



## Politeness of Requests Made via 'LINE' Application

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### Abstract

This pragmatic study is aimed at investigating the selection of request strategies of the undergraduate students when performing requests to their teacher on LINE application. In order to fulfill the research aim, 40 LINE messages containing requests sent by 40 Thai undergraduate students were analyzed. The theoretical frameworks used in the analysis of the data included the request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) along with the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). The findings showed that most students selected the direct strategy when making requests to their teacher regardless of the power and distance. Furthermore, it was found that the most frequently used external modifiers preceding and following the request head acts were the 'title + preparatory' and the 'supportive reason', respectively. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the understanding of students' pragmatic competence as well as the impacts of technology on communication.

**Keywords:** *Pragmatics, Request strategies, Computer-based communication*

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### 1. Introduction

With the advanced technology and the advent of various online communication platforms such as WhatsApp, WeChat, and LINE, human communication has been reshaped. Most communications nowadays occur online and they could occur anywhere and anytime (Rogacka, 2017). In addition, the use of digital communication platforms also changes the face of many sectors, especially business and education. Business negotiations could now be performed on social networking sites. Learning and instruction through computer-mediated communication is also a common thing in many schools and universities (Sannomiya & Kawaguchi (2000)). In recent years, the language in computer-mediated communication has received a lot of attention from linguists, communication scholars as well as researchers from other disciplines. Many seek to investigate how human language has been used in the online platforms (Baym, 2006) and some try to discover the impacts of technology on the human communication (Bosamia, 2013; Cuel & Ferrario, 2006; Drago, 2015).

In order to be able to communicate successfully or fulfill the communicative purposes, possessing only the linguistic knowledge and a large bank of vocabulary is not sufficient. Social and cultural knowledge is required as well. That is to say, a speaker needs to take into consideration the context as well as the interlocutor so that he/she would be able to communicate appropriately using the possessed linguistic knowledge (Hymes, 1972). This communicative competence was referred to as the pragmatic competence by linguists and scholars. Having this pragmatic competence, a speaker would have the ability to produce socially appropriate utterances in various contexts (Daskalovska et al, 2016). A lack of such pragmatic ability could lead to disastrous outcomes such as misunderstandings and conflicts between the speaker and the interlocutor. According to Daskalovska et al. (2016), the pragmatic competence could be observed in the realization of speech acts such as complaints, apologies, persuasions, as well as requests. In making requests, the requester may subconsciously employ various strategies which are different in terms of the degree of directness. A lack of awareness in making an appropriate request could lead to failure in communication as well as conflicts between the requester and the interlocutor. Therefore, the focus of this study will be on the strategies which undergraduate students employ to perform requests to their teacher on LINE application.

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## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Computer-mediated Communication (CMC)

Over the past decades, technology has constantly changed the face of humans' communication. Little by little, it has become a part of the ways people communicate with one another and slowly replaced the traditional 'face-to-face' communication, which means it is unnecessary for people to meet each other in order to talk since communications can now happen through the use of electronic devices and this kind of communication is called the computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018).

According to Baym (2006), the CMC can be categorized into two types based upon the nature of the communication whether it occurs in real time with the co-presence of the communicators (synchronous CMC) such as an instant chatroom or the chat box in various online games, or there is a delay between messages sent (asynchronous CMC) such as communication via emails, webpages, online boards, Facebook comments, etc.

'LINE' is a social networking application which was first launched in 2011 and has been constantly developed by LINE Corporation. Similar to email and other widely used social networking applications, the communication via LINE is computer-based since it allows users to exchange texts, pictures, videos, and audio files on their electronic devices such as smartphones and tablets. The language used on the application LINE can be considered as natural and authentic as the spoken discourse since messages are written as if spoken and users can express their feelings or emotions through the use of emoticons, emojis, and stickers (Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018). Furthermore, the communication on LINE application is asynchronous in nature since users have control over manipulating, composing, and editing their messages. This means users can reread the messages and edit linguistic and pragmatic clarity as well as politeness before sending them to the receivers (Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez 2018).

In Thailand, the use of LINE application in communication is ubiquitous with more than 32 million users around the country (Leesa-nguansuk, 2018). It has been the most preferred channel for communication among individuals as well as the business sector. Several Thai companies employ LINE application to benefit their business in various ways such as communicating with customers, creating online campaigns for marketing, and approaching new targeted customer groups (Rendon & Krajangwong, 2017). Furthermore, the use of LINE application is also pervasive and entrenched in the educational sector, especially in university and college where LINE application has currently become means of communication between educators and students. This means teachers are now approachable. Students can pose their questions or submit the assignments to their teacher via LINE application. Some teachers also employ LINE application to strengthen their teaching. For example, they can send extra exercises or practices to their students or make an appointment with them online anywhere and anytime.

Nevertheless, in Thailand, the relationship between teachers and students is said to be distant to some certain extent. Students are taught to respect teachers who are positioned in higher social hierarchy to them. Such ideology highly influences students' manners, behaviors, as well as language expressed towards their teachers. However, with the advent of technology, the distance between teachers and students tends to be narrower. With the help of technology, teachers are now more accessible to students. Therefore, it is very interesting to investigate the linguistic aspects of politeness embedded in the written discourse generated by the students in the communication with their teacher on LINE application to see the students' choices of politeness.

### 2.2 Politeness Theory

In general, the concept of politeness mainly discusses human's behaviors and etiquettes in treating someone in the society (Febiyani et al, 2019). In language theory, there are various views towards the concept of politeness. According to Akpanglo-Nartey (2017), politeness is a matter people consider when speaking a language in order that they would not offend their interlocutors, and it is also a key in



establishing and sustaining social relationships among people. Similarly, for Watts (1989), politeness is considered 'politic behavior' necessary for a smooth interaction and it is a well-developed discourse used among social groups. Brown (2015) defined politeness as the use of language in which a speaker highly considers how interlocutors should be verbally treated, by expressing concern of their social status as well as their social relationship. This reflects that the concept of politeness is grounded on the notion of preserving 'face.' 'Face' as proposed by Goffman (1956) is the public self-image that everyone has and expects other people else to recognize (Yule, 2011). For Ho (1976), 'face' means the individual's dignity, social status, and honor. So, when someone's face is threatened, that person will lose dignity, social status, and honor.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), 'face' can be divided into two aspects, positive face and negative face. The positive face is the need for an increase of a positive self-image (O'Keeffe et al, 2011) or a desire to be approved, liked, or appreciated by other people, while the negative face is the desire to be independent, to have freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The desires for positive face are, for example, the need to be respected by co-workers and considered as a proficient member of an organization. The examples of the desire for negative face are the wish to be independent and self-directed (Duthler, 2006). In everyday social communication, people generally expect that their interlocutors will respect their public self-image or face wants as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) that in order to preserve positive and negative face, one is also required to support the face wants of others.

Although the theory suggests that everyone must support and preserve the face wants of their interlocutors during the interaction, in reality, one can say things that represent threats to others' face wants. Brown and Levinson (1987: pp. 64) referred to this as face-threatening acts (FTAs). For example, a criticism 'you are not good enough.' may threaten the interlocutor's positive face wants since it ruins the public image and threatens the need for approval (Duthler, 2006). An order or a command such as 'please bring me a glass of water' can threaten the negative face wants of the interlocutor since the hearer is bound to some future action so his/her freedom is restricted. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987: pp. 76) posit that the weightiness or the seriousness of FTAs can be calculated from three variables; namely power of the hearer over the speaker (P), social distance between the hearer and the speaker (D), and ranking of imposition or the situation (R), since these three variables tend to have a great influence on humans' speech behaviors.

In a situation when performing the FTAs is needed, the speaker has to make a decision whether he/she will perform that FTA directly or mitigate the weightiness of the FTA on the interlocutor's face. In order to mitigate the weightiness of the FTAs, Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 76) propose five sets of politeness strategies listed in terms of the degree of politeness as follows: 1) Baldly or On record, 2) Positive politeness, 3) Negative politeness, 4) Off-record, and 5) Don't do the FTA. For example, if a student needs to interrupt his friend during the conversation because he needs to go to the exam room, he might say "Wait!" (Baldly or On record), "Mate, that's interesting!" (Positive politeness), "I'm so sorry. We will talk about this later" (Negative politeness), that student may look at the clock (Off-record), or that student may not perform any FTA at all (Don't do the FTA).

The concept of politeness can be deemed universal. It exists in every culture and society. However, each society may have a different view of what politeness is (Barešová, 2008). This reflects that what is considered to be polite by people in a community might not be so in other communities. This study will focus on Thai students' politeness when performing the speech act of request with their teacher.

### 2.3 Speech Act of Request

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a request is an illocutionary act which is frequently used and possesses notorious face-threatening nature. Normally, a request is made by a speaker to make an addressee perform an action whether by using verbal or non-verbal discourse; therefore, it is a speech act that threatens the negative face of the hearer since it imposes on the hearer's freedom of action (Akpanglo-Nartey, 2017).



Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) posit that the speech act of request may include three parts, namely a) address terms, b) head act, c) and adjunct(s) to head act. When performing a request, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) indicate three levels of directness which can be deemed universal including 1) explicit level or the most direct form of making requests such as various forms of imperatives, 2) conventionally indirect level which can be noticed from the use of words such as 'would' and 'could', and 3) nonconventional indirect level in which a request is made by using a hint.

Since performing a request may threaten the faces of both the speaker and the hearer, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest a request be performed with appropriate politeness strategies in order to mitigate the level of imposition loaded upon the speaker and the hearer. Nevertheless, the choice of politeness strategies in performing a request can be different in each culture (Salvesen, 2015). Dittrich et al. (2011) propose that in cultures which value individualism and emphasize freedom, more formal titles will be used in performing the speech act of request, while in the cultures which are communal-oriented and value society and togetherness tend to use less formal titles in performing a request.

In Thai context, various studies have been done on the politeness and the request strategies. A prominent study among these belongs to Chiravate (2011) who compared the selection of strategies in making requests between the native speakers of American English and Thai EFL learners using a judgment task consisting of 12 situations. The results showed that, in the same situations, Thai EFL learners selected less strategies when making requests due to the L1 influence. Apart from the social variables including power, distance, and ranking of imposition, L1 interference could have an influence in the selection of request strategies.

This present study is aimed at investigating choices of request strategies of Thai undergraduate students when performing requests to their teacher on LINE application. The specific research questions to be addressed include:

- 2.1 What request strategies do Thai undergraduate students select to perform requests to their teacher on LINE application?
- 2.2 Apart from the request act, what are external modifiers the students employ?

### **3. Materials and Methods**

#### *3.1 Data and Research Participants*

The data used in the analysis were 40 request messages on LINE application written in Thai by Thai undergraduate students from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University. These messages were collected between September 2019 to January 2020. Among these students, 90% (54 persons) were female and 10% (6 persons) were male, and their age ranged from 19-21 years old. All the students' names were erased in order to maintain their anonymity. In order to create a corpus, all collected messages were copied into the Microsoft Word document and numbered.

#### *3.2 Research Instrument*

The data used in the present study were collected from LINE application registered in the name of the researcher. Basically, LINE application provided an instant exchange of messages in which the messages written would be as natural and authentic as the spoken discourse. However, the text producers could edit the linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness of the messages before sending them to the receivers. Thus, messages created on LINE application truly reflected the linguistic choices and communicative strategies the text producer selected and used to achieve the communicative goals.

#### *3.3 Data Analysis*

The study employed the request strategies originally proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as a theoretical framework for the analysis. Theoretically, requests could be classified according to the levels of directness which indicated how polite the requests were. Such levels of directness could be divided into three major levels as demonstrated in the table below:

**Table 1** Request Strategies (Adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989))

Request Strategy	Sub-strategy	Examples
Direct	Imperatives	Close the window.
	Performatives	I ask you to close the window.
	Obligations	You must close the window.
	Want statements	I'd like to borrow you some money.
Conventionally Indirectness	Permissions	Can I borrow you some money?
	Willingness	Would you mind lending me some money?
	Suggestory Formulae	How about THB 100?
Non-conventionally Indirectness	Hints	I am so hungry. (Intent: borrowing some money)

In addition to the analysis of the request head acts, the contexts surrounded the request act were investigated as well. Such contexts were called external modifiers and they were divided into the context preceding the request head act and the context following the request head act. According to Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez (2018), the external modifiers could be divided into 2 types. The first one was 'alerters' consisting of 6 elements, namely greetings, title, surname, first name, the pronoun, and apologetic formulae, while the second one was called 'supportive moves' and could be divided into 4 subtypes including preparators, obtaining a pre-commitment, supportive reasons, and expressions of gratitude.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section presented the request strategies across 40 LINE messages, and it was divided into three sections concerning the results from the analysis of external modifiers preceding the head acts, the request strategies in the request head acts, and the external modifiers following the head acts.

##### 4.1 External Modifiers Preceding the Head Act

###### 4.1.1 Alerters

When making a request, the requester may begin the request with alerters. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), alerters refer to elements preceding the request act. Alerters help initiate the conversations and draw attention from the interlocutor. From the study, it was found that three types of alerters were employed by the LINE users, including greeting, title + nickname, and title. The percentage of each was presented in the table below.

**Table 2** Alerters used in 40 LINE messages

Alerters	Frequencies (Times)	Percentages (%)
Greeting	3	7.5
Title + Nickname	10	25
Title	23	57.5
No alerters	7	17.5

From table 2, the most preferred alerter was 'title' (57.75%), followed by 'title + nickname' (25%) and 'greeting' (7.5%). Interestingly, some students did not employ any alerters when making a request (17.5%). The examples of alerters were demonstrated below.

- (1) อาจารย์คะ พ่วงนี้หนูขอืม adapter mac หน่อย  
**Teacher**, I'd like to borrow your MacBook adapter tomorrow.
- (2) อาจารย์อคะ หนูขอย้ายจากเซค 10 ไปเซค 12 ของอาจารย์ได้ไหมคะ  
**Teacher A**, can I move from section 10 to your section?
- (3) สวัสดีค่ะ อาจารย์เอ๋ ว่างหรือเปล่าคะ อยากรจะขอปรึกษาเรื่อง IS ค่ะ  
**Hello**, Teacher A. Are you available? I'd like to consult with you about my IS.



The bold Thai word in (1) was equivalent to the word ‘teacher’ or ‘lecturer’ in English. In Thai culture, professions such as ‘teacher’ and ‘doctor’ could be commonly used as titles of address in daily conversations. In addition, these titles could be followed by the nickname of the person being addressed as shown in (2). However, it was surprising that ‘greeting’ as in (3) was not a preferred alerter used to initiate the conversation among the samples.

#### 4.1.2 Supportive Moves

Theoretically, the supportive moves were used to mitigate the weightiness of the request. They also functioned as the lead-in to the request head act. In this study, apart from the alerters, it was found that 14 chats (35%) contained the supportive moves prior to the request head acts. The students’ choices of supportive moves were displayed in the table below:

**Table 3** The supportive moves selected by the students

Supportive Moves	Frequencies (Times)	Percentages (%)
Preparatory	10	71.42
Supportive reasons	3	21.42
Getting a pre-commitment	1	7.14

From table 3, the most preferred supportive move was ‘preparatory’ which the samples employed to ask for the availability of their teacher, followed by the use of ‘supportive reasons’ which accounted for 21.42% of all the supportive moves used in the study. The last supportive move found was ‘getting a pre-commitment’ which was found only 1 time. The use of supportive moves ‘preparatory’, ‘supportive reasons’, and ‘getting a pre-commitment’ were shown in (4), (5), and (6), respectively. The supportive moves were underlined with dash lines.

- (4) วันนี้อาจารย์ว่างกี่โมงคะ หนูจะรบกวนให้อาจารย์ตรวจงาน writing ให้ค่ะ  
What time will you be available today? I’d like you to check my writing.
- (5) อาจารย์คะ พอดีหนูไม่สบาย หนูขอสอบย้อนหลังได้ไหมคะ  
 Teacher, I am sick. Can I take a test later?
- (6) อาจารย์คะ ที่หนูนัดกับอาจารย์ตามสอบควิฯ ขอเลื่อนเป็นวันพฤหัสบดีหรือไม่ก็ศุกร์ได้ไหมคะ  
 พุธนี้ผมมีธุระต้องกลับบ้านที่ต่างจังหวัดคะ  
 Teacher, I have scheduled a test with you. Can it be postponed to Thursday or Friday?  
 I need to go back home tomorrow.

When considering both alerters and supportive moves altogether across 14 messages which contained these external modifiers, it was found that they occurred in various combinations. The combinations of the alerters and supportive moves were shown in the table below.

**Table 4** Patterns of external modifiers preceding the request head acts

Patterns	Frequencies (Times)	Percentages (%)
Title + Preparatory	4	28.58
Greeting + Title + Nickname + Preparatory	2	14.29
Title + Nickname + Preparatory	2	14.29
Title + Nickname + Supportive reasons	2	14.29
Title + Supportive reasons	1	7.15
Title + Precommitment	1	7.15
Preparatory	2	14.29



From table 4, it was obvious that the patterns of external modifiers preceding the request head acts selected by the students when making a request to their teacher varied according to the students' preferences. However, across all 14 messages which contained external modifiers, it was found that the pattern 'title + preparatory' was the dominant pattern, while other patterns were employed in a close percentage.

- (7) อาจารย์คะ พุธนี้อาจารย์ว่างช่วงไหนบ้างคะ หนูจะเข้าไปพบคะ  
**Teacher, what time will you be free tomorrow?** I will go see you.
- (8) อาจารย์อยู่ห้องไหนคะ หนูจะไปสอบคะ  
Are you at your office? I'll go there and take a test.

In (7), the alerter 'title' and the supportive move 'preparatory' were combined, and this pair appeared in the highest frequency. So, the conclusion could be drawn in the sense that when making a request to their teachers online, students preferred to draw attention by calling their teacher with the profession's title and then asked for the teacher's availability before producing the request head act. Interestingly, there were also some students who preferred to initiate the conversation using the supportive move 'preparatory' without greeting or addressing their teacher as shown in (8).

#### 4.2 Request Head Acts

Across all 40 LINE messages, it was found that the request strategies selected by the students were varied. Table 5 and Table 6 summarized the selected request head acts categorized by the degree of directness.

**Table 5** Request strategies selected by the samples

Request Strategies	Frequencies (Times)	Percentages (%)
Direct	22	55
Conventionally Indirectness	15	37.5
Non-conventionally Indirectness	3	7.5

**Table 6** The distribution of selected request sub-strategies

Request Strategies	Sub-strategies	Frequencies (Times)	Percentages (%)
Direct	Imperatives	8	20
	Want statements	13	32.5
	Obligations	1	2.5
Conventionally Indirectness	Permissions	15	37.5
Non-conventionally Indirectness	Hints	3	7.5

Table 5 showed that, among all 40 messages, the direct request strategy was employed in the highest frequency (55%), followed by the conventionally indirectness (37.5%), and non-conventionally indirectness (7.5%). At this point, the conclusion could be drawn in the sense that when having the asynchronous communication on the LINE application in which the students had time to edit linguistic elements and select request strategies of their choice, there was a high tendency that the students would make requests using direct strategies regardless of the fact that they were having a conversation with their teacher.

As shown in table 6, the direct request strategy was expressed in the forms of 'want statement' in the highest frequency (32.5%), followed by the imperatives (8%) and obligations (1%), and the examples of these three sub-strategies were demonstrated in (9), (10), (11), respectively. The request head acts were double underlined.

- (9) สวัสดีคะ อาจารย์ชื่อ ว่างหรือเปล่าคะ อยากรจะขอปรึกษาเรื่อง IS ค่ะ  
 Hello, Teacher A. Are you available? I'd like to consult with you about my IS.
- (10) อาจารย์เอคะ ขึ้นไปปลดสื่อให้หน่อยคะ (อีโมจิ) หนูส่งไปหลายวันแล้วแต่อาจารย์ยังไม่เซ็นให้เลยคะ



- Teacher A. Sign this pre-registration form for me. (Emoji) I have submitted it for several days but you haven't signed it yet. (Emoji)
- (11) อาจารย์เอคะ ไม่ทราบว่าพุงนี้อาจารย์เข้ามาวิทยาลัยใหม่คะ หนูเรียนกับอาจารย์ทอมที่แล้วพอดีหนูลืมประเมินอะคะ ต้องให้อาจารย์เซ็นให้คะ  
Teacher A. Will you come to university tomorrow? I took your course last semester and forgot to do the course evaluation, and it is required that you sign the form.

From the messages (9), (10), and (11), it was obvious that the students performed the speech act of request explicitly. The request strategy in (9) could be realized as 'want statements' since the text producers expressed their desire by using the expression 'อยากจะทำ' or 'would like to,' followed by the main verb indicating the illocutionary intention. This expression was added in the request in order to mitigate the seriousness of the explicitness. In (10), the request head act could be realized as 'imperatives' since it began with the verb indicating the direct intention of the text producer without any other linguistic features to downgrade the weightiness of the request. Interestingly, instead of using modal verbs or hedged expressions, the emoticons were added after the request head act to lighten the force of the request head act. This also suggested how the text producer wanted to emphasize the request and express it directly without any redressive actions. In (11), the request head act was analyzed as 'obligations' since the word 'ต้อง' or 'must' indicated that the text receiver was obliged to perform what requested.

Apart from being direct, the samples also selected the conventionally indirectness when making requests, and it was found that asking for 'permissions' was the only sub-strategy employed by the samples in the study, but it was used in the highest frequency (15 times) across all the sub-strategies. The last sub-strategy employed by the samples was 'hints' categorized under the non-conventionally indirect strategy. The examples of these two sub-strategies were shown in (12) and (13) below.

- (12) อาจารย์เอคะ วันนี้หนูมีพรีเซนตชันตอนบ่ายสองแต่ลืมเอาหัวต่อแมคมา หนูขอืมของอาจารย์ได้ไหมคะ  
Teacher A. I have a presentation at 2 p.m. today but I forgot my Mac adapter.  
Can I borrow yours?
- (13) อาจารย์อยู่ที่ไหนคะ  
Where are you?

Considering the request head act in (12), instead of statements, the text producer used question to make the request. Such question was with the intention to ask for text receiver's permission. Although being indirect, it could be noticed that the request for permission normally benefited the text producer. For (13), it should be noted that there were no messages prior to or after the text. The text producer initiated the request with question 'อาจารย์อยู่ที่ไหนคะ' or 'where are you?' which could be realized as a 'hint' with the text producer's real intention to request to see the teacher rather than asking the place the teacher was in. Practically, a hint can be interpreted differently, and it is the text receiver's responsibility to interpret the message to see what the requester actually means.

#### 4.3 External Modifiers following the Head Act

This study also investigated the external modifiers following the head acts. However, among 40 request messages, there existed only seven utterances containing the post external modifiers or the supportive moves. In addition, only 'supportive reason' supportive move was identified. The example was shown in (14) below, and the supportive move was underlined.

- (14) อาจารย์คะ หนูสอบย้อนหลังได้ไหมคะ วันนี้หนูไม่สบายไปเรียนไม่ได้หวะ  
Teacher. Can I take a test later? I am sick and cannot attend your class today.



Obviously, the supportive reasons were added after the request head acts in order to intensify the possibility that the request would be fulfilled. However, it was amazed that no samples ended the request with the common move like the ‘expressing gratitude.’

## 5. Discussions and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrated that the direct request strategy was the most common request strategy employed in the LINE chats between undergraduate students and the teacher. Nevertheless, when analyzing the sub-strategies under each degree of directness (i.e. direct, conventionally indirectness, and non-conventionally indirectness), it turned out that the ‘permissions’ strategy under the conventional indirectness had the highest frequency of use. Thus, the findings of the study tended not to coincide with most previous studies in the field positing that the students tended to employ conventional indirectness strategies when making requests with their teachers or persons of superior power and social status (Al-Marrani & Sazalie, 2010; Daskalovska et al, 2016; Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018; Shawesh & Hussin, 2015).

According to Wierzbicka (2003), the diversities in ways of speaking or interacting were the result of different cultural attitudes, beliefs, and values. Hofstede (2015) had proposed that each culture had distinctive cultural values and he had classified these distinctions into five dimensions, namely power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. The cultural dimension which might help clarify the findings of this study was the power and distance. In Thai culture, it was commonly known that power was distributed unequally. The subordinates or people with less power were not expected to express disagreement with people of superior power (Taras et al, 2010), as mentioned in Yoshifumi (2017). In addition, from the past until today, Thai children were instilled with the belief that adults, especially their parents and teachers, were superior to them and must be approached with politeness. Such politeness should be reflected in both manners and speeches. If this notion was the case, then the findings of this study should have revealed that the students selected a more polite strategy when making a request with their teacher. However, with the roles of online communication mediums such as LINE, WeChat, and Facebook Messenger, the gap between groups of people tended to be bridged. When students were allowed to communicate with their teacher through these mediums, the sense of closeness might be established and the power and distance, somehow, vanished. Consequently, as showed in the results of the study, the students were likely to show a sign of indifference towards the concept of politeness and tended to be direct to achieve their communicative purposes.

However, if the request strategies were put aside, it could be seen that there were other linguistic features which were added, and they help soften the explicitness of the requests. These linguistic features included the use of particle ‘กะ’ /kha/ for a woman and ‘ครั’ /khrap/ for a man at the end of each sentence. Such particles indicated respect and politeness paid to the addressees as well as mitigated the weight of the request, and they were prevalent in the messages written by the students. Apart from the particles, in some messages, the emoticons were also used. These emoticons, like the particles, helped soften the request and color the feelings and moods behind the messages although the selection of emoticons mattered sometimes. The last linguistic feature found was the use of the first-person pronoun ‘หนู’ /nu/ which literally means ‘mouse’ in English. This pronoun was used mostly by females with the older or superior adults since the word itself represented inferiority (tiny as a mouse). Using this pronoun to refer to oneself, therefore, indicated how the user considered him/herself to have less power than the interlocutor.

In conclusion, this study showed that the students tended to be direct when making requests with their teacher through an online communication medium regardless of the Thai cultural value which emphasized the power and distance among people having different social backgrounds, ages, and positions. It is hoped that the findings from this study would benefit both teachers and students. For teachers, this study would provide them with the notion of how students communicate which might help avoid misinterpretation and bad feelings. For students, this study could raise their awareness on how they should approach their teachers. Furthermore, it is



hoped that the findings from this study will shed more light on the undergraduate students' pragmatic competence as well as the impacts of technology on communication.

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