CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explained the information about the subjects, the construction of the research instrument, the collection of the data, and the analysis of the data in order to find differences in terms of cross-culture between Thai English major students of Udonthani Rajabhat University and American native speakers who lived in Washington D.C. in making refusals.

Subjects

The subjects in this study consisted of 2 groups. Both groups were selected by purposive sampling. The first group included fifty Thai students who were studying in the fourth year and majoring in English in the Faculty of Humanities at Udonthani Rajabhat University in the regular program. These students were chosen to be the subjects in this study because they were fourth year students who had to use their English language and knowledge about cross-culture during their professional training and possibly in their future career.

The second group included fifty American native speakers aged between 20-40 years who lived in Washington D.C. All of the American subjects were white American born and used the English language in communication. In addition, all of them had bachelors' degrees. The researcher requested assistance from Mrs. Doungta Haper who lived in Washington D.C. in gathering the responses from this target group.

Research Instrument

The DCT questionnaire

In this study, the data were collected using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). DCT is a "written questionnaire" (Kasper and Dahl, 1991, p. 221 as cited in Kwon, 2004). It is a short dialogue that usually begins with an opener followed by a blank indicating an unfinished dialogue. In the blank, the subjects were required to

provide a speech act to complete the dialogue. In this study, the speech act the respondents were required to write was refusal.

The DCT in this study was designed for 12 items because the researcher aimed to study refusals in requesting, although many studies have designed short questionnaires to find various data (Gass and Neo, 1995; Chen, 2007; Chen and Chen, 2007; Guodong and Jing, 2005)

To draft a good questionnaire, Carter (1972) suggested that the questionnaire be as short as possible. Some questionnaires containing insignificant questions that are irrelevant to the purpose of the study should be eliminated. In the same way, the DCT in this study was employed to find out refusal strategies used by Thai students and American people in request situations. Thus, 12 items covered the contents and the purpose of the study was clear and sufficient for seeking responses.

Development of the DCT Questionnaire

In the present study, the researcher employed the DCT which was a modified version of Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990; Liao and Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson, et al., 2002; Chen, 2007). A complete version of the DCT can be seen in Appendix A. The procedure of the development of the questionnaires was divided into 4 steps. In the first step, the researcher sent an e-mail to ask for permission to employ and adopt the DCT from Nelson, et al. and Liao and Bresnahan who later sent an e-mail reply with their permission. In the second step, the format of the DCT was changed slightly because the researcher had used only the content in request situations in the original DCT. In the 12 request situations, there were different statuses of the requesters in order to determine the realistic and natural situations that may be faced in daily life. However, status was not a factor for analyzing data in this study. The researcher maximized the details of the instructions for the DCT to decrease problems of misinterpretation in answering the questions. In addition, the researcher specified "You refuse by saying…" in the answer section in order to make the subjects aware that they had to make a refusal. Then, the questionnaire was reviewed and assessed by the advisor. Next, the content validity and reliability of the questionnaire were checked and assessed by a native speaker and two language experts who were lecturers at

Naresuan University. Finally, the researcher tried out the implementation of the questionnaire in a pilot study.

Structure of the DCT questionnaire

The DCT questionnaire was divided into 2 parts:

Part I comprised instructions and explanations as to how to respond to the questions. Part II consisted of 12 items that demanded a refusal. Each item included a short dialogue which was preceded by a short description of a situation and an incomplete dialogue. The respondents had to make refusals after "You will refuse by saying:" the 12 items were related to everyday occurrences expected to be familiar to the American and Thai subjects. The 12 request situations for which the subjects had to make refusals are described as follows:

1. A worker's request for a raise
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
9. A younger sister's request to borrow money
10. A friend's request to borrow a car
11. A roommate's request to borrow a dress for a wedding
12. A student's request to ask for a key to get inside a classroom
13. A boss's request to translate an English complaint

Pilot Study

To check the reliability and evaluate the suitability of the content of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was piloted with two groups. The first group comprised 22 fourth-year English major students at the Faculty of Humanities at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, who studied in the evening program. The second group included 5 American native speakers of English in the U.S.A. In the first group, the researcher selected the students because they had taken courses similar to the

students studying at Rajabhat Udonthani University. The students at Naresuan University had studied Conversation (205331) which focused on interactions with native speakers in daily life and specific situations. In addition, the courses were related to the difference between Thai and western cultures. The content and reliability from the pilot study was used for improving the questionnaire.

Data Collection

After the DCT questionnaire had been checked for content validity and approved by the thesis committee, it was employed with the target group. In the first step, the researcher asked permission to collect data from Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Udonthani Rajabhat University. Then, the questionnaires were administered to 50 Thai subjects in class by the researcher. The researcher explained the instructions for the questionnaires and answered questions raised by the students.

To collect the data on the American subjects, the questionnaires were distributed through Miss Harper Doungta who had lived in the U.S.A. for more than 15 years. She distributed the questionnaires to 50 American subjects who were 20-40 years old and had bachelor's degrees. After, the questionnaires were completed, she sent them back to the researcher in a package by mail.

Data Organization

In this section, the data from the completed questionnaires of the Thai and American subjects were organized in the same process in that all data from the refusals to the request situations were classified into 17 categories of refusal strategies based on Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). (See Chapter 2). Below is a sample of parsing the data into the categories of refusal strategies.

A: How about coming over for a dinner Saturday night? We're having a small dinner party.

B: Sorry, I would like to, but I have made other plans.

In the situation where the respondents had to refuse a friend's invitation to join in a dinner party, a response such as "Sorry, I would like to, but I have made other plans," was analyzed into 3 units, each falling into the taxonomy of refusals based on Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). Thus, this statement was divided into 3 strategies and these strategies fell into the indirect refusal type, as demonstrated below.

"Sorry, I would like to, but I made other plans.

Sorry = Statement of regret.

I would like to = Wish

But I have made other plans = Reason

Indirect refusal
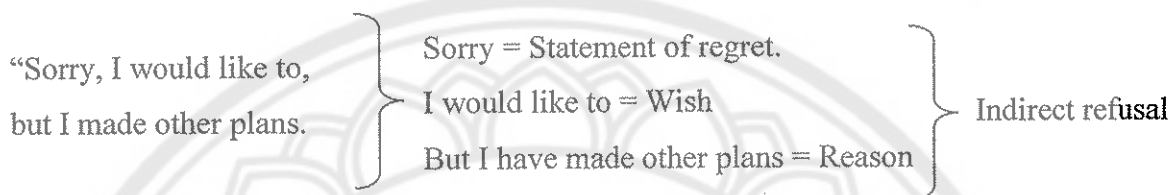
To understand this process, a sample of coding refusal data into refusal strategies was shown in Appendix B. In the same way, lists of Thai and American subjects' frequencies in using refusal strategies was shown in Appendices C and D.

Reliability and Validity of Coding

In coding the data, it becomes necessary to have two native speakers of American English classify the responses and check classification codes. Mr. Miller and Mr. Jerry, both adult native speakers of American English with bachelors' degrees, were willing to be the coders together with the researcher in this study. In this way, the validity of the coding was verified.

In comparing the two groups, the "Units of analysis need to be non-overlapping" (Ryan and Bernard, 2000. p.780 as cited in Nelson, et al., 2002) i.e. each unit of analysis belongs to only one category. Thus, when there were disagreements in some items, the coders reviewed the coding guidelines and recorded the data until they came to a consensus. However, if the agreement of any item was still in dissent, the researcher had to cooperate with the advisor to finalize the coding of the items. (See a sample of checking the agreement of three coders in refusal strategies performed by American and Thai subjects in Appendix E)

Data Analysis and Statistical Devices

After the data had been parsed into the classifications of refusal strategies, the researcher divided the data analysis in this study into 2 parts as follows:

1. Descriptive analysis of refusal strategies used by Thai and American subjects.

2. Pearson Chi-square analysis of the relationship of refusal strategies in request situations by Thai and American subjects.

1. Descriptive analysis of refusal strategies used by Thai and American subjects

In this section, the researcher and two native speakers analyzed the frequencies of refusal strategies by using the procedure of Sairhun (1999) and Promsrimas (2000). The researcher recorded "1" for each response to a question whether a subject responded with one or more refusal strategies wherein a score of "0" was assigned when the response did not show refusal strategies. Below is an example of this analysis:

Subject A: No, thanks, but I'm on a diet.

No = Non-performative Statement → Direct refusal

Thanks = Gratitude → Indirect refusal

But I'm on a diet = Reason → Indirect refusal

The frequency of the refusal strategies was 3.

Subject B: Sorry. I won't be able to give them to you.

Sorry = Statement of regret → Indirect refusal

I won't be able to give them to you = Non-performative → Direct refusal

The frequency of the refusal strategies was 2.

Subject C: Thank you for the offer, I love it.

There is no refusal strategy in this case. So, it is marked as "0", and it will not be counted as any refusal strategy.

To check the classification of the refusal taxonomy, the researcher analyzed this process for a total of three times, as did Coder 1 and Coder 2. When the frequencies of all data were analyzed, the researcher computed them into percentages.

2. Pearson Chi-square analysis of the differences between refusal strategies used by the Thai and American subjects.

According to Research Question 2, the researcher used Pearson Chi-square to test for any differences between the Thai and American subjects in using refusal strategies. Additionally, the researcher used Pearson Chi-square to examine whether or

not the Thai subjects used more indirect refusal strategies than American subjects. The alpha level was set at 0.05 and 0.01.