CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

As the world is becoming more and more developed, there exist so many things which need to be studied and discovered. Linguistic study, however, is still far from satisfactory. In the last few decades of the 20th century, there have been many linguistic researches so far but their concerns were only with the forms of language systems which are studied and explained apart from their functions in relation to social situations. Additionally, their attention was basically paid to structural theories on which the small units were arranged and combined into the larger ones. Recently, within linguistics, there was a shift of emphasis from an almost exclusive concern with formal aspects of language (structural linguistics and generative transformational grammar) to a growing interest in language use. The study of linguistic pragmatics holds for not only linguists but also language teachers and students, since the relevance of pragmatics has become increasingly clear to linguists, which is shown by a number of researches of those such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975), Blum-Kulka (1982), Leech (1983), Levinson (1983), Claxton (1979), Cohen (1996), Yule (1996) so on and so forth.

Although the scope of pragmatics is far from easy to define, the variety of research interests and developments in the field share one basic concern: the need to account for the rules that govern the use of language in context (Levinson, 1983). According to Blum-Kulka (1983), one of the basic challenges for research in pragmatics is the issue of universality: to what extent is it possible to determine the degree to which the rules that govern the use of language in context vary from culture to culture and from language to language? In particular, the issue of universality is relevant in the context of speech act studies.

With a hope to contribute to the area of contrastive pragmatics, a modest attempt was made to carry out a comparative study on politeness strategies in the speech act of complaining...
in American and Vietnamese cultures. There are two reasons to do so. Firstly, many studies regarding the speech act of request, giving and receiving compliments, promising or addressing terms and so on have been carried out in Vietnam and in other interlanguage of English learners of different language backgrounds, but little attention is paid to the speech act of complaining which is used to express common feelings like pain, discontent or dissatisfaction about something. In other words, complaining is an area that not much research has been dedicated. This is surprising because everyone complains sometimes and some people seem to complain all the time. We frequently hear others or ourselves complain about the weather, a test they have just taken, about their jobs, their economic status, traffic, other’s behaviors, etc. So often are these remarks and expressions of dissatisfaction that we do not notice how much these expressions are used and how face–threatening those speech acts are. And although complaints are a common feature of our everyday lives, it is surprising the little attention that has been paid to this topic. Secondly, the strategies the Vietnamese choose to carry out those speech acts are not the same as those the American or people from different societies do since the ways in which a given function is realized may differ from one language to another, even though communicative functions appear to exist across languages. In other words, they may speak in different ways – not only because they use different linguistic codes, involving different lexicons and different grammars, but also because their ways of using the codes are different (Wierzbicka, 1991: 67) and therefore, a systematic and scientific observation on complaining strategies is virtually necessary.

1.2. Aims of the study

In the light of contrastive pragmatics, this study aims at comparing and contrasting different linguistic politeness strategies in the speech act of complaining of American and Vietnamese speakers in relation to the social factors assigned in the contexts studied.

1.3. Research questions

With a view to achieving the aims of the study, the research questions will be addressed as follows:
1. What are the linguistic politeness strategies used by American speakers in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

2. What are the linguistic politeness strategies used by Vietnamese speakers in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

3. How are American speakers similar to and different from Vietnamese speakers with respect to the choice of linguistic politeness strategies in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

1.4. Scope of the study

Due to the scope of the M.A. thesis, limited time and experience, it is impossible to cover all contrastive pragmatic matters. This study just focuses mainly on comparing and contrasting the politeness strategies used in the speech act of complaining in American and Vietnamese cultures basing on the analysis of the data collected from DCT in relation to the three social parameters (P, D and R) in the contexts studied.

As a result, the theoretical frameworks applied to this study are the speech act theory, politeness theory, indirectness and the social factors affecting politeness in interaction. In other words, the study focuses on verbal communication, but other important factors such as non-linguistic factors (facial expression, gestures, eye contact, etc.), paralinguistic factors (intonation, pause, speed of speech, etc.) will not be taken into account.

1.5. Method of the study

The method used in this study include quantitative and qualitative. The data were collected via questionnaires namely the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which was logically and empirically validated before it is used as a data collection instrument. The instrument to construct validation which is called Metapragmatic Questionnaire (MPQ) is used to tap individual assessment of relative Power (P), social Distance (D) and the severity of face – threatening of complaints (R). Then, data will be analysed using Independent Samples t-test of SPSS Statistical Package 13.0.
Both MPQ and DCT were conducted on the same subjects including two groups: 1) thirty American speakers and 2) thirty Vietnamese speakers.

1.6. Organization of the study

This study is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the study in which the rationale for the research, the aims, the research questions, the scope of the study, the research method as well as the organization of the study were briefly presented.

Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical issues relevant to the study including speech acts and the speech act of complaining. Then, the notions of politeness and indirectness in complaining as well as some previous studies on complaining are discussed.

Chapter 3 discusses issues of methodology and outlines the study design, data collection instruments, reliability and validity test of the data collection instruments, procedure of data collection, selection of subjects and analytical framework

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and discusses the findings on the choice of politeness strategies used by American and Vietnamese speakers in relation to the variables of Power (P), Social Distance (D) and Ranking of Imposition (R) in the contexts under studied.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of major findings and interpretations, implications, limitations and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To establish the framework of the theoretical background from which my area of investigation lays foundation and operates, this chapter has two-fold intent. Firstly, it deals with the speech act theory and speech act of complaining. Secondly, it highlights the theory of politeness, especially three social variables (P, D and R) affecting politeness in interaction.

2.1. The speech act

2.1.1. The speech act theory

Of all the issues in the general theory of language usage, the speech act theory has probably aroused the widest interest. It has undergone serious investigation by different theorists such as Austin (1962), Grice (1957, 1975), Hymes (1964), Searl (1969), Levinson (1983), Brown and Yule (1983), Yule (1996). Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1982:2) emphasize that “the study of speech acts is to remain a central concern of pragmatics, especially cross-cultural pragmatics”

2.1.1.1. Austin’s theory

The speech act theory is originally developed by the Oxford philosopher of language J.L. Austin. In his famous work, "How to do things with words," Austin outlines his theory of speech acts and the concept of performative language, in which to say something is to do something.

To make the statement “I promise that p” (in which p is the propositional content of the utterance) is to perform the act of promising as opposed to making a statement that may be judged true or false. Performatives cannot be true or false, only felicitous or infelicitous. Austin creates a clear distinction between performatives and constantives, statements that attempt to describe reality and can be judged true or false, but he eventually comes to the
conclusion that most utterances, at their base, are performative in nature. That is, the speaker is nearly always doing something by saying something.

For Austin, what the speaker is doing is creating social realities within certain social contexts. For example, using an explicit performative, to say “I now pronounce you man and wife” in the context of a wedding, in which one is marrying two people, is to create a social reality, i.e. in this case a married couple.

Austin describes three characteristics, or acts, of statements that begin with the building blocks of words and end with the effects those words have on an audience.

- **Locutionary acts**: “roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain ‘meaning’ in the traditional sense.”

- **Illocutionary acts**: “such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, & conceding, i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force.”

- **Perlocutionary acts**: “what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (1962: 109).

For example, S says to H "I will come tomorrow" (a promise).

- Since this is a well-formed, meaningful English sentence, a successful locutionary act has been performed if S knows English.

- A successful illocutionary act (promise) has been performed if S intends to come tomorrow, believes she can come tomorrow, thinks she wouldn't normally come tomorrow, thinks H would like her to come tomorrow, and intends to place herself under an obligation to come tomorrow and if both S and H understand the sentence, are normal human beings, and are in normal circumstances.
A successful perlocutionary act (persuasion) has been performed if H is convinced that S will come tomorrow.

Austin focuses on illocutionary acts, maintaining that here we might find the “force” of a statement and demonstrate its performatve nature. Based on performative verbs, he presents taxonomy consisting of five categories of speech acts:

- **Verdictives** are typified by the giving of a verdict by a jury, arbitrator or umpire (e.g. grade, estimate, diagnose)

- **Exercitives** are the exercising of power, rights or influence (e.g. appoint, order, warn)

- **Commissives** refer to the assuming of obligation or giving of an undertaking (e.g. promise, undertake)

- **Behabitives** relate to attitudes and social behaviour (e.g. apologize, compliment, congratulate)

- **Expositives** address the clarifying of reasons, arguments or expressing viewpoints (e.g. assume, concede, suggest)

For example, to say “Don’t run with scissors” has the force of a warning when spoken in a certain context. This utterance may be stated in an explicitly performative way, e.g., “I warn you, don’t run with scissors.” This statement is neither true nor false. Instead, it creates a warning. By hearing the statement, and understanding it as a warning, the auditor is warned, which is not to say that the auditor must or will act in any particular way regarding the warning.

### 2.1.1.2. Searle’s theory

According to Searle (1969, 23-6), language is a part of a theory of action and there are three different kinds of act:
• **Utterance acts** (was called locutionary acts by Austin) consist of the verbal employment of units of expression such as words and sentences.

• **Propositional acts** are those matters having to do with referring and predicting

• **Illocutionary acts** have to do with the intents of speakers such as stating, questioning, promising or commanding

An utterance act may have no propositional content, as in an example like “Damn”. However, an illocutionary act must be both a propositional act and an utterance act.

Searle (1975) sets up the following classification of illocutionary speech acts which seems to be clear and useful. From his point of view, the basic for categorizing speech acts is the illocutionary point or the purpose of the act, from the speaker’s perspective.

• **Representatives** – the speaker is committed to the truth of a proposition: affirm, believe, conclude, deny, report

• **Directives** – the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something: ask, challenge, command, dare, insist, request

• **Commissives** – the speaker is committed to a (future) course of action: guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow

• **Expressives** – the speaker expresses an attitude about a state of affairs: apologize, deplore, congratulate, regret, thank, welcome

• **Declarations** – the speaker alters the external status or condition of an object or situation, solely by making the utterance: I baptize you, I resign, I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you be dead, I name this ship, etc.

He also argues that each type of illocutionary acts requires certain expected or appropriate conditions called felicity conditions. These conditions relate to the beliefs and attitudes of the speaker and hearer and to their mutual understanding of the use of the linguistic devices for communication. He identifies four kinds of felicicy conditions as follows:
1. **Preparation conditions**: the person performing the speech act has to have quality to do so. Such verbs as baptize, arrest can be used only by qualified people.

2. **Sincerity conditions**: the speech act must be performed in a sincere manner. Verbs such as apologize, guarantee and vow are effective only if speakers mean what they say.

3. **Propositional content conditions**: the utterance must have exact content; e.g. for a warning, the context of the utterance must be about a future event.

4. **Essential conditions**: the speech act has to be executed in the correct manner. For example, by the act of uttering a promise, the speakers intends to create an obligation to carry out the action as promised.

### 2.1.2. The speech act of complaining

There is already an extensive literature on the speech act of complaining (Kasper, 1981; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Anna Wierzbicka, 1991, 2003; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Trosborg, 1995; Laforest, 2002, to cite a few). Undeniably, complaining is considered to be the most frequently occurring communication acts. It is an action which is not particularly dignified, because it involves something akin to feeling sorry for oneself.

Searle (1976), in his typology of speech acts, distinguishes between apology and complaint as expressive speech acts, where the former is made to threaten the addressee's positive-face want (See Brown & Levinson, 1987). Complaint has also been classified as a particular speech act - in reaction to a “socially unacceptable act”- to imply severity or directness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

It has been further defined as a speech act to give the speaker a way to express “displeasure, annoyance, blame, censure, threats or reprimand” as a reaction to a past or on-going action the consequences of which are perceived by the speaker as affecting him unfavorably. Or, complaining is an act to hold the hearer accountable for the offensive action and possibly suggest/request a repair (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993)
Trosborg (1995) thinks that the speech act complaint belongs to the category of expressive functions including moral judgements which express the speaker’s approval as well as disapproval of the behaviour mentioned in the judgement. She defines a complaint as an illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses his/her disapproval, negative feelings etc. towards the state of affairs described in the proposition and for which he/she holds the hearer responsible, either directly or indirectly. In other words, a complaint is by its very nature designed to cause offence and it is, therefore, highly threatening to the social relationship between speaker and hearer.

According to Boxer (1993a, 1996), people use complaints:

1. to share a specific negative evaluation, obtain agreement, and establish a common bond between the speaker and addressee"trouble sharing" (Hatch, 1992), "troubles talk" (Tannen, 1990). For example:

   - "I can't believe I didn't get an A on this paper. I worked so hard!"
   - "Same here. She doesn't give away A's very easily, that's for sure."

1. to vent anger or anxiety/let off steam

2. to open and sustain conversations

The scholar also classifies the speech act of complaints into two types:

1. **Direct complaints**: are addressed to a complainee who is held responsible for the offensive action

   For example: Could you be a little quieter? I’m trying to sleep

2. **Indirect complaints**: are given to addressees who are not responsible for the perceived offense. Indirect complaints often open a conversation and establish solidarity between the speakers.

   For example: She never cleans up after her. Isn’t that horrible?
Meanwhile, in the view of Anna Wierbicka (2003), complaining belongs to the same group with moaning, exclaiming, protesting, objecting, bemoaning, and lamenting. People often complain to:

1. say that something bad is happening (E.g. I say: something bad is happening to me)
2. express the feeling caused by this (E.g. I feel something bad because of that)
3. appeal for something like pity or sympathy (E.g. I want someone to feel sorry for me because of that)

Moaning and exclaiming have some differences in comparison with complaining. A person who is alone might moan or exclaim but he/she would be unlikely to complain (there would seem to be no point in doing so if there was no one there to hear and feel sorry for one). Feeling sorry for oneself is important but it is not enough: the complainer wants to see his/her own self-pity reflected in the pity of the complainee.

The feckility conditions of this speech act might be stated as:

| 1. Preparing condition | - X (which is wrong) happens to S.  
|                        | - H can or S believes that H is able to share with S’s dissatisfaction. |
| 2. Executive condition | - S shows his/her dissatisfaction about X.  
|                        | - H does Y to show his/her pity or sympathy to S’s. |
| 3. Sincerity condition  | - S believes that his dissatisfaction is reasonable. |
| 4. Fulfillment condition| - H will reach Z by doing Y to show his/her pity or sympathy.  
|                        | - S’s state will be changed in some way. |

From the above mentioned felicity conditions of complaining, S may perform an FTA (Face Threatening Act) if:

- H doesn’t or can’t be able to share with S’s problem, or
S performs the act of complaining without taking into consideration whether H is able to do something to show his/her pity to S’s expectation, or

H does understand S’s problem but really does nothing to show his/her sympathy.

In the event that all these conditions are met, the speech act of complaining is said to be felicitous.

2.3. Issues of politeness and indirectness

2.3.1. The politeness theory

In pragmatics, the term “politeness” does not refer to the social rules of behaviour such as letting people go first through a door, or wiping one’s mouth on the serviette rather than on the back of one’s hand. It refers to the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them.

Politeness which is a universal phenomenon in every cultural linguistic community have attracted a lot of due attention from linguistics as well as sociologists. This is the reason why politeness principles have been considered to have wide descriptive power in respect of language use (Lakoff, 1972, 1973), to be major determinants or linguistic behaviour (Leech, 1983), and to have universal status (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). Their politeness theories are all linked somehow to Grice’s Cooperative Principle. However, there are some differences across their main approaches. Grice sets the ideal standard for polite acts to refer, meanwhile Lakoff proposes the principles of politeness in communication in the form of do’s and don’t’s. Brown and Levinson’s approach seems to be the most elaborate one in which they specify the necessary strategies to encounter Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in communication.

2.3.1.1. Grice’s cooperative principle

The English language philosopher Paul Grice (1967) proposes that in ordinary conversation, speakers and hearers share a cooperative principle, the content of which is to “make your conversational contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs,
by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged’.
Grice goes on to describe four categories of special of this principle, which he calls maxims which are listed here: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

| Maxims of quantity | 1. Make your contribution as informative as required.  
|                   | 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. |
| Maxims of quality  | 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.  
|                   | 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. |
| Maxim of relation  | 1. Be relevant. |
| Maxims of manner   | Be perspicuous  
|                   | 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.  
|                   | 2. Avoid ambiguity.  
|                   | 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)  
|                   | 4. Be orderly. |

2.3.1.2. Lakoff and Leech’s politeness theory

R. Lakoff (1972) asks why it is that it is considered polite for an English-speaking hostess to offer a guest something to eat with (1a), that if she used (1b) it would be accounted familiar, and that use of (1c) for the same purpose would be considered downright rude.

1a. You must have some of this fruitcake

1b. You should have some of this fruitcake

1c. You may have some of this fruitcake

After all, on the face of it, (1a) would appear to be more overbearing, and (1c) less imposing. Why isn’t (1c) the more polite offer?
Participants in a conversation can choose to be polite; they can choose to avoid being rude; or they can choose to do as they please conversationally with utter disregard for other’s feelings and wishes.

In her opinion, politeness is “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange”

Lakoff (1973b) also describes three different rules a speaker might follow in choosing to be polite:

**Rule 1:** Don’t impose, which is the most formal politeness rule, is appropriate in situations in which there is acknowledged difference in power and status between the participants, such as between a student and a dean, or between a factory worker and the vice– president in charge of personnel. A speaker (S) who is being polite according to this rule will avoid, or ask permission or apologize for making the addressee (A) do anything which A does not want to do. This includes acts which distract A from whatever A may be doing or thinking about when S addresses him or her.

**Rule 2:** Offer options, which is a more informal politeness rule, is appropriate to situations in which the participants have approximately equal status and power, but are not socially close, for example, the relationship between a businessperson and a new client in a business, or the relationship between two strangers sharing a semiprivate room in a hospital. Offering options means expressing oneself in such a way that one’s opinion or request can be ignored without being contradicted or rejected, for example, saying “I wonder if it would help to get a perm” or “Maybe you should get a perm”, instead of “You should get a perm”. Generally, if S wishes to persuade A of some view or course of action, S will phrase his speech so that A does not have to acknowledge S’s intent.

**Rule 3:** Encourage feelings of camaraderie, which is for friendly or intimate politeness, is appropriate to intimates or close friends. Even lovers have to abide by certain “politeness” norms with each other, or their relationship will come unstuck, as evidenced by the fact that if a spouse or lover or best friend chose to display formal politeness behaviour, the
significant other would interpret it as being given the cold shoulder, and wonder what had caused the relationship to change. In intimate politeness, almost any topic of conversation is fair game, assuming that with a close friend, one should be able to discuss anything.

In contrast to formal politeness, the governing principle here is not only to show an active interest in the other, by asking personal questions and making personal remarks, but also to show regard and trust by being open about the details of one’s own life, experiences, feelings and the like. Participants use intimate forms of address, including nicknames and in some contexts, abusive epithets.

As a reaction to the shortcomings of Lakoff’s rules, Leech (1983) formulates a more comprehensive framework. He argues that there is a Politeness Principle that works in conjunction with the Cooperative Principle and identifies six associated interpersonal politeness maxims basing on the concepts “cost” and “benefit”

1. **The Tact maxim**: “minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other”

2. **The Generosity maxim**: “minimize the expression of benefit to self; maximize the expression of cost to self”.

3. **The Approbation maxim**: “minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other”.

4. **The Modesty maxim**: “minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self”.

5. **The Agreement maxim**: “minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other”.

6. **The Sympathy maxim**: “minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other”.

2.3.1.3. Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory
Brown and Levinson (1978) provide a slightly different perspectives on politeness phenomena which they have studied in more widely diverse languages and cultures. They suggest that the origin of politeness phenomena is the same in all societies. All human beings, in order to enter into social relationships with each other, must acknowledge the “face” of other people.

Interestingly enough, central to their theory is the abstract notion of “face” which is derived from that of Goffman (1955) “face-work” (the work of presenting faces to each other, protecting our own face, and protecting the other’s face), and from that of English folk term which ties face up with notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, and “losing face”.

Brown and Levinson assume that all adult competent members of a society have:

*Face, the public self-image that every member (of a society) wants to claim for himself consisting of two related aspects:*

- **Negative face:** the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.
- **Positive face:** the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated).

They also say that:

*Face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. That is, normally everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others’ faces, it is in general in every participant’s best interest to maintain each other’s face.*
They point out that it is a universal characteristic across cultures that speakers should respect each others’ expectation regarding self-image, take account of their feelings, and avoid Face Threatening Acts (FTAs – acts which threaten the face wants of the speaker, the hearer, or both of them). They also propose 4 kinds of FTAs:

1. Acts threatening to the hearer’s negative face by indicating (potentially) that the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding hearer’s freedom of action. *E.g.* ordering, suggesting, advising, reminding, threatening, warning, offering, promising, complimenting

2. Acts threatening to the hearer’s positive face by indicating (potentially) that the speaker does not care about the addressee’s feeling, wants, etc. – that in some important respect, he does not want hearer’s wants. *E.g.* disapproving, contempting, complaining, criticizing, disagreeing, accusing and raising taboo topics

3. Acts threatening to the speaker’s negative face. *E.g.* accepting an offer, accepting thanks, excusing, promising unwillingly

4. Acts threatening to the speaker’s positive face. *E.g.* apologizing, accepting compliments, and confessing

Brown and Levinson also outline five macrostrategies that speakers can seek to avoid these above Face Threatening Acts.

*Figure 1: The possible strategies for doing FTAs*
From the above figure, it is clear to see that in the context of the mutual vulnerability of face, the speaker has two choices: he/she may seek to avoid the Face Threatening Act (Don’t do the FTA) or decide to Do the FTA.

The speaker goes on record in doing an act A, if his/her statement is directly addressed to the hearer. Doing an act on record consists of doing it:

- **without redressive (baldly)** – the most clear, unobscure possible way. E.g. for a request, saying “Do X!”

- or **with redressive action** – giving “Face” to the hearer to prevent from the face damage of the FTA with some alterations and additions. Such action takes one of two forms, relying on which aspect of face (positive or negative) is being emphasized.

**Positive politeness** is oriented toward the positive face of the hearer, the so-called positive self-image. As the speaker wants at least some of the hearer’s wants, the potential face threat of an act is mitigated in this case.

**Negative politeness** is oriented toward the negative face of the hearer, marked by self-effacement, formality and restraint. The negative politeness strategies ensures that the speaker recognizes and respects the hearer’s negative face wants and will not violate the hearer’s freedom of action.

On the contrary, the speaker goes off in doing an act of A, if there is “more than one unambiguous attributable intention”. In other words, the statement that the speaker makes is indirectly addressed to the hearer, avoiding unequivocal impositions. The choice of this strategy is marked by the employ of metaphor, irony, rhetorical questions, understatements, tautologies and all kinds of hints.

The authors propose 15 strategies for achieving positive politeness and 10 for negative strategies as follows:
Positive Politeness Strategies

1. Notice, attend to H
2. Exaggerate
3. Intensify interest to H
4. Use in-group identity markers
5. Seek agreement
6. Avoid disagreement
7. Presuppose, assert common ground
8. Joke
9. Show concern for H’s wants
10. Offer, promise
11. Be optimistic
12. Include both S and H in the activity
13. Give reasons
14. Assume or assert reciprocity
15. Give gifts

Negative Politeness Strategies

1. Be conventionally indirect
2. Question, hedge
3. Be pessimistic
4. Minimize the imposition
5. Give deference
6. Apologize
7. Impersonalize S and H
8. State FTA as a general rule
9. Nominalize
10. Go on record as incurring a debt or off record as indebting H

However, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness has been criticized as not being universally valid, by linguists working with East-Asian languages, including Japanese. Matsumoto (1988) and Ide (1989) claim that Brown and Levinson assume the speaker's volitional use of language, which allows the speaker's creative use of face-maintaining strategies toward the addressee. In East Asian cultures like Japan, politeness is achieved not so much on the basis of volition as on discernment (wakimae, finding one's place), or prescribed social norms. Wakimae is oriented towards the need for acknowledgment of the positions or roles of all the participants as well as adherence to formality norms appropriate to the particular situation.

Japanese is perhaps the most widely known example of a language that encodes politeness at its very core. Japanese has two main levels of politeness, one for intimate acquaintances, family and friends, and one for other groups, and verb morphology reflects these levels.
Besides that, some verbs have special hyper-polite forms. This happens also with some nouns and interrogative pronouns. Japanese also employs different personal pronouns for each person according to gender, age, rank, degree of acquaintance, and other cultural factors.

2.3.2. Social factors affecting politeness in interaction

When we interact with other people, the language that we use is influenced by a number of factors which identify our many “faces” in society. Brown and Levinson (1987:74) propose three independent variables that have a systematic impact on the choice of appropriate politeness strategies.

- The **social distance** (D) of S and H (a symmetric relation)

- The **relative “power”** (P) of S and H (an asymmetric relation)

- The **absolute ranking (R) of imposition** in the particular culture

The social distance (D) is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which S and H stand for the purposes of this act. In some situations, D is based on a evaluation of frequency of interaction and the types of material and non-material goods (embracing face) between S and H. The evaluation will be usually measures of social distance relied on stable social attributes.

The relative power (P) which is an asymmetric social dimension is the degree to which H can impose his own plans and his own self – evaluation (face) at the expense of S’s plans and self – evaluation. Generally, there are two sources of P, either of which may be authorized or unauthorized – material control (over economic distribution and physical force) and metaphysical control (over the actions of others, by virtue of metaphysical forces subscribed to by those others.

The absolute ranking (R) of imposition which is situationally and culturally defined is the degree to which there is an interference in S’s wants or self- determination or approval (S’s negative and positive wants). There are normally two scales or ranks which are identifiable
for negative – face FTAs: a ranking of impositions in proportion to the expenditure of services (including the time provision) and good (including non–material goods such as information, regard expression and other face payments). As for positive – face FTA, the ranking of imposition embraces an assessment of the amount of “pain” given to H’s face, based on the differences between H’s desired self-image and that presented in FTA. Cultural rankings of facets of positive face (like success, niceness, beauty etc.) can be reranked in specific circumstances, so do the negative face rankings. Besides, that there are also personal rankings can explain why some people object to certain kinds of FTAs and some do not.

Obviously, the three social variables have a systematic effect on the choice of polite expression. Brown and Levinson also suggest the equation to compute the seriousness (or weightiness) of the FTAs, since that will determine the appropriate type of strategy to be used:

\[
W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x
\]

Where \( x \) is the FTA

The weightiness of the intended FTA is a composite of the social distance \( D \) between S and H, the power, \( P \), that H weilds over S and R, the degree to which \( x \) constitutes an imposition. The greater the value of \( W \), the closer should be the utterance to strategy 5 – Don’t do the FTA. The smaller the value of \( W \), the closer it should be to strategy 1 – Do the FTA baldly with no redressive action.

Moverover, the social dimensions P, D, R are called different names by different authors. Power can be named social power, status, dominance or authority.

Dominance pertains to the status relationship between the participants, which was specified either by the authority of one interactant over the other, or by the lack of authority in the case of persons of equal status (Trosborg, A. 1995: 148).
Distance can be understood as solidarity, closeness, familiarity or relational intimacy (Spencer – Oatey, 1996: 5-9).

2.3.3. Politeness and indirectness

The notions of indirectness and politeness play a crucial role in the negotiation of face during the realization of speech acts. Many cross-linguistic studies have argued for a positive correlation between politeness and linguistic indirectness.

It has been proposed in some researches that the chief motivation for using indirect forms is politeness (i.e. Brown and Levinson, 1978; Searle, 1979). The relationship between indirectness and politeness is studied by a number of pragmaticists such as Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1983, 1987), Blum-Kulka (1987), LoCastro (2003).

For example, according to the tact maxim (Leech, 1983), the speakers may increase the degree of politeness by using a more and more indirect kind of illocution while keeping the same propositional content. He also states that “indirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be”. In other words, the degree of politeness of the speaker is closely related to that of optionality he gives the hearers.

Brown and Levinson believe that there exists a close relationship between the use of indirect speech acts and politeness. They observe that “looking just at the indirect speech acts which are expressed by the asserting or questioning of their felicity conditions, we can make some generations about their relative politeness” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 134). They also consider that the degree of indirectness is inversely proportional to the degree of face threat. The regard negative redress (negative politeness) more polite than positive redress (positive politeness) because the speaker expends more effort in face – preserving work of the hearer in his use of more indirectness in speech acts.

According to LoCastro (2003), the greater the face threat, the greater the need to use linguistic politeness, and the more indirectness is used. The link between indirectness and politeness is further supported by Searle’s observation that “politeness is the most
prominent motivation for indirectness in requests, and certain forms tend to become the conventionally polite ways of making indirect requests” (1975: 76).

However, there are also studies arguing that indirectness and politeness are different dimensions. Blum-Kulka (1987) examined in a series of experiments designed to tap native speakers’ perception of politeness and indirectness in requests in Hebrew and English and found that indirectness does not necessarily imply politeness. According to Blum-Kulka, indirectness is comprised of two types: conventional indirectness (CI) which centers on conventions of language including propositional content (literal meaning) and pragmalinguistic form used to signal an illocutionary force, and nonconventional indirectness (NCI) which relies heavily on the context and tends to be “open ended, both in terms of propositional content and linguistic form as well as pragmatic force” (1989:42). She argues that too much indirectness may be perceived as a lack of clarity which is a marker of impoliteness.

As a matter of fact, it is not absolutely true to ascertain that indirectness communicates politeness but rather indirectness and politeness are really interrelated, and the level of indirectness considered as politeness is culturally bound. That is, the same degree of indirectness can be polite for one culture but not for the other. In this study, the view is taken that there exists a positive correlation between politeness and indirectness.

2.4. Complaining in previous studies

In a study in 1993 by Frescura, eighty three subjects provided the tape-recorded role-play data on reactions to complaints (mostly apologies). The subjects of the study belonged in four different groups: (a) native Italian speakers in Italy, (b) native English speakers in Canada, (c) Italians residing in Canada, and (d) English-Canadian learners of Italian. The respondents, after being tape-recorded in six role-play interactions, were asked to listen to all six recordings and to provide retrospective verbal report on:

a. how close to real life they felt their performance to be;

b. how dominant they felt their interlocutor was;
c. their sensitivity to the severity of the offense and to the tone of the complaint; and

d. their possible linguistic difficulties (for Italians in Canada and Canadian learners of Italian).

The data were coded according to a taxonomy comprising seven semantic formulas in two categories: (a) hearer-supportive (including formulas providing gratification and support for the "face" of the complainers), and (b) self-supportive (including formulas uttered by the speakers to defend and protect their own "face"). Performance was measured according to the three dimensions of (1) production (total output of formulas, including repetitions), (2) selection (types of formulas used, excluding repetitions), and (3) intensity of formulas produced. The results, after data analysis, revealed that native speakers of Italian had an overall preference for the self-supportive category of formulas; native speakers of English, however, had a preference for the hearer-supportive category. Moreover, Canadian learners of Italian did not indicate any preference; by way of contrast, Italian-Canadian speakers, though diverging some from the native norm, gave indication of language maintenance as well. Frescura had used verbal report which helped her establish, among other things, that the learners of Italian tended to think in English first before responding to the role plays.

Arent, R. (1996) carried out an exploratory study that compares the relative frequency of the performance and avoidance of oral complaints by 22 Chinese learners and 12 native speakers of American English. Respondents asked to respond to three problematic situations that were set in the same university housing complex. Audiotape role-plays, interview data on perceived situational seriousness, and verbal report data were obtained. Respondents were allowed to opt out, and effects of social distance, power, and type of social contract controlled for. Found that sociopragmatic decision making for Chinese learners and NSs of American English appears to be associated with individual perceptions of situational seriousness and with culturally-conditioned perceptions of the flexibility of explicit social contracts. In the car being towed situation, the Chinese learners saw it as more serious than the Americans did. The numerous limitations of the study are listed.

Indirect complaint (IC) refers to the expression of dissatisfaction to an interlocutor about someone or something that is not present. An indirect complaint is defined as a negative
evaluation wherein the addressee is neither held responsible for the perceived offense nor capable of remedying the perceived offense. Native English speakers usually use indirect complaints as a positive strategy for establishing points of commonality; they frequently employ indirect complaints (ICs) in an attempt to establish rapport or solidarity between themselves and their interlocutors. One of the early attempts at studying ICs was made by Boxer (1993a). In Boxer's study, 295 interlocutors produced 533 indirect complaints. Boxer identified three different types of IC themes (personal, impersonal, and trivial), and six types of IC responses (nothing or topic switch, question, contradiction, joke/teasing, advice/lecture, and commiseration). The study focused mainly on the role of gender, social status, social distance, and theme in connection to ICs. Since half of interlocutors in Boxer's study were Jewish, it was possible to investigate ethnicity. Boxer found that Jews complain more. She also found that approximately 25% of griping sequences served to distance the interlocutors from one another while 75% of the grippings were found to be rapport-inspiring by a group of ten native English-speaking raters. Boxer's study found that speakers of English often employed grippings in sequential interaction in an attempt to establish solidarity. It was also found that women mostly commiserated with ICs, while men contradicted or gave advice. Boxer noticed that ESL textbooks, with respect to gender, did not include ICs or included them but did not treat them as ICs. The study, therefore, suggested that non-native speakers (NNSs) should know that commiserating with complaints is important in that it signals to the speaker (S) that the hearer (H) is supportive; this builds solidarity.

In another study by Boxer (1993b), indirect complaints as well as commiseration in conversations between Japanese ESL learners and their E1 peers were studied. Boxer used spontaneous speech or field notes. In this study, 295 interlocutors were recorded in spontaneous conversation (195 women and 100 men). The issue that emerged was that of how to respond to an indirect complaint. The results showed that natives used (a) joking/teasing, (b) nonsubstantive reply ("hmn"), (c) question, (d) advice/lecture, (e) contradiction, and (f) commiseration. With NSs most responses were commiseration with some questioning. For NNSs, the major category was nonsubstantive, sometimes accompanied by some questioning and some commiseration. The study concluded that the
Japanese ESL learners were missing out on opportunities for conversation by not engaging in the interaction more fully; they did not utilize talk in the same way as NSs did.

In a cross-linguistic study of the speech act of complaining, Nakabachi (1996) compared complaints produced by Japanese L1 speakers and Japanese EFL speakers. The study looked at whether Japanese EFL learners changed their strategies of complaint when they spoke in English, and if so, what factors caused the change. The subjects of the study were thirty nine undergraduate students with an intermediate level of proficiency in English who had no experience of living in English speaking countries. A discourse completion test (DCT) including eight situations was used for data collection. Nakabachi (1996) found that almost half of the subjects changed their speech strategies in English; they used more severe expressions than natives did. This was interpreted as over-accommodation to the target language norms, and seemed to suggest the risk involved with attempting to adapt to the local sociocultural norms.

Thuan (1998) carried out the study to investigate complaining and responding strategies in terms of what has been done and what has not been done in English and Vietnamese. He studied the form of complaining and responding, identified the similarities and differences of the speech acts concerned between two languages. One of the interesting differences lied in politeness and face strategies. He pointed out that more often than not the English people chose positive politeness strategies: they went directly to the problem and in case of refusal; both parties still retained face after conversation. Vietnamese, on the other hand, often carried out negative politeness strategies to make the addressee feel good and highly appreciated even in the case of not accepting the complaining. Moreover, this contrastive study also aimed at pointing out the difficulties and pragmatic problems which Vietnamese learners may face when learning these speech acts in English, helping them avoid getting into troubles with culture specific problems.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter has established the framework of the theoretical background from which the *speech act theory*, *politeness theory* and other issues related to the matter of this thesis have been covered. This chapter will outline the research design, data collection instruments as well as the analytical framework.

3.1. The research questions

With a view to achieving the aims of the study, the research questions will be addressed as follows:

1. What are the linguistic politeness strategies used by American speakers in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

2. What are the linguistic politeness strategies used by Vietnamese speakers in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

3. How are American speakers similar to and different from Vietnamese speakers with respect to the choice of linguistic politeness strategies in realizing complaints in the contexts studied?

Specially,

1. How is the realization of complaints by American and Vietnamese speakers different with respect to the choice of politeness strategies:

   a. Where the speaker has lower power than the hearer (-P);  
   
   b. Where the speaker has equal power than the hearer (=P);  
   
   c. Where the speaker has greater power than the hearer (+P);
2. How is the realization of complaints by American and Vietnamese speakers different with respect to the choice of directive acts:

a. Where the speaker has lower power than the hearer (-P);

b. Where the speaker has equal power than the hearer (=P);

c. Where the speaker has greater power than the hearer (+P);

d. Where the speaker and the hearer are familiar with each other (-D);

e. Where the speaker and the hearer are unfamiliar with each other (+D).

With a view to answering the research questions, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used in this chapter.

3.2. Research design

In this section, all the issues related to the research design will be discussed: Discourse Completion Task, subjects, questionnaires including social variables manipulated in data collection instruments, content of the questionnaires and procedure to collect data.

3.2.1. Discourse Completion Task

A widely used and fruitful elicitation procedure is the Discourse Completion Test/Task (DCT), originally developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and used by such researchers as Olshtain and Cohen in their study of apologies in Hebrew and English, Beebe in her work on refusals in Japanese and English, and Eisenstein and Bodman in their investigation of expressions of gratitude among native and nonnative speakers of English.

Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is defined as any pragmatic measure that obliges examinees to (a) read a written situation description and then (b) write what they would
say next in the situation. For instance, a DCT which consists of different situations is followed by an open-ended respond: “You say ……”

DCT will be chosen as the data collection method in this study, as it has been widely used for the speech acts researches by many researchers such as Blum – Kulka (1982), Blum – Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Banerjee & Carrell (1988). They used DCT questionnaires in studying the speech acts of request, compliment and apology.

The DCT proves to bring some outstanding advantages over other methods such as ethnographic, role-play or multiple choice methods. First of all, the DCT enables the researchers to elicit data from the large sample of subjects easily, using the same situations where contextual variables are controlled. Second, it is an effective means of creating an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that will occur in natural speech (Cohen, 1996: 25). Third, DCT is seemingly used to study the stereotypical perceived requirements for a socially appropriate response and is a good way to gain insight into social and psychological factors that are likely to affect speech and performance, that is to say, it avoids those very context specific constraints that influence authentic data (Beebe, 1985: 10).

Nevertheless, some disadvantages of the use of the DCT in speech act researches can be seen. First, a written task for data collection of spoken language in the DCT cannot record some kinds of information such as prosodic and nonverbal features of oral interaction. Second, although the DCT ascertains the canonical shape of refusals, apologies, partings etc. in the minds of the speakers of that language, they are not natural speech and they do not accurately reflect natural speech. The DCT may reflect language which is closer to written than to spoken norms. Moreover, as the subjects have more time to respond in writing than in speaking, they also may provide longer responses than when they speak.

Notwithstanding some disadvantages, the DCT is still the most suitable method in designing the research. However, the concern about the validity of the constructs manipulated in the DCT that some researchers have raised will be discussed in more detail in the section 3.2.3.
3.2.2. Subjects

There are two groups of subjects in this study: one group of American speakers and the other of Vietnamese speakers. The first group consisted of 30 American who were officially working in the offices around Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Some of them were tourists on their vacations. Most of them whose ages ranged from 22 to 45 had university degree and came from urban areas in the United States of America. The second group – 30 Vietnamese speakers were also graduates and post graduates coming from urban areas such as Hanoi, Haiphong and Ho Chi Minh City. Their ages fluctuated from 25 to 40.

To ensure compatibility, the number of male and female subjects was approximately evenly distributed in each group (15 males and 15 females).

3.2.3. Data collection instruments

According to Tam, H.C. (1998: 50), to overcome the reliability problems in the use of DCT, the study would be divided into two main phases: the validity and reliability testing (MPQ) and the language elicitation questionnaires (DCT). This section also discusses the design of the two questionnaires including variables manipulated in data collection instruments and the content of the MPQ and DCT.

3.2.3.1. Variables manipulated in data collection instruments

As mentioned in section 2.3.2 in the previous chapter, the three social variables proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) – the relative power (P), the social distance (D) and the absolute ranking of imposition (R) have a systematic effect on the choice of an appropriate polite expression in performing a FTA in a given context.

They explain that P and D are “very general pan-cultural social dimensions” made up of compounded cultural-specific factors, and the relative rate of imposition is both culturally and situationally defined. As these factors are assumed to be independent, it seems that “where P and R are constant and have small values in the estimate of S – in other words, where the relative power of the S and H is more or less equal, and the imposition is not great … then D is the only variable which provide the motive for linguistic coding of the
FTA” (Brown and Levinson, 1987:80). It can be inferred that when P and R are small, D should be paid due attention to. In this study, R was intended to keep constantly low, thus mitigating the number of independent factors. Then, P and D would be variables to be investigated.

A bank of 18 real-life situations based on Brown and Levinson’s theory were designed to elicit complaints. The values of the variables are as follows:

- **The relative power** has three values:
  - P: Speaker has a lower rank, title or social status than hearer.
  - =P: Speaker and hearer are equal in rank, title or social status.
  - +P: Speaker has a greater rank, title or social status than hearer.

- **The relative social distance** refers to the feature of closeness and familiarity between speakers and hearers. The variable D investigated in this study has the following values:
  - -D: Speaker and hearer have very close relationship such as between members of family, coworkers, friends or neighbours.
  - +D: Speaker and hearer have never met each other or only know each other by sight.

- **The absolute ranking of imposition (R)** in this study is the degree of severity of face-threatening that the complaints constitute.

From the above mentioned values, there were 6 constellations assumed to underlie the situations:

1. The speaker has lower power than the hearer, and they are familiar with each other (-P, -D)
2. The speaker has lower power than the hearer; they are unfamiliar with each other
   (- P, + D)
3. The speaker and the hearer are equal in power; they are familiar with each other
   (= P, - D)
4. The speaker and the hearer are equal in power; they are unfamiliar with each other
   (= P, + D)
5. The speaker has higher power than the hearer; they are familiar with each other
   (+ P, - D)
6. The speaker has higher power than the hearer; they are unfamiliar with each other
   (+ P, + D)

3.2.3.2. The content of the questionnaires

Two types of questionnaires were used in this study: the MPQ and DCT. The first
questionnaire - Metapragmatic Questionnaire was intended to tap the subjects’ assessment
of the social variables in the contexts (Tam, H.C, 1998: 53). That is to say, the MPQ aimed
to test the validity and reliability of the 18 real – life situations in which variables’
constructs were reflected.

Sample of Metapragmatic Questionnaire:

Could you please read the situations on the following pages and tick (✓) the answer in the
appropriate box? Note that in each situation, in which a complaint may be made, the
speaker is “You”, the complainer and Hearer is the addressee.

Situation 2: You are sharing an apartment with your friend. Recently, the friend
comes home very late almost every night and makes a lot of noise, even though both
of you had agreed to be quiet after 11:30 p.m., when you first decided to live together.
You have put up with the noise for several days, but tonight you feel that you should
tell him/her about your annoyance.
A. How do you rate the social status of speaker with respect to hearer?  
1. Lower  
2. Equal  
3. Higher

B. How well-acquainted are the speaker and hearer?  
1. Not at all  
2. A little bit  
3. Very well

C. How do you rate the severity of face-threatening of the speaker’s complaint?  
1. Not severe  
2. Quite severe  
3. Severe

The second questionnaire – Discourse Completion Task consisted of 6 situations selected from 18 situations in the MPQ. The DCT was used to elicit complaints from the subjects.

**Sample of Discourse Completion Task:**

**Situation 5:** You are a university student whose paper has been marked unfairly by your professor. You are quite shocked because you worked very hard on it. You go to the professor’s room and talk to him about your disapproval of his given mark.

You complain: ……………………………………………………………………………………………

**3.2.4. Data collection procedure**

As mentioned earlier, the MPQ was used to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaires and the DCT was intended to elicit complaints from the subjects. They were conducted on 30 Vietnamese and 30 American subjects. For the first questionnaire, they were asked to rate three social factors in each situation. The results of the MPQ done by American subjects were used to select situations for the DCT. Meanwhile, the results by Vietnamese speakers were kept for comparing the choice of strategies in later analysis.

Afterwards, the valid and reliable situations in the MPQ were selected, and the DCT was prepared and administered. To make it consistent, subjects were still those who rated social factors in the MPQ. The results of the statistical analysis of complaints were reported in chapter 3.

**3.3. Results of the MPQ**
The following table will present the results of the ratings done by the American subjects

Table 1: Mean ratings of social factors by American subjects (n=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constellation</th>
<th>Situation number</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-P -D</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-P +D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=P -D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=P +D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+P -D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+P +D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1. The interpretation of the scores

**Question A**: How do you rate the social status of speaker with respect to hearer?

A score of 1 means –P (S has lower power than H). A score of 2 is equivalent to =P (S and H have equal power). A score of 3 refers to +P (S has higher power than H). Using a three point scale, the mean score of P was divided into three intervals: 1 − 1. 67 (interpreted as –P), 1.67 − 2.34 (interpreted as =P), and 2.34 − 3 (interpreted as +P).

**Question B**: How well-acquainted are the speaker and hearer?

In this thesis, situations were set up so that the speaker and hearer are either familiar with each other or not familiar with each other. So, the value =D (S and H are relatively familiar with each other) was not included. A score of 1 means +D (S and H are unfamiliar with
each other). A score of 3 means –D (S and H are familiar with each other). If the mean score of D is less than 2, D is interpreted as +D, and if the mean score of D is more than 2, D is interpreted as –D.

**Question C**: How do you rate the severity of face – threatening of the speaker’s complaint?

A score of 1 is equivalent to –R (the face – threatening of S’s complaint is not severe). A score of 2 means =R (the face – threatening of S’s complaint is quite severe). A score of 3 refers to +R (the face – threatening of S’s complaint is severe). In this study, if the mean score is less than 2, R is considered as low, and over 2, R is interpreted as high.

**3.3.2. Six investigated situations**

At first, I rejected situations with mean score of R which were over 2. The reason for doing this is that R was intended to keep fairly low, and P and D were varied across situations. Therefore, situations 6, 11 and 15 didn’t satisfy the condition.

For the constellation –P, -D, between 2 situations, situation 8 was chosen as it had the mean score of R less than 2, whereas situation 11 had the score of R over 2.

For the constellation –P, +D, situation 5 was obviously chosen as it was the only one in the group and it satisfied all the conditions.

For the constellation =P, -D, situation 2 was apparently accepted. It had the mean score of P exactly 2, the mean score of D closest to 3, and the mean score of R less than 2. Although situation 9 had score of P exactly 2 and the score of R less than 2, it had the score of D (2.13) not close to 3 as situation 2.

For the constellation =P, +D, among situations 1, 3, 14, 16 and 18, situation 14 seemed to be the most acceptable. It had the score of R less than 2. Besides, the mean score of P was exactly 2; the mean score of D (1.1) was closest to the score of 1.
For the constellation +P, -D, among situations 7, 12, 13, situation 7 was chosen, since it had the score of R less than 2, and it had the P and D value were exactly 3 (in comparison with score of P (2.23), D (2.9) in situation 12, and P (2.46), D (2.9) in situation 13)

For the constellation +P, +D, situation 10 was chosen, as it had the score of R less than 2. Compared with situation 4 in the group, in regard to the score of P, it had the value closest to the score of 3 (1.56), and the score of D was exactly 1.

3.4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework used in this study is based on Trosborg’s (1995) one.

3.4.1. Complaint strategies

Trosborg (1995) outlines four main complaint strategies which are very similar to those offered by Olshtain and Weinbach. They are no explicit reproach, expression of annoyance or disapproval, accusation and blame with their sub – categories.

3.4.1.1. No explicit reproach – Category I

As a complaint is an intrinsically face threatening act, the speaker may use the hinting strategies to avoid a conflict. This strategy is considered the most indirect since the speaker does not directly say something is bad, and the hearer does not know whether an offence is referred to or not.

Strategy 1: Hints

1. Don’t see much of you these days, do I? (Trosborg, 1995)

3.4.1.2. Expression of annoyance or disapproval – Category II

When the speaker thinks that the hearer does something bad, he/she can express his/her annoyance, dislike, disapproval, etc. By doing so in an explicit way, S implies that H should be responsible, but S does not mention H as the guilty person.
Strategy 2: Annoyance

2. You know, we agreed to be quiet after 11 p.m., don’t you? (my data)

Strategy 3: Ill consequences

3. I have already spar, spa, I’ve already spent ten minutes oh, quarter of an hour I think it was, cleaning up the bathroom itself. (Trosborg, 1995)

3.4.1.3. Accusation – Category III

Strategy 4: Indirect accusation

S can ask H questions about the situation or assert that he/she was in some way connected with the a certain state of affairs he/she considers bad for him/her. Formulating accusation as a question is less face threatening and more polite to H, meanwhile S has the opportunity to disclaim responsibility without explicitly contradicting H.

4. You borrowed my car last night, didn’t’ you? (Trosborg, 1995)

Strategy 5: Direct accusation

5. Did you happen to bump into my car? (Trosborg, 1995)

3.4.1.4. Blame – Category IV

Strategy 6: Modified blame

S expresses modified disapproval of an action for which the H is responsible.

6. Con không thể giọng gàng hơn được sao? (my data)

Strategy 7: Explicit blame (behaviour)

7. How on earth did you manage to be stupid? (Trosborg, 1995)

Strategy 8: Explicit blame (person)
8. Mùi thuóc lá của anh làm tôi khó chịu quá. (my data)

3.4.2. Directive acts

A directive act may be implied or added, when a complaint is uttered. This act aims at making H repair the damages he/she causes, and/or preventing a repetition of the deplorable act. Directive acts are not treated as complaint strategies, but additional acts.

3.4.2.1. Request for repair

A complaint is made in order to pass moral judgement and imply that H should do something to repair the damages that he/she brings to S.

E.g. I would appreciate it if you would reconsider my grade. (my data)

3.4.2.2. Threat

The speaker issues a threat to state an ultimatum with immediate consequences.

E.g. Tôi không đồng ý với kiểu sinh hoạt như vậy, nếu càu không thay đổi thì tôi hoặc càu sẽ chuyển đi chỗ khác. (my data)

3.4.2.3. Request for forbearance

In regard to future behaviour, S can make a request which is intended as a negative reinforcer relative to the subsequent repetition by the H of the specific behaviour.

E.g. Well, I’d really like to find out about this because I’m hoping it won’t happen again. (Trosborg, 1995).
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the two social variables investigated in this study are relative power (P) and social distance (D), while the absolute ranking of imposition (the severity of face – threatening of S’s complaint) is kept constantly low. This chapter will discuss the impact of P and D on the choice of strategies and directive acts in relation to the politeness value of the speech act of complaining. Specifically, this chapter will help to answer this following question:

- How are Vietnamese speakers and American speakers similar to and different from each other with respect to the choice of politeness strategies and directive acts in relation to variation of the social dimensions P and D in the contexts studied?

This chapter explains the above question in section subdivided according to the following settings:

- where S has lower power than H (-P)
- where S and H are equal in power (=P)
- where S has higher power than H (+P)
- where S and H are familiar with each other (-D)
- where S and H are unfamiliar with each other (+D)

4.1. Choice of strategy

The data is analysed using Independent Sample t-test of SPSS Statistical Package 13.0 to determine whether there is probability a significant difference between the means of two independent samples. Once the analysis is run for each situation, two tables in the output will appear. The first table is called “Group statistics” showing the sample size for each
group, represented in the “N” column, as well as the standard deviation, the standard error of the mean and especially the mean test score for each group from which the chart for each setting is drawn. Table 2 “Group statistics in situation 5” is a sample.

Table 2: Group statistics in situation 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1000</td>
<td>.30513</td>
<td>.05571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.5667</td>
<td>.50401</td>
<td>.09202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoyance</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1333</td>
<td>.34575</td>
<td>.06312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1000</td>
<td>.30513</td>
<td>.05571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill consequences</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0667</td>
<td>.25371</td>
<td>.04632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Accusation</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.4000</td>
<td>.49827</td>
<td>.09097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1667</td>
<td>.37905</td>
<td>.06920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Accusation</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.2333</td>
<td>.43018</td>
<td>.07854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1000</td>
<td>.30513</td>
<td>.05571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Blame</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.1333</td>
<td>.34575</td>
<td>.06312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Blame on Behaviour</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000(a)</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000(a)</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Blame on Person</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000(a)</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.00000(a)</td>
<td>.00000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a t cannot be computed because the standard deviations of both groups are 0.

The second table is called “Independent sample t-test statistics”. There are many statistics given in the table for which there is no need to ask. The first set of statistics comes under the heading of the Levene’s test for equality of variances. This checks to see if the variances of the two groups in the analysis are equal. If they are not, then SPSS makes an adjustment to the remainder of the statistics to account for this difference. If the observed probability value of the Levene’s test is greater than 0.05, the top row of t test statistics will be used. If the observed probability value of the Levene’s test is less than 0.05, the bottom row of t test statistics will be used.

When the set of t test statistics to use is decided, the observed t statistic value and its corresponding probability value can be found. If the observed probability value (p) or Sig.
(2-tailed) is greater than 0.05, there will be no statistically significant difference. If the observed probability value (p) or Sig. (2-tailed) is less than 0.05, there will be statistically significant difference. Table 3 “Independent sample t-test statistics in situation 5” is a sample.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test statistics in situation 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>45.298</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-4.338</td>
<td>47.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoyance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.633</td>
<td>.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>57.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill consequences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>9.609</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.439</td>
<td>29.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Accusation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>16.626</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.041</td>
<td>54.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Accusation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>8.449</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.385</td>
<td>52.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Blame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>24.926</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.112</td>
<td>29.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1. Choice of strategy in lower power setting (-P)
What came as a nice surprise is the fact that American and Vietnamese speakers in this study greatly differed in the variation of strategy choice with respect to –P. Most notably, they were also somewhat different in their assessment of indirectness.

**Table 4: Choice of strategy with respect to –P (Sit5, Sit8)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strat.</th>
<th>Situation 5 (-P, +D) Mark</th>
<th>Situation 8 (-P, -D) TV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strat = Strategy
Strat1 = Hints
Strat2 = Annoyance
Strat3 = Ill consequences
Strat4 = Indirect Accusation
Strat5 = Direct Accusation
Strat6 = Modified Blame
Strat7 = Explicit Blame on Behaviour
Strat8 = Explicit Blame on Person

As can be clearly seen in Chart 1, in situation 5, most VS opted for Strat1 – *Hints* with the very high percentage (56.7%) in comparison with 10% of AS. There is obviously significant difference between two groups because the probability value for the Levene’s
test is Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, the observed $t$ statistic value is $t = -4.338$ and its corresponding probability is Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 (Refer to the Appendices for more details).

Interestingly enough, the most overwhelmingly used complaints among Vietnamese speakers were: “Em đã rất cố gắng trong thời gian vừa qua” (I-try-my-best-during-this-semester) or “Bài luận em viết rất tốt mà” (My-essay-seem-good) or “Sao điểm bài luận của em thấp thế a?” (Why-mark-so-low?).

Unlike VS, AS seemingly chose Strat4 – Indirect Accusation most often for their complaints (40%). Once again, the difference between them can be seen with the significant level for the Levene’s test 0.000 < 0.05, $t$ value 2.041, and the observed probability value 0.046 < 0.05. In this powerless and unfamiliar setting like this situation, AS tended to say such things as “Sir, tell me what I did wrong on this paper?”, or “Did you give me low mark for this wonderful paper?”, or “I believe there is a mistake in your grading”.

Besides, the American and Vietnamese speakers also differed in their preference for Strat6 – Modified Blame. 13% of AS chose this strategy, whereas none of VS did so (0%). As appears in table 5, the value for the Levene’s test is less than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.000), the $t$ statistic is 2.112 and its corresponding probability value is also less than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.043).

Noticeably, concerning the level of indirectness in this situation, AS were inclined to use more direct strategies than VS. For example, AS’s preference was demonstrated in the choice of Indirect Accusation, Direct Accusation and Modified Blame. Meanwhile, VS tended to opt for Hints and Indirect Accusation.

The difference between AS and VS in this situation may be situationally specific and it may be derived from the role relationship between S and H as well as S’s perception of this role relationship. Traditionally, in Vietnam, teaching is one of the most noble and respectable job and the teacher used to rank second only to the King (King, Teacher, Father) (Quân, Sư, Phụ). Hence, even when the students are not content with the results, they may have recourse to hinting strategies in which case the complainable is not
mentioned in the proposition as they do not directly state that something is bad. Although this strategy is weak complaint strategy, it might be used successfully to prepare for some directive acts.

Undoubtedly, in situation 8, most of AS chose Strat1 – *Hints* (40%) with the probability value for the Levene’s test Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, the *t* statistic value 2.041 and the probability value Sig. = 0.046 < 0.05 (“I’ve been waiting to watch football”, or “Mom, this game is only on tonight”). Whereas, most VS used Strat5 – Direct Accusation (40%) with the probability value Sig. = 0.020 < 0.05 (“Mẹ xem kênh này 2 giờ rồi đấy” (You-been-watching-2-hours) or “Mẹ xem lâu quá, sắp đến bóng đá rồi” (You-been-watching-long-time-football-about-begin).

The second preferable strategy by AS was Strat3 – *Ill consequences* (with the probability value Sig. = 0.024 < 0.05). The consequence resulting from S’s mother watching TV for 2 hours was confirmed by the common statement “I’m going to miss the match”. Meanwhile, the second frequently chosen strategy by VS was *Annoyance* which seemed to be less direct than *Ill consequences* (with the probability value Sig. = 0.029 < 0.05).

However, it is interesting to note that both groups were somewhat similar in their rejection of two most direct strategies *Explicit Blame on Behaviour* and *Explicit Blame on Person* in powerless and familiar setting. It might be due to the fact that the social variable P had different influences on two groups in the choice of complaining strategies. There was a tendency that the speakers tried to avoid using too direct complaints when they were in lower position than the hearers.

### 4.1.2. Choice of strategy in equal power settings (=P)

In the settings where speaker and hearer are equal in power, American and Vietnamese subjects differed in the trend of indirectness regarding the choice of strategy. American speakers tended to show more directness in their complaints than Vietnamese ones.

*Table 5: Choice of strategy with respect to =P (Sit2, Sit14)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strat</th>
<th>Situation 2 (=P, -D) Noise</th>
<th></th>
<th>Situation 14 (=P, +D) Smoke</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>AS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>p ≤ 0.05</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strat = Strategy
Strat1 = Hints
Strat2 = Annoyance
Strat3 = Ill consequences
Strat4 = Indirect Accusation
Strat5 = Direct Accusation
Strat6 = Modified Blame
Strat7 = Explicit Blame on Behaviour
Strat8 = Explicit Blame on Person

Chart 2: Choice of strategy with respect to =P (Sit2, Sit14)

Chart 2 shows the relative frequency of 8 strategies for 2 groups: American and Vietnamese speakers in situation 2 (=P, -D) and situation 14 (=P, +D). An amazing fact becomes quite evident from the first glance at Chart 2: there is a significant difference between two groups.

As can be clearly seen from the Chart 2, the striking feature to note is that the most commonly used strategy in the group American speakers is Strat5 – Direct Accusation (33.3%) in situation 2. As described in table 3, it is obvious to notice that the observed
probability value is \( \text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05 \) for the Levene’s test, the observed \( t \) statistics value is \( t = 2.693 \) and its observed probability value is \( \text{Sig.} = 0.010 < 0.05 \) (refer to Appendices for more details). Therefore, it can be understood that there is a statistically difference between two groups (33.3% in comparison with 6.7%). While Strat5 – Direct Accusation was favoured by American Speakers, Vietnamese Speakers preferred Strat2 – Annoyance (40%), with the observed probability value \( \text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05 \) for the Levene’s test. Accordingly, the \( t \) statistics value is \( t = -2.041 \) and its probability is \( \text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.046 < 0.05 \). Once again, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant difference between the choices of strategies Direct Accusation and Annoyance of American and Vietnamese Speakers.

The common utterances to accuse hearer directly in American English were: “You’ve made a lot of noises, recently”, “Why can’t you keep silent when you return home?” or “You have chosen to break the rule”. Meanwhile, Vietnamese speakers tended to express their annoyance by saying such things as: “Mày biết là tao khó ngủ mà?”(You-know-I-find-hard-sleep-didn’t-you?) or “Chúng ta đã quy định không đi về khuya và làm ồn sau 11h cơ mà”(No-noise-after-11h) or even more direct “Ăm ăng quả, không thể nào ngủ được”(So-noisy-I-can’t-sleep).

One more interesting thing worth noticing is that none of VS (0%) chose Strat1 – Hints (the most indirect strategy) and Strat8 – Explicit Blame on Person (the most direct strategy). It would in fact be interesting to see that in the situation where S and H are roommates (equal in Power and familiar with each other) Vietnamese speakers tended to choose something neither too direct nor too indirect. Quite a few American speakers opted for two these strategies at the extremes. As presented in table 5, the Levene’s observed probability values for both Strat1 and Strat8 of groups are \( \text{Sig.} = 0.43 < 0.05 \), the observed \( t \) statistic values are \( t = 1.000 \) and its corresponding observed probability values are \( \text{Sig.} = 0.326 > 0.05 \). Once \( p = 0.326 \) is greater than 0.05 for Strat1 and Strat8, there is no significant difference between two groups, although 33% of AS chose those two strategies when they wanted to complain.

The second frequently used strategies (an amazingly coincident number: 16.7%) of AS are Strat2 – Annoyance, Strat3 – Ill consequences, and Strat6 – Modified Blame. For Strat2, the
Levene’s observed probability value is Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, observed \( t \) statistic is \( t = -2.041 \) and observed probability value is Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.046 < 0.05. Thus, there is a significant difference between AS and VS in terms of the choice of Strat2 – Annoyance. On the contrary, there is no significant difference for the use of Strat3 and Strat6 between two groups because the values \( p = 0.527 \) and \( 0.456 \) (respectively) are much greater than the value 0.05.

In situation 14, that Strat7 – Explicit Blame on Behaviour is the most frequently used strategies by American speakers (33.3%) indicated that they were direct in this situation (with the Levene’s probability value is Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 and \( t \) test’s probability value is \( t = 2.693 \) and probability value is Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.010 < 0.05). On the contrary, Vietnamese speakers seemed more indirect when they employed Strat2 – Annoyance (with the high percentage 36.7%). The difference can be seen from the figures in table 5 with the probability value Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.005 which is much less than 0.05. It, therefore, appears that American and Vietnamese speakers differed in the trend of indirectness. For situation 14, AS said such things as “The smoke from your cigarette is bothering me greatly”, “You are contaminating the atmosphere”, or “You are breaking the rule” or something even more direct “How on earth did you manage to be thoughtless” or “You are not supposed to smoke in train”. Meanwhile, Vietnamese tended to be milder in saying such things: “Khói thuốc của anh làm tôi khó chịu” (Your-smoke-bothering-me), “Anh biết là biên ghi không được hút thuốc lá” (Sign-indicate-you-not-smoke-here) or “Anh nhìn xem phòng toàn khói thuốc’ (Room-full-smoke).

As can be seen from Chart 2, no VS opted for Strat8 – Explicit Blame on Person which is the most direct and strongest strategy (with 0%) in both situation 2 and situation 14 where S and H are equal in power (\( p = 0.023 < 0.05 \)). Whereas, instead of using indirect strategy, AS were inclined to employ more direct ones (Indirect Accusation, Direct Accusation, Modified Blame, and Explicit Blame on Behaviour) which seem to have explicit impacts and increase the weight of their complaints. It can be understood that AS tended to obey the rule better than VS. Therefore, the rule violation which affects other people is unacceptable in any public places with the sign of no smoking. No other complaining strategies can be more effective than the explicit condemnation of the H’s action. That
strategy might go beyond the irritation of the S because smoking regardless of the sign is certainly against the rule.

Apart from Strat1 – *Hints*, Strat3 – *Ill consequences* is the least commonly used one. Although American and Vietnamese speakers seemed not to be similar in their choice of strategy used in this situation, the frequencies with which they used *Ill consequences* were not significantly different (with Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.326 > 0.05). While 3.3% of VS used this strategy, no one of AS opted for it (0%).

In short, in a setting where the speaker and hearer are of equal power (the Noise and Smoke situations), American and Vietnamese speakers are different in the trend of indirectness regarding the choice of strategy. The above mentioned outcomes suggest that Americans are more direct than Vietnamese speakers as more VS used Strat2 – *Annoyance* for their complaints no matter what the value of the variable Social Distance. It means that in situation 2 and situation 14, the variable D changed from negative to positive, but Vietnamese speakers still showed their preference for the choice of it. Meanwhile, Strat7 – *Explicit Blame on Behaviour* which was chosen by AS with the high percentage is more direct than the strategy chosen by Vietnamese speakers.

### 4.1.3. Choice of strategy in higher power setting (+P)

Overall, the strategy choice of American and Vietnamese speakers seemed to be similar in settings where S had greater power than H (the Mess and Steak situations). Nevertheless, if a close look is taken at the Chart 3, differences between two groups in the choice of strategies can be detected. Although AS and VS made similar choice of some certain strategies, the frequencies with which they utilized are different across situations. There is a tendency that in those situations, AS showed the higher degree of directness than VS regarding the choice of strategies.

*Table 6: Choice of strategy with respect to +P (Sit7, Sit10)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strat</th>
<th>Situation 7 (+P, -D) Mess</th>
<th>Situation 10 (+P, +D) Steak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Strat5</td>
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<td>26.7</td>
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<td>Strat6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strat = Strategy
Strat1 = Hints
Strat2 = Annoyance
Strat3 = Ill consequences
Strat4 = Indirect Accusation
Strat5 = Direct Accusation
Strat6 = Modified Blame
Strat7 = Explicit Blame on Behaviour
Strat8 = Explicit Blame on Person

* p ≤ 0.05
- not significantly different

Chart 3: Choice of strategy with respect to +P (Sit7, Sit10)

As can be seen in Chart 3, the most frequently chosen strategies by American speakers in situation 7 (Mess) is Strat5 – Direct Accusation, and there is no difference between two groups (26.7% of AS and 33.3% of VS opted for this strategy). The probability value is Sig. = 0.273 which is greater than 0.05 for the Levene’s test. Therefore, the top row of t test statistics will be used. Accordingly, the t statistic value is -0.555 and probability value is 0.581 > 0.05.
Likewise, although much more Vietnamese speakers opted for Strat2 – *Annoyance* with the percentage of 26.7% in comparison with 10% of AS, these two groups seemed to be similar concerning strategy choice. In detail, the probability value is $\text{Sig.} = 0.001$ which is less than 0.05 for the Levene’s test. The $t$ statistic value and its corresponding probability value are -1.680 and 0.099 (> 0.05) respectively. Such utterances as “What a mess!” or “Look at these things!” can be obviously seen from the DCT intended for the American subjects. Vietnamese were quite similar in the way to express their annoyance, e.g. “Thật là bừa bãi!” (What-a-mess!), or “Con thì nhìn xem cái gì đây?” (Look! What-hell-that?). Sao con lại bày bừa thế này?” (Why-you-leave-room-mess?) “Con chi giới bày bừa thôi” (You-always-leave-room-mess!), or “Đến bao giờ thì con tội bày bừa!” (When-you-stop-make-dirty?).

Their preference for the choice of *Explicit Blame* clearly indicates that AS and VS were direct in making complaints to those who were in lower position than them. That is to say, the social variable Power was found to be dramatically associated with the choice of *Explicit Blame* strategy (especially on hearer). No other strategies were more effective than *Explicit Blame* in which S directly formulates his/her condemnation of H.

Similarities between AS and VS also occur in the choice of some other strategies, especially Strat8 – *Explicit Blame on Person* which the same number ($n = 2$) of them preferred in the situation where S had higher power than H.

However, the concentration of AS on Strat5 – *Direct Accusation* and Strat7 – *Explicit Blame on Behaviour* shows that AS are more direct than VS when making complaints in higher power familiar situation. That VS opted for various strategies (Strat2, Strat5, Strat7 and Strat8) suggests that they were prone to employ less direct strategies in the same situation.

In situation 10, the highest percentage of American (30%) chose Strat4 – *Indirect Accusation* to make complaints about the overdone steak that the waiter brought to them. Some common complaints by American were “I asked for a rare steak, but this is overdone”, “I ordered rare”, “I cannot eat this. I ordered my steak rare” or “I requested that the steak be rare”. Those spoken utterances were overwhelmingly used by American
speaker. Although only 10% VS opted for this strategy, there is actually no significant difference between two groups in general. The reason is that the probability value is $p = 0.055$ which is greater than 0.05 (as the probability value for the Levene’s test is $0.000 < 0.05$).

It is interestingly noticeable that nearly the same percentage of Vietnamese speakers (33.3% with $n = 10$) preferred Strategy 2 – Annoyance in this situation. Notwithstanding the different frequencies with which the strategies were used (30% and 13.3% respectively for American and Vietnamese speakers), they showed their likeness in the choice of complaining strategies because the observed probability value is $0.122 > 0.05$. In higher power and unfamiliar setting, VS tended to say: “Tôi gọi món tái” (I-ordered-rare) or “Tôi gọi bò tái cơ mà nhỉ?” (I-ordered-rare-didn’t-I?), or “Anh nhìn lại xem đây có phải là thịt bò tái không?”(Look-this-dish-rare?).

What is more, the similarity between two groups became much more evident in situation 10. That is, AS appeared to be similar to VS when exploiting some strategies. The same number of AS and VS utilized Strat1 – Hints ($n = 5$ accounting for 16.7%) and Strat8 – Explicit Blame on Person ($n = 0$).

On balance, although AS and VS did not entirely have the same results in terms of frequency of preferred strategies, there is no statistically significant difference between them in the higher power and familiar setting (situation 7) and higher power and unfamiliar setting (situation 10). However, it is obvious to see that they are different in the degree of indirectness. VS seemed to be less direct than AS in situation 7, but more direct than AS in situation 10. It can be explained that the social variable P had little effect on the preference of strategies in situation 10. This suggests that some of the differences can be ascribed to the combination of both P and D.

4.1.4. Choice of strategy in familiar setting (-D)

With respect to –D, the American and Vietnamese speakers in this study differed in the choice of the most frequently chosen strategies; however, they tended to be similar in the choice of the least preferred ones.
Table 7: Choice of strategy with respect to –D (Sit 2, Sit 7, and Sit 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strat</th>
<th>Situation 2 (-D,=P)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Situation 7 (-D,+P)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Situation 8 (-D,-P)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig. ≤ 0.05</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig. ≤ 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strat = Strategy  
Strat1 = Hints  
Strat2 = Annoyance  
Strat3 = Ill consequences  
Strat4 = Indirect Accusation  
Strat5 = Direct Accusation  
Strat6 = Modified Blame  
Strat7 = Explicit Blame on Behaviour  
Strat8 = Explicit Blame on Person  

Chart 4: Choice of strategy with respect to –D (Sit 2, Sit 7, and Sit 8)

Looking at Chart 4, in situation 2, one third of American speakers (33.3%) used Direct Accusation for their complaints more often than any other strategies. The significant difference between two groups can be explained by the figure in Table 5 with the probability value is Sig. = 0.010 < 0.05. In contrast, the most commonly used by VS was Strat2 – Annoyance, for 40% of them preferred it, while only 16.7% of AS did (Sig. = 0.046 < 0.05).
Another difference can be attributed to the frequency with which the most preferred strategies were used in situation 8. As appears in Chart 2, twelve American speakers (40%) opted for \textit{Hints}, whereas only 5 VS did (16.7%) with probability value Sig. = 0.046 which is less than 0.05. Conversely, in the setting where the mother – the Hearer is the complainee, that those speakers chose \textit{Direct Accusation} more often showed that they were seemingly more direct than AS. This is the only situation out of six where VS demonstrated higher degree of directness than AS.

Obviously, the social variable D had effect on the choice of strategy. Comparing the strategies VS used in situation 2 with those in situation 8, it is clear to see that VS tended to complain to their family members more explicitly and directly than to their roommates, even though in both situations S and H were familiar with each other. It can be inferred that the more familiar S and H are, the more direct strategies S use to complain.

Besides differences, AS and VS were somehow similar in the choice of Strat8 – \textit{Explicit Blame on Person} which ranked the lowest in frequency in situation 2, 8 (with p = 0.326 and 0.083 respectively > 0.05) and Strat1 – \textit{Hints} in situation 7 with the percentage of 0\% (n = 0). As mentioned above, VS tended to be more direct with familiar people, but they could not be most direct with those of higher power than them. Situation 8 is a good example because none of them used Strat8 to blame their mother for watching TV for more than two hours.

4.1.5. Choice of strategy in unfamiliar setting (+D)

In the setting where S is unfamiliar with H regardless of the social variable P, AS seemed to be different from VS with respect to the most frequently chosen complaining strategies and the degree of indirectness. In other words, AS appeared to be more direct in choosing complaining strategies.

\textit{Table 8: Choice of strategy with respect to +D (Sit5, Sit 10, and Sit 14)}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strat</th>
<th>Situation 5 (+D,-P)</th>
<th>Situation 10 (+D,+P)</th>
<th>Situation 14 (+D,=P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig. ≤ 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strat = Strategy  
Strat1 = Hints  
Strat2 = Annoyance  
Strat3 = Ill consequences  
Strat4 = Indirect Accusation  
Strat5 = Direct Accusation  
Strat6 = Modified Blame  
Strat7 = Explicit Blame on Behaviour  
Strat8 = Explicit Blame on Person

* p ≤ 0.05  
- not significantly different

**Chart 5: Choice of strategy with respect to +D (Sit5, Sit10, and Sit14)**

Looking at Chart 5, it is apparent that American speakers showed their preference for Strat4 – *Indirect Accusation* (in the Mark and Steak situations). While twelve AS used this strategy accounting for 40%, only five VS (16.7%) did (p < 0.05). Besides, Strat7 – *Explicit Blame on Behaviour* was the most preferred strategy at 33.3% with p < 0.05 in the Smoke situation.

On the other hand, Vietnamese speakers sounded to be most indirect in situation 5. Actually, Strat1 – *Hints* ranked the highest in frequency (56.7%) in comparison with 10% of AS (p = 0.000 < 0.05). They tended to be more direct in situation 10 and 14, since they
used *Annoyance* and *Direct Accusation* more often than any other strategies at the frequency of 30% and 26.7% (Steak), 36.7% and 26.7% (Smoke) with p which is almost less than 0.05.

One possible explanation for this is that in unfamiliar higher power setting (+D), to avoid potential conflicts with the hearers, Vietnamese speakers tended to be milder and less direct in mentioning his or her ill feeling and dissatisfaction toward the H by not stating directly that something is bad especially in situation 5 where the professor is the complainee. According to them, complaining to the professor about their mark is really a big thing that threatens the face of him/her. Accordingly, they had to compensate by being more indirect than in other cases; thus they utilized the most indirect one, which is the *Hints* strategy.

Nevertheless, concerning the least preferable strategies, the Vietnamese speakers seemed to be similar to the American speakers. The amazing coincidence is that both groups expressed no interest in using *Explicit Blame on Person* in situation 5 and 10 (with n = 0), and only 1 American out of 30 opted for *Explicit Blame on Behaviour* in the Smoke situation. Even though VS avoided using the most direct strategy in situation 14, 6.7% Americans did (n = 2). Furthermore, the likeness between two groups can be seen in the fact that they increased the level of directness from situation 5 (Mark) to situation 10 (Steak) and finally to situation 14 (Smoke). That is to say, they were least direct in situation 5 and most direct in situation 14.

### 4.2. Choice of directive act

According to Trosborg, when a complaint is issued, a directive act may be implied or added in order to make the hearer repair the damages s/he has caused, or prevent a repetition of the deplorable act. Directive acts include Act1 – *Request for Repair*, Act 2 – *Threat* and Act3 – *Request for Forbearance* which are treated as additional acts appearing subsequent to a complaint.

The data is analysed using Independent Sample $t$-test of SPSS Statistical Package 13.0 to determine whether there is probability a significant difference between the means of
directive acts of two independent samples. The results of the independent means $t$ test are shown in two tables namely Group statistics and Independent sample $t$-test statistics (refer to part 4.1.1 to understand how figures are interpreted and Appendices for more details).

**4.2.1. Choice of directive act in lower setting (–P)**

**Table 9: Choice of directive act with respect to –P (Sit5, Sit8)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Situation 5 (-P, +D) Mark</th>
<th>Situation 8 (-P, -D) TV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Act = Directive Act
* $p < 0.05$
- not significantly different

Chart 6: Choice of directive act with respect to –P (Sit5, Sit8)

As can be seen in Chart 6, the most important feature to note is that American speakers tended to use directive acts more often than Vietnamese speakers. In other words, AS and VS were significantly different in the additional act most frequently chosen for the setting where the speaker has lower power than the hearer. In Situation 5 (Mark), while 40% of American speakers ($n = 12$) chose Act1 – *Request for Repair* only 13.3% of Vietnamese speakers ($n = 4$) did so with the probability value for the Levene’s test = 0.000 < 0.05 and the Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.020 < 0.05. Likewise, in situation 8 (TV) while 33.3% of American speakers ($n = 10$) opted for Act1 – *Request for Repair* functioning as an incentive for the
hearer to repair the complainable only two Vietnamese did so (6.7%) with the probability value for the Levene’s test = 0.000 < 0.05 and the Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.010 < 0.05.

In situation 5, the common requests for repair by AS were: “I am hoping you could explain why I got this grade?”, “Could I perhaps find out how the grades were figured?”, “Can you tell me what you didn’t like about it?”, “Would you be so kind as to give it a second reading?” or “Can you help me understand why I got this grade?”. Meanwhile, VS tended to say such things as “Thành phố có thể xem lại giúp em bài luận này được không a?”(Can-you-read-essay-again?), “Thành phố, thành phố có thể chỉ cho em lỗi sai được không a?”(Can-you-point-out-mistakes?).

Another difference can be noted is that in lower setting, only seven Vietnamese speakers chose Act1 for their complaint, and none of them chose Act2 and Act3. Fewer American speakers opted for Act1 in situation 8 than in situation 5, as some of them chose Act2 (n =4) with p = 0.043 < 0.05. Besides difference, AS and VS were somewhat similar in their choice of Act3 – Request for forbearance for which none of them opted in both situation 5 and situation 8.

4.2.2. Choice of directive act in equal setting (=P)

Overall the directive act choice of American and Vietnamese speakers appeared to be similar in settings where the interlocutors were equal in power (the Noise and Smoke situations).

Table 10: Choice of directive act with respect to =P (Sit2, Sit14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Situation 2 (=P, -D) Noise</th>
<th>Situation 14 (=P, +D) Smoke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act1</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Act = Directive Act
* p ≤ 0.05
- not significantly
Act1 = Request for Repair
Act2 = Threat
Act3 = Request for Forbearance
As appears in Chart 7, notwithstanding the different frequencies with which American and Vietnamese speakers used the directive acts, they were similar in their choice in the equal power settings (situation 2 and 14). Among three additional acts, *Request for Repair* seems to be the most favourable. While 26.7% and 43.3% of American speakers chose Act1 for their complaint (n = 8 and 13 respectively) only six and ten Vietnamese speakers opted for it in both situations. Although fewer VS opted for it, there were no significantly difference between two groups (with Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.549 > 0.05 for situation 2 and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.434 > 0.05 for situation 14). American speakers tended to say in situation 2: “Can you quiet down?” or “Is there any way you could come home by round 10:30 or be more quiet when you come in at 11:30?” and more directive acts were used in situation 14: “Could you please smoke in the smoking section?”, “Please stop smoking” or “If you want to smoke, go somewhere else”. Similarly, in situation 2, seven Vietnamese speakers said: “Mày làm ơn đừng về muộn lại còn gây ầm i nœa” (Don’t-go-home-late-and-make-noise) or “Mày đừng làm ồn nœa”(Stop-making-noise). However, more VS chose *Request for Repair* (n = 10) in situation 14: “Anh làm ơn tắt thuốc được không?”(Can-you-stop-smoking?).

Moreover, AS and VS were also similar in their preference for Act2 – *Threat* in situation 2. While four American speakers issued threats (13.3%), three Vietnamese did so (p = 0.694 > 0.05). Common threats by AS were: “If you cannot live up to our previous agreement concerning no noise after 11:30, I am going to move to another apartment” or “If we’re going to continue to live together, you have to be quiet” or “I shall be leaving soon if you
continue making noises”. VS tended to threat the same thing, i.e. leaving house if this continues to happen: “Nếu không thay đổi thì tôi sẽ chuyển ra chỗ khác” (If-you-do-not-change-I-move) or “Chúng ta không nên sống với nhau nữa” (We-shouldn’t-live-together) or “Nếu không thực hiện được thì chúng ta nên ở riêng sẽ thôi mai cho cả hai” (If-you-cannot-do-we-shouldn’t-live-together).

Noticeably, nearly the same number of AS and VS used Act3 – Request for Forbearance in situation 2 (n = 3 and n = 4 respectively with Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.694 > 0.05). AS tended to say: “I’m hoping it won’t happen again” or “… as long as it doesn’t happen again”. Similarly, VS said: “Hy vọng lần sau về nhà bạn sẽ không làm ông” (hope-you-won’t-make-noise) or “Mày muốn cùng không sao nhưng lần sau cố gắng đừng gây ông để tao còn ngủ” (Coming-late-doesn’t-matter-do-not-make-noise). Exactly the same number of them (n = 0) rejected Act3 in situation 14.

4.2.3. Choice of directive act in higher power setting (+P)

American and Vietnamese speakers slightly differed in the choice of directive act in the settings where the speaker had greater power than the hearer. It can be inferred that the higher the relative power between the speaker and hearer is, the more directive acts they tended to use. That is to say, in situation 7 and 10 more directive acts were employed than in lower power setting (situation 5, 8) and equal power setting (situation 2, 14).

Table 11: Choice of directive act with respect to +P (Sit7, Sit10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Situation 7 (+P, -D) Mess</th>
<th>Situation 10 (+P, +D) Steak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act1</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Act = Directive Act
Act1 = Request for Repair
Act2 = Threat
Act3 = Request for Forbearance

Chart 8: Choice of directive act with respect to +P (Sit7, Sit10)
From Chart 8, in higher power settings (situation 7, 10), AS seemed to have higher preference for additional acts than VS. In detail, American speakers issued *Request for Repair* and *Threat* more often than Vietnamese speakers. While 43.3% of AS chose it, 16.7% VS did so (with Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.024 < 0.05). Most of them often said to their son in situation 7: “*Clean your room now*” meanwhile VS tended to say: “*Con dọn phòng ngay*”(*Clean-room-right-now*), or “*Mẹ cho con 2 tiếng dọn sạch*”(*You-have-2h-clean-room*). In situation 10, AS continued showing their preference for *Request for Repair* with a half of the Speakers (n = 15) issued such things as: “*Please take this back. Please give me a red … rare steak*”, “*Give me what I ordered*”, “*Can I have what I ordered*” or “*Could you take care of this for me?*”. There is no significant difference between AS and VS (p = 0.065 > 0.05), although only eight Vietnamese speakers said nearly the same things in situation 10 (Steak): “*Làm ơn đổi món này cho tôi*”(*Change-this-for-me*), “*Anh làm ơn đổi món này cho tôi*”(*Could-you-change-this*), “*Đổi lại địa khác nếu có thể*”(*If-you-can-change-it*).

What’s more, AS also issued *Threat* was more explicitly threatening to the face of hearer than *Request for Repair*. For example, “*If you don’t keep it clean, then there will be no more parties*”, “*I’m not going to let you go to the next school dance if you don’t clean it up*”, “*After you clean up all this stuff, I’ll tell you what your punishment is*” or even more serious threats like “*You’re grounded for a week*”, “*You’re grounded for a week and will stay grounded until your room is consistently picked up*”. Irrespective of different frequencies with which they chose Act2 (AS: n = 5 for both situation and VS: n = 4 for situation 7 and n = 1 for situation 10), there is no significant difference between two groups (p = 0.723 and 0.090 > 0.05). Milder *Threats* by Vietnamese speakers could be:

Interestingly, in higher power setting, none of American speakers (n = 0) used Act3 – Request for Forbearance meanwhile four Vietnamese did so (with probability for the Levene’s test = 0.000 and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.043 which are both less than 0.05).

4.2.4. Choice of directive act in familiar setting (-D)

With respect to –D, the American and Vietnamese speakers in this study slightly differed in the choice of the most frequently chosen directive acts; however, they tended to be similar in the choice of the least preferred ones.

Table 12: Choice of directive act with respect to –D (Sit2, Sit7, and Sit8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Situation 2 (-D,=P)</th>
<th>Situation 7 (-D,+P)</th>
<th>Situation 8 (-D,-P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig. ≤ 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Act = Directive Act
Act1 = Request for Repair
Act2 = Threat
Act3 = Request for Forbearance
* p ≤ 0.05
- not significantly different

Chart 9: Choice of directive act with respect to –D (Sit2, Sit7, and Sit8)
As appears in Chart 9, in the familiar settings (situation 2, 7 and 8), American speakers used those additional acts at the higher frequencies than Vietnamese speakers. In situation 2, 26.7% of AS chose it in comparison with 20% of VS. In situation 7, there is a statistically significant difference between two groups as the percentage of AS and VS were in turn 43.3% and 16.7% (p = 0.024 < 0.05). With higher percentage (33.3% in comparison with 6.7%, p = 0.010 < 0.05.), it is obvious that AS tended to be more direct than VS when using more directive acts in situation 8.

Another slightly difference between American and Vietnamese speakers can be attributed to their choice of Act2 – Threat. Quite a few American were inclined to attack the hearer’s face only by issuing a threat. Although the number of AS and VS employed this act is different in situation 2 and 7, there is no significant difference between them. However, none of VS opted for it in situation 8. This suggests that even in familiar setting, if the Vietnamese speakers were in lower power, they would try to avoid attacking the hearers’ face explicitly by issuing a threat. On the contrary, with those who are familiar (especially family members or friends), AS tended to show their directness more often than with unfamiliar ones.

Furthermore, if AS showed their preference for more direct acts such as Request for Repair and Threat, VS liked Request for Forbearance functioning as a negative reinforcer relative to the subsequent repetition by S of the specific behaviour. In the familiar setting, only three American (10%) opted for it, but eight Vietnamese did so (26.6%) across different situations.

4.2.5. Choice of directive act in unfamiliar setting (+D)

Overall the directive act choice of American and Vietnamese speakers appeared to be similar in settings where the interlocutors were unfamiliar with each other (the Mark, Steak and Smoke situations) although AS tended to use those acts more frequently than VS.

Table 13: Choice of directive act with respect to +D (Sit5, Sit10, and Sit14)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Situation 5 (+D,-P)</th>
<th>Situation 10 (+D,+P)</th>
<th>Situation 14 (+D,=P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Sig. ≤ 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Act = Directive Act
Act1 = Request for Repair
Act2 = Threat
Act3 = Request for Forbearance

It is immediately apparent from Chart 10 is that *Request for Repair* was still the most commonly used among American as the total number of speakers opted for it across three situations was 40, meanwhile only fifteen Vietnamese did so with p > 0.05. Especially, in the unfamiliar settings, far more AS chose *Request for Repair* and fewer chose *Threat* and *Request for Forbearance* than in the familiar settings. Only seven American (16.7% in situation 10 and 13.3% in situation 14) employed Act2 and Act3 while of them did so (n =13).

Despite the fact that there were more AS choosing *Threat* than VS in unfamiliar settings (situation 10 and 14), there is no significant difference between two groups. Situation 5 was the situation where none of AS and VS opted for *Threat* (n = 0 for both groups).

Additionally, what is remarkable in the unfamiliar settings is that out of sixty subjects, no one chose the last directive act. This coincidence and likeness of AS and VS can be attributed to the fact that regardless of the social status between the speakers and the
hearers, the likelihood of meeting again is so small that they tended not to use *Request for Forbearance* with unfamiliar people.

**4.3. Concluding remarks**

Looking back at all the tables, charts, findings and discussions presented in this chapter, it is revealed that overall American speakers are more direct than Vietnamese ones since in most situations the strategies chosen by Vietnamese speakers were more face-threatening than the ones chosen by American. Regarding the choice of directive act, once again, American speakers showed their directness in their complaints by adding more directive acts, meanwhile Vietnamese speakers tended to imply them. That is to say, AS tended to be more explicit in pointing out what they wanted by issuing additional acts.

However, in some cases although AS and VS were somewhat similar concerning the choice of strategies and directive acts, there is evidence that they were culturally different and the similarities are only accidental coincidences of the formal structures of the two languages, whereas in fact the structures themselves had different illocutionary forces/pragmatic interpretations in each language.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. Major findings

There are numerous studies investigating the speech act performance of native speakers of different languages. It has become evident in such studies and comparative studies that although the typology of speech acts appears to be universal, their conceptualization and verbalization can vary to a great extent across cultures (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989, among others). In other words, speakers of different languages can have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies, but they can differ in the strategies they chose.

5.1.1. Choice of strategy

Although many cross-linguistic studies have argued that indirectness and politeness are different dimensions, the view that a positive correlation between politeness and indirectness exists was taken in this study.

With regard to complaining strategies, it is evident that the American speakers were more direct than the Vietnamese speakers in general. In lower power settings (situation 5 and 8), American and Vietnamese speakers appeared to be significantly different from each other. While AS tended to use Indirect Accusation, Direct Accusation and Modified Blame, VS tended to opt for Hints, Annoyance and Indirect Accusation. However, two groups showed their slight difference in equal power settings (situation 2 and 4) in which Vietnamese speakers continued being in favour of Hints and Annoyance meanwhile American speakers increased the level of directness by employing more imposing strategies namely Direct Accusation and Explicit Blame on Behaviour.

Apart from dissimilarities in the choice of strategies in lower and equal power settings, AS and VS were somewhat similar in situations where the speakers had higher rank or social status than the hearer. The most frequently used strategy among them was Direct
Accusation with higher percentages than any other strategies. It can be inferred that the social factor P had impact on their choices, as the higher power of the speaker is, the more direct and imposing strategies he/she tended to utilize.

Moreover, besides P, the variable D was also under investigation to figure out whether D influenced the choice of strategy or not. In comparison between familiar settings (situation 2, 7 and 8) and unfamiliar settings (situation 5, 10 and 14), it seems evident that more direct strategies were used according to the higher degree of solidarity and familiarity. For instance, in –D settings, Direct Accusation and Explicit Blame on Behaviour were favoured by AS, but they mainly opted for Indirect Accusation and sometimes Direct Accusation to make complaints in +D settings. On the contrary, Vietnamese tended to be consistent in choosing strategies under any circumstances. That is to say, D had little effect on their option since they preferred Annoyance and Direct Accusation all the time and Hints sometimes. It can be understood that what really matters in the choice of strategies of VS is P meanwhile the various choice of AS can be attributed to both social variables P and D.

5.1.2. Choice of directive act

It would be a mistake when the choice of directive act was ignored in this study. According to Trosborg (1995: 320) directive acts may be added or implied in the speaker’s complaints. The reason is that in most cases, especially six investigated situations, a complaint is not made for the sole purpose of passing moral judgement or disapproval of the behaviour mentioned in the judgment.

What came as a nice surprise is that apart from more direct strategies, American speakers used additional acts more often than Vietnamese speakers. Moreover, both groups tended to use directive acts in equal power settings and even more in higher equal settings. In other words, the higher the relative power between the speaker and hearer is, the more directive acts they tended to use. Seemingly, Request for Repair was the most favourite act among them with quite high percentages in situation 7 and 10 (higher power settings). Besides, they were quite similar in avoiding more imposing act like Threat in equal power and unfamiliar settings despite the different frequencies.
On the other hand, American and Vietnamese speakers were significantly different in lower power settings and slightly different in higher, lower power and familiar settings (especially situation 7 and 8).

On balance, these findings confirm to what has been mentioned that American and Vietnamese speakers were culturally different and their similarities are accidental coincidences of the formal structures of the two languages, whereas in fact the structures themselves had different illocutionary forces in each language. American’s preference for directness and Vietnamese’s preference for indirectness can be treated as an empirical support to Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) and Leech’s (1986) assumptions that in spite of the fact that cultures may have the same strategies, they may differ in terms of priorities and values given to each strategy.

5.2. Implications

Speakers of different cultures are observed to bring into interactions assumptions and norms of their own cultures, which is probably the source of unintended impressions, miscommunication and cultural conflicts. According to Bardovi-Harlig (1996), there are at least two reasons why language learners may have different patterns of realization. Learners do not have enough linguistic or pragmatic devices at their disposal. In many cases, learners are not exposed to appropriate and sufficient input. Lack of pragmatic awareness or linguistic proficiency can lead to failure in verbal communication.

The findings of this research may serve as guidance for teaching English as a second language to Vietnamese speakers. It also suggests that it is necessary for language teachers and learners to be fully aware that American speakers seemed to exploit more direct strategies than Vietnamese ones when they complaining. On the basis of the study, the dissimilar pragmatic rules between two languages may pose difficulties for Vietnamese learners, one of which is the pragmatic failure.

With a view to helping Vietnamese learners to avoid pragmatic failure, it is teachers, textbook writers, and course designers that are responsible for raising the learners’ pragmatic knowledge. The tendency to make the learners use English in the same way as
American speakers of English may be considered as “cultural imperialism (Verschueren, 1984: 495). It is recommended that the extent to which learners should acquire native-like ways of using English is determined by the contexts in which and purposes for which they are likely to use the language.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

Irrespective of the writer’s great efforts, the study has shown many inevitable shortcomings and weaknesses due to the writer’s incomplete knowledge of the field as well as limited ability of doing scientific work and some other objective factors. Moreover, due to a limitation of time and reference materials relating to subject-matter under investigation, it is obvious that this thesis contains a lot of weaknesses. Therefore, in the future research, something should be done to overcome limitations.

Firstly, the studies in the future should be replicated with a larger and more diverse group of subjects since one of the limitations is attributed to the sample size of the study. As presented in Chapter 3, the study involved two groups of 60 subjects in total. Data were obtained from an unvaried population. Consequently, it is important to understand that with a limited number of research participants, making inferences about populations produces only probability statements about population. In other words, all the findings and discussions in this thesis are considered tentative.

Secondly, when naturalistic data collection is not an option, future studies should adopt procedures to better control the amount of time that the subject spends completing the DCT. While it is a time-efficient instrument, it may not be the best way to obtain authentic data. Subjects were writing, not speaking, and had the opportunity to contemplate and changed their responses, something that was less possible in a naturalistic spoken setting. For this study, most subjects responded immediately, taking about 15-25 minutes to complete the survey in the researcher’s presence. Twenty percent of subjects completed the survey outside of the researcher’s presence, and many took a number of days before returning the completed survey. Another suggestion may be to produce an oral version of the DCT, in which participants respond orally to the prompts and audio recordings are made and transcribed (Hendriks, 2002).
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