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Understanding Politeness Strategies: A Study of Tourist Police Service Encounters Through Discourse Approach

กลวิธีทางความสุภาพและระบบความสุภาพ ของตำรวจท่องเที่ยวไทย

Srowcha Rattanapian*

สโรชา รัตนเพียร

***** PhD candidate in English Language Studies, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract

This paper is a study to investigate politeness strategies and the politeness system of 10 Thai tourist police officers in service encounters with foreign tourists at two Tourist Report Centers in Thailand. A study is conducted to answer two research questions: 1) What are the politeness/ face strategies of Thai tourist police when they communicate with tourists at the Thai Tourist Center? 2) What is the politeness/face system utilized in the interactions between tourists and tourist police at the Thai Tourist Report Center? Discourse approach following Scollon, Scollon, and H. Jones (2012) is applied to study the encounters at both lexical and discursive levels. The study has found that the tourist police employed speech acts of directives and assertives the most frequently in the encounters. For face/politeness strategies, the participants employed a mix of bald-on-record, involvement politeness, and independence politeness strategies. Last but not least, the hierarchical face/politeness system is prevalent in the encounters as tourists are empowered by factors in the context including roles, responsibilities, physical setting, and physical appearance.

บ ท คั ด ย่ อ

      วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อมุ่งเน้นศึกษากลวิธีทางความสุภาพและ
ระบบความสุภาพของตำรวจท่องเที่ยวไทยในการให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ
ที่ศูนย์บริการนักท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทย ซึ่งประกอบไปด้วยคำถามในการวิจัย
ทั้งหมด 2 ข้อ ได้แก่ 1. ตำรวจท่องเที่ยวใช้กลวิธีทางความสุภาพใดเมื่อให้บริการ
นักท่องเที่ยวที่ศูนย์บริการนักท่องเที่ยว 2. ตำรวจท่องเที่ยวและนักท่องเที่ยวใช้
ระบบทางความสุภาพใดบ้างขณะให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยวที่มาแจ้งความ ณ ศูนย์
บริการนักท่องเที่ยว ผู้วิจัยเลือกใช้การวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมของตำรวจท่องเที่ยว
ไทยทั้งระดับคำศัพท์และระดับวาทกรรม เพื่อเข้าสู่การหาคำตอบในงานวิจัย จาก
การวิจัยพบว่าตำรวจท่องเที่ยวไทยใช้วัจนกรรมพูดสั่งและวัจนกรรมบอกกล่าวมาก
ที่สุดในการให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยว สำหรับกลวิธีในการให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยว ผู้เข้า
ร่วมวิจัยเลือกใช้การพูดตรง กลวิธีทางความสุภาพแบบการมีส่วนร่วมและแบบให้
ความเป็นอิสระ ผลการวิจัยจากภาษาในการให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยวยังสรุปได้ว่า
ตำรวจท่องเที่ยวไทยและนักท่องเที่ยวมีระบบความสุภาพแบบเป็นลำดับชั้นโดย
บทบาทหน้าที่ การแต่งกาย และบรรยากาศที่ตั้งศูนย์ให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยวเป็น
ปัจจัยที่ทำให้ตำรวจท่องเที่ยวมีอำนาจเหนือกว่านักท่องเที่ยว

คำสำคัญ: ตำรวจท่องเที่ยวไทย, ความสุภาพ, การสื่อสารต่างวัฒนธรรม, วาทกรรมศึกษา, การ
สื่อสารต่างวาทกรรม

Introduction

Politeness is one of the crucial topics in intercultural communication and interpersonal communication that draws attention in linguistics and sociolinguistic fields, and it has been studied vastly in both international arenas and in Thailand. Pan (2000) defines linguistic politeness as the use of language to address a speaker's needs to mitigate utterances that can pose a threat to a hearer's face. Corresponding to the explanation of politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1978), a speaker uses linguistic politeness to alleviate face threatening acts (FTA) of his/her speech acts and to make the hearer feel less imposed upon. Moreover, different scholars agree that politeness strategies are strongly relevant with different cultural values and people's expectations towards the question of what is polite. Thus, speakers and hearers with different cultural values could have different judgments of politeness behaviors and strategies. In other words, politeness is viewed as having close links with socially dependent aspects, namely, speaking context and interlocutors' values and beliefs.

As politeness cannot be understood without understanding the context, pinpointing that society-based setting is essential. In this paper, a study on politeness issues has been conducted on Thai tourist police in the setting of two Tourist Report Centers located on Rajadamneon Nok Road and at Suvarnnabhumi Airport where the researcher observed and studied the naturally speaking data of 10 Thai tourist police officers. Discourse approach introduced by Scollon et al. (2012) has been deployed in order to obtain natural data in the real interactions, as the researcher expects that the study could provide a fresh view of a politeness study in Thailand via discourse approach and contribute to the service improvement of the Thai tourist police division.

Research problems

Two interconnected research problems are explained in this section to justify why Thai tourist police officials' politeness behaviors occurring in service encounters should be explored. Two major issues involve 1) the lack of research into Thai tourist

police officials' politeness behaviors in intercultural service encounters and 2) a need to understand Thai tourist police officials' politeness behaviors.

Despite ongoing communication research on the Thai tourism industry, there is no study exploring politeness behaviors of Thai tourist police when they communicate with foreigners. The lack of research in this group of participants stresses a research gap that is valuable for intercultural communication study in Thailand. Politeness in service encounters between tourist police officials and tourists is significant and useful because the former have direct interactions with tourists from different cultures and social backgrounds. Additionally, given the fact that there is no research studying Thai participants' politeness via a discourse approach, this study can address politeness behaviors or strategies which participants naturally use in real life. Thus, the approach conducted here presents major study strength, whereas previous studies have explored politeness through research tools such as questionnaires or Data Elicitation Tools (DCT) to understand linguistic politeness strategies. Two studies in Thailand that employed questionnaires as a major research tool to study Thai tourist police officials in different aspects are discussed next. The first study is quantitative research that was conducted in Phuket province on tourists' level of satisfaction and communication problems with Thai service providers (Sodpiban 2002). It was found that even though foreigners have problems communicating verbally with Thais, they are satisfied with Thai politeness. The other

study of Tipmontree (2007) also employed questionnaires to investigate Thai tourist police officers' difficulties with English and intercultural communication skills. It was found that the research participants have problems with grammar and understanding foreigners' accents and they search for assistance from foreign volunteers during communication. Despite the fact that the two studies focus on Thai tourist police officials, neither successfully delivered naturally-occurring data produced by the participants in the settings.

The second research problem is an urgent need for researchers to study politeness behaviors of Thai tourist police in service encounters due to the continually increasing number of tourists visiting Thailand over the years. The influx of tourists could lead to Thailand becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. Being able to understand politeness phenomena of the tourist police would allow them to achieve one of the missions of Tourist Police Division to provide satisfactory services to tourists with politeness and friendliness. According to the Department of Tourism (2015), the number of tourists in Thailand tends to be increasing. In 2007, there was a report of 14.4 million tourists in Thailand and the number increased to 19.2 million in 2011, 21.7 million in 2013, and 24.8 million in 2014. Moreover, once Thailand becomes a part of ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015, it is highly probable that tourist police officials will be expected to provide more services to tourists in the near future. It is important for academic researchers to study their interactions, specifically their politeness behaviors in an

intercultural work setting. It is expected that the findings will be beneficial to inform the personnel of their own politeness behaviors in real-life practices.

Research questions

The research questions in this study are: 1) What are politeness/face strategies of the tourist police when they communicate with tourists at the Thai Tourist Report Center? 2) What is the politeness/face system utilized in the interactions between the tourist and the tourist police at Thai Tourist Report Centers?

Significance of the study

This section outlines contributions of the study to the body of intercultural communication and politeness research in Thailand and to actual practices of interdiscourse communication of Thai tourist police when they encounter foreigners who come to Tourist Report Centers.

In terms of the study contribution to politeness and intercultural communication research, this study can help researchers gain better understandings on politeness in service encounters between Thai tourist police and foreign counterparts. It is expected to shed light on politeness and intercultural communication research in the specific context of Thai Tourist Report Centers in which tourist police are the main participants. In a focused aspect, this study hopes to present useful findings on how participants express politeness strategies and what

type of politeness system they create. In a broader aspect, this study is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of pragmatics, specifically politeness, intercultural communication, and discourse studies. Researchers who are interested in a similar type of study can replicate it with the change of participants or contexts so that they could provide more comparative studies to the politeness and intercultural communication research in Thailand.

Regarding the significance of the study to a better practice of intercultural communication of Thai tourist police, the research is expected to illustrate evidence of politeness behaviors during service encounters between Thai tourist police and foreigners. Learning and understanding their own practices can lead to greater awareness of aspects that should be corrected and improved for successful communication with foreign interlocutors. Currently, Tourist Police Division provides one annual English course for tourist police; however, intercultural knowledge is not delivered in the course. Furthermore, there is no intercultural training designed for personnel in Tourist Police Division. Thus, this study can act as a preliminary, useful guideline to either develop the language course or design new training programs to help tourist police officials understand their own behaviors and improve communication when they interact with tourists.

Literature review

This section entails speech acts theory and two approaches

of politeness study because they are underlying theories employed in this study.

Speech acts theory

Speech acts is an important theory that underpins the notion that when people say something they are also doing something. It is through the study of pragmatics that we learn how language is performed and what is meant when people use it in the real world. The essential introduction to speech acts theory, as well as criticisms of the frameworks, is briefly explained here.

Austin (1962) begins the study of speech acts with the notion that utterances can be divided into two categories, which are 'performatives' and 'constatives'. The former represents the utterances which are used to perform action. The latter are the actions of just saying something. Also, he sets out distinctions among the characteristics of utterances, which are 1) 'locutions', 2) 'illocutions', and 3) 'perlocutions'. Locutionary acts are acts of speaking and speech building from the grammatical rules of a language. These acts are constatives as they involve only the acts of asserting and stating. Illocutionary acts are acts which are the results of spoken utterances. These acts are performatives and are different than locutionary acts. Perlocutionary acts are consequences of illocutionary acts, or acts of speaking. After uttering illocutionary acts, speeches affect speakers' or hearers' opinions, feelings, or actions.

Searle (1979) has put five classes of speech acts into a

taxonomy of illocutionary acts which include: 1) 'Assertives', which are used to commit the speaker to the truth of proposition. For example, asserting and claiming; 2) 'Directives', which are speech acts to show attempts by speakers to have the hearer do something. For instance, asking, requesting, ordering, begging, inviting, commanding, and advising; 3) 'Commissives', which are those used to commit speakers to future actions, such as promise; 4) 'Expressives', which are illocutionary acts used to express psychological state in the sincerity condition, namely, thanking, apologizing, and welcoming; and 5) 'Declarations', which are speech acts that bring successful performance in reality, such as declaring and announcing.

Approaches to politeness study

There are two major approaches to politeness, including language-based and society-based. The first approach views politeness as a part of pragmatic knowledge. Brown and Levinson (1978) concede politeness behaviors are pragmatic rules which can be linguistically realized.

A language-based theory of linguistic politeness is that of Brown and Levinson (1978), which is a part of pragmatic rules. The theory states that people have positive or negative face needs, or the need to be liked, and needs of freedom. Accordingly, people involved in interpersonal communication exercise linguistic politeness strategies to reduce face-threatening acts, or FTAs, to attend to the hearer's face needs. In other words, linguistic strategies are face-saving devices that are used

to alleviate the imposition of FTAs so that participants can have smooth communication. Politeness strategies proposed in this framework are 1) bald-on-record, 2) positive politeness, 3) negative politeness, 4) off-record, and 5) don't do FTA. Positive politeness promote the face needs to be connected with others, whereas those of negative politeness and off-record stress negative face needs of independence and not being imposed upon by others. Examples of positive politeness strategies are seeking agreement, giving gifts, using in-group identity markers via the use of nicknames and dialects, and claiming in-group membership. Examples of negative politeness strategies are conventionally indirect, hedge and questions, deference, and impersonalizing S (speaker) and H (addressee). In a nutshell, Brown and Levinson have addressed two face needs, which are positive and negative face needs, and they have proposed politeness strategies that are based on linguistic features of utterances.

Despite the fact that Brown and Levinson's universal politeness is the most widely used and cited in politeness research, it confronts a number of criticisms. Many researchers have put forward that the theory focuses on Eurocentric views of 'negative face', or the need to be independent; however, many studies have revealed different cultural values of politeness in Asia. While individualism takes crucial cultural values in Western linguistic politeness, Asian cultures such as China and Japan tend to be more collectivistic and interdependent in the choice of politeness strategies (Gu 1990; Ide 1982; Mao 1994; Ting-Toomey

1988). Also, speech acts that are FTAs can vary in different cultures as one FTA in a culture might not hold true in another. For example, requests are FTAs in Western cultures as the speaker interferes with the hearer's freedom of independence; nevertheless, it is considered an act of deference in Japanese cultures when a subordinate requests his/her superior to take care of him (Matsumoto 1988). It is argued that cultural values and the relationship between participants and situation must be taken into account when analyzing acts that are face-threatening in each culture. Accordingly, with regard to the latter move of politeness, scholars have refused a purely linguistic politeness theory, which claims its universality to all politeness.

Given the fact that Brown and Levinson have provided three sociological factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies, the linguistic politeness theory does not mention the essence of the factors of power relations, distance, and imposition in each culture. A source of power relations may differ between cultures due to factors such as age, gender, rank, economic status, and education. Social distance can be close in American cultures as five-minute conversations can make interlocutors familiar with each other, whereas there is a clear distinction between in-group and out-group members in Chinese culture and it takes a longer period of time for interlocutors to become close in the relationship (Fasold 1990).

Another approach to politeness is society-based, which pays importance to contextual and sociological factors in understanding politeness phenomena. Scollon and Scollon (1995)

have introduced a face/politeness system which is understood through participants' discourse. This approach stresses that politeness is a part of a discourse system and in order to understand politeness behaviors, a whole communicative system should be investigated as politeness phenomena reside as a part of discourse that participants use. Furthermore, power relations and distance are crucial sociological factors that determine the use of politeness strategies of discourse members. In other words, sociocultural and contextual elements, namely, social relationship, social distance, cultural values, and situations are indispensable in defining appropriate politeness strategies in communicative events. Tannen (1996) has coined two terms which are borrowed to explain two types of face/politeness strategies, 'involvement' and 'independence'. In order to avoid the misconception that 'positive politeness' is good and 'negative politeness' is bad, the term 'positive politeness' is replaced with 'involvement' to show what participants have in common, and 'negative politeness' is replaced with 'independence' to emphasizes participants' rights to be unimpeded.

Scollon and Scollon (1995) have adopted three face/politeness systems, including 'deference', 'solidarity', and 'hierarchical politeness system' based on the influence of sociological variables of power (p) and distance (d). In the deference face/politeness system, participants are equal in power but treat each other with distance. Independence strategies, namely, giving deference, avoiding imposition on others, and indirectness are preferred in this case. In the solidarity

face/politeness system, participants have equal power and close social distance; involvement strategies are favored to stress firm solidarity and inclusivity. In the hierarchical face/politeness system, there is asymmetrical power between participants, leading to one party having higher power or a superordinate position speaking down using involvement strategies, and the other party with lower power or a subordinate position speaking up using independence strategies. Society-based approach, or discourse approach, is recommended as a suitable method for intercultural communication due to the fact that people tend to exercise different politeness strategies as they are familiar with different discourse practices. Moreover, due to the study that face systems are varied across discourse systems, miscommunications can occur as people from dissimilar discourse systems have different interpretations of face. By this significance, it is analyzed that politeness cannot merely be realized at the linguistic level; the researcher also needs to investigate carefully what is produced by the interlocutors at the discursive level. Some research examples following the global politeness framework of Scollon and Scollon (1995) are described next. Pan (2000) in her *Politeness in Chinese face-to-face interaction* employs a discourse approach to understand situation-based politeness behaviours of Chinese interlocutors in family, business, and official settings in China. Bou-Franch and Garces-Conejos (2003) apply three politeness systems in the teaching of pragmatics in a second language so that learners can better understand sociological variables affecting

politeness strategies in classroom contexts. Cargill (1998) also borrowed the society-based approach of Scollon and Scollon (1995) to investigate the discourse of face-to-face discussion between postgraduate students and their advisors. In the study, a high level of deference and a hierarchical politeness system were found to be prevalent in intercultural communication in a university context.

Extending beyond the linguistic politeness study, Tannen (1984, 1989, 1990) has proposed discursive strategies of involvement and independence which are used to study politeness of discourse members. In her works, she has studied conversational styles in cross-cultural communication and has introduced the terms *involvement* and independence to signify different discursive strategies that are used between men and women. Scollon et al. (2012) later employed the terms to explain politeness systems in intercultural communication. While involvement strategies refer to the face need to be involved, or *positive politeness*, independence strategies show the need to not be impeded, or *negative politeness*.

Methodology

Investigation sites

The sites of investigation for the research are two Tourist Report Centers located on Rajadamneon Nok road in Bangkok and at Suvarnabhumi airport. The centers are open for 24 hours from Monday to Sunday to provide services and assistance to tourists who are travelling in Thailand. When tourists enter the

centers, the layout of the center automatically brings tourists to sit opposite tourist police officers. The interaction between two parties begins either when tourists open the center door and walk in or when they sit.

Participants

Participants in this study are 10 tourist police officers who provided services to tourists who came to Tourist Report Centers. Tourist police at the service counter are responsible for helping tourists with directions, issuing police reports for lost items, negotiating between business owners and tourists, and providing life and asset security with qualified services. Regarding participants' demographic information, three female tourist police and seven male tourist police from, 35 to 53 years of age are participants in the study. Their education varies from secondary education to a university degree from the Royal Police Cadet Academy, however, none of them obtained higher degree education. For participants' English background and proficiency, they have fundamental knowledge of English, yet none of them majored in English language study. They started to seriously practice the language through on-the-job training at the Tourist Report Centers. Their English language proficiency is at a low to medium level, as they can communicate with tourists to a certain degree; however, the linguistic errors, namely lexical incompetence, grammatical mistakes, confusing sentence structure, and miscommunications have been observed during service encounters with tourists. For the language training course,

The Tourist Police Division organizes an annual training course to improve staffs' English language skills, yet it is not compulsory.

Instrument

The study utilizes field notes, observation, and audio-recordings as major research instruments. The service encounters last from 20-90 minutes and the data collection period is 30 days in total. During the data collection process, 10 service encounters are observed and note-taken by the researcher and another specialist with an aim to gain understanding of contextual factors, namely, the interaction topic and purpose, the sequence of a service encounter, and the relationship between two interlocutors. In the meantime, an audio recorder has been used to record the service encounter of the participants and the tourists so that the data can be later analyzed. The recording begins when either tourist police or a tourist starts the conversation, and it ends when the tourist leaves the service encounter.

The researcher is concerned with the rights of participants in joining the study. Thus, the research proposal and written statements that describe the involvement of human participants in the research process are created and submitted to the Ethical Review Committee for Research in Human Subjects of Thammasat University. The researcher guarantees the anonymity of participants and information is kept confidential to be used for research purposes only. Tourist police officials are informed of the research and requested to sign consent forms if they are

willing to join the project. For tourists, they will be requested to sign consent forms before the service encounter begins. Regarding the transcription of all service encounters, participants' titles will be kept anonymous and new names are assigned for all participants.

Data Analysis

After the encounter is recorded, it is transcribed following the transcription convention of Schiffrin (1987) and Tannen (1989), and the data is then investigated at both lexical and discursive levels to understand the participants' politeness strategies. At the linguistic level, the researcher categorizes different types of speech acts that arise in the interaction following Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary acts by searching for participants' specific utterances that perform illocutionary acts such as asking, order, confirming, or acknowledging. Next, the speech acts that the participants use in the service encounter are quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed to understand participants' dominant speech acts in the communicative events in this setting of the Tourist Report Centers. At the discourse level, discursive features such as topic introduction, turn-taking, turn length, topic control, overlapping, and interruption are studied. Next, participants' distribution of politeness strategies is used to analyze the prevalent politeness system in the specific service encounter.

Findings

Table 1 Distribution frequencies of speech acts

	Directives	Assertives	Commissives	Expressives	Declaratives	Total
Statements	122	208	2	5	3	340
Basic imperative	7	3	0	0	0	10
Question	248	31	0	0	0	279
Total numbers	**377**	**242**	**2**	**5**	**3**	**629 (times)**
Percentage (630)	**59.94%**	**38.47%**	**0.32%**	**0.79%**	**0.48%**	**100%**

Out of 630 speech acts delivered by the participants, directives (59.94%) are the most frequent speech acts used, followed by assertives (38.47%), expressives (0.79%), commissives (0.32%), and declaratives (0.48%). For directives, it is shown that asking (80.77%) is the most frequently used of speech acts, followed by ordering (18.68%) and requesting (0.55%). This corresponds with the data from field notes as tourist police need to perform a high number of directives speech acts by investigating the tourist's case and asking many WH-questions in order to verify the case. In the service encounter, the tourist police are also authorized to order tourist police to follow all required processes, such as filling in the tourist form and handing personal documents. The linguistic evidence for asking and ordering that is extracted from the data is shown below.

(A) *Where is he from?* (asking)

(B) *You're waiting for your bag?* (asking)

(C) *Sit here.* (ordering)

(D) *Tell the problem.* (ordering)

Additionally, it is demonstrated that confirming (40.76%) is most frequently used for assertives speech acts, followed by explaining (27.73%), stating (15.97%), acknowledging (11.76%), and suggesting (3.78%). In the service encounter, participants constantly confirm the information told by tourists in order to reach the precise, correct information on their cases. Also, tourist police need to clearly explain all procedures and situations to the visitor in order to form mutual understandings about the responsibility scope of the tourist police. It is interestingly shown here that speech acts of expressives (welcoming, blaming), commissives (promise), and declaratives are seldomly used in the service encounter as tourist police are not rightful by their duty to linguistically commit to the future course of action by promise, to express the psychological state of himself/herself to the listener and to bring about a change to the listener's status. Some examples of assertive speech acts are listed below.

(A) *Camera passport cash two thousand five hundred.* (Confirming)

(B) *It's upstairs fourth floor row M six to twenty two.* (Explaining)

(C) Tourist: *It was our first night here.* Tourist police: *Yeah.* (Acknowledging)

Tourist police's politeness strategies

Findings on tourist police's politeness strategies are divided into two parts. The first part involves those at the lexical level following the linguistic politeness framework of Brown and Levinson (1978). It must be noted that the researcher replaced the terms 'positive politeness' with 'involvement strategies' and that of 'negative politeness' with 'independence strategies' to avoid confusing judgment attached with the terms' meanings. The second part of the findings entails participants' strategies at the discursive level from participant discourse features, such as topic control, turn-taking, and turn length.

Regarding participant's politeness strategies at the lexical level, it is found that tourist police have employed a mix of independence, involvement, bald-on-record, and off-record strategies. It has shown that bald-on-record (63.41%) strategies are the most frequently employed to directly deliver the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise messages. Interestingly, involvement strategies (22.56%) and independence strategies (5.33 %) have also been used in the encounters but not as frequently as bald-on-record strategies. Off-record strategies (8.7%) have also been used to avoid a speaker's commitment to his speech.

Tourist police's use of bald-on-record without redressive action is frequent in all encounters. They are normally communicated through 1) asking direct WH-questions to investigate tourists in order to get every detail about the incidences, for example, "who recommends you?", "what's

wrong?", 2) ordering tourists directly to perform their requests such as "come here.", "shut up!", and 3) giving direct advice, namely, "you need to call and check.", "Passport is important, you must keep it with you." Participants employed involvement strategies namely 1) Seek agreement through repetition, 2) expressing discourse particles namely 'Umm', 'OK' or Thai discourse particles such as 'อืมจ๊ะ', 'อืมฮึ' to show agreement and cooperation with hearers, 3) use in-group identity markers and 4) giving gifts to hearers by expressing thanks and understanding. These strategies have been conducted to address tourists' positive face to be liked. In terms of independence strategies, participants have expressed utterances with an aim to satisfy a hearer's wants to be unimpeded. These strategies involve 1) conventionally indirect, 2) hedge, 3) giving deference by addressing the tourists' titles by 'Mr.' and 'Sir', and 4) Impersonalizing S and H stating. The linguistic evidence to exemplify participants' involvement and independence strategies is listed as follows;

Involvement strategies

(A) Tourist: *They found it in the premium counter.*
Tourist police: *Yeah premium counter.* (The use of repetition to seek agreement)

(B) Tourist: *Is everything all good? Thanks for your help. Thanks so much.*
Tourist police: *Welcome. Take care. Have a nice holiday.* (Giving gift)

Independence strategies

(A) Tourist police: *Fill the form please*. (Conventionally indirect)

(B) Tourist police: *Yeah you just contact with the bank and you also make a report as well* (Hedge)

(C) Tourist police: *Sir, you have to understand something*. (Deference)

It is also useful to look into tourists' politeness strategies, for it can give a clearer view into the factor of the power of tourist police and the distance between them. It is demonstrated that the tourists have practiced the highest number of bald-on-record (73%), which is followed by involvement (14%) and independence (13%) strategies. Bald-on-record strategies have been distributed when the tourists explained cases, directly answered questions, confirmed the given information, and insisted on information validity. The cause of the highest occurrence of bald-on-record by tourists is that the tourists have been framed by the official setting, and that the roles of tourist police lead them to speak only precise, true information. Failing to abide by the division rules or lying to the police could result in punishment such as fine, accusation, and imprisonment. Also, the tourist applied involvement strategies when he showed understanding to the police's explanation, thanked the police, sought agreement, accepted his own fault, and apologized. It is viewed from the data here that the tourist performed some independence strategies such as code-switching in Cantonese, yet it seldom occurred in the encounter.

Corresponding with the findings at the lexical level, it is found that tourist police adopted mixing strategies of bald-on-record, independence, involvement, and off-record strategies at the discursive level. For topic control, tourist police controlled the conversational floor by asking many questions, ordering tourists to perform their requests, and guiding tourists through all procedures. In the meantime, tourists took the reversed role and were obliged to answer questions, explain their cases, fill in the form, and follow the police guidance. In terms of turn-taking, the police had slightly higher turns (51.11%) than the tourists (48.89%). However, the participants had longer turn lengths than the tourists who took their turns by stating short answers ('yes', 'no', 'I don't know') and discourse particles to show agreement ('Oh', 'Orr', 'Ok'). Overlapping was another involvement strategy which was used frequently and interactively by both parties to show cooperativeness in the communication, however, only Thai participants interrupted when they wanted to dominate conversational floor. From the result, it has shown that direct investigation of tourists' cases through bald-on-record strategies are primary strategies in giving services rather than goals of satisfying tourists' negative and positive faces.

Hierarchical face/politeness system

From the findings on politeness strategies issued by the participants, it is analyzed that the hierarchical face/politeness system is prevalent in the context of the Tourist Report Centers. The results from both lexical and discursive levels correspond

in the way that the tourist police tended to play more bald-on-record strategies to demonstrate their power, whereas the tourists issued more of involvement strategies which project their submissive positions in the encounters. To explain the point, the participants are authorized by their roles and duty to control the topic of conversation, to guide the tourists through all processes, to testify the tourists, and to decide whether the tourists deserve the report or not. Additionally, another piece of evidence to show the strong power of the tourist police in this context is that the police could reject the tourists by not offering them reports and the tourists could not protest against the denial.

Having looked at politeness strategies issued by both parties, the asymmetrical relationship between the police and the tourist was clearly demonstrated. According to Scollon et al. (2012), both parties did not see themselves as being in equal social position or they are socially different in the setting and this resulted in the different play of politeness strategies. It is worthwhile to mention here two factors which are Power (P) and Distance (D) that have led to the hierarchical face/politeness system. In this study, police is positioned in a higher position (+P) and obtained higher power over a tourist who has lower power (-P). Sources of power differences in this context are the police's authoritative role as a government official and laws enforcer as well as their rightful responsibility which are assigned by Thai laws. In a different vein, tourists are viewed as ordinary people who should both abide by the laws and

obey the police. Besides the power factor, two parties are involved in an unfamiliar, distant relationship (+D) due to the following reasons: they are strangers to each other and have never known each other before the service encounter; they are from different countries and nationality, thus the sharing of common ground can possibly be rare in the first meeting; their expectations towards the nature of service encounter is a one-time experience in which they do not expect to tighten their personal relationship. To support Scollon et al. (2012), this type of hierarchical face system is familiar in governmental, business, and educational organizations.

Discussion

In this section, the findings are explained with the link with the previous literature review. The discussion follows in line with the order of the findings part.

The findings on the frequency of speech acts used have presented these encounters in these settings as peculiar and different from the typical service encounter. A service encounter is defined as everyday social interactions between a service provider and a customer who are in some service area (Merritt 1976; Reiter & Placencia 2004). A server is officially posted to fulfill customers' wants and thus, he/she is involved in institutional roles which aim to succeed in service transactions. Once service providers and clients/customers start their interaction in the setting, their identities, responsibilities, and expectations are made clear (Drew & Heritage 1992). Nonetheless, it has shown that

the responsibility of the tourist police in this setting extends beyond the act of serving and satisfying what the customer wants. It involves the acts of investigating and asking trivial questions about the tourist's case, and the police have the power to guide, direct, and order the service receiver via speech acts of directives and assertives. Moreover, due to the expectation of the police that they should be truthful, fair, and direct in their works, they have constantly practiced the Gricean conversational maxim (1975) of being true, informative, relevant, and clear via the use of bald-on-record strategies. This evidence from the study have shown the reason why this service encounter in the context of the tourist report center is unusual.

The findings of the participant's politeness strategies at both lexical and discursive levels have correspondingly revealed that the tourist police practiced both independence strategies and involvement strategies while they provided services to the tourists. Surprisingly, bald-on-record strategies following conversational maxims are also frequently exercised by both parties in the interdiscourse communication. It is worthwhile to explain here how the participants' choices of politeness strategies have reflected two key factors of power (P) and distance (D) of politeness/face relationships between the participants and tourists in these settings. Also, the importance of context or the setting needs to be addressed as it crucially influences interlocutors' face relationships.

Power is a supremely crucial factor determining the clear hierarchical politeness system in the studied service encounter.

The police employed higher power (+P) over the tourists who seem to be more submissive and humble to their interlocutors as they realized unequal vertical disparity between them. By revisiting the findings, the tourist police exercised a high number of strategies which are not normally seen in daily service encounters in places such as markets and department stores. The use of directives speech acts such as ordering and directing, the control of the conversational floor via interruptions and longer conversational turns are linguistic evidence showing the power of the speakers. Sources of power of the speakers derive from: 1) the institutional role as the Thai tourist police who are endorsed by the laws; 2) the responsibility endorsed by the laws as a laws enforcer and a safety guard to foreign tourist; 3) the official setting of the tourist police station; 4) the physical appearance of the speakers which is the police uniform. Evidently, these sources have strongly and clearly empowered the speakers over the tourists.

Long distant relationship is prevalent in this service encounter due to several reasons. First, the two interlocutors can share some extent of the common ground when they do not use their first language to communicate with each other. As English is not the mother tongue for Thai tourist police, conveying messages can be uneasy, uncomfortable, and can lead to higher distance between the two parties (Scollon et al. 2012). Second, the two parties are involved in a one-time service experience and do not attempt to build a more personal relationship. Third, as the two parties have different nationalities,

and belong to a different society and discourse system, their interaction is purely based on an out-group relationship. The boundary between them is set clearly and they tend not to develop social relationships in the encounter. As of the clear distance, involvement politeness strategies, namely, claiming in-group relationship, using nicknames, showing sympathy, and using dialect, are rarely used by the Thai tourist police in the study. In order to clearly understand the issue of face/ politeness relationship in the study, it is strongly suggested that the researcher needs to understand the grammar of context beforehand. The term signifies contextual components such as participants, message form, and sequences involved in interdiscourse communication.

To end the discussion, some Thai cultural values of politeness that were reflected through participants' strategies and some participants' communicative difficulties are described next. Regarding the Thai cultural value of politeness, while 'wai' which is a Thai way of greeting was not found in the observation, some Thai participants started the encounters with the Thai greeting phrase 'sawasdee ka/krub' to show their willingness and friendliness to help. Additionally, as Thailand is well known as the land of smiles and a fun-filled country, it was observed that Thai participants smiled quite often in the service encounter to express a welcoming service atmosphere. However, it must be noted that some politeness behaviors in Thai culture can be interpreted differently by tourists across cultures due to dissimilar cultural practices. From the data, smiling can also be

perceived as an inappropriate and impolite strategy to utilize when tourists were saddened and depressed. From the point mentioned, the issue of interlocutors' cultural differences in intercultural communication is worthy of further exploration in future research. The other strategy reflecting polite behavior in Thailand is the 'not saying no' culture. It is considered rude, face-threatening, and face-breaking when a speaker rejects someone's request or corrects someone's statement. This cultural note was revealed in the data when Thai tourist police officials normally said 'yes' to tourists' questions despite the fact that they did not understand their interlocutors' questions. Accordingly, their strategy to show active involvement turned negative and brought about miscommunication.

In terms of Thai tourist police officials' communicative difficulties in the service encounters, the data showed that they were able to communicate to tourists at a certain level, however, English language mistakes such as grammatical and lexical errors and confusing sentence organization were observed. In regard to the politeness strategies they exercised, it was found that their knowledge of linguistic politeness in English was greatly limited. Last but not least, participants were not well aware of cultural differences and their cultural awareness was quite low. Accordingly, the findings here can be used further to tailor the language training course to match learners' needs in their actual participation in intercultural communication at work.

Limitation of the study

The research tools which are observation and tape recorders could cause uncomfortable feelings in research participants and could affect the natural interactions to some degree. In some cases, participants have decided to keep silent when they do not wish their utterances to be recorded.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a study which aims to study Thai tourist police's politeness strategies and politeness system in service encounters with foreign counterparts at the Thai tourist report centers. The research problems have been addressed to pinpoint the research gap in the field of politeness, pragmatics, and intercultural communication studies in Thailand, and to proactively study the tourist police politeness behaviors in preparation for the coming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Next, the relevant theory of speech acts and two major approaches to politeness were reviewed to demonstrate the underlying literature which the researcher employed in this study. In the following section, the researcher explained how the study has been conducted based upon the discourse approach. It is a chosen approach as the researcher deemed that it can help both researchers and readers gain the data from the natural interaction of the participants in the discourse system, rather than accessing other types of stimulated data. Also, the research findings have demonstrated the occurrence of mixing strategies of bald-on-record, independence, and involvement strategies,

and the prevalence of a hierarchical politeness system in the context of study. To end the paper, discussions and limitations of the study have been brought up to show factors which could limit the data trustworthiness.

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