CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study related to the research questions and discussions of the results. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. There are two parts in this chapter. The first part deals with the information about the test takers. The second part is the results of the study. Descriptive statistics, one way ANOVA, and content analysis were applied to answer the three research questions. Discussions based on research findings were made at the end of each research question.

4.1 Test takers' demographic data

Table 4.1 presents the test takers' demographic data drawn from the student grade report. The test takers in this study are homogeneous in terms of age, education level, field of the study, and training experiences related to hospitality operation. Therefore, the data of English courses taken gives more beneficial information related to the study. Table 4.1 below presents the number of English courses both in the required and elective courses in the curriculum taken by the test takers.

Table 4.1: The test takers' demographic data

Background		Total	Per cent
Gender	Male	18	20.00
	Female	72	80.00
Foundation English	Foundation English I	90	100.00
	Foundation English II	90	100.00
	Intermediate English	78	86.67

Table 4.1: The test takers' demographic data (cont.)

Background		Total	Per cent
Reading	Fundamental English Reading /Reading Skill	45	50.00
	Intermediate English Reading	3	3.33
	Reading for Mass Communications in English	27	30.00
	Reading for Tour Guides	3	3.33
Writing	Fundamental of Writing	60	66.67
	English Structure I	60	66.67
	English Structure II	30	33.33
	Paragraph Writing	9	10.00
	English Correspondence	33	36.67
Listening & Speaking	Listening I /Basic Conversation I	90	100.00
	Listening II /Basic Conversation II	60	66.66
	English Pronunciation	9	10.00
English for Occupation	Communicative English for Careers	51	56.67
	Technical English	27	30.00
	English for Ground & In-fight Attendants	3	3.33
	English for Business Communication	9	10.00
	English for Tour Guides	42	46.66
	Communicative English for Tourism & Hospitality	27	30.30
English for Hotel	English for Hotel Studies I	90	100.00
	English for Hotel Studies II	30	33.33
Others	English through songs	24	26.67

Table 4.1 shows the English language courses that the test takers took from both fundamental and elective courses based on the curriculum. It can be seen that all the test takers completed foundation English courses as a prerequisite. Besides, they all took English Listening I (Basic Conversation I), and English for Hotel Studies I.

When calculating all English subjects taken by each test taker, the number of English subjects taken by the test takers in this study were approximately 10 subjects (Mean = 10.97, SD = 1.79).

4.2 Results and discussions

The results of the main study are presented based on the three research questions mentioned in Chapter 1.

Research question 1: Can the Front Office Pragmatic Test (FOP-Test) differentiate the students' pragmatic ability into different levels? (Tables 4.2 - 4.6)

Research Hypothesis 1: The FOP-Test can significantly differentiate the students' pragmatic ability related to hotel Front Office Department context into different levels.

The mean scores and standard deviations obtained from the FOP-Test of the high, average, and low language ability groups were calculated and presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of the FOP-Test total scores

Language ability groups	N	Total score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.	%
High	30	300	147	264	217.45	28.324	72.48
Average	30	300	103	254	184.78	38.797	61.59
Low	30	300	82	247	154.50	34.602	51.50

Table 4.2 demonstrates the means and standard deviations of the total scores of the FOP-Test. It can be seen that the mean scores obtained from the test takers with high language ability (72.48%) is more than that of the average language ability group (61.59%), and more than that of the low language ability one (51.50%). This indicates that the test takers from the high language ability group have the highest scores. More specifically, the following tables (Tables 4.3 – 4.6) show descriptive statistics of the four components (i.e., the correct speech acts, the expressions and vocabulary, the amount of information, and the degree of appropriateness) assessed in this study.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics for the correct speech acts scores

Language ability groups	N	Total scores	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.	%
High	30	75	37	75	57.83	9.082	77.11%
Average	30	75	28	69	52.08	10.970	69.44%
Low	30	75	20	64	41.58	8.926	55.44%

From Table 4.3, when the correct speech acts are considered, it can be seen that the mean scores obtained from the high language ability group (77.11%) is more than that of the average language ability group (69.44%), and more than that of the low language ability one (55.44%).

When comparing the overall mean scores of correct speech acts of the three ability groups, the standard deviations show that the scores of the correct speech acts from the three language ability groups are not much varied. However, the average group has the largest spreading of scores (10.970) while the low group (8.926) and the high language ability group (9.082) have similar standard deviations. Table 4.4 below shows descriptive statistics of the expressions and vocabulary.

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics of the expressions and vocabulary scores

Language ability groups	N	Total score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.	%
High	30	75	39	68	54.27	7.756	72.36
Average	30	75	25	59	45.17	8.889	60.23
Low	30	75	20	60	38.83	8.967	51.77

From Table 4.4, it can be seen that the scores of the expressions and vocabulary of the three ability groups assessed by the FOP-Test are 72.36%, 60.23%, and 51.77% respectively. When comparing the standard deviations, those of the average and the low ones are almost the same. The standard deviations are 8.889 and 8.967 respectively. The high language ability group has the smallest standard deviation (7.756).

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics of the amount of information scores

Language ability groups	N	Total scores	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.	%
High	30	75	35	66	52.03	7.420	69.37
Average	30	75	24	63	43.45	9.894	57.93
Low	30	75	21	64	36.08	9.428	48.11

Table 4.5 shows the descriptive statistics of the amount of information. It can be seen that the mean scores obtained from the test takers with the high language ability group (69.37%) is more than that of the average language ability group (57.93%), and more than that of the low language ability one (48.11%).

The standard deviations show that the spreading of scores of the amount of information of the average and the low language ability groups are not much varied (9.894 and 9.428). However, the spreading of scores of the high language ability group is narrower than the other two groups.

Table 4.6: Descriptive statistics of the degree of appropriateness scores

Language ability group	N	Total score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.	%
High	30	75	37	66	53.32	6.540	71.09
Average	30	75	27	63	44.08	9.529	58.77
Low	30	75	21	59	38.00	8.352	50.67

Table 4.6 shows the differences in the mean scores for the degree of appropriateness among the three language ability groups. It can be seen that the scores of the degree of the appropriateness of the high, average, and low language ability groups assessed by the FOP-Test are 71.09%, 58.77%, and 50.67% respectively. When comparing the standard deviations, the average group has the largest spreading of scores (9.529) while the spreading of the scores of the high and the low ones are narrower. The standard deviations are 6.540 and 8.352 respectively.

Discussion for the first research question

With regard to the FOP-Test as a semi-direct speaking test for assessing the students' pragmatic ability in this present study, it was found that the FOP-Test could differentiate the test takers' pragmatic ability into three levels: high, average, and low. The findings show that the total mean score of the FOP-Test obtained from the test takers with the high language ability group is higher than those of the average and low language ability groups. The means are 72.48, 61.59, and 51.50 respectively. With respect to the four components, the high group has the highest scores and the average group has higher scores than the low group. More specifically, when comparing the correct speech acts, the expressions and vocabulary, the amount of information, and the degree of appropriateness, it was found that the mean scores obtained from the test takers with the high language ability are higher than those of the average and low groups in all four components.

It was also found that the mean scores of the correct speech acts was the highest while the mean scores of the amount of information was the lowest. This could be interpreted that the ability to give the correct speech acts was regarded as the easiest while giving the sufficient amount of information was the most difficult. The highest mean scores of giving the correct speech acts indicated that the test takers from the different language ability groups could recognize what speech act was called for. Therefore, the scores were rated highest. On the contrary, the scores of giving amount of information were rated lowest. This can be explained by the fact that giving utterances in length required syntactical or grammatical knowledge to a certain extent or elaborating the utterances could meet the satisfaction of the hotel guests. Regarding using the scores obtained from each component, the students' pragmatic ability could be differentiated. This finding confirms the finding of Hudson (2001) who proposes that five pragmalinguistic components of correctness of linguistic expressions, the amount of information, formality, directness, and politeness can be used to evaluate the speakers' actual response.

It was also found that the standard deviations varied among the three groups in different components. There are two possible explanations for this. First, some respondents skipped the responses in some speech acts. This often occurred when the test takers found it difficult to respond in English or when the low degree of imposition was needed such as in requesting or apologizing; however, the test takers chose not to answer. This may be due to their insufficient English proficiency or the

feeling of no need to respond. The occurrence of opting out caused a great effect in scoring. Second, the elicitation of the wrong speech act occurred. For example, the situation itself required an apology, but some respondents did not include an apology. Besides, some scores deduction had to be made when some responses seemed to be parts of the described situation in the test rather than the expected responses.

The findings revealed that the test could distinguish the test takers into three pragmatic ability groups using both the total mean scores and the component mean scores. So, it can be concluded that the oral elicitation method of the FOP-Test could elicit the students' pragmatic ability in the hotel Front Office context. Therefore, the FOP-Test could be an instrument for assessing pragmatic ability in English for occupational purposes, particularly in the hotel Front Office context.

Research question 2: Do levels of English proficiency affect the students' pragmatic ability and what are the similarities and differences of linguistic features produced by the students with different levels of English proficiency?
Research hypothesis 2: The students' pragmatic ability of the high, average, and low levels of English proficiency differ significantly.

There were two findings from this research question. The first one was the finding of whether levels of English proficiency affect the students' pragmatic ability while the second one was the finding of the similarities and differences of linguistic features produced by the students with different levels of English proficiency. The discussion of the two answers were made at the end of each finding.

For the first sub-question, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores of the three groups in order to test the effects of language ability groups on the test takers' pragmatic ability. The results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The ANOVA of group differences in terms of proficiency levels is displayed in Table 4.7

Table 4.7: One-way ANOVA test of group differences

Components	Variance	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*
Correct speech acts	Between Groups	4073.750	2	2036.875	21.630***
	Within Groups	8192.750	87	94.170	
	Total	12266.500	89		
Expressions and	Between Groups	3611.089	2	1808.544	24.669***
Vocabulary	Within Groups	6367.700	87	73.192	
	Total	9978.789	89		
Amount of	Between Groups	3823.439	2	1911.719	23.717***
information given	Within Groups	7012.683	87	80.606	
	Total	10836.122	89		
Degree	Between Groups	3568.617	2	1784.308	26.328***
of Appropriateness	Within Groups	5896.283	87	67.773	
	Total	9464.900	89		

*** $p \leq .001$

In Table 4.7, one-way ANOVA showed significant differences between groups. Significant differences were found in all components assessed, namely the correct speech acts ($F=21.630$, $p \leq .001$), the expressions and vocabulary ($F=24.669$, $p \leq .001$), the amount of information ($F=23.717$, $p \leq .001$), and the degree of appropriateness ($F=26.328$, $p \leq .001$). This indicates that the three language ability groups differed significantly in all components. Since the results of one-way ANOVA show that the mean scores from the three language ability groups were significantly different, a Scheffé post- hoc test was conducted to find the differences among the means of the three language ability groups and see where the differences lie among them. The results are displayed in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Results of Scheffé post - hoc tests in all groups

(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High	Average	32.67*	8.825	10.69	54.65
	Low	62.95*	8.825	40.97	84.93
Average	High	-32.67*	8.825	-54.65	-10.69
	Low	30.28*	8.825	8.30	52.26
Low	High	-62.95*	8.825	-84.93	-40.97
	Average	-30.28*	8.825	-52.26	-8.30

* $p \leq .05$

From Table 4.8 in the column "Mean Difference", it can be seen that the difference in mean scores between the high and the average groups is 32.67 and the difference in the mean scores between the high and the low groups is 62.95. The difference in mean scores between the average and the low group is 30.28. All the *p* values were significant at the .05 level. This indicates that the test takers in the high group were significantly different from the test takers in the average and low language ability groups. More specifically, a Scheffé post-hoc test was also used to analyze the significant difference in each component (i.e., the correct speech acts, the expressions and vocabulary, the amount of information, and the degree of appropriateness) and to locate where the differences lied among the means. The results are displayed in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Results of Scheffé post-hoc comparison tests of each component

Components	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error
Correct speech acts	High	Average	5.75	2.506
		Low	16.25*	2.506
	Average	High	-5.75	2.506
		Low	10.50*	2.506
	Low	High	-16.25*	2.506
		Average	-10.50*	2.506
Expressions and vocabulary	High	Average	9.10*	2.209
		Low	15.43*	2.209
	Average	High	-9.10*	2.209
		Low	6.33*	2.209
	Low	High	-15.43*	2.209
		Average	-6.33*	2.209
Amount of information	High	Average	8.58*	2.318
		Low	15.95*	2.318
	Average	High	-8.58*	2.318
		Low	7.37*	2.318
	Low	High	-15.95*	2.318
		Average	-7.37*	2.318
Degree of appropriateness	High	Average	9.23*	2.126
		Low	15.23*	2.126
	Average	High	-9.23*	2.126
		Low	6.08*	2.126
	Low	High	-15.32*	2.126
		Average	-6.08*	2.126

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The results in Tables 4.8 – 4.9 reconfirmed that all the three language ability groups differed from one another in all components except for the mean difference between the high and the average groups in the correct speech acts.

Discussion for the first sub-question of research question 2

The findings for the first sub-question were found to support the hypothesis. The findings showed that there was a significant main effect of the test takers' level of English proficiency on pragmatic ability scores in all components assessed (i.e. the correct speech acts, the expressions and vocabulary, the amount of information, and degree of appropriateness) at the .001 level. More specifically when examining where the differences lied among the three different levels of English proficiency by employing a Scheffé post-hoc test, it showed that all the *p* values were highly significant. The difference in the mean scores between the high and the average English ability groups was 32.67 and the difference in the mean scores between the high and the low English ability groups was 62.95. The difference in the mean scores between the average and the low English ability groups was 30.28. This indicated that the test takers who had a high English proficiency performed pragmatic ability significantly different from the test takers who had an average English proficiency and were significantly different from those who had a low English proficiency. Thus, the findings of this study could provide the evidence that English proficiency was a variable which had a great effect on the test takers' pragmatic ability.

However, there was still a question whether learners of different English proficiency levels performed differently in pragmatic tests (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Kasper and Rose (2002) themselves believe that the development of pragmatic competence is closely related to that of grammatical competence. The learners who are highly proficient students are assumed to have a high grammatical competence as well. This agrees with Taguchi (2007) who supports that language background and English proficiency have demonstrated to influence L2 pragmatic processing. The findings of this study could correspondingly agree with the studies of Bardovi-Harling and Dorhyei (1998) in that different learning contexts (EFL/ESL) and proficiency levels are likely to affect the ability in pragmatic and grammatical awareness.

The finding of the effect of levels of English proficiency on pragmatic ability of this study corresponds with some previous studies (Matsumura, 2003; Roever, 2005) in that the high language proficient participants had better performance in pragmatics tests than the low language proficient participants. This study's results are consistent with the results in Matsumura (2003)'s who revealed that the overall

level of proficiency in the target language plays an important role in the acquisition of pragmatic awareness. Thus, the significant differences of the test takers' pragmatic ability in this study could be influenced by the differentiation of the test takers' GPA in English into three levels since their GPA are often one of the first evaluators in English proficiency and perceived to be linguistically demanding in the measurement of language proficiency. In other words, English proficiency levels account for a variable of pragmatic ability.

The second sub-question of research question 2 was to examine the similarities and differences of the linguistic features collected from the test takers from the three language ability groups. To avoid redundant or excessive examples, it was decided to randomly select responses of 10 test takers from each language ability group so the data collected from 30 respondents were examined. The similarities and differences of responses from the three language ability groups were analyzed qualitatively.

The differentiation was drawn from the typical linguistic features found from the test takers' responses in all five speech acts assessed from the test (See Appendix L for samples of responses). So, to examine the similarities and differences, the results were presented by comparing the frequency of the pragmalinguistic features that were correspondingly related to the rating scale used in the FOP-Test, not separately analyzed like conversational analysis as generally done in the previous studies. It is also important to note that the major response categories of pragmalinguistic features presented in this study might be different from those of other studies because it depended on the test takers' responses to speech acts assessed by the FOP-Test. Besides, the co-occurrences like politeness strategies found in speech acts of handling compliments and apologizing were also analyzed based on the frequent occurrence in the data collected. Tables 4.10 to 4.14 below present the frequency counts of the number of pragmalinguistic features found from the speech acts assessed in the hotel Front Office Department context. The number in parentheses appeared in the reporting part indicates the frequencies of the concerned features.

Table 4.10: Frequency of linguistic features found in promising

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
1. Routine patterns	**24**	**24**	**29**
I will *provide/inform/prepare/arrange/contact* …	20	12	18
We will *inform/prepare/send/bring* …	3	3	1
I will *take care for that/take it for you/do it for you.*	0	2	2
I promise (you to) …	1	4	0
We promise …	0	2	0
We're V+ing …	0	0	1
Just a moment/wait for a moment, please.	0	1	7
2. Affirmation markers	**29**	**29**	**19**
okay	7	2	3
yes, of course	13	5	1
yes	4	9	10
certainly	5	9	3
absolutely	0	3	1
definitely	0	1	0
yes, please.	0	0	1
3. Adverbial	**12**	**12**	**9**
right away	4	1	1
as soon as *possible/we can*	1	5	3
immediately	4	4	3
in about 5/15 minutes	0	1	1
within 5 days	0	1	0
for sure	1	0	0
shortly	1	0	0
for a second	1	0	0
now	0	0	1
4. Politeness markers	**7**	**3**	**6**
Could you (please) …?	1	0	0
Could/can I …, please?	1	1	1
May I have …, please?	1	1	1

Table 4.10: Frequency of linguistic features found in promising (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
Embedded clause	4	1	2
Please + VP	0	0	2
5. Address form	**18**	**23**	**17**
Sir	12	14	14
Madam	5	9	2
Ma'am	0	0	1
Miss	1	0	0
6. Others			
...thank you for V+ ing	**1**	**0**	**2**
...thank you.	**2**	**1**	**1**
...okay...	**0**	**1**	**2**
Don't worry (about that).	**1**	**3**	**2**
It's all right.	**0**	**0**	**1**

Note: Numbers in the boldface font show the total number of occurrences.
f = frequency of occurrences

Table 4.10 presents the frequency of the main features found in the prompted scenarios of promising to send more room amenities (Situation 1), promising to arrange the limousine (Situation 2), and promising to mail hotel guest's lost items if found (Situation 3). The responses can be grouped into six categories. First, the use of routine patterns seemed to occur at the high rate in all three language ability groups. Considering the expressions related to the future act with the use of model "*will*" followed by the performative verbs like "*provide*", "*prepare*", and "*inform*" as markers for the future action preceding with the pronoun "*I*" and "*we*", the high group and the low groups used them with 23 and 21 tokens respectively while 17 tokens were made in the average group. When considering the use of pronoun "*I*" and "*we*" in this category, it is obvious that the "*we*" was used in a small degree in all groups. The average group (5 tokens) mostly used the pronoun "*we*" while the high and the low group used relatively small with 3 and 2 tokens respectively. It was interesting to see that the performative verb "*promise*" was explicitly used among the average group while it was absent from the low group. However, it can be seen that

the respondents from the high group used "*promise*" only once while 6 tokens were found in the average group. When considering other routine patterns, it is also interesting to see the test takers from the low group (7 tokens) preferred using the routine *"Just a moment/wait for a moment, please*" while the only one token was found in the average group, but none in the high group.

Secondly, the affirmation markers were observed, a number of frequent responses were the same in the high and the average groups (29 tokens) while the low group did 19 tokens. It can be seen the features that occurred in this category varied. The use of *"okay"* and *"yes, of course"* were very distinctive in the high group (7 and 13 tokens respectively). While *"certainly"* and the markers *"yes"* alone were most frequently used in the average and the low groups with 9 and 10 tokens respectively. The other markers; "*absolutely*", "*definitely*", and "*yes, please*" were found more or less in the average and the low groups, but not in the high group.

Third is the observation of the co-occurrences of adverbials which occurred when the promising was made. It can be seen that the occurrences of adverbials from the test takers from the high, average, and low groups were 12, 12, and 9 tokens respectively. However, the distinctive features among the three groups were the use of "*right away*", *"as soon as possible/we can"* and *"immediately"*. The intensifier "*right away*" was highly used in the high group (4 tokens) while "*as soon as possible/we can*" was commonly used in the average group (5 tokens). The responses from the high and average groups yielded the agreement in the use of "*immediately"*(with 4 tokens) while it was used in the low group with 3 tokens. Other words or phrases of intensifiers "*in about ... minutes*", "*within ... days", "for sure", "shortly", "for a second",* and *"now"* were seldom used among the three groups. There was only one token eventually found in each test taker group.

Fourthly, politeness markers were observed. The higher total frequency was found in the high and the low groups with 7 and 6 tokens respectively. The expressions of *"Could/Can/May/ you/I ..?"* were commonly found in all groups. However, when comparing the occurrences of each feature in this category, the use of the embedded clause was used remarkably in the high group (4 tokens) whereas only one and two tokens were found in the average and the low groups respectively. However, the marker of *"please* + VP" was neither found in the high nor the average groups, but it appeared only in the low group data with two tokens.

Fifthly, the use of the address form was considered. It can be seen that the average group highly addressed the hotel guests by the title (23 tokens) whereas 18 and 17 tokens were used in the high and the low groups respectively. In addition, the address form of "*Miss*" and "*Ma'am*" appeared separately once in the high and the low groups only.

Lastly, for other minor features found from the test takers' responses, the use of pre-closing *"...thank you for V+ing"* and *"thank you"* in the high group was identical to that of the low group who did this with 3 tokens each while only one token was found in the average group. The pre-closing *"...okay..."* was found in the average group (1 token) and the low group (2 tokens), but not in the high group. Besides, the statement letting the interlocutor off the hook *"Don't worry about that"* was also used in all groups with a small degree of occurrences (1, 3, and 2 tokens respectively) while *"It's all right"* was found only once in the low group. Table 4.11 shows the linguistic features found in the responses in informing.

Table 4.11: Frequency of linguistic features found in informing

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
1. Routine patterns	**12**	**9**	**9**
We have ...(name the facility).	1	1	2
We provide ...	3	0	0
We already have ...	1	1	0
You can *access/use/* ...	7	7	7
2. Formulaic expressions of regret	**10**	**12**	**10**
Sorry.	4	4	5
Excuse me.	0	5	1
So sorry.	1	0	0
I'm sorry *about that/to tell you that* ...	3	0	1
I'm *so/terribly/really/ sorry.*	1	3	3
We're sorry.	1	0	0
3. *Politeness markers*	**14**	**11**	**6**
Would you *mind/like*...?	3	1	0
Could/can you (please)...?	3	4	0

Table 4.11: Frequency of linguistic features found in informing (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
I'm afraid that …	2	2	0
I think …	1	0	0
Embedded (if)	4	3	3
It's possible to …	1	1	1
Please	0	0	1
Please + VP	0	0	1
4. Affirmation markers	**8**	**8**	**10**
Yes, you can.	1	0	0
Certainly	1	0	0
Okay	2	0	0
Yes	3	6	10
(Yes) of course	1	2	0
5. Address forms	**23**	**13**	**9**
Sir	11	3	0
Madam	11	10	7
Ma'am	1	0	2
6. Others			
Thank you.	**2**	**0**	**0**
…okay…	**1**	**0**	**0**
Is that okay with you?	**1**	**0**	**0**
No.	**0**	**0**	**1**
No, you can't.	**0**	**0**	**1**
We could not.	**0**	**1**	**0**

Note: Numbers in the boldface font show the total number of occurrences.
f = frequency of occurrences

Table 4.11 shows the linguistic features found in the responses from prompted scenarios of informing where to get access to the internet (Situation 4), informing the check-out guest regarding an invalid credit card (Situation 5), and informing the late-checkout charge (Situation 6). The features can be grouped into six categories. The first category was the use of routine patterns when informing. The distinctive feature that could differentiate the responses among the three groups

was the use of "*we*" form when informing hotel facilities. The high group used it 5 tokens while it occurred in the average and the low groups in the same number (with 2 tokens). However, the statement beginning with "*You can.*" was preferred equally in all groups (with 7 tokens each).

Second, the formulaic expressions of regret were observed. They were highly performed in the situations 5 and 6 where the guest's face was imposed. It was found that the test takers from the three groups produced the expressions of regret with 10, 12, and 10 tokens respectively. The performative verb "*sorry*" was most frequently used in all groups. The expression "*excuse me*" was more frequently used in the average group (5 tokens) while the low group made only once. However, it was absent from the high group. Comparing the expressions of regret which were extended with the content like "*I'm sorry to tell you that ....*", the high group (3 tokens) did this more than the low group whereas it was absent in the average group. Besides, the "*we*" form in expressing the regret was found once in the high group only.

The third observation was the use of politeness markers. The features found in this category varied. The high group (14 tokens) performed them most while the low group (6 tokens) did the least. The similar frequency found in all the three groups were the use of the embedded clause and the expression "*It's possible to ...*". The remarkable finding from employing politeness markers was none from the low group that produced the indirect questions like "*Would you mind/like ...*?, "*Could you...?*", the downgrading makers, "*I'm afraid that...*" and "*I think..*". The use of these features was only found from the test takers from the high and the average groups who performed them interchangeably. Besides, the features that neither the high nor the average groups did was the marker "*Please*" and "*Please + VP*". They were only found once in the low group.

Fourth was the examination of affirmation markers. It was found that the frequency of affirmation markers among the three groups was similar. However, the expressions "*Yes, you can*", "*Certainly*", and "*Okay*" were found only in the high group while the average and the low groups tended to use "*Yes*" and "*Yes, of course*". It was found that a single world "*Yes*" was mostly used in the low group (10 tokens).

The fifth category was the use of the address form. The highest frequency was found in the high group (23 tokens) while the average and the low groups did 13

and 9 tokens respectively. Lastly, other minor features were observed. The test takers from the high group used the pre-closing markers, "*Thank you*", "*...okay...*", and *"Is that okay with you?"* in their responses whereas none of the test takers from the average and the low groups did. Besides, the use of direct refusal markers, *"No"* and "*No, you can't*" were only found in the low group while it was found only once in the average group with the use of the "*we*" form. Table 4.12 illustrates the frequency of linguistic features which occurred in the speech act of requesting.

Table 4.12: Frequency of linguistic features found in requesting

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
1. Formulaic expressions of regret	**15**	**12**	**7**
Sorry ...	5	1	1
Excuse me...	3	9	2
I'm sorry ...	4	0	2
I'm *so/very sorry* (about it) ...	0	0	2
We're sorry ...	0	1	0
We're *terribly* sorry ...	1	0	0
Please accept my/our apology...	2	0	0
We're terribly sorry for the inconvenience...	0	1	0
2. Routine patterns	**2**	**2**	**2**
Just a moment, please.	0	0	1
We hope you don't mind. *	0	1	0
Thank you for using xxx*	0	1	1
Please have a nice holiday.*	1	0	0
Hope to look forward to seeing you again.*	1	0	0
3. Affirmation markers	**10**	**7**	**10**
Yes...	4	2	8
Yes, of course...	1	3	0
Certainly...	1	2	2
That's all right.. .	1	0	0
Okay...	2	0	0
Yes, you can...	1	0	0

Table 4.12: Frequency of linguistic features found in requesting (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
4. Politeness markers	**23**	**14**	**8**
Would you mind ...?	1	1	0
Could/can you (please) (possibly)...?	**8**	5	0
Would you (please) like ...?	2	0	1
May/can I..., please?	4	4	1
I'm afraid that ...	1	1	0
I think ...	1	0	0
I'm not sure ...	0	1	0
Unfortunately, ...	1	0	0
If (clause)	4	1	2
Please + VP	1	1	4
5. The "we" form	**5**	**3**	**1**
(excluded from the formulaic expressions)			
6. Address form (sir/madam/ma'am)	**15**	**13**	**10**
7. Others			
xxx thank you (very much).	**4**	**2**	**3**
Don't have.	**0**	**0**	**1**
I don't know.	**0**	**0**	**1**
No.	**1**	**0**	**0**
It's okay.	**0**	**0**	**1**
xxx okay xxx.	**0**	**2**	**0**
Is that okay with you?	**1**	**0**	**0**
Don't worry.	**0**	**0**	**2**

Note: Numbers in the boldface font show the total number of occurrences.
f = frequency of occurrences

Table 4.12 shows the features that occurred in the prompted scenarios of requesting a walk-in guest for the deposit (Situation 7), requesting the arrival guest to give the check-out time, due to the high occupancy rate (Situation 8), and requesting the departure guest to pay for hotel room amenities taken from the room (Situation 9). The occurrences of features can be described as follows. Firstly, it is obvious

that the formulaic expressions of regret were the most frequent features used in the high group (15 tokens) while the test takers from the average and the low groups did with 12 and 7 tokens respectively. It can be seen that the test takers from the average group had more tendency to use the expression "*Excuse me*" (9 tokens) than did the high group (3 tokens) and the low group (2 tokens). The high group preferred to use "*Sorry*" and *I'm sorry*" than the other two groups did. Besides, the expressions that need a more supportive move like *"Please accept my/our apology..."* were made only in the high group (2 tokens).

The second category was the use of routine patterns. The occurrences of this category were found in a very small degree. The expression "*Just a moment, please*" was made once in the low groups. There were other four expressions marked with asterisk markers were grouped in this category; however, they were irrelevant to the given situation. These expressions were found in the high and the average groups with 2 tokens each while it was once made in the low group. These errors are discussed in the discussion part of the third research question.

Thirdly, some respondents initiated their utterances with the affirmation markers. The use of these markers varied; however, the markers that were remarkably found among the three test taker groups were a single word "*Yes*" and "*Yes, of course.*" The former was the most frequently used in the low group (8 tokens) while the latter was used in the high and the average groups with 1 and 3 tokens respectively. The markers; *"That's all right", "Okay", Yes, you can*" were found in the high group only while "*certainly*" was used in all groups, but in a small number. In addition, it is interesting to see that the occurrences of affirmation markers in requesting collected from the test takers in this study also produced the repetition of the requirement, for example, "*Yes, of course. One double room for two nights", "Yes, there are rooms available for you" and "Okay, one double room for two nights".* The repetitions of the guests' requirements are considered as the norm of practice in the hotel-guest communication because this service encounter involves with payment. It was found that the test takers from the high, average, and low language ability groups made them in the similar proportion with 10, 7, and 10 tokens respectively.

Fourthly, the politeness markers have the highest frequency when comparing to the other occurrences. It is interesting to see that the politeness markers when making a request like *"Would you mind...?" and "Could/can you (please)*

possibly...?" are seldom used by the low group while the high and the average groups performed them 11 and 6 tokens respectively. Besides, when observing the use of indirect questions of request like "*May/can I ..., please?"*, it was found that the high and the average groups used them in the same number (with 4 tokens each) while one was made in the low group. Besides, the hedge markers, "*I'm afraid that ...", "I think...", "I'm not sure..." and "unfortunately"* were absent from the low group. They were only made in the high and the average groups, but in a very small degree. In addition, the frequent use of "*if clause"* was highly found in the high group (4 tokens) while the average and the low groups did 1 and 2 tokens respectively.

Fifthly, the finding reveals that the use of the "*we"* form was found in a small degree. There were 5 tokens in the high group while the average and the low groups had 3 tokens and 1 token respectively. The use of the address forms; "*Sir", "Madam",* and "*Ma'am"* were grouped in the sixth category. It was found that the high group had 15 tokens while the average and the low groups performed 13 and 10 tokens respectively.

Lastly, when observing other minor features, the conventional closing like "*thank you*" and "*okay*" and the use of refusals were also found eventually in a small number. The frequent use of the marker, "*thank you*" was relatively similar in all three groups with 4, 2 and 3 tokens from the high, average, and low groups respectively. As for the use of refusals, there were two respondents in the low group and only one respondent from the high group who performed the direct *"No"*. However, the test takers from the average group did not perform the refusal at all. Besides, the markers, "*It's okay", "...okay...", "Is that okay with you?*" and "*Don't worry*", which function as pre-closing conversation, were found in a small frequency in the three groups with 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Table 4.13 illustrates the frequency of features which occurred in handling complaints.

Table 4.13: Frequency of linguistic features found in handling complaints

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
1. *Formulaic expressions of regret*	**36**	**47**	**35**
Excuse me…	0	2	1
Sorry…	0	1	0
So, sorry…	0	3	0
I'm sorry…	1	3	4
I'm sorry to hear that/for that.	2	0	1
I'm sorry about /our mistake/for this wrong.	0	0	2
… I'm *very/so/really* sorry (for you/for that) again.	1	0	7
I'm *so* sorry /to hear that/for that.	5	11	5
I'm *so/truly/very/terribly* sorry (for the inconvenience).	3	6	4
I'm *really* sorry (about that mistake).	1	0	5
I have to apologize you.	0	0	1
Please accept ***my*** apology.	0	0	1
We're sorry.	1	0	0
We're sorry *for the mistake/the inconvenience*.	3	0	0
We're *so/terribly/really* sorry (about this/that problem)	8	10	3
We apologize for an inconvenience.	0	0	1
We *really/do/* apologize for *that/ this convenience*.	1	5	0
We have to apologize for the mistake.	1	0	0
We hope you give me apology.	1	0	0
We're *really /terribly/* sorry to keep you waiting.	2	0	0
Please accept ***our*** apology.	6	5	0
Could you please accept our apology?	0	1	0
2. *Routine patterns*	**6**	**3**	**3**
(wait) just a moment, please.	1	0	3
Could you please wait for a minute?	0	1	0
We understand how this happened.	1	1	0
I understand you how …	1	1	0
See what else I can do.	1	0	0
Let see how we (could) make this out.	2	0	0

Table 4.13: Frequency of linguistic features found in handling complaints (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
3. *Politeness markers*	**4**	**12**	**0**
Would you mind…?	1	11	0
Could you mind…?	1	0	0
Could I …?	0	1	0
Please.	1	0	0
I think …	1	0	0
4. *Adverbials*	**9**	**5**	**5**
Now	0	1	3
Immediately	6	1	0
As soon as possible/I can	1	0	1
Right away	2	1	1
(may be) in five/ten minutes.	0	2	0
5. Address form	**17**	**26**	**14**
Sir	5	0	0
Madam	12	25	13
Miss	0	0	1
Ma'am	0	1	0
6. The "we" form	**3**	**4**	**3**
(excluded from the formulaic expressions)			
7. Strategies			
Give an explanation	**1**	**2**	**1**
Acknowledge of responsibility	**2**	**1**	**0**
Offer a repair	**28**	**29**	**19**
Give compensation	**4**	**1**	**6**
Promise of forbearance	**1**	**1**	**1**
8. Others			
…thank you.	**1**	**2**	**0**
Okay, it will be okay.	**0**	**0**	**1**
Okay …	**0**	**0**	**1**
…okay?	**1**	**0**	**0**

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Table 4.13: Frequency of linguistic features found in handling complaints (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
...okay...	**1**	**0**	**0**
Don't have.	**0**	**0**	**1**
Don't worry.	**1**	**0**	**1**

Note: Numbers in the boldface font show the total number of occurrences.
f = frequency of occurrences

Table 4.13 shows the features that occurred in the prompted scenarios of handling complaints regarding the malfunction of water heater (Situation 10), noise disturbance (Situation 11), and the no-show of the airport representative (Situation 12). The features found in the test takers' responses in handling complaints could be categorized into eight features. The findings could be reported as follows. First, the formulaic expressions of regret were frequently used in all groups. However, they were most frequently used in the average group (47 tokens) while the high and the low groups did 36 tokens and 35 tokens respectively. When examining the features occurred, it was found that the average group (32 tokens) highly used a greater range of intensifiers: *"so"*, *"really"*, *"truly"*, *"very"*, and *"terribly"* while the high and the low groups performed similarly with 21 and 24 tokens respectively. When considering the use of the "*we*" form when expressing the regret, the high group (17 tokens) and the average group (15 tokens) frequently used it in a higher degree while only 4 tokens occurred in the low group. Besides, the use of routine patterns, "*(Could you) please accept our apology*" was equally used in the high and the average groups for 6 tokens whereas it appeared only once in the low group with the use of the first possessive pronoun, *"Please accept my apology"*.

Second was the examination of the use of routine patterns. When comparing the patterns found in this category, the test takers from the low group (3 tokens) preferred to use *"(wait) just a moment, please*" while it was found only once in the high group, but not in the average group which used the pattern of *"Could you please wait for a minute*" only once. In addition, none of the test takers from the low group made the patterns that show the speaker's concern like "*We understand how this*

happened." and *"I understand you how ... "*. These routines were used equally in the high and the average groups. In addition, the use of unspecific offers of repair expressions, *"See what else I can do."* and *"Let's see how we make this out"* were found in the high group only.

Third, it is interesting to see that the occurrences of politeness markers did not appear in the low group at all. They were frequently used in the average group (12 tokens) while 4 tokens were found in the high group. The average group (11 tokens) mostly used the expression *"Would you mind ...?"* which was much more frequent than the high group (1 token).

Fourth, the respondents showed the use of adverbials. They most occurred in the high group (9 tokens) while the average and the low groups did in the same proportion (with 5 tokens). The word *"immediately"* was remarkably made in the high group whereas the low group tended to use *"now"* to intensify the action.

Fifth, the address form of the title *"Sir"* and *"Madam"* were made in the situations assessed. The highest occurrences appeared in the average group (with 26 tokens) while the high group used 17 tokens and the low group did 14 tokens. The sixth category was the use of the *"we"* form. It is noted that the *"we"* form in this category did not include in routine patterns and formulaic expressions of regret. It was found that the *"we"* form similarly occurred in all three groups; however, it was found in a small degree.

Seventh, the respondents obviously performed politeness strategies used in handling complaints. This category was made distinctively when comparing to the other four speech acts assessed in this study. To consider the occurrences of strategies in all three groups, the high group (36 tokens) and the average group (34 tokens) relatively produced them in a higher degree. However, when comparing among the strategies used, offering a repair was highly made in the high and the average groups. For example, *"...but I will check if there is available room on the other floor"* and *"Would you mind to change to another room?"* were offered when the requested room was not available (Situation 11). On the contrary, giving explanations like in the situation when the airport representative did not show up at the airport (Situation 12) *"...there are some problems with the representative of our hotel on the way to the airport"* and acknowledging of responsibility like *"...We're pleased to have responsibility for it"* were less performed in all groups. Another interesting finding was the low group employed strategies of compensation such as

"*I will give you a welcome drink and a dinner for free*" and "*Don't be worried about the taxi price because we will take care of it*" more than the high and the low groups. However, when the content of compensation was observed, it was found that information given appeared to be awkward and unreal. The occurrence of promise of forbearance such as *"I will not let it happen again."* and *"It would not happen the next time."* was found in all groups as well, but it was only once made in each language ability group.

The last category was the occurrence of the minor features produced by the test takers. The pre-closing markers were employed in all groups interchangeably, but in a very small number. However, it was obviously found that the average group made only 2 tokens of closing markers like "*...thank you*" in this category while the high and the low groups equally used the marker of "*okay*" with 2 tokens each. The refusal marker was neither found in the high and average groups, but it appeared in the low group. The statement letting the interlocutor off the hook "*Don't worry*" was found only once in the high and low groups. Table 4.13 shows the features which occurred in the responses in apologizing.

Table 4.14: Frequency of linguistic features found in apologizing

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
1. Formulaic expressions of regret	**37**	**40**	**26**
Excuse me...	0	1	0
Sorry...	5	3	0
So sorry...	0	1	0
I'm sorry to hear that.	1	0	0
I'm sorry /for the mistake/for this wrong.	5	5	9
I'm so/very/really/ sorry for that/about it/ about this.	7	3	16
I'm terribly/truly sorry.	1	1	0
I apologize.	0	1	0
I do apologize for this inconvenience.	0	1	0
Please accept my apology.	1	4	1
We're sorry (about that problem).	3	0	0

Table 4.14: Frequency of linguistic features found in apologizing (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
We're so/really/very/ terribly sorry (for this).	4	10	0
We apologize (and show our sorry).	1	0	0
We have to apologize (about this).	1	0	0
We do apologize (for this inconvenience).	2	4	0
Please accept our apology.	1	2	0
...sorry for *keeping/letting/* you waiting.	5	4	0
2. Routine patterns	**6**	**3**	**11**
(Please) wait for a moment/just a minute (please).	5	0	11
We do understand ...	1	0	0
...let me talk to the manager and see what we should do for you.	0	3	0
3. Politeness markers	**24**	**6**	**4**
I'm afraid that ...	2	0	0
I think ...	1	0	0
Could/can you (please)...?	4	1	0
Would you mind ...?	6	2	0
Would it be possible ...?	1	0	0
Embedded (if)	6	2	0
Please + VP	4	1	3
Please	0	0	1
4. Adverbials	**4**	**6**	**2**
Immediately	4	2	0
Urgently	0	2	0
Right now	0	1	0
Very/really sorry	0	1	1
As soon as I can	0	0	1
5. Address of form	**8**	**21**	**7**
Sir	2	0	0
Madam	3	17	5
Ma'am	3	4	2

Table 4.14: Frequency of linguistic features found in apologzing (cont.)

Feature of occurrences	High Group (N=10)	Average Group (N=10)	Low Group (N=10)
	f	*f*	*f*
6. The use of "we" form	**3**	**2**	**-**
7. Affirmation markers	**3**	**0**	**3**
Of course.	1	0	0
Okay ...	2	0	0
...okay ...	0	0	1
Okay?	0	0	1
Certainly	0	0	1
8. Strategies			
Give explanation	**8**	**6**	**6**
Acknowledge of responsibility	**1**	**1**	**0**
Offer a repair	**17**	**12**	**13**
Give compensation	**5**	**4**	**6**
Promise of forbearance	**0**	**1**	**1**
9. Others			
...thank you.	**1**	**0**	**0**
Are you okay?	**1**	**0**	**0**
Don't worry.	**0**	**1**	**0**
We don't have.	**0**	**0**	**1**

Note: Numbers in the boldface font show the total number of occurrences.
f= frequency of occurrences

Table 4.14 shows the features that occurred in the prompted scenarios of apologizing for ineffective services (Situation 13), unavailability of the room (Situation 14), and a shortage of staff when checking-in (Situation 15). The occurrences of features can be described as follows. First, for formulaic expressions of regret, the expression *"I'm (we're) sorry..."* was the most commonly used in all groups. However, the distinctive feature that could differentiate the expressions of regret among the three groups was the use of intensifiers. In order to express the concern for the hearer, the intensifiers, *"really"*, *"terribly"*, and *"very"* were remarkably made, especially in the average group (14 tokens) and the low group (16 tokens) while 12 tokens were made in the high group. Besides, in order to indicate a

strong commitment, the high and the average groups used aggravating "*do apologize*" which was absent from the low group. However, the average group (5 tokens) performed more than the high group did (2 tokens). In addition, the expressions requested for forgiveness like "*Please accept my/our apology*" was the most preferred response in the average group (6 tokens) while the high and the low groups produced a very small number of occurrences with 2 and 1 token respectively. Besides, the expression *"...sorry for keeping/letting/ you waiting"* was absent from the low group while the high group (5 tokens) and the average group (4 tokens) performed this similarly.

Second was the use of routine patterns. There were three expressions found in this category. The expression "*(please) wait for a moment/just a minute (please)"* was most frequently used in the low group (11 tokens) while the high group (5 tokens) performed half of what the low group did; however, none of the test takers from the average group used this expression. The expressions "*We do understand"* and "*... let me talk to the manager and see what we should do for you."* were only found in the high and the average groups. The former occurred only once in the high group while the latter was found in the average group with 3 tokens.

Third, for politeness markers, the responses that were most preferred in the high group were the hedge markers, embedded clauses, and *"Please"* followed with the verb phrase. For the head act, neither the test takers from the average and the low groups used the hedge of "*I'm afraid that..."* and *"I think ..."*. These two markers appeared in the high group only. The head act "*Could/can you..?"*, and "*Would you mind ...?"* that are commonly used to soften the speech in apologizing were found in the high group (10 tokens) and the average group (3 tokens) while they were absent from the low group. When considering the features of embedded clauses, only the high group (6 tokens) and the average group (2 tokens) used the syntactic downgrading of "*if*". The examples are "*Would you mind if I change the room for you?"* and "*You can talk to her* (the manager) *if you want a discount."* and "*It will be nice if you get a double room"*. Besides, the verbal downgrading "*Would it be possible...*?" was used only once by the high group. In addition, the maker of "*please+VP"* such as "*Please, follow me."* and "*Please, wait for a while*" was frequently used similarly in the high group (4 tokens) and the low group (3 tokens) while it was made only once in the average group. However, it is obvious that the low group only chose markers "*please + VP"* (3 tokens) and a single word *"please*"

(1 token) in the feature of being polite while the high and the average groups used these markers with 4 tokens and 1 token respectively.

Fourth, the adverbial intensifiers, *"immediately"*, *"urgently"*, *"right now"*, *"very/really"* and *"as soon as I can"* were observed. It was found that the frequent use of these intensifiers in the high group (4 tokens) and the average group (6 tokens) was similar while the test takers from the low group used the adverbial intensifier of *"very/really"* and *"as soon as I can"* only once each.

Fifth, the use of the address form, the addressing by the title *"Sir"* and *"Madam"* was found in this study due to the nonexistence of the names given in the prompted situations. A more frequent use of the address form appeared in the average group (21 tokens) while the high group (8 tokens) and the low groups (7 tokens) used it less.

The sixth observation was the use of the *"we"* form, which was relatively found in a small frequency. It was used only in the high and average groups with 3 and 2 tokens respectively while it was absent from the low group. Seventh, the affirmation markers only appeared in the responses from the high and the low groups, not in the average group. However, the frequency found in this category was rather small with 3 tokens in the high and the low groups.

Eighth, the speeches collected from the three groups of the test takers also show strategies used in apologizing. The findings show that the test takers from the three groups attempted to minimize the degree of offence by giving explanations in apologizing, for example, *"Oh sorry madam, the double rooms are sold out..."* or *"We're terribly sorry, ma'am, but we're really fully booked for the double room right now"*. The high group (8 tokens) performed higher than did the other groups (with the identical number of 6 tokens). According to acknowledging the responsibility, the high and the average groups performed only once while it was absent from the low group. The two responses were *"I'm very sorry for that – that you have a terrible room"* and *"We're sorry about that problem."* On the contrary, all three groups offered a repair in a high degree. For example, *"Would you prefer a suit instead?"*, *"Could you change to another room?"*, and *"... let me talk to the manager"* were offered when the room required was not available. However, offering a repair was the most frequently used in the high group (17 tokens) while the average group (12 tokens) and the low group (13 tokens) offered a repair in the similar degree. In order to satisfy the simulated hotel guests, the test takers from the

three groups also attempted to give a compensation in a similar frequency of 5, 4, and 6 tokens respectively. However, the use of the promise of probearance like "*I'm sorry, it wouldn't be happened anymore*" only occurred once in the average and low groups while it was absent from the high group.

Lastly, the minor features were also found from the respondents. Pre-closing markers "*...thank you*" and "*Are you okay?*" were used once in the high group. At the same time, a statement letting the interlocutor off the hook "*Don't worry*" and the direct refusal "*We don't have.*" were each used in the average group and the low group respectively.

Discussion for the second sub-question of research question 2

Tables 4.10 – 4.14 show the similarities and differences of the linguistic forms reflecting the pragmatic ability of the test takers in the high, average, and low English proficiency groups. These pragmalinguistic forms were grouped based on the major linguistic features found from the actual responses from the data collected. It can be seen that the differentiations of the linguistic features performed in the five speech acts assessed in the study varied. The details of the frequency of occurrences in each feature were separately reported in each table (as presented in Tables 4.10 – 4.14). However, in order to discuss the similarities and differences of the test takes' pragmalinguistic forms as a whole, the total of frequency counts of the number of pragmalinguistic features found from the five speech acts assessed by the FOP-Test are displayed in Figure 4.1.

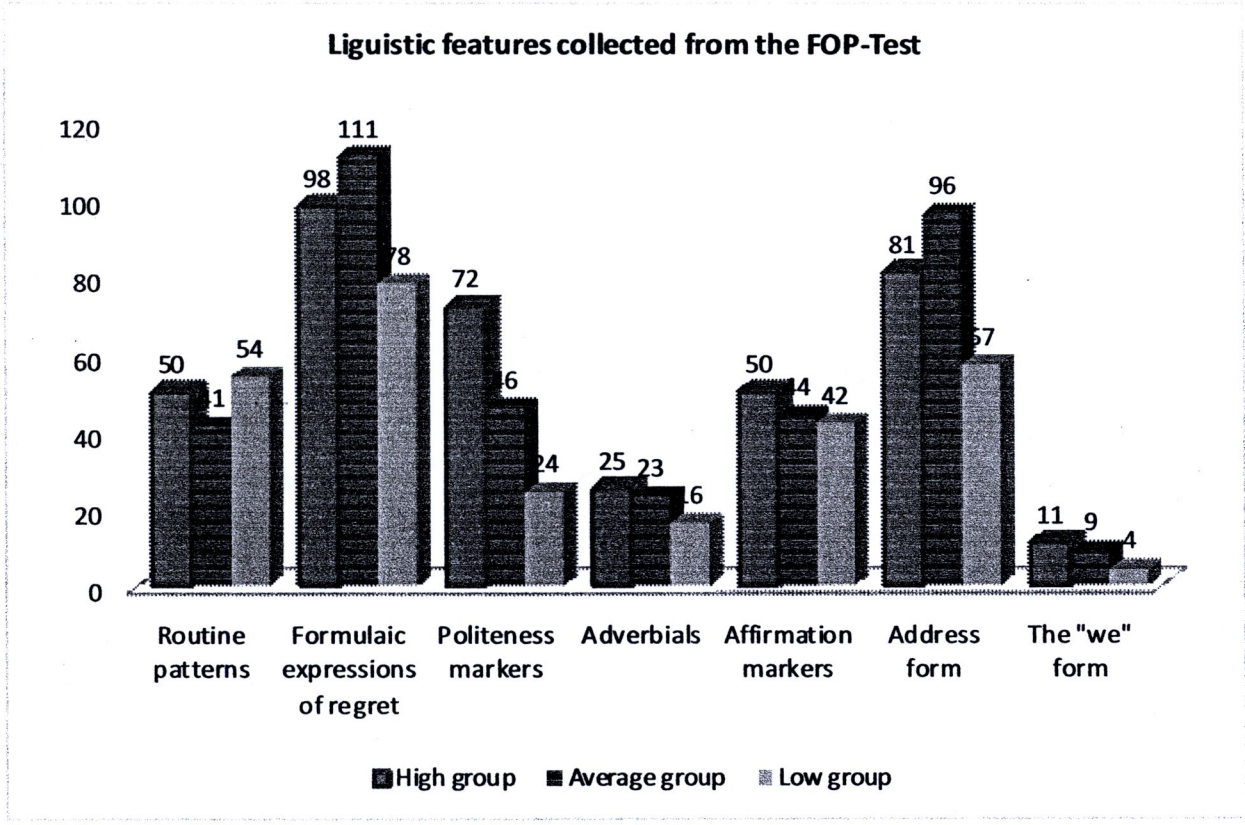

Figure 4.1: The differentiations of linguistic features collected from the five speech acts assessed by the FOP-Test

Figure 4.1 shows the major differences of linguistic features drawn from the test takers of three language ability groups in the frequency counts. Their responses can be basically distinguished into seven categories. The category of "others" and strategies applied in handling complaints and apology are presented separately in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. Comparing frequency counts of linguistic features in all categories, the distinct features that can differentiate among the test takers from three language ability groups were the use of politeness markers and the address forms.

Firstly, it can be seen that the test takers from the high group highly applied politeness markers in their responses to the simulated hotel guests in the situations given in the FOP-Test (as presented in Tables 4.10 – 4.14). From the data collected, particularly in requesting (see Table 4.12), the markers; "*Could/Can you... please?*", "*Can/Could I ..., please?*", and "*May I ...?*" were highly used among the test takers from the high language ability group. The markers which require the syntactic knowledge to lengthen the utterances like the hedge "*I think ...*", "*I'm afraid ...*", and the embedded clause are rarely found from the low English proficiency test

takers. Thus, there are two possible reasons for the apparent high frequency for the use of politeness markers produced by the high level test takers. First, the highly proficient students may have awareness and be more comfortable to make their speech more polite than the average and the low groups. Second, the English proficiency of the high level test takers enables them to make their responses more polite by applying their grammar knowledge to lengthen their intention in English while the less proficient students might have difficulty due to the lack of the grammatical knowledge to express themselves. The absence of the occurrence of the politeness markers in handling complaints in the low level takers could be could be considerable evidence (See Table 4.13). The test takers from the low group in this study obviously exhibited the marker of *"Please + VP"* and an isolate word *"Please"* to soften their speech when the requesting was required. In terms of politeness, in fact, *"please"* makes a sentence more polite when using it with a command or a direction, but not with a request (Fukushima, 1990).

On the contrary, the test takers from the low English ability group frequently used routine patterns higher than the high and the average groups. It was also interesting to see that the test takers tended to use one form of routine patterns repeatedly in their responses. However, the number of frequency was relatively similar among the three groups of the test takers. A possible explanation for the apparent high frequency of routine patterns in the low group is that those forms can be learned easily through the list of possible utterances provided in their textbooks so they possibly rely on the rote memory of routine patterns. This agrees with the researchers who have noted that the acquisition of the routine patterns occurs relatively early in the stage of L2 learning. However, from data collected, the use of routine patterns in the high proficiency test takers was rather different from the responses collected from the low proficiency group in terms of the length of patterns. It can be seen that the test takers from the high and the average groups tended to use long routine patterns such as *"We do understand ..."* and *" ...let me talk to the manager and see what we should do for you."* One possible explanation for this difference could be related to their ability to conclude from the overall input they heard and were able to put words in longer sentences rather than expressions that come in chunks or short forms of expressions.

Formulaic expressions of regret were highly used in all speech acts assessed by the FOP-Test except for the speech act of promising. Expressions of regret were

most commonly found in handing complaints and apologizing as presented in Tables 4.13 – 4.14. Unlike speech acts of promising, informing, and requesting, handling complaints and apologizing were expressive functions proposed by Searle (1975). He mentions that the expressive functions are used when the speaker expresses his/her feelings or attitudes towards things. In this study, handing complaints and apologizing were made when the hotel guests were unsatisfied towards hotel services. Expressing regrets to the hotel guests agrees with Olshtain's (1983) explanation that when one person (the hotel guest) is perceived as offended, the party (the hotel staff) needs to apologizing. From the data collected, it could be seen that the high and average groups used formulaic expressions of regret remarkably similar in a greater degree when compared to all categories of linguistic forms examined in this study.

Another distinct linguistic feature among the three groups appears in the use of the address form to the hotel guests by addressing the title like "*Sir, would you ...?*" which is considered polite and appropriate in the context of hotel service encounters. There is one point to make from the test takers' responses that they only addressed the simulated guests by using the forms of "*Sir*" and "*Madam*" since the simulated guest's first and last name was not mentioned in the test. It was clear that the test takers tried to avoid the difficulty, so they addressed the simulated hotel guests by addressing "*Sir*" and "*Madam*" which Wardllaugh (1990) mentions that it is possible to do so if there is doubt how to address. In spite of this fact, in English, addressing by the title is the least intimate address form; however, the address terms of "*Sir*" and "*Madam*" to the hotel guests are considered professionally prestigious. Regarding the role of business interaction, the address forms "*Sir*" and "*Madam*" are the linguistic politeness markers which include honorifics and solidarity booster. Besides, in hospitality language, the title and the guest's last name are used to mark the respect in a formal way (Blue & Harun, 2003). However, in this study, the last name was opted out. Gu (1996) regards address maxim as one of the politeness maxims. A failure to use an appropriate address term is a sign of rudeness. He illustrates that addressing one's interlocutor is not simply addressing to draw attention, but it involves the speaker's recognition of the hearer as a social being in a specific social status or role. Since the interaction between the hotel staff and guests is considered an unequal encounter, it is a norm for the hotel staff to initiate the talk by addressing the guests and choose address terms which are more formal. From the

findings, it can be seen that the test takers from the low language ability group used it least while the high and the average levels of the test takers performed the use of *"Sir"* or *"Madam"* in a high degree relatively. Even the average language group frequently used them higher than the high group. One possible explanation of this occurrence is the test takers from the low language ability group may be reluctant to address the hotel guests and the high and average groups have power-hierarchy consciousness of being formal in the hotel staff-guest transactions in English higher than the low group.

Those three categories that can reveal the similarities among the three language ability groups are the use of adverbials, the use of affirmation markers and the use of the *"we"* form. It should be noted that the use of the *"we"* form in this category did not include routine patterns and formulaic expressions of regret. The frequency from the most to the least occurred from the high to the low groups respectively. However, comparing frequency counts of linguistic features in all categories of three language ability groups, the occurrences of affirmation markers like *"Yes"* or *"Certainly"* and the use of adverbials were seemingly similar in a moderate degree and low degree respectively while the use of the *"we"* form was produced in a very small degree. Figure 4.2 shows the category of "others" that includes minor features produced by the test takers.

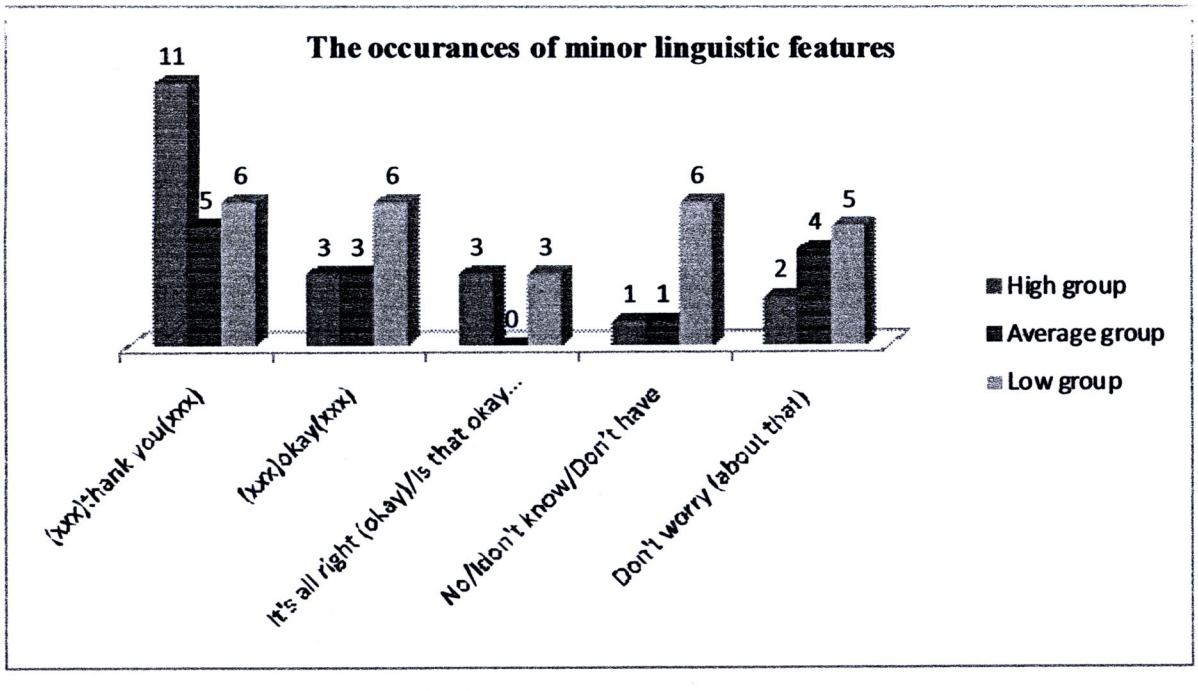

Figure 4.2: Minor linguistic features produced by the test takers

Figure 4.2 shows minor linguistic features found from the data collected. It was separately reported from the major features discussed in Figure 4.1 due to low frequency of use. The linguistic features in this category varied. The distinctive features that can distinguish the responses from the three groups of the test takers from one another were the use of pre-closing markers *"...thank you..."* in the high group and *"...okay..."* in the low group. While *"It's all right (okay)"*, *"Is that okay with you?"*, and *"Are you okay?"* were used equally in the high and the low groups, but not in the average group. It is important to note that the function of *"thank you"* made by the test takers in this study is not a response to the compliment, but an attempt to close the encounters between the hotel staff and guest or to terminate the conversation. The function of *"thank you"* responded from the test takers in this study corresponds with Aston (1995:60) who states that *"thank you"* does not only refer to express the gratitude, but also to signal the conclusion of a conversation and *"'thanking'"* was treated as appropriate closing as a matter of politeness". Rubin (1983) points out that *"thank you"* used in a service encounter seems to be a quick and *'bold'* thank you. However, it is considered as a social amenity. From the data collected, the test takers, particularly in the high group, attempted to use *"thank you"* as a signal to close their responses to the simulated hotel guests in the given situations in the FOP-Test while the low group frequently used *"okay"* as a sign of pre-closing instead. One possible explanation to explain the high difference of the use of pre-closing marker *"thank you"* in the high group is that they may have an awareness of being purposive in the hotel staff-guest transactions. They attempted to make it end without considering other requirements which may follow. While *"okay"* provides a partial solution to ongoing interactional problems, it is opening up the way for closing (Beach, 1993). However, when examining the content, the test takers from the low group attempted to use pre-closing to close difficult situations due to their lack of English ability to respond to the given situations.

Lastly, the test takers from the low group tended to use the statement letting the interlocutor off the hook *"Don't worry (about that)"*. The remarkable feature that can differentiate the test takers of the low group language ability from those of the high and the average groups is the use of direct refusals such as *"No"* or *"No, you can't"* even though each was found in the high and the average groups only once.

Regarding politeness strategies found in handling complaints and apologizing, it is important to note that observing a particular strategy when handling complaints and apologizing was not an aim of this study; however, since they were found correspondingly from the speeches collected; thus, they were also analyzed like the co-occurrence features and are presented in Figure 4.3.

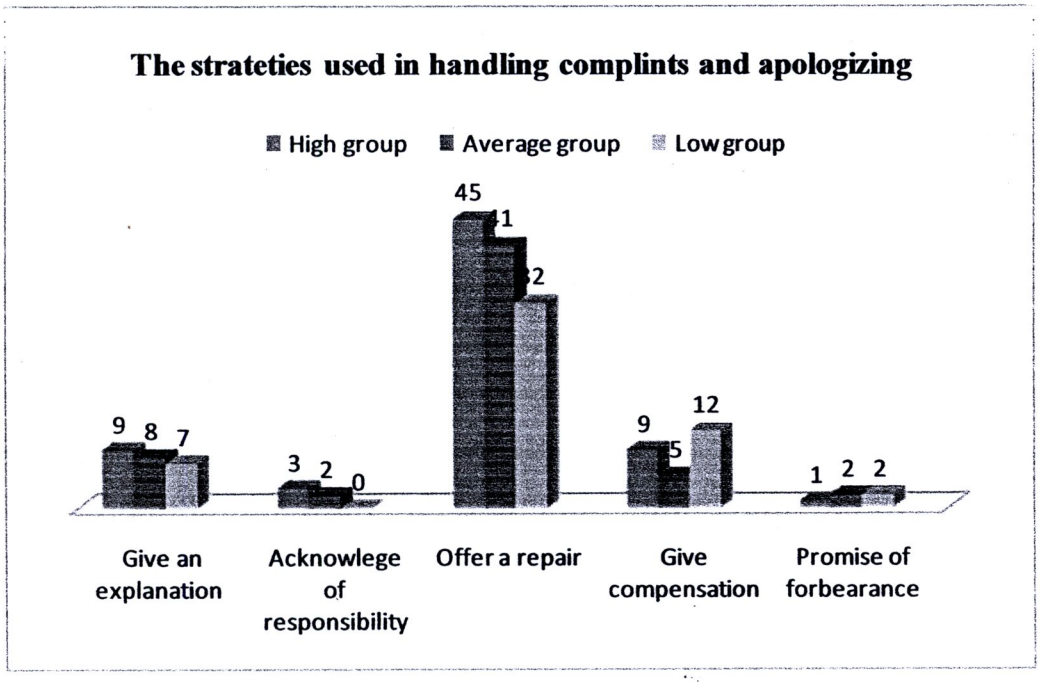

Figure 4.3: Strategies used in handling complaints and apologizing

Figure 4.3 concludes the occurrences of politeness strategies found in handling complaints and apologizing from the data collected. They were observed correspondingly with the linguistic forms because they were remarkably produced when handling complaints and apologizing were made. Comparing the strategies applied in the data collected, it can be seen that the strategy of offering a repair was highly used in the high group while the average and the low groups performed differently in a relative degree. On the contrary, the low group attempted to give compensation in a higher occurrence compared to the high and the average groups. However, the content of compensation appeared awkward or unreal in real hotel encounters. It sounded contextually awkward although the appropriate strategy was applied.

The frequent occurrence of giving an explanation and a promise of forbearance seemed not to be able to differentiate among the three groups since they all performed relatively similarly with the small degree of occurrences. However,

none of the test takers from the low group applied the strategy of acknowledging of responsibility. Only the high and the average groups did this in a small degree.

The use of the strategy of offering a repair in all groups in a high degree can be explained with two reasons. First, it is the influence of classroom rehearsals. Handling complaints and apologizing are functional language commonly found in the textbooks related to hospitality language for the hotel staff. They are explicitly taught as tools to be used when facing the difficult hotel guests or difficult circumstances. Such explicit instructions seem to be excessive in offering help or repair in the hotel guests' dissatisfaction. For example, "*...but I will check if there is available room on the other floor*" or "*Would you mind to change to another room?*" were offered when the requested room was not available. Second, the test takers may attempt to reduce their offense by offering a repair in mistakes they did not make. However, when the content of offering a repair was observed, it was made in short and in a chunk form like a rote memorization.

Research question 3: "What are the errors that interfere with the students' pragmatic knowledge?"

In response to the third research question, the findings are divided into two parts. The first part reports maximum and minimum scores, means, and standard deviations of the responses from the pragmatic questionnaire related to the test takers' pragmatic background knowledge in general as well as speech acts and politeness in the hotel Front Office context. The second part is the report of the content analysis of the test takers' responses which were inappropriate and ineffective in the hotel staff-guest communication. Finally, the results of two parts are discussed.

To report the finding of the first part, the maximum and minimum scores, mean scores and standard deviations obtained from the pragmatic questionnaire collected from the high, average, and low language ability groups were calculated and presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Descriptive statistics of the responses from the pragmatic questionnaire

Groups:	High Language Ability (N = 30)			Average Language Ability (N = 30)			Low Language Ability (N = 30)		
Questionnaire:	Max/ Min	M	SD	Max/ Min	M	SD	Max/ Min	M	SD
General* knowledge	15/ 7	10.90	2.09	15/ 6	10.73	1.93	13/ 6	10.10	1.83
Promising**	5/ 1	3.80	2.09	5/ 0	3.43	1.65	5/ 0	4.23	1.22
Informing**	5/ 1	3.87	1.33	5/ 0	3.37	1.79	5/ 0	3.77	1.52
Requesting**	5/ 0	2.23	1.74	5/ 0	2.40	1.59	5/ 0	3.07	1.57
Handling** complaints	5/ 1	3.83	1.34	5/ 0	3.27	1.68	5/ 0	3.10	1.49
Apologizing**	5/ 1	4.00	1.44	5/ 1	3.07	1.66	5/ 0	3.73	1.66

Notes: * indicates total scores of 15 and ** indicates total scores of 5.

Table 4.15 shows the maximum and minimum scores, mean scores and standard deviations of the scores from the pragmatic questionnaire. The mean scores of the general pragmatic knowledge collected from the high, average, and low groups are 10.90, 10.73, and 10.10 respectively. The mean scores of general pragmatic knowledge collected from the test takers from the three English ability groups appear to be very close. When considering the five scenarios representing the five speech acts, the mean scores obtained from the high group in apologizing, informing, handling complaints, and promising are the highest by the mean scores of 4.00, 3.87, 3.83, and 3.80 respectively. The mean scores obtained from the low group in promising, informing, and apologizing are also high by the mean scores of 4.23, 3.77, and 3.73 respectively. The mean scores from the average group in all speech act scenarios, except apologizing which in the lowest, are in the middle. Table 4.16 shows the mean scores obtained from the pragmatic questionnaire from all test takers.

Table 4.16: Descriptive statistics of the responses of all test takers from the pragmatic questionnaire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD.
Pragmatic knowledge	90	6	15	10.58	1.960
Promising	90	0	5	3.82	1.503
Informing	90	0	5	3.67	1.558
Requesting	90	0	5	2.57	1.656
Handling complaints	90	0	5	3.40	1.527
Apologizing	90	0	5	3.60	1.620

Table 4.16 shows the mean scores of pragmatic knowledge obtained from the three test takers groups is 10.58. Considering the mean scores of the five scenarios representing the five speech acts, the highest mean score is promising ($\overline{X} = 3.82$) while the lowest is requesting with the mean score of 2.57. The other three speech acts range from informing, apologizing, and handling complaints with the scores of 3.67, 3.60, and 3.40 respectively. In order to see any significant mean differences of pragmatic knowledge, one- way ANOVA was applied to compare the scores obtained from the three language ability groups.

Table 4.17: Results of one-way ANOVA test from the pragmatic questionnaire

Variables	Variance	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
General knowledge	Between Groups	10.689	2	5.344	1.404	.251
	Within Groups	331.267	87	3.808		
	Total	341.956	89			
Promising	Between Groups	9.622	2	4.811	2.185	.119
	Within Groups	191.533	87	2.202		
	Total	201.156	89			
Informing	Between Groups	4.200	2	2.100	.863	.426
	Within Groups	211.800	87	2.434		
	Total	216.000	89			
	Total	244.100	89			

Table 4.17: Results of one-way ANOVA test from the pragmatic questionnaire (cont.)

Variables	Variance	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Requesting	Between Groups	11.667	2	5.833	2.183	.119
	Within Groups	232.433	87	2.672		
	Total	244.100	89			
Handling	Between Groups	8.867	2	4.433	1.941	.150
complaints	Within Groups	198.733	87	2.284		
	Total	207.600	89			
Apologizing	Between Groups	13.867	2	6.933	2.745	.070
	Within Groups	219.733	87	2.526		
	Total	233.600	89			

Table 4.17 shows the result of one-way ANOVA test run for the mean differences of the questionnaire answers made by the three language ability groups. The findings show that the test takers' pragmatic recognition from three language ability groups are not significantly different from one another in all parts, so there is no further examination to test the mean differences of the three groups.

The findings from the pragmatic questionnaire indicate that the test takers in the three groups did not differ significantly in pragmatic recognition assessed by the questionnaire. Due to the differences in the means reported in Table 4.17, pragmatic failures produced by the test takers in all groups were analyzed qualitatively. Examining pragmatic inappropriateness that could cause communication breakdowns between the hotel staff-guest in the hotel Front Office operation can give useful information to answer the third research question. Decision regarding inappropriateness was based on the descriptors of the ineffectiveness along with the inappropriateness of the FOP-Test rating scale. The major features of inappropriateness in language use collected from the test takers' responses were grouped into seven types of inappropriateness. The first observation was the deficiency in giving the correct speech act. The second to the fourth observations reported the failure in information given. The fifth observation was the deficiency in the usage of words and expressions. The last two observations were the failures in terms of the degree of appropriateness. Figure 4.4 shows the pragmatic errors that

were made by the test takers. The report for each error was analyzed with regard of the frequency of occurrences. The excerpted transcripts with the underlined sentences demonstrate the errors in terms of pragmatic failures. In addition, it is important to note that there is no correction in the excerpted transcripts since the major concern of the production is the effectiveness and appropriateness in language use. In order to illustrate the ineffective or inappropriate responses, the descriptions of situations are shown in brief but all utterances of the simulated hotel guests are not given here (See Appendix E for the FOP-Test). Data were drawn from the same group of the test takers who were randomly selected to answer the second sub-question of the second research question and the scripts were analyzed qualitatively before the frequency counts were made.

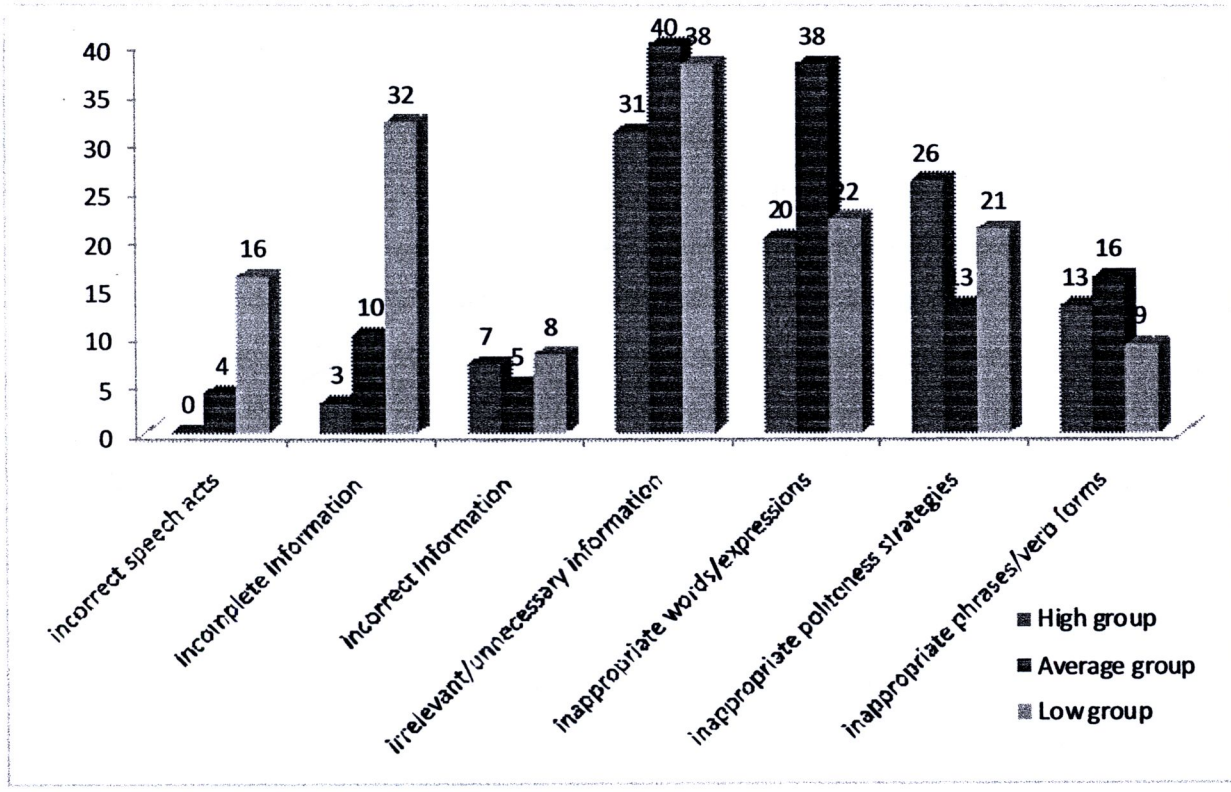

Figure 4.4: Pragmatic errors produced by the test takers in the hotel Front Office context

Figure 4.4 shows the occurrences of seven pragmatic errors collected from the test takers of the three English proficiency levels. The results are descriptively reported as follows. First, in terms of ineffectiveness in giving correct speech acts, it was found that the test takers from the average and the low groups gave incorrect speech acts while the high group did not. The error also included the absence of the speech act required for the given situation. It could be seen that the test takers from

the low group produced more errors than the average group did. The following 6 excerpts (A5, L3, L6, L2, L4, L8) illustrate the examples of incorrect speech acts:

Situation 7 : Request a walk-in guest for a deposit

A5 : *"And what time do you check out? ... "*

L3 : *"Yes, just a moment please. I will check one double room".*

L 6 : *"Yes, madam. I will check for you".*

Situation 8 : Request the arrival guest to give the check-out time, due to high occupancy rate

L 2 : *"Thank you. You xxxx miss anything. Don't worry. If you miss anything, I will take it // send it for you".*

L 4 : *"Everything is correct. Thank you for using our service//our hotel".*

L 8 : *"Check out time will be at 12.00//12 pm".*

In the examples shown above, the test takers did not perform the required speech act of request. The test takers were expected to make a request of a credit card as a deposit guarantee (Situation 7) and time for check-out (Situation 8), but they gave responses that were irrelevant to the situations given and did not include the speech acts required. The suggested answers for requesting in Situation 7 and 8 could be responded respectively, such as, "*Excuse me, madam. Would it be possible to have your credit card for imprint?*" and "*Excuse me, sir. Could you please give us your check-out time? We do apologize for asking because we're quite busy at the moment.*"

The second observation is the failure in giving sufficient information. It can be seen in Figure 4.4 that there is a marked difference in giving incomplete and unclear information of the examinees from the low language ability group. Besides, there were unfinished sentences in their responses. The following responses were taken from the speech acts of handling complaints and apologizing.

Situation 11 : **Deal with noise disturbance from the next door and the housekeeper's duty on the floor**

H 8 : *"I will call the – housekeeping immediately."*

L 6 : *"I'm really sorry ma'am. I will told the housekeeping and stop vacuum cleaner."*

L 8 : *"I have to apologize you madam. I-I-I will ( ) I will tell the house cleaner for ( )"*

Situation 14 : **Apologize for unavailability of the double room asked for upon the checking-in**

H 6 : *"We're sorry. The rooms are: all occupied. Er: can you: er: see: er: what about another room?"*

A 4 : *"I'm so sorry madam – um – please accept my apology and I-will-took//I will take to another room."*

L8 : *"I'm really sorry madam. The occupancy full."*

In H8, L6, and L8 (Situation 11) the test takers simply acknowledge the responsibility to one cause of problem by informing the housekeeping while problem solving of the other cause of disturbance from the next door had not been mentioned. A sample response of this situation is, " *I'm really sorry, madam. I can understand how you must feel. I will tell the maid to move to the other area and send someone to tell the next door to turn down the volume. I'm really sorry to hear this. I am very sorry again for the noise, madam.*" In case of supportive examples in Situation 14, the examinees, H6, A4, and L8, simply stated about the unavailability without any alternative choice to the simulated hotel guest. They failed to give the prhecise information of what room type would be offered in case there is no availability of the room requested. The responses were left with doubt and unclear answer. Since the room rate initially influences decision making of the hotel guest, it is important to know what type of room would be offered and whether it meets his/her prior expense arrangement or not. The suggested answer could be as follows:

> *"We're sorry, madam. Unfortunately, all of our double rooms are occupied this evening. What I can do for you is to first keep your request and have it checked for tomorrow. If possible, we will inform you immediately and have your room changed. Will it (the twin) be all right for you this evening, madam? We're so sorry again."*

Third is an error in giving correct information. The observed frequency in Figure 4.4 shows that the test takers in all three language ability groups gave incorrect information to the simulated hotel guest in the situation given. When comparing the frequency of responses from the three groups, they were relatively similar; however, the average group produced slightly less than the high and the low groups. Consider the following responses by the test takers from the three language ability groups:

Situation 14 : Apologize for unavailability of the double room asked for upon the checking-in

H3 : *"Could you change to another room? May be king size bed room or queen size bed room or may be you're looking to the other facilities."*

A 3 : *"So sorry madam. Um this is our mistake. I will change your room to: um: <suite room> or – double room. Are you okay, madam?"*

L 9 : *"We will install the double bed to your room. Please wait for a moment."*

From the excerpted examples, the examinees made an error in giving information related to the type of the hotel room. In terms of room types, a double room is one bed for two persons. The size of the bed is another concern for the requirement. It is surprising to see that the examinees, who were the hotel students, not only had the wrong concept of the room type, but offered the double bed room which was not available according to the room status mentioned in the given situation.

The results also show that the test takers from all three language ability groups attempted to give the simulated hotel guest information of the hotel as much as possible, but the responses were irrelevant and sometimes awkward. The irrelevant responses include the reacting to parts of the described situations in the prompt. The observed frequency of irrelevant information appeared in a high degree from the three language ability groups; however, it is surprising to see that the examinees from the average group (40 tokens) produced higher than the high group (31 tokens) and the low group (38 tokens). The supportive examples are as follows.

Situation 3 : **Promise to mail the hotel's guest's lost item if found**

H 7 : *"Of course, madam. I will send it as soon as we possible."*

A 8 : *"Absolutely, your belt will be served to your house within five days. Don't worry about that."*

L 2 : *"Certainly. Er: if we find: er: I just-I just take-I just take. Er: I just take it//give it to you."*

Situation 4 : **Inform where the internet can be accessed**

H 3 : *"You can access the internet from your bed room. In the bed room has a lot of facilities such as king size bed room, American breakfast and: all of them you can see from the brochure."*

A 6 : *"The internet is already been set for – you to connect them to the exact point if you – connect the wireless. It is already set for the Hi-speed internet, sir."*

L 3 : *"The double room xxxx king size bed and Hi-speed wireless internet. You can enjoy er: internet in the double room."*

Situation 13 : **Apologize for ineffective service claimed by the staying guest**

H 2 : *"Sorry. I'm sorry madam to hear that. Please: er: wait our manager. I will contact her immediately. You can talk to her if you want a discount – let me know – what could we do for you?"*

A 5 : *"I'm very apologize for this situation: um: we will manage this thing by reduce your – room cost and the price is not include the spa therapy, madam."*

L 7 : *"I'm so sorry madam. I think about your hot first night: er: I will send someone for fix it xxx and I have discount er: 80% for you. I'm so sorry again."*

In H7, A8, and L2 (Situation 3) the responses sound very awkward. This is because the guest's valuable items can be lost or found in case of the loss; however, the test takers did not spare for the fact of being lost. Instead, they automatically gave a promise to ensure the guest to return the guest's property or valuable things which sounded uncommon to the real circumstance. The suggested response could be like "*I'm so sorry to hear that, madam. I will inform the housekeeping and ask them to check right away. Whether we find it, we will inform you as soon as possible. Is that all right, madam?*" Besides, the test takers failed to give precise information regarding hotel facilities. In H3, A6, and L3 (Situation 4) the examinees were expected to give specific information needed but they gave irrelevant or

unnecessary information in their responses instead. The possible answer to Situation 4 is, "*Certainly madam. The internet access is available in your room through WiFi connection, madam.*" In addition, unreal information was also given as illustrated in H2, A5, and L7 (Situation 13), the examinees from the three language ability groups offered the discount as offering a repair for the guest's dissatisfaction which is not a receptionist's job description. In fact, based on the job descriptions in the hotel front office operation, the decision maker in giving the compensation to the hotel guest such as a discount is from the manager level. Moreover, considering the content of compensations, they seemed to be contextually awkward based on the real job performance. The suggested response should be left for those who have the authority to handle the problem; for example, "*I can understand this must have been frustrating for you. I'm so sorry to hear that, madam. May I ask our manager and see if there is anything we could do to make your stay more enjoyable?*"

Fifth, the examinees from the three language ability groups made pragmatic errors in giving inappropriate formulaic expressions; however, the examinees from the average group exhibited a marked increase in the frequency of inappropriate idiomatic expressions, when compared with the high and the low English proficiency levels. The examples of the errors are illustrated as below:

Situation 7 : Request a walk-in guest for a deposit

H 2 : *"Yes, of course madam. One double room for two nights for you – the room is available – and we guarantee our service. Please have a nice holiday."*

A 6 : *"Yes, sir. We'll book // we will set the room for you right now and please be happy with our service."*

Situation 10 : Deal with the malfunction of a water heater

H 10 : *"We're terribly sorry ma'am. We under: um: please accept: hm: our apology and let's us see how we could make this out for you."*

From the responses shown above, the test takers, H2 and A6 (Situation 7), attempted to use idiomatic expressions to function as the pre-closing conversation; "*we guarantee our service. Please have a nice holiday*" and "*please be happy with our service*" which sound very strange to the given situation. The suggested response could be briefly stated like "*Excuse me, madam. Would it be all right for*

leaving us a deposit for 50% of the room charge? Another example is in H10 (Situation 10). The test takers tended to terminate the conversation when the problems had not been solved yet by expressing, *"let us see how we could make this out for you."* In fact, the hotel guest needs informative answer. Here is the suggested answer that could be extended from H10's response:

> *"...let us see how we could make this out for you. We will immediately send the mechanic to have it checked. Would you mind to wait for a few minutes? We will take care of that right away, madam."*

Sixth, inappropriate politeness strategies are also found in all groups. Surprisingly, the test takers in the high group produced them in a very high degree. Their responses were very direct and without hints. The excerpts below support the finding:

Situation 5 : **Inform the check-out guest regarding the invalid credit card**

H 4 : *"So sorry madam. Your credit card has not been approved. Do you have any card?"*

A 10 : *"I'm terribly sorry madam. Expenses will be pay by credit card, but you credit card has not been approved. Could you ...?"*

L1 : *"Sorry, the credit card is wrong. It's not approving is um: my account."*

Situation 9 : **Request the check-out guest to pay for two hotel bathrobes from the room**

H 1 : *"I'm sorry sir. The housekeeping just called me that you are taking two hotel bathrobes with you – so: er: would you mind: er: return: ..."*

A 9 : *"Um + + I'm not sure – er – the – the house department report me that – you - >take something with you<."*

L 4 : *"Excuse me. You have taken the two bathrobes. Please check it ..."*

Situation 14 **Apologize for unavailability of the room asked upon the checking-in**

H 5 : *"Oh, sorry madam. You haven't made a requirement for the double bed room: um: however ..."*

A 8 : *"Very sorry for that, but: er: we didn't - // we haven't been informed that: you required for – double bed..."*

L 1 : *"I'm sorry. Now I don't' have a double room for you xxx for you because when you regis ( ), you don't inform me // you didn't inform me about the double bed. ..."*

In all excerpted examples shown above, the examinees did not apply face-saving strategies in their responses, which were too direct without hinting. From Situation 5, the suggested response for this situation is, "*I'm sorry madam. I'm supposed there must be something wrong with your credit card. Would you mind giving me another card or do you prefer to pay by cash?*" It is interesting to see that the test takers expressed their regrets by using the expressions in order to soften their speech like "*so sorry*" or "*I'm terribly sorry*"; however, the extended utterances were too direct which might easily be considered impolite. Besides, making a request in Situation 9, it is clear that the test takers seemed to lack applying politeness strategies in their responses. The suggested response could be, "*I'm sorry madam, our bathrobes are also for sale. If you prefer to keep them, we could add them to your bill. Will that be all right for you, madam?*" It can be seen that the test takers' responses for Situation 9 did not give any options to the hotel guest. According to Lakoff's (1973) politeness rules, if the purpose of communication is to make the hearer feel good, giving an option is required. Moreover, sample responses shown in Situation 14 were also too direct and purposeful; however, the failure to make general hints might be perceived as impolite.

The last error is inappropriateness in the use of word choice, verb forms, and phrases. All groups of the test takers exhibited this error; however, the average group did the highest while the high and the low groups performed relatively similar. The use of the verb forms "*have to*", "*need to*", and "*must*" was high like in Situations 6 and 9 illustrated below. The inappropriateness in the use of verb forms are illustrated in Situations 6 and 9 as follows:

Situation 6 : **Inform the late check-out rate**

H 5 : *"Yes, of course, madam. It is possible to keep the room until 8.00 pm., but you <u>have to pay</u> for the extra 50% for the room. ..."*

A 8 : *"Yes, it is possible, but you <u>have to pay</u> more ex xxxx 50% charge for a late night".*

L 4 : *"You can keep the room until 8.00 pm., but we <u>have to charge</u> if you – if you – if you want it you can".*

Situation 9 **Request the check-out guest to pay for two hotel bathrobes from the room**

A 1 : *"We're sorry madam. You <u>have to pay</u> charge for – item souvenir – it's not including in your room rate – madam".*

A 5 : *"Excuse me. I'm so sorry, but you have to pay for – a two hotel bath xxxx "(.)*

From all excerpts shown above, the utterances were grammatically correct, but they failed pragmatically. The sample response of informing extra 50% charge for check-out late in Situation 6 could be slightly changed to *"...our hotel needs to charge 50% for the room if you prefer to keep the room until 8.00 pm, madam"*. It is clear that the imperative form of verbs can be regarded as inappropriate in hotel services where high negative politeness is preferred. Instead of using imperative verbs, the suggested responses in Situation 9 could be, "... *If you prefer to keep the hotel bathrobes, we could add them to your bill. Will that be all right for you, madam?"* as previously mentioned. In terms of making a request, Blum-Kulka (1994) suggests effectiveness is an important role in performing a request. The hearer can recognize the speaker's intent when the request is made. The example from A1 in Situation 9 mentioned above, *"you have to pay charge- for item souvenir*" is the most direct and effective way to perform a request, but it is certainly considered impolite in the hotel staff-guest communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that effectiveness can be a conflict with politeness when directness is applied. There are also other expressions that are considered inappropriate as illustrated in Situation 15 below:

Situation 15 : Apologize the arrival guest for short of staff when checking-in

A 4 : *"We're so sorry madam. Please accept my apology: um: - and we understand for your waiting. What should we do for you?"*

A 8 : *"I'm sorry for that. Our staff were busy. I don't know what to do. What do you want me to do? xxxx"*

From the responses shown in A4 and A8, the examinees did not attempt to save the hotel guest's face. They just simply expressed their regrets without giving any elaboration such as the empathy and explanation. The expected response could be as follows:

> *"I'm so sorry madam. I do understand how you must feel for waiting so long. By the way, our staff are quite busy at this moment. What I can do for you now is to put you to the room with our pool view. And if anything we could do to make your stay more enjoyable, please let us know.*

Perhaps this case may be explained that the test takers either they lacked awareness of the polite form of language use in the hotel staff-guest communication or they wanted to be polite, but they did not know how. Their English proficiency was not adequate enough to express their intentions in order to satisfy the guest's needs.

Discussion for research question 3

The test takers were expected to give some information relating to their knowledge of pragmatics in general, speech acts, and politeness in the context of hotel Front Office Department through the questionnaire. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference among the three language ability groups in their responses. This task is similar to a judgment task to evaluate whether the statements relating to pragmatic knowledge were *true* or *false* and speech act utterances in the given situations were pragmatically appropriate by rating a five-scale of appropriateness from the *"very inappropriateness"* to *"very appropriateness"*. The test takers' pragmatic recognition from the three language ability groups were not significantly different from one another in all parts. They showed the same degree of awareness by recognizing the errors of some kinds in pragmatic items and they could distinguish different degrees of politeness reflected by their responses in the questionnaire. This may be explained by the aspect of recognition in pragmatics. A small number of studies have been discussed regarding the development of L2 pragmatics and recognizing of learners in pragmatic learning. However, the recognition in pragmatics has been supported by Schmidt (1995: 24) who has hypothesized that recognizing is the first level of awareness in pragmatic learning. Learners can recognize in general "a principle, rule, or pattern" in pragmatics before "understanding" it. Schmidt has termed conscious perception or awareness as a matter of "noticing". Schmidt's (1995) anecdotal evidence supports that there is a relationship between what learners notice and what they learn about pragmatics. In terms of recognizing, it partially agrees with Kasper (1998) who stresses that the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge can be acquired if the learners have an opportunity to notice the relevant input through a mode of recognizing. The result of no significant differences in pragmatic knowledge among the three groups reflected from their responses in the questionnaires suggests that the learners could recognize the pragmatic violations and the degrees of appropriateness whether the utterances

were pragmatically correct by using the questionnaire. In this study, the test takers' levels of proficiency does not affect the degrees of recognition in pragmatics.

Examining pragmatic failures that could cause communication breakdowns between the hotel staff-guests in the Front Office Department was further investigated. From the seven errors mentioned in Figure 4.4, there are possible explanations why the examinees made inappropriate responses. First, regarding ineffectiveness in giving correct speech acts, the examinees from the low language ability group highly exhibited this failure. From the evidence, the examinees could not respond to the expected speech act in a particular given situation. Regarding to Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle rules, the error in giving incorrect speech act seems to break the maxim of relevance. The test takers said something irrelevant and could not respond to immediate hotel guests' needs during the stage of transaction between the hotel staff and guests. They tended to overuse routine patterns that are not relevant to the given situations and said something which was not beneficial to both the hotel staff and guests. As a consequence, this error might be related to the fact that the examinees lacked both grammatical and contextual knowledge related to hotel Front Office operation. This error does not really harm the interaction with the hotel guests, but it highly affects the guests' perceptions towards an individual as an unprofessional and incompetent practitioner.

Second, the test takers' responses were incomplete and short without appropriateness of information, especially the test takers from the low language ability group. This could lead to misunderstanding because they failed to give sufficient information required for given situations. This error can be taken into the consideration of violating the Maxim of Quantity in Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle rules. Generally, the hotel staff-guest communication is more like business transactions which are straightforward and purposive. The hotel staff are expected to give sufficient amount of information and services that the hotel offers. This ineffective performance could be caused by unfamiliarity or inexperience in the given situations and the test takers' language ability. One possible explanation of the lack of familiarity might result from classroom practice. Generally, Thai hotel students have experience in language of hotel services only from the classroom where many rehearsal situations or encounters between hotel staff and guests are predictable. However, when they could not employ predictable varieties in the test, the problems then occurred. The lack of familiarity with the given situations seems

to make a language task difficult since the complexity of language is required by the situation. Therefore, the test takers' unfamiliarity in terms of language practice may affect their performance in the FOP-Test. In addition, the incomplete utterances may come from the lack of the test takers' English proficiency. The examples from the collected speeches showed that many test takers failed to express the positive elaboration which the hotel guests expected from the hotel staff to satisfy their needs, particularly when dealing with difficult guests such as in the case of handling complaints. More elaborative information in such situation is needed in order to make the guests feel at ease. Their lack of linguistic knowledge appears to be the reason for their inappropriate knowledge to provide sufficient information.

Third, the failure in giving the correct information was found in a small degree. The possible explanation of this error might be due to the test takers' misunderstanding, particularly in the wrong usage of terms in hotel front office work-oriented and content related to the hotel studies, rather than the test takers' deficiency in language ability. Therefore, the examinees may be required to have extensive knowledge of terms used in hotel operation.

The findings of the production of irrelevant or unnecessary information are quite striking since they were found in a high degree in all test takers language ability groups. This phenomenon agrees with Blum-Kulka & Olshain's (1984) assumptions that the L2 learners are more wordy than native English speakers because they try to compensate for their language deficiencies by adding a great deal of unnecessary information. This phenomenon may come from two possible causes. The first cause is the lack of experience of being exposed to English in real work-oriented communication. This limitation hindered them to give informative responses to unpredictable situations given in the test. The second possible cause is that the effects from inauthentic classroom practices impaired their responses. Based on the responses collected from this study, several examinees gave the answers which were unrealistic to the given situations such as offering discounts or giving compensations that were beyond one's job responsibility. This might be the effect from the classroom practice relying on the suggested answers from textbooks that contain unrealistic situational contents. Besides, it might be from English language teachers who are inexperienced in hotel context and heavily depend on the textbooks. The error in giving irrelevant and unnecessary information actually would not seriously lead to communication breakdown; however, it personally affects the hotel guests'

perception towards the image of operational and administrative levels of the hotel as a whole.

Fifth, inappropriateness in the usage of formulaic expressions can be found from the responses collected. This error can be interpreted as a result of the great influence of prior classroom instructions as mentioned in the aspect of giving irrelevant or unnecessary information. Those formulaic expressions are simplified and easy to memorize through classroom practice. According to Fukushima (1990), this error made by the test takers could be the result from memorizing the use of set phrases which would not be so difficult for foreign language learners. Several evidences showed inappropriateness in the usage of linguistic realizations practiced from the classroom. It can be seen that expressions vary according to the content of the utterance. One pattern is appropriate for one situation, but not for the others. However, the examinees employed such patterns unknowingly whether they are suitable in certain situations or not. Besides, considering the textbooks, most of the language from the textbooks related to the hotel services are too explicit, overly polite, and often simplified (Blue & Harun, 2002; Williams, 1988). This agrees with Scotton and Bernstern (1988: 53) who state that textbooks provide "list of over-polite, over explicit, one-sentence long exponents for function". To illustrate, below are two dialogs taken from one textbook of English for hotels. The former deals with the registration for the walk-in guest and the latter is the transaction when checking-in:

> Receptionist (1) : "*...because you're not a British citizen, I will require your passport in order to complete the registration.*"
>
> Receptionist (2): "*Thank you. Here's your credit card, passport, and here's your key. It's room 706 on the seven floor. The elevator is on the right. If you just tell a porter your room number, he'll follow you up with the luggage.*"
>
> (Harding & Henderson, 1994: 156)

As a result, the presentation in the textbooks obscures the natural contexts and their appropriateness. It does not always seem to reflect authentic hotel language encounters. Some certain words or expressions are used differently in different contexts and the overuse of routine expressions might have contributed to their failure in communication.

For the last two errors were the use of inappropriateness in politeness strategies and phrases or verb forms. There were fewer expressions of indirectness

applied in the test takers' responses. Besides, many imperative verb forms such as *"must"* and *"have to"* were highly used, especially in making requests. This is opposite to Levinson (1987) in that the imperative is rarely used in requests in English. The native English speakers tend to make sentences indirect when requesting is made. It can be seen that failure to be indirect is perceived as being rude in the hotel services. There are two possible explanations for these two failures. One possibility is the lack of pragmatic awareness. From the utterances collected, generally the examinees exhibited their grammatical knowledge and were able to use syntactic patterns in their utterances, especially in the high language ability group. However, they lacked knowledge in applying politeness strategies to save the hearer's face, which is involved with people's feelings. In observing the principle of "face" (Brown and Levinson, 1987), the hotel staff-guest communication and interaction may require a degree of directness much higher than another service encounter does. For example, the test takers tended to use imperative verb forms that can be perceived as being offensive in the hotel services. The possible explanation of the overuse of imperatives is a result of the transfer of training. According to Blum-Kulka (1982), imperatives are the first request forms taught in L2. The learners acquire the use of imperatives easily because they are direct and a clear strategy in requesting. As a result, they might use them without being aware of the risk of high imposition to the hearer, especially in the hotel service context where the guests generally have high needs/wants in services.

The second possible explanation for the ineffectiveness of politeness strategies and verb forms is that the examinees had no tact maxim. Tact maxim, one kind of politeness of which a scale of cost-benefit to the hearer (hotel guest), plays an important role in politeness (Leech, 1983). This scale of politeness is the preference in the hotel service context where "benefit to guest" is required, but "cost to the guest" is avoided. Indirectness tends to be more polite because it increases the degree of options and decreases the force to the hearer (Leech, 1983). Leech (1983) views tact as the most important kind of politeness in English speaking society, especially in business interaction since it could maximize the benefit and minimize the cost to the hearer. It is also used to avoid a conflict which apparently comes with experience in social communication. Because of the fact that tact violates the Grice's (1975) "clarity rule", a speaker should make the message clear in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding. However, Lakoff's (1973) politeness rule of

giving options applied in tact maxim is required for the hotel staff. Since the communication of the hotel staff-guest involves with cost-benefit relationship, the knowledge about what is appropriate depends much more on social appropriate rules than on linguistic knowledge. This problem was raised by Trosborg (1987: 147) who stated that "proficient foreign language learners may fail to communicative effectively because they lack social appropriateness rules for conveying their intended communicative acts." It is clear that social appropriate rules correspond with Bachman's (1990) components of language competence that pragmatic competence does not only depend on the abilities of understanding and producing speech acts and knowledge of different dialects or register, but also the ability to select appropriate linguistic forms to realize a certain speech act. There have been considerable evidences that non-native speakers of English face difficult tasks in acquiring the appropriate ways to communicate language functions (Carrell & Konneker, 19891; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981); Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). The evidences of this study are consistent with the results in Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998) which show that learners show knowledge of a particular grammar in the later stage of learning L2, but fail to use it to create pragmatic effects.

Summary

This chapter reports the results of the findings. Descriptive statistics were employed to the first and third questions. One-way ANOVA and content analysis were applied to answer the second question and pragmatic failures in the third question. Frequency counts were conducted to reveal pragmalinguistic features and pragmatic failures produced by the test takers from different English proficiency levels. Each part ends with discussions based on the findings and literature review.