

Refusal as a Social Speech Act among Thai EFL University Students

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Abstract

This paper discusses the commonly realised social speech act of refusal strategies in English among university students in the Southern part of Thailand, in explaining how they say 'no' to request and the effects of this speech act on the hearer's face. Using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to collect oral data in naturally-occurring situations, together with a qualitative analysis of the transcribed data according to Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) classification scheme of refusal, the study affirms that there are two major common ways of realising refusals to request in English among these students, namely: direct and, overwhelmingly, indirect refusal strategies. The findings also reveal that the last strategy of the classification scheme, adjuncts to refusals, was not found in the data. Similarly, not all the indirect refusal sub-strategies were found in the data. However, two novel sub-strategies: giving advice/explanation, and lack of empathy were found in the analysis. The findings have implications for better socio-cultural communication and interaction in a multicultural university context.

Keyword: Refusal strategies, social speech act, Thai EFL university students

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