



**Speech Acts Knowledge of Thai University Students Majoring in Tourism
Industry in Southern Thailand**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English as an International Language
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 Majoring in Tourism Industry in Southern Thailand

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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์	ความรู้ด้านวัจนกรรมของนักศึกษาไทยระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียนสาขา อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในภาคใต้ของประเทศไทย
ผู้เขียน	นายจิรายุ สงเคราะห์
สาขาวิชา	การสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษานานาชาติ
ปีการศึกษา	2556

บทคัดย่อ

วัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์คือหนึ่งในทักษะทางภาษาที่สำคัญต่อการสื่อสารระหว่างประเทศและวัฒนธรรม โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งผู้ที่ปฏิบัติงานในหน่วยงานอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวจำเป็นต้องมีความเชี่ยวชาญในด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ควบคู่กับด้านภาษาศาสตร์ งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 3 ประการ 1) เพื่อสำรวจภาพรวมของระดับสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 4 สาขาอุตสาหกรรม การท่องเที่ยวในแง่ของการเสนอ ความช่วยเหลือ การเรียกขานบุคคล และการตอบรับคำชม 2. เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้ด้าน วัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ ของนักศึกษาและความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษ 3. เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศ ของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง และวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์รวมทั้งความรู้ด้านภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้คือนักศึกษาที่เรียนสาขาอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในมหาวิทยาลัยในภาคใต้ของประเทศไทยจำนวน 239 คน

เครื่องมือที่ใช้มี 2 ประเภทคือแบบทดสอบความสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์แบ่งออกเป็น 30 สถานการณ์ ในวัจนกรรม 3 ด้าน (การเสนอความช่วยเหลือ การเรียกขานบุคคล และการตอบรับคำชม) และ ข้อสอบวัดระดับความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษแบบเลือกตอบจำนวน 40 ข้อ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า 1. คะแนนเฉลี่ยความสามารถทางวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง อยู่ในระดับปานกลาง 2. กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้คะแนนในส่วนวัจนกรรมเรียกขานบุคคลสูงที่สุด ตามด้วยการตอบรับคำชม และ การเสนอความช่วยเหลือตามลำดับ 3. พบความสัมพันธ์เชิงบวก ระหว่างความรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์และความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง กล่าวคือ กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่มีคะแนนภาษาอังกฤษสูงมีคะแนนด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์สูงเช่นกัน 4. ความแตกต่างด้านเพศมีผลต่อความสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ กล่าวคือ เพศชายมีความสามารถในด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์มากกว่าเพศหญิง

ข้อเสนอแนะจากงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้คือ นักศึกษาไทยที่เรียนสาขาอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในภาคใต้ยังคงต้องได้รับ ความรู้ ทางด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ควบคู่กับภาษาศาสตร์ในชั้น เรียน ภาษาอังกฤษในระดับเข้มข้น

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatic competence is one of the requisite language skills essential for international and intercultural communication. Speakers, particularly those in tourism industry career, need to be proficient in pragmatics along with linguistics. The purposes of the present study, thus, were threefold: 1) to explore the overall pragmatic competence of fourth year tourism industry students in offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments; 2) to determine subjects' pragmatic competence in relation to English proficiency; and 3) to investigate the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence including their English proficiency. Two hundred and thirty nine students majoring in tourism in Southern Thailand participated in the study.

Two sets of instrument were used to collect data: a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT), consisting of 30 scenarios concerning three speech acts (offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments), and an English proficiency test consisting of 40 MC test items.

Statistical results showed that: a) The subjects' pragmatic competence was at a moderate level; b) They scored best in addressing people, followed by responding to compliments, and offering help, respectively; c) A positive relationship between the subjects' pragmatic competence and English proficiency was found; subjects with higher language proficiency scored higher on the pragmatic test; d) Gender differences had a significant effect on the pragmatic performance; male subjects performed pragmatics better than their female counterparts.

It is suggested that Thai tourism industry students in the south of Thailand need to be intensively taught pragmatic knowledge along with linguistic knowledge in the English classroom setting.

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Jirayu Songkhro

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LIST OF PAPERS

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คณะมนุษยศาสตร์
มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร
อำเภอเมือง
จังหวัดพิษณุโลก
๖๕๐๐๐

๑๘ เมษายน ๒๕๕๗

เรื่อง ตอบได้รับบทความ
เรียน นายจรรย์ สงเคราะห์

ตามที่ท่านได้ส่งบทความวิจัยเรื่อง "The Relationship between Pragmatic Knowledge and English Proficiency (TOEIC) of Thai EFL Learners Majoring in Tourism Industry in Southern Thailand" เพื่อรับการพิจารณาลงพิมพ์ในวารสารมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร นั้น ทางวารสารฯ ได้รับบทความของท่านแล้ว และจะดำเนินการพิจารณาคุณภาพขั้นต้น จากนั้นจะส่งให้ผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิประเมินคุณภาพบทความตามขั้นตอนของวารสารฯ หากมีความคืบหน้าใด ๆ ทางวารสารฯ จะแจ้งให้ท่านทราบในโอกาสต่อไป

จึงเรียนมาเพื่อโปรดทราบ

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Thailand TESOL, Lower-Southern Affiliate (L-SA)

Organization of English Teachers in Thailand

Established under the patronage of

Her Royal Highness Princess Galayani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra

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1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, English has played a key role in today's communication; billions of people use English as a tool to communicate, share ideas and run their business (Mckey, 2002; Jenkins, 2003). In intercultural communication, where people from different cultures with different linguistic knowledge communicate with each other, misunderstanding and misinterpretation, which then leads to communication breakdown, can occur. Therefore, to effectively communicate, the speakers need to have communicative competence.

Hymes (1972) and Canale & Swain (1983) defined the term communicative competence as a speaker's ability in using correct grammatical sentences in different circumstances. Canale and Swain (1983) proposed four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. Grammatical competence refers to a speaker's ability to use words and rules of the target language correctly. Sociolinguistic competence is the appropriateness of language used in a certain social context. Discourse competence refers to a speaker's ability to understand and produce the language in contexts appropriately and coherently. And strategic competence is a speaker's appropriate use of communication strategies or the ability to handle real-life communication situations.

Regarding the four types of competence, it seems to imply that to achieve successful communication, language users need not only linguistic or grammatical knowledge but also the competence to produce appropriate utterances in a medium language (Blum & Kulka, 1982) known as 'pragmatic competence', which is a part of sociolinguistics.

'Pragmatic competence', as proposed by a number of scholars in the field (Thomas, 1983; Kasper, 1997; Fraser, 2010, for example), is a speaker's ability to convey the intended message efficiently; i.e. the message is understood as it was intended. In foreign language contexts, pragmatic competence is defined as the users' knowledge of speech acts, their knowing how to appropriately perform the acts, and employ the language in acceptable ways with its contextual factors (Kasper 1997; Kasper & Roever 2005). Without this competence, in cross cultural communication

where the interlocutors do not share the same linguistic and situational context, communication failure can occur. This phenomenon is known as ‘pragmatic failure’.

Thomas (1983) categorized pragmatic failure into pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. The former concerns linguistic problems occurring when a speaker uses inapplicable target language to convey his message. For example, on the study of pragmatic competence of learners with different linguistic levels by Khamyod (2013), pragmalinguistic failure was produced by low-proficiency learners (LPL) regarding the act of apology. In the situation, it was supposed that the participants were waiters/waitresses and they accidentally bumped into a 7-year-old boy (Jerry). The participants were required to apologize him.

LPT: Excuse me, I don't attended.

Jerry: (Jerry is crying.)

In order to express their lack of intent, the participants used wrong word ‘attended’, rather than ‘intended’. The response “*Excuse me, I don't attended.*”, therefore, can lead to the interlocutor’s misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Sociopragmatic failure, on the other hand, concerns the interlocutors’ differences in socio-contextual norms and perception and resulted in an inappropriate speech and behavior in that situation. In responding to compliments and forgiving in almost all situations, for example, Thai people say “You’re welcome”, “Don’t mention it”, “Not at all”, “It doesn’t matter”, and “Never mind”. These improper responses are due to the expression in Thai; all of these phrases are expressed in one expression “*Mai-Pen-Rai*” (ไม่เป็นไร) in Thai. The response of Thai students, therefore, does not correspond with the situation in English, where those phrases are used for different circumstances (Sukasan, 2004).

Gender differences have also played a significant role in the pragmatic performance. Holmes (1995) found men and women employ different levels of politeness in his studies on the differences of pragmatic performance between males and females regarding the acts of complaints, apology and request (1989, 1995). He used a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to assess the participants’ pragmatic

knowledge. He found that females used significantly more apologies compared to their male counterparts.

In Thailand, English is spoken as a foreign language. It is used as a medium for communication between service providers and customers in certain business transactions, however. One of the important businesses is the tourism industry. Thus, people working in hospitality and tourism industry must be proficient and fluent in the English language (Anyadubalu, 2009). To create and maintain positive relationships with customers, politeness strategies are essential.

Politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987) perceived as the way to show speakers' manner in a particular cultural context based on social relationship, can be divided into two aspects: positive and negative politeness strategies. The former are intended to avoid offense by highlighting friendliness or familiarity, while the latter are intended to avoid offense by showing deference. Negative strategies include hedging, questioning, and presenting disagreements as opinions. To make a smooth communication, therefore, language users, particularly service providers must be proficient in politeness strategies; otherwise they may experience business opportunity losses (Berg, 1997, cited in Sirikhan & Prapphal, 2011).

In hotel and tourism business, it is essential that customer satisfaction be attained in order that the business can survive well in today's intensively competitive business environment. To this end, university graduates need to be well prepared regarding language proficiency and pragmatic competence.

Concerning studies on pragmatics in Thailand, different aspects of the field have been investigated. Wannaruk (2008), for example, studied pragmatic transfer in refusals of 40 American (NEs), 40 Thai native speakers (NTs) and 40 Thai EFL learners. The participants were divided into 3 groups: lower intermediate, intermediate and upper intermediate based on the scores from the university's Graduate English Test. A Discourse Completion Test was employed to collect the data. Results showed that the lower intermediate students were found a noticeable problem; they translated the language from their L1 to L2. It implied that their L2 pragmatic knowledge was inadequate.

In another study, Pinyo (2010) investigated pragmatic competence of Thai English teachers in requests-making, accepting, and declining using an oral discourse completion test. It was found that the subjects' pragmatic competence was at a moderate level, which implied that they could perform in the given scenarios, but not at a highly successful level.

More recently, Wichein (2012) analyzed pragmatic features in English course material used at a university. Three Teacher's book and 3 Student's book used in required communication courses for English major students were analyzed. Four pragmatics features: Speech act information, Usage, Politeness, Register, Style and Cultural information were the focus of the study. It was found that the Student's books contained an insufficient amount of pragmatic information and not every pragmatic feature was presented in each book.

Despite those studies, pragmatic competence of those who interact routinely with non-Thai speakers as tourism students has minimally been investigated. The present study, therefore, aimed at investigating this group of EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Since pragmatics has been conceptualized as pertinent to speech acts (Vasquez & Fioramonte, 2011), the focus of this investigation was on the three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. These three speech acts are commonly used in every communication. 'Offering help' is used for presenting something to be accepted or refused showing a speakers' willingness or intention. 'Addressing people' is regarded as showing formalization of politeness and status in language (Spolsy, 1989), and essential for opening the conversations (Aliakbari & Toni, 2008). 'Responding to compliments' is perceived as a positive act which fosters solidarity between speakers and hearers through showing admiration or approval (Wolfson, 1983). In addition, these aspects of speech act are frequently used in routine tourism communication and considered vital for second language learning, (Hammerly, 1982; Seelye, 1984).

The present study also aimed at measuring participants' linguistic knowledge through an English proficiency test of which the scores were compared with their pragmatic competence measured by a MDCT. Gender in relation to pragmatic competence was the last aim of the present study. It is expected that the findings of this research will be beneficial to English language teaching in Thailand or other EFL contexts, particularly curriculum designers in providing language input relevant to real life use of the language in the hotel and tourism industry.

2. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed at the following three purposes.

1. To explore the subjects' overall pragmatic competence in offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments
2. To examine the relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in three speech acts
3. To investigate the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was carried out to answer the following research questions.

1. To what extent do fourth year university students majoring in the tourism industry have pragmatic competence in three speech acts: offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments.
2. Is there any relationship between subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in the three speech acts?
3. What is the relationship between pragmatic competence of male and female subjects?

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The participants in this study were limited to the fourth year university students majoring in tourism industry studying in the first semester of the academic year 2013 in five public universities in Southern Thailand.

2. The major focus was on three speech acts: offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments.

5. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The three key terms used in the present study: pragmatic competence, speech act, multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT), and English proficiency test are explained below.

5.1. Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence refers to the speaker's ability to use an appropriate language form in a particular social context. It embraces the meaning of words in interaction and how a speaker conveys the message to be understood by the interlocutor as it was intended (Thomas, 1983; Kasper 1997).

5.2. Speech Acts

Speech acts refer to the making of utterances performed by a speaker in real-life interactions. It requires not only speaker's knowledge of target language but also knowing how to speak that language appropriately in a particular socio-cultural context. Speech acts are of various types, such as an apology, a greeting, a request, a complaint, an offering of help, a compliment and a refusal. In the present study, three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments were the focus of investigation.

5.3 Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT)

In accessing Thai students' pragmatic competence, certain methods have been employed, such as an oral discourse completion test (ODCT) (Pinyo, 2009), a discourse completion tasks (DCTs) (Phoocharoensil, 2012), and a contextualized pragmatic judgment test (CPJT) (Rattanaprasert & Aksornjarung, 2012). However, a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) has not been used as a research instrument to investigate Thai students' pragmatic competence. Conceivably, Thai students might be accustomed to this test type because the test which provides a multiple choice has commonly been used to measure their knowledge in almost all subjects. Therefore, MDCT which provides response alternatives or choices was used to access students' pragmatic knowledge in the present study. MDCT has its own special characteristics consisting of written description of situations, conversational dialogues and response alternatives. It also contained distractors, which were not always incorrect. Rather, they were rated on the degree of appropriateness in that particular situation. The aspects of speech act focused included offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Each aspect contained 10 items. In performing the tasks, the participants were required to read each scenario and select the most appropriate response from four options.

5.4 English Proficiency Test

The English proficiency test in the present study was constructed by adapting standardized language tests. It consisted of 40 multiple choice items. Each item weighed 1 mark equally. This English proficiency test was aimed to tap the participants' overall linguistic knowledge of which the scores were used to compare with subjects' pragmatic knowledge. In other words, the scores did not have any positive or negative impact on their English courses.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quasi-experimental research, employed a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) and an English proficiency test in the data collection. This part is divided into four sections: participants, research instrument, pilot study, data collection, and data analysis.

6.1 Participants

Two hundred and thirty nine, (191 female and 48 male), fourth-year university undergraduate students majoring in tourism industry from five public universities in Southern Thailand participated in the present study. Their ages ranged from 22 to 24. They were purposively selected by their instructor. The participants had experienced training in real workplaces relating to their field for at least 400 hours or approximately 2 months. To compare subjects' pragmatic competence within their sub-group of English proficiency, the participants were divided into three groups according to the English proficiency test results. Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique (Kelley et.al, 2002) was run to group them into high (n=63), middle (n=108), and low (n=67) score groups.

6.2 Research instrument

Two sets of instrument were employed to collect data: a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) and an English proficiency test.

6.2.1 Multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT)

The MDCT employed in the present study was aimed to examine the participants' pragmatic competence in three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Before collecting data, the test was examined for linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness by a native speaker and three Thai experts. It was also tried out in a pilot test. Regarding the MDCT, the test consisted of 30 test items with 30 scenarios having the indices of difficulty between 0.25-0.76. Each aspect of speech acts thus contained 10 items and each item weighed 1 mark. In each scenario, there was a description of situation and conversational dialogue between

a service provider and a customer observed to occur in hotels, travel agencies, and restaurants. To perform the tasks, the participants were required to read each scenario and select the most appropriate response among four alternatives (See appendix A).

6.2.1 English proficiency test

The English proficiency test employed in the present study consisted of 40 multiple choice test items, each item weighing 1 mark. This language proficiency test aimed at measuring participants' linguistic knowledge. The test was constructed by adapting the test items from published standardized language tests (See appendix B). To effectively assess the participants' grammar knowledge, various linguistic features included word family, preposition, conjunction, adverb of frequency, verb tense, pronoun, gerund, determiner, comparative adjective, adjective clause, connecting word, vocabulary [v], vocabulary [n], vocabulary [adv], vocabulary [adj], and vocabulary [v], were under investigation. These linguistic features were believed to cover most of the English grammatical aspects.

6.3 Pilot study

Forty-five items of the MDCT concerning the three speech acts were tried out in a pilot test. Fifteen fourth-year students majoring in hospitality and tourism at a university participated in the study. They were required to finish the test within 60 minutes. Results were then analyzed to determine the difficulty index. All the items with the index lower than 0.20 (too difficult), or higher than 0.80 (too easy) were deleted. The remaining 32 items, with the indices of difficulty between 0.20-0.80, were taken into consideration. In order to obtain more valid and accurate results, the number of test items in each aspect of speech act were weighed equally. Two items with the difficulty index rather low (0.24) and quite high (0.77) were discarded accordingly. The remaining 30 items with the indices of difficulty index between 0.25-0.76 were, thus, included in the actual test (See appendix A).

6.4 Data collection procedure

The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2013 academic year. Two tests were administered to 239 tourism students studying at five public universities in the south of Thailand, namely: Phuket Rajabhat University, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (Songkhla), Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (Trang), Prince of Songkla University (Phuket Campus), and Prince of Songkla University (Trang Campus). In administering each test, the students were explained the objectives and instructions in Thai. The procedures are described below.

6.4.1 Multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT)

The MDCT test was the first test administered to the participants in the classroom. Before taking the test, they were explained the aim, instruction and time allocation (1 hour). After that, they were asked to read each situation and select the most appropriate response from four options of each test item. The participants were not allowed to use any textbook, printed document or electronic aid during the test time.

6.4.2 English proficiency test

In the second stage, a copy of the English proficiency test was distributed to the participants in the classroom. Like taking the MDCT, the participants were explained the objectives and instruction; the proficiency test was aimed at tapping their overall linguistic knowledge; wrong answers were not subject to penalty. The participants were allowed to spend 60 minutes to complete the test.

6.5 Data analysis

The data obtained from the MDCTs and English proficiency test were statistically analyzed according to the research questions formulated, as described below.

Research question 1: To what extent do fourth-year university students majoring in the tourism industry have pragmatic competence in the speech acts of offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments?

To answer the first research question, the total scores of the pragmatic test were computed to determine the mean value to show participants' overall pragmatic knowledge. Also, mean value of each aspect was examined in order to show the differences of each speech act.

Research question 2: Is there any relationship between subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in the three speech acts?

To answer Research Question 2, the scores collected from the MDCT and English proficiency test were computed. A Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test was performed. Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique was then run to classify the subjects into three groups according to the English proficiency scores. A One-Way ANOVA was subsequently performed to examine the means and the difference between means of the three groups of different language proficiency.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between pragmatic competence of male and female subjects?

To answer this research question, an Independent- Samples T-test was performed to identify the differences between male and female subjects in pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts and their English proficiency.

7. RESULTS

The present study aimed at finding out the following objectives: 1) to explore overall pragmatic competence in offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments and identify the differences in students' pragmatic competence in the three speech acts; 2) to examine the relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in three speech acts; and 3) to investigate the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence. Findings from the two instrument sets are described according to the above objectives below.

Table 7.1 Pragmatic Competence in 3 Speech Acts

Speech Acts (n=239)	Score (Total scores=30)				
	Full score	Min	Max	\bar{x}	Std.
Offering help	10	2	7	4.54	1.98
Addressing people	10	5	10	5.62	2.15
Responding to compliments	10	4	10	5.49	2.24
Total	30	5	29	15.65	5.09

Table 7.1 shows the results of statistical analysis of the MDCT obtained from 239 tourism students. It was found that the subjects performed best in 'addressing people' (5.62), followed by 'responding to compliments' (5.49), while this they performed worst in 'offering help'. Out of the full score (30), the mean value was 15.65. The results indicated that the students' pragmatic competence was at a moderate level. It was found in a further analysis that the lowest score was 5, while the highest was 29. The difference in scores of the students was rather high, as confirmed by a rather large standard deviation ($SD=5.09$).

Further, a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Test was performed to identify the relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and pragmatic competence. The results are shown below.

Table 7.2 The Relationship between English Proficiency and Pragmatic Competence

	Correlation			
	Pragmatic Test			
	Offering help	Addressing people	Responding to compliments	Total
English Proficiency	.224**	.261**	.244**	.305**
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 7.2 shows that scores on the English proficiency test were positively related to the three aspects of the speech act in the pragmatic test. There was also a significant difference between the English proficiency and the overall pragmatic competence scores ($p=0.01$). In addition, a statistically significant difference among the three speech acts was found, at 0.01 level. These findings implied that the Thai fourth year university students majoring in tourism industry in Southern Thailand who achieved high scores on English proficiency test tended to have high scores on the pragmatic test, and vice versa.

In a further analysis, Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique was run to group the students into three English proficiency sub-groups. Then, a series of One-Way ANOVA tests was performed to examine difference between mean on the pragmatic test of the three proficiency sub-groups. Results are shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Comparison of Pragmatic Competence and English proficiency

	Low group (67)		Middle group(108)		High group (64)		F-test	Sig
	\bar{X}	S.D	\bar{X}	S.D	\bar{X}	S.D		
English Proficiency Test	28.66	5.26	40.68	3.75	60.68	12.20	12.18	.001*
Pragmatic Test	49.85	16.13	48.55	15.91	60.68	16.83		.001*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 7.3 shows the pragmatic knowledge and English proficiency of the three subject groups. A positive relationship between both tests was found. Participants with high English proficiency (high group) were found to perform well in the pragmatic test. Regarding the other two groups, the middle group did rather poorly on the pragmatic test, (\bar{X} =48.55). On the other hand, the low group (who achieved the lowest mean score on the English proficiency test (\bar{X} =28.66)) performed better than the middle group in the pragmatic test (\bar{X} =49.85). A significant difference between mean of scores ($p=0.01$) of the two tests of the three groups was also found.

In addition, to investigate the subjects' pragmatic knowledge and English proficiency, the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence was investigated. An Independent- Samples T-tests was performed to identify the differences between male and female students' pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts including the difference between gender and English proficiency. Results are shown in Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4 Pragmatic Competence and English Proficiency of 2 Gender Groups

Speech Acts	Male (n=48)		Female (n=191)		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	\bar{x}	S.D	\bar{x}	S.D			
Offering help	5.02	2.26	4.41	1.907	1.68	237	.006
Addressing people	6.25	2.16	5.47	2.12	2.28*	237	.002*
Responding to compliments	6.42	1.93	5.26	2.26	3.273**	237	.001*
Total	17.69	5.28	15.23	4.92	3.163**	237	.001*
English proficiency	14.52	5.60	12.37	3.69	2.532**	57.65	.001*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 7.4 shows the scores on the 3 speech acts performed by male and female students. It was found that the total mean score of male subjects was 17.69, compared with that of their female counterparts, 15.23. These statistical results show that the male students had higher pragmatic competence in the 3 speech acts; they achieved noticeably higher scores in 2 aspects: addressing people and responding to compliments. When each aspect was compared between the 2 genders, significant differences were found; a statistically significant difference at 0.01 and 0.02 in 'responding to compliments' and in 'addressing people' respectively were found. A significant difference in total scores of the 2 genders regarding the 3 aspects was also found, $p=0.01$, while no significant difference in 'offering help' was shown. Moreover, considering English proficiency scores, it was found that male students obtained a higher mean score (14.52) than female ones (12.37). Also, a significant difference at .001 between the English proficiency score of the 2 genders was found.

To sum up, the findings show that male students had more knowledge both in pragmatics and linguistics than their female counterparts.

8. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results derived from two sets of instrument: A multiple choice discourse completion test, and an English proficiency test. The findings show that tourism students' pragmatic competence was at a moderate level (15.65). However, results sought from MDCT showed three factors affecting the participants' pragmatic competence: negative transfer from L1, lack of pragmatic competence, and linguistic deficiency.

Out of 10 of each aspect 'Addressing people', which plays a role in social interaction, scored highest (5.62) , followed by 'responding to compliments' (5.49), and 'offering help', (4.54), respectively. Looking closer at 'addressing people' and 'responding to compliments, it can be interpreted that participants had moderate knowledge of culture and social appropriateness rules. For example, *scenario 14* (addressing people) in which the respondents were required to address the guest's name who had more power in interaction, it was found that 192 of 239 participants were able to select the best appropriate item, which implied that they had sufficient knowledge in this scenario because they addressed the *guest's surname* which is considered acceptable in a formal situation in the English context (Leech, 1983).

However, in *scenario 15* which involved accepting the address of the guest, the first factor, negative pragmatic transfer from L1, was found. More than half of the participants selected '*what sir?*' which was directly translated from students' L1 (อะไรครับ/ค่ะ (ท่าน)). The most acceptable and appropriate response in this scenario was '*yes, sir*' showing willingness and intention. In terms of 'responding to compliments', for example, *scenarios 25, 28, and 30* provoked the participants to accept the interlocutor's compliment. Most participants performed well on these items by selecting '*You're welcome*' to respond to the compliment '*Thank you*'. Grant (2012) argued that saying '*You're welcome*' is a basic rule of politeness to respond to '*Thank you*'. It signals that respondents accept the expression of gratitude or shows the respondents' willingness. Therefore, it can be interpreted from the above findings that language patterns of both 'addressing people', and 'responding to compliments' are

uncomplicated and routinely used in hotel and tourism service leading to their quite well-performed language acts.

Concerning ‘offering help’, as it was perceived as welcoming sentence, the participants performed relatively poorly (4.54). The second factor, participants’ lack of pragmatic competence, was particularly found in the *scenario 3* which involved offering for leaving a message. The majority selected “*Leave a message or not?*” (จะฝากข้อความไว้หรือไม่) to offer the guest. In this case, the participant needs politeness strategies which is a core part of pragmatics to make an offer. The response “*Leave a message or not?*”, therefore, is too direct and considered rude in English conversation. To make this sentence more polite and softer, the interlocutor might feel convenient with the question, “*Would you like to leave a message?*” (คุณต้องการฝากข้อความไว้หรือไม่). The last factor affecting the participants’ pragmatic competence in performing offering help is its linguistic construction. To make an effective offer, it requires a speaker’s linguistic knowledge such as mood (imperative), agent (2rd person singular (implicit)), subject-verb agent (3rd person singular (explicit)), tense (present), voice (active), and the type of speech (direct) (Ad-Darraji, Foo, Ismail & Abdulah, 2012). Moreover, as pragmatics is related to politeness, speakers need to have knowledge about using auxiliary or modal verbs. Therefore, it can be concluded that lack of linguistic knowledge can affect the participants’ pragmatic competence.

It can be maintained that linguistics and pragmatics share certain similar components from the findings in the present study; a positive relationship between pragmatic competence and English proficiency of fourth year tourism students was found. Those who attained high scores on linguistics were found to achieve higher scores on pragmatics. The finding was in accordance with Pinyo (2009) who investigated Thai English teachers’ pragmatic competence in requests in relation to their linguistic knowledge and Khamyod (2013) who examined pragmatic competence of Thai learners with high and low English proficiency. They found that the participants in the high language proficiency group were capable of performing better on the pragmatic test. In contrast, some researchers, Barron (2003); Rattanaprasert & Aksornjarung (2011); Farashaiyan & Hua (2012), found that participants with high

scores on linguistics failed to perform as well on pragmatic tests. Those results implied that both linguistics and pragmatics should not be neglected in the English classroom. Likewise, language proficiency and pragmatic competence need to be investigated more extensively using different research methodology and a larger sample size.

It was also found in the present study that gender difference had a significant effect on the pragmatic performance of the participants. Male students performed the tasks better than their female counterparts on the pragmatic test regarding the three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Regarding 'addressing people' in *scenario 11*, the participants were asked to address an elderly female guest. Some female subjects produced an improper address ('*grandma*') which is considered rude in formal interaction because '*grandma*' is a kinship term mainly used among family members (Braun, 1988; Yang, 2010). In this scenario, the appropriate answer must be '*madam*'. Moreover, in *scenario 12*, addressing the guest for repeating the order, female participants gave certain awkward responses (*Sorry, Delfino. Could you repeat your orders again, please?*). They addressed the guests without appropriate personal titles (Mr., Ms., Mrs.) In social interaction particularly in a formal situation, the personal title is imperative in addressing unacquainted interlocutors in order to pay respect (Manjulakhi, 2004).

Considering 'responding to compliments', some prominent mistakes were also made by female students, particularly in *scenarios 24 and 29* relating to accepting compliments for keeping the guest's mobile phone (scene 24) ("*That's very kind of you! Thank you so much*") and upgrading the room (scene 29) ("*That's very nice, thank you*"). In *scenario 24*, it would be better to accept the compliment "*That's very kind of you! Thank you so much*" by saying "*It's my pleasure*" rather than repeating "*That's very kind of you*" to accept the compliment received. Likewise in *scenario 29*, the guest said "*That's very nice, thank you*" to compliment regarding upgrading the room. In this case, female students responded to the guest by saying '*Thank you*' which did not correspond to the guest's speech. Therefore, producing such awkward utterances can confuse native speakers or the interlocutor and lead to their misinterpretation of the intended message (Linnell et al, 1992).

In case of ‘offering help’, it was found that male students in the present study performed slightly better than their female counterparts. For example, in *scenario 8* (respond to give help to the guest whose purse was stolen), male students could select the most appropriate choice to respond the guest is asking for help by choosing “*What can I do for you?*”, while half of the female students selected “*Do you want me to do something?*”. Thus, it can be interpreted from this finding that negative transfer from L1 influenced females’ response. This case can be described in the Thai context that Thai people always say “คุณต้องการให้ฉันทำ (ช่วย)อะไรไหม” which is directly translated from “*Do you want me to do something?*” However, if the sentence “*What can I do for you?*” which is accepted in English conversation, is translated into Thai language, it might be translated as “ฉันสามารถทำอะไรสำหรับคุณได้บ้าง ” which is not commonly spoken in the Thai context. Apart from this, in *scenario 7*, asking about offering the guest how to make a payment, some errors were made by females. Some female subjects made an offer to the guest by saying “*Want to pay now or charge it to your room?*”, whereas most of the male counterparts chose “*Would you like to pay now or shall I charge it to your room?*”. To make an effective offer in this case, they needed a modal verb (*would, shall*) to make the sentence more polite. In a Thai formal situation, the sentence “*Would you like to pay now or shall I charge it to your room?*”, can be translated as “คุณสะดวกชำระเงินในตอนนี้หรือ คุณสะดวก ชำระรวมพร้อมค่าห้องพัก ” which is considered polite. However, the response “*Want to pay now or charge it to your room?*” which means in Thai that “ต้องการชำระในตอนนี้หรือชำระรวมพร้อมค่าห้องพัก ” given by some female subjects was too direct. This response may lead to pragmatic failure or conversation breakdown.

The findings lead to the conclusion that tourism male students had higher competence in selecting the most appropriate sentences in performing pragmatics in the given scenarios. They were more attentive to formality/informality and more aware of the patterns of politeness and social factors than their female counterparts. However, the finding of this study did not correspond with some previous studies conducted by Macalalay (2001), and Shams & Afighari (2011). They found that female students had better pragmatic competence than males in politeness strategies and social appropriateness rules, for instance. The researchers concluded that males frequently

used direct speech act to perform the acts, whereas females used indirect speech act which is considered more polite in face to face conversation. Moreover, the participants in those studies were from different social classes, educational levels, and training which might be one of factors influencing the participants' pragmatic performance. Both male and female students in the present study, however, had been equally trained in their L1 to be polite to customers; they had also taken several English courses focusing on English conversation routinely used in the hospitality and tourism context in addition to a certain amount of internship training relating to their study major in a real workplace. Moreover, male students in the present study might have a greater intention to enter a career in hotel and travel agency businesses. All of these factors might have had resulted in the results contradicting to previous studies.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated pragmatic competence of tourism industry students in the south of Thailand. It was expected that their pragmatic competence should have been higher than what was found, given that they were fourth year students who had experienced internships in real hotel management and the tourism industry. However, the findings revealed that they had certain capability of performing appropriate speech acts in the given scenarios, but not at a highly successful communication level. These findings implied that educational levels, or years of study, did not correspond with their pragmatic knowledge. To help students to successfully master English and survive well in international and intercultural communication, therefore, teachers should raise their awareness on how to use target language appropriately when in contact with English language speakers. In doing so, it is imperative to teach socio-cultural norms of English native speakers and identify the differences between the norms of the students' mother tongue and those of the target language along with linguistic knowledge.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study investigated the overall pragmatic knowledge of English proficiency of 239 tourism students in five public universities in Southern Thailand. The focused speech acts were ‘offering help’, ‘addressing people’, and ‘responding to compliments’. Since it was conducted with certain limitations, the following recommendations should be taken into account.

1) Further study should investigate other aspects of speech acts that are relevant in real life use in the tourism industry, such as greeting, requesting, apologizing, and informing.

2) Pragmatic competence of other groups of participants such as English teachers who teach tourism students and high vocational students should be an interesting area of investigation.

3) It might be beneficial to ask the students’ opinion towards the number of pragmatics presented in the textbook, and whether it is adequate or not.

4) Future investigation should focus on factors which possibly affect learners’ pragmatic competence and English proficiency, such as teaching materials, teaching methodology and teacher’s background knowledge of pragmatics .

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Test of Speech Acts (MDCT)

Direction: Read each of the situations in A, B, C. There are four responses for each situation. Decide which response is the most appropriate for each one.

A: Offering help

1. A female customer comes to a travel agent to arrange her vacation trip. You first give her a brochure about the accommodation. The customer then selects the most luxurious hotel.

Guest:	Oh, this one is good, The Hilton Hotel. It is expensive, but I have heard that it's very nice.
You:	Yes, that's a top class hotel. I'm sure you will enjoy your stay there.?
Guest:	Yes.

How would you offer your help to reserve the hotel?

- a. Would you like me to make the booking now?
- b. Want me to book the hotel now or later?
- c. Please tell me whenever you want to make the booking.
- d. If you like this hotel, I'm ready to make the booking for you now.

2. You work as a tourist officer. A foreign guest comes to your office and asks for information about an attraction downtown.

Tourist:	May I ask a favor of you?
You:	.....

How do you offer your help?

- a. Of course. What can I do for you?
- b. Yeah, What do you want?
- c. Certainly, please tell me what you want.
- d. I see. Please go ahead.

3. Mr. Thornton, Sales Manager of Holiday Inn, Bangkok, wants to contact Mr. Howard, who is now staying at the Sea South Hotel, room 305. Unfortunately, Mr. Howard is out at the moment.

You:	.....
Mr. David:	Of course. Could you please tell Mr. Howard to call me back as soon as possible?

How do you offer to take a message for Mr. Howard?

- Leave a message or not?
- You can leave a message whenever you want.
- Would you like to leave a message?
- Could you please leave a message?

4. A group of teenager guest wants to go shopping downtown. So, they come to the front desk to ask you how to get there. As a receptionist, you offer your help to phone to a car service.

You:	.....
Guest:	That sounds good. Thanks a lot.

How do you offer to call a car service?

- Do you want to go there by car?
- Would you like me to book a car?
- What would you like me to do?
- Do you want a car? I can reserve for you.

5. In the restaurant, the male customers come to have lunch. At the entrance, you firstly greet and ask them about the seat they want. You offer them two sections, that is, smoking and non-smoking.

You?
Customer:	Smoking area.

How do you offer the seat area?

- Would you prefer the smoking or non-smoking section?
- Smoking or non-smoking section, which one do you want?
- We have two sections, smoking and non- smoking. Do you prefer?
- Want to be in smoking section or not, sir?

6. At the restaurant, the customer orders red wine. As a waitress, you offer to help pour the wine.

You:	Here's the wine that you ordered sir.?
Customer:	I have a glass now, please.

How do you offer your help to pour the wine?

- Would you like to let it breathe for a little while, or would you like to try it now?
- Would you like me to pour it, or do you want to drink it later?
- Do you want me to pour it, or you will pour it by yourself?
- Do you want to pour it by yourself, or do you want me to help you?

7. In a hotel restaurant, a female customer asks you to check the bill. As a waiter, you ask the customer whether she prefers to pay in the restaurant or charge it to the room.

You:	.....
Customer:	I'd rather pay now, please.

What would you offer your help?

- Do you want to pay now or charge it to your room?
- Want to pay now or charge it to your room, madam?
- Do you want to me to charge it to you room? I think that's better.
- Would you like to pay now or shall I charge it to your room?

8. A female guest has had her purse stolen and is asking you for help. You promise to call the police.

Guest:	Excuse me, but can you help me?
You:	Of course ma'am,?
Guest:	Someone just snatched my purse from my shoulder outside the hotel.
You:	Are you OK? I'll call the police.

How do you respond to help?

- What can I do for you?
- I'll help you. It's my duty.
- What do you want me to do?
- Do you want me to do something?

9. You are a receptionist. A male guest is walking hurriedly with serious facial expression to the front desk. You want to assist him.

You:	.....
Guest:	I've lost my mobile phone.

How do you offer you help?

- Excuse me. How are you?
- You look so serious. What's happened?
- Excuse me. How may I help you?
- What's happened with you?

10. You work in a travel agency. You have reserved a round trip ticket from Bangkok to Beijing for a male customer. You also inform him of the flight schedule. The return flight to Bangkok will be 11:50 pm. So, you offer to book a taxi for the customer.

You:	The arrival time to Bangkok will be 11:50 pm.
Customer:	Oh! That's late.
You:	.....

How do you give him a hand to book a taxi?

- I have a taxi do you want to book?
- Shall I reserve a taxi for you?
- A taxi is available for you.
- Book a taxi by yourself?

B: Addressing People

11. You work as a front office assistant. An old lady reserves a room for three nights.

An old lady:	I want to reserve a room for three nights.
You:	.....

What would you say to her?

- Of course, which kinds of room do you like, grandma?
- Certainly, which kinds of room do you prefer, madam?
- Yes, which kinds of room do you like, Mrs.?
- Sure, which types of room would you like, mum?

12. You work as an assistant manager in hotel. Mr. Delfino is the customer. He wants you to arrange the meeting room but you don't understand some of his requests. You want to ask him to repeat what he has said. Unluckily, Mr. Delfino is walking out from the hotel.

Mr.: Delfino	.....<i>Walking</i>
You:	.....

What would you say?

- Sorry, Delfino. Could you repeat your orders again, please?
- Delfino, Could you repeat your orders again, please?
- Hey!, Mister. Could you repeat your orders again, please?
- Excuse me, sir. Could you repeat your order again, please?

13. Mr. White asks you about a famous restaurant near the hotel. As a receptionist, you acknowledge his request and recommend the restaurant.

Guest:	Is there anything interesting to see nearby?
You:	.....

How do you accept and address the guest politely?

- All right, man. We have Bua Thai restaurant.
- Of course, sir. We have Bua Thai restaurant.
- Certainly, Mister. We have Bua Thai restaurant.
- Sure, White. We have Bua Thai restaurant.

14. A middle-aged woman has reserved a single room through an agency. She is Ms. Karl Waldonburg. Next day, she comes to check in at the front desk. As a receptionist, you have to address her correctly.

You:	.....
A middle-aged woman:	Yes, I'm.

How do you address her?

- Excuse me. Are you Miss Karl?
- Sorry, Are you Ms. Karl?
- Excuse me. Are you Ms. Waldonburg?
- Sorry, Are you Miss Waldonburg?

15. You are a maid in the housekeeping department. You are walking pass the guest's room. Unexpectedly, the male guest needs your help and addresses you. So, you have to acknowledge him.

Guest:	Excuse me.
You:	.....

How do you accept the address?

- Yes, sir.
- Yes, mister.
- What, sir?
- What? Please

16. In the hotel, a group of teenage girl asks you to contact a limo service for them because they want to go Siam Square. As a receptionist, you have to accept and address their title correctly.

Teenage girl:	Can you contact a limo service agent for us?
You:	.....

How would you accept the addressing?

- Certainly, miss.
- Of course, madam.
- Certainly, girl.
- Of course, Mrs.

17. A woman phones the restaurant to reserve a table for 2 people. You know her name (Anna Jenkins) but you are unknown her status.

Customer:	I want to reserve a table for 2 people.
You:	.....

How do you accept and address her name?

- Of course. Ms. Jenkins.
- Certainly. Miss Anna.
- Of course. Mrs. Jenkins.
- Certainly. Anna Jenkins.

18. In the hotel restaurant, you are taking an order with a customer (old woman). After that, you ask her for anything else that she wants.

You:	Would you like anything else?
Customer:	A Caesar Salad, please.
You:	.....

How do you accept and address her?

- a. Certainly, grand.
- b. Certainly, madam.
- c. Certainly, Mrs.
- d. Certainly, mum.

19. You are a bellboy. You are asked to pick up Mr. Phillip's suitcases. Five minutes later, you are at Mr. Phillip's door.

You:	.....
Mr. Phillip:	Come in.

How do you address the guest?

- a. Sir! Phillip, Bellboy.
- b. Bellboy, sir!
- c. Mister, Bellboy!
- d. Guest, Bellboy!

20. You are a tour guide. There are 23 tourists on a trip to Ayutthaya. During the trip, you announce the program to the tourists.

You:	.....
Tourist:	Oh, that's very interesting

How do you address the tourist?

- a. Mr. and Ms., the tour will begin with a guided walk around the splendid Bang Pa-In Summer Palace.
- b. Ladies and gentlemen, the tour will begin with a guided walk around the splendid Bang Pa-In Summer Palace.
- c. Everyone, the tour will begin with a guided walk around the splendid Bang Pa-In Summer Palace.
- d. You guys, the tour will begin with a guided walk around the splendid Bang Pa-In Summer Palace.

C: Responding to Compliments

21. At a hotel restaurant, a guest gives a compliment on your food. You are a chef, you have to accept the compliment appropriately.

Guest:	This is delicious. You really are a good cook.
You:	.....

How do you accept the compliment?

- a. Is it true?
- b. No, I'm not a good cook.
- c. Thank you. I'm glad you like it.
- d. Thanks, but it is very easy.

22. In a hotel, the conference room was used for a meeting by customers. After the meeting was finished, they complimented you on the facilities and service. You are a manager, you accept the compliment.

Customer:	Your facilities and service are great. We are very pleased with them.
You:	.....

How do you accept the compliment?

- a. Never mind. It's not very important.
- b. Thank you, but it's such a small matter.
- c. Thanks. I never thought I'd get it.
- d. I'm very grateful for your comments.

23. A group of tourists bought a tour to Krabi. After they finished traveling, they give a compliment to you.

Tourist:	Thank you very much. The trip was fantastic. We enjoyed it so much.
You:	.....

How do you accept the compliment?

- a. Don't mention it. It's always perfect.
- b. You've been very kind to me.
- c. Thank you. I enjoyed it too.
- d. I'm pleased to hear it.

24. A female guest left her mobile phone on the table, as a waiter, you retained it for safe keeping. Ten minutes later, the guest returned and enquired about her mobile phone. You gave it back to her. The guest thanks you.

Guest:	That's very kind of you! Thank you so much.
You:	.....

How do you accept the thanks?

- a. Don't take about it.
- b. It's my pleasure.
- c. That's very kind of you.
- d. Don't think about it, will you?

25. You work as a travel agent. A newly-wed American couple wants to buy a trip to Trang for two days. You give them 20 % discount. The customers were pleased with the discount.

Guest:	Thank you for giving us a discount.
You:	.....

How do you reply?

- a. All right
- b. Never mind
- c. You're welcome.
- d. It's my duty.

26. You are a receptionist working in a five-star hotel. A guest from the United States requires the information about tourist attractions around the city. You clearly describe those places because you speak English well. The guest admires you.

Guest:	Your English is excellent.
You:	.....

How do you accept the compliment?

- a. Don't mention it.
- b. Thanks a lot.
- c. Thank you so much.
- d. Thanks. You are so sweet.

27. You are a waiter. You are serving VIP customers. They are very appreciative of the food, so they want you to pass their compliments to the chef.

Guest:	My compliments to the chef. All dishes are superb.
You:	.....

How do you accept the compliment?

- a. Thanks! I'll tell him as soon as I can.
- b. Oh, thank you. He may feel happy.
- c. Thank you, sir. I'll make sure to let him know.
- d. Thanks a lot, sir. I'm very proud of him.

28. Mr. James is an American tourist who is visiting Thailand for the first time. He has made his own travel arrangements. After completing both immigration and customs formalities, he walks to the tourist information counter.

Mr. James:	I want to go to Chiang Mai, could you tell me how I can get there and how long it takes?
You::	Certainly, sir. You can get there by bus, train or air. It takes 55 minutes by air and nine hours by bus or train.
Mr. James:	Thank you. You've been very helpful.

You:
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How do you respond to the thanks?

- a. Never mind. Have a nice trip.
- b. You're welcome. Have a nice trip.
- c. Don't worry. Have a nice trip.
- d. That's all right. Have a nice trip.

29. A male guest has reserved a single room through the hotel's online booking system. Unfortunately, there was a glitch with the system, so no single rooms are available. You upgrade him to a higher room category with no additional charge. He thanks you.

You:	Don't worry, sir. I will upgrade you to one of our business suits, they all come with Jacuzzis and no extra charge to you.
Guest:	Oh, that's very nice. Thank you.
You:	.....

How do you accept the thanks?

- a. My pleasure.
- b. Don't worry.
- c. Take it easy.
- d. Thank you.

30. You are a receptionist. After a female guest has checked in, you give her some general information and recommend the nearby tourist attractions. At the end of the conversation, you wish the guest have a pleasant stay. The guest thanks you.

You:	Have a pleasant stay.
Guest:	Thank you
You:	.....

How do you reply?

- a. You're welcome.
- b. I'm glad to hear it.
- c. I really appreciate it.
- d. That's okay.

APPENDIX B**English Proficiency Test**

1. Their newly _____ toys will be free from material defects and offer you a three-year product guarantee from the date of purchase.
 - a. introduced
 - b. introduction
 - c. introduce
 - d. introducing
2. The publishing company will ask whether you will renew _____ subscription to its magazine or not.
 - a. your
 - b. yours
 - c. you
 - d. yourself
3. The necessary device in the event of a power failure is not _____ installed due to the lack of budget.
 - a. seldom
 - b. never
 - c. meanwhile
 - d. yet
4. After _____ testing it, we could officially receive governmental approval for the recently developed part.
 - a. through
 - b. thoroughly
 - c. thorough
 - d. thoroughness
5. Children under the age of twelve are not permitted to watch this program _____ guided by their parents.
 - a. but
 - b. otherwise
 - c. without
 - d. unless
6. The accounting division has already found two candidates _____ qualifications meet the requirements for the job openings.
 - a. who
 - b. whom
 - c. whose
 - d. which

7. The architect found a lot of time spent in designing the blueprints for MC Center _____.

- a. exhaust
- b. exhausted
- c. exhausting
- d. exhaustingly

8. One grand prize winner and two first place winners will be _____ from all eligible, correct entries.

- a. handled
- b. drawn
- c. offered
- d. given

9. Recently, the price of crude oil affecting each country's economy _____ moderately.

- a. to rise
- b. risen
- c. rises
- d. rose

10. Please wait _____ the elevator door to close automatically in order to conserve energy.

- a. of
- b. for
- c. by
- d. until

11. _____ located, the resort area is as close to both the downtown and airport as you can drive a car yourself.

- a. Convenience
- b. Convenient
- c. Conveniences
- d. Conveniently

12. Our improved customer services have had a significant _____ not only on the sales figures but on customer satisfaction.

- a. management
- b. impact
- c. expression
- d. exclusion

13. Our legal staff will attempt to discuss some employee-related issues with you as _____ as twice a week in order to finalize the issues.

- a. almost
- b. often
- c. well
- d. always

14. By the next year it _____ necessary to double the production quota to keep up with market demands.

- a. was
- b. will be
- c. has been
- d. being

15. Failure to respond promptly to this letter within _____ time will result in a void contract.

- a. limited
- b. limit
- c. limitation
- d. limiting

16. The Ropes family is going to have an opportunity to _____ their relatives in Mexico.

- a. arrive
- b. look
- c. travel
- d. visit

17. To get a necessary reference letter for the scholarship, students must contact _____ high schools in advance.

- a. they
- b. them
- c. their
- d. theirs

18. The manager, however, did not pay much attention _____ the grounds that the problem will be solved soon.

- a. to
- b. from
- c. at
- d. on

19 I sincerely would like him _____ for the error in processing your recent order due to a malfunction in his system.

- a. apologize
- b. to apologize
- c. apologized
- d. apologizing

20. _____ in progress, conference participants must turn off heir cell phones and digital cameras.

- a. While
- b. Although
- c. Ever
- d. During

21. The most effective means for shop owners to learn how to make theirs more attractive is through _____ from their regular customers.

- a. alert
- b. objection
- c. feedback
- d. observation

22. Client _____ does not come from just a switch to a new system, but rather from a change in each employee's attitude.

- a. satisfied
- b. satisfactory
- c. satisfying
- d. satisfaction

23. The newly adapted diagram _____ that the corporation's profits are diminishing in size.

- a. shows
- b. supports
- c. surrogates
- d. suppresses

24. _____ one of our specials has been ordered yet and we still cannot find why.

- a. No
- b. Not
- c. Any
- d. None

25. It is _____ that all drivers install air bags at the front row for the minimum safety.

- a. decisive
- b. active
- c. imperative
- d. regular

26. In some countries, prices have a tendency to soar _____ as interest rates began to drop.

- a. efficiently
- b. strictly
- c. productively
- d. dramatically

27. In case of the _____ of the contract that would cut the firm's revenues half, we need an alternative.

- a. cancel
- b. cancels
- c. canceled
- d. cancellation

28. The company announced _____ it has decided to acquire materials from the region.

- a. what
- b. when
- c. that
- d. which

29. In the past, you could make a room reservation _____ paying or warranting it with your credit cards.

- a. without
- b. in
- c. for
- d. to

30. The hotel clerk _____ to cancel the reservation at least 2 days in advance before the reserved date to avoid penalties.

- a. suggested
- b. proposed
- c. minded
- d. recommended

31. You are required to wear _____ clothing before you enter the room.

- a. protect
- b. protective
- c. protection
- d. protecting

32. The former supervisor took pleasure in writing a letter of recommendation for Mr. Chuan since he _____ took care of all the assignments.

- a. specifically
- b. undeservedly
- c. suitably
- d. voluntarily

33. Five years ago Chinese buyers _____ for 1% of global sales of luxury goods.

- a. required
- b. accounted
- c. cared
- d. accompanied

34. My advice is not to pay your key deposits in full _____ everything is signed.

- a. so
- b. as though
- c. until
- d. otherwise

35. There have been several leading _____ in genetic engineering to help cure terminal cases.

- a. activeness
- b. advances
- c. currencies
- d. resistances

36. _____ participants in this weekend conference should be assured that they can take a day off during the next week.

- a. Each
- b. Every
- c. Much
- d. All

37. She declined to confirm reports that the central bank was considering _____ the money supply.

- a. manipulating
- b. to manipulate
- b. manipulate
- d. manipulated

38. In 1990, over 50 million Americans were working at the _____ wages of any nation in the world.

- a. high
- b. highly
- c. higher
- d. highest

39. We are _____ to the following business principles in all countries.

- a. prevented
- b. scheduled
- c. committed
- d. contributed

40. Consumers have a sincere interest in the behavior of the company _____ they place their trust.

- a. which
- b. in which
- c. whose
- d. whichever

PAPER 1

An Investigation of Speech Acts Used by Thai University Students of
Tourism Industry in the South of Thailand

An Investigation of Speech Acts Used by Thai University Students of Tourism Industry in the South of Thailand

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Abstract

The present study investigated the use of three speech acts by tourism industry students in the South of Thailand. The aims were 1) to explore overall pragmatic competence in offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments and 2) to identify the differences in students' pragmatic competence in the three speech acts. Two hundred and thirty nine fourth-year students took a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) consisting of 30 scenarios. Statistical results are revealed as follows: a) a moderate mean score in the targeted language used; and b) They scored best in addressing people, followed by responding to compliments, and offering help, respectively. Although their pragmatic competence was at a moderate level, it was inadequate to achieve at a successful communication. It is recommended that Thai university tourism industry students in the South still need to be provided with intensively pragmatic knowledge.

Key words: Pragmatic competence, Speech acts, Thai university tourism industry students in Southern Thailand, Multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT)

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1. Introduction

In this globalization age, English is spoken all corners of the world. Billions of people use English as a medium for international communication. To achieve international communication, speakers need communicative competence that consists of three components (Canale & Swain, 1980). The first component, grammatical competence, refers to using words and rules correctly. The second, sociolinguistic competence, is the appropriateness of language used in that social context. And the third, strategic competence, refers to the appropriate use of communication strategies or the ability to handle real-life communication situations.

To communicate effectively, therefore, it requires not only interlocutors' grammatical knowledge, but also their ability to produce appropriate utterances in each situation. This competence is known as 'pragmatic competence'. A speaker's inadequate pragmatic competence can lead to communication problems known as 'pragmatic failure' which is divided into two types: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. The former refers to a speaker's using inappropriate language forms and the latter refers to speakers' limited knowledge about the cultural and social values involved (Blum & Kulka, 1982).

In hotel business, it is essential that hoteliers must have sufficient language knowledge of both linguistics and pragmatics in order to successfully communicate with hotel customers. To maintain positive relationships with customers, moreover, they need politeness strategies. Nonetheless, loss of business may occur. (Berg, 1997 as cited in Sirikhan & Prapphal, 2011).

Different aspects of previous pragmatic studies have been investigated. However, those conducted in EFL contexts are still limited. Kılıçkaya (2010), for instance, investigated the request strategies used by 40 Turkish undergraduate students. Using a type of a discourse completion task (DCT), the researcher found participants' lack of certain level of politeness in the given situations. Kılıçkaya concluded that the unsuccessful communication could result from poor language learning and teaching textbooks.

In another study in Turkey, Bektas-Cetinkaya (2012) investigated the ability in performing pragmatic competence of 23 pre-service teachers in four speech acts - responding, giving advice, refusing, and making requests. Data were collected using a discourse completion task (DCT). Results revealed that the participants were not fully able to perform their pragmatic competence at a native speaker level. She maintained that when compared with learners in an ESL context, those in an EFL classroom have limited exposure to English outside the classroom; i.e. English learning is almost restricted to the classroom.

In Indonesia, Krisnawati (2011) discussed pragmatic components taught in a spoken English classroom. It aimed at analyzing learning instruction and materials used in the classroom and discussing some theoretical reviews for the inclusion of pragmatic instruction. The researcher concluded that teaching materials and pragmatic contents provided in the classroom were inadequate. It was suggested that to raise pragmatic awareness of EFL learners, curriculum designers and material developers should integrate pragmatic elements in curricula and course materials.

The results of the studies above revealed that learners' pragmatic knowledge is quite poor and pragmatic contents used in English classroom are rather insufficient. Therefore, both learners' pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic contents should be seriously improved and developed.

Concerning research on pragmatics in the Thai EFL context, a number of studies have addressed issues related to different types of speech acts involving different participants, namely English teachers (Pinyo, 2009), medical students (Rattanaprasert & Aksornjarung, 2011), and undergraduate university students (Thijittung, 2010). Findings also showed unsatisfactory levels of pragmatic knowledge, despite their relatively high linguistic knowledge.

However, research on pragmatic knowledge of hotel and tourism business learners is still limited. Therefore, this research intended to investigate the pragmatic competence of Thai university students majoring in tourism industry in Southern

Thailand in order to identify their knowledge of pragmatic competence when communicating with foreign guests.

In particular, the researchers aimed at investigating such EFL learner' competence in three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments which are frequently employed in daily life, and considered vital for second language learning (Hammerly, 1982; Seelye, 1984). Findings from this study are expected to provide additional information for further research and classroom practice relevant to real life use of language.

2. Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the present study were (1) to examine the overall pragmatic competence of fourth-year university students majoring in the tourism industry: offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments, and (2) to identify the differences in their pragmatic competence in the three speech acts.

3. Research Methodology

A quasi-experimental design, with a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT), was adopted for data collection. This part is divided into four sections: participants, pilot study, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Participants

Two hundred and thirty nine, 48 male and 191 female, fourth-year university students majoring in the tourism industry in the Southern part of Thailand participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 22 to 24. They were purposively selected from five public universities offering hospitality and tourism programs, namely: Phuket Rajabhat University, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (Songkhla), Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (Trang), Prince of Songkla University (Phuket Campus), and Prince of Songkla University (Trang Campus).

3.2 Pilot study

The test battery, consisting of 45 items, was tried in the pilot test. Fifteen fourth-year students majoring in hospitality and tourism at a university were participants. Results were then analyzed to determine the difficulty index leading to 15 items with the index lower than 0.20 (too difficult), or higher than 0.80 (too easy), being deleted.

3.3 Research Instrument

A multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) comprised of 30 test items was employed in data collection. This test type was developed and validated by Lui (2004), and has been employed to assess L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge in a number of studies (Birjandi & Rezaei, 2010; Farashaiyan & Hua, 2012), for example. The MDCT used in the present study had been checked for linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness which took place at Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai campus by a native speaker and three Thai experts. It has also gone through a pilot test as described in 3.2 above. Hence, the items included in the actual test were those having an index of difficulty between 0.20-0.80.

The 30 test items embraced 30 scenarios taking place in hotels, travel agencies, and restaurants focused on: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Each aspect contained 10 items and each item equally weighted 1 mark.

3.4 Data collection

Data collection procedure was conducted during the first semester of academic year 2013 with the tourism students studying in five public universities. In collecting data, a copy of MDCT was distributed to each participant in the classroom. The researchers first explained to the participants the aims and instructions of the test. Participants were required to read each situation and select the best response from four options. While taking the test, they were neither allowed to communicate with other test takers nor to use any documents or textbooks. The paper tests were collected when the time allotted, 60 minutes, was over.

3.5 Data analysis

The total raw scores gathered from the MDCTs were computed to determine the mean value and, subsequently transformed to percentages in order to indicate the subjects' overall pragmatic competence. In the same way, mean value of each aspect was examined and later transformed to percentages in order to show the differences of each speech act performed by 239 students.

4. Results and Discussion

This quasi-experimental study was conducted in order to examine the level of Thai fourth-year university students majoring in Tourism English in Southern Thailand. The researchers focused on speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. The researchers also investigated participants' extent of pragmatic competence in the three speech acts. The total scores sought from the MDCT were statistically analyzed, the results of which are reported below.

Table 4.1 Overall Pragmatic Competence of the Tourism Industry Students

N	Full score	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
239	30	5	29	15.65	5.09

Table 4.1 shows the results of the statistical analysis of data from the MDCT. The mean and standard deviation of the scores obtained from 239 students were determined. Out of the full score (30), the mean value was 15.65. The results shown above indicated that the students' pragmatic competence was at a moderate level. Considering the distribution of the students' pragmatic competence, it was found there was a rather large standard deviation ($SD=5.09$). In further analysis, the researchers found that the lowest score was 5, while the highest was 29, i.e., the difference in scores of the students was rather high.

Table 4.2 below shows the different means and percentages of the students' pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts.

Table 4.2 Southern Thailand University Students' Competence in Three Speech Acts

Speech Acts	Full score	Mean		Std.
		Score	%	
Offering help	10	4.54	15.13	1.98
Addressing people	10	5.62	18.73	2.15
Responding to compliments	10	5.49	18.30	2.24

Table 4.2 shows that this group of tourism students performed best in 'addressing people' (5.62), followed by 'responding to compliments' (5.49), while they performed worst in 'offering help' (4.54). The degree of SD, which were rather high, confirms the differences in students' pragmatic competence in the three speech acts. To restate, when the participants performed each aspect separately, their pragmatic competence was rather different.

4.4 Discussion

This part discusses the results obtained from the investigation of fourth-year tourism students' pragmatic competence.

'Addressing' plays a significant role in social interaction and is regarded as showing the formalization of politeness and status in language use (Spolsky, 1998). Findings in the present study showed that the participants scored best in 'addressing people' (5.62), followed by 'responding to compliments' (5.49), and 'offering help' (4.54), respectively. The results correspond with a previous study by Sirikhan and Prapphal (2011). They found that the Thai fourth-year participants majoring in hotel management and tourism program with high and average levels of language ability

frequently addressed male customers with 'sir', females with 'madam' and asking a question by using "Would you...?" It was concluded in that study that the participants could select appropriate and polite words to address customers in the context of hotel service. Similarly, it can be concluded that Thai students majoring in tourism industry in the present study have relative sufficient competence in this aspect which can be interpreted that 'addressing' demands less linguistic knowledge than other aspects of speech acts (Lui, Zhang and Zhang, 2010). Such linguistic knowledge includes demonstrative pronouns, social titles--genetic titles, kinship terms, occupational titles--names and official titles.

Regarding 'responding to compliments', results showed that they did not perform as well (the mean score was slightly lower than 'addressing people') (5.49). It could be interpreted that language patterns of 'responding to compliments' are more uncomplicated and that in hotel and tourism service only simple responding as "Thank you" or "Thank you, that's very kind of you", are regularly used. The finding yields with Phoocharoensil (2012), who found that Thai learners with high English proficiency level were able to employ compliment responses patterns resembling those in American norms. In other words, they could successfully use language patterns of compliment responses accepted by a native English speaker.

Concerning 'offering help', it is also commonly used in hotel and other services, and functions as 'welcome', showing the willingness or intention to help customers. It is a polite and proper way and crucial for hotel and tourism staff. (<http://.thairath.co.th>, December 5, 2013). However, in the present study, the participants did poorly in this part, which means their pragmatic competence in this aspect is rather inadequate, (mean score is 4.54). It can be inferred that one of the factors affecting the participants' competence in making offering is linguistic constructions. In this regard, Ad-Darraj, Foo, Ismail and Abdulah (2012) argued that the function of offering needs various linguistic constructions, including mood (imperative), agent (2nd person singular (implicit)), subject-verb agent (3rd person singular (explicit)), tense (present), voice (active), and the type of speech (direct). Moreover, as pragmatics is directly related to politeness, speakers need to have knowledge of using auxiliary or modal verbs. To make an effective offer, thus, a

speaker must attain language knowledge and pragmatic competence. In short, speakers with low linguistic proficiency might not be competent enough to produce a correct and appropriate offer compared to those with sufficient linguistic and pragmatic knowledge.

To conclude, the results of the present study showed that the differences of scores in each speech act probably arise from two main factors: speaker's linguistic knowledge and speaker's social appropriateness knowledge. That is, the participants obtained the lowest scores in 'offering help' because it demands more linguistic knowledge than the other two. Both 'addressing people' and 'responding to compliments' mainly require speaker's appropriateness knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Thai-fourth year university students of tourism industry in the south of Thailand are expected to perform better in the three speech acts in question than what was found in the present study, although they were fourth-year students who had taken several English courses and experienced internships in real hotel management and tourism industry. The findings showed that they were able to perform the task in the given situations to a certain extent; it was, however, not sufficient to achieve successful communication. These findings implied that educational levels or years of study did not correspond with their pragmatic knowledge. It can be suggested that to be successful in international communication, Thai tourism and hospitality graduates of Thai universities in the South, need to be intensively equipped with pragmatic knowledge in the English classroom setting, along with linguistic knowledge.

5.1 Recommendations for further research

The present study was conducted within the limitation of sample size and aspects of investigation. Nonetheless, based on the findings, it is recommended that more relevant real-life situations, such as role-plays, should be applied as a data collection method. Furthermore, since the current research focused on offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments, further research should be carried out to investigate tourism industry students' pragmatic competence in other aspects of

speech acts, including apologizing, requesting, promising, and other acts relevant to effective communication in the hotel management and tourism industry. These results can be used as a source to create suitable contents to help learners acquire pragmatics.

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PAPER 2

The Relationship between Pragmatic Knowledge and English Proficiency
(TOEIC) of Thai EFL Learners Majoring in Tourism Industry in
Southern Thailand

The Relationship between Pragmatic Knowledge and English Proficiency (TOEIC) of Thai EFL Learners Majoring in Tourism Industry in Southern Thailand

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence is particularly essential in real life communication. Graduates from hotel and tourism are those who use English on a daily basis. The major objectives of the present study, thus, were to: 1) determine Thai tourism students' pragmatic competence in relation to English proficiency, and 2) investigate the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence. Two hundred and thirty nine fourth-year students were given: a multiple discourse completion test (MDCT) consisting of 30 scenarios concerning three speech acts (offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments), and a TOEIC test consisting of 40 MC test items. Statistical results showed a) a positive relationship between the subjects' pragmatic competence and English proficiency. b) the subjects with high language proficiency scored higher on the pragmatic test. c) gender differences could result in subjects' pragmatic performance; male subjects performed better than their female counterparts.

Key words: Offering help, Addressing people, Responding to compliments, Tourism industry students, Multiple choice discourse completion test

บทคัดย่อ

ความสามารถทางด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์นั้นถือว่ามีค่า เป็นต่อการสื่อสารในชีวิตจริง นักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาสาขาโรงแรมและการท่องเที่ยวถือเป็นผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นพื้นฐานประจำวัน ดังนั้นวัตถุประสงค์หลักของงานวิจัยนี้คือ 1) ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง ความรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์และความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาสาขาอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว 2) ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเพศและความสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการศึกษานี้คือ นักศึกษาระดับชั้นปีที่ 4 จำนวน 239 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้มี 2 ประเภทคือแบบทดสอบความสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์แบ่งออกเป็น 30 สถานการณ์ ในวัจนกรรม 3 ด้าน (การเสนอความช่วยเหลือ การเรียกขานบุคคล และการตอบรับคำชม) และข้อสอบโทอิกแบบเลือกตอบจำนวน 40 ข้อ ผลการวิจัยสรุปได้ดังนี้ 1) ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์และความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มตัวอย่างปรากฏอยู่ในเชิงบวก 2) กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่มีคะแนน

ภาษาอังกฤษสูงมีคะแนนด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์สูงเช่นกัน 3) ความแตกต่างด้านเพศมีผลต่อความสามารถด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ กล่าวคือ เพศชายมีความสามารถในด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์มากกว่าเพศหญิง

คำสำคัญ: การเสนอความช่วยเหลือ การเรียกขานบุคคล การตอบรับคำชม นักศึกษาที่เรียนสาขาอุตสาหกรรม การท่องเที่ยว แบบทดสอบความสามารถทางวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์แบบเลือกตอบ

1. Introduction

English is considered a universal language. Several billions of people, both native and non-native speakers of English, use English as a tool for communication and exchange of ideas (Pakir, 2001; Jenkin, 2003). The vital roles of English nowadays are in education, job application, international trade, and industry (Crystal, 2000 as cited in Rattanaprasert, 2012). Given its importance, competence in this language is a prerequisite for individuals' socio-economic success. Graduates looking for jobs need to achieve impressive scores of certain standardized tests, especially TOEIC, in attaining employment opportunities.

TOEIC is a well-accepted test type widely used in Asia and Europe in recruiting employees (Roger, 1997; Chapman, 2005). Some business services, such as hotel and tourism, require candidates to obtain high scores in a standardized language test. Alternatively, all candidates are required to take a test constructed specifically to test communication skills needed to perform hotel and tourism services. (Sirikhan & Prapphal, 2011); the skills are known as 'pragmatic competence'

An authority of the field, Thomas, 1983; Kasper, 1997; Fraser, 2010, defined pragmatic competence as a speaker's ability to effectively communicate the intended message in a particular social-cultural contexts, i.e, the message is understood as it was intended. However, in cross cultural communication, misinterpretation and misunderstanding occur due to the interlocutors' different linguistic and pragmatic background. Those misunderstanding or errors are called 'pragmatic failure' because the interlocutors fail to reach their communication goal. Theoretically, pragmatic failure was categorized into two types: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures (Thomas, 1983). The former concerns linguistic problems occurring when a non-native speakers or L2 learners use inappropriate target language to perform actions. The latter is believed to result from the speaker's and the listener's different perception and socio-cultural norms; differences between the first cultural norms and those of target language can result in speakers' production of ill-form utterances and/or wrong interpretations (Thomas, 1983). So, when people with different linguistics and different cultural norms exchange in intercultural communication, they have to be proficient both in linguistics and in pragmatics.

In hotel and tourism business, it is essential that customer satisfaction be attained in order that the business can survive well in today's intensively competitive business environment. To this end, thus, university graduates need to be well prepared regarding language proficiency. However, the relationship between English proficiency and pragmatic knowledge of students majoring in the tourism industry has not been broadly investigated. Pragmatic research conducted in the Thai context embraced the level of politeness strategies used by the EFL learners (Srisuruk, 2011) and the comparison of pragmatic competence of Thai students and native speakers (Cedar, 2006; Phoocharoensil, 2012). Only Sirikhan and Prapphal (2011) studied ability in performing pragmatic competence of 90 fourth year university students majoring in hospitality program in Bangkok area. The focused speech acts were apologizing, handling complaints, requesting, informing, and promising.

The present study, therefore, attempted to investigate other aspects of pragmatic study of Thai learner. In particular, it was also aimed to find out whether gender has any effect on the subjects' pragmatic competence. The investigation focused on three speech acts: offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments, all of which are used routinely in hotel and tourism industry (Hammerly, 1982; Seelye, 1984). The findings of this research are expected to provide additional information for further research and be beneficial for the English language teaching in Thai or other EFL contexts particularly curriculum designers in providing language input relevant to real life use of language.

2. Purposes of the study

The major purposes of the present study were as follows:

1. To investigate the relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in three speech acts.
2. To determine the pragmatic competence of subjects with different levels of English competency.
3. To investigate the relationship between gender and pragmatic competence.

3. Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between the subjects' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in three speech acts?
2. What is the performance in the pragmatic test of learners with different English proficiency levels?
3. What is the relationship between pragmatic competence of male and female subjects?

4. Research Methodology

This quasi-experimental study employed a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) and a TOEIC test in data collection. This part is divided into four sections: participants, research instrument, pilot study, data collection, and data analysis.

4.1 Participants

Two hundred and thirty nine, fourth-year universities students majoring in the tourism industry in the Southern part of Thailand were purposively selected from five public universities where hospitality and tourism programs were offered. One hundred and ninety-one of the participants were female and forty-eight were male students. Their ages ranged from 22 to 24. The participants were divided into three groups according to the TOEIC test scores. Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique (Kelley et.al, 2002) was performed to group them into high (N=63), middle (N=108), and low (N=67) score groups.

4.2 Research instrument

The present study employed two sets of instrument: an English proficiency test (TOEIC) and a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT).

4.2.1 English proficiency test (TOEIC)

The English proficiency test employed in the present study was developed from an actual TOEIC test (Sang, 2006) consisting of 40 multiple choice items; this test was administered to measure participants' linguistic knowledge. The linguistic features under investigation included word family, preposition, conjunction, adverb of frequency, verb tense, pronoun, gerund, determiner, comparative adjective, adjective clause, connecting word, vocabulary (v), vocabulary (n), vocabulary (adv), vocabulary (adj), and verb form. Each test item weighed 1 mark.

4.2.2 Multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT)

The MDCT was developed and validated by Lui (2004) and has been employed to assess L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge in a number of studies (Birjandi & Rezaei, 2010; Farashaiyan & Hua, 2012), for example. The MDCT used in the present study has been checked for linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness by a native speaker and three Thai experts. It has also been tried in a pilot test. The MDCT consisted of 30 test items having the indices of difficulty between 0.20-0.80. All the test items embraced 30 scenarios which were observed to occur in hotels, travel agencies, and restaurants. The test focused on three aspects of speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Each aspect was investigated by 10 items of equal marks.

4.3 Pilot study

The MDCT test battery tried in the pilot test consisted of 45 items. Fifteen fourth-year students majoring hospitality and tourism at a university participated in the pilot test which took one hour. Results were analyzed to determine the difficulty index. The items with the index lower than 0.20 (too difficult), or higher than 0.80 (too easy) were discarded. The remaining, having the indices of difficulty between 0.20-0.80. were included in the actual test.

4.4 Data collection

Data collection was conducted during the first semester of academic year 2013 with the cooperation of 239 students studying at the five public universities in South of Thailand. In administering the tests, the students were explained the objectives and instruction in Thai. The two sets were administered as follow.

4.4.1 Multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT)

The MDCT test was administered to the participants in the classroom. Prior to taking the test, they were explained the aim and instruction of the test. Then, they were required to read each situation and select the best response from four options of each test item. While taking the test, they were not allowed to communicate with other test takers. Nor were they allowed to use any printed and electronic material. They were required to complete the test in one hour.

4.4.2 English proficiency test (TOEIC)

Before taking the test, the participants were explained the objectives and instruction that the proficiency test was aimed to tap their overall linguistic knowledge; no penalty would be imposed on incorrect answers. The participants were allowed to spend 1 hour to complete the test.

4.5 Data analysis

The data collected from the MDCTs and TOEIC were statistically analyzed to answer the research questions formulated, as described below.

Research question 1: Is there any relationship between learners' English proficiency and their pragmatic competence in the three speech acts?

To answer the question, the scores from the MDCT and English proficiency test were computed. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test was performed.

Research question 2: What is the performance in the pragmatic test of students with different English proficiency levels?

In answering research question 2, Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique was run in order to classify the subjects into three groups according to the TOEIC test scores. A One-Way ANOVA was subsequently performed to

examine the mean score and the difference between the mean score of the three different language proficiency groups.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between pragmatic knowledge of male and female subjects?

To answer the research question, an Independent- Samples T-test was performed to identify the differences between male and female subjects in pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts.

5. Results and discussion

The objectives of this quasi - experimental study were 1) to determine the relationship between the English proficiency and pragmatic competence of Thai fourth-year university students majoring in tourism industry in Southern Thailand 2) to examine the pragmatic knowledge of subjects with different levels of English competency 3) to investigate whether gender has relationship with subjects' pragmatic competence. Two tests were used to collect data: a TOEIC to measure the subjects' English proficiency, and a pragmatic to measure 3 speech act (offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments). The total scores obtained from two tests were statistically analyzed, the results of which are subsequently reported below.

5.1 The Relationship between English Proficiency and Pragmatic Competence

	Correlation			
	Pragmatic Test			
	Offering help	Addressing people	Responding to compliments	Total
English Proficiency	.224**	.261**	.244**	.305**
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 5.1 shows the results of the test of correlation (Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Test) performed to identify the relationship between English proficiency (through the TOEIC test) and pragmatic competence (through the MDCT). It was found that scores on the TOEIC test was positively related to the three aspects of the speech act on the pragmatic test. Besides, a significant difference between English proficiency (TOEIC) and the overall pragmatic competence scores was found, $p=0.01$. In addition, there was a statistically significant difference among the three speech acts at 0.01level. These findings imply that the Thai fourth year university students majoring in tourism

industry in Southern Thailand who achieved high scores on English proficiency test tended to have high scores on the pragmatic test, and vice versa.

In a further analysis, the Kelley's 27 percent discrimination technique was performed to group the students into three English proficiency sub-groups. Then, a series of One-Way ANOVA was run to examine the differences between the means of the three proficiency sub-groups on the pragmatic test. Results are shown in Table 5.2.

5.2 Comparison of Pragmatic Competence and English proficiency

	Low group (67)		Middle group(108)		High group (64)		F-test	Sig
	\bar{X}	S.D	\bar{X}	S.D	\bar{X}	S.D		
TOEIC	28.66	5.26	40.68	3.75	60.68	12.20	12.18	.001*
Pragmatic Test	49.85	16.13	48.55	15.91	60.68	16.83		.001*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 5.2 shows the pragmatic knowledge and English proficiency of the three subject groups. Participants with high English proficiency (high group) were found to perform well in the pragmatic test; a positive relationship between both tests was found. Regarding the other two groups, the middle group (who achieved high scores in the English proficiency test ($\bar{X}=40.68$)) did rather poorly on the pragmatic test, ($\bar{X}=48.55$). On the other hand, the low group (who achieved the lowest mean score on the TOEIC ($\bar{X}=28.66$)) performed better than the middle group in the pragmatic test ($\bar{X}=49.85$). A significant difference between means of scores ($p=0.01$) of the two tests of the three groups was also found.

In addition, in order to identify the differences between male and female students' pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts, an Independent-Samples T-tests was performed, of which the results are shown in Table 5.3 below.

5.3 Pragmatic Competence of 2 Gender Groups

Speech Acts	Male (n=48)		Female (n=191)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	\bar{x}	S.D	\bar{x}	S.D			
Offering help	5.02	2.26	4.41	1.907	1.68	237	0.06
Addressing people	6.25	2.16	5.47	2.12	2.28*	237	0.02*
Responding to compliments	6.42	1.93	5.26	2.26	3.273**	237	0.01*
Total	17.69	5.28	15.23	4.92	3.163**	237	0.01*

* $P \leq .001$

Table 5.3 shows the scores on the three speech acts by male and female students. It was found that the male could perform better than their female counterpart in the three speech acts; they achieved higher scores in two aspects: addressing people and responding to compliments. As confirmed by the total means, their total mean score was 17.69, compared with that of the females' 15.23. When compared among each aspect, significant differences were found. A statistically significant difference was found, 0.01 and 0.02 in 'responding to compliments' and in 'addressing people' respectively. Moreover, significant in total scores of the two genders regarding the three aspects was found, $p=0.01$, while no significant difference in 'offering help'. To sum up, the findings show that male students had more pragmatic competence in the given scenarios.

5.4 Discussion

This section discusses the research results and the instrument used in the study (the TOEIC and the MDCT tests).

Findings of the present study revealed that there was a positive relationship between pragmatic competence and English proficiency of fourth year tourism students. Those who attained high score on linguistics were found to obtain high score on pragmatics. This finding supports Pinyo (2009) and Khamyod (2013). Pinyo (2009) investigated Thai English teachers' pragmatic competence in *requests* in relation to their linguistic knowledge. Similarly, Khamyod (2013) examined pragmatic competence used by Thai learners with different levels of English proficiency. Findings showed that the participants with proficient English proficiency were able to perform highly on the pragmatic test. Results gained from the three language ability groups in the present study: low, middle and high obvious showed that the participants in high group attained high score on the pragmatic test. However, this finding is in opposing the studies by Barron (2003); Rattanaprasert & Aksornjarung (2011); Farashaiyan & Hua (2012). They found that participants with high score on linguistics failed to perform as well on pragmatic tests. In other words, despite their high linguistic competence, learners may not have achieved a comparable pragmatic competence.

In addition, a difference between males and females was found. Male students performed better than females on the pragmatic test regarding the three speech acts: offering help, addressing people and responding to compliments, particularly in the aspects of 'addressing people' and 'responding to compliments'. This phenomenon implied that male students had higher competence in selecting the most appropriate sentences in performing pragmatics in the given scenarios. Therefore, it can be interpreted from the findings that males are more sensitive and more aware of the patterns of politeness and social factors than the female counterpart. However, the findings were in contrast with previous studies conducted by Macualay, (2001) and Shams & Afighari, (2011), for instance. They found that females are more polite than males in cross-sex conversations. In other words, females had better pragmatic competence than males both in politeness strategies and social appropriateness rules. However, both males and females participants in the present study had been trained to be polite to customers and had taken several English courses focusing on English conversation routinely used in the hospitality and tourism context. They also had experienced an internship relating to their major study in a real workplace.

6. Conclusion

The present study employed two sets of instrument: a TOEIC test consisting of 40 multiple choice test items and a multiple choice discourse completion test with 30 test items. The former was measured subjects' English proficiency, while the latter tested their pragmatic competence regarding the three speech acts: offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments. Findings showed that there was a positive relationship between the scores of the TOEIC and the pragmatic tests. The students with high level of language proficiency tended to have high competence on pragmatics. However, when considering each group intensively, it was found that the middle group could not perform well on the pragmatic test, although they scored higher on the TOEIC than the low group. It can be interpreted that having high linguistic knowledge can help students succeed in English learning. However, it may not result in equivalent. The present study also found that male students could perform better than their female counterparts in pragmatic test.

It can be suggested that to survive in today's international and intercultural communication, Thai students, especially those who have to interact with foreigners as do the students majoring in tourism industry, should be intensively taught both linguistics and pragmatics in the classroom settings.

7. Recommendations for further research

In order to study other dimensions of pragmatics, the following recommendations should be taken into the consideration.

- 1). The present research focused on offering help, addressing people, and responding to compliments, further research, thus, should be carried out to

investigate tourism industry students' pragmatic competence in other aspects of speech acts frequently used in the hotel and tourism service, such as greeting, requesting and thanking.

2). Future investigation should focus on factors possibly affect learners' pragmatic competence and English proficiency, such as teaching materials, teaching methodology and teacher's background knowledge of pragmatics.

3). A replicate study with larger sample-group, should be conducted.

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