Order	Refusal Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Reason	457	29.89
2	Non-performative statement	364	23.81
3	Statement of regret	308	20.14
4	Pause filler	123	8.04

Table 2 (Cont.)

Order	Refusal Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5	Statement of alternative	74	4.84
6	Statement of empathy or understanding	62	4.05
7	Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor	43	2.81
8	Set condition for future or past acceptance	26	1.70
9	Promise of future acceptance	25	1.64
10	Statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement	20	1.31
11	Avoidance	12	0.78
12	Statement of principle	9	0.59
13	Acceptance that functions as a refusal	4	0.26
14	Gratitude	1	0.07
15	Performative verb	1	0.07
16	Wish	0	0
17	Statement of philosophy	0	0
	Total	1,529	100

Table 2 reveals that "reason" (29.89%) was the most commonly used strategy while "non-performative statement" (23.81%) and "statement of regret" (20.14%) were the second and the third most commonly used strategy, respectively. However, "gratitude" and "performative verb" were used only once or at 0.07%. Indeed, this rank did not include showing "wish" and "statement of philosophy" because the first-year subjects did not use "wish" and "statement of philosophy" when performing refusal speech acts.

Table 3 **The Frequency of the Fourth-Year English Major Students' Responses**
to Using Refusal Strategies in Request Situations

Order	Refusal Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Reason	444	27.78
2	Statement of regret	371	23.22
3	Non-performative statement	299	18.71
4	Statement of alternative	124	7.76
5	Pause filler	78	4.88
6	Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor	65	4.07
7	Statement of empathy or understanding	52	3.25
8	Set condition for future or past acceptance	43	2.69
9	Statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement	40	2.50
10	Promise of future acceptance	35	2.19
11	Statement of principle	20	1.25
12	Avoidance	10	0.63
13	Acceptance that functions as a refusal	6	0.38
14	Statement of philosophy	3	0.19
15	Gratitude	3	0.19
16	Performative verb	3	0.19
17	Wish	1	0.06
	Total	1,597	100

From Table 3, the three most frequently employed refusal strategies were "reason" (27.78%), "statement of regret" (23.22%), and "non-performative statement" (18.71%), respectively. However, "statement of philosophy", "gratitude" and "performative verb" were used only 3 times or at 0.19%. Similarly, "wish" were employed only once or at 0.06%.

A comparison of refusal strategies made by both subject groups was presented in the following bar chart.
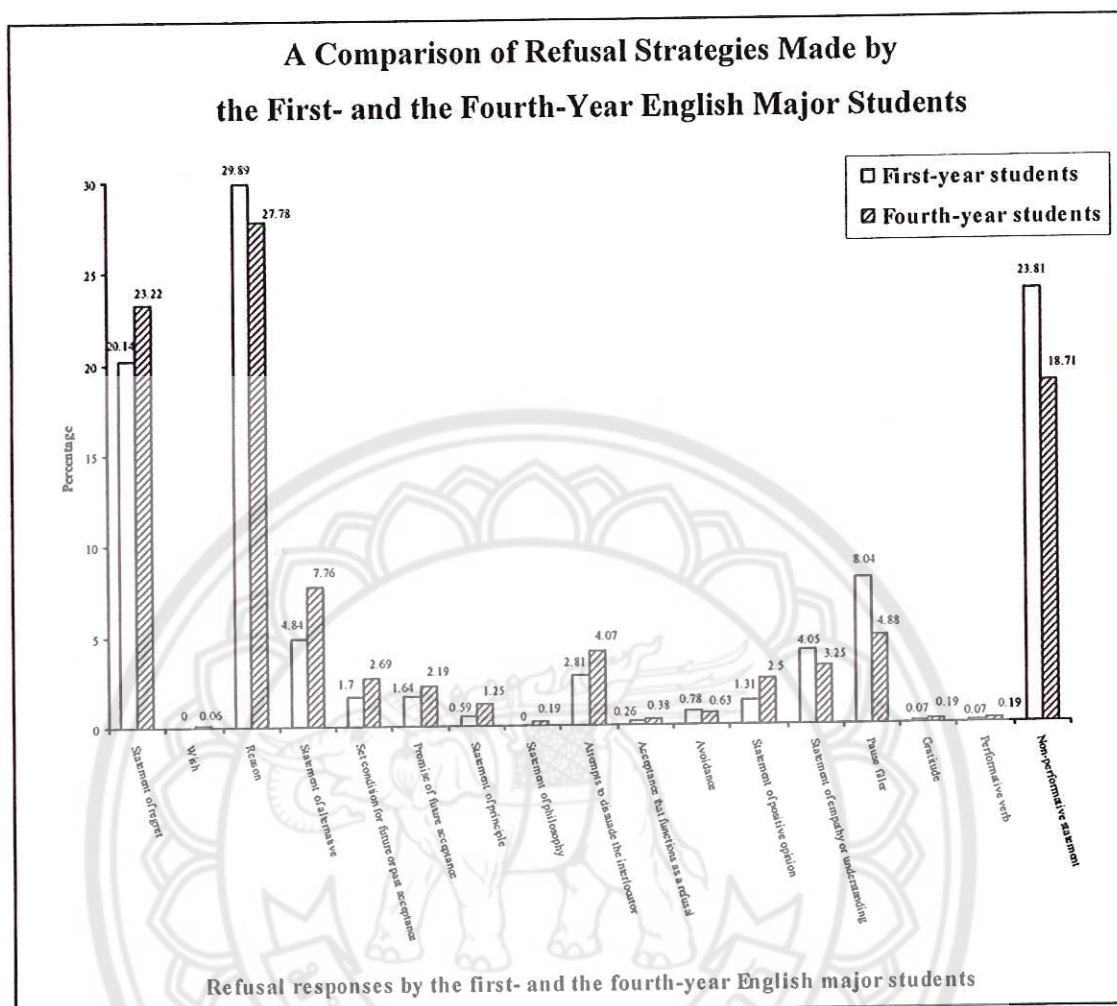
Figure 1 A Comparison of Refusal Strategies Made by the First- and the
Fourth-year English major students

Figure 1 shows that the first-year subjects used 5 refusal strategies more frequently than the fourth-year subjects. These include "reason", "avoidance", statement of empathy or understanding", "pause filler", and "non-performative statement". Moreover, it reveals that the fourth-year subjects employed 12 refusal strategies more frequently than the first-year subjects. These are "statement of regret", "wish", "statement of alternative", "set condition for future or past acceptance", "promise of future acceptance", "statement of principle", statement of philosophy", "attempts to dissuade the interlocutor", "acceptance that function as a refusal", "statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement", "gratitude", and "performative statement".

Research Finding Two

In order to answer the second research question (Is there any significant difference between refusal strategies used by first year students and fourth year students, whose major is English?), the findings were divided into two parts. Part one reports the percentage and the characteristics of the two subject groups' responses in 17 refusal strategies. Part two describes the different and similar characteristics of each refusal strategy made by the two subject groups.

Part I: The percentage and the characteristic of the two subject groups' responses in 17 refusal strategies

In this part, the percentage in refusing the requests of the first-year subjects was compared with those of the fourth-year subjects by using Chi-square tests. The statistic results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4 The Comparison of Differences in Refusing the Requests Performed by the First- and the Fourth-Year English Major Students

Refusal Strategies	1st-Year Students (%)	4th-Year Students (%)	χ^2	p-value
1 Non-performative statement	100	100	-	-
2 Reason	98	100	1.010	0.315
3 Statement of regret	98	98	0.000	1.000
4 Pause filler	82	64	4.110	0.043**
5 Statement of alternative	66	86	5.482	0.019**
6 Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor	50	70	0.047	0.041**
7 Statement of empathy or understanding	48	60	1.449	0.229
8 Set condition for future or past acceptance	28	52	6.000	0.014**
9 Statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement	28	48	4.244	0.039**
10 Promise of future acceptance	28	44	2.778	0.096
11 Avoidance	22	20	0.060	0.806

Table 4 (Cont.)

Refusal Strategies	1st-Year Students (%)	4th-Year Students (%)	χ^2	p-value
12 Statement of principle	16	40	3.175	0.008*
13 Acceptance that functions as a refusal	8	10	0.122	0.727
14 Gratitude	2	6	1.042	0.307
15 Performative verb	2	6	1.042	0.307
16 Statement of philosophy	0	6	3.093	0.079
17 Wish	0	2	1.010	0.315
Total	100	100	19.549	0.007*

Note: The differences between the frequencies of strategies made by both subject groups that are statistically significant at the level of 0.05 and 0.01 were presented with ** and *, respectively.

Table 4 reveals similarities and differences between the two groups. In general, the use of all strategies by the first-year subjects was statistically different from that by the fourth-year subjects ($\chi^2 = 19.549$, $p < 0.01$). In response to differences in each strategy used, the results showed that there is a significant difference in 6 of 17 refusal strategies. They are "pause filler" ($\chi^2 = 4.110$, $p < 0.05$), "statement of alternative" ($\chi^2 = 5.482$, $p < 0.05$), "attempt to dissuade the interlocutor" ($\chi^2 = 0.047$, $p < 0.05$), "set condition for future or past acceptance" ($\chi^2 = 6.000$, $p < 0.05$), "statement of positive opinion/feelings or agreement" ($\chi^2 = 4.244$, $p < 0.05$) and "statement of principle" ($\chi^2 = 3.175$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, in an overall picture, it shows that there is no significant difference in 11 of those strategies performed by the two subject groups. They are "non-performative statement", "reason", "statement of regret", "statement of empathy or understanding", "promise of future acceptance", "avoidance", "acceptance that functions as a refusal", "gratitude", "performative verb", "statement of philosophy" and "wish".

Part II: The different and similar characteristics of each refusal strategy made by the two subject groups

In the previous part, the analysis indicated that the first-year subject group used six refusal strategies differently from the fourth-year subject group. Moreover, it was shown that the first-year group used eleven refusal strategies similar to those used by the fourth-year group.

This part illustrated examples of differences in structure and/or order of each refusal strategy as described below. These examples were selected from the unedited responses of the two subject groups and presented using the following symbols.

1ˢᵗE = an example taken from the first-year English major subjects' responses

4ᵗʰE = an example taken from the fourth-year English major subjects' responses

Differences in Using Refusal Strategies

1. Statement of alternative (FS4)

As shown in Table 4, it was found that 66% of the first-year group used "statement of alternative" in making refusal speech acts which was less than the fourth-year group (86%). This data led to the difference of using this refusal strategy between the two groups at the significance level of 0.05.

According to the finding, the reason that 86% of the fourth-year group preferred to use the indirect refusal strategy may be because it provided a way to avoid a direct argument between the interlocutor and the refuser. This point could be divided into three sub-types, namely, statement of alternative by setting condition, statement of alternative by changing the time, and statement of alternative by suggesting another way as shown in the examples written in bold letters below:

1.1 Statement of alternative by setting condition

Ex. (1)   Oh! I have to read it too. I can't give it to you but **we can read it together.** (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (2)   I'm sorry. I can't give my notes to you but **you can copy it now.** (4ᵗʰE)

In refusing a friend's request to borrow lecture notes, example (1) shows the use of statement of alternative by setting condition of the first-year subject. Similarly, example (2) presents statement of alternative by setting condition of the fourth-year subject. In these cases, the subjects mitigated the refusals by setting the condition that they might be able to help.

1.2 Statement of alternative by changing the time

Ex. (3)   Oh teacher! I can't finish homework in time. **Can I send a homework after your conference.** (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (4)   Sorry boss. I have an important thing to do tonight but **we can finish this work tomorrow.** (4ᵗʰE)

In the first-year subject's refusal to his/her teacher's request to turn in homework earlier than scheduled, example (3) shows the use of statement of alternative by changing the time. This was the way the subject provided an alternative by asking his/her teacher to reconsider his/her request at another time. In example (4), the fourth-year subject used statement of alternative by changing the time instead of complying with his/her boss's request at that time.

1.3 Statement of alternative by suggesting another way

Ex. (5)   I can't to give a dress but **I can go with you to buy a new dress.** (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (6)   I can't help you to move your things because I have an important meeting with my teacher but **you can call the truck service to help you.** (4ᵗʰE)

In example (5), the first-year subject used statement of alternative by suggesting another way for maintaining a good relationship. In example (6), the fourth-year subject referred to a third person while performing statement of alternative by suggesting another way.

In terms of the sequence of refusal, all the above examples showed that statement of alternative usually occurred in the final position.

2. Set condition for future or past acceptance (FS5)

In Table 4, 28% of the first-year group employed "Set condition for future or past acceptance" in making refusal speech acts which was less frequent than the

fourth-year group (52%). According to the Chi-square results, there was a significant difference in using this strategy between both groups at the 0.05 level of significance.

The low percentage used by the first-year group might be because they had limited English language ability. In other words, they might be worried about expressing correct grammar while refusing in the English language more often than the fourth-year group. As Promsrimas (2000) and Mumsam (2009) found in their studies that there was a refusal strategies as set conditions for future or past acceptance in Thai language. This finding concurred with the previous studies (Sairhun, 1999 and Mumsam, 2009) which found that Thais rejected using set conditions for future or past acceptance. See some examples below:

Ex. (7)   Sorry. I'm busy in tomorrow. **If I available I will translating an English complaint.** (1stE)

Ex. (8)   **If this is a first year, I would let you borrow it** but sorry. I need to read it for this final exam. (4thE)

In refusing a boss's request to translate an English complaint, as in example (7), the first-year subject employed statement of regret to express apology to his/her interlocutor followed by giving reason that he would be busy tomorrow and setting condition for future or past acceptance that he/she would translate the English complaint whenever he/she was available. In contrast, in example (8), the fourth-year subject refused his/her friend's request with set condition for future or past acceptance in the first step and provided 2 strategies: statement of regret and reason. This finding was different from the study conducted by Thammo (2005) which found that set condition for future or past acceptance usually occurred in the final position. Since this strategy could occurred in the initial and final positions as shown in examples (7) and (8), this finding was in accordance with Mumsam's (2009) finding, stating that set condition for future or past acceptance could occur in many positions.

3. Statement of principle (FS7)

With regard to the use of "statement of principle" in the refusal speech acts of the first- and the fourth-year groups, the data showed that 16% of the first-year group used this strategy less often than the fourth-year group (40%). Thus, this data revealed a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level.

In response to a student's request to postpone a midterm test, this strategy could be used to soften the effect of the refusal as shown in example (9) below:

Ex. (9)   I think I can't. I know you want to take care your brother but I can't postpone the midterm exam because **it is the law of college**. (1st E)

In example (9), the first-year subject employed this strategy by referring to the college's rule.

In another example, the fourth-year subject used this strategy in refusing his/her student's request to ask for a key to get inside a classroom by referring to the school's rule as in the example shown below:

Ex. (10)   I'm sorry. I have to go home now. **The school doesn't allow anyone to get inside the classroom this time** but I'll open it for you tomorrow. (4th E)

The low percentage used by the two groups was in accordance with the findings from several studies that found that non-native speakers such as the Chinese (Chen et al., 1995), the Japanese (Beebe et al., 1990), the Arabic (Nelso, et al., 2002) and the Thais (Thammo, 2005; Mumsam, 2009) rarely used this strategy while making refusals.

4. Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor (FS9)

In Table 4, the first-year group used "attempt to dissuade the interlocutor" at a lower frequency than the fourth-year group. This data led to the comparison of using this strategy because there was a significant difference at the 0.05 level.

"Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor" was used in order to persuade the interlocutor to stop an action plan. On this point, there were four sub-types of this strategy, such as, making the interlocutor feel guilty, criticizing the interlocutor, letting the interlocutor off the hook, and using statement of self-defense, as described below:

4.1 Making the interlocutor feel guilty

Ex. (11)   Hmm. No. **It is your mistake.** (1st E)

Ex. (12)   I have to say sorry. I can't lend you my notes. **I want you to know that missing class gives you problem.** (4th E)

In refusing a friend's request to borrow lecture notes as in example (11), the first-year subject employed pause filler followed by non-performative statement and attempt to dissuade the interlocutor by making the interlocutor feel guilty. In the same request shown in example (12), the fourth-year subject began

his/her refusal with statement of regret followed by non-performative statement and attempt to dissuade the interlocutor by making the interlocutor feel guilty.

4.2 Criticizing the interlocutor

This strategy was used to criticize the interlocutor and/or to perform a statement of negative feeling/opinion. Although it was indicated that this strategy was rarely used among Thais (Mumsam, 2009), this study found that both subject groups employed this strategy in refusing the requests as shown in the examples below:

Ex. (13) **I think it's not well**. I can't. (1st E)

Ex. (14) Hmm, **I think it's not a good idea. Your body size is larger than me**. (4th E)

In example (13), the first-year subject criticized her roommate who requested to borrow a dress for a wedding and finished her refusal with non-performative statement. In the same request, the fourth-year subject in example (14) began her refusal with pause filler followed by criticizing the interlocutor and finished her refusal with criticizing the interlocutor again. Since criticizing the interlocutor could occur in many positions as shown in examples (13) and (14), this finding was different from the finding of Mumsam's (2009) study that found that criticizing the interlocutor usually occurred in the initial positions.

4.3 Letting the interlocutor off the hook

This strategy was used in order to let the interlocutor know that the refuser care about his/her interlocutor's feeling as shown in the examples below:

Ex. (15) No. I will do finish homework. **You don't worry**. (1st E)

Ex. (16) I'm sorry. I've to go now but I'll come earlier in tomorrow morning and find your wallet. **Don't worry**. (4th E)

Examples (15) and (16) showed that letting the interlocutor off the hook occurred in the final position. This finding was not in line with the finding of Mumsam (2009) who found that this strategy usually occurred in the initial position

4.4 Using statement of self-defense

This sub-type was rarely used by the first- and the fourth-year subject groups. Promsrimas (2000) and Mumsam (2009) mentioned that this strategy mostly occurred in refusing an offer. However, this study found only one example of using this strategy of the fourth-year subject as shown below:

Ex. (17)   I don't have enough money. **All I can do is giving you only $50**. I'm sorry. (4thE)

In example (17), the fourth-year subject refused his/her younger sister's request to borrow money. This showed that he/she was not willing to comply with the interlocutor's need.

5. Statement of positive opinion/feelings or agreement (FS12)

The data in Table 4 shows that 28% of the first-year group made "statement of positive opinion/feelings or agreement" in making refusal speech acts which was less often than the fourth-year group (48%). Thus, it was indicated that the use of statement of positive opinion/feelings or agreement between the two groups was significantly different at the 0.05 level. Here are some examples:

Ex. (18)   **I want to give you** but I have many things to pay. (1stE)

Ex. (19)   **I would love to help you**, but I have a lot of things to do. I'm really sorry. (4thE)

In refusing a younger sister's request to borrow money, in example (18), the first-year subject began his/her refusal with statement of positive opinion/ feelings or agreement to let the interlocutor feel good and followed by giving reason. Similarly, in example (19), the fourth-year subject used this strategy followed by giving reason and statement of regret in refusing his/her friend's request to move to another town. That is to say, this strategy often occurred in the initial position. This finding concurred with the findings of Sairhun (1999) and Mumsam (2009) which found that this strategy often occurred in the initial position and was used with reason.

6. Pause filler (FS14)

Table 4 shows the difference in "pause filler" performed between the subjects in both groups. The data showed that the first-year subject group (82%) employed more pause filler than the fourth-year subject group (64%) did. Therefore, this data revealed a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level.

The reason why both subject groups preferred to use this strategy may be because it was a way to buy time to think about other strategies which could support their refusals and reduce the interlocutor's loss of face. Here are some examples:

Ex. (20)   **Oh!** I'm sorry. I can't postpone your midterm exam. (1stE)

Ex. (21)   **Ah...** Sorry (4thE)

In example (20), the first-year subject used the interjection "**Oh**" to buy time and statement of regret to reduce the threatening effect of the refusal before ending the refusal with giving reason to reject his/her student's request to postpone a midterm test. Likewise, the fourth-year subject began his/her refusal with "**Ah**" and tried to provide statement of regret to refuse his/her student's request to ask for a key to get inside a classroom.

Similarities of Using Refusal Strategies

    1. Statement of regret (FS1)

Table 4 presents a similar percentage between the subjects in both groups in that 98% of each group employed "statement of regret" to make refusals. Thus, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy.

According to the finding, the formulaic expression "I'm sorry" was found in both subject groups. It was also found that statement of regret was used in combination with other strategies and typically occurred in many positions of a refusal as shown in the examples below:

    Ex. (22)   **Sorry**. I have many other thing to do. (1^{st}E)

    Ex. (23)   Tomorrow I have business must to do. **I'm sorry**. (1^{st}E)

    Ex. (24)   **I have to apologize for that sir**. I cannot hand in the homework earlier because my other subject has too much homework too. **Sorry**. (4^{th}E)

    Ex. (25)   This weekend I have an important exam. **I'm sorry dude**. (4^{th}E)

In example (22), statement of regret occurred in the initial position while it occurred in the final position in example (23). However, in example (24), "**I have to apologize for that sir**" and "**Sorry**" occurred in both the initial and final positions. Moreover, it could be used with other strategies, such as reason (in examples (22), (23), (24), and (25)) and non-performative statement (in example (24)). Additionally, it could occurred with a pause filler such as "Oh"/ "Um"/ "Well"/ "Ah" as shown in the following examples:

    Ex. (26)   **Oh! Sorry sis**. I have only $300 in my account. ($1^{st}$E)

    Ex. (27)   **Um**... I cannot allow you to join the party. **I'm so sorry**. (4^{th}E)

In example (26), the first-year subject began the refusal with the pause filler "**Oh!**" to show uncertainty in making refusal and placed the reason why he/she could not let his/her younger sister borrow money at the end of the refusal. In example (27), statement of regret was placed at the end of the refusal after the pause filler "**Um**" and non-performative statement. This finding was in line with the finding of Mumsam (2009) in that statement of regret always occurred with reason and in many positions.

2. Wish (FS2)

The data from Table 4 indicated that none of the first-year group employed "wish" in making refusal speech acts. It also indicated that "wish" was rarely used by the fourth-year group in which it was employed at the rate of 0.06%. As a result, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy.

This study found only two examples of using this strategy by the fourth-year subjects as shown below:

Ex. (28) **I wish I could do so**, but it is my time to relax. (4thE)

Ex. (29) **I wish I could stay**, but I have to go now. Sorry sir. (4thE)

In examples (28) and (29), this strategy was placed in the initial position. In example (28), the fourth-year subject tried to soften the effect of the refusal by using wish and adding reason to support the refusal at the end. Apart from adding reason, in example (29), the fourth-year subject provided statement of regret at the end of the refusal to acknowledge the interlocutor's feeling.

3. Reason (FS3)

According to Table 4, the use of "Reason" by the first- and the fourth-year groups had no significant difference. This meant that the two groups had similarities in using this strategy.

"Reason" was the indirect refusal strategy that provided a way to avoid hurting the interlocutor or making the interlocutor lose face. According to the finding, this strategy could be divided into four sub-types such as using unspecific reasons, using specific reasons, referring to a third person and using weak specific reasons as shown in the following examples:

3.1 Using unspecific reasons

Ex. (30)   I can't because **I've to go now.** (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (31)   I'm sorry boss, **tomorrow I'm very busy.** (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (32)   **This evening I have an important appointment.** Can we do it tomorrow? (4ᵗʰE)

Ex. (33)   **I have an appointment tomorrow.** I think I can't help you. Sorry! (4ᵗʰE)

The above examples show that an unspecific reason was used in combination with other strategies such as statement of regret, statement of alternative and non-performative statement. In response to a boss's request to spend an extra hour to finish up work, in example (30), the first-year subject began the refusal with non-performative statement followed by an unspecific reason while, in example (32), the fourth-year subject employed an unspecific reason followed by statement of alternative. In example (31), the first-year subject refused his/her boss's request to translate an English complaint with statement of regret followed by an unspecific reason while, in example (33), the fourth-year subject employed an unspecific reason followed by non-performative statement and statement of regret.

3.2 Using specific reasons

Ex. (34)   No, **I will use the note for the exam.** Sorry friend. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (35)   Sorry. I can't lend my dress to you because **I have to use it for** the wedding. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (36)   I'm sorry. **I've to drive it for my work this evening too.** (4ᵗʰE)

Ex. (37)   I can't give my money to you because **I have to save it for my next semester's tuition.** (4ᵗʰE)

From the examples given above, a specific reason often co-occurred with other strategies such as statement of regret and non-performative statement. It also appeared either in the middle or final position of a refusal. In response to a boss's request to spend an extra hour to finish up work, in example (34), the first-year subject began the refusal with non-performative statement followed by a specific reason and statement of regret. In another request (a roommate's request to borrow a dress for a wedding), in example (35), the first-year subject employed statement of regret

followed by non-performative statement and a specific reason while, in example (36), the fourth-year subject used statement of regret followed by a specific reason. In example (37), the fourth-year subject employed non-performative statement followed by a specific reason in response to his/her younger sister's request to borrow money.

3.3 Referring to a third person

Ex. (38)   **This weekend I have to go to big travel with my father**. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (39)   No, because **I've to use my car to visit my grandfather at the hospital**. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (40)   I'm so sorry sir. **I have to pick up my son at school in 15 minutes**. (4ᵗʰE)

Ex. (41)   I'm really sorry boss. **My wife is waiting for me**. (4ᵗʰE)

In examples (38), (39), (40) and (41), the subjects sometimes referred to a third person such as father, grandfather, son, or wife while making a refusal.

3.4 Using weak reasons

Ex. (42)   Sorry. **I'm so tired**. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (43)   I'm sorry boss. **I've to deal with some housework**. (4ᵗʰE)

Moreover, as shown in examples (42) and (43), the two groups tended to refer to a reason that was not strong enough to support the refusal. This characteristic was previously found in Thai student's refusals in the studies of Sairhun (1999) and Mumsam (2009).

4. Promise of future acceptance (FS6)

As shown in Table 4, the first-year group (28%) used "promise of future acceptance" at lower frequency than the fourth-year group (44%). This data led to the comparison of using this strategy. However, there was no significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance.

According to the finding, 44% of the fourth-year subjects preferred to use this strategy may be because it helped to soften the effect of the refusal by giving promise to comply with the interlocutor's request in the future as shown in the examples below:

Ex. (44)   I'm really sorry. I have important exam coming up. But **I'll help you when I finish exam already**. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (45)   Sorry teacher, I'm very busy right now. **I will help you next time**. (4^{th}E)

The reason why both subject groups avoided using this strategy may be because of Thai culture. That is, Thais really care about the interlocutor's face and feelings (Mumsam, 2009). In other words, they feel anxious about the time they promised because if they broke that promise, it might lead to a bad relationship.

In examples (44) and (45), this strategy was placed in the final position of the sequence of refusal while other strategies were exchangeable. This finding supported the findings of Thammo (2005) and Mumsam (2009) in that this strategy was usually placed at the end of the refusal.

5. Statement of philosophy (FS8)

As for the use of "statement of philosophy", table 3 shows that all the first-year group did not use this strategy in making refusals. It also indicated that this strategy was rarely used by the fourth-year group in which it was employed at the rate of 0.19%. According to a Chi-square statistic, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy. This study found only three examples of using this strategy of the fourth-year subjects as shown below:

Ex. (46)   I'm sorry. **Everyone has to depend on themselves**. (4^{th}E)

Ex. (47)   So sorry teacher. I haven't finished it yet. **Good work needs time**. Is it possible to send it after your conference? (4^{th}E)

Ex. (48)   **Tomorrow still comes**, please be back tomorrow. (4^{th}E)

As shown in the above examples, it seemed that this strategy had a similar characteristic to reason (FS3) and statement of principle (FS7) in which the content in this strategy referred to the philosophy as ideas and beliefs about the meaning of life.

In example (46), the fourth-year subjects used **"Everyone has to depend on themselves"** in order to refuse his/her friend's request to borrow lecture notes. In the same way as shown in example (47), the fourth-year subjects performed **"Good work needs time"** to reject his/her instructor's request to turn in homework earlier than scheduled. In example (48), refusing a student's request to ask for a key to get inside a classroom, the fourth-year subjects employed **"Tomorrow still comes"** to mitigate the refusal and comfort the student who was worried about his/her wallet.

He/She referred to the natural world and offered another alternative for the student, saying that he/she could come tomorrow.

6. Acceptance that functions as a refusal (FS10)

The data from Table 4 revealed that 8% of the first-year group and 10% of the fourth-year group performed "acceptance that functions as a refusal" in making refusals. According to the data, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy. In addition, two sub-types of this strategy were found as follows:

6.1 Using unspecific or indefinite replies

This strategy was used to soften the effect of the refusal as well as acknowledge the interlocutor's face and feeling. See the examples below:

Ex. (49) **I'm not sure** because I haven't finished it yet. (1^{st}E)

Ex. (50) **I'm not sure**. Could you postpone handing in the homework scheduled? (4^{th}E)

In examples (49) and (50), both subjects tried to beat around the bush by using the indefinite replies followed by other strategies in refusing their instructors' request to turn in homework earlier than schedule. This finding was in line with Mumsam's (2009) study in that this strategy used by Thai students often occurred with other strategies such as reason or statement of alternative.

6.2 Using lack of enthusiasm

This strategy was employed to evade compliance as in the example shown below:

Ex. (51) **So what?** I want to send my homework on time that depends on my schedule! (4^{th}E)

The example (51) above was the only one example found in all the completed questionnaires. In this example, the fourth-year subject refused his/her instructor's request to turn in homework earlier than schedule by beginning the refusal with lack of enthusiasm and provided other refusal strategies. This showed that he/she was not willing to comply with the interlocutor's need immediately.

7. Avoidance (FS11)

With regard to the use of "avoidance" in the refusal speech acts of the first- and the fourth-year groups, the data showed no statistical difference between the two groups in their use of this strategy. Moreover, the analysis indicated four sub-types of this strategy: topic switching, repetition, postponement, and hedging, as shown below:

7.1 Topic switching

Ex. (52)   Tomorrow I must test exam. **Good luck and happy with your new town**. I always visit you. (1stE)

Ex. (53)   Oh! I have to use my car tonight. **Say hi to your family for me too**. (4thE)

In examples (52) and (53), both subjects tried to shift the interlocutors' request by changing the topic of their conversation as well as plan of action.

7.2 Repetition

Ex. (54)   **My car?** It's crushing and now I'd to repair it. (1stE)

Ex. (55)   **Translate English complaint letter?** I'll do it for you on my workdays. (4thE)

In the above examples ((54) and (55)), both subjects repeated and/or restated part of the act on the interlocutors' request to confirm the interlocutors' need.

7.3 Postponement

Ex. (56)   Ah! Boss, I'm sorry tonight I have to go out with my family. **I will think about your request**. (1stE)

Ex. (57)   **Not this week**, sorry. (4thE)

In example (56), the first-year subject performed neither an acceptance nor a refusal, but asked to accept or refuse later. Similarly, in example (57), the fourth-year subject employed **"Not this week"** to ask for a postponement.

7.4 Hedging

Only one fourth-year subject provided this strategy to rid himself/herself of the requirement to the interlocutor as in the example shown below:

Ex. (58)   **I can't guarantee** but I will try. (4thE)

In response to a teacher's request to turn in homework earlier than scheduled, in example (58), the fourth-year subject began the refusal with hedging to avoid complying with the teacher's request.

8. Statement of empathy or understanding (FS13)

As shown in Table 4, the use of "statement of empathy or understanding" by the first- and the fourth-year groups had no significant difference. Both subject groups avoided confrontation by asking for understanding and/or empathy from the interlocutor as shown in the following examples.

Ex. (59)   **I know** but I have to take it go back work. (1stE)

Ex. (60)   I can't do it. I have exam tomorrow. **I hope you understand me**. (1stE)

Ex. (61)   Oh **I see** but my friend has borrowed it. You should borrow other member. (4thE)

Ex. (62)   I can't postpone the midterm exam. **Hope you understand**. (4thE)

In response to the sequence of the refusal, this strategy was placed in all positions. It was placed not only in the initial position (in example (59)) but also the middle position (in example (61)) and the final position (in examples (60) and (62)). This finding was in accordance with the studies of Thammo (2005) and Mumsam (2009).

9. Gratitude (FS15)

From Table 4, "gratitude" was rarely used among the first- and the fourth-year groups wherein the strategy was employed at rates of 0.07% and 0.19%, respectively. Thus, it was indicated that there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy. The examples of using this strategy are shown below:

Ex. (63)   **I appreciate that**, but let us finish this meeting first. You can clear about this before leaving. (4thE)

Ex. (64)   **Thank**, but today I'm going to have dinner with my family. I can't do it. (4thE)

In refusing his/her boss's request to spend an extra hour finishing up work, the fourth-year subjects in examples (64) and (65) used **"I appreciate that"** and **"Thank"** to make their interlocutors feel good before providing other strategies.

Ex. (65)   Oh! **That so kind of you** but I'm so tired and also have many works to clear. Sorry boss. (4ᵗʰE)

However, in example (65), the fourth-year subjects began the refusal with pause filler **"Oh!"** followed by gratitude **"That so kind of you."** After that, he/she placed reason stating that he/she was so tired and also had many assignments to do before expressing statement of regret at the end of the refusals. This showed that gratitude could occur in the initial and final position of the refusal sequence.

This study found only one example of using gratitude of the **first-year** subjects as shown below:

Ex. (66)   **Thank you for your invite**. But today I think I'm sick. (1ˢᵗE)

In example (66), the first-year subject used **"Thank you for your invite"** and gave a reason by saying that he/she was sick in refusing his/her boss's request to spend an extra hour finishing up work. Although he/she expressed **"Thank you"** categorized as gratitude, his/her response seems to not make sense in this context. Since he/she stated **"for your invite"** after expressing **"Thank you"**, it seems that he/she was responding to an invitation, not to a request. Having limited English knowledge may be one possible reason why he/she misinterpreted this situation (Al-Falasi, 2007). This may lead to a communication breakdown because the native speaker will probably misunderstand the use of a response like this (Felix – Brasdefer, 2003).

10. Performative verb (FS16)

Similar to the use of "gratitude", the data from Table 4 showed that "performative verb" was rarely used among the first- and the fourth-year groups in which the strategy was employed at rates of 0.07% and 0.19%, respectively. According to a Chi-square result, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy.

This strategy is a direct refusal strategy. It was used to express unwillingness and/or inability to comply with the interlocutor's request. Since Thai students are familiar with the expression "no" or "not", only one example of employing this strategy by the first-year subject was found. Here is the example.

Ex. (67) I'm tired through day. **I refuse this work**. (1stE)

Moreover, only two examples of using this strategy by two fourth-year subjects were found in this study as shown in examples (68) and (69) below:

Ex. (68) Amy, I think it's not fair to others, I'm so sorry **to deny you.** (4thE)

Ex. (69) **I have to refuse your request**. I'm sorry teacher. I have an important thing to do after this. (4thE)

From the examples given above, performative verb could be placed in the initial and final position of the refusal sequence.

11. Non-performative statement (FS17)

Table 4 presented a similar percentage between the first- and the fourth-year groups in that 100% of each group employed "non-performative statement" to make refusals. According to the statistic result, there was no significant difference between the two groups in using this strategy.

Apart from the previous strategy (performative verb), this strategy was the other direct refusal strategy. In this strategy, negation lexical items such as "no" or "not" were used immediately or after statement of regret to reject the interlocutor's need. Here are some examples.

Ex. (70) **No**, sorry. (1stE)

Ex. (71) Sorry, **I'm not finish my homework**. (1stE)

Ex. (72) **No**, I'm very rushing. You can get it tomorrow. (4thE)

Ex. (73) I'm sorry. **I'm not free too**. In fact, I'd like to help you but my test is so important more than others. (4thE)

In examples (70) and (72), the first- and the fourth-year subjects used **"no"** to deny his/her interlocutors' request directly. Moreover, as shown in the above examples, non-performative statements usually occurred with statements of regret to soften the previous and/or subsequent direct refusal.

Furthermore, other negation lexical items such as "I don't" and "I can't" were also used to perform non-performative statement as shown in the examples below:

Ex. (74) **I don't give my car to you** because this dinner I've to go out with my parents. (1ˢᵗE)

Ex. (75) **I can't make it, professor**. I still have heaps of work to finish up from other subjects (4ᵗʰE)

In example (74), the first-year subject used "**I don't give my car to you**" to show a strong inability and "**I can't make it, professor**" in example (75) of the fourth-year subject showed that he/she did not have ability to turn in homework earlier than scheduled.

In terms of the position of the refusal sequence, it was found that the expression of non-performative statement could occur in every position; in the initial, middle, and final positions. This finding was not different from the study of Mumsam (2009).

To sum up, there was a significant difference at the 0.01 level between the two subject groups' uses of refusal strategies. This meant that the first- and the fourth-year subjects had differences in using refusal strategies in the request situations. It implies that the number of study years has an impact on the use of refusal strategies.