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**English for Airline Purposes in Taiwan:
Directive Speech Acts for the Check-in Counters**

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the effect of airline one-year placement experience on Taiwanese students' development and acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence focusing on their English speech act behaviours. 50 subjects participated in this study, including 10 airline staff and 40 hospitality university students. Two instruments - the Discourse Completion Test and the Focus Group Interview were used to elicit the request strategies from three research groups for analysis.

The results of the study demonstrated that exposure to the target speech community specifically a year-long airport placement is relatively influential for the pragmatic development of Taiwanese hospitality university students. The findings in this study also showed that there is a positive relationship between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic ability. It is observed that the participants with better performance in the linguistic and grammatical knowledge tend to show equivalent pragmatic development more than the participants with lower proficiency.

The study is believed to significantly contribute in three directions. Firstly, the findings of this study provide valuable data for the development of pragmatic competence in airline English learning. An overall review of the relevant literature shows that there are no studies until now that have explored the effects of airline placement on the pragmatic development of Taiwanese hospitality university students in terms of their English request realisation. Secondly, the results of the study can serve as important practical evidence and can provide guidelines for airline English instructors to start considering how to integrate effective instruction with intercultural pragmatic learning in their teaching materials and curriculum design in order to assist Taiwanese hospitality university students to acquire the pragmatic and social cultural abilities to meet the airline workplace language requirement in the future. Thirdly, the results of the study also revealed information about the pragmatic performance of Taiwanese ground staff; senior employees and supervisors. Therefore, it is hoped that the results of the study can raise the awareness of both English course planners and administrators in Taiwanese airlines to develop appropriate airline English courses for ground staff in order to improve ground staff's English communication competence when dealing with passengers and also reach the standard of good service quality.

Declaration

In accordance with regulation 2.5 of the postgraduate assessment regulations for research degrees, I hereby declare that I have composed this thesis myself, that the work it contains is my own and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Jing-Min Lee
Edinburgh, April 2015

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Chapter One

Overview of Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This cross-sectional study aims to investigate Taiwanese university students' development of L2 pragmatic competence by examining their directive speech acts at the airport check-in desk. In this introductory chapter, I initially explain how my interest in hospitality university students' pragmatic development at airport check-in desk developed. Secondly, the institutional contexts of National Kaohsiung Hospitality and Tourism University and structures of Taiwanese airlines are discussed and reviewed. Thirdly, both the study purpose and the research questions are explained and demonstrated. In the final section, this study outlines as well as the significance of the research are proposed.

1.2 Background

“English has become the predominant lingua franca for international tourism” (Cravota 2001, p. 52), notably in the airline businesses that mostly deal with international travelers (Crystal, 2003; Tangniam, 2006). English language plays an important role in international communication and most non-native speakers rely on it as the key language in order to communicate with other non-native speakers, not to mention airline staff that deal with travelers of various nationalities every day. English has naturally become the vital medium which airline employees employ to communicate with passengers from different cultural backgrounds. Cravotta (2000, p.

33) discussed the significance of communicative competence relative to the field of international tourism and pointed out that “Effective English communication for international tourism requires total communicative competence and deep intercultural understanding.” Cravotta (2000) explained that total communicative competence includes a mastery of grammatical, discoursed, strategic, and sociolinguistic factors. Communicative competence plays a significant role in the tourism industry as extensive verbal communication is required. Therefore, communicative competence is naturally and directly related to service quality, especially for speakers who are using a second language.

Some studies (Jones, 2004; Tolpa, 2012) have showed that with respect to the customers’ evaluation of the quality of airline service encounter, politeness of airline staff is considered to be one of the crucial elements for good quality service. Jones & Sasser (1995) pointed out that “good quality meal and polite and friendly attitude have an important role in making the customer fully satisfied with the services and thus achieve true customer loyalty” (cited in Tolpa, 2012, p. 55). Tolpa (2012, p. 41) indicated that one of the most important attributes for airport services is that airport staff interact with a courteous and helpful manner. Customers generally judge and evaluate the quality of the airline service encounter based on the way the service provider behaves and interacts with customers. Airline staff’s service attitude, language and communication skills have to display a high degree of politeness (Jones, 2004). Thus, in order to deliver efficient and quality service, airline ground staff need to be aware of English language usage in terms of politeness in every encounter.

International airlines in Taiwan require their employees to have a good level of English competence, which is necessary in conjunction with job knowledge in order to meet the quality standard of their ground handling services. To date, the studies examining pragmatic ability for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), or pragmatic ability at the workplace, are considerably rare. In order to improve students' communicative competence to meet the airline workplace English requirement, the research aims to investigate the interlanguage behaviour of Taiwanese hospitality university students intending to follow careers in the airline industry, focusing on the ways in which they ask passengers to comply with requirements for flight check-in.

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is the branch of second language research which studies how non-native speakers develop the ability to understand and perform linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992, p. 203). Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, p. 3) defined ILP as “the study of nonnative speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language”. Interlanguage pragmatics is defined by Kasper and Rose (2002, p. 5),

As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 5).

In this study, interlanguage pragmatic knowledge is defined, according to Kasper (1992) and Kasper and Rose (2002), as the nonnative speaker's knowledge of a pragmatic system and knowledge of its appropriate use.

The literature on interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research has centered on exploring language learners' pragmatic competence and language performance of second or foreign language learners and the development of pragmatic competence by non-native speakers, which is the focus of the present study. Many interlanguage pragmatics studies focused on comparing native speakers' and L2 learners' production and comprehension of speech acts (Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002). The similarities and differences between native and L2 learners' production and comprehension of certain speech acts have led ILP researchers to a better understanding of learners' interlanguage development. Some researchers investigated how learners' pragmatic behaviours deviated from native speakers' due to pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992; Riley, 2006) or cultural-specific interactional style (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Many SLA researchers pay more attention to interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), because L2 learners, even the high grammatical proficiency L2 learners may use language inappropriately and show differences from target-language pragmatic norms (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Bouton, 1996; Cai & Wang, 2013). Learners fail to communicate effectively in certain situations due to their lack of pragmatic knowledge of the target language, that is, when to use what appropriately (Barron, 2003; Chang, 2010; Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Riley, 2006).

Among various types of speech acts that have been studied, the realisation patterns of the speech act of request have been a popular subject in the field of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The speech act of request is classified by Searle as a directive. As defined by Searle (1973, p. 13), "these are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something." A request is defined as an illocutionary act whereby a speaker

expresses to a hearer that he/she wants the hearer to practice an act which is for the benefit of the speaker. Trosborg's definition of "a request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker" (1995, p. 187). For example, in the airline context, ground staff request passengers to pay for the over-weight luggage by saying: *Can/could you pay the excess baggage charge, please?* Passengers are requested to pay the excess baggage charge for the company benefit; however it is a cost to the passengers. The notion of benefit-and-cost to him/her self or other was initially proposed by Leech (1983) in his description of politeness in a Tact maxim: (a). minimize cost to other, (b). maximize benefit to other and in a Generosity Maxim: (a). minimize benefit to self; (b). maximize cost to self (see more details on pp. 108-109).

The speech act of request has been regarded as a Face-Threatening Act (FTA), defined by Brown & Levinson (1987, *ibid*:64), which "by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speakers". Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 25) defined politeness as "redressive action" taken to alleviate the force of the acts on the hearer. Making a request is considered a face-threatening act to the hearer so learning how to make requests to customers without offending them is a valued communicative skill for front line airline employees.

The purpose of the study is to investigate Taiwanese students' development of L2 pragmatic competence during the airline placement. By investigating the differences of students' directive speech acts behaviour before and after placement, it is hoped that by identifying students' pragmatic needs and instances of failure in the study it

can be used as a resource for airline English teachers to design appropriate airline English courses and develop teaching methods to improve students' pragmatic competence in order to develop their communicative competence sufficiently to meet the English proficiency level needed for employment with airlines.

1.3 National Kaohsiung Hospitality and Tourism University

The mastery of English has been held as one of the most important employment criteria by many airlines in Taiwan. To respond to the airlines' requirement of high proficiency in English, a variety of ESP courses such as airline English are commonly offered at universities in Taiwan, such as National Kaohsiung Hospitality and Tourism University (hereafter: NKUHT). NKUHT is a nationally recognized professional school devoted exclusively to the hospitality and travel industries. NKUHT incorporated airline English courses into the curriculum as proficiency in English is considered a core skill for internationally-minded service providers. The curriculum of NKUHT are designed to address hospitality industry needs and to facilitate the education and training of students interested in becoming hospitality industry professionals. Accepting that student placement programmes are a critical component of the collaboration between service industries and training schools (as noted in Goodenough & Page, 1993), placement programmes at NKUHT have been integrated into each faculty's syllabus. All students spend a full year on placement as part of their study programme. A student's third academic year must be spent on placement in a selected company and students enrolled in the Airline and Transport Service Management Department (hereafter: ATSMMD) at NKUHT must find a placement with an airline.

As a teacher at National Kaohsiung Hospitality and Tourism University in Taiwan I am required by the university to visit students majoring in airline service management regularly during their one year placement in the airlines and discuss with airline managers my students' the work performance. Constructive comments about students' work performance and language ability from managers and supervisors were recorded and documented in my placement visiting reports. During my airline placement visits, I was permitted by Taiwanese airline managers to observe students' work at the reservation centres and check-in counters. Based on my observations of students' work and discussions with airline managers about ground staff's duties at reservation centre and check-in counters, I developed airline English course materials, which were published in book form as 'Airline English for ground staff in Taiwanese airports' in 2005. This book has since been used as the main course book and within the syllabus in the Airline and Transport Service Management Department at NKUHT. The content of the textbook focuses on the conversations that frequently occurred in the reservation centre and check-in counters.

1.4 International airlines in Taiwan

In the following sections, on the basis of my placement visiting reports, Taiwanese international airlines in-house training, airline service delivery system and features of airline English will be introduced.

1.4.1 In-house training in airlines

In-house training is obligatory in every airline, but, the duration of the courses varies from airline to airline. Training lasts approximately three months in Taiwan, depending on the time table of the airlines. Training modules include reservations, ticketing, check-in procedures and customer service skills which cover approximately two to three weeks depending on the airline.

Customer service training is seen as the overriding principle by the airlines in their in-house training agenda. The aims of customer service training are to educate airline staff on the knowledge, skills and customer service attitude required to anticipate and respond to the problems which passengers inevitably face. The course includes objectives of customer service, customer expectations of service, communication barriers, communication skills, non-verbal communication, listening skills, principles to receiving the customers, social styles, cross-cultural awareness, dealing with complaints, and customer relationship management. As people from all nations work within the airline industry, communication skills are of utmost importance for an airline professional to possess. Therefore, special training for effective communication skills is always a priority in the customer service training courses.

The following account is based on two informal discussions¹ with two respective airline managers of Taiwan's airline front-line staff that carry out a series of check-in

¹ The discussions were conducted through msn and skype on Dec 16, 20, 29, 2009, Aug 1st, 2010.

procedures to help passengers in the check-in process. The procedures for check-in and suggested expressions at each step are outlined in the training course as follows.

Step 1: Greeting

Airline staff: Good morning/afternoon/evening, sir/madam.

Step 2: Request passengers to present travelling documents

Airline staff: May I have your passport/visa/ticket, please?

Step 3: Request passengers to put the luggage on the scale.

Airline staff: Would you put your luggage on the scale please?

Step 4: Requirement from passengers

Passenger: I'd like to have a window seat.

Airline staff: Certainly, sir/madam. Let me check your request.

Step 5: Gratitude

Airline staff:

(1) Thank you and I wish you a pleasant flight.

(2) Thank you for flying with us and enjoy your flight.

(Quoted from Taiwanese airlines staff training handbook, 2007, 2nd edition)

Following their in-house training, new ground staff are assigned to different departments according to the airline's needs. In order to ensure that their employees are familiar with every aspect of the services they provide, some airlines will rotate ground staff through their various departments. Normally, ground staff working at the airport are directed by a senior staff member for up to a three months probation period to ensure the efficiency of their work. Experienced staff members train junior staff in a variety of ways such as instructing on appropriate check-in procedures,

advising on the most appropriate way in handling ‘special needs’ passengers and advising on effective customer communication. During this probation period new staff will try to replicate experienced airline staff in their communication skills, which allows new employees to gain experience in handling different situations that may arise and help them to develop both Chinese and English communication skills. As observed by Basturkmen (2006, p. 3) “it is understood that learners of English should try to emulate the ways of communicating of those who are already members of these communities.” Basturkmen is basing this on Lave and Wenger (1991) who view learning as social, involving participation in a community of practice. A community of practice is a group of people who share common interests and increase their knowledge and expertise by interacting with each other (Wenger, McDermot & Snyder, 2002, cited in Basturkmen, 2010, p. 11). According to Wenger (1998) communities of practice develop knowledge and act as repositories for that knowledge. They are the ideal place to learn community knowledge. The staff training could be viewed as part of the process of socialising students into the expectations and practices of the airline staff community of practice. The placement provides students with a unique opportunity not open to most pre-experience ESP learners.

During the training probation period, new staff are trained by different staff members from various stations, and because of this, communication training skills are somewhat different depending on the ability of the trainer. However, as trainees communicate with one another they share and exchange experiences and knowledge, that leads to the trainee gaining a greater insight. This supports Basturkmen’s (2006, p. 3) argument which suggests that because ‘members of discourse communities

regularly communicate with one another and with the outside world, they have developed specific communicative practices and mechanisms, that is, distinctive forms of discourse’.

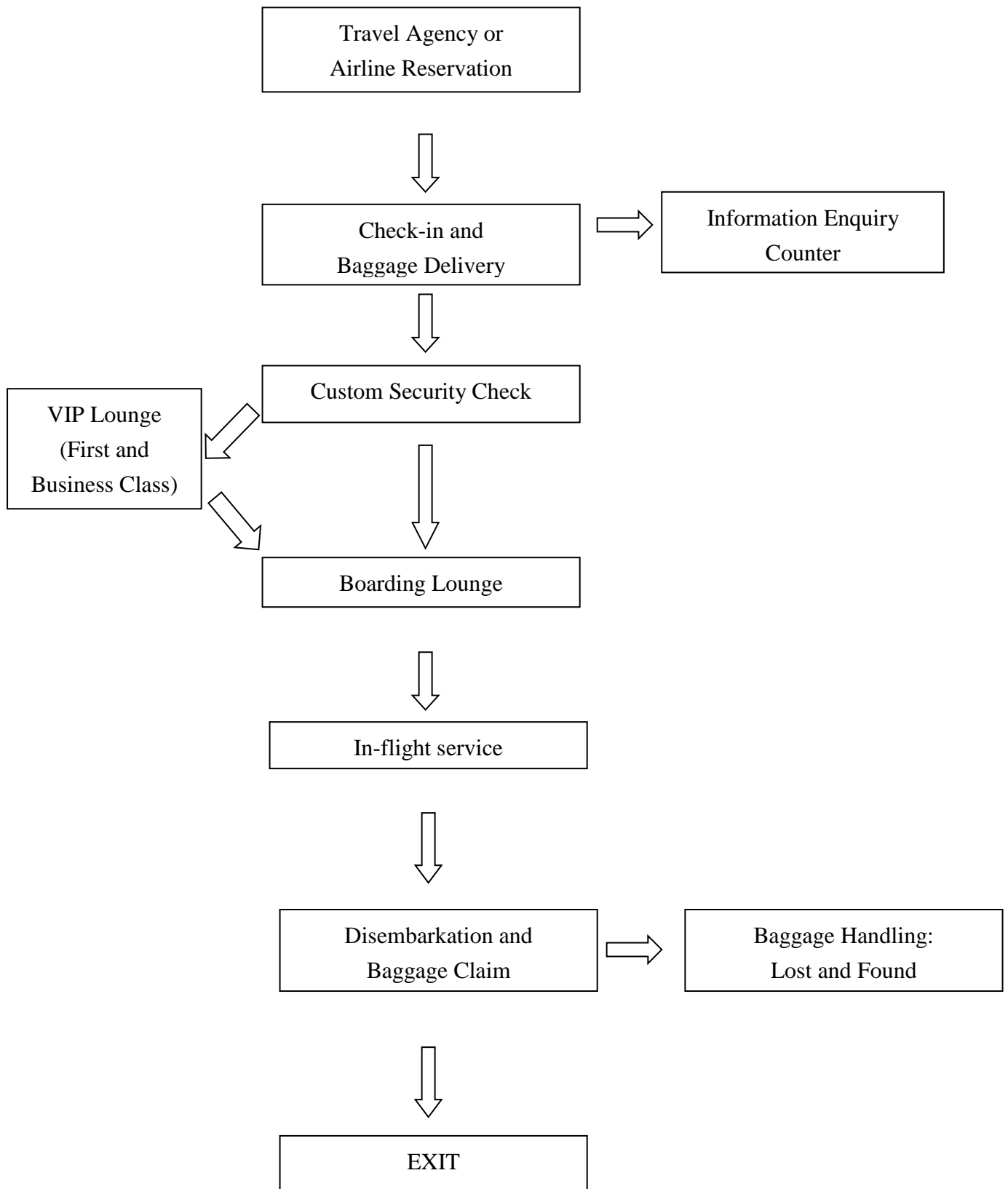
Airline managers pointed out that front-line staff are seen as the ‘face’ of the airline, therefore front-line staff are expected to excel in customer service. It is within their remit to make that all-important first impression. They are the staff who have constant contact with the passengers, their behaviour can directly influence the passengers behaviour and attitude. Some airline managers further indicated that ‘front-line staff deal with people coming from different nations and cultures. Cultural differences can create barriers to communication’. In order to be competently conversant, front-line staff need to be attentive of cultural differences and stereotyping and treat these differences with sensitivity, thus avoiding misunderstandings and at times conflict.

As an airline English teacher, I am obliged to understand the characteristics of the airline staff’s job activities and social roles and also to identify the proper language forms and functions which meet ground staff’s everyday uses to facilitate the provision of consistent and excellent service for passengers and decide what further training is needed. In the following section the airline service delivery system will be described.

1.4.2 Airline service delivery system

For clarity, I designed a flow chart that describes a 'typical' airline service delivery system, from the point at which a customer purchases a ticket until they arrive and leave the airport at their final destination (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Airline Service Delivery System



As can be seen from the flow chart, initial contact is made when a reservation is placed. The Airline reservation centre is where customers make their reservations and purchase their ticket. However, some airline customers purchase tickets from an airline reservation centre, an airline city ticket office or at the airport. Therefore, most customers do not encounter airline staff until they arrive at the airport.

Check-in is usually the first process at the airport for passengers. Ground staff's work at check-in counters includes verifying passengers' travel documents, allocating seating and arranging luggage delivery. At the end of the check-in procedure, ground staff will issue passengers with boarding passes and inform the customer of the boarding time and to which gate they must go to, and finally thank the passengers for their custom. After completion of check-in procedures passengers will move on to the security check, which is independent of the airline service. Before boarding, it is explained to passengers from First and Business Class that they can have access to the VIP Lounge prior to departure; this facility is not made available to economy class.

The Information Enquiry Counter is optional; this service is available for passengers that may enquire about flight services. Ground staff working at these counters must be able to attend to passengers needs efficiently and competently while responding to queries on a wide range of subjects such as the reasons for flight delays, stand-by passenger information, ticketing problems and the location of VIP Lounges or duty-free shops.

VIP Lounges are available to First Class and Business Class passengers only, this service is provided by the airline and not by the airport authority. Drinks, meals services are provided by ground staff. The lounges are often equipped with free internet access where customers can either use the airport computers or the passengers' own computers. VIP lounges are staffed by employees that have a high degree of customer service experience in dealing with airline customers, as most airlines are aware that these high paying customers expect a much higher service. Though economy class passengers go to duty free shops, this service is not provided by the airline and therefore not in the remit of this research.

The boarding lounge is where all passengers stay before they board. The work in the boarding lounge can be very stressful as ground staff need to load all the passengers, from a few to a few hundred people onto an airplane in a span of 15 to 20 minutes. During this period, ground staff have to take tickets checking them against the passengers details, handling seat re-arrangement requirements, oversized or over-weight carry-on luggage, and making public boarding announcements. The in-flight service is provided by flight attendants, thus it will not be discussed in this study.

The final step of the airline service delivery system is baggage claim. Once passengers have disembarked, they will proceed to the baggage area to claim their baggage. If passengers' luggage was lost or damaged ground staff at Lost and Found counters are in attendance to handle passenger complaints and solve problems

As discussed above, it can be seen that there are many service activities occurring in a service delivery system at all airports, therefore, effective interaction between airline ground staff and their customers is paramount. To ensure that the needs of the passenger are met, airline staff need to utilise various language functions and skills so that they can communicate with the passengers effectively. The various language functions and skills needed for effective communication are described in the following section.

1.4.3 Features of airline English in the airlines

The general airline service encounters which take place at the Information Enquiry Counters, Check-in counters, VIP Lounge, Boarding Lounge, and Lost and Found counter present show a collection of predictable routine business transactions. In order to effectively assist my students, majoring in airline service management, to cope with the language features and to develop the needed linguistic competence in an airlines context, the forms of language use at each service encounter were analysed. The following devised examples at the service counters were matched with the language functions and possible exponents, which were selected from the airline customer service handouts, needed by the airline staff. The activities associated with linguistic requirements in different stages of airport services are displayed in Table 1.1, which was designed by the researcher.

Tables 1.1 Activities and Linguistic Requirements of Airline airport services

Department	Activity	Language Function	Exponents
Information Enquiry	-Initiating the conversation	- Verbal welcome and greeting.	- “Good morning/afternoon/

Counter	-Responding to passengers who have flight enquires.		evening, sir/madam.” -“May I help you?”
Check-in Counter	-Verifying passengers’ traveling documents. -Allocating seating. -Arranging luggage delivery.	- Verbal welcome and greeting.	-“Good morning/afternoon/evening, sir/madam.” - “May I have your passport and visa?” -“Do you have any seat preference?” - “Would you please put your luggage on the scale?”
Boarding Lounge	-Loading passengers. -Checking boarding passes against manifest -handling oversized, over-weight carry-on luggage. -making public announcements	-Verbal welcome and greeting. - Expressing farewell utterances. - Final thanks	-“May I have your passport and boarding pass, please?” - “Would you put your carry-on luggage on the scale please?” -“Enjoy the flight. Have a good flight.”
VIP Lounge	-Providing drinks and meal service to passengers.	-Verbal welcome and greeting.	-“Good morning/afternoon/evening, sir/madam.” -“Would you care for anything to drink/eat?”
Lost and Found counter	-Solving problems of lost property or damaged luggage	-Standard form filling in writing or with guests’ oral instruction. - Formal language use.	-“Would you like to fill out this form please?”

1.5 Purpose of Study

On the basis of my airline visiting reports from 2000 to 2006, airline managers

indicated that one particularly problematic area for students was related to making requests in English, such as asking passengers to display their travel documents, repacking their luggage or requesting them to pay extra for overweight luggage. Airline managers further said that they had received complaints from passengers about the requests made by students due to their insensitive approach. Acquiring a language involves learning not only its formal aspects, such as grammar and vocabulary, but also its pragmatic aspects, i.e. rules for appropriate use in a given sociocultural context. In the case of my students the way the requests were expressed at times could be viewed as discourteous by the passengers. For example, when one passenger's luggage was overweight one of my students' replied in requesting the passenger to pay for the over-weight excess baggage "Your luggage is overweight. You must pay extra money. It's the law." The airline commented that the students' poor language ability resulted in misunderstandings and the passengers may feel that their replies were inappropriate and rude. The above example shows that the students' replies, although grammatically-correct, were pragmatically incorrect. Two airline managers' comments about my students' performance in my visiting reports pointed out the fact that my students' poor pragmatic ability actually hindered their communicative competence especially in dealing with international passengers. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) suggested two ways to assist L2 learners: investigating learners' language needs and exploring what language competence or skills they should possess and use in the target context. Identifying learners' needs precisely will assist in measuring the gap between the learners' present language ability and the workplace language requirement. Therefore, being the course instructor of airline English in the ATSMMD at NKUHT in Taiwan, I intend to investigate the pragmatic competence of Taiwanese hospitality and tourism university students majoring in

airline service management, focusing on their request realisation in English, their first foreign language.

Placement and its influence on pragmatic competence have been identified by the researcher as a key factor which needs to be examined in this study. The students majoring in airline service management stated emphatically in the focus group interview that once they had completed their one year airline placements they felt more confident when speaking English and more sensitive to cultural differences when interacting with native English speakers. They also pointed out that they had learned to communicate more effectively with non-Chinese speakers by using different strategies when they experienced difficulty in making themselves clear. Students' feedback about the placement actually triggered some interesting issues. Was the exposure to target community target language environment one of the factors in the learning of L2? Did the airline placement experience have a positive effect on the development of pragmatic awareness in this study? Was students' proficiency level another variable affecting their pragmatic development?

The placement at the airport for the participants can be viewed as similar to an ESL environment rather than EFL, where the target language is used as a medium of communication. It is also noted that greater exposure to the target language speakers and greater cultural experience of L2 social conventions may support adult L2 acquisition. Some studies have examined issues involving the pragmatic development of second and foreign language learners with different length of exposure to the target community and at different levels of proficiency when performing and comprehending various speech acts. For example, Shardakova (2005)

carried out a study of apologies performed by 90 American learners of Russian at two different proficiency levels. She analysed the combined effects of L2 proficiency and exposure to the target culture on learners' pragmatic development. Learners were divided according to their proficiency level and their exposure to the target language. She found that the low proficiency group with direct exposure to the Russian culture approximated more to the Russian norm than the high proficiency group without exposure to the target language. The low proficiency learners with direct exposure expanded their apologetic vocabularies and adjusted their apologies to contextual factors; it brought them closer to the NS norms. On the other hand, the high proficiency learners without direct exposure exhibited changes in their repertoire of apologies, but these proved insufficient for the learners to approximate the NS patterns. The second group did not change their contextual perception; only exposure to the target culture enabled learners to see things from the point of view of a Russian. This appears to resonate with the experience of the airline students on completion of their one year placement.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of airline placement experience and to what extent Taiwanese hospitality university students' pragmatic competence in their request realisation develops in the year-long placement in the target speech community - the airline service environment.

1.6 Research Questions

By analysing the responses from three major groups of research participants – Group A (2nd year students, before placement), Group B (4th year students, after placement)

and Group C (airline staff), this study aims to answer the following three research questions.

- 1. What are the differences between Group A (2nd year students before placement), Group B (4th year students after placement) and Group C's (airline staff) request behaviours?**

The study pays particular attention to the request strategies of 2nd year students before placement (Group A) and 4th year students after placement (Group B) and provides an analysis of the request strategies that these two groups used most frequently and compares them to those preferred by the more experienced airline staff group. The findings of the request strategies used by three research groups are examined and discussed in Chapter 5.

- 2. What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English language proficiency levels in Group A? At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in appropriate pragmatic use of language after placement?**

Considering the factors influencing the students' pragmatic development, the participants' proficiency was considered a variable in the study. The effects of language proficiency on Group A's request behaviours before and after their placement was investigated. In order to discover the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels (high and low proficiency) in Group A, Group A participated in the 1st

Discourse Completion Tests (for details see Section 4.5.2, pp. 139-144) in their 2nd year before one-year placement and participated in the 2nd Discourse Completion Tests in their 4th year after placement.

On the basis of Group A's proficiency level and placement experience, Group A was further divided into Group A-Low-Proficiency-before placement (Group A-LP-before in short), Group A-High-Proficiency-before placement (Group A-HP-before in short), Group A-Low-Proficiency-after placement (Group A-LP-after in short) and Group A-High-Proficiency-after placement (Group A-HP-after in short) for data analysis. The request strategies of high and low proficiency groups in Group A before and after placement were compared and analysed in order to discover which level of proficiency participants in Group A makes more progress in the development of pragmatics after placement.

3. To what extent do participant responses in the DCTs conform to airline managers' expectations of appropriate verbal behaviours by check-in staff?

In order to reveal the gap between the students' present language ability in regards to the language requirement of airlines, it is crucial to understand the managers and trainers' principles and philosophy of politeness in the airline customer service context as they are the ones that determine airline employee's needs. Thus, in the study the participants' replies are evaluated by airline professionals from different international airlines in Taiwan based on their airline customer service experiences to

ascertain whether there are any differences between airline managers' perceptions of politeness and that of the participants'.

Students are not only required to speak English accurately in the workplace in airlines, but also speak 'appropriately' based on airlines customer service criteria. Both Group A and Group B participants' replies were evaluated by two airline managers from different Taiwanese international airlines based on the managers' airline customer service experiences. This is to elicit whether there are any differences between airline managers' perceptions of politeness and that of both groups. Furthermore, airline managers would also elicit whether Group A or Group B participants would be more likely to adhere to the principles and philosophy of the airlines after their placements. The hypothesis of question 3 postulates that the replies of the students who have carried out work placements would adhere to airline customer service principles to a greater extent than the replies of the students without any airline placement experience. The implication therefore for the fourth year students after having placement experience is that the data can reveal whether there are any improvements.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

The remaining chapters in this thesis are organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on theoretical aspects and previous studies related to ESP. In this chapter the development of ESP, the definitions and characteristics of ESP, the categorization of Business English, and needs analysis in ESP are reviewed. The problems and challenges of ESP in Taiwan are discussed.

In chapter 3 the concept of pragmatics is explained. Thereafter, possible influences of L1 transfer to learners' communicative competence and speech behaviors are discussed. Following this, the framework of Speech Act Theory is discussed as the theoretical basis. The classification of speech acts, the definitions, and the conditions for the speech acts to occur are investigated. As it is often suggested that speech act performance is related to politeness, in Section Five the Western and Chinese concepts of face and politeness are then addressed and compared.

Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methodology used in this study. A cross-sectional study design is used in this study to describe the characteristics that exist in the three research groups. Chapter 4 starts with an introduction to the research questions. Then the purposes of using two instruments; the Discourse Completion Tests (henceforth: DCT) and the Focus Group Interview in the study are explained. Following this, the coding scheme for quantitative analysis is discussed. Finally, the criterion of airline customer service is explained.

Chapter 5 reports the results of an exploratory cross-sectional study of pragmatic development among three groups of hospitality university students in Taiwan who completed Discourse Completion Tests designed to elicit request behaviours. Chapter 5 displays and explains statistical analysis of the request strategy used by three research groups in the First Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs). The First DCT data collected from three research groups were compared to determine whether there were significant differences in Group A and Group B participants' overall request strategy use.

In Chapter 6 the request strategies in Second DCTs utilized by low proficiency participants were analysed and compared to those used by high proficiency participants to examine whether there were significant differences in these two group participants' overall request strategy use.

In Chapter 7, the results and discussion of findings of the interview with airline managers are described. The airline managers' comments about Group A and Group B participants' responses in First DCTs and Second DCTs were discussed to ascertain whether the participants provided answers to the questions that complied with customer service principles.

In Chapter 8, all the results were brought together and compared, suggesting causes and effects. Both the similarities and differences between Group A, Group B and Group C in relation to the request strategies in First DCTs are interpreted. The effects of the variable, English proficiency on Group A participants' request behaviours in the Second DCTs are examined and discussed. Following this, the differences between airline managers' perceptions of politeness and that of Group A and Group B participants' are examined. Finally, implications for airline English teaching and suggestions for future research are discussed.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study is believed to significant in three directions. Firstly, the findings of this study provide valuable data for the development of pragmatic competence in airline English learning. An overall review of the relevant literature shows that there are no

studies until now that have explored the effects of airline placement on the pragmatic development of Taiwanese hospitality university students in terms of their English request realisation. Secondly, the results of the study can serve as important practical evidence and can provide guidelines for airline English instructors to start considering how to integrate effective instruction with intercultural pragmatic learning in their teaching materials and curriculum design in order to assist Taiwanese hospitality university students to acquire the pragmatic and social cultural abilities to meet the airline workplace language requirement in the future. Thirdly, the results of the study also revealed information about the pragmatic performance of Taiwanese ground staff; senior employees and supervisors. Therefore, it is hoped that the results of the study can raise the awareness of both English course planners and administrators in Taiwanese airlines to develop appropriate airline English courses for ground staff in order to improve ground staff's English communicative competence when dealing with passengers and also reach the standard of good service quality.

Chapter Two

English for Airline Purposes

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the ESP literature in order to establish the study's theoretical framework. The motivation for this study was to identify the needs of Taiwanese hospitality university students precisely. This can assist in measuring the gap between the learners' present language ability and the airline workplace language requirement. In this study the differences between the request behaviours of students prior to and after placement were analyzed and the causes for the differences were identified. After identifying the needs of Taiwanese hospitality university students in this specific area, it is important to consider how to integrate effective instruction with intercultural pragmatic learning in airline English teaching materials and curriculum design in order to assist students in acquiring the pragmatic and social cultural skills in English to meet the airline workplace language requirement.

Thus, in this chapter, the previous studies related to ESP are addressed, which includes the development of ESP, the definitions and characteristics of ESP, the categorization of Business English, and needs analysis in ESP. Finally, the problems and challenges of ESP in Taiwan are discussed, including students' inadequate English language skills, learning difficulty of ESP, insufficient instruction hours, large class size and teacher qualification. All of these variables were considered as obstacles that hinder the effective learning of ESP.

2.2 Definition of ESP

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to using English for particular groups of learners in specific fields. ESP focuses on obtaining English language knowledge and skills in learners' particular subject areas. Mackay (1978) indicated that the development of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) began in the 1960s when English gradually achieved the dominant position of the world language to meet the growing needs of technology, commerce and academia worldwide. ESP became one of the most prominent areas of EFL/ESL teaching because of a rising demand for English language teaching to meet learners' needs and to be specially designed for specific domains (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

In defining ESP, Munby (1978, p. 2) stated that "ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learners." Munby's definition of ESP complied with Kennedy and Bolitho's (1984), the prime concern in ESP course design was the needs of the learners. Robinson (1991) took the view that what is special or specific in ESP is not the language itself, but rather the reasons for learners to learn English. Hutchinson & Waters (1987, p. 19) regarded ESP as "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning." In other words, ESP is not a new product in language teaching, but rather a teaching approach where the learners' needs determine the entire course design and instructional activities. Strevens (1988, pp. 1-2) defined ESP by identifying its absolute and variable characteristics, later modified by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 4-5). Strevens means by "absolute characteristics" i.e. shared

features of all ESP courses. Table 2.1 shows Strevens' absolute characteristics of ESP with the modifications made by Dudley-Evans and St John.

Table 2.1 Absolute Characteristics of ESP

Strevens (1988)	Dudley-Evans and St John (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed to meet specified needs of the learner; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defined to meet specific needs of the learner;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> centred on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of this discourse; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in contrast with General English. 	

One of the absolute characteristics of ESP is its learner-centred concern. Focusing on learners' needs to design and teach the course is one of the most important principles of ESP. Besides the learners' needs, the absolute characteristics of ESP also suggest that the content of the activities and materials may focus on specific fields as well as the language instruction. The comparison between Strevens and Dudley-Evans (see Table 2.1) showed that Dudley-Evans and St. John have removed the absolute characteristic that 'ESP is in contrast with General English'.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) adopted a much broader view of ESP than the earlier proponents such as Strevens (1988). Table 2.2 lists their opinions about the variable characteristics of ESP.

Table 2.2 Variable Characteristics of ESP

Stevens (1988)	Dudley-Evans and St John (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be suitable for learners at secondary school level;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

In Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) revised definition, more variable characteristics were added. They claimed that ESP is not necessarily related to a specific discipline. Moreover, ESP is likely to be used with adult learners and generally designed for students with a higher English language level, although it could also be used with beginners. Savignon (1997) explained that ESP is a term specifically used for English language programmes that have been developed in response to specific adult occupational or social needs. Belcher, Johns and Paltridge (2011, p. 1) underlined in their introduction, ESP research has always been grounded in practice: 'Studying language, discourses, and contexts of use – as well as student

needs, in the broadest sense-and *then* applying these findings to the pedagogical practices, is what distinguishes ESP from other branches of applied linguistics and language teaching'.

It can be concluded from the researchers' above definition that ESP is an approach to English teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on learners' particular reason for learning. It covers not only the particular aspects of language to be used, but also the competency and the skills needed to handle the language, as well as an awareness and understanding of the context within which English is situated.

2.3 Classifications of ESP

Under the umbrella term of ESP, there are two sub-divisions: English for academic purposes (EAP), or academic study needs, and English for occupational purposes (EOP), or work and training-related needs (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Robinson, 1991). Each group is sub-divided into several parts by its content areas. Goal-oriented ESP (both EAP and EOP) aims at developing the competence in English as an international medium that learners need to function effectively in their target academic, professional and workplace environments. EAP usually focuses on developing the English needed for study. For example, in Taiwan many college/university students need to read academic texts in English or even published papers in English because they are not available in the L1. Since the English language is not the main instructional medium for discussions in class, ESP teaching seems to basically focus on only one particular receptive skill – reading. Thus, the

situation often occurs that those students can read English textbooks but they cannot communicate in English. On the other hand, the EOP programmes such as airline English etc. offer students with the simulated working environments where learners are instructed in English as the medium apart from the English written textbooks. Learners are expected to obtain both receptive and productive skills to cope with their future occupations.

2.3.1 Airline English in ESP

“Since the 1970s, a general term “aviation English” has encompassed radiotelephony phraseology as well as the language of airport ground staff, cabin crew, passenger service agents, management and Civil Aviation Authority staff” (Cutting, 2012, p. 4). However, aviation English very often refers only to the radiotelephony communications, the “plain” language used by air-traffic controllers and pilot communication by the public. Radiotelephony English (RTFE) may be defined as a kind of special language for occupational purposes (EOP), or a restricted language as Mackay and Mountford (1978, pp. 4–5, cited in Wang, 2007, p. 122), clearly illustrate:

The language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as “special”, in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or airhostess (Mountford , 1978, pp. 4–5).

Radiotelephony English (RTFE) forms the core of Aviation English, because “the

insufficient language proficiency of non-native-English speaker pilots and ATCOs may have been one of the factors contributing to a number of fatal accidents” (Cutting, 2012, p. 4). Kim & Elder (2009) suggested that responsibilities for communication problems in aviation English are distributed across NS and NNS users. Part of the communication problems are due to the lack of shared assumptions about efficient and appropriate communication practices in an environment where English is a lingua franca (ELF). As mentioned above although Aviation English often refers to radiotelephony communications, in fact, aviation English should be defined as English related broadly to aviation. The people involved in the aviation industry are not only pilots or air-traffic controllers but also flight attendants, flight dispatchers and employees working in the customer service departments in the airlines. Therefore, for a broader definition, aviation English should refer not only to the language used by air-traffic controllers and pilot communication, but also include the use of English relating to any other aspect of aviation. For example, language needed by pilots for briefings, announcements, and flight deck communication; language used by maintenance technicians, language used by flight attendants in service, flight dispatchers, or airlines managers and customer service staff within the airline industry.

In this study, the focus of the discussion falls on the language used by the airline employees from the customer service department, such as airline managers and ground staff during their encounters with passengers at the airport check-in counters. The term ‘airline English’ will be used instead of ‘aviation English’ to signify the features of the airline service for the language used in the airline service context. In this thesis I define airline English as the language used for business transactions and

interactions specific to the airline service context. Therefore, in this thesis I argue that airline English should be considered as part of Business English as the next section demonstrates.

2.3.2 Airline English and Hotel English in ESP

King (1995) defined hospitality in a commercial or organizational setting as a kind of relationship between individuals- a host and a guest. In his view, the host provides services to the guest, including not only offering amenities, accommodation and/or entertainment, but also for the guest's security, psychological and physiological comfort. Hospitality is therefore concerned with comfort and security for the satisfying of physical and social-psychological needs and objectives. For example, the guest wishes not only to feel safe in a home-away-from-home, but also to enjoy himself or herself. In this relationship, the host understands what would give pleasure to the guest and enhances his or her comfort and well-being, and delivers it in face to face interactions (King 1995). The objective is to enhance guest satisfaction and develop repeat business. It can be assumed that the core service for the air transportation industry is to provide hospitality services to passengers on the flight; that is, the airline offers food, drink, sleeping accommodation and entertainment while at the same time providing passengers a safe and secure journey in order to give the passengers' psychological and physiological comfort.

According to Blue and Harun (2003, p. 73), "particular patterns of language are associated with host-guest interaction. This language, corresponding to the different stages of the arrival-departure hospitality cycle, may be termed hospitality

language.” The scope of hospitality English encompasses English used in hotels, travel agents, restaurants, information centres and tourist attractions (Blue and Harun, 2003). ‘Hotel English’, under the umbrella term of English for Specific Purposes, is the language used in the hotel environment (Huang, 2008). From the above discussion, it can be seen that one of the characteristics hotels and airlines both share is that they provide hospitality services to customers, thus, the language used in hotels (hotel English) and airlines (airline English) can be categorized within the scope of hospitality language. Hospitality English is part of Business English. In order to accurately represent the relationship between airline English, hotel English and Business English, I have configured a diagram as follows.

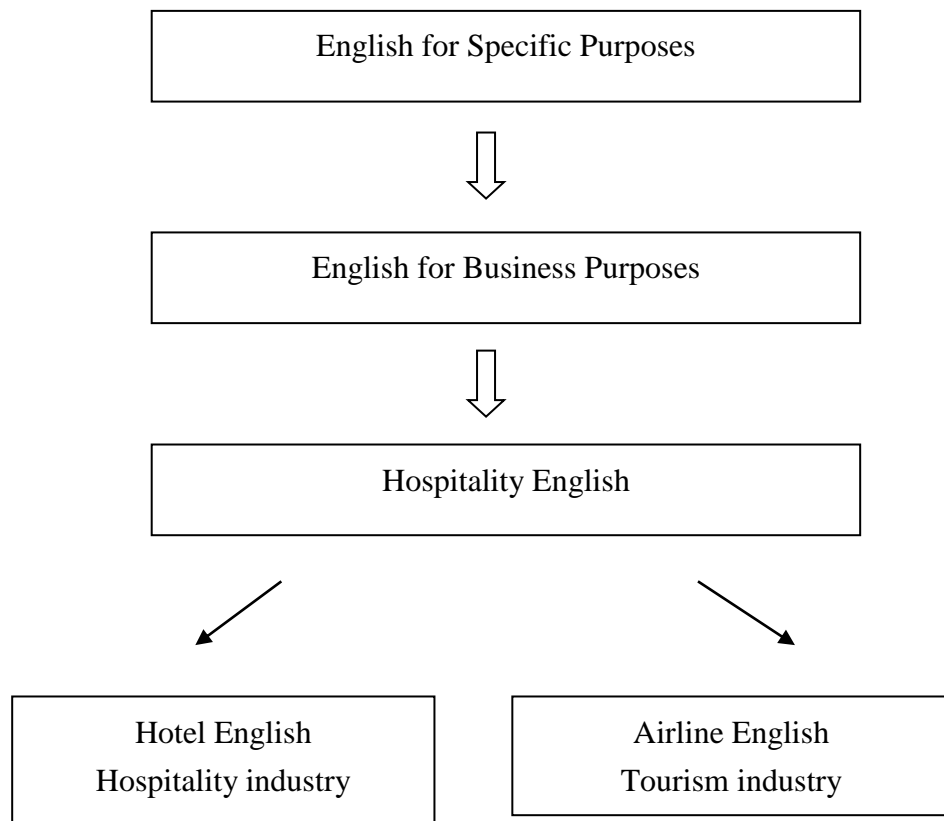


Figure 2.1 Airline English, Hotel English, and Business English in ESP

As Airline English is a sub-division of hospitality English, defining the differences between the ‘airline English’ and ‘hotel English’ is necessary. Thus, in the following section the features of airline English are compared with those of hotel English.

2.3.3 The Features of Airline and Hotel English

Being an airline English teacher, it is important for me to provide appropriate and useful materials for students majoring in airline service management, to identify the language features and the particular forms of language use at airline service encounters. It is also important to separate the language uses of hotel English

material from airline English due to the more demanding safety concerns in Airline industry.

The activities associated with linguistic requirements in different stages of airport services (e.g. information enquiry counter, check-in counter, boarding lounge, VIP lounge, lost and found counter) are respectively discussed and displayed in Table 1.1 (pp. 16-17). Moreover, Table 2.3 represents the expanded version of Table 1.1 particularly focusing on airport check-in procedures in terms of their linguistic requirements. The activities associated with linguistic requirements in different stages of airport services are displayed in Table 2.3, which was designed by the researcher.

Tables 2.3 Activities and Linguistic Requirements of airport check-in service

Step	Activity	Language Function	Example of /possible Exponents
Passenger Arrival	-Waiting and welcoming passengers at the check-in counters.	-Verbal welcome and greeting with non-verbal language - smile. -Functional and formal language use.	-Good morning/ afternoon/evening
Document verification	-Verifying passengers' traveling documents.	- Functional language used, such as request. -Routine, rehearsed, formal language use.	-May I have your ticket and passport, please? -May I have your passport and visa?
Seat Arrangement	-Allocating seating.	- Functional language used, such as request. - Routine, rehearsed, functional and formal	- Do you have any seat preference, sir/madam? - Would you care for a window or aisle seat,

		language use.	sir/madam?
Luggage delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arranging luggage delivery. -Explaining excess baggage policy. - Explaining airline security and safety policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional language use, such as explain, request. - Routine, rehearsed and formal language use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Would you please put your luggage on the scale? -The check-in luggage allowance is 20kg for Economy passengers.
Passenger Departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Announcement of departure and farewell. -Reminding passenger about the boarding time and gate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressing farewell utterances. - Final thanks and goodbye. - Functional and formal language use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Here's your boarding pass. -The boarding time is 10:15 and the boarding gate is 20. -You need to proceed to the boarding gate before 10 o'clock. -Have a nice flight. Enjoy your flight. -Thank you for flying with us.

The activities and linguistic requirements of airport check-in service is listed in the airline customer service handbook while the commercial arrival-departure hospitality cycle is reported by Blue and Harun (2003, p. 75). In the following section the features of hotel English are displayed. Table 2.4 provided by Blue and Harun (2003, p. 75) shows each activity associated with its linguistic requirements at the different stage of check-in procedures in the hotels.

Tables 2.4 The commercial arrival-departure hospitality cycle

Stage	Activity	Features of Language used
Arrival	Pick-up service in some hotels; luggage may be carried by porters; registration at the reception. All services are commercial	Greeting by driver, welcome by receptionist. Routine and rehearsed language used. Formal question-answer transactions in formal tone. Varies with category of hotel
Familiarisation	Receptionist briefs guest on what and where in-house facilities are available, and on meal and check-out times; guest may also read in-house brochures and ask questions about hotel	Briefing style, rehearsed messages, additional questions and answers, formal tone, language use varies according to category of hotel
Engagement	Independent use of facilities in rooms and in different sections of the hotel. Popular items include: TV, restaurant and bar, pool, gymnasium, sauna, disco.	Mostly formal and impersonal, but may depend on how long guest stays in a hotel. Difficult to predict exact language needs other than those relating to use of facilities
Departure	Luggage transfer, preparation of bill, perfunctory farewell Conversation	Mostly rehearsed language, mostly formal and impersonal

(Blue & Harun, 2003, p. 75)

From the above framework of airline and hotel check-in service procedures, it can be seen that in each stage of the service cycle there is a collection of predictable routine business transactions and forms of language use. This kind of service language and

transactional procedures is usually standardized. For example, when passengers arrive at the airport or hotel check-in counters, they are expected to check in according to standardized check-in procedure. The language used at this stage is formal and focuses on transactional functions, showing 'formal respect' and 'certain genteel politeness convention' (Maybin, 1996, p. 13). The polite expressions of hospitality service language will regulate most service encounters. For example, a front-line staff member at the check-in counters trying to identify a guest/passenger would ask 'May I have your name, Sir/Madam?' instead of 'What's your name?' when trying to identify the passenger. In this instance, airline English shares the same features of politeness in service language as hotel English.

On the other hand, there are some differences between airline English and hotel English. Firstly, airline managers pointed out in the interviews that in order to ensure passengers have a safer and more secure journey, there are some international airline regulations or laws made by governments which airline staff must abide by, such as safety and security standards. Under these circumstances, airline staff have to follow the laws as airline safety is paramount and this may cause some major friction between airline staff and passengers. For example, some passengers carry some items categorized as hazardous goods such as nail-clippers and body spray which are prohibited by the regulation. For the sake of abiding with the airline safety regulation, ground staff's utterances need to be specific, direct and sometimes authoritative and that may override passengers' preferences. It seems other hospitality staff like hotel staff may not face similar situations like this. However, airlines' passengers may regard this stance as impolite, unhelpful and rude when they are directed or banned from conducting certain behaviours; however, passengers' preferences cannot

override airline safety.

Secondly, the airline check-in service is delivered under time constraints, which may influence front-line, ground staff's language manner. On the other hand, hotel staff can carry out the check-in procedure without time constraints; they have more time to establish a social relationship with customers. Regarding the airline check-in service, ground staff must perform a great deal of tasks, and at times respond to hundred passengers in a short period of time, normally about 2 hours, as the check-in counters open 2 hours before the flight departure. These tasks include, providing standardized check-in services (see Table 2.3, pp. 37-38) and handling passengers' various requests such as, handicapped access and help, special meals and special baggage requests (oversized, overweight, etc). Each passenger's needs have to be attended to immediately. However, in order to complete all the tasks within the time constraints, ground staff's utterances are sometimes brief, explicit and purpose-driven, which affect the establishment of a social relationship with the passengers. Ground staff have a tremendous impact on making the passengers feel welcome. Check-in counters are where passengers are greeted when they arrive at the airport, where their seats are assigned, and where their luggage is checked in. Airline ground staff working at the check-in counters will have an integral role in determining the first impression of the airline that passengers will gather.

Another difference between the airlines and hotels check-in procedures is the stress levels that exist in an airport. After passengers check-in their luggage they will proceed to the boarding lounge and wait for the boarding announcement. The boarding process is a complex and time restrictive process. Only three to four ground

staff are responsible for loading from a small number, to a few hundred passengers in a short period of time, normally about 20 minutes before the flight departure, onto an airplane (Tangniam, 2006). Ground staff need to take passengers' ticket and verify each boarding pass as passengers present their documents. This process can be done manually, or with a special boarding pass scanner. Ground staff may also verify the identity of the boarding passengers by asking to see a passport, travel document, or some other type of photo identity card and handle oversized carry-on luggage while dealing with new customers arriving at the gate close to departure time.

According to the airport regulations, airlines will pay significant penalties for flight delays caused by manual operation mistakes. Therefore, the priority of airline ground staff is to check in all passengers' luggage and make sure all passengers are on board a flight as scheduled. With the time limit of the check-in process, airline staff's stress level is normally higher than hotel staff. Therefore, as to the explanation of the features of airline English, airline ground staff's communicative competence - linguistic and pragmatic competence is indispensable in order to successfully and politely communicate with passengers in a professional setting under time constraints.

2.4 Relationship of General and Specific English in the Workplace

According to my airline visiting reports (see Section 1.4, pp. 7-17) in order to successfully communicate with customers, airline service management students not only need the ability to use airline terminology characteristic of that specific occupational context, they should also have adequate knowledge about the

implementation of grammatical rules and vocabulary including airline terminology in order to increase their English communicative competence. According to the airline managers' explanation about airline staff's duty, which I recorded in my airline visiting reports, I noted that there exists a substantial overlap of General Business English since ground staff's routine duties incorporate the following:

- (1) providing general information about flight itineraries and other services.
- (2) conducting appropriate telephone conversations to perform their duties effectively.
- (3) making impromptu public address announcements in case of flight irregularities such as flight delay or cancellations.
- (4) verifying personal details and information from passengers' travel documents such as tickets, visas, passports, itineraries, etc.
- (5) writing messages to inform passengers, using standard English comprehensive grammar and vocabulary as passengers are not part of the airline discourse community and cannot understand airline English.
- (6) handling passengers enquiries covering failures in services (flight irregularities): overbooking, delays, missed connections, and so on.

(Quoted from Taiwanese airlines staff training handouts, 2007, 2nd edition)

From the above description of ground staff's duties, it seems that it is not sufficient that the airline service management students have a limited repertoire of appropriate phrases in order to communicate in these target situations (exponents of particular functions). They require quite a high level of proficiency in English so that they are able to communicate flexibly and creatively. This is often obtained through more

time spent studying General Business English. Therefore, it is suggested that the students not only require the ability to use airline terminology characteristic of that specific occupational context, in addition to learning the linguistic formula for the genre of airline English, students will also need to enhance their skills in the general use of the English language. Moreover, professional language skills in the workplace can be developed and students will reach an understanding of the institutional values and expectations of the hospitality sectors.

2.5 Airline English related studies

Ketkew (1997) examined flight attendants' needs of English of Thai Airways. The study revealed that listening and speaking skills were the most important for flight attendants to improve. In-flight service managers and flight pursers who are directly supervise and coordinate flight attendants' work, needed to improve all four skills. Dejkunjorn (2005) identified the English language needs of Thai pilots. The study showed that most of the pilots rated English as highly important. Listening and speaking skills were mostly required and the problems of using the four skills were moderate. Pilots needed to improve their listening and speaking skills most during their flight duties. Tangniam (2006) investigated the needs of English for Thai Airways ground staff. The study reveals that English language was perceived as important for the airline ground staff as English is the main medium in international business, and they have to use English as a tool to communicate with passengers and deliver services. Liang's (2010) study introduced a course framework for airport ground staff working at the Information Desk, from examining the context, analysing the specific learners' needs and indentifying their objectives, to designing the

syllabus and the material, as well as providing plans on learning assessment and course evaluation. Cutting (2012) conducted a structural-functional analysis of the dialogues written from the multimedia course, part of a European Commission Leonardo project, for English language learners seeking work as ground staff (e.g. security guards, ground handlers, catering staff and bus drivers) in European airports.

2.6 Needs Analysis in ESP

With the development of Munby's (1978) Communication Needs Processor, needs analysis has drawn the attention of researchers and teachers' in language learning since the 1970s (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Through Munby's model, learners' language needs are portrayed in detail according to communication purposes, communicative settings, the means of communication, language skills, functions, structures, etc. It was purported that needs of any group of people could be adequately defined by using this model. Though many researchers criticized Munby for emphasizing only the target situation analysis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001a), this model indeed plays an important role in the development of ESP, especially the development in needs analysis.

Understanding learners' needs for learning and attending the course would be the primary concern for a successful ESP programme (Basturkmen, 2006). Without the consideration of learner needs, the teachers, curriculum developers, and materials designers often tend to perceive the future needs of the students using their intuitions, which may lead to limited success in the subsequent ESP course (Braine, 2001). Basturkmen (2010, p. 17) defined needs analysis in ESP as a course development

process.

In this process the language and skills that the learners will use in their target professional or vocational workplace or in their study areas are identified and considered in relation to the present state of knowledge of the learners, their perceptions of their needs and the practical possibilities and constraints of the teaching context (Basturkmen, 2010, p. 17).

In the planning process, needs data collected from learners, teachers, administrators and employers will help identify the language content and skills needed in a specific context for a specific group of learners and to make learners more aware of the specific language requirements of their posts. This analysis also helps motivate learners and maximizes the promotion of active learning. Kaur (2007, p. 2) interpreted the concept of 'learner needs' in two ways:

- what the learner wants to do with the language (a goal-oriented definition of needs), which relates to terminal objectives or the end of learning; and
- what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language (a process-oriented definition) which relates to transitional/means of learning (Kaur, 2007, p. 2).

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) categorized learners' needs into three parts: Target Situation Analysis (necessities), Learning Situation Analysis (lacks), and Present Situation Analysis (wants), which are defined in the following sections. Figure 2.2 depicts the process of identifying learners' needs as follows.

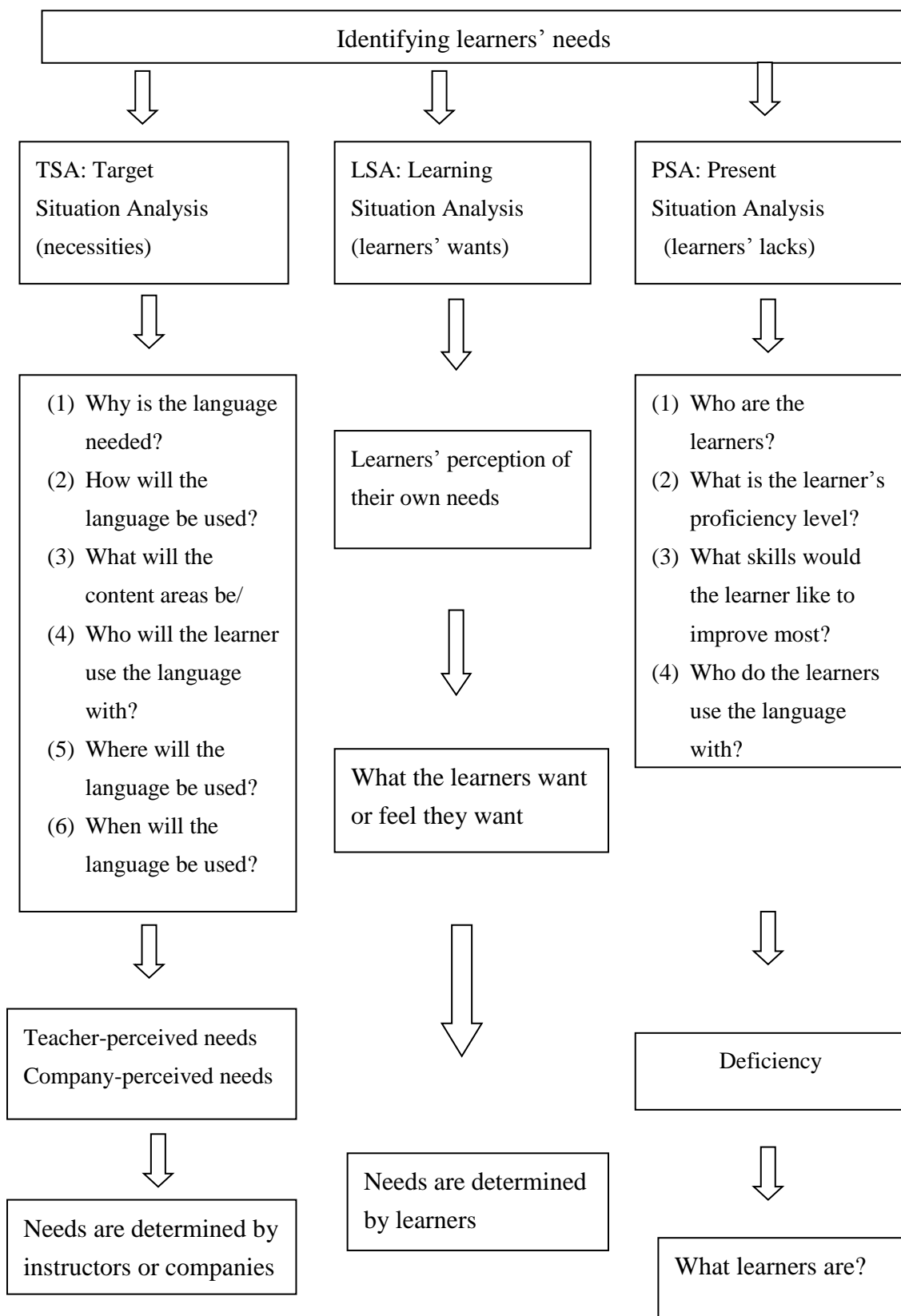


Figure 2.2 Key Concepts in Needs Analysis

Note: This figure was adapted from Hutchinson & Waters (1987) *English for Specific Purposes: A learning-centred approach*, p. 59)

Target Situation Analysis (TSA) refers to learners' necessities, which are derived from the language requirement of target situations. For example, one of the best ways to investigate the TSA of airline employees' English needs is by interviewing airline managers or experienced staff. Airline employee's needs were perceived by airline managers, following customer service principles, as what and how learners/students are expected to know and perform in the target situations – airline service contexts. Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), concerns learners' wants. Wants refer to learners' self-perception about their needs. The concept of 'want' has further entailed the dichotomy between objective needs (viewpoints from experts/teachers) and subjective needs (viewpoints from learners) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Brindley, 1989). Similarly, Berwick (1989) used the term 'felt needs' for needs perceived by learners while 'perceived needs' for experts' or teachers' interpretation of learner needs. In contrast to perceived needs' being widely accepted by the public as objective viewpoints, felt needs are usually regarded as subjective expressions. Since perception may differ from person to person, sometimes language needs perceived by learners may not match those of ESP practitioners. As Hutchinson & Waters (1987) indicated, objective and subjective views of needs do not always correspond to each other, which may hence cause a negative impact on learning motivation. Thus, it is important to understand learners' subjective needs because their learning motivation might greatly influence learning efficacy; learners' opinions deserve equal attention.

Needs analysis is often criticized by researchers because the institution seems to dominate the information and their expectation of students in order to serve its own interest though often at the cost of the learners (Auerbach, 1995, cited in Basturkmen, 2006, p. 19). Present Situation Analysis (PSA), refers to learners' lacks. The gap between the current and target language proficiency is what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) meant by learners' lacks. For example, a learner working in an airline with poor speaking ability needs to communicate with customers from all over the world. For this reason, a learner's present deficiency needs to be discovered so that the learner could be offered appropriate training programmes. A PSA seeks to estimate the students' ability at the start of their language course, investigate their strength and weaknesses and skills in the language.

Chen (2000) pointed out that many language teachers and researchers in Taiwan are not yet familiar with ESP theory and research to transform adequately their existing ESL or EFL programs into ESP programmes. Therefore, in the following section, to understand the recent development of ESP theory and practice in Taiwan, the problems and challenges of English for specific purposes (ESP) teaching and research in Taiwan are described.

2.7 Challenges of ESP

The problems and complexities of ESP are different from EGP issues because ESP courses vary in goals, content, methodologies, and instructional approaches. There are thus potentially a variety of issues and problems in ESP courses. Previous studies have investigated the problems and challenges involved in ESP classes, including

students' inadequate English language skills (Huang, 1997; Chang, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Wang, 2004), learning difficulty toward ESP (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a/b), insufficient instruction hours (Chang, 2000; Tsao, Wei & Fang, 2008), large class size and poorly motivated learners (Braine, 2001), as well as teacher qualifications (Huang, 1997; Chen, 2000).

ESP researchers in Taiwan have found that there are some factors which make ESP courses inefficient in Taiwan, such as ESP teachers' qualifications (Chen 2000; Huang, 1997; Shen, 2009), content of ESP, students' low English proficiency (Huang 1997; Chia et al, 1999; Chang, 2004; Wang, 2004; Shen, 2009), large class sizes, mixed levels, insufficient teaching time (Chang 2000; Tsao, Wei, & Fang, 2008; Shen, 2009), and lack of relevant curricula and materials that can reflect or meet the needs of the job market (Shen, 2009).

2.7.1 Content of ESP

Some researchers argued that the students were poorly equipped to handle the language in specialized situations and contexts in the ESP courses, and as a consequence ESP courses were ineffective (Shi, Corcos, & Storey, 2001). Tsao, Wei & Fang (2008) pointed out that that students need to have a satisfactory grounding in basic English skills before they advance to ESP learning. Jackson (2004) proposed that learners have difficulty coping with the ESP courses because of poor English skills. The most frequently reported problems relate to inadequate vocabulary (Tsao, Wei & Fang, 2008; Shen, 2009) and grammar (Chang, 2000; Shen, 2009). On the other hand, some researchers reported that students suffer from learning problems relating to the content of ESP (Gatehouse, 2001), the instruction of ESP (Bacha, &

Bahous, 2008; Leki & Carson, 1994), and the tasks involved in the ESP courses (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a/b). Level of difficulty of the content should ensure that it is acceptable to learners, as most learners lack general English skills (Basturkmen, 1998; Chang, 2004; Jackson 2004; Shen, 2009; Tsao, Wei & Fang, 2008). Further, regarding the tasks in the ESP class, Flowerdew & Peacock (2001a) indicated that the tasks should be applied based on the learning goals and should be closely related to the specific purpose of their target subject area.

2.7.2 The qualifications of ESP teachers

ESP teachers' qualifications have often been regarded as one of the important factors affecting the effectiveness of ESP. ESP teachers often have to carry out roles other than just teaching ESP. According to Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998), ESP teachers are expected to play five key roles: teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher, and evaluator. To carry out the above roles, ESP teachers should possess a higher level of language competence and specialist knowledge. 'Specialist knowledge' is defined by Ferguson (1997, p. 80) "as knowledge of the subject matter of the discipline or profession of the students taught."

A lack of qualified ESP teachers who have English language teaching skills, relevant work experience, and knowledge has been an issue in ESP teaching in Taiwan (Liang, 2007). Many English teachers in Taiwan are still primarily language specialists, not teachers of a subject that requires special expertise. English teachers in Taiwan have been trained and prepared in the areas related to linguistic competence, literature and cultural knowledge. They do not know enough about other professional fields such as

science, engineering, or tourism and hospitality industry to effectively teach ESP courses alone. Thus, when transferring from General English to ESP teaching, they might have encountered several difficulties. Strevens (1988) mentioned that difficulty lies in the gap between the learners' knowledge of the special subject and the teachers' unfamiliarity with it. Language teachers often have no confidence in coping with students' area of specialism (Robinson, 1991).

There appears to be no consensus among researchers about - ESP teachers' required degree of knowledge about students' specialism. Smith (1983) believed that many of the best ESP teachers have a good amount of knowledge of their students' discipline. "An effective ESP teacher must possess a relevant background in the subject field, especially on some subjects totally different from English such as science and technology, so as to offer learners a successful and beneficial course" (Chien, Lee & Kao (2008, p. 120). Nevertheless, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argued that ESP teachers do not need to learn specialist subject knowledge, but they should have a positive attitude towards the ESP content, knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject matter, and an awareness of how much they probably already know. The aforementioned studies have suggested ESP teachers should at least have a certain degree of specialist knowledge, but they did not strictly require the teachers to become experts in the knowledge of the students' subjects. The question arises. 'What is students' perception of ESP teachers' degree of knowledge about students' specialism?' Mansoor, Najmeh & Mohsen's (2013) study indicated that students actually do not expect their ESP teachers to know everything about their subject area. In response to the issue - that ESP teachers are struggling to overcome the dual demands of language teaching and the specialist knowledge, Johns and

Dudley-Evans (1985) suggested that team teaching is a solution to this problem. Team teaching is an integration of language and content in second and foreign language instruction. The language teachers work with content (subject) teachers to determine agreed language and content objectives (Kuo, 1993). Johns and Dudley-Evans (1980) were two EAP teachers and researchers who found team teaching to be useful in their study. Kennedy & Bolitho (1984) emphasised that even the most dedicated ESP teacher will realise his/her knowledge of a subject has limits and may need to cooperate with the subject teacher. Thus, Huckin (1988) proposed that the specialist (technical or business) colleagues can provide specific information and monitor the students to solve the problems. The English teacher can monitor whether each student has performed a certain level of communication skills.

Some researchers and universities in Taiwan also believed that collaborative teaching could be an alternative to ESP instruction to solve the problem. They suggested that English teachers should collaborate with teachers from other professional fields (Shao, 1992; Chien, Lee & Kao, 2008). A study by Shao (1992) suggested that the best way for an ESP programme to be effective is for English teachers to collaborate with science/engineering/computer teachers or teachers from any other professional fields in the instruction. In this way, English teachers may be able to develop adequate knowledge of a subject and teach confidently from subject-specific texts. Then team teaching will be an ideal mode of teaching, which has generally proven to be most effective in the ESP classroom. It is worth noting that in Taiwan Chung Yuan Christian University (CYCU) Chien, Lee and Kao (2008) undertook this approach. The study aims at investigating the effectiveness of an ESP program with cooperative teaching by an English teacher and a science teacher, evaluating the level

of progress the students made over the duration of a one-year course. Their results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in English improvement between these two groups; ESP and EGP class. Thus, the researchers concluded that ESP team teaching does not provide a significant improvement. Nevertheless, the results showed that students were much more motivated toward English learning by the end of the academic year. The authors therefore concluded team teaching is somewhat effective in terms of increasing students' motivation.

Team teaching is supported by some of the researchers in Taiwan, however, some comments have been made on the practical limitations of the cooperation between the subject teacher and the language teacher. Kennedy (1980) argued that team teaching is costly in terms of time. Robinson (1991) stressed that subject-language integration is very untidy in practice and the pay schedules do not allow two teachers in one classroom. Moreover, Kuo (1993) argued that the availability of adequate teaching materials in many cases was unsatisfactory and the proper design and production of materials under time pressures was problematic. Most importantly, vital to the success of the programme is adequate financial and administrative support.

Apart from the issues discussed above, several factors also potentially affect ESP instruction, such as large class sizes, mixed levels, insufficient teaching time and inadequate teaching methodology, which will be described in the following section.

2.7.3 Large Class Sizes and Mixed Levels

Large class sizes are common in colleges and universities in Taiwan (Shen, 2009), such as the airline English class with fifty to fifty-five students in NKUHT. Large class sizes make it difficult to provide enough practice for individual students. Thus, teachers in large classes tend to reduce every learner's participation time in order to cover all learners in the classroom. On the other hand, learners in smaller classes share more time with teachers for personal practices. (Robinson, Strong, Whittle, & Nobe, 2001). In addition, many of the ESP classes are mixed ability either in language levels or in subject specialty. The differences in student abilities will make it difficult for teachers to set appropriate standards and to adjust materials. Two interviews with two airline English teachers from the Airline and Transport Service Management Department of the NKUHT were conducted respectively prior to the research. They pointed out that an Airline English class with fifty students and mixed level problems makes Airline English teaching very ineffective.

2.7.4 Insufficient Teaching Time

ESP courses in many colleges and universities in Taiwan are considered optional. The total time allocated for ESP instruction is typically inadequate, which results in ineffective ESP class instruction (Shen, 2009). Taking the Airline English subject in the Airline and Transport Service Management Department of the NKUHT as an example, it is a core subject for the first year students and an optional subject for the fourth year students. Each Airline English class runs two hours per week whether it be core or optional. Students will take 36 hours in total during a semester. According

to the comments made in the interviews with students from the Airline and Transport Service Management Department two hours per week is inadequate. Unfortunately, airline English teachers are in no position to raise the number of airline English class hours as subject classes always take priority. What they can do within their power is to design a course syllabus tailor-made for the students.

2.7.5 Inadequate Teaching Methodology

Apart from the above mentioned factors resulting in inefficient ESP courses in Taiwan, inadequate teaching methodology also contributes to the inefficient ESP teaching. The traditional English language teaching (ELT) methodology in Taiwan consists of analysing sentences from the grammatical point of view, comparing the usage of vocabulary and expressions, and then translating the content of the text into Chinese. From an ESP methodological perspective, this could be the first stage in a lesson. The advantage of this method is to develop ESP students' understanding of the text. Nevertheless, this method is teacher-centered and provides students with little chance to speak or to communicate with others in the target language. Consequently, the English students are unable to discuss the work-related matters in English since they lack oral practice. They fail to acquire the normal English proficiency to freely exchange their ideas on specialised issues. The problem is that nothing further is done with the language. It would be adequate if the purpose was just to develop students' passive understanding of the meaning – for reading purposes. However, this method is inadequate for airline students as they need to use the language for oral communication.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the issues and concerns in the field of English for Specific Purposes particularly in the context of airlines. It started with various definitions ESP. ESP is a way of teaching/learning English for specialized subjects with certain specific vocational and educational purposes in mind. As a branch of English for Business Purposes, comparable with hotel English, airline English contains distinguishable features in the language use with polite expressions and types of activities in the airline service. Thereafter, needs analysis, an essential component of ESP, was described with a depiction of the three components: the Target Situation Analysis (TSA), the Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), and the Present Situation Analysis (PSA). To audit the gap between PSA and TSA, the ground staff's and airline service management students' needs are defined. Finally, in order to appreciate the development of ESP theory and practice in a non-English speaking country such as Taiwan, the problems and challenges of ESP in Taiwan are discussed.

Chapter Three

ESP and Pragmatics

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provides a detailed literature review on the development of the field of pragmatics and past studies on the teaching and learning pragmatics in ESL-EFL contexts. Firstly, three different concepts ‘communicative competence’, ‘proficiency’ and ‘communicative language ability’ which are keys to this study are defined and discussed. Secondly, pragmatic competence is defined and its relation to communicative competence is also discussed. Thirdly, the studies of pragmatics and the discussions involving key concepts such as factors influencing L2 learners’ pragmatic development are examined. Fourthly, the studies of pragmatics and service encounters are reviewed. Fifthly, the framework of Speech Act Theory and the speech act performance from the perspectives of universality versus culture-specificity in speech act studies are reviewed. In the final part of this chapter the theories of Western and Chinese politeness and the concept of face are explored and compared.

3.2 Communicative competence, proficiency and communicative language ability

In this section, three different but interrelated concepts which are keys to this study are discussed in order to show how the concept of pragmatic competence as separate from other types of linguistic competence has developed.

There are several discussions on different uses of 'competence', 'proficiency' and 'communicative language ability' in linguistic research. Generally speaking, 'competence' originated by Chomsky should follow his formulation, whereas 'communicative language ability' refers to a speaker's ability to employ a language and is also split into 'language proficiency' as well as 'communicative proficiency'. Chomsky used his generative-transformational theory of grammar to challenge both structural linguistics and behavioural psychology in the nineteen sixties and became profoundly influential in the following developments of linguistics. One of his important assumptions to build his theory is he regards language is characterized for its competence and performance. This argument is rather similar to Saussure's (1916) between *langue* and *parole* in principle. The notion of 'competence' was initially introduced and became well-known. Chomsky considered languages as rule-governed systems which are unaffected by social and situational variation in order to make a distinction between 'competence' and 'performance' of a language (Lyons, 1996, p. 18). This concept of competence, defined as the knowledge of an ideal speaker-hearer, was soon attacked by many situational and sociolinguistic researchers. They disagreed with Chomsky's reduction in all cases of variation to 'performance' and also argued for the inclusion of the notion of 'ability for use' in the definition of competence. Nevertheless, Chomsky (1980, p. 59) responded to this argument by making an explicit statement of exclusion of 'ability for use' from the definition later. This divergence about whether 'ability for use' should be included within the concept of 'competence' or not remains controversial. However, linguists holding to the Chomskian tradition still rejected 'performance' to be applied to any language behaviour. Though Chomsky initially used and defined the term 'competence', it does not belong to Chomsky exclusively. Chomsky might also have

been aware of the controversy over 'competence', he stopped using the term and employed 'I-language' instead, defined as "the system of knowledge attained" in "the transition from the initial to the mature state of the language faculty" (Chomsky, 1986, p. 26). Even provoking the controversy about the scope of competence, Chomsky's definition is still regarded as the starting point for many other approaches. Hymes in his research objected to Chomsky's the ascription of all sociocultural and situational factors to performance, and he also deplored "the distorting effect of using the one term 'performance' for two distinct things: a theory of performance and a theory of language use" (Hymes 1972, p. 272). In response to his objection, Chomsky revealed the existence of 'pragmatic competence' as a complement to 'grammatical competence' (1980).

Following Hymes' step, Canale (1983a) furthered the concept of communicative competence in his studies. He proposed a framework for the description and assessment of communicative competence that is divided four separate components (1983a):

- 1) grammatical competence, which is rather identical to Chomsky's idea of competence
- 2) sociolinguistic competence, which "addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts" (Canale, 1983a, p. 7)
- 3) discourse competence, related to the correct organization of texts following the rules of cohesion and coherence determined by the text itself and by its particular genre
- 4) strategic competence, which is restricted to what has come to be known as 'communication strategies' (Bialystok, 1990; Kasper & Kellerman, 1997) as opposed to 'learning strategies' (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

It is evident that both ‘competence’ and ‘communicative competence’ are employed in quite different senses relying on who uses the terms and what functions they serve. Ellis (1994, p. 696) defines ‘competence’ as ‘language user's underlying knowledge of language’ and classifies ‘communicative competence’ as “the knowledge that users of a language have internalized to enable them to understand and produce messages in the language.” Edmonson (1981) reckons ‘communicative competence’ is closely related with decoding in order to master both linguistic codes and functions. Wiemann & Backlund (1980, p. 190) stated “proficiency skills is what is required for the manifestation of communicative competence”. Bruner (1973, p. 111) brought the notion ‘skill’ to ‘competence’ and he insists it can be learned as any other skill rather than innateness of competence. Corder (1973, p. 126) also regarded communicative competence as a skill. He develops a new term ‘transitional competence’ on the basis of Chomsky’s ‘competence’ that emphasizes learners’ knowledge of the language should be constantly developing instead of a static concept. It is noted that Corder (1973) focuses on non-native communicative competence mainly and considers it dynamic and constantly developing, whereas Chomsky’s ‘competence’ is defined as ‘static’ state.

As ‘proficiency’ is one of the variables considered in this study, the concept needs examination. Apart from the variations on ‘competence’, the use of the term ‘proficiency’ also varies in different literature. Stern (1983, p. 357) approaches proficiency from two different perspectives: one based on the establishment of ‘levels of proficiency’, that is “the different degrees of actual or required mastery of the second language, or the progression from a basic to a near-native level”, the second perspective focusing on the definition of ‘components of proficiency’ that is

more theoretically complex and controversial. Stern elaborates proficiency as “the actual performance of given individual learners or groups of learners” (Stern, 1983, p. 341), and he suggests ‘proficiency’ should involve the following four masteries:

- 1) the intuitive mastery of the forms of the language
- 2) the intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meanings, expressed by language forms
- 3) the capacity to use the language with maximum attention to communication and minimum attention to form
- 4) the creativity of language use (Stern, 1983, p. 341).

Cummins (1983) defines language proficiency as a concept that extends along two continua: context-embedded versus context-reduced. Context-embedded communication is based on a code of implicit knowledge that is shared by the speakers. Context-reduced communication, on the other hand, is based on a lack of common knowledge, which forces speakers to elaborate messages and use very explicit language in order to avoid misinterpretation. Though it seems these two oppose each other, Cummins (1983, pp. 120-121) views both as complementing each other to enable speakers to handle different communicative situations. Canale (1983b, p. 339) proposed that three dimensions of ‘language proficiency’ need to be established in order to fully realize the language: basic language proficiency, mainly supported by the biological elements of language; communicative language proficiency, based on “social, interpersonal uses of language through spoken or written channels”; and autonomous language proficiency, involved in “intrapersonal uses of language such as problem solving, monitoring one's thoughts, verbal play, poetry, or creative writing” (Canale, 1983b, p. 340).

‘Proficiency’ is defined by The Collins COBUILD dictionary as ‘ability’ or ‘skill’. Proficiency in second language teaching and learning also suggests variability and is traditionally related to measurement and testing. The TOEFL test for example, declares it is a highly reliable measure of English-language “proficiency” on its website. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) also assesses the English language “proficiency” of people who want to study or work where English is used as the language of communication. This explains ‘proficiency’ is always linked with the notions of measurement and tests.

3.3 Pragmatic Competence

In this section pragmatic competence is defined in the light of the current understanding of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics concerned with language use, and is different from syntax and semantics, which deal with the form and meaning of sentences respectively (Ninio and Snow, 1996, p. 9). One of the key areas of pragmatics is speech acts (for more details see pp. 83-90) which refer to the acts a speaker performs when making utterances (Levinson, 1983). As a means to investigate pragmatics, the speech act approach has been used effectively both in first and second language acquisition research. Pragmatic competence consists of the knowledge that speaker-hearers use in order to engage in communication, including how speech acts are successfully performed (Ellis, 1994, p. 719). Pragmatic competence is one component of communicative competence, as in Savignon’s (1991, p. 262) explanation “the communicative competence needed for participation

includes not only grammatical competence, but pragmatic competence.”

Pragmatics defined by Levinson (1983, p. 9) is “the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised or encoded in the structure of a language.” Crystal (1985, p. 240) defined pragmatics as:

... the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication (Crystal, 1985, p. 240).

Another definition of pragmatics proposed by Yule (1996, p. 3) stated that “pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or a writer and interpreted by a listener or a reader.” Central to this definition of pragmatics is the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said. It relates to examining how speakers organize what they want to convey in accordance with who they are talking to, when, where, and under what circumstances (Yule, 1996). Pragmatics is also defined as the study of communicative action in its socio-cultural context by some researchers (Rose & Kasper, 2001) and “the study of meaning in context” (Archer & Grundy, 2011, p. 2). According to Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor (2003, p. 37), pragmatics refers to “the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate.”

Pragmatic competence is “the speaker’s knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way speaker will understand and

formulate speech acts” (Koike, 1989b, p. 279). This study has principally adopted Yule’s working definition to pragmatics and defines pragmatic competence as the ability to precisely interpret the meaning of an expression or an utterance made in a certain context, which often implicates one's knowledge about the social distance, social status between the speakers involved, the cultural knowledge such as politeness, and also explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge. For example, ‘The runway is full at the moment’ is generally understood as an instruction not to land a plane, rather than just a statement of an act (Paltridge, 2006, pp. 1-4).

In the following section pragmatic competence in relation to communicative competence is discussed.

3.3.1 Pragmatic Competence in relation to Communicative competence

After 1980, many researchers have attempted to define the term ‘communicative competence’. Canale & Swan (1980) and Canale (1983) proposed that communicative competence consists of four essential components:

1. Grammatical competence
Grammatical competence is concerned with mastery of lexical items, morphology, morphology, phonology, word formation, sentence of formation and semantics (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 29).
2. Sociolinguistic competence
The sociolinguistic competence requires the knowledge of contextually appropriate choices of language in use. Savignon (2002) mentioned that to have an appropriate ability of judgement involves participants knowing what to say in a situation and how to say it, that means participants should be aware of the context of conversation.
3. Discourse competence

Discourse competence is composed of knowledge of achieving cohesiveness in form, and coherence in meaning in both written and spoken texts.

4. Strategic competence

Strategic competence refers to the knowledge of how to enhance the effectiveness of communication. It is a complex concept which means “the component will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30).

Gumperz (1992, pp. 40-41) elucidated communicative competence as “the knowledge of linguistic and related communicative conventions that speakers must have to initiate and sustain conversational involvement.” Some researchers (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1995) claimed that second language learners must reach (1) linguistic, (2) discourse, (3) actional, (4) sociolinguistic, and (5) strategic competences in order to become fully competent in communication of the target language. Though there are slight differences in terminology, these all still cover Swales and Canale’s four components.

Pragmatic competence is regarded as a sub-concept of communicative competence. Bachman (1990) gives a very detailed model of pragmatic competence which he considers as a part of language competence. In Bachman's model (1990), communicative competence consists of two interactive components: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of joining them together at the levels of

sentence ('grammatical competence') and discourse ('textual competence'). Bachman (1990) initially contended that pragmatic competence represents a part of overall L2 proficiency. He proposed that acquiring pragmatic competence requires language learners to have a variety of abilities concerned with the use and interpretation of language in different contexts by making use of different language functions – to request, to instruct, to apologise. It also incorporates listeners' ability to appreciate and interpret the speaker's underlying intentions, especially when these intentions are not directly conveyed in the surface forms. When listeners fail to do this, conversation (and sometimes more than just conversation) breaks down (Bialystok, 1993). According to Kasper and Roever (2005, p. 317),

Sociopragmatic competence encompasses knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, and the imposition associated with a past or future event, knowledge of mutual rights and obligations, taboos, and conventional practices, or the social conditions and consequences of "what you do, when and to whom" Pragmalinguistic competence comprises the knowledge and ability for use of conventions of means (such as the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of form (such as the linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies) (Kasper and Roever, 2005, p. 317).

3.3.2. Pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics and pragmatic failure

Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) classified two major components of pragmatics as pragmalinguistics and sociopramatics. Leech (1983, p. 11) defined pragmalinguistics as the linguistic side of pragmatics, encompassing "... the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions." It addresses the relationship between linguistic forms and their functions, involving "resources for

conveying communicative acts and interpersonal meaning” (Dewaele 2007, p. 165). Rose and Kasper (2001, p. 51) pointed out that “pragmalinguistic knowledge requires mapping of form, meaning, force and context, which are sometimes obligatory (as in the case of prepackaged routines and sometimes not (as in the case of indirectness).” On the other hand, sociopragmatics, is the “sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 10). It addresses the relationship between actions and social constraints, concerned with “the social perception underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action” (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 3). Thus, pragmatic ability for a language learner refers to the capacity to comprehend the pragmalinguistic action as a listener and also the ability to produce the appropriate target language (TL) as a speaker in response to the previous messages. It is stressed by researchers that lack of either sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic competence can lead to pragmatic failure. As Thomas (1983) also pointed out pragmatic failure often occurs when learners misunderstand what a speaker of a target language (TL) says, and/or when they produce inappropriate expressions that do not meet the TL pragmatics or cultural norms

Deficiencies in pragmatic competence result in what is commonly called pragmatic failure. The term “pragmatic failure” used by Thomas (1983, p. 677) refers to “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said.” She classified two aspects of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure.

(2.7) Pragmalinguistic Failure & Sociopragmatic Failure

- a. Pragmalinguistic failure, which occurs when the pragmatic force by S onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language, or

when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2.

- b. Sociopragmatic failure, a term I have appropriated from Leech (1983, p. 10-11), which I use to refer to the social conditions placed on language in use (Thomas, 1983, p. 693).

In other words, pragmalinguistic failure is associated with appropriate form and force of an utterance while sociopragmatic failure involves the rules of speaking in the given context. Specifically speaking, sociopragmatic failure often arises because learners talk without considering social or cultural conditions such as cultural values, the addressee's age, gender, social status, social distance, or occupation. This explains why pragmatic failure is considered more serious than errors in grammar because pragmatic failure could be attributed to arrogance, impatience, rudeness, unfriendliness, or even racial discrimination (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Thomas, 1983).

3.3.3. Importance of pragmatic competence

The importance of pragmatic competence and language learners' pragmatic competence development has been highly stressed by numerous researchers (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; Du, 2004; Koike, 1996; Thomas, 1983). Their studies claimed that native speakers often make more allowances for the phonological, syntactic, lexical errors made by L2 speakers than misunderstandings caused by pragmatic errors. Though grammatical errors made by L2 learners may hinder efficient communication, yet native speakers tend to tolerate them because they only reveal that the speaker is simply a low-proficiency language user. But L2 speakers who do not use appropriate pragmatic expressions may be considered childish by

native speakers (Trosborg, 1987), appear rude and even insulting (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds, 1991). Considering the importance of appropriateness in language use in order to communicate successfully, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners require to learn and acquire pragmatic competence.

3.4 Factors Influencing L2 Learners' Pragmatic Development

In accounting for the factors influencing the development of learners' pragmatic competence, researchers (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998; Dong, 2006; Edwards & Csizer, 2004; Eslami-Rasehk, 2004; McLean, 2004; Mei-Xiao, 2008; Nguyen, 2008; Niezgoda & Rover, 2001; Rose, 1994; Takahashi, 1996) posit that factors such as L2 learners' linguistic competence of a target language, length of residence in a target country, authentic input, L1 transfer and pragmatic awareness can benefit EFL learners' pragmatic development. In order to answer the research questions in this study three factors – linguistic competence, pragmatic transfer, and exposure to target community – will be fully discussed as follows.

3.4.1 Linguistic Competence

It has been widely suggested that that linguistic competence in a target language implies pragmatic competence (Nguyen, 2008). However, the question is whether learners with high language proficiency will possess a relatively high level of pragmatic competence. Some scholars believe that pragmatic competence develops in line with proficiency level. Proficiency level, as defined by Bachman & Palmer (1996), is learner's knowledge of L2 grammar and vocabulary, a subcomponent of

general language ability. Faerch and Kasper (1989) analysed the linguistic means of mitigation in internal and external modification in their interlanguage requests of Danish learners of English and German at different proficiency levels. The results of these studies revealed that NNSs' lack of linguistic knowledge in the L2 prevented them from successfully performing native-like requests and a lack of grammatical knowledge was also observed in the use of modal verbs and pronouns of address. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) found that in comparison to low language proficiency learners, high proficient learners seemed to possess high level of pragmatic competence. The studies on the comparison of native speakers' of American English and EFL learners in their use of lexical and syntactic mitigation devices (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Felix-Brasdefer, 2007) showed that EFL learners lacking pragmalinguistic knowledge necessary fail to use appropriate mitigation to reduce the force of face-threatening speech acts. Further, Li (2007) examined the relationship between two kinds of competence of 42 Chinese English learners with different levels of proficiency (high- and low-levels) in Bei Hang University. Li adopted the College English Test-4 (CET-4) test paper to test participants' linguistic competence and the bi-lingual Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to measure their pragmatic competence. The scores from the two tests correlated. The findings suggested a positive relationship between the two kinds of competence, but at a very weak level. Thus, Li (2007) claimed that linguistic competence was necessary but not sufficient for pragmatic development.

On the other hand, some research findings (e.g. Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Takahashi, 1996) showed a mismatch between grammatical and pragmatic competence, arguing that learners' linguistic competence and pragmatic

competence do not necessarily increase hand in hand (Kasper, 2000). In other words, high linguistic competence does not guarantee high pragmatic competence. Hinkel (1994) pointed out that non-native speakers sometimes employ inappropriate L2 politeness strategies even if they have highly advanced linguistic competence. Similarly, Kasper's and Schmidt's (1996) research appeared to show that proficiency may have little effect on the range of realisation strategies that learners use: both intermediate and advanced learners use the same range of realisation strategies used by NSs.

To date, the researchers have not reached agreement as to what extent linguistic and pragmatic competencies are interrelated, i.e. to what extent the development of pragmatic competence depends on linguistic competence. Nevertheless, the pragmatic-grammar nexus discussed above at least reveals the crucial role that learners' linguistic competence has in the development of interlanguage pragmatics. As Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990), Cohen and Olshtain (1993), Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) concluded although linguistic competence is not a sufficient condition for pragmatic competence, linguistic competence is necessary for pragmatic realisation (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999).

3.4.2 Exposure to target community

This section focuses on the relationship between exposure to the target community and the development of pragmatic competence. The term 'target community' is used here to refer to the influence of context on language. Apart from focusing on investigating the relationship between learners' L2 proficiency levels and their L2

pragmatic competence development, some studies have also taken their naturalistic experience into consideration and examined the effect of the length of exposure to the target community (named as 'length of residence') as a factor in L2 pragmatic acquisition (Han, 2005). Moreover, a great number of studies have yielded findings which actually favour explicit approaches to the teaching of L2 pragmatics. Researchers argue that language learners living in a target speech community have better opportunities to interact in the L2, which leads to the learners' successful acquisition of pragmatic competence. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) in their researches reported an expansion in acceptance of positive request strategies and directness by NNSs of Hebrew as their length of stay increased from less than 2 years to more than 10 years. In terms of explicit L2 teaching approach vs. environmental procurement to L2 pragmatic competence, similarly to the differences between EFL/ESLs' learning environments, EFL learners mainly depend on explicit learning in the language classroom without any external surrounding support, while ESL learners can be indulged in the exposure to the target language implicitly. Bouton (1994) also found that ESL learners enrolled at an American university without specific training in pragmatics became increasingly target-like in their interpretation of implicature as the length of stay increased up to 3 years. Some researchers reported that even a short length of residence in the SL context affects learner's pragmatic competence. Churchill (2001) recorded a decrease in direct want statements in the English request realisations of his JFL learners over a month in the target language contexts. Schauer (2006b) reported that ESL students who stayed nine months in England displayed high pragmatic awareness and assessment that surpassed that of EFL students in Germany. Besides these findings, it is also noted that greater exposure to the target language speakers and greater cultural experience

of L2 social conventions may tremendously support adult L2 acquisition. L2 studies of communicative competence have clearly indicated that both active involvement with and positive affect toward the target language and culture may be the root cause of adult acquisition or non-acquisition (Bella, 2011; Hassall, 2013; Schmidt, 1983). Overall these studies suggest that a high amount of exposure to the target language offers much better opportunities for learners to accommodate in a large number of social interactions. Through these interactions, learners may become more socialized into the L2 pragmatic norms and more experienced in terms of real practices. Thus, it is very evident that naturalistic exposure to the target language is one of the influential factors that help language learners increase their L2 pragmatic competence. This influential factor for L2 pragmatic competence is crucial to my study, because the placement at the airport for the participants can be truly regarded as an ESL environment rather than EFL one, where the target language is actually employed as a medium of communication. Therefore, the exposure to the target community is genuinely considered as one of the variants.

The progress of L2 pragmatic competence resulting from naturalistic exposure to target language community has been studied and the role and effectiveness of L2 instruction were also compared with naturalistic exposure in second language acquisition (SLA) (Ellis, 1994). Researchers are interested in finding what kinds of direct instruction develop pragmatic competence or at least facilitate it. Many studies have shown that pragmatic ability can be taught, (Kasper & Rose, 2001; Silver, 2003). Kondo (2001) also investigated the effect of explicit teaching of refusals to thirty-five Japanese learners of English. The findings illustrated that instruction has significantly positively affected participants' use of refusal. Silva (2003) examined

whether explicit instruction may play a facilitative role in the L2 pragmatic development, and become the most appropriate and effective ways to deliver the pragmatic information to L2 learners. The result positively showed that the instructional approach enhanced the L2 pragmatic ability of performing the speech act. Rueda (2006, p. 170) held the view that “pragmatic ability can be systematically developed through planned classroom activities.” A substantial body of these studies has demonstrated that L2 instruction may be indispensable for L2 learners who are away from the real L2 context, where they cannot have contact with native speakers, should be taught to make use of pragmalinguistic features of target language (Ellis, 1994; Long, 1983), or for some aspects of the L2 system (e.g., non-salient aspects of grammar) and L2 proficiency (e.g., high levels of grammatical accuracy) (DeKeyser, 2000; Doughty, 2003). Moreover, the findings of some studies about learners who have access to both instruction and naturalistic exposure to L2 (e.g., Howard, 2005; Spada, 1986) indicate that when either type and amount of naturalistic exposure or type and amount of instruction are held constant, the advantages of instruction are supported (Doughty, 2003; Long, 1983). Overall these studies provided qualitative evidence that a relatively explicit approach to L2 pragmatic teaching is likely to have positive effects on learners’ L2 pragmatic competence through raising their awareness of L2 sociopragmatics and providing them with explicit inductive instruction on the L2 pragmalinguistic features.

3.4.3 Pragmatic Transfer

Pragmatic competence can be difficult for L2 learners to develop. One of the factors resulting in pragmatic failure is the transfer of L1 features. Studies have shown that

in the learners' interlanguage (IL), the transfer exists at the pragmatic level (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Ellis, 1994). With regard to pragmatic transfer, it occurs when learners perceive the L1 pragmatic features as a frame. It is assumed that cross-cultural miscommunication is often caused by the interference of learners' L1 sociocultural norms and conventions with realisation of speech acts in a target language (Takashashi, 1996).

In terms of classification of pragmatic transfer, there are two subtypes of pragmatic transfer; positive and negative. When learners project their L1 pragmatic knowledge to the L2 language context it results in learners' production of speech behaviours features similar to L2 native forms, then positive transfer occurs. Positive transfer may result in successful exchanges. Positive transfer was described by Barron (2003, p. 37) as follows:

Where the L1 and L2 exhibit similar pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic features not shared by all languages, and where learners adopt these features appropriately, positive transfer can be postulated (Barron, 2003, p. 37).

However, if negative transfer appears in communication, it often leads to L2 communication break down. Negative pragmatic transfer, on the other hand, was defined as:

... the projection of first language-based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge onto second language contexts where such projections result in perceptions and behaviours different from those of second language users (Maeshiba et al. 1996, p. 155, cited in Barron, 2003, p. 38).

An example of inappropriate pragmalinguistic transfer is a Chinese man receives a compliment from an American co-worker and responds 'I don't deserve it'. This answer may result in misunderstanding. Another example is native Chinese speakers tend to show their hospitality to guests by saying 'qing-man-yun' (please enjoy the meal) but literally translating as 'eat slowly please' that carried the meaning to ban eating quickly. Yu (1999) also gave an example of inappropriate pragmalinguistic transfer. Native English speakers can mitigate the imposing force of their requests by using past tense forms of verbs (e.g. 'I wanted to ...') or modal verbs (e.g., 'Could I...'), whereas there are no such parallel verbal devices in Chinese. Thus, for Chinese EFL learners who have not mastered these devices, their English requests with the 'Can I..' or 'I want to...' form may be considered inappropriate or impolite. An example of sociopragmatic negative transfer is how L2 learners in Taiwan typically respond to compliments. Yu (2003) examined the compliment responses by native Chinese and English speakers as well as EFL and ESL speakers. The result of the study revealed the influence of L1 socio-cultural norms.

Yu (2003, p. 1702) indicated that

Chinese non-acceptance utterances, which may or may not be present in other cultures, reflect this cultural norm of modesty. By rejecting the compliment given and/or humbling/abasing themselves, complimentees verbally demonstrate their knowledge of Chinese face, thereby achieving public acknowledgment of their reputation or prestige and maintaining their face (Yu, 2003, p. 1702).

Thus, native Chinese speakers and EFL speakers in Taiwan manifested more rejections than acceptance when receiving others' compliments. A great number of studies on speech acts and the issue of pragmatic transfer have been documented, encompassing apology (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989), request (Faerch & Kasper, 1989), complaint (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993) and suggestion (Koike, 1996) in order to help L2 learners acquire intercultural communicative competence. Trosborg's (1987) study showed that sociopragmatic strategies are indeed transferred from one language to another. Wolfson (1989) stated that rules of speaking (norms of interaction) are 'culture-specific' and largely 'unconscious.' Their findings appear true when we examine the greetings of Chinese New Year, Chinese people continuously say 'Gong-Si' to each other meaning 'congratulations'. However, it is beyond native English speakers to understand the culture-specific greeting by keeping saying "congratulations" on the New Year day. The expression actually originated from the people's survivals of not being eaten by the monster called '*Nia*' ('*Yea*'). English speakers might wrongly transfer it into Chinese without the adequate background knowledge and vice versa.

3.5 Pragmatics and Service Encounters

In the airline industry the service encounter plays a significant role because here the customer comes in direct contact with the employees of the airlines. Jones (2004) indicated that airline employees' politeness presentation in service encounters has great influence on passengers' perception of the service quality and airlines.

A service encounter defined by Merritt (1976, p. 321) is “an instance of face-to-face interaction between a server who is ‘officially posted’ in some service area and a customer who is present in that area, that interaction being oriented to the satisfaction of the customer’s presumed desire for some service and the server’s obligation to provide that service.” Hence, Bartlett (2005) provided a definition of service encounter based on Coupland (2000, p. 136) as “being transactionally or instrumentally motivated, consisting of ‘limited moments of co-presence’ in which the cashier and customer, who are typically strangers, greet and, after a short period of time, take leave of one another” (quoted from Long, 2005, p. 308).

Service encounters have been widely studied from a pragmatic and interpersonal point of view. Marriot & Yamada (1991), analysed discourse in a duty free shop in Melbourne showing sales opportunities were missed by an Australian speaker of Japanese due to lack of pragmatic competence. They suggested that specific training in interactive competence was necessary to make a sale (quoted from Bartlett in Long 2005, p. 309). Regarding L2 pragmatic development in service encounters, Bataller (2008) investigated the development of the request strategies used in two service encounter scenarios by American learners of Spanish studying in Spain for four months. Bataller (2008) reported that American students’ strategies they used to request a service were more similar to the native Spanish speakers after four months in Spain, however, their use of request strategies still differed considerably from the native Spanish speaker group. Moreover, as learners’ proficiency improved their request mitigation devices were more similar to the native Spanish speakers. Shively’s study (2011) examined study abroad students’ L2 pragmatic development in the service encounter context. Longitudinal analysis indicated that there was

development with regard to L2 politeness norms in some participants, specifically with regard to request forms, discourse markers, and openings, which suggested that students learned some of the pragmatic norms of service encounters in the Spanish speech community.

On the basis of the above studies on learners' L2 pragmatic development in uninstructed settings, the goal of the study is to explore the hospitality university students' L2 pragmatic development in the airline context of service encounters, specifically examining the ways in which hospitality university students' request behaviours shifted before and after airline placements and the extent to which airline management major students learn the pragmatic norms of the speech community; that is – the airlines in which they completed their placement.

Bartlett (2005) analysed the discourse between the servers and customers in the service encounters from three different coffee shops. Bartlett's study suggested that that "due to shared background knowledge, there is a high degree of implicitness and ellipsis in the server and customer turns" (2005, p. 322). The form of ellipsis is used as a time-saver when the server is busy or the customer is in a hurry. Bartlett (2005, p. 322) further claimed that in this context "to order without a polite request form was not impolite, but pragmatically appropriate in this context." For example, in Bartlett's data the customer orders a 'regular' coffee and requests that the cup be filled to the top of the cup by saying 'Regular (xxx), right to the top.' In this encounter, the customer did not use any polite form but both the server and customer understand the meaning of 'right to the top' in this context.

Bartlett's (2005) study was supported by Kuang, David, Lau, and Ang's (2012) who claimed that the evaluation of what is polite and what is impolite is very much dependent on how the speaker and the hearer evaluate polite behaviour. Kuang, David, Lau, and Ang (2012) investigated politeness strategies in openings and closings of service encounters in two Malaysian government agencies. Their findings indicated both service providers and the public seldom greet and address each other. The service providers in two Malaysian government agencies did not use many openings and closings whether verbal or non-verbal. The analysis also showed that service providers did not consider applying politeness strategies as an important factor in their communication skills, however the Malaysian public did not complain about it.

According to Culpeper (2005, p. 38), "Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)." Bousfield (2008, p. 72) indicated that impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs). Bousfield proposed two levels of face-threat caused by impoliteness: 'intentional' face-treat and unintentional face damage. The unintentional face damage can be divided into two damage levels: the accidental unintentional face damage and the incidental unintentional face damage.

- if the speaker/producer does not intend face-damage but the hearer/receiver constructs the speaker's/producer's utterances as being intentionally face-damaging then this could be accidental face-damage, ..

- if the speaker/producer does not intend face-damage but the hearer/receiver constructs the speaker's/producer's utterance as being unintentionally face-damaging then this could be the incidental unintentional face damage, ... (Bousfield, 2008, p. 72).

A central issue of Culpeper's (2005) and Bousfield's (2008) definitions of impoliteness is the extent to which impoliteness depends on speaker's intention and can also depend on the hearer's perceptions of the speaker's intention. However, intentionality carries lots of problems with it. Foremost is the fact that we have no direct access to people's thoughts at all, we are not able to know for sure whether someone intended something.

Defining impoliteness is not an easy task. An important reason for this is although some verbal behaviours, such as using direct (bald on record) request forms based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (see Section 3.7.2 pp. 108-115), might be perceived as the least polite or impolite strategy, but these impolite behaviours will not necessarily be impolite. The above findings of Bartlett's (2005) are also advocated by Kuang, David, Lau, and Ang's study (2012), they suggested that making requests without polite form or strategies in service encounters is not always considered impolite and sometimes is even regarded pragmatically appropriate and acceptable due to limited time at the service counters in real life. Yet, in the context of the subject under study, the following question arises. How would airline managers, based on airline customer service principles, evaluate hospitality university students who made requests without the use of polite forms or strategies due to time constraints in the airline customer service context? If airline managers consider that making requests without polite forms is also appropriate, this brings up

another question: to what extent should rules of standard politeness be taught and followed in classrooms in terms of teaching polite requests in these type of service encounters?

3.6 Pragmatics and Speech Acts

One of the key areas of pragmatics is speech acts which refer to the acts a speaker performs when making utterances (Levinson, 1983). As a means to investigate pragmatics, the speech act approach has been used effectively both in first and second language acquisition research. This approach was first proposed by Austin in 1962 and then further extended by Searle (1969). Austin (1962) argued that people “do things with words” that is, to perform actions such as apologizing, complimenting, or requesting at the same time. The utterances consisting of the performative verbs are performative utterances. For example, verbs like *request/ invite/ refuse* are performative. In order to identify what speakers say and what they mean Austin (1962) proposed that the actions performed by an utterance will have three kinds of acts. These are the *locutionary act*, the *illocutionary act* and the *perlocutionary act*. The locutionary act is the actual words (phonemes, morphemes, sentences), referring to the literal meaning of the actual words. For example, the sentence ‘It is cold in here’ can be a statement about the temperature in a certain place. The illocutionary act refers to the speaker’s intention in uttering the words (such as a request for someone to close the window). The perlocutionary act refers to the effect this utterance has on the thoughts or actions of the other person (such as someone getting up and closing the window). However, some researchers argued that it is not always easy to identify the illocutionary force of what someone says, as it

may depend on the stage in the discourse and the social context. The illocutionary force of what someone says, can really only be determined in relation to what has come before and what follows, rather than in isolation from the overall discourse (Paltridge, 2006). It is also not unusual for what someone says to have more than a single illocutionary force. For example, 'The tea is cold' might be a statement, a request and a complaint. A person might reply 'It is indeed' treating the utterance as a statement. They might reply 'I am sorry. I will exchange it for a cup of hot tea immediately.' treating the utterance as both a request and a complaint.

Based on Austin's theory, Searle (1969) developed speech act theory, classifying the performative verbs and defining them as "speech acts". Searle (1969) classified five speech actions that one can perform in an utterance:

- (1) Representative:
These are acts in which the words aim to make the speaker believe that the proposition is true, such as 'describe', 'assert', 'claim', 'insist' and 'predict'.
- (2) Directives:
This is a speech act, where the speaker requests the hearer to carry out some action, e.g. 'request', 'advise', 'invite', 'suggest', 'order', 'suggest' and so on.
- (3) Commissives:
This speech act is to commit the speaker to some future actions, e.g. 'promise', 'offer', 'threaten', 'refuse', 'vow', 'volunteering'.
- (4) Expressives:
This category includes acts in which the words state what the speaker feels, such as 'apologize', 'congratulate', 'thank', 'sympathize', 'compliment' and 'regret'.
- (5) Declaratives:

A declarative is the speech act that changes the world by their utterances such as 'I declare', 'I bet', 'I nominate' and 'I appoint'. (Cutting, 2008, pp. 16-17)

Speech acts can be classified into direct speech acts and indirect speech acts. Searle explained that someone uses a direct speech to communicate the literal meaning that the words conventionally express. The direct speech act contains the given speech act in the utterance (Searle, 1975). For example, with the utterance 'stop making noise', the hearer understands the illocution in the utterance to be a directive without much difficulty or misunderstanding. They sometimes contain performative verbs such as 'give', 'tell', 'request', 'demand' and so on which directly delivery the speaker's meaning. There is a direct relationship between the form and the function. The following examples will illustrate this.

1. I want a burger.
2. Do you need some tea?
3. Get me some.

The sentence 'I want a burger' is a declarative form and has the function of a statement or assertion; the sentence 'Do you need some tea' is an interrogative form and has the function of a question; 'Get me some' is an imperative form and has the function of a request or order. Direct speech acts can be decoded and encoded simply by the surface linguistic meaning of the expression because the requestive force is derived from the sense of the utterances.

On the other hand, indirect ways of getting things done by language are called indirect speech acts. According to Searle (1975), indirect speech acts occur in cases

in which “a sentence that contains the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act is uttered to perform, in addition, another type of illocutionary act” (p. 30). The illocutionary force of the indirect speech acts is not derivable from the surface structure. That is, when using an indirect speech act, a speaker intends to communicate something that is quite different from the surface meaning of what they convey; obviously the form is not directly related to the function. Searle classifies the indirect speech acts into conventional indirectness (CID) and non-conventional indirectness (NCID). CID refers to the standardized utterances to perform acts which are only conventionally designated for certain functional purposes. These purposes are not assigned in their grammatical forms (Searle, 1975; Blum-Kulka, et al, 1984, 1989). The following examples will illustrate this.

1. Can I have a burger with egg and cheese?
2. Do you have a pen?
3. I was going to have a burger.
4. I will have two burgers and a small portion of chips, thanks.
5. Would you like any drink or dessert with that?
6. Have a good flight.

In Example 1 when a speaker says ‘Can I have a burger with egg and cheese?’ the hearer might think the speaker wants his/her permission to eat a burger, as ‘can’ is often used to refer to ability or permission, and only answers the question ‘Yes’ and does nothing. The communication would break down and the reply is considered highly inappropriate. This utterance is very commonly used by customers in service encounters and thus, it is a sales request not a question about ability or permission in

the restaurant discourse context. If the hearer can be aware of the expression e.g. ‘can you,’ ‘could you,’ and ‘how about’ are the certain conventional linguistic forms of indirectness of requests then the hearer would be able to understand the speakers actually want the hearer to do something- buy a burger.

In Example 2 the utterance is an interrogative form and serves as an indirect request. When the speaker says ‘Do you have a pen’, in fact, s/he does not expect the hearer to answer the question only with ‘Yes or No,’ which is considered highly inappropriate. In fact, the speaker wants the hearer to do something – lend him/her a pen. If the speaker uses an explicitly direct request like ‘Lend me your pen,’ which may make the hearer feel offended and the speaker’s purpose will not be achieved easily. That is why native speakers are likely to use indirect speech acts to fulfil their purposes (Searle, 1975; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In example 3 and 4 the utterances ‘I was going to get a burger’ and ‘I will have two burgers and a small chips, thanks.’ are in fact declarative forms, the form most closely associated with making statements, is used to make a request or give an order. Similarly, in example 5, the utterance ‘Would you like any drink or dessert with that?’ can be taken as the function of a question and an offer. Finally, in my example 6, the utterance ‘Have a good flight’ function as a statement meaning ‘I hope you enjoy your flight’.

The second type of indirectness, non-conventionally indirectness (NCID), also called ‘Hints’ involves utterances whose illocutionary force is not conventionally associated with any particular patterns (Yu, 1999). NCID includes utterances which are ambiguous in either content or illocutionary force or both (Searle, 1975; Grice, 1975; Weizman, 1989; Zhang, 1995a/b). For instance, when X says to Y “Let’s go shopping this afternoon,” and Y answers: ‘I have to work.’ In this example, it seems

that there is no systematic relation between the form and the illocutionary force. So that, the hearer X needs to “go through a calculation process” (Yu, 1999, p. 282) to interpret X’s underlying meaning in the utterance and come to realize that Y’s answer is meant to refuse X’s invitation, instead of asserting that s/he needs to work. Then, how can the hearer know that the reply is a rejection to an invitation? In order to maintain a communication it is essential and important for people to have the concept of direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts refer to the speaker saying what he/she means, the speaker’s intention is explicit; while indirect speech acts imply that the speaker means more than, or something other than what he/she says; the speaker’s intention is conveyed implicitly (Searle, 1975). Searle argued that in order to understand indirect speech acts, the speaker and hearer need to have mutually shared factual background information, and the ability of the hearer to make inferences (Searle, 1975). Indirect speech acts embedding a speaker’s underlying meaning seem more complex and difficult. Indirect speech acts disparity exists between the locutionary sense and illocutionary force. Thus, indirect speech acts are often difficult for second language learners to recognize because much of what English speakers say operates on both levels (direct and indirect), and utterances often have more than one of the macro-functions (‘expressive’, ‘directive’, ‘commissive’ and so on). The following example was quoted from the data.

Airline staff:

‘We would like you to stay overnight in the airport hotel and take the next available flight the following day. The transport is ready to take you to the airport hotel’.

On the surface, the utterance ‘We would like to you to stay overnight in the airport hotel’ is a declarative with the function of a statement and a direct representative describing the airline staff’s wish. However, it appears to be intended as an order or a suggestion to the passenger, meaning the same as the imperative ‘Go and stay in the airport hotel’, and therefore an indirect directive, and the suggestion is reinforced by the ‘The transport is ready to take you to the airport hotel’, which is uttered as the airline staff had actually said ‘Go and stay in the airport hotel’.

A major contribution of speech acts theory is in its clarification of dimensions of communicative competence. Austin’s and Searle’s Speech Act Theory has provided us with a framework of performative verbs and also insights into the actions accompanied by those verbs, nevertheless, the theory has several limitations. First of all, Cicourel (1980) argued that Austin’s and Searle’s theory focuses on isolated utterances. They limited themselves to one single instance, one isolated utterance of a certain speech act (e.g. the speech act of promising) (Mey, 2001). In an authentic conversation, the participants modify their talk as it goes on, rather than use a single utterance to perform the illocutionary function. Second, the theory does not include the speaker’s paralinguistic such as the pitch, volume, intonation, and body movements, which can all carry meanings and express the conversational participants’ emotions. The utterances ‘you know’, ‘well’, and ‘so there you go’ serve as an interactional and socially cohesive function of avoiding silence. However, it is difficult to put these utterances in any of the classifications as they lack semantic content. Finally, for the purpose of investigating speech acts in the context of second language learning, perhaps the most important question is whether and to what extent the various aspects of speech acts are universal. Although Searle claimed that these

indirect strategies are universal in each language and his claim is supported by other researchers (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), the issue of universality versus culture-specificity (Wierzbicka, 1985) is still highly debated. The speech act theory does not incorporate the social and cultural factors such as cultural differences, the degree of imposition, age, power, learners' proficiency that make speakers perform a given act differently in various contexts. The ways of expressing speech acts vary from country to country, from culture to culture. Differences in speech act conventions can cause difficulties cross-culturally.

3.6.1 The Speech Act of Requests

The realisation of the speech act of request is closely related to my research question, relevant studies have been reviewed in order to develop a solid theoretical foundation. According to the Cambridge Grammar of English Dictionary (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 696), the definition of 'requests' is as follows:

Requests are speech acts where the speaker desires a particular course of action from the listener, but where, unlike commands, the listener has a far greater choice whether to act in the way indicated. Requests and commands occasionally overlap, as a command may be softened by making it seem more like a request (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 696).

Defined as the above statement, it is noted that commands are actually practiced under the cover of requests. It is clear that some of the requests used by ground staff can be seen to be occurring in this overlapping area. For example, at a check-in counter, ground staff's question of 'would you like to pay for the over-weight

charge?’ actually offers no alternatives for passengers unless the passenger is willing to discard some of the luggage. This question may appear as a request but indeed it is a command that is conveyed in the form of a request.

In contrast to a request, a suggestion is explained as to make a proposal and declare a plan for something which is usually in the common interest of the hearer. Koike (1996, p. 260), in a study on the suggestion in Spanish, also interprets suggestions as “speech acts that are made presumably in the best interest of the listener, usually to help the listener toward some goal that the latter desires or is assumed to desire.” If the act to be performed is exclusively for the benefit of the hearer, it is an instance of giving instruction, or a warning. In a command the speaker gives an order that the hearer has to follow, as long as the speaker has authority over the hearer. The above discussion in terms of definitions; request, suggestion, advice, or command showed those two distinctive features - ‘benefit to speaker’, ‘cost to hearer’ - are rather decisive when distinguishing requests from other acts in which the speaker tries to exert his/her influence over the hearer.

There seems to be no unambiguous dividing line between the illocutionary acts. A request itself may be presented as a suggestion or a form of advice, a warning, or a command. Thus, a speaker’s desire to have the excess baggage charge paid may take the following forms:

- (1) Can/could you pay the excess baggage charge, please? (request)
- (2) I suggest you to pay the excess baggage charge. (suggest)
- (3) I think you’d better pay for the excess baggage charge. (advice)
- 4) If you don’t pay for the excess baggage charge you can’t get on the flight.

(warning)

(5) You must pay the excess baggage charge. (command)

(6) You must pay the excess baggage charge, otherwise, you cannot get on the flight.

(threat)

According to Blum-Kulka's (1989) research, the definition of *Locution derivable* is classified as a direct strategy when making requests is utterances which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act. E.g. You'll should/must/ have to /ought to/ move your car. In this study, my definition for the speech act requests covers the major acts with the illocutionary point of 'getting somebody to do something', therefore, I would like to redefine *Locution derivable* as utterances that suggest an obligation of the hearer to perform a particular act or prohibit the hearer from conducting a certain act without making specific reference to the request (obligation) or any of its elements. For example, the sentence 'you must repack your baggage' might directly sound like a command in general but actually mainly serves a request function to passengers in the airline check-in context. The utterance does imply a reciprocal obligation on the hearer's part, i.e. according to airline's over-weight rule, you are definitely required to pay extra for the excess weight if the baggage remains its original status. Some compromises could be made on the condition of passengers' repacking behaviours. Therefore the above 'you must repack your baggage', a command in many situations, should be regarded as a request and classified into the category of *Locution derivable* in this study.

The speech acts of requests has been regarded as one of the most threatening speech acts, since it constitutes 'a face-threatening act', a term proposed by Brown &

Levinson (1978, 1987). Structurally speaking, some researchers attempted to deconstruct the constituents of speech acts and they declared that the request act is made up of two main parts: the core request or head act, which performs the function of requesting, and 'its peripheral elements', which serves to either mitigate or aggravate the force of the request (Trosborg, 1995; Sifianou, 1997; Marquez Reiter, 2008; Safont-Jorda, 2005). For example, the head act of request like 'would you mind taking the next flight?' is 'would you mind', while the peripheral element here is 'I can offer you a VIP lounge voucher for compensation'. Peripheral modification devices are internal or external. Internal modification refers to linguistic elements within the same speech act, whereas external modification is achieved by devices which occur in the immediate linguistic context rather than in the speech act itself (Sifianou, 1999). More detailed examples will be fully explored in Section 4.8.1 (pp. 157-169).

3.6.2 Studies on Requests

The linguistic realisations of requests have been widely discussed in the interlanguage pragmatics research (Achiba, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig/Dornyei, 1998; Barron, 2003; Hassall, 2003; Hill, 1997; Rinnert & Kaobayashi, 1999; Rose, 2000; Trosborg, 1995; Takahashi, 1996). Some studies have focused on identifying those variables that may influence learners' pragmatic performance. Hill (1997) investigated the influence of L1 transfer in the usage of requests. Hill's study of the requests of learners of EFL at a Japanese university showed that learners used fewer modifiers compared to the native speaker group. Hill (1997) attributed learners' underuse of internal modifiers to L1 interference.

The following researchers (Hill, 1997; Ellis, 1994; Trosborg, 1995) identified learners' language proficiency as one of the most important factors in influencing learners' pragmatic performance. The attributed research findings provide important insight to answering the research question of this study in terms of the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic development. Hill's (1997) study showed that as to the type of modification involved, learners frequently resorted to the word *please*. The frequency of using the word *please* decreased as their proficiency level increased. In addition, learners at different proficiency levels overused direct strategy types. However, as their level increased, there was a marked decrease in the percentage of direct requests since learners more frequently resorted to conventionally indirect strategies and advanced learners' use of this strategy approached NS levels. Learners firstly resorted to imperatives belonging to the direct category and they started making use of conventionally indirect strategies as their proficiency level increased. These findings were in line with Ellis' (1994) results that learners' performance improved in line with their proficiency level. According to the findings of Trosborg's study (1995), learners at lower levels made less use of hints than more advanced learners and English native speakers. Trosborg attributes these findings to the lexical and grammatical difficulty implied in performing hints. In addition, learners preferred the supportive moves of *grounders* but failed to use *sweeteners*, *disarmers*, *cost-minimizing* and *promise of reward*.

Some researchers investigated the differences between native speakers and L2 learners in terms of the usage of request strategies by using roleplay and DCT methods. Rinnert & Kaobayashi (2003) used the roleplay as an instrument to analyse the pragmatic production of Japanese learners of English on the basis of their

proficiency level (i.e. high and low). Their performance was examined and compared to native English and Japanese speakers. The result showed that “the higher proficiency learners used a greater number and variety of supportive moves than the lower proficiency groups, particularly in the high imposition situation”. In addition, learners of the high proficiency group employed longer turns and pre-request sequences than learners from the lower proficiency group. Rose (2000) also found that frequency of conventional indirectness increased with proficiency among Cantonese-speaking primary-school students in Hong Kong, and that directness was most frequent among the lowest proficiency group. Trosborg’s (1995) study indicated that advanced learners’ request performances were more approximate to native English speakers than the other groups. A portion of beginner and intermediate learners underuse the direct formulae compared to the use of direct strategies by native English speakers. Blum-Kulka (1982) used Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) to elicit and compare the request strategies between learners of Hebrew and native speakers of Hebrew. The study found that learners used the same range of strategies as that of the native speakers. However, learners preferred using less direct request strategies compared to that of the natives. The author attributes this to the transfer of learners’ L1 (English) social norms to Hebrew. Faerch and Kasper (1989) also used DCTs to examine the request strategies used by nonnatives with the same L1 (Danish) in two different L2s (English and German). The result indicated that firstly, Danish learners of German negatively transfer their L1 modal verb to L2. Secondly, the realisation of requests by Danish learners of English approximated to their native English responses. Thirdly, Danish learners of English and German overuse *please* and *bitte* which were regarded as explicitly polite request markers (pp. 232-233). This study further supported Blum-Kulka and

Olshtain's (1986) findings that all nonnative groups displayed more supportive moves than the target language native speakers. Kasper (1981) employed a role-play to elicit learners' requests and compare the differences between English learners' and English native speakers' requests. The study showed that native speakers of English used a wider range of internal modification items than English learners, particularly those of the consultative (e.g. if that is OK with you) and downtoner (e.g. kind of) type.

The participants in this study need to communicate with passengers from various cultural backgrounds. This need makes it necessary to examine all the relevant studies on requests from the cross-cultural perspective. One of the most prominent studies investigating cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics on the speech act of apology and request is the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) launched by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). They examined speech act realisation – patterns of two speech acts - requests and apologies in seven languages and set up nine request strategies which were rank-ordered by increasing degrees of directness on the basis of the formal and functional features. Data was collected with DCTs as an instrument which includes specified social differentiations such as settings, status, social distance, etc., as an open slot for participants to complete as exemplified below.

An example of DCT test in CCSARP:

At the University

Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.

Ann: _____.

Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.

(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 14)

In the CCSARP coding scheme request expressions were classified into the following parts: (a) an alerter such as terms of address or attention getter, (b) a “Head act” of request, and (c) “adjuncts to the head act” – supportive moves (i.e. external modifications which also called as supportive moves) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 200). An example of the segment of a request response is displayed as follows.

John, / could I borrow your notes from yesterday’s class / I promise I will return it tomorrow.

Alerter: ‘John’ Address term

Head Act: ‘Could I borrow...’

Adjunct to Head act: ‘I promise I ...’

The head act of request is identified on the basis of nine request strategies which are rank-ordered by increasing degrees of directness in accordance with the formal and functional features (see Table 3.1). These nine strategies are grouped into three levels of directness: directness, conventional and nonconventional indirectness. Mood derivable, explicit performance, hedged performative, locution derivable and want statements belong to direct strategies. Suggestory and preparatory formula are conventional indirect speech act strategies, and the last two ‘strong hint and mild hint’, fit in nonconventional indirect speech act strategies. In the project various contextual factors that may affect request behaviours such as Degree of Imposition, Status, Social Distance, Right and Obligation, etc. are examined with the Discourse Completion Test as an instrument.

Table 3.1 CCSARP Request Coding Schema

Least indirect	Main category	Subcategory
	1. Direct Strategy	(1) Mood derivable (imperative) (e.g. Leave me alone.)
		(2) Explicit performative (e.g. I'm asking you not to park the car here.)
		(3) Hedged performative (e.g. I must / have to ask you to clean the kitchen right now.)
		(4) Locution derivable (e.g. Madam, you'll have to/ should/must/ought to/ move your car.)
		(5) Want statement (e.g. I wish you'd stop bothering me.)
	2. Conventional Indirect	(6) Suggestory Formula (e.g. Why don't you get lost?)
		(7) Query Preparatory (e.g. Can/Could I borrow your notes? I was wondering if you would give me a lift.)
	3. Non-conventional	(8) Strong hint (Intention: getting a lift home: e.g. Will you be going home now?)
	Most Indirect	Indirect

(Blum-Kulka et al, 1989, pp. 278-280)

A study by Weizman (1989), using the framework of CCSARP as the coding scheme, examined and compared the differences of Hints (i.e. Non-conventional indirect strategies) used by native speakers of Australian English, Canadian French, and Israeli Hebrew. The result displayed that the percentage using hints in all three

languages was quite low - Australian English (7.8%), Canadian French 7.1%, and Israeli Hebrew 8%, which supported Blum-Kulka's (1987) and House's (1986) claims that the requestive Hint (i.e. Non-conventional indirect strategies) was not perceived as universally polite as Conventional Indirect strategies were.

A number of the studies on Chinese requests focused on cross-cultural comparison such as Chinese vs. English (Chung, 1995; Liao, 1997) and Chinese vs. German (Hong, 1993). Some studies on Chinese requests focused on Mandarin Chinese only (Hong, 1996; Lee-Wong, 1994a, b; Zhang, 1995a, b). Chung (1995) pointed out Chinese and EFL learners use similar request strategies as Native English speakers do toward interlocutors' different status and relations though frequencies of the use of certain strategy varied. In addition, pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic failures were found in EFL learners' use of request strategies. For example, both Chinese and EFL learners in Chung's study demonstrated during the test that they would refer to their manager by his/her title "Manager (jing-li), could I...", Honorifics are always expected to be included in the interactions particularly when the subordinate addresses his/her superior. For example, there are several hierarchical titles for university teachers, such as 'lecturer', 'senior lecturer', 'reader' and professor. Chinese tend to address the interlocutor with the highest rank like 'professor' (jiao shou) to show the speaker's respect even though he/she is just a lecturer. This phenomenon reflects the importance to study the address terms – *alterter*. Therefore CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989) was adopted to analyse the data in this study.

A study focuses on the interlanguage of request made by Chinese learners who learn English as a foreign language (Chinese EFLs) in Taiwan (Yu, 1999). With DCTs as an instrument, Yu (1999) examined and compared the use of request strategies, external modifications (supportive moves) and internal modifications of 40 native speakers of English (EL1), 40 native Mandarin speakers (CL1) and 40 Chinese EFL learners (Chinese EFL). The results of Yu's (1999) study showed that native speakers of Chinese and Chinese EFL learners significantly used more direct strategies than native speakers of English. The frequency of strategies and modifications used by the three groups from high to low are displayed as follows.

The frequency of request strategies used by the three groups:

1. Direct strategies: CL1s> Chinese EFLs> ELs in all contexts
2. Conventional Indirect: EL1s>Chinese EFLs> CL1s in all contexts
3. Non-conventional Indirect: EL1s (except in "+distance, +dominance" situations)> Chinese EFLs=CL1

The frequency of modifications used by the three groups:

1. Supportive moves: Chinese EFLs> EL1s>CL1s
2. Downgraders: CL1>EL1s>>Chinese EFLs
3. Internal vs. supportive moves
 - a. CLs: used more internal than supportive moves
 - b. EL1s and Chinese EFLs: use more supportive moves than internal

(Chen, 2006, p. 42)

Another finding of Yu's study is that Chinese EFLs negatively transferred their use of direct strategies to L2. Yu's (1999) finding was consistent with Lee-Wong's (1994) study and was supported by Han (2013). Han (2013) contrasted the request strategies in English and Chinese and found that the similarity between native Chinese speakers and native English speakers is that both value conventionally indirect strategies and their difference lies in that native Chinese speakers prefer to use direct

strategies i.e. imperatives, while native English speakers overwhelmingly preferred to use conventionally indirect strategies and used direct strategies less frequently than Chinese people do. Bald imperatives will be considered as very rude among native English speakers.

Unlike the parallel relationship between directness and politeness in Western cultures, direct strategies in Chinese are regarded as polite. Lee-Wong (1994a) pointed out that Chinese people do not use direct strategies to make requests regardless of the contextual factors but only use it in certain socially legitimate contexts where being direct is appropriate and polite. Lee-Wang (1994a, p. 509) claims that in Chinese, being indirect can be regarded as inappropriate whereas being direct (i.e. using imperatives) were polite instead of the situations described: (a) where the request is deemed to be easily carried out (b) where the speaker is in a position of power or authority, for example, directive language can only be used by the elderly to the younger ones, employers to their employees, teachers to their students and parents to their children, (c) where both interactants are familiar or socially close. For example, A and B are neighbours. A asked neighbour B 'give me a little salt I'm in a hurry frying vegetables.' To use a query-preparatory like 'Can you give me a little salt?' will have a different implication for a Chinese speaker as opposed to a native English-speaking addressee. For native English speakers using a conventionally indirect request like 'can you give me a little salt' appears to be polite. However for native Chinese speakers using the indirect request in this context could result in sending the wrong message to the hearer that the speaker is not certain if the hearer would give the speaker some salt, which may offend the hearer as the speaker is doubting the speaker's generosity (Lee-Wang, 1994a, p. 508).

The preference of direct request strategies by the Chinese people is the reflection of the traditional Chinese culture. In Chinese traditional culture, individual's position and power in the society is very much emphasized. The power relationship is stressed in Chinese society. As a result, direct strategies or imperatives, which seem more or less like orders, are preferred when they make requests. Chinese politeness principle is used to reflect and maintain the class distinction. Moreover, because the collectivist-oriented culture of the Chinese values positive face over negative face, the negative face, i.e. the need for freedom of action is not so stressed by Chinese people as by native English speakers. So to impose on someone's freedom of action does not usually threaten the addressee's face in Chinese. On the contrary, it is often acceptable in China (Han, 2013). What really concerns the addressee's face in the Chinese society is his/her dignity or self-respect, and negative face does not exist in Chinese culture (Gu 1990, p. 251).

3.7 Politeness, Face and Discourse

The notion of face comes from Goffman's (1967) work. According to Goffman (1967, p. 5), face is an image "located in the flow of events, supported by other people's judgments, and endorsed by impersonal agencies in the situation." That is, face is a person's image based on the judgment of her/himself and other people from the same speech community. Goffman pointed out that in the interaction, a speaker constantly attended to both her/his own face and the addressee's face. S/he exhibited a defensive orientation towards saving her/his own face and a protective orientation towards defending that of the addressee. Goffman (1967, p.12) used the term

“face-work” to refer to the action that people performed “to make whatever they are doing consistent with face”, while they tried to save their own face and the that of the others. Politeness and face are important for understanding why people choose to say things in a particular way in spoken and written discourse. The realisation of speech acts is perceived as involving the employment of politeness strategies to do face work, i.e. to protect the psychological face and to repair damage caused by a certain speech act. This is because requests are sometimes discourteous, which may damage the relationship between the people concerned (Leech, 1983). Thus, speakers usually adopt certain strategies that are adaptable when making requests. It is important that the speaker chooses the right level of politeness based on the relative imposition involved in the request. If the speaker is not polite enough, the hearer may feel imposed on. If the speaker is too polite, the utterance might sound sarcastic. For example, the expression ‘your hearty service made me experience what Taiwanese hospitality is’ sounds like a sarcastic expression rather than a sincere compliment. The speaker needs to employ the strategy of politeness in order to avoid offence and assure safety in conversations when deciding whether and how a request would be made. Therefore, in order to make polite requests it is necessary to understand the concept of politeness and it is necessary to observe how people of different cultures view the concept of politeness.

In the following sections theories related to politeness in western culture are presented: the conversational-maxim view (Lakoff, 1973; Grice, 1975; Leech, 1983), and the face-saving view of politeness on the basis of Goffman’s (1967) and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) work. Next, theories of Chinese politeness and the concept of face *liǎn* (臉) and *miànzi* (面子) in Chinese culture are discussed. Finally,

differences between Brown and Levinson's and the Chinese conceptions of face are compared.

3.7.1 Conversational View of Politeness

Lakoff's (1973) definition of politeness involved viewing the issue as 'a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange' (cited in Eelen, 2001, p. 2). Her model considers politeness to be a 'device used in order to reduce friction in personal interaction' (Fraser, 1990, p. 223). Lakoff (1973) proposes three maxims of politeness:

1. Do not impose.
2. Give options
3. Make the hearer feel good

For example, we apologise for imposing by saying 'I am sorry to bother you but...'. We make requests by saying 'I am wondering whether you could...' to give the hearer the option of refusal. Or we might make them feel good by saying something like 'You did a better job in the presentation than I.' A major criticism of Lakoff's work is that the model is too vague theoretically to be of any use in analysing actual interaction between speakers (Watts et al, 1992).

The Cooperative Principle (hereafter, CP) introduced by Grice (1975) is the foundation for the conversational-maxim view. Grice argued that in order to communicate successfully, interlocutors are required to make cooperative efforts in

conversation by providing information, clear, relevant and truthful. From this CP, Grice formulated four sub maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. Grice (1975) asserted that from the following maxims, one can make his/her conversational contributions appropriate to the speech situation.

1. The maxim of quantity: speakers should be as informative as is required for the particular purpose and should give neither too little information nor too much. A speaker may say 'to cut a long story short' or 'I won't bore you with all the details' to show they are aware of the maxim of quantity.
2. The maxim of quality: speakers should say what they believe to be true and what they have evidence for. A speaker may say 'I may be mistaken, but -' or 'as far as I know' to show they are following the maxim of quality.
3. The maxim of relation: speakers should say something that is relevant to what has been said before, or they should indicate in what way it is not. A speaker may indicate a change of topic using a marker such as 'by the way' or 'just going back to your point' to show they are aware of the maxim of relation.
4. The maxim of manner: speakers should be brief and orderly in what they say and avoid ambiguity or obscurity. A speaker may say something such as 'it may be a bit confused, but -' or 'just to clarify one point' to show they are aware of the maxim of manner. The above examples show that the

speakers comment on what they are saying not only to show they are aware of the conversational maxims, but also that they are trying to observe them.

On some occasions speakers violate the co-operation principle and expect their hearers to appreciate the meaning implied. That is, the speaker assumes that the hearer knows that their words should not be taken from the surface meaning and that they can infer the implicit meaning. We say that speakers are ‘flouting’ the maxims.

1. Flouting quantity: the speaker who flouts the maxim of quantity seems to say less or more than is necessary.
2. Flouting quality: the speaker flouting the maxim of quality may simply say something that obviously does not represent what they think.
3. Flouting relation: if speakers flout the maxim of relation, they expect that the hearers will be able to imagine what the utterance did *not* say, and make the connection between their utterance and the preceding one(s).
4. Flouting manner: Those who flout the maxim of manner, appearing to be obscure, are often trying to exclude a third party (Cutting, 2002, pp. 37-39).

According to Grice’s CP (1975), speakers are ‘violating’ a maxim when they know that the hearer will *not* know the truth and will only understand the literal meaning of the words. They deliberately mislead the other person by supplying insufficient information, saying something that is not true, irrelevant or ambiguous. If speakers violate the maxim of quality, they deliver the wrong information to hearers. Namely, maxim violation becomes a deliberate lie, when the speaker is really trying to deceive the listener. In this

study, airline managers said in the interview that on some occasions airline employees are advised to deliver the wrong information to passengers. For example, when dealing with passengers' false travel documents new airline employees will be instructed by other senior staff on the basis of customer service training to blame the computer as airlines did not want to raise the passengers' awareness of their false or suspicious passports and cause problems. Therefore, Group B participants' replies in Situation 7 such as *'the computer system seems to have some problem'*, *'My computer just encounter some problem'*, *'There seems to be a problem with our computer data'* are considered by airline managers as appropriate answers. Nevertheless, the above replies seem to violate the Grice (1975) maxim of Quality in the Cooperative Principle (CP) as the violation is deliberate.

Holding the same belief as Grice (1975) that conversation is constrained by a set of maxims and sub-maxims, Leech (1983, p. 132) added the Politeness Principle (PP). He developed six politeness maxims. Each maxim includes two sub-maxims.

1. Tact Maxim: (a) Minimize cost to other; (b) maximize benefit to other
2. Generosity Maxim: (a) Minimize benefit to self; (b) maximize cost to self
3. Approbation Maxim: (a) Minimize dispraise of other; (b) maximize praise of other
4. Modesty Maxim: (a) Minimize praise of self; (b) maximize dispraise to self
5. Agreement Maxim: (a) Minimize disagreement between self and other; (b) maximize agreement between self and other
6. Sympathy Maxim: (a) Minimize antipathy between self and other; (b)

maximize sympathy between self and other

According to Trosborg's (1995, p. 187) a request is defined as an illocutionary act whereby a speaker expresses to a hearer that he/she wants the hearer to practice an act which is for the benefit of the speaker and also the cost of the hearer. In the airline context, ground staff request passengers to pay for the over-weight luggage by saying: *Can/could you pay the excess baggage charge, please?* Passengers are requested to pay the excess baggage charge for the company benefit; however it is a cost to the passengers. The notion of benefit-and-cost to him/her self or other was initially proposed by Leech (1983) in his analysis of politeness in the Tact maxim: (a) minimize cost to other, (b) maximize benefit to other and in the Generosity Maxim: (a) minimize benefit to self; (b) maximize cost to self.

3.7.2 Brown and Levinson's theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory could be seen as the most influential work for examining politeness phenomenon in interaction. The principal notion of their politeness theory is based on the face notion raised by the sociologist Goffman (1967) who used the term to discuss some of the constraints on social interaction. According to Goffman (1967, p. 5), face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." He believed that face wants are mutual, i.e. if one wants one's face cared for, one should care for other people's face (Goffman, 1967).

The politeness theory that Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) proposed consists of three fundamental notions: face, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson believed “face” is the motivation for politeness and proposed that ‘face’ as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” i.e. we want to protect our face against possible damage when interacting with others. They believed that people are concerned with maintaining two distinct kinds of face in conversation:

Negative face: the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others.

Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others

(Adopted from Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62)

Positive face is the desire to be approved of by others, and negative face is the desire to be unimpeded by others in one’s actions (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 13). Barron (2003) pointed out Brown and Levinson’s model is speech-act based. During the conversations, some acts could damage the face of both interlocutors; such as warning, ordering, complaining, criticizing, advising, offering or apologizing, and so on. Brown and Levinson suggested that these acts are intrinsically face-threatening acts (FTAs), i.e., they potentially threaten either the positive and/or negative face of the speaker and/or hearer, and define politeness as a “redressive action” (p. 25) taken to alleviate the force of the acts. In order to minimize the force on the hearer, the speakers attempt to avoid or uses politeness strategies, which in speech involve attempts to minimize the face-threat generated during interactions.

Strategies used to preserve one's positive politeness are called positive strategies, and strategies used to show deference are termed as negative strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 129). Positive strategies relate to certain attempts to establish solidarity with the addressee by emphasizing commonality, and are likely to occur when there is minimal social distance and little power difference between the interlocutors (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 101). Negative strategies involve performing the act in such a way that deference is shown to the hearer, and the purpose is to give the hearer a way out of compliance with the act. It is used when the power difference between the participants is great (p. 70).

Brown and Levinson (1987) further proposed five main strategies that speakers can employ when they encountered face threatening acts to avoid or minimize the effects from carrying out FTAs (see Figure 3.1)

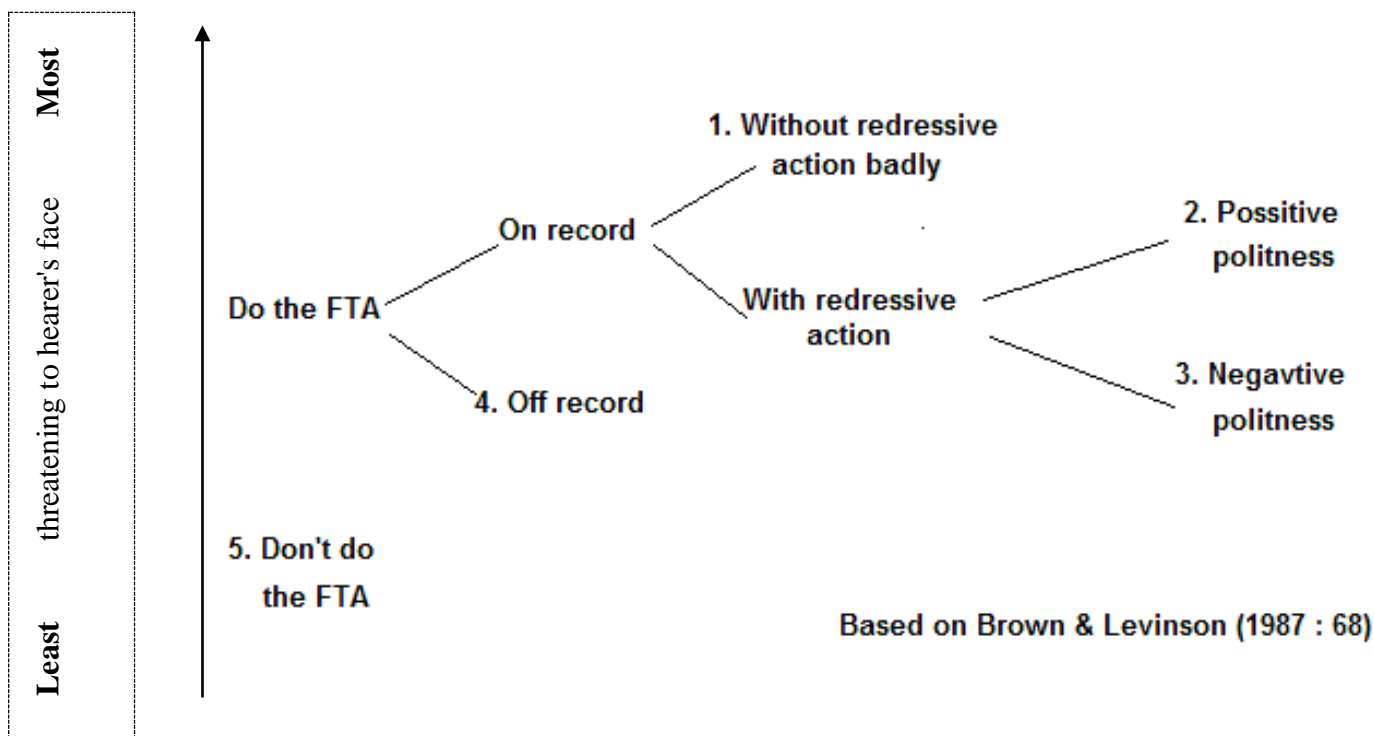


Figure 3.1 Politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 68).

The first three are on-record strategies, in which “there is only one unambiguously attributable intention” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 69) on which both speakers and hearers agree. The first one is to do the FTA directly without any explicit redressive action (e.g. for a request, one says ‘Give me your notes’), which Brown and Levinson refer to as an action that gives face to the hearer. Speakers show their indifference to the feelings of hearers, and they make no attempt to minimize threats to the hearers. This type of strategy is considered the most direct strategy.

The second and the third on-record strategies are to perform FTA with redressive actions. Speakers employ the second on-record strategies to attend to the hearer’s

positive face and treat the hearers as in-group members (i.e. positive politeness). For example, the utterance “Buddy, we are good friends, right?” belongs to positive politeness. Additionally, the third on-record strategies are used by speakers to satisfy the addressee’s negative face and the hearer’s desire to be respected (i.e., negative politeness). Negative politeness is related to “conventionalized indirectness” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 70). Speakers might phrase their FTAs in a conventionally indirect way, for example, by saying “can you give me your flight ticket” or “I am wondering if you could pass me your flight ticket” as a request.

Off record strategy is used when speakers want to employ an FTA but try to avoid liability for doing it. Thus using this type of strategy leaves the interpretation of the FTA up to the addressee. This kind of strategy used by the speakers going off record includes metaphor, irony, ellipsis, understatements, rhetorical questions and all kinds of hints.

The last strategy, doing no FTAs, is that the speakers chose to avoid FTA and do nothing (Brown and Levinson, 1987, pp. 68-69). In general, “the more a given act threatens the speaker’s or the addressee’s face needs, the more the speaker will want to employ a higher-order strategy” (Yu, 2003, p. 1683).

In realising a speech act, speakers need to choose from these five strategies - but what criteria do speakers base their decision on? Brown and Levinson further argued that in many cultures there are three independent and culturally-sensitive variables involved in the assessment of the seriousness of face-threatening acts. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 74) offered a formula for measuring the weight of a face

threatening act. Based on the different weights of these variables (see below), Brown and Levinson could make predictions about the typical distribution of politeness strategies in that culture.

- *social distance* (D) between the speaker and the hearer, i.e. the degree of familiarity between interlocutors,
- *relative power* (P) of the speaker with respect to the hearer, i.e. the degree to which speakers can impose their will on the hearers
- *absolute rank of imposition* (R) in the particular culture in terms of the expenditure of goods and/or services by the hearer, the right of the speaker to perform the act, and the degree to which the hearer welcomes the imposition. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74)

More importantly, Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 244) proposed a politeness theory that made claims of universality in the following:

- (i) The universality of face, which is describable as two kinds of basic wants.
 - (ii) The potential universality of a set of strategic resources from which individual cultures choose, and of certain principles and their rational deployment.
 - (iii) The universality of the interlocutors' mutual knowledge of (i) and (ii)
- (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 244).

It is argued that Brown and Levinson believe that the model of politeness is universal, and is shared by western and non-western cultures. Yet under this framework, no differences would be expected in the speech act behaviour of people. It is difficult to subscribe to this notion that people of different cultures belong to the same ideal speech community.

Brown and Levinson's concept of face and politeness theory has been criticised on a number of important points briefly discussed in the following. Firstly, Brown and Levinson suggested the face-saving strategies and three independent and culturally-sensitive variables (i.e. social distance, relative power, and ranking of imposition) are present in all cultures. However, none of these variables stay constant between individuals because relative power and responsibilities will change according to the social norms of each culture (Fraser, 1990).

Secondly, Brown and Levinson (1987) argued for two types of politeness: Negative politeness refers to verbal strategies that express the effort not be regarded as imposing. Positive politeness refers to strategies that are emphasized in group membership (p. 70). Nonimposition may not be universally the most valued interaction norm. In other cultures, expressing intentions clearly and showing sincerity might be preferred over nonimposition. Therefore, directness will not necessarily be associated with impoliteness (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Impoliteness, defined by Culpeper (2008, p. 36), "involves communicative behaviour intending to cause 'the face loss' of a target or perceived by the target to be so." The notion of politeness is culturally relative. That is to say, what is considered polite behavior in a culture may not be accepted so in other cultures (Al-Oqaily &

Tawalbeh, 2012). For instance, Economidou-kogetsidis (2005) investigated Greek callers' opening request in their calls to an airline's call centre and found that their requests were more direct than those produced by British English callers. Economidou-kogetsidis (2008, p. 270) contested that directness does not indicate impoliteness but rather a polite concern for non-imposition by not wasting the addressee's time. Directness for Greek callers is motivated by clarity, goal orientedness, and formality rather than impoliteness. Sifianou (2013, p. 98) also indicated that

utterances are multifunctional and structures, whether direct or indirect, formal or informal, are not inherently polite or impolite; they are attributed such evaluation on the basis of assumed speakers' intentions and addressess' expectations and various other contextual factors (Sifianou, 2013, p. 98).

Finally, let us look at the issue of universality. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that the desire to maintain positive and negative face is a universal concern of people of all cultures and every speaker is interested in maintaining face during daily interactions with others. Nevertheless, researchers studying politeness in non-western societies have contested the claim to universality (e.g. Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Wierzbicka, 1985). Wierzbicka, (1991) by providing examples from Polish and Japanese, argues that the association of politeness with indirectness stem from an Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism. In Polish direct requests and offers carry positive meanings not to be regarded as impolite. Mao (1994), Gu (1990), and Matsumoto (1988) contend that Brown and Levinson's theory of face and politeness focus on individualism reflects an ethnocentric Western-bias. The theory fails to

explain the politeness phenomena in non-western cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese.

3.7.3 Chinese politeness

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is deemed inapplicable to Chinese culture (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994) due to differences in the concept of face, especially negative face, which is less of a concern in more group-orientated cultures (Shea, 2003). In order to understand the differences, Chinese politeness and the concept of face will be reviewed in the following sections.

3.7.3.1 Chinese Concept of Face

Regarding the concept of face in Chinese culture, Hu (1944) proposed that the notion of face can be classified into two categories: '面子 *mianzi*' and '臉 *lian*'. '面子 *mianzi*' represents "prestige or reputation, which is either achieved through getting on in life" (Mao, 1994, p. 457), or "ascribed (even imagined) by other members of one's own community". Similarly, Ho (1976) stated that '面子 *mianzi*' can be given when one makes the achievement or when one possesses some "non-personal factors", such as wealth, social connections, and authority. That is to say, one's '面子 *mianzi*' is sanctioned according to the society's recognition of his/her social standing and moral characters. One can only receive '面子 *mianzi*' through the interaction with others. The notion of Chinese '臉 *lian*' refers to "the respect of the group for a person with a good moral standard" and is "both a social sanction for moral standards and internalized sanction" (Hu, 1944, p. 45). In other words, the respect

and prestige that can only be earned from the speech community through interactions rather than given for free. When one's moral character such as integrity is sanctioned by other members of his society, he can receive '臉 lian'. When someone loses '臉 lian', it is more likely to be the case where s/he has done something socially disapproved, or even immoral, and then is condemned by the whole society.

Chinese face is interpreted as a notion closely related to "public image" and awareness of the social obligations to other members of the group (Gu, 1990; Ho, 1975; Hu, 1944; Mao, 1994). Since individual's '臉 lian' is sanctioned by the society when the individual interacts with other members of the society one considers more about others' feelings and thoughts than those of oneself and when an individual is trying to promote social harmony, one is considered to behave politely. The main difference between '面子 mianzi' and '臉 lian' is that the former is related to one's dignity or prestige, while the latter has to do with "a recognition by community for an individual's socially acceptable, moral behaviour or judgment" (Yu, 2003, p. 1684). Both aspects covered respectable and reputable images that one can claim for oneself from the community in which one interacts or to which one belongs (Ho, 1975). Thus, being polite in Chinese discourse is "to know how to attend to each other's '面子 mianzi' and '臉 lian' and to enact speech acts appropriate to and worthy of such an image (Mao, 1994, p. 463).

3.7.3.2 Chinese Politeness Principle

In Chinese culture, the concept of Chinese politeness '禮貌 limao' is derived from Confucius's promotion of enhancing social harmony and restoring the social

hierarchy and order in the society. Politeness is also a belief that one's social behaviour ought to live up to the expectations of the elements of respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement (Gu, 1990, p. 239). Gu (1990, p. 245) adopted Leech's Politeness Principle to explain the politeness phenomenon in Chinese and proposes four maxims of Politeness Principle; namely the Self-denigration Maxim, the Address Maxim, the Tact Maxim and the Generosity Maxim.

The Self-denigration Maxim, related to the notions of respectfulness and modesty, is to denigrate self and elevate other. To break the maxim of denigrating self is regarded as being impolite or even rude and to break the maxim of elevating others is considered as being 'arrogant', 'boasting', or 'self-conceited' (Gu, 1990, p. 246).

The Address Maxim, based on the notions of respectfulness and attitudinal warmth, refer to addressing your interlocutor with an appropriate address term. This maxim helps to "establish or maintain social bonds, strengthen solidarity, and control social distance" (Gu, 1990, p. 249). The choice of an addressing term depends on the recognition of the interlocutor's gender, social status and familiarity between the interlocutors. Misuse of addressing terms is regarded as rude or a breakdown of social order in Chinese. There can be pragmatic failure between people of the same culture and language.

The Generosity and Tact Maxims, a modified version of Leech's (1983), were based on the notion of attitudinal warmth and refinement (Gu, 1990). Breaking the Generosity maxim would be regarded as stingy while breaking the Tact maxim

would risk being considered greedy. For example, in issuing an invitation and in declining an invitation in Chinese, the speaker tries to maximize benefit to other (in compliance with the Generosity Maxim), while the hearer tries to minimize cost to other (in compliance with the Tact Maxim). Therefore, refusing in Chinese culture is not considered as “threatening the hearer’s negative face,” as in Brown and Levinson’s theory, but rather as a polite act (Gu, 1990). On the contrary, not performing a refusal to someone’s invitation would risk being considered greedy and rude in Chinese society as it breaks the Tact maxim (Mao, 1994; Chen, Ye & Zhang, 1995).

The notion of Chinese face and politeness is different from that of Brown and Levinson (1987), which has explained the politeness phenomenon in western cultures. Next, a critical comparison between these two views is made in the following sections.

3.7.4 A Comparison of Face in Chinese and Brown and Levinson’s Framework

Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that the face-saving model and positive as well as negative face are universal politeness phenomena. Yet, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has been challenged because they cannot explain the politeness phenomenon in non-Western cultures, especially in Japanese and Chinese culture (Matsumoto, 1988; Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994). The Chinese concept of face is different from that of western cultures (Gu, 1990; Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944; Mao, 1994; Yu, 1999). Two major differences between Chinese face and Brown and Levinson’s face were

proposed (Mao, 1994, p. 459). First of all, Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) centred their face concept as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself.” That self image mainly concerned the individual’s wants and desires. Individuals want to be approved by others, and they have the desire to be left alone. This image is public only when it depends on others’ face for being maintained (Mao, 1994; Yu, 1997, 1999). Since this self-image only concerns self’s wants and desires, it will not be influenced by external pressure and interpersonal factors. This image is predetermined (Mao, 1994). On the contrary, Chinese face encoded a reputable image that individuals can claim for themselves in a community. Face in Chinese culture emphasized not the accommodation of individual wants or desires but “the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgment of the community” (Mao, 1994, p. 460). Chinese highlight the value of society and how the whole society judges and perceives their behaviour rather than their own opinion about themselves. Face has to be earned through an interactional process (Yu, 2003). Chinese people care more about the feelings, thoughts, and actions of other members in society, that is, the public image not just the self-image. Therefore, politeness in Chinese does not merely focus on the maintenance of self positive face and negative face as Brown and Levinson mentioned; instead, it highlights the desire to enhance social harmony and avoid tension or conflict within interaction (Gu, 1990, p. 239).

Based on the notion of self-image and public-image, Markus and Kitayama (1991) stated that self-image emphasizes the independent view of self, while public image focuses on the interdependent view of self. They further explained that, on the one hand, self-image regards the self as an individual, who only makes behaviour constructed on the basis of his/her own thoughts and feelings rather than others’. On

the other hand, public image views the self as “part of an encompassing social relationship”. Within this relationship, one will consider other members’ thoughts and feelings when making speech (Mao, 1994, p. 472).

The second difference is the content of face. Brown and Levinson’s face was related to an individualistic, self-oriented image because they consider politeness to be something related to the expectations of individuals, while Chinese face emphasises the character of “public image”. Chinese face is on “communal, interpersonal” image, thinking of politeness as addressed to the expectations of society (Zhang, 1995a; Yu, 1999, 2003). Thus, Gu (1990, p. 242) argued that Brown and Levinson’s universal model of politeness could not account for the politeness behaviour present in non-western cultures. Politeness concept for Chinese “is a phenomena belonging to the level of society, which endorses its normative constraints on each individual”. Though politeness is universal and can be found in every culture, we found that what counts as politeness behaviour including values and norms attached to such behaviour is language and culture-specific (Gu, 1990, p. 256). In other words, Chinese politeness put more emphasis on human relations, formality and differences for others and modesty for self, while Americans puts higher value on intimacy and equality instead (Mao, 1994).

3.8 Research Focus

On the basis of the theoretical research presented in the literature review of the relevant fields, I propose the focus of the study. The quantitative and qualitative

evaluation of data in the study supported a rigorous analysis in order to investigate the following hypotheses:

1. There exist great differences between Chinese and native English speakers' social conventions and speaking rules; moreover, speech act performance can also be quite different since it is closely attached to speakers' linguistic and cultural norms. As related interlanguage studies with L1 control data suggested, some L1 transfer indeed caused cross-cultural misunderstandings in L2 expressions, thus, in this study I examined whether that the linguistic options and request strategies employed by the three research group participants were closely related to their L1 – Chinese Mandarin. Apart from this, I extended my investigation to examine the extent cultural norms actually influence the participants' request behaviour in this study.
2. Current research only provisionally concludes that linguistic competence is influential in the participants' growth of pragmatic competence progression. However, in the study I further intend to discover at which proficiency level participants can actually make more progress in terms of pragmatic development after placement. Did the greater improvement of pragmatic development after the placement come with a participant's better awareness of pragmatics? Was this better awareness actually rooted in the participant's better linguistic knowledge? My study attempted to investigate if the High Proficiency participants had more awareness of pragmatics after placement; it suggested that there may be a relationship between the two variables - proficiency and length of stay in the target speech community in pragmatic development.

3. Many studies on communicative competence have already emphasised the significant influence of learner's greater exposure to his/her target community. They proposed that exposure to the target language and greater cultural experience of L2 social conventions may effectively support L2 acquisition. With these research findings, I therefore hypothesize that airlines' placement experience indeed assist to improve participants' ability to communicate with passengers in service encounters in a more pragmatically appropriate way. With the presupposition that 'placement experience does play a positive role in learners' pragmatic development', I extended my study to examine 'what exactly is it about the placement experience that improves their ability to communicate in service encounters in a more pragmatically appropriate way?'
4. In previous sections of this chapter, concepts of politeness and theories related to politeness in both western and Chinese cultures are fully discussed in order to help understand cross-cultural similarities and differences between passengers' and participants' cultural backgrounds. However, does the Chinese concept of politeness and theories related to politeness in western culture accord with airline managers' concept of politeness based on their airline customer service experience? If not, what are the causes of these disagreements and conflicts?

3.9 Summary

This literature review has attempted to provide an overview of the issues and concerns in the fields of pragmatics, the speech act of requesting and politeness theory. First of all, pragmatic competence and interlanguage pragmatics were defined. Then interlanguage pragmatics was examined in order to gain information about

learners' development of pragmatic competence. Kasper (1992) proposed a distinction between pragmalinguistic transfer and sociopragmatic transfer, and differences between the two transfer phenomena were reviewed. Next, Speech Act Theory proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) was explored. The exploration included the features of speech acts, in addition to the distinctions between direct and indirect speech acts. In the last section theories related to politeness in western culture - the conversational-maxim view presented by Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), Cooperative Principle introduced by Grice (1975), and Brown & Levinson's (1987) were reviewed. Following this, theories of Chinese politeness and the concept of face- *lian* (臉) and *mianzi* (面子) in Chinese culture were discussed. Finally, Brown and Levinson's and the Chinese conceptions of face were compared and discussed.

Based on the literature review, the research design and methodology employed in this study will be described in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Research Design and Methods

4.1 Introduction

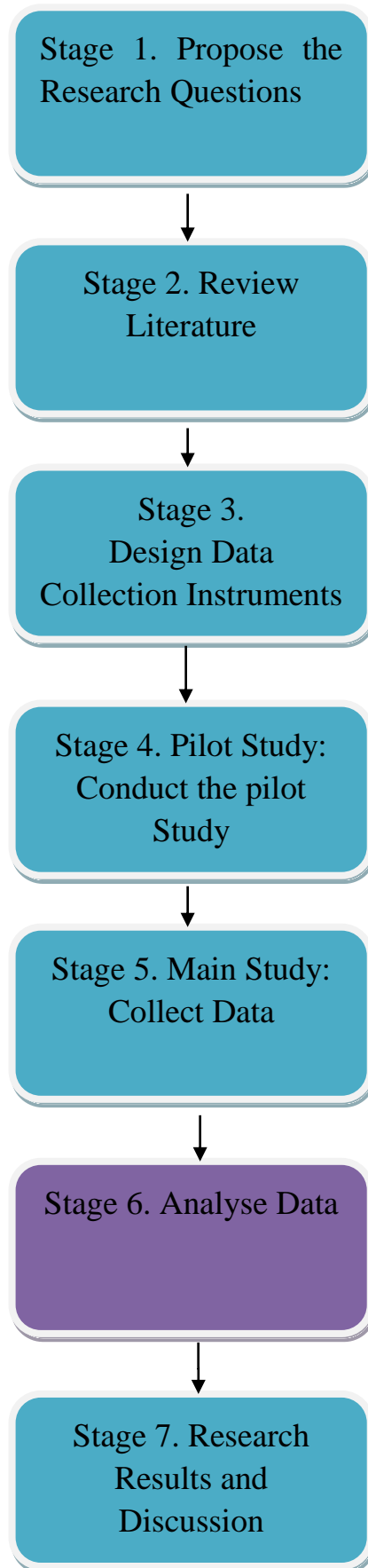
Chapter 4 describes the methods and research design of this study. This chapter consists of eight sections. Section 4.2 presents the overall research design of this study. In Section 4.3, the purpose of the study and the research questions are described. Section 4.4 explains the participants' background. In Section 4.5 the purposes of using two instruments - the Discourse Completion Test (henceforth DCT) and the Focus Group Interview in the study are explained. Following this, in Section 4.6, the procedure and results of the pilot study are described. In Section 4.7 the data collection procedure of the main study is described. In Section 4.8, the data analysis methods; the coding scheme - CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), the airline customer service criterion and the method used to analyse the Focus Group Interview are explained. Both research group replies are evaluated by two airline managers from different international airlines in Taiwan based on their airline customer service experiences to determine whether there are any differences between their perceptions of politeness and that of the participants. Finally, the limitations of the methodology are discussed.

4.2 The study design

The purpose of this study was to investigate one aspect of the second language pragmatic development of hospitality and tourism university students by focusing on

their realisation of the English speech act of request before and after their airline placement, as a way to enhance the knowledge of the airline English instructor and to apply this knowledge to the development of materials. A cross-sectional study design is used in this study to describe the characteristics that exist in the three research groups. In order to provide a clear illustration of the study, the description of the procedures of the study and stages of the data collection is displayed in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 The procedure of the main study



4.3 Research Questions

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the Taiwanese hospitality students' pragmatic development in terms of their realisation of speech act of requesting. This study aims to answer the following three research questions.

- 1. What are the differences among Group A (2nd year students before placement), Group B (4th year students after placement) and Group C's (airline staff) request behaviours?**

By comparing Group A's (2nd year students before placement) and Group B's (4th year students after placement) request behaviour differences before and after their airline placement in the First DCTs and also identifying the gap between students' present language ability and airline language requirements, it is expected that the results of the study can provide practical implications and even a guideline for airline instructors to design both appropriate authentic airline English materials and curriculums for learners.

- 2. What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English language proficiency levels in Group A? At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in appropriate pragmatic use of language after placement?**

After preliminary analysis of Group A and Group B participants' replies in the data, the effects of English language proficiency on the participants' request strategies also

emerged as an important issue. It was observed that some of Group A participants' replies were not only inappropriate but also ungrammatically delivered. For example, "Madam, could you take next flight to Hong Kong? We almost at boarding time. It's distance from here to gate, otherwise, that's will be rush, maybe your luggage shouldn't be in your destination. So, don't worry, we will plan you the best way for you". The example above illustrates numerous grammar and lexical errors that might even be more irritating to passengers in the context of receiving information from the airline staff in time critical scenarios. Moreover, some Group A participants' request replies revealed that the mistakes were not caused by the actual requesting verb phrase but the surrounding expressions, explanations, apologies, offers (i.e. other speech acts) that embedded the. For example, the utterances "you are so late. The counter is closed. I will arrange you take next flight" were found in some of Group A participants' replies. The above replies demonstrate that the learners' language proficiency might be a crucial and relevant variable in forming successful realization of requests. A question was also raised as to 'was students' English language proficiency level another variable affecting their pragmatic development?' Prachanant (2006) provided the addition of comparison of learners' proficiency in his study on the similarities and differences in responding to complaints and pragmatic transfer. The present study is aimed at answering the research question 2 whether Taiwanese students with different English proficiency have different pragmatic competence. The results from this investigation are expected to provide insights for future research into the pragmatic knowledge of learners with different proficiency.

3. To what extent do participant responses in the DCTs conform to airline managers' expectations of appropriate verbal behaviours by check-in staff?

In this study, to understand airline service management students' English needs for future employment in the airlines, knowledge of general and specific language needs for ground staff in the target situation - the airline settings should be investigated. In order to observe the English needs of the ground staff, several interviews with Taiwanese airline managers and ground staff were conducted during my placement visits from 2000 to 2006 (see Section 1.4, pp. 7-17).

4.4 Participants in the Study

4.4.1 Participants in the Main Study

50 subjects participated in this study including ten airline staff and forty hospitality university students majoring in airline service management. The background of subjects is displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Background of subjects in the main study

Group	Number	Age / number of subjects	Gender / number of subjects	Airline Experience	Data Instrument Participation
Group C (Airline Staff)	10	20-25 years old / 5 25-30 years old / 3 30-35 years old / 1 36-40 year old / 1	Male / 6 Female / 4	6~10 years Airline experience	1 st DCTs
Group A 2 nd year students	20	19 years old / 15 20 years old / 5	Male / 10 Female / 10	No placement experience	1 st DCTs

Group A-LP-before 2 nd year students	12	19 years old / 10 20 years old / 2	Male / 3 Female / 9	No placement experience	1 st DCTs
Group A-HP-before 2 nd year students	8	19 years old / 5 20 years old / 3	Male 1 Female 7	No placement experience	1 st DCTs
Group A-LP-after 4 th year students	12	21 years old / 10 22 years old / 2	Male 3 Female 9	One year placement (7/1, 2009 ~ 6/30, 2010)	2 nd DCTs
Group A-HP-after 4 th year students	8	21 years old / 5 22 years old / 3	Male 1 Female 7	One year placement (7/1, 2009 ~ 6/30, 2010)	2 nd DCTs
Group B 4 th year students	20	21 years old / 12 22 years old / 8	male 10 female 10	One year placement (7/1, 2007 ~ 6/30, 2008)	1 st DCTs

In order to provide a comparative model, ten airline staff from one of the airlines in Taiwan were invited to participate in this study and sorted into Group C. These experienced airline staff had worked for an international airline in Taiwan with at least six years of working experience in the airline industry. Five out of ten of the airline staff had 10 years of airline customer service experience and ranked as supervisors, overseeing and coordinating the work and activities of ground staff in their work.

The other 40 participants selected for the study were hospitality students, because the participants selected from the department were relatively homogeneous in terms of

educational background and age. Hospitality students were selected from the Airline and Transport Service Management Department (ATSMD) in Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism in Taiwan (NKUHT). 40 students were classified as Group A and Group B. Group A was made up from second year students prior to placement while Group B was fourth year students after one year's placement in the airlines. All the participants in this study were university students and in this way it was made possible to control the educational background and age profile within the study.

In order to search for factors influencing the students' pragmatic development, the participants' proficiency was considered as a major variable in the study. The present study probed the effects of language proficiency on Group A participants' request strategy use before and after their placement. Group A participants' English proficiency was evaluated by one of English lecturers of NKUHT in February, 2009, one month before the data collection for this study was conducted. The Airline English teacher used a paper-based TOEIC practice test as a Placement Test for Group A participants in the first Airline English lesson. The class was divided into two classes based on the performance of participants' TOEIC practice test. Table 4.2 shows that 12 participants from Group A were categorised as low proficiency group and 8 participants from Group A were grouped as high proficiency group.

Table 4.2 English Proficiency Group

Level	Low Proficiency Score below 550	High Proficiency Score higher than 550	Total
Number	12	8	20

Group A low proficiency participants before placement were classified as Group A-Low-Proficiency-before (Group A-LP-before in short) and high proficiency participants were classified as Group A-High-Proficiency-before (Group A-HP-before in short). After one year placement, Group A (both low and high proficiency participants) participated in the Second DCT in their 4th year. Low proficiency participants were labeled as Group A-Low-Proficiency-after (Group A-LP-after in short) and high proficiency participants were labeled as Group A-High-Proficiency-after (Group A-HP-after in short).

These subjects were selected based on two principles: (1) similar educational background (2) airline working experience. According to Scarcella (1979), learners' background such as experience and familiarity with the subject matter would influence the way they speak. Thus, this study ensured that these hospitality university students were taught by the same English teacher using the same textbooks and instruction for one year. Next, the students were asked by their teachers (without the researcher present) whether they were willing to participate in a task involving the use of English. Finally, since one of the purposes of the study was to investigate whether the airline placement experience helps Taiwanese hospitality university students raise their pragmatic awareness, it was decided to select students from Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism as the students are required, as part of their curriculum, to have a one year placement in a related industry, whereas for students from other universities placements are deemed optional.

4.4.2 Participants in the Pre-pilot Study

In order to design the content of the DCTs (see Section 4.5.2, pp. 139-144), Seven students from the National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism (NKUHT) working in the airlines at the airport on their placement, classified as Group X, were interviewed to gain students' viewpoints about their placement experiences in the airlines, such as what kind of situations they encountered and how they dealt with difficult passengers and situations. The background of subjects is displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Background of subjects in the focus group interview in the pre-polite study

Group	Number	Age / number of subjects	Gender / number of subjects	Airline Experience
Group X (3 rd year)	7	21 years old / 5 22 years old / 2	Female / 7	During their airline placement

The criteria for selecting these seven 3rd year students for the pre-pilot study were threefold. The first was that the students had the same educational background; the second was that they were currently situated in their placements so they had placement experience as fourth year students. The purpose of conducting the study during their placements was to elicit their reaction and views whilst experiencing their time with passengers which could be observed and analysed. The third reason for selecting the third year students rather than the fourth year students for the pre-pilot study was that the fourth year students were used in the main study and sorted into Group B.

4.5 Research Instrument

Written Discourse Completion Test (DCT), role-plays, multiple-choice questionnaires and interview tasks are tools used to assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence. DCTs are the most widely used data-collection method in cross-cultural and ILP research because of its practical use among other assessment tools (Aufa, 2013). However, there have been debates whether the WDCT can be used to assess EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, this paper argues that despite its limitation, the Written DCT is an effective tool to assess the learners' pragmatic competence.

4.5.1 Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) are written/oral questionnaires consisting of a brief description of a situation which requires informants to fill in the most appropriate response based on their intuition in the given situation. The DCT was adopted by Blum-Kulka, and Olshtain (1989) in the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project, which investigated requests and apologies across eight languages (viz, Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, and Hebrew and Russian). Blum-Kulka, and Olshtain (1989) employed DCTs to collect data in order to investigate (1) cross-cultural variability, (2) social contexts, and (3) interlanguage variations of apology and request realization patterns. DCTs have been used to study, among other speech acts, such as speech act apologies (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Bergman and Kasper, 1993), refusals (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Welts, 1990; Kwon, 2004; Robinson, 1991; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987), requests (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain,

1986; Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Hill 1997; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Yu, 1999), complaints (Murphy & Neu, 1996; Nakabachi, 1996; Olshtain & Weinback 1993), disagreements (Beebe & Takashi 1989; Du, 1995) and expressions of gratitude (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Lin & Yu, 2006).

The advantages of using DCTs have been advocated by many researchers. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) indicated that the DCT is “... the most celebrated and most maligned of all the methods used in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics research” (p. 238). Barron (2003) and Blum-Kulka et al, (1989) proposed that DCT is an appropriate means to obtain more stereotyped formulas and strategies in everyday speech acts. This makes it a very appropriate method for studies focussing on routine exchanges such as those which might occur at airline check-in counters. Kasper and Rose (2002) pointed out that the DCTs provided useful information about speakers’ pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategies and linguistic choices are appropriate. Moreover, studies on participants’ responses in DCTs indicated the strategic and linguistic means were consistent with the data collected in natural occurring settings (Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Olshtain & Cohen, 1993). Furthermore, situational variables such as social status, age, gender, and L2 proficiency (Kasper, 2000) can be effectively controlled so that it enables researchers to focus on a given language phenomenon and further investigate and test it comparably (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008, p. 117) concluded that “there has been no conclusive evidence to show that the DCT is not

an effective method to collect speech act data from a large sample of subjects on a wide range of difficult-to-observe linguistic phenomena.”

The validity of the DCTs has been examined by some researchers. Hinkel, (1997) criticised these studies because in DCTs participants’ spoken utterances are elicited by written forms, which may influence the validity of the test. Moreover, subjects may choose to write more formal language on the written questionnaire (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). Some researchers argued that the data collected with this method do not correspond to natural data since subjects may respond differently than they would in real conversation (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993). As Rintell and Mitchell (1989, p. 270) proposed “subjects tend to react differently than they would in actual speech situations. Important factors such as emotional involvement and turn taking do not occur and cannot be analysed.” Blum-Kulka (1982, p. 250) indicated “It is hard to tell how representative what subjects write on such a discourse completion test is of what they actually say in spontaneous conversation.” In addition, the design of the DCTs may limit the subjects’ response since “the length of response is constrained by the space the subjects have in which to write”, and “respondents may choose specific linguistic forms based on familiarity with the spelling of one word rather than another” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, p. 250). Therefore, to elicit pragmatic data, most researchers favour the use of naturally occurring data in speech act analysis as what people say and what people think they would say in situations may be different (Wolfson, 1989). In spite of the advantages of using naturally occurring data, some researchers (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Blum-Kulka et. al, 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Rintel & Mitchell, 1989) reported the drawbacks of using naturally occurring

data. Beebe & Cummings (1996) indicated that in a real-life situation it is almost impossible that a desired speech act would occur in the same context and with same relationship between interlocutors as that desired by the researchers. In practice, in this study the original plan for collecting data was to collect naturally occurring speech in the airline check-in counters. Therefore, three airline managers from three different airline companies in Taiwan were contacted for their consent to record front-line staff in conversation with passengers. Unfortunately due to security and privileged information between airlines and their customers, my request was declined. Due to this response, it was not possible to collect naturally occurring speech data thus, the Discourse Completion Test was used to elicit the request strategies from three research groups for analysis and comparison to examine whether there were any significant differences between the three research groups.

The DCT was employed as a research tool for data collection in this study for the following three reasons.

- (1) Firstly, it provides a variety of situational contexts in which the speech act of request occurred, and was helpful to elicit useful information about pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge of the request strategies used by the participants.
- (2) Secondly, situational variables such as social status, social distance, age, gender, exposure to target language community and L2 proficiency can be efficiently controlled so that researchers can focus on a given language phenomenon and investigate it comparably (Beebe and Cummings, 1985; Blum-Kulka et al, 1989; Golato, 2003; Johnston,

Kasper, & Ross, 1998; Kasper, 2000).

- (3) Thirdly, the linguistic patterns elicited from Group A, Group B and Group C participants were needed in order to build comparisons of syntactic and lexical patterns in framing their requests, thus the results could be compared and contrasted and used in actual teaching situations.

4.5.2 The Design of DCTs

Regarding the development of DCTs in this study, the original DCT situations were actually written in two language versions: English and Chinese. The original purpose of this study was to investigate whether L1 transfer plays a role in terms of pragmatic development, for learners. Therefore, the DCT situations were chosen in both English and Chinese languages, students were required to take both English DCT and Chinese DCT in order to explore the differences in the real world between Chinese request strategies and English request strategies. However, due to Group B students' extremely tight school schedule, they could only afford to complete the English DCT but not Chinese DCT. Therefore, the Chinese written DCTs were neglected and were conducted in English language only.

The DCT took the format of dialogue construction questionnaires, in which a rejoinder was left out. In each situation, each dialogue was preceded by a short description of situations specifying the setting. Respondents were asked to provide an answer to the particular situation. The DCTs in this study consisted of 20 request-eliciting scenarios (see Appendix 2, pp. 357-363), which took place at the

airport check-in counters in Taiwan. A sample taken from the situation of the DCTs used in the study is shown as follows. An example of DCTs used in this study:

Situation: A passenger's luggage is overweight, he is a middle aged gentleman from Germany and he has been waiting in a queue to be served for 30 minutes, he seems somewhat impatient with the situation. As an airline ground staff member working at the airport check-in counter, you have to make a request to the passenger for paying the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger in this situation? Please provide responses specifically. I would say (to the passenger):

Airline ground staff:

As we can see in the above example of DCTs, the respondents are asked to take on the role of airline employees at the airport check-in counters in the tests and write down responses they thought the most appropriate in the given context.

The construction of the DCTs for this study went through several phases before the final version was determined. The following sections provide a detailed description of the process and the phases including one focus group interview and two semi-structured interviews, the pilot test of the 1st version, which will be described in Section 4.6, and the final version.

Phase 1: Focus Group Interview in the Pre-Pilot Study

Morgan (1996, p. 130) defined "focus groups as a research technique that collects

data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher.” To avoid confusion between focus groups and group interviews it is important to distinguish between the two. Kitzinger & Barbour (1999, p. 4) explained “Focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of group interaction to generate data.” In group interviews the researchers ask questions of each person in turn, while in focus groups researchers encourage participants to talk to one another; asking questions, exchanging experiences and commenting on each others’ points of views (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 4).

In order to design the questions in the DCTs for this study, the Focus Group Interview was employed in the pre-pilot study. The rationale for using Focus Group Interview is described as follows.

- (1) Focus group interviews are particularly useful when it comes to investigating *what* participants think, allowing participants to generate their own questions, frames and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms, in their own vocabulary (Morgan, 1997, p. 12).
- (2) Focus group interviews could serve as a source of preliminary data in a primarily quantitative study. For example, they could be employed to help construct questionnaires: developing an understanding of key issues and refining the phrasing of specific questions (Morgan, 1997).
- (3) Focus group interviews could also be used as a source of follow-up data to assist the DCTs. For instance, they might be used to help understand survey results.

(4) The focus group was adopted rather than individual interviews. This was to avoid participants feeling isolated and that individual interviews may have been thought of as a test-like activity which may have been stressful. As the aim of the focus group interviews was to encourage participants to share their views, a focus group interview was seen to be more appropriate rather than individual interviews.

(5) Due to participants' busy school schedule they were unable to be interviewed individually and focus group interviews provided a way of collecting data relatively quickly from a large number of research participants.

The focus group interview was firstly conducted with Group X participants - 3rd year students during their placement in the pre-pilot study. The purpose of focus group's discussion was to collect students' viewpoints in terms of their personal placement experiences at the airlines, such as what most frequently encountered situations were at airport and how they dealt with difficult passengers and situations. The researcher then designed the content of the DCTs based on the results of the focus group interview in the pre-pilot study (see Appendix 1) with Group X students during their placement.

The duration of the interview was about 60 minutes. Though an interview guide had been prepared as the semi-structured interview guide, all participants were encouraged to talk for as long as they preferred. All the interviews were audio recorded with consent from interviewees and later transcribed verbatim for future analysis. According to the participants in the focus group interview, there were 15

situations (see Appendix 2 for the full list) which they encountered most frequently at the check-in counters during their placement.

Phase 2: Semi- Structured Interviews in the Pre-Pilot Study

In order to collect as many authentic situations occurring most frequently at the check-in counters as possible, three interview invitation letters were initially sent to the target managers- three airline managers from three international airlines in Taiwan to solicit their consent and the most convenient time for an in-person visit. A follow-up courtesy phone call was then made to the three airline managers respectively in order to obtain their consent to proceed in arranging the interviews. However, due to company policy one of the airline managers declined the interview invitation. Therefore, two semi-structured interviews with two airline customer service managers from two international airlines in Taiwan were conducted. As far as the interviewees are concerned, one of the airline managers was a senior customer service manager with 25 years of airline customer service experience and was promoted in 2013 as a general manager, working at the airport. The other participant was also a customer service manager with 20 years of airline customer service experience. One of their major duties was to supervise and provide constructive suggestions to front-line staff working at the customer service counters. Their rich customer service experience enabled them to provide reliable and valid information in terms of the airline customers service principles and handle various possible difficult situations at the check-in counters. Thus, they are considered qualified to make the information generalisable.

The duration of the interviews was about 45 minutes each. In the two interviews the airline managers were invited to read the 15 frequently occurring situations suggested by Group X, seven placement students, in order to verify if they actually occurred frequently. At the same time they were also invited to propose any other situations which airline ground staff may encounter frequently. The results of the two interviews showed that the two airline managers both agreed with the 15 frequently occurring situations provided by placement students, Manager A proposed another 3 situations while Manager B suggested 2 more situations. The two airline managers' suggestions were taken into account in order to design the questionnaire which authentically reflected the work of airline ground staff at the check-in counters, and therefore, 20 situations comprised the first version of the DCTs.

Phase 3: Pilot test

In order to test the reliability and the validity of the first version of DCTs, a pilot test of the first version was carried out in the pilot study (see Section 4.6, p. 146).

4.5.3 English Proficiency Test - TOEIC

“TOEIC” is the acronym of “the Test of English for International Communication” produced by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey, USA. The TOEIC claims to function as an English proficiency test for measuring how well people can employ English language for communication purposes in global workplaces. Structurally speaking, TOEIC is a 2-hour multiple-choice test consisting of two major receptive parts: listening and reading comprehension. As far as the test measurement is concerned, the total score adds up to a scale from 10 to 990 points.

On the basis of the information from the ETS website, it is estimated that more than two million people take the TOEIC every year, with over 8,000 companies worldwide applying the TOEIC scores to determine an employee's English ability. Bagnell et al. (2007) indicated that the TOEIC test is one method to prove one's proficiency in English. The test is a general assessment of what is known and of an ability to use English in the work place. Rogers (2006) also demonstrated that many businesses actually require people to take the TOEIC exams prior to being hired, prior to being considered for promotions, or prior to being allowed to travel overseas.

According to the Taiwanese airline managers from two different international airlines, the TOEIC exam scores are generally used by Taiwanese airlines as a key reference for measuring applicants' English communicative competence, thus applicants were precisely required to provide their TOEIC English proficiency certificates and were expected to hold test scores of at least 550. To meet the prerequisite language requirements for airlines, the Airline and Transport Service Management Department at NKUHT has adopted the minimum scores of at least 550 on TOEIC as a threshold for students' graduation or equivalent scores from other proficiency tests such TOEFL, IELTS, etc.

In this study, to validate the proficiency levels of the students, a proficiency test TOEIC mock test was administered to Group A and B. In order to classify Group A participants in the study according to their English linguistic competence, Group A participants were classified according to their scores on the TOEIC examination. Group A participants who had scored 500 or lower were allocated to the 'low' L2 proficiency group, while those with scores of 550 were classified as intermediate

learners. For participants with scores higher than 550 they were ranked as the high proficiency group and those participants with scores lower than 550 were assigned to the low proficiency group. These rankings were used as indicators of proficiency for the purpose of this study.

4.6 Pilot Study

In this section, the description of the procedure and results of the pilot study is presented.

4.6.1. Participants in pilot study

Six subjects, classified as Group Y, participated in the pilot study include five female students and one male student. The participants were 2nd year students from the ATSMC of NKUHT and their consent to participate in the tests was obtained. There are two reasons behind choosing these six students as participants in this pilot study. Firstly, these students volunteered for the test. Secondly, in order to avoid using the participants who are in the four year program leading to their BA in the main study, the six participants who participated in the data collection in the pilot study were taken from the two year program leading to their BA after completing the 2 year Diploma program. The background of subjects is displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Background of subjects in the polite study

Group	Number	Age / number of subjects	Gender / number of subjects	Airline Experience

Group Y (2 nd year students, Two Year BA Program)	6	21 years old / 4 22 years old / 2	Male / 3 Female / 3	No airline placement experience
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4.6.2 Data Collection in pilot study

In the pilot study each participant was asked to write his/her responses to 20 questions in the DCTs. At the beginning of the test, the researcher explained the instructions written on the test to the subjects and made sure that the subjects understood. After the explanation, the subjects had to respond to the questions by writing down their responses. There was a time limitation for groups to complete the DCTs. The participants were allowed 60 minutes to complete the First DCTs. Responses were hand written. After the completion of the DCTs, the six participants were interviewed together in order to obtain their feedback on the DCT. The focus group interview was conducted in English in the classroom and the duration of the interview was about 60 minutes. The focus group interview was both audio-recorded.

4.6.3 Results of pilot study

From the experience of the pilot study certain areas for improvement were noted. Firstly, the examiner who is the director's assistant of the ATSM of National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism found that all 6 participants only completed 10 out of 20 questions in the test within 60 minutes. The examiner had no choice but to extend the time for another 60 minutes so that participants were able to complete all the questions of the DCTs. Thus, the time of the DCTs in the main study was extended from 60 minutes to 120 minutes.

Secondly, two semi-structured interviews were conducted before Group Y participants took the Role Plays. The examiner found that participants lived in the university dormitory and discussed the questions together after the First DCTs so it was decided that in the main study the participants should be interviewed before they took the Role Plays, to ensure that they would not recall situations of the First DCTs.

Thirdly, with the results revealed in the pilot test of the first version of the DCTs, the questions of the DCTs needed to be expanded in terms of the passengers' social status, for example, age, gender, nationality, profession so that participants would be aware of the cultural differences when answering each question in the test. For example, participants claimed that they feel stressed while dealing with English native speaker passengers as they feel the English native speaker passengers evaluate their English ability. In addition, some participants admitted that they would treat elderly passengers differently, i.e. they would sympathize with the elderly more than young passengers, and they might not ask elderly passengers to pay for the excess baggage charge. After the pilot test, twenty situations in the DCTs were modified and administered to the participants to make requests by taking on the role of airline ground staff.

Fourthly, in the focus group interview five out of six participants expressed the view that they had difficulty in answering the questions in the test since they had no placement experience. They were not sure whether their answers were the correct solution to the problems at the check-in counter of the airport so they spent much time thinking about it and paid less attention to the composition of the responses in

English. For example they didn't scrutinize the grammatical correctness of the sentences after providing the answers to the questions. Yet, one participant claimed that she was able to answer the questions because she had placement experience. Therefore, in the main study it is necessary to investigate whether participants without placement experience have background knowledge about handling situations at the check-in counter of the airport or not because the absence of training at handling situations at the check-in counter of the airport makes the data particularly suitable to examine to what extent the exposure to the airport working environment helps participants develop their pragmatic ability to make polite English requests.

Finally, the aim out of conducting the Role Plays in this research was to test whether the DCTs was a useful instrument for collecting data representative of what participants might actually say in the airline service discourse. Thus, the Role Play was used to scrutinize whether there would any reply differences between the DCTs and Role Plays. The results of the study showed that the data elicited by the Role Plays supported the results found in the DCTs as there were no significant differences between the written and oral data in terms of types and frequency of request strategies. Thus, the results suggested that the DCT is a suitable instrument for data collection in this study. The results of the pilot study are displayed in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Results of the pilot study

Tool	DCTs	Focus Group Interview
Problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exam time 60 minutes is too short. 2. Participants were not aware of cultural differences when answering the questions in the test and this made it difficult to answer. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five out of six participants had difficulties in answering the questions of the test due to a lack of placement experience in the airline. One participant claimed that she was able to answer the questions because she had placement experience. 2. One participant seldom said anything and offered mainly verbal and non-verbal agreement with the statements made by others.
Solution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extending exam time for another 60 minutes 2. The questions of the DCTs needed to be modified in terms of the passenger's social status. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Placement experience is a variable for the pragmatic development in this study, therefore the participants without this background knowledge will not be taught about how to handle various situations that front-line staff experience due to lack of passenger experience. In the main study therefore, participants would be divided into two groups, those who have airline experience and those without. 2. The researcher should encourage the less vocal participants to elicit their feedback about the DCTs within the focus group.

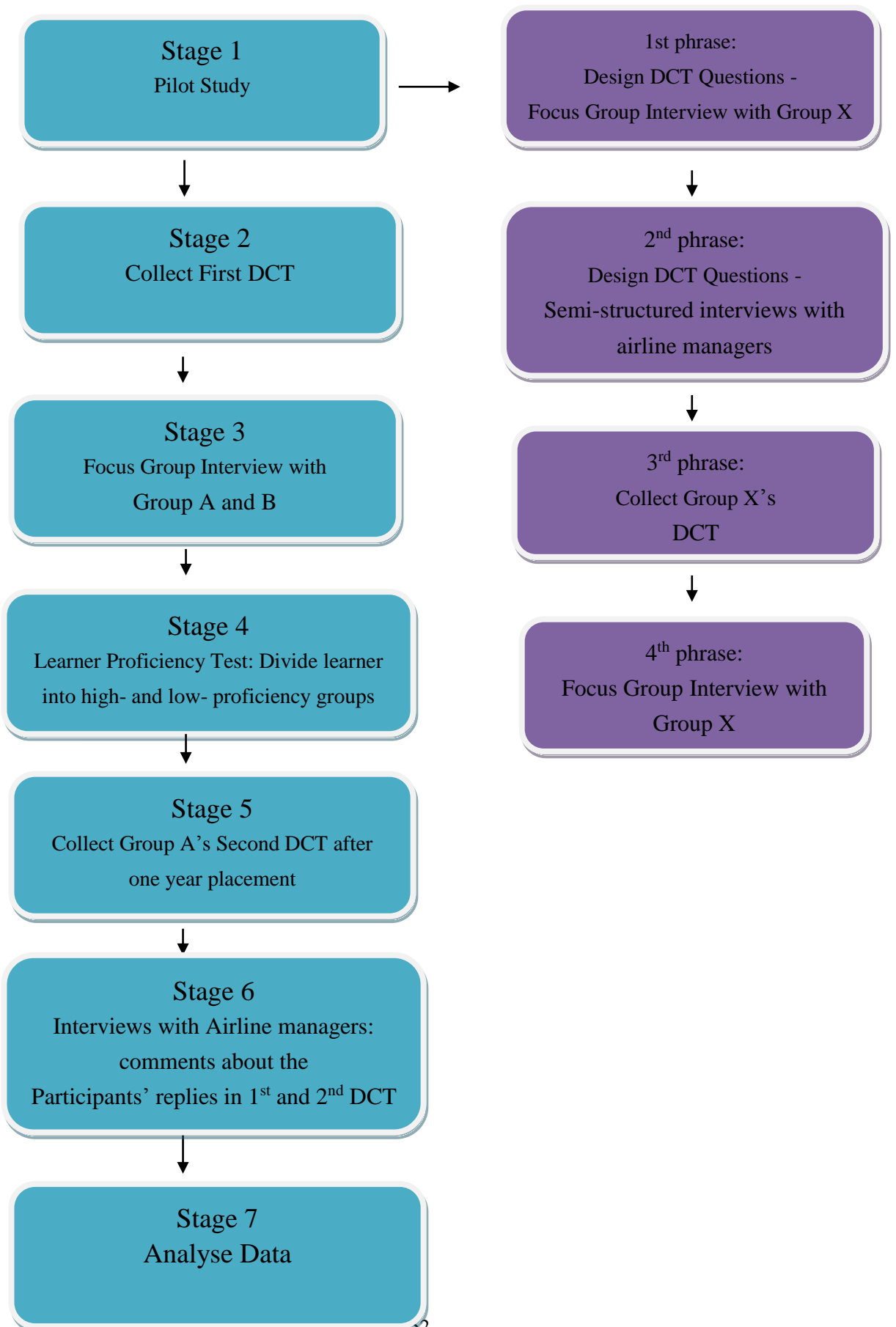
Change	<p>1.Exam time: 2 hours in the main study</p> <p>2. In the modified DCTs, more information is gleaned about each passenger’s social status such as age, gender and whether they knew the customer. This information can then be constructive in determining how airline front-line staff would interact with satisfy passengers’ expectations and requirements.</p>	<p>1. At the end of the focus group interview the researcher will encourage the participants who are quiet to share their viewpoints about the reasons for providing particular answers to the questions in the DCTs.</p>
Notes		

The methodological drawbacks in the pilot study were overcome based on the results of the pilot study. Following the pilot study, data collection in the main study was carried out.

4.7 Data collection in main study

The description of the stages of the data collection is displayed in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 The stages of data collection



4.7.1 Gaining access for Data collection

This section provides some information of the anticipated problems and the process of negotiating access to the hospitality and tourism university students and the airline staff.

Before gaining access to a whole class of students and airlines staff in order to collect data as effective samples, several potential problems have been considered such as the selection of the subjects, the locations of conducting this research and the timing of this investigation. A difficulty is that of student reluctance to take part in a study which would involve writing responses to two questionnaires, being recorded and interviewed, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, as the design of the questionnaire is not multiple choice based, instead it requires students to answer questions in detail students may consider it is a test rather than a questionnaire. In order to ease students' worries, a meeting was held to explain that the questionnaire itself is not a test and the results are confidential.

Secondly, students are required to answer the questions in English, which may hinder some students with low English proficiency from taking part in the questionnaire. In order to comfort their fear of answering these questionnaires in English, an orientation was held to explain that grammar errors were tolerant in answering these questions to encourage their participation.

Thirdly, due to a busy course schedule it was not easy to gather all the students together to participate in the First DCTs and the interviews. Alternatively, they were

encouraged to sacrifice their lunch breaks to conduct the DCTs and the interviews individually.

The first step towards conducting the study was to negotiate access to the students of (ATSMD) at NKUHT and airline staff. Permission to approach students was gained from the Director of ASTMD, and the students were approached individually. An explanation of the aims and procedures of the proposed study was given to the students, who were invited to ask questions. They were then provided with a consent form (see Appendix 3, p. 364) to read and sign. Next, in order to collect data from the airline staff, authorization was sought from both airline staff and their managers. Having their consent was to ensure that the research would not pose a risk to their organization and that the results would be of benefit to the airlines. Regarding the selection of airline staff, three international airlines managers in Taiwan were approached in order to gain their company's approval. Nevertheless, two airline managers said that although their staff were interested in the research they were not confident in answering the questionnaire as they were required to answer the questions in English. The airline staff inquired about the possibility of answering the questions in Chinese Mandarin. As considering answering the questions in Chinese Mandarin may distort the original research purposes, I had to decline this suggestion. Thus, due to the limitation of participants, the airline staff group was only selected from one airline. The airline staff, who were willing to participate in the study, were then provided with a consent letter to read and sign.

4.7.2 Data Collection Procedure

Regarding the procedures of data collection, the data was collected in five stages and is described as follows.

Stage 1: First DCTs – Groups A, B and C

The First DCTs were distributed to two groups of the students from National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism, who were asked to write responses in the DCTs. At this stage, the participants completed the First DCTs and were required to answer the questions in English. There was a time limitation for groups to write responses in the DCTs, i.e. the participants had to complete the test within 120 minutes. The instruction for the test was given before distributing the test. A neutral and objective instruction was given. To avoid a possible Hawthorne Effect which would have negatively affected the internal validity of the study (Barron, 2003) no information was given to the participants about the focus of the study during the data collection process as it is viewed that this might affect their performance. One week after completing the written DCTs, the participants took the Role Plays.

After the completion of the First DCTs, the focus group interviews were conducted to gain the participants' feedback on the First DCTs.

Stage 2: Focus Group Interviews - Groups A and B

The four focus group interviews took place one week after the First DCTs. Both Group A and Group B were divided into four subgroups, due to their academic commitments during this time. In total four semi-structured focus group interviews

with Group A and Group B were carried out. Each interview lasted for one hour. Group A and Group B were divided into two small groups respectively for the focus group interview. The first and second interviews were conducted with a total of 20 participants in Group A, i.e. 10 participants attended the first interview and the rest of the participants joined the second interview; the third and fourth focus group interviews were held with 20 participants in Group B. The participants' responses were audio-taped. Paper and notepads were provided to the participants in the focus group interview. At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained that the aim of the focus group is to encourage people to talk to each other. In each interview the participants were seated in a circle to help establish a conducive atmosphere.

Stage 3: Second DCTs - Group A

In order to examine the request strategy use of Group A participants across different proficiency levels before and their after their placement, Group A took a further series of DCTs after one year placement. The scenarios for the First DCTs and the Second DCTs are the same in order to focus on the comparisons between written data of the First and Second.

Stage 4: Interviews with Airline managers about 1st and 2nd DCTs

At this stage, two airline customer service managers with at least 15 years airline customer service experience from two of the international airlines in Taiwan were invited to evaluate the participants' replies to determine whether they reflected customer service principles in staff training and further more to what extent appropriate language use was a natural occurrence at check-in counters. The language used in the interviews was Chinese Mandarin. The interviews were divided

into two steps. The first step was prior to discussing the results of Group A and Group B in the First DCTs with the two airline managers; they were invited to comment on the results of the data and to appraise the participants' performance. In the second step, and again, prior to discussing the results of Group B in the Second DCTs with the two airline managers, they were invited to comment on the results of the data and to evaluate the participants' performance.

4.8 Approaches to data analysis

The collected data were interpreted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The frequency with which the subjects used request strategies and lexical repertoire categorized on the basis of the coding scheme – CCSARP (Blum-Kulka and House and Kasper, 1989) were analysed quantitatively to determine whether there were significant differences across the research groups: Group A (2nd year students), Group B (4th year students) and Group C (airline staff). Moreover, the research subjects' replies in each situation were analysed qualitatively based on the customer service criteria used in airline in-house training (see Section 4.8.2, pp. 169-176).

4.8.1 The Coding Scheme - CCSARP

The CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) coding method was adopted to analyse the data in this study. In the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), Blum-Kulka and House and Kasper (1989) examined varieties of speech act realisation of requests and apologies in seven languages and set up nine request strategies which were rank-ordered by increasing degrees of directness on the basis

of formal and functional features. The request expressions in the DCTs in the study were analysed based on the coding schema CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) for level of directness (direct, conventionally direct and non-conventionally indirect), presence of alerters, internal modifiers used in Head Act and supportive moves.

The CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) coding method was used to analyse the data in this study as firstly all of the equivalent counterparts in their classifications of request expressions can be applied to analyse the ground staff's interactions with passengers at the airline check-in counters. For example, they classified request expressions into three parts: *alerters, head act of request and adjuncts to the head act - supportives*. The *address terms - alerters* are especially important in Chinese society as the appropriate usage of titles is a crucial factor to show speakers' politeness. Secondly, the scale adopted to measure the directness can serve as a basis to discuss and evaluate the degree of politeness for the participants in this study. Moreover, Blum-Kulka's framework has been modified and additions were made in order to analyse the data in this study. The reason for this is that the code used in CCSARP by Blum-Kulka and House and Kasper (1989) cannot be applied to fully decipher the data of this study as the data in the CCSARP project is based on social discourse whereas the collected data in the present study is airline service discourse- business discourse. In order to identify the differences between social discourse and airline service discourse, the features of airline English are described in the previous chapter (see Section 2.3.3, pp. 36-42).

According to the CCSARP coding scheme request expressions were classified into the following parts: alerters such as terms of address or attention getters (e.g., ‘John’, ‘excuse me’), the “Head act” of request and “adjuncts to the head act” – supportive moves (i.e. external modifications) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 200). An example of the segment of a request response is displayed as follows.

John	could I borrow your notes from yesterday’s class	I promise I will return it tomorrow.
A: alerter	B: Head act	C: Adjunct to Head act

4.8.1.1 Alerters

When preceding requests, alerters serve as exchange openers. “Coding of address terms proceeds by type (nominal categories) noting variations in type of appellations (Title + surname/Surname only, etc.) as well as semantic variations in items used (‘darling, could you...’ as opposed to ‘you fool, why don’t you...’)” (Blum-Kulka and House, 1989, p. 17). In the present study ‘excuse me + sir/madam’ was counted as an alerter based on the airline staff training of the airlines in Taiwan. According to the staff training all airline employees are required to say ‘excuse me, sir/madam’ for getting the passenger’s attention when interacting with passengers.

4.8.1.2 Head Acts

The Head Act is ‘the minimal unit which can realize a request’ (House and Kasper 1989). The Head Acts can be analysed under three main categories and 9

subcategories from the most direct to the least direct. The definition of the three categories is explained as follows.

- (1) direct speech act (DIR) which is the most direct, explicit level, such as imperatives (e.g. Open the door.), or by other verbal means that name the act as a request, such as performatives (Austin, 1962) and 'hedged performative' (Fraser, 1975) (e.g. I want you to take the next flight.).
- (2) conventional indirect speech (CID) “procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201) such as *Suggestory* (e.g. How about taking some items from your luggage?) and *Preparatory* (e.g. Can you come back in 5 minutes?).
- (3) nonconventional indirect speech act (NCID), i.e. “the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act ('Why is the window open'), or by reliance on contextual clues ('It's cold in here')” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201) such as Hint (e.g. You have been busy here, haven't you?).

The CCSARP schema classifies the Head Acts into nine types according to the degree of directness. The nine request strategies are defined and exemplified in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Strategies used in Head Acts

Main category	Subcategory	Definition
Direct Strategy	Mood Derivable	The imperative marks its illocutionary force as a request. E.g. <i>Leave</i> me alone. <i>Clean up</i> this mess, please.
	Explicit performatives	The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speakers. E.g. <i>I'm asking you</i> to clean up the mess.
	Hedged performatives	Utterances in which the naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions. E.g. <i>I'd like to/must/ have to</i> ask you to clean the kitchen right now.
	Locution derivable	The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution. E.g. <i>You should/must/ have to /ought to</i> move your car.
	Want statement	The utterance expresses the speaker's intention or feeling <i>vis d vis</i> the fact that the hearer do X. E.g. <i>I wish</i> you'd stop bothering me.
Conventional Indirect	Suggestory Formula	The sentence contains a suggestion to do x. E.g. <i>How about</i> cleaning up?
	Query Preparatory	Utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions (e.g., ability, willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized in any specific language. E.g. <i>Can/Could I</i> borrow your notes? <i>Could you</i> clear up the kitchen, <i>please</i> ? <i>Would you mind</i> moving your car?
Non-conventional Indirect	Strong hint	Utterances containing partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act. E.g. You have left the kitchen in a right mess.
	Mild hint	Utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable through the context as requests (indirectly pragmatically implying the act). E.g. You've been busy here, haven't you?

(Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 202)

The present study is based on the classification adopted by the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) with a number of modifications. First of all, according to Blum-Kulka (1989), the definition of 'Locution derivable' is utterances which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act. E.g. *You'll should/must/ have to /ought to/ move your car. I would like to argue that "Locution derivable" is utterances that suggest an obligation of the hearer to perform an act or prohibit the hearer from performing an act without making specific reference to the request (obligation) or any of its elements. For example,*

1. *You can't check-in because you are late and the counters are closed.*
2. *Excuse me, here is airport you can't drink beers and talk loudly.*
3. *According to our over-weight rule, we have to charge you for the excess weight. Thank you for your cooperation.*

From the utterance in example 3 'we have to charge you for the excess weight' the speaker didn't explicitly state the obligation of the hearer by saying 'you should pay for the excess.', however the utterance did imply a reciprocal obligation on the hearer's part, i.e. "according to our over-weight rule, you are required to pay extra for the excess weight." Therefore the above request expression 'we have to charge you for the excess weight' should be classified into the category of Locution derivable. Blum-Kulka's coding schema was modified and is displayed as follows.

Table 4.6 Strategies used in Head Acts in the present study:

* The examples used in the table were taken from my own data therefore there might be some grammatical inaccurateness.

Main category	Subcategory	Definition
Direct Strategy	Mood Derivable	Utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force. <i>E.g. Please pay the excess baggage charge.</i>
	Explicit Performative	Utterances in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named. <i>E.g. I request that you pay the excess.</i>
	Hedged Performative	Utterances in which the naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions. <i>E.g. We must ask you to abandon some articles of luggage.</i>
	Locution Derivable ²	1. Utterances that suggest an obligation on the hearer to perform an act. <i>E.g. You should/must/have to/need to/ought to pay your excess baggage charge.</i> 2. Prohibition can be thought of as the negation of obligation. <i>E.g. He is obliged not do something</i> (Leech & Svartvik, 1988, p. 145). <i>E.g. You can't check-in because you are late and the counters are closed.</i> 3. Utterances that prohibit the hearer from performing an act without making specific reference to the request (obligation) or any of its elements. <i>E.g. We have to charge you the excess.</i>
Conventional	Want statement	Utterances which state the speaker's desire that the hearer carries out the act. <i>E.g. We hope you pay the excess baggage charge for the safety.</i> <i>E.g. We would like to ask you to stay overnight and take the flight the following day.</i>
	Suggestory	Utterances which the illocution intention is made by

² Modification of Locution derivable in Blum-Kulka's coding schema

Indirect	Formula ³	<p>means of suggestion or routine suggestive formula.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formula: <i>How about taking the next flight?</i> 2. Performative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) I <i>suggest</i> you to take something out from your luggage. (b) I <i>advise</i> you to take the next flight. 3. Tentative suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) <i>You could</i> repack your luggage and take something on board by yourself. (b) <i>You may</i> ask another passenger to change seat with you. 4. A suggestion with choices/options. <p>E.g. Sir, your luggage is overweight. <i>There are two measures to solve it, one is...and the other is.....</i></p>
	Query Preparatory	<p>Utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g., ability, willingness) as conventionalized in any specific language.</p> <p>E.g. <i>Can/could</i> you repack your luggage, <i>please?</i></p> <p>E.g. <i>Would you mind</i> sitting in the Economy class?</p> <p>E.g. <i>May we arrange the next flight for you?</i></p> <p>E.g. <i>If you don't mind</i>, we can arrange a later flight for you.</p>
Non-conventional Indirect	Strong hint	<p>Utterances containing partial reference to an object or element needed for the implementation of the act.</p> <p>E.g. <i>I am sorry but the flight is closed for check-in. We do apologize for the inconvenience.</i></p> <p>E.g. <i>Excuse me, under the airlines regulations, luggage in excess of twenty kg is taxed.</i></p>
	Mild hint	<p>Utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable as requests by context.</p> <p>(No examples in the data).</p>

³ Modification of Suggestory formula in Blum-Kulka's coding schema

4.8.1.3 Supportive moves (External modifiers)

Apart from internal modifiers, speakers might also choose to support the speech act with external modifications. A supportive move is a “unit external to the request” (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p. 276) whose function is to soften the request through the use of mitigating supportive moves. Speakers may use supportive moves, occurring either before or after the head act to justify, modify, or disarm the request to increase chances of listeners’ compliance (Edmondson, 1981; Faerch and Kasper, 1989).

The classification of supportive moves in the present study is based on the classification of the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), with some modifications and additions based on the requirements for airline staff training in Taiwan. The classification used in the present study was modified based on the customer service in airline staff training before the data collection. For example, the supportive moves- ‘*reward*’ was modified and replaced with the term ‘*compensation*’ and the ‘*reassurance*’ was added in the classification of supportive moves. ‘*Reward*’ is one of the supportive moves in the classification of the CCSARP project and the definition of ‘*reward*’ is that the speaker tries to persuade the listener to comply with the request by offering reward or compensation if the request is carried out. When the airline employees make requests to passengers the airlines sometimes would offer some forms of compensation to the passengers to make up for their loss. Therefore, in the present study ‘*reward*’ will be modified and replaced with the term ‘*compensation*’. In addition, when airline employees make requests to passengers in order to eliminate the degree of imposition that is put on

them, airlines sometimes offer reassurance to passengers. For example, when a passenger arrives late at the check-in counter and the flight is closed for check-in the airline employee reassures the passenger that although the flight is closed for check-in they can check the schedule for the next available flight. Therefore, in the present study ‘*reassurance*’ will be added in the classification of supportive moves based on airline staff training. The classification used in the present study is modified and added as follows:

- a. Preparatory: The speaker prepares his or her request by making the listener aware that a request is anticipated, e.g. “*I’d like to ask you something..*”
- b. Pre-commitment: The speaker asks permission to make the request in order to reduce the imposition of his/her request.
E.g. “*Could you do me a favour?*”
E.g. “*Please allow me to ...*”
E.g. “*May I have your permission...*”
- c. Grounder: The speaker explains or justifies the reasons for the request.
E.g. “*I forgot to bring my pen. Could I borrow yours?*”
- d. Disarmer: The speaker provides reasons to disarm the addressee from the possibility of a refusal”.
E.g. “*I’ know you don’t like lending out your notes, but could...*”
E.g. “*I know that you are busy but...*”
- e. Empathy: The speaker tries to reduce the degree of imposition that is put on the listener by showing that the speaker understands and cares about the listener’s problems.
E.g. “*I understand you must feel very frustrated about this situation...*”

f. Apology: The speaker adopts an apology as “strategic disarmers” (Trosborg, 1995, p. 384) for a face-threatening act, to apologize for causing an inconvenience, disturbing or interrupting the listeners that the speaker’s request causes.

E.g. “*I’m sorry to bother you but could I have a break?*”

g. Accept Responsibility: The speaker denigrates him/herself by blaming him/herself for making such a request due to his/her own misbehaviour or mistakes.

E.g. “*It’s our fault...*”

h. Compensation: The speaker tries to make up for the listener’s loss if the request is carried out.

E.g. “*We will compensate for your loss.*”

i. Reassurance: The speaker gives advice or help that takes away the listener’s fears or doubts.

E.g. “*I’ll do my best to rearrange your seat.*”

E.g. “*We will do our best to assist you with taking the next flight.*”

j. Gratitude: The speaker shows his/her appreciations if the request is complied with. The strategy is usually used at the end of the request utterance.

E.g. “*Thank you very much.*”

4.8.1.4 Internal modifiers

According to Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1989), the Head Act can be internally modified to soften the force of the request. Internal modifiers have been defined as

‘elements within the request utterance proper (linked to the head act), the presence of which is not essential for the utterance to be potentially understood as a request’ (Blum-Kulka 1989, p. 60). According to Blum-Kulka (1989), there are two types of internal modifications: syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders.

(1) *Syntactic downgraders:*

Syntactic Downgraders include interrogative, conditional, negative structures, past tense marker, and the durative aspect marker. For example:

a. *Interrogative*

Could you do the washing up?

b. *Negation*

Excuse me. I wonder if you *wouldn't mind* giving me a lift?

c. *Past tense*

I *wanted* to ask for a loan.

d. *Embedded 'if clause*

I would appreciate it *if* you left me alone.

(2) *Lexical/phrasal Downgraders:*

The lexical and phrasal downgraders examined in the present study were the same as the downgraders tested in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (henceforth CCSARP). These downgraders are as follows:

- Politeness markers (e.g. “please”)
- Consultative device/Openers

(e.g., “would you mind”, “do you think”, “would it be all right if”, “is it/would it be possible”, “do you think I could”, “is it all right?”, “Is that ok to”.)

- Downtoner (modal adverbs such as “perhaps”, “possibly”).
- Upgraders:
 - a. Intensifiers (e.g. Clean up this mess, it’s disgusting.
 - b. Expletives (e.g. You still haven’t cleaned up that bloody mess!)
- Understarters (e.g., “a bit”, “a little”)
- Hedges (e.g., “sort of”, “rather”, “quite”)
- Subjectivizers (e.g., “I’m afraid”, “I wonder”, “I think/suppose”)
- Cajolers (e.g. “you know”, “I’d really like ...”)
- Appealers (e.g., “clean the kitchen dear, will you?”, “..., ok/right?)

In the study, the request expressions in the collected data were coded based on the modified coding scheme CCSARP (Blum-Kulka and House and Kasper, 1989) for level of directness (direct, conventionally direct and non-conventionally indirect), presence of alerters, internal modifiers used in Head Act and supportive moves. Both sets of data (First and Second DCTs) were coded by a native English speaker. The CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) coding method was adopted to analyse the data in this study as firstly all of the equivalent counterparts in their classifications of request expressions can be applied to analyse the ground staff’s interactions with passengers at the airline check-in counters. For example, they classified request expressions into three parts: *alerters, head act of request and adjuncts to the head act - supportives*. The *address terms - alerters* are especially important in Chinese society as the appropriate usage of titles is a crucial factor to

show speaker's politeness. Secondly, the scale adopted to measure the directness can serve as a basis to discuss and evaluate the degree of politeness for the participants in this study.

4.8.2 Airline customer service criteria

Apart from applying the modified coding scheme CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989) for quantitative analysis, the data were also analysed qualitatively based on the criteria for customer service of airline in-house training. The rationale for that is CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989) cannot fully illuminate the data of this study because the data in the CCSARP project is social discourse present in everyday family conversation and the collected data in the present study is airline service discourse so some of the original categories proposed by Blum-Kulka are not relevant in the business context. I have modified the coding scheme in part to take this into account. Therefore, the purpose of analysing the data qualitatively was not to make up for any deficiency in the data but because a qualitative approach will provide a fuller picture.

The participant replies were evaluated by two airline managers from two different international airlines in Taiwan in terms of level of politeness and degree of conformity to airline managers' perception of what constitutes appropriate request behaviour on the part of check-in clerks based on customer service principles in staff training. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of airline customer service criteria, three informal discussions with two airline managers about airline customer service in staff training were conducted respectively. The language used in the

discussions was Chinese Mandarin. Two airline managers indicated that increasingly, attention to the customer is becoming the criterion by which an airline company is judged. Customer service training is seen as the overriding principle by the airlines in their in-house training agenda. Therefore nowadays many airlines in Taiwan have required their staff to attend the Customer Service training course (see Section 1.4, pp. 7-17) especially the staff from the following departments: ticket office, reservations, check-in, traffic, operations, baggage service, cargo reservations and receiving public relations and sales support personnel.

The two airline managers further pointed out that ground staff have many regulations they must follow and enforce to maintain the safety of a flight. However, when following the regulations they must also maintain good customer service. As a matter of 'duty of care' in enforcing safety rules they must do so, and focus their interaction as to 'provide safety with service', consequently airline employees will enforce safety rules devoid of imposing these rules in an authoritarian way. They need to avoid sounding rude or threatening. As a matter of course, front-line staff may request passengers to abide by certain regulations, such as baggage weight restrictions which may cause conflict. Two airline managers acknowledged that enforcing rules in a polite manner to avoid the potential of conflict is never an easy task for ground staff, even for senior staff. Thus, special training for effective communication skills is always a priority in the customer service training courses. Occasionally airline staff may need to ask for passenger's compliance or cooperation. For example, airline front-line staff working at the check-in counters may encounter a range of passenger queries or problems may occur at any step of the check-in

procedure. At Step 3, there are cases when passengers checked in excess baggage and were requested by front-line staff to pay the excess charge.

Regarding service language in the customer service training, airline staff are told that their language should always be polite and when performing any request airline staff must explain the reasons for their requests and show awareness of how they make requests, in terms of words, strategies and non-verbal language. For example, using words to express politeness e.g. please; using appropriate terms of address and exchange openers e.g. excuse me; avoiding using phrases such as 'I am sorry' as exchange openers; using non-verbal communication, such as making eye contact and smiling. If a passenger becomes upset or emotional airline staff can reassure them and show that airline staff are concerned by empathising. This also helps to prepare the passenger for what is to follow and encourages them to consider the available options.

When requesting the cooperation of the passengers there are some principles airline staff should follow in order to 'make a safety request'. The principles of making a safety request and suggested expressions under each principle are as follows.

Principle 1 Empathy: showing understanding and consideration of the passenger's problems.

e.g. I'm very/really sorry, sir/madam.

e.g. I really wish I could do more.

e.g. I can appreciate how inconvenient this is for you.

e.g. I understand how inconvenient and frustrating this must be for you.

Principle 2 Explanation: making a statement telling the passenger why something happened.

e.g. The flight is closed for check-in.

e.g. Due to technical problems the flight will be delayed for an hour.

e.g. We are unable to allocate you a seat at this moment because the flight is heavily booked.

e.g. I cannot guarantee that your bag in its present state will reach your destination without further damage.

e.g. Passengers are required to pay the excess baggage charge if the luggage is over the baggage allowance.

Principle 3 Reassurance: giving advice or help that takes away passenger's fears or doubts.

e.g. Don't worry madam. We will do our best to help you.

e.g. We will offer you a free drink and meal voucher while you are waiting for the flight.

Principle 4 Apology: apologizing for the inconvenience caused to passengers.

e.g. Sorry for any inconvenience caused to you.

Principle 5 Offering alternatives/options: making an alternate suggestion.

e.g. Are you willing to...

e.g. What I can suggest is....

e.g. It would be best if ...

Principle 6 Closure (Gratitude): Finish the conversation by thanking the passenger for their cooperation.

e.g. Thank you very much for your understanding.

e.g. We really appreciate your cooperation.

(Quoted from Taiwanese airlines staff training handouts, 2007, 2nd edition)

According to the managers I interviewed, an awareness of the staff's communication skills when dealing with passengers, as detailed in the principles above, is vital. Providing good service is not only a matter of 'what to communicate' to the passengers, i.e. using service minded words and phrases, but also, 'how to communicate' with the passengers. It is suggested in the customer service training that using a calm, gentle voice and always maintaining eye contact is an effective strategy when dealing with passengers. Using inappropriate non-verbal communication is said to be unproductive leading to misunderstandings, conflict and even complaints. Two airline managers in the two informal discussions expressed that one of the major sources of passenger complaints, which airlines have received, concerns airline employees' attitude. The passengers explained that they had the experience of interacting with airline employees when delivering a service and because of their lack of concern the passengers were left unsatisfied with the service they had received. Based on the airline staff training in Taiwan, on the occasions that a passenger experiences a problem with the service airline employees have provided them with, it is crucial to express care and concern. Airline staff are required to say he/she is sorry to hear what happened and say something kind and sympathetic. Even if it is still unclear who is responsible for the problem, assure the passenger that airline staff personally will take care of the situation and resolve it to mutual

satisfaction. Therefore in order to deliver a better service ‘empathy’ plays a very important role in dealing with passengers. Airline staff must communicate empathy as part of their jobs, regardless of their personal feelings about passengers, the number of times they have heard the "same story," or the experiences they have previously had. Airline employees need to express an appreciation for their communication and maintain a friendly attitude throughout. “Airline employees need to express compassion for disheartened, confused passengers and should not make passengers feel like they are bugging you” was a view expressed by one of the airline managers in the interview.

In addition, two Taiwanese airline managers observed in the interview that the usage of facial expressions is also a crucial strategy when dealing with passengers. In the customer service training, the importance of nonverbal communication signals, how they affect the communication process, and how to communicate more effectively by recognizing these signals are taught and discussed. Therefore, in order to make passengers feel airline employees understand and care about passengers’ problems and would do their best to help passengers, airline employees would not only express their empathy verbally but also nonverbally. For example, when an airline employee says “I understand how inconvenient and frustrating this must be for you”, they should say it with a concerned facial expression and sincere tone of voice. Last but not least, airline employees should always appreciate the underlying value of following the motto of ‘service with a smile’ as customers are able to infer a sense of enthusiasm and friendliness on behalf of the airline staff. Taiwanese Airline staff are required to flash a constant smile. Every employee is instructed in the customer service training which highlights the need to smile and to be cheerful. The two airline

airline managers, in informal discussions, said that “we’re supposed to make eye contact, greet every passenger and smile when we are on duty. If you don’t you get reprimanded.”

In order to fully illuminate the data, responses of Group A and Group B participants were evaluated by the two airline managers from different international airlines in Taiwan to determine whether Group A and Group B subjects have provided appropriate answers to the questions based on the airline customer service criteria for airline staff training. Moreover, as one of the research aims is to enhance the knowledge of the airline instructor an understanding of the target situation was considered essential.

Two Taiwanese airline managers were chosen from two different major international airlines in Taiwan. They were responsible for evaluating both the High Proficiency Group’s and Low Proficiency Group’s appropriateness of the replies based on the five ability-level criteria (see Table 4.8). In order to effectively quantify the performance of participants’ replies, I discussed this aim with the two airline managers respectively hoping to reach standard criteria for them to assess the participants’ performance. One of the managers firstly suggested that he was accustomed to giving 10-scale criteria (1-10) that is widely adapted to evaluate employees’ performance in his company for years. Nevertheless, after several discussions, we reached an agreement that they employ the 4 point scale (five ability-level criteria 1-5) to quantify the replies. As for determining the score, the two managers established the criteria together after discussions and followed the rating system to examine the replies.

Table 4.8 Rating Scale for Reply Appropriateness in the Second DCTs

Customer Service Principles	Score	Criteria
	4-5: Excellent	The reply complied with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are appropriate.
	3-4: Good	The reply mostly complied with the customer service principles. Service language manners are fairly appropriate.
	2-3 Fair	The reply partially complied with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are not really appropriate, but acceptable.
	1-2: Poor	The reply did not comply with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are least appropriate and acceptable.

4.8.3 Focus Group Interview Analysis

The interviews were conducted in Chinese Mandarin and were recorded. After the interviews the tape-recording was transcribed into a written record. Nonverbal communication, gestures and behavioural responses were reflected in the transcript as the way members of the group used words and the tone with which words were used are important sources of information which can radically alter the interpretation of a statement. Moreover, the transcripts were supplemented with some observational notes that were taken during the interview. The method of analysis chosen for the focus group interview was content analysis because it produces a systematic and comprehensive overview of the data (Bertrand et al., 1992; Knodel, 1993; Wilkson, 2004). The process of analysis in the focus group data is as follows.

Step 1:

Go through descriptive responses given by the participants to each question in

order to understand the meaning they communicate. The aim of the step is to be familiar with the data.

Step 2:

Read through the transcripts and make notes on general themes within the transcripts.

Step 3:

Read through transcripts again and write down as many headings as necessary to describe all aspects of the content.

Step 4:

The list of categories and sub-headings is established. The categories are checked with some of the interviewees to make sure the categories cover all aspects of the interviews.

Step 5:

Each transcript is worked through with the list of categories and sub-headings and coded according to the list of category headings.

Step 6: Start writing up the findings.

4.9 Limitations of the Study

Before generalizing the findings of the study, we must be aware of some limitations. The limitations of the methodology in this study included two aspects. One concerned methodological constraints. The study employed two instruments, which collected both written and spoken data, which was collected within an artificial setting. In other words, the data were not produced in natural settings. As Beebe and Cummings (1996) have suggested, the discourse completion task (DCT) is useful to

create an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that may occur in natural speech. However, data elicited by using DCT were not the same as natural data. They could not represent natural utterances. In order to collect natural data, I have personally visited two major Taiwanese airlines and explained to two airline customer service managers individually that this research would not pose any risk to their organizations and that the results would be of benefit to the airlines. Unfortunately, they decisively declined my request to gather data on airline staff's English directive speech acts in natural settings - at the check-in counters due to security reasons. Thus, this constraint seemed insurmountable.

Another methodological problem of this study is the small number of 40 hospitality university students. The sample size is not sufficient to support inferential statistical analysis. The results of the study demonstrated that the score differences after the placement of the participants in the High Proficiency group are higher than those in the Low Proficiency group. However, due to the limited sample the paired t-test results do not suggest the tendency that the higher participants' proficiency levels are, the more progress they can make from their placement experience. But, if the sample had been big enough to perform the paired t-test, the tendency is highly expected.

The third limitation concerns the population to which the findings can be generalised. Results can only apply to Taiwanese intermediate-to-advanced ESL undergraduates who major in Airline and Transport Service Management. This research waived the variables of diversity in terms of age, occupation, social class and other possible sub-cultural differences because the subjects in this study were all university students.

The fourth limitation is that there exists little discussion about the extent to which proficiency tests also involve pragmatic competence measurement. Roever (2011) pointed out a fact that there may be a lack of pragmatic issues in most language proficiency testing (TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.) and also in most ESL programs, because constructing valid pragmatic tests is never an easy task. Sirikhan and Prapphal (2011, p. 75) indicated that “the TOEIC result is simply an indirect measure of English speaking and writing skills. It casts doubt on whether the TOEIC scores can truly reveal how a candidate to perform specific linguistic behaviours in real situations.” Hence, Jianda (2006) reported that the traditional TOEFL was found not to fully correlate with pragmatics tests. It is observed that those with high TOEFL scores seem not to have correspondingly high interlanguage pragmatic abilities. Jianda’s (2006) finding is also supported by this study, it is observed that the participants’ TOEIC scores did not fully correlate with the pragmatic competence of the participants. Some pragmatic failures are still frequently found in the high proficiency students’ replies.

4.10 Summary

This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study. The target participants in this study consisted of a total of 40 airline service management students from NKUHT and ten airline staff from one international airline in Taiwan. Quantitative data were collected from DCTs and qualitative data from semi-structured focus group interviews with airline managers and airline service management students. The data collected from DCTs were analysed based on the coding schema CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) with a number of

modification as necessary in order to analyse the collected data. The first and second DCTs were also evaluated by airline managers following airline customer service principles. The multiple data sources collected were to ensure the reliability and validity of the methodology used in this study.

Chapter Five

Analysis of First Set of Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data from the First DCTs, examining the placement variable – before and after, and effects on ‘request behaviours’ in order to answer the research question 1:

What are the differences between Group A (2nd year students before placement), Group B (4th year students after placement) and Group C’s (airline staff) request behaviours?

The frequency with which the subjects used request strategies and their lexical repertoire categorized on the basis of the coding scheme – CCSARP (Blum-Kulka and House and Kasper, 1989) were analysed quantitatively to examine whether there were significant statistical differences in request behaviours across the three research groups; Group A, Group B and Airline Staff Group. The comparisons revealed not only differences in strategies and expressions utilized by each group when requests to passengers are made but, generally, underscored to what extent the research groups’ responses differed from the airline employees’ responses.

5.2 The First DCTs results

Responses received from Group A and Group B in the data of the First DCTs, were compared to the Group C (airline staff) participants' responses in terms of alerters, supportive moves and the types of strategies and internal modifiers in the Head Act.

5.2.1 Alerters

When preceding requests, alerters serve as exchange openers. 'Coding of address terms proceeds by type (nominal categories) noting variations in type of appellations (Title + surname/Surname only, etc.) as well as semantic variations in items used ('darling, could you...' as opposed to 'you fool, why don't you...') (examples taken from Blum-Kulka and House, 1989, p. 17). In the present study 'excuse me + sir/madam' was counted as an alerter because of the requirements dictated by staff training in Taiwanese airlines. The two airline managers indicated that according to the staff training all airline employees are required to say 'excuse me, sir/madam' to get passengers' attention. The alerters were analysed and compared among the three research groups; Group A, B and C, in terms of types and frequency.

The frequency distribution of 'alerters' by Group A, B and C across all situations is displayed in Table 5.1a, 5.1b and 5.1c. The aggregated frequencies of 'Alerters' across Groups A, B and C are shown in Table 5.1d. The types of alerters were coded and displayed in the following table and the coding is explained with examples on page 184.

Key

Alerters	Coding	Alerters	Coding
Sir	A1	Excuse me	A14
Mr.	A2	Excuse me, sir	A15
Madam	A3	Excuse me, Mr.	A16
Miss	A4	Excuse me, madam	A17
Ms.	A5	Excuse me, miss	A18
Lady	A6	Excuse me, Ms	A19
Gentlemen	A7	Excuse me, lady/ladies	A20
ladies and gentlemen	A8	Excuse me, Mrs.	A21
Dear Mrs. + surname	A9	Excuse me, men	A22
Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss + surname	A10	Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs.	A23
hello / hi	A11	Excuse me, everyone	24
hello, sir / madam	A12	Zero alerters	25
Good morning/afternoon	A13		

Table 5.1a: Frequency distribution of 'alerters' by individual students across all situations: Group A

Alerters / Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Sub-totals	
1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	20
2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	20
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	19	20	
5	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	20
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	20
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	
8	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	19	20	
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	19	20	
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	19	20	

13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	20
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	20
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	13	20
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	20
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	20
18	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	14	20
19	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Totals	13	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	27	16	0	3	7	0	4	1	1	0	1	319	400

Table 5.1b: Frequency distribution of 'alerters' by individual students across all situations: Group B

Alerters / Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	25	Sub-totals	
1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	20
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	20
3	2		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	20
4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	20
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20
6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	20
7	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	20
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	20
10	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20
11	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	20

12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	18	20
13	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	20
14	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20
15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	20
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20
17	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	20
18	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0
19	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	20
20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	20
Totals	38	1	3	5	3	1	0	0	1	0	5	4	0	10	13	0	13	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	312	400

Table 5.1c: Frequency distribution of 'alerters' by individual students across all situations: Group C

Alerters / Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	25	Sub-totals	
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	20
2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20
3	5	5	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20
4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	20
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	20
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	20
7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	20
8	5	5	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20
9	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	20
10	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	20
Totals	24	10	9	7	0	0	2	0	0	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	200	

Table 5.1d Aggregated Frequencies of 'Alerters' across Groups A, B and C

Alerters	Group A (N=20)	Group B (N=20)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Sir	13	38	24	75
Mr.	2	1	10	13
Madam	0	3	9	12
Miss	1	5	7	13
Ms.	0	3	0	3
lady	1	1	0	2
gentlemen	2	0	2	4
ladies and gentlemen	0	0	0	0
Dear Mrs. + surname	0	1	0	1
Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss + surname	0	0	95	95
hello / hi	0	5	0	5
hello, sir / madam	0	4	0	4
Good morning/afternoon	1	0	0	1
Excuse me	27	10	0	37
Excuse me, sir	16	13	0	29
Excuse me, Mr.	0	0	0	0
Excuse me, madam	3	3	0	6
Excuse me, Miss	7	0	1	8
Excuse me, Ms.	0	1	0	1
Excuse me, lady	4	0	0	4
Excuse me, Mrs.	1	0	0	1
Excuse me, men	1	0	0	1
Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs.	1	0	0	1
Excuse me, everyone	1	0	0	1
Zero alerters	319	312	52	679
Overall Totals	400	400	200	1000

With reference to the types of alerters, the results revealed that Group A used ‘lady’ and ‘gentlemen’ to address passengers. These forms were not found in the other two research groups’ replies. The alerters ‘lady’ and ‘gentlemen’ when addressing passengers are not recommended and at times discouraged in the customer service training manual. However, the types of alerters used by Group B are very similar to those used by Group C. Addressing female passengers can be somewhat confusing, the marital status of a woman can be difficult to assess, therefore calling a woman ‘Ms’ dispenses with this dilemma. Some of Group B participants were aware of the dilemma and used the alerters ‘Ms’ in the First DCT to address female passengers. Group B participants’ usage of the alerter ‘Ms’ not only complied with airline customer service training but also showed that it is pragmatically appropriate. Group B participants’ usage of the alerter ‘Ms’ revealed that they have more pragmatic awareness than Group A participants without placement experience. Group B participants’ pragmatic awareness may be attributed to the placement experience.

The alerters ‘hi’, ‘hello’ and ‘hello, sir/madam’ were only found in Group B’s replies as the participants were not required to have interaction with another interlocutor in the written task. In order to elicit why these alerters were used Group B were asked to expand on their answers in the Focus Group Interviews. They explained that they were instructed in the training that while delivering services to passengers the first step is to greet passengers. When completing the task they imagined what replies would be in a ‘real situation’; therefore they would start by greeting passengers as they normally did at work during their placement in the airlines. The results of the study demonstrated and collected what participants actually responded in the DCTs extracted from the actual interaction of airline service discourse, which reflects that

the DCT is a useful instrument for collecting data representative of what participants might actually say in the airline service discourse.

In the data observed, 'Sir' or 'Mr' followed by the surname is mostly used to address male passengers, while female guests are referred to as 'Madam'. It is noticeable that the attention getters 'Mr./Mrs./Ms + surname' were only found in the Group C airline staff's responses, while Group B only used 'Mr. + surname' and none of Group A participants used any one of the three attention getters. Surnames are normally used to address guests rather than forenames, showing formal respect and certain genteel politeness conventions (Blue & Harun, 2003). The two airline managers in my placement visiting reports indicated that using appropriate address forms for greetings in the airline service is perceived to be polite behaviour. Airline staff are trained to provide exemplary customer service by 'treating passengers individually', i.e. making passengers feel that they are important. One of the ways to help passengers feel they are being recognized and respected as individuals is to address them by their surname or title. Regarding Group B participants' usage of 'Mr. + surname', interestingly, the 'Mrs. + surname', 'Ms + surname' or 'Miss + surname' was not found in Group B participants' replies. One possible explanation for it may be because during their placement, passengers were either unaccompanied business men or tourists with partners. In the case of the tourists, male passengers are normally addressed, because in many cases the male partner is the one who hands the travelling documents to airline staff. Therefore, it is generally the male partners who initiate the exchange. This is also found in Blue & Harun's (2003) study which showed the title 'madam' was less frequently used than 'sir' by hotel front-line staff at the check-in counters. The result suggested that Group B participants' preference

for using ‘Mr. + surname’ in the data was a habit which was cultivated during their placement. As mentioned in the previous section, what Group B participants wrote in the First DCTs is actually said in the airline service discourse. In this case, participants’ preference for using ‘Mr. + surname’ reflected what they actually and frequently said at the check-in counters.

To sum up, with regard to the differences between alerters used among Group A (2nd year students before placement) and Group B (4th year students after placement) and Group C (airline staff), it was found that Group B participants’ replies were very similar to Group C participants’ in comparison with those of Group A. For example, Group B participants addressed female passengers as ‘Ms’ because the marital status of a woman can be difficult to assess. Moreover, Group B participants’ usage of ‘Mr. + surname’ complies with the international airline customer service policies – showing formal respect to passengers and ‘treating passengers individually’. The findings suggested that the reason for the differences between Group A and B participants’ use of alerters was that Group B participants’ replies followed the language conventions used in the airline community while Group A did not. Group B participants’ replies revealed a fact that being exposed to the target community of the airline for a period of time has provided the participants with opportunities to enhance their pragmatic abilities. During the placement, Group B participants have been exposed to more competent members of airline community, who subtly offered them many opportunities for input and interactions needed to acquire language forms and appropriate ways of speaking. Hence, we may also state that the placement plays an important role in developing participants’ pragmatic awareness. Group B

participants' usage of alerters is indicative of the importance of the placement for developing participants' pragmatic awareness and competence.

5.2.2 Head Acts: Request Strategies

The request strategies used in the Head Acts were compared amongst the three Groups to see how Group A and B participants' request strategies were different from those of Group C airline employees in the DCTs. The analysis of the request strategies is based on the classification adopted by the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, and Olshtain, 1989) with slight modifications as noted in the previous section 4.8.1 (see pp. 157-170).

Request strategies were analysed and compared among the three separate groups in terms of types and frequency. With regard to the types of request strategies, Group B and Group C employed the same request strategies. Group A used more types of direct strategies than the other two groups. Group A employed 4 of 5 types of direct strategies; *Mood Derivable*, *Hedged Performative*, *Locution Derivable* and *Want Statement*, while Group B and Group C only used two types of direct strategies; *Mood Derivable* and *Locution Derivable* in the data. The examples used are quotes from data collected and include some grammatical errors. For example,

Direct request strategies	
Mood Derivable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please pay for the excess baggage. (Group A participant 1's reply) 2. Please go to another desk and pack the luggage. (Group B participant 8's reply)

	3. Please go to another desk and pack the luggage. (Group C participant 9's reply)
Hedged Performative	1. We have to request you that you have to pay for the excess luggage charge. (Group A participant 3's reply) 2. We must ask you to abandon some articles of luggage. (Group A participant 8's reply)
Locution Derivable	1. All of check-in assignments were closed. You need to wait next flight. (Group A participant 3's reply). 2. You should carry on something cause your luggage is overweight. (Group B participant 13's reply). 3. Under my company policy, you could check-in xx kilos for free but you would have to pay for the kilos for excess part. (Group C participant 6's reply)
Want Statement	1. We hope you pay for the excess baggage. (Group A participant 11's reply)

Regarding the direct strategy- mood derivable, imperatives are the grammatical forms of the utterances of this type. In most cases in English, the imperative signals that the utterance is an order. It is assumed that only under one circumstance the use of an imperative is considered appropriate, that is when it is used by a speaker who has power over the hearer. In this sense, this strategy is the least preferred means of making a request in English. However, in this study, it was found that all three research groups used the imperatives when making requests in the data. Here two questions need to be addressed:

1. 'Does the result suggest that the three research groups, including airline staff, with at least three-years customer service experience, are very impolite or even rude when making requests based on the category of CCSARP?'
2. 'Can the so-called 'universal' pragmatic principles proposed by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) in the CCSARP be applied to all languages such as Chinese?'

Concerning requests, one of the most significant findings of the CCSARP was that for all the languages studied conventionally indirect request strategies were overwhelmingly preferred (e.g. Could I borrow your notes?). However, there remains a distinct Western bias in the CCSARP; that all of the language and varieties studied (except Hebrew) were either Germanic or Romance based, and all of the cultures studied were either Western or heavily influenced by Western culture. The CCSARP categorises the use of the imperative in making requests as impolite. In English, the politeness marker *please* is used to soften the force of the request and serves to increase the politeness of a straightforward request. If one prefaces the imperative with *please* it turns it into a polite request rather than a command. According to House and Kasper (1987), the politeness marker *please* has two functions: first, it signals politeness and thus serves as a mitigating device; second, it functions as an illocutionary force indicator clearly signalling the request force of the locution. That is to say, the use of *please* softens the requestive force by means of its mitigating function while at the same time it emphasizes the force. The examples from the three research groups demonstrate the usage of the politeness marker *please* to express politeness. For example,

1. Please wait. Let me check. (Group A participant 2's reply)
2. Please repack your luggage. (Group A participant 12's reply)
3. Please come to airport early next time. (Group B participant 1's reply)
4. Please go to another desk and pack the luggage. (Group B participant 4's reply)
5. Please come to another desk and let us help you pack the luggage. (Group C participant 9's reply)

The explanation for the overuse of “*please*” in both Group A and B may be rooted in the equivalent politeness marker - ”*qing*” (請) “*please*” in Chinese. From a Chinese perspective, the mitigating lexical term, “*qing*” (請) “*please*” is used to make a proper request. On this basis, we may propose that Group A and B’s preference for using the word “*please*” could be attributed to L1 transfer – positive transfer.

Apart from the usage of politeness marker “*please*”, the choice of a modal verb form such as ‘would’ instead of ‘will’, ‘could’ instead of ‘can’, etc., can show the degree of politeness. However, Chinese modal verbs lack such functions since they do not have tenses as in English. Song’s (2009) study reveals that Chinese speakers display a preference for direct request forms. The most distinctive feature of the linguistic realisation of requests is the application of basic action verbs that indicate the desired action directly e.g. *dai* ‘bring’, *na* ‘get, take’, *jie wo* ‘lend me’ etc. It is also found that in Chinese, politeness effects are achieved by the use of the mitigating lexical term, *qing* (請) ‘*please*’ and marker such as *keyi ma* (可以嗎) ‘May I’, *ke bu keyi* (可不可以) ‘can I’, *xing bu xing* (行不行) ‘can I’, which are used to make a proper request. *Qing* reflects the attitude of sincerity of the requester. The directives in the following example (quoted from the data) sound natural and polite in everyday face to face interaction.

e.g.

Ni	<i>ke bu keyi</i>	Na	Nide	Xing Li	Zai ci fen Zhuang?
= (You)	(marker)	(take)	(your)	(luggage)	(repack)

= Take your luggage and repack it.

e.g.

Ni bi shu da Xia Yi ban fei chi *keyi ma?*

= (You) (have) (take) (next) (a) (flight) (marker)

= You have to take the next flight.

From the above discussion, it can be said that the use of imperatives by some research participants is not considered impolite and actually is natural and elaborately polite according to the politeness convention in Chinese. Therefore, the result suggested that the participants' preference for using the imperatives when making requests can be explained with reference to L1 transfer - negative transfer. The finding is supported by Barron (2003, p. 35) who proposed that "elements of L1, such as politeness rules and formulae, may be transferred to a learner's interlanguage."

Regarding the usage of Conventional Indirect strategies, all three research groups employed Conventional Indirect strategies in the data. The examples used are quotes from data collected and include some grammatical errors. For example,

Conventional Indirect request strategies	
Suggestory Formula	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I suggest that you carry some luggage or you will have to pay overweight charges. (Group A participant 6's reply).2. I suggest you can change your seat with other passengers. (Group B participant 12's reply).3. Sir, I'm sorry that we are not able to accept you in this flight because the flight has closed for check-in. I would like to suggest you to take KA flight which is only 30 minutes later. (Airline Staff participant 10's reply).

Query Preparatory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether you have luggage or not, this flight is full, could you please wait for next flight? (Group A participant 5's reply). 2. Would you like to divide 7 kg into hand carry baggage so you only have to pay 5 kg over-weight fee. (Group B participant 19's reply). 3. Would you mind if I assist you to repack this suitcase and you could get on the flight on time? (Airline Staff participant 7's reply).
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One difference was noted among the three groups' data in terms of the use of the Non-conventional Indirect strategy - Mild hints. The Mild hints were only used by Group A. Examples of Mild Hints used by Group A participants are as follows. The examples used are quotes from data collected and include some grammatical errors. For example,

1. I am sorry but the flight is closed for check-in. We do apologize for the inconvenience. (Group A participant 1's reply)
2. Excuse me, under the airlines regulations, luggage in excess of twenty kg is taxed. (Group A participant 4's reply)
3. Sorry, sir. According to our luggage rules, the excess baggage fare has to pay. Your luggage is already over-weight. (Group A participant 6's reply)
4. I am afraid your luggage is over-weight, we have the weight restriction, over it, there is excess luggage charge. (Group A participant 9's reply)
5. Sorry, sir. Because of mechanical problems, the flight xx from Hong Kong is delayed, we apologize for this, and we're already preparing hotel for you this evening. (Group A participant 10's reply)
6. We are deeply sorry, sir. Due to the mechanical problem, the flight can't be take off. So as for your safety, we've arranged you to the following flight

next morning. And our company will deal with the compensation part.

(Group A participant 14's reply)

7. I'm very sorry, Mr. Because the flight has some mechanical problems. And the next flight is tomorrow morning. Our company will provide the meals and clothes for you. I'm very sorry. (Group A participant 17's reply)
8. I'm very sorry. We'll book a hotel for you right now. (Group A participant 20's reply)

Next, as far as the frequency of the request strategies is concerned, frequency distribution of 'Request Strategy' (Head Act) by individual student from Groups A, B and C across all situations is displayed in Tables 5.2a and 5.2b.

Key

<i>Direct Strategy</i>		<i>Indirect Strategy</i>		<i>Non –Conventional Indirect</i>	
Strategy	Coding	Strategy	Coding	Strategy	Coding
Mood derivable	MD	Suggestory	S	Strong hint	SH
Explicit performative	EP	Preparatory	P	mild hint	MH
Hedged performative	HP	/			
Locution derivable	LD				
Want statement	WS				

Table 5.2a: Frequency distribution of 'Request Strategy' (Head Act) by individual student across all situations: Group A and B

Request Strategy/ Student	MD	EP	HP	LD	WS	S	P	SH	MH	Sub-totals	MD	EP	HP	LD	WS	S	P	SH	MH	Sub-totals		
	Group A											Group B										
1	3	0	0	10	0	0	6	1	0	20	3	0	0	3	1	4	9	0	0	20		
2	0	0	0	4	0	1	15	0	0	20	2	0	0	3	4	5	6	0	0	20		
3	5	0	2	7	1	0	5	0	0	20	1	0	0	5	2	4	8	0	0	20		
4	8	0	1	5	2	1	2	1	0	20	4	0	0	3	3	2	8	0	0	20		
5	2	0	3	4	0	1	10	0	0	20	3	0	0	4	1	2	10	0	0	20		
6	3	0	0	9	1	1	5	1	0	20	3	0	0	5	1	3	8	0	0	20		
7	3	0	0	7	2	0	8	0	0	20	3	0	0	6	1	1	9	0	0	20		
8	1	0	4	8	5	0	2	0	0	20	1	0	0	6	1	2	10	0	0	20		

9	3	0	1	11	1	0	3	1	0	20	3	0	0	7	2	2	6	0	0	20
10	5	0	0	11	0	0	3	1	0	20	4	0	0	5	0	1	10	0	0	20
11	10	0	0	7	2	0	1	0	0	20	3	0	0	6	0	2	9	0	0	20
12	3	0	0	10	2	1	4	0	0	20	4	0	0	5	3	3	5	0	0	20
13	3	0	2	9	0	0	6	0	0	20	2	0	0	4	1	2	11	0	0	20
14	1	0	2	7	1	4	4	1	0	20	1	0	0	3	1	5	10	0	0	20
15	7	0	0	4	0	3	6	0	0	20	5	0	0	6	3	1	5	0	0	20
16	3	0	0	7	0	0	10	0	0	20	2	0	0	6	5	0	7	0	0	20
17	1	0	0	7	3	3	5	1	0	20	1	0	0	6	0	2	11	0	0	20
18	3	0	0	4	0	3	10	0	0	20	2	0	0	4	0	4	10	0	0	20
19	3	0	0	9	1	1	6	0	0	20	4	0	0	5	2	5	4	0	0	20
20	2	0	0	5	2	1	9	1	0	20	1	0	0	3	5	3	8	0	0	20
Totals	69	0	15	145	23	20	120	8	0	400	52	0	0	95	36	53	164	0	0	400

Table 5.2b: Frequency distribution of 'Request Strategy' (Head Act) by individual student across all situations: Group C

Request Strategy/ Student	MD	EP	HP	LD	WS	S	P	SH	MH	Sub-totals
	Group C (Airline Staff)									
1	3	0	0	2	1	5	9	0	0	20
2	2	0	0	1	2	3	12	0	0	20
3	4	0	0	0	1	3	12	0	0	20
4	2	0	0	4	1	5	8	0	0	20
5	2	0	0	3	1	5	9	0	0	20
6	3	0	0	3	1	8	6	0	0	20
7	2	0	0	1	2	3	12	0	0	20
8	5	0	0	1	1	1	12	0	0	20
9	2	0	1	4	1	3	9	0	0	20
10	2	0	0	2	1	5	10	0	0	20
Totals	27	0	0	21	12	41	99	0	0	200

Table 5.2a shows that Group A participants used the Direct strategy of *locution derivable* most frequently, then followed by the conventional indirect strategy of *preparatory* in comparison with the different groups' responses to the factual situations presented. On the other hand, Group B employed the conventional indirect strategies of *Preparatory* most frequently and the Direct strategy of *locution derivable* was the 2nd frequent usage, whereas Group C airline staff preferred to employ conventional indirect strategies *suggestory* and *preparatory*, when making requests to passengers.

Table 5.2c: Aggregated Frequencies of 'Request Strategies' (Head Acts) across Group A, B and C

		Group A (N=20)	Group B (N=20)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Direct Strategies	Mood Derivable	69	52	27	148
	Explicit Performative	0	0	0	0
	Hedged Performative	15	0	0	15
	Locution Derivable	145	95	21	261
	Want statement	23	36	12	71
	Sub- totals	252	183	60	495
Indirect strategies	Suggestory	20	53	41	114
	preparatory	120	164	99	383
	Sub totals	140	217	140	497
Non- conventional indirect	Strong hint	8	0	0	8
	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0
	Sub-totals	8	0	0	8
	Overall Totals	400	400	200	1000

Judging from the results in the previous sections, the major difference between Group A (2nd year students), Group B (4th year students) and Group C (airline staff) participants' request strategy use is the frequency of using request strategies. Group A participants without any airline working experience used more direct strategies than Group B participants with one-year working experience, however significantly fewer direct strategies as compared to Group C participants. Group C applied indirect strategies more often than the direct ones and the frequency of using indirect strategies for Group B is higher than Group A. This result suggested that Group B participants with airline working experience were "more airline staff like" as they tended to use indirect strategies to reduce the impact of making requests to passengers. In sum, the results showed that Group C used the least number of Direct strategies, whereas Group A used the most, and Group B were moderate users of the Direct strategy.

5.2.3 Supportive moves

The results showed that Group A and Group B participants were found to use English forms of the characteristic Chinese external modifiers such as 'sorry', 'I am sorry' or 'we are sorry' before issuing a request. For example,

1. '*Sorry*. Would you please take next flight, because this flight was closed for check-in.' (Group A participant 6's reply)
2. '*I am sorry*, the flight is closed for check-in. Could you wait for next flight please?' (Group A participant 9's reply)
3. '*We are sorry*, madam. As for your safety, we can't let you get on this flight.' (Group A participant 18's reply)

Yu (1999, p. 299) indicated that ‘this kind of formulaic apology expression, which is usually intended by speakers to show politeness by apologising for the trouble that their requests may cause to hearers’. Therefore, the wordings ‘sorry’, ‘I am sorry’ or ‘we are sorry’ are considered as “strategic disarmers” (Trosborg, 1995, p. 384) and categorized as an ‘apology’ in the classification of supportive moves (external moves) in this study. The following examples provided are quoted from the data and include the grammatical errors of the Non-Native Speakers of English (NNSE).

- a. Preparatory: The speaker prepares his or her request by making the listener aware that a request is anticipated.

(1) *I'd like to ask you something.*

- b. Pre-commitment: The speaker asks permission to make the request in order to reduce the imposition of his/her request. Examples 2 and 3 were chosen from Group B's data.

(2) *Will you do me a favour?* Can you take something out from your luggage?

(3) Your baggage is over-weight. You will be charged for the excess. *Please allow me* to explain the weight of free baggage allowance.

- c. Grounder: The speaker explains or justifies the reasons for the request. Example 4 and 5 come from Group A's data.

(4) *The counter is closed for check-in.*

(5) *Due to technical problems the flight will be postponed.*

d. Disarmer: The speaker provides reasons to disarm the addressee from the possibility of a refusal”, e.g. I know that you must be very upset about the flight delay.

e. Empathy: The speaker tries to reduce the degree of imposition that is put on the listener by showing that the speaker understands and cares about the listener’s problems. Example 6 is chosen from Group B’s data and example 7 was selected from Group A’s data.

(6) *I understand you must be very frustrated about it.*

(7) *According to the rule you must pay the excess luggage charge. I am very sorry about it.*

f. Apology: The speaker adopts an apology as “strategic disarmers” (Trosborg, 1995, p. 384) to apologize for causing an inconvenience, disturbing or interrupting the listeners that the speaker’s request causes. Example 8, 9 are from Group A’s data and example 10 is from Group B’s data.

(8) *Sorry for any inconvenience caused to you.*

(9) *We really apologize for the inconvenience.*

(10) *We are really sorry about the delay and the inconvenience caused.*

(11) ‘*We are sorry, madam. As for your safety, we can’t let you get on this flight.*’

g. Accept Responsibility: The speaker denigrates him/herself by blaming him/herself for making such a request due to his/her own misbehaviour or the company's mistakes. Example 11 and 12 come from Group A's data.

(12) *It's my fault/mistake.*

(13) *They're our company's faults.*

h. Compensation: The speaker tries to make up for the listener's loss if the request is carried out. Example 14 comes from Group A's data.

(14) *We would upgrade you to First Class.*

i. Reassurance: The speaker gives advice or help that takes away the listener's fears or doubts. Example 15 and 16 are from Group A's and Group B's data.

(15) *We would offer you a free drink and meal voucher while you are waiting for flight.*

(16) *We will provide you with meals and accommodation in a hotel near the airport.*

j. Gratitude: The speaker shows his/her appreciation if the request is complied. The strategy is used usually at the end of the request utterance. Example 17 and 18 comes are from Group A's and Group B's data.

(17) *Thank you.*

(18) *Thank you for your cooperation.*

The supportive moves were analysed and compared among the three research groups; Group; in terms of types and frequency. Regarding the types of supportive moves used by the three groups, the data revealed that participants in all three groups used various supportive moves and that participants intended to make use of all the main mitigating strategies to soften the impact of their English requests. The types of supportive moves were coded and displayed in the following table and the coding is explained with examples.

Key

Supportive Moves	Coding
Preparatory	P
Pre-commitment	PC
Grounder	G
Disarmer	D
Empathy	E
Apology	A
Accept Responsibility	AR
Compensation	C
Reassurance	R
Gratitude	Gr

Table 5.3a: Frequency distribution of 'Supportive Moves' by individual student across all situations: Group A and B

	Supportive Moves																							
Supportive Moves / Student	P	PC	G	D	E	A	AR	C	R	Gr	Sub-totals	P	PC	G	D	E	A	AR	C	R	Gr	Sub-totals		
	Group A												Group B											
1	0	0	16	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	20	0	0	16	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	20		
2	0	0	16	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	20	0	0	17	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	20		
3	0	0	17	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	20	0	0	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20		
4	0	0	17	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	20	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	20		
5	0	0	17	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20		
6	0	0	18	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	20	0	0	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20		
7	0	0	17	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	18	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	20		
8	0	0	15	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	20	0	0	18	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	20		

9	0	0	18	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	20
10	0	0	18	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	20	0	0	18	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	20
11	0	0	16	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	20	0	0	19	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	20
12	0	0	17	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	20	0	0	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20
13	0	0	16	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	20	0	0	18	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	20
14	0	0	18	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20
15	0	0	18	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	20	0	0	16	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	20
16	0	0	15	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	17	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	20
17	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	20	0	0	17	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	20
18	0	0	17	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	20	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	20
19	0	0	18	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	20
20	0	0	17	0	0	4	0	1	0	2	20	0	0	16	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	20
Totals	0	0	335	0	0	21	17	11	4	12	400	0	0	361	0	7	17	0	2	6	7	400

Table 5.3b: Frequency distribution of 'Supportive Moves' by individual student across all situations: Group C

Supportive moves / Student	Supportive Moves										Sub-totals
	P	PC	G	D	E	A	AR	C	R	Gr	
1	0	1	14	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	20
2	0	1	14	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	20
3	0	0	14	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	20
4	0	2	16	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	20
5	0	2	12	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	20
6	0	0	17	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	20
7	0	0	17	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	20
8	0	0	16	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	20
9	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	20
10	0	0	16	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	20
Totals	0	6	154	4	18	7	0	0	8	3	200

Table 5.3c Aggregated Frequencies of ‘Supportive Moves’ across Groups A, B and C

Supportive Moves	Group A (N=20)	Group B (N=20)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Preparatory	0	0	0	0
Pre-commitment	0	0	6	6
Grounder	335	361	154	847
Disarmer	0	0	4	4
Empathy	0	7	18	25
Apology	21	17	7	45
Accept Responsibility	17	0	0	17
Compensation	11	2	0	12
Reassurance	4	6	8	18
Gratitude	12	7	3	26
Overall Totals	400	400	200	1000

Table 5.3c shows that the supportive moves *pre-commitment* and *disarmer* were only found in the Group C airline staff’s replies in the data. One possible explanation for this is ‘because they require more elaboration than grounders’ (Alcon-Soler, 2008, p. 136). The supportive moves *grounder* stands out as the most frequently used by three research groups. Providing explanations for requests seems to be an effective strategy for the three research groups. A possible explanation for the pervasiveness of this supportive move in the three research groups is as Fraser (1981) suggested that the effectiveness of an explanation enables the speaker to transfer the responsibility of the offence to another party or source. In addition, although the supportive moves - *grounder* i.e. explanations were used in the three research groups, yet they differ in two ways. Group A participants tended to give lengthy explanations when making requests. Many of Group A participants explained that they believed that when considering supportive moves in making requests of passengers a “more the better” approach is part of a ‘playing-it-safe’ strategy that will result in passengers being

more likely to comply with the requests and less likely to feel offended. Comparing with Group A's explanations, there were fewer explanations given by the Group C when given, they were noticeably short and brief. A possible explanation for this is that airline staff know there is no time for socialising as there is a time constraint for passengers to check-in and board the airplane.

The supportive moves - *empathy* were used by Group B and C. According to the two airline managers referred to earlier, *empathy* plays a very important role in staff's dealings with passengers. It is crucial for airline staff to express sensitivity to and concern for passengers' problems and a staff member should be prepared to say he/she is sorry to hear what happened and to say something kind and sympathetic. Even if it is still unclear who or what may be responsible for the problem, passengers must be assured that an airline staff member will act on the situation and resolve it to the passenger's satisfaction. Group B participants explained in the focus group interview that they tended to use the supportive moves- *empathy* to reduce the degree of imposition that a listener may feel by showing that they understood and cared about the listener's problems. Conversely, the data confirms that none of Group A participants used the supportive moves - *empathy*. Once again Group B participants are "more airline staff like" in their responses.

When comparing the frequency of using the supportive moves- *compensation* and *accept responsibility* amongst these three research groups, Group A participants used these two supportive moves. In a number of situations Group A participants used both the supportive move - *accept responsibility* and *compensation* at the same time. In the Focus Group Interview, many of Group A participants explained that they believed that once the staff offers the supportive move of accepting responsibility for a mistake

made by an airline the staff should be prepared to discuss possible compensation with passengers. Group B used the supportive moves - *compensation* only in situation Eight and the supportive moves- *accept responsibility* did not appear in Group B's data. It showed that Group B participants were careful not to use the two supportive moves - *compensation* or *accept responsibility* when delivering services. This result suggested that Group B participants with airline working experience were once again "more airline staff like" as they were aware of the possible problems that could arise from using the supportive moves - *compensation* and *accept responsibility*. However, Group A participants used them more frequently than Group B suggesting that Group A was more lacking in knowledge of airline customer service policies than Group B. Notably, Group C was the only group that did not use the supportive moves of *accept responsibility* and *compensation* in any situations. The two Taiwanese airline managers from two different international airlines explained in the interviews that airline customer service training emphasises that when providing services airline staff must be very careful about verbally accepting responsibility for any problems that arise as admissions could have legal consequences that require compensation. Group C participants' avoidance of using the two supportive moves - *accept responsibility* and *compensation*, conforms with airline customer service policies. In addition, within Group C participants' responses there is a relatively low frequency of explicit expressions of apologies, such as offers of apology and overt expressions of responsibility such as 'it's our fault'. This perhaps is not surprising, considering that their inclusion would put companies in a position of undisputed fault hence damaging their image and, in some cultures, possibly opening the door for compensation

In particular, Group A was the group that used the supportive moves - *gratitude* such as ‘Thank you’, and ‘Thank you for your cooperation’ most frequently and Group C was the group that used it least. Group A used it in 14 situations while Group C only used it in one situation. One probable explanation for that is Group A used the supportive moves - *gratitude* to reduce the impact of making requests to passengers. Group A used more request expressions so they were more likely to say ‘thank you’ more and Group C used less request expressions so they used fewer the supportive moves- *gratitude* in fewer occasions.

Regarding the usage of ‘apology’ as a supportive move, it is noted that there are some differences between Group A’s and B’s data in terms of the content of the ‘apology’. The frequency distribution of types of apology by individual student from Group A, B and C across all situations are outlined in Table 5.4a, 5.4b and 5.4c. The types of apology are coded and displayed in the following table and the coding is explained with examples.

Key

Apology Type	Coding
Sorry	A1
(I am) sorry + title	A2
I am / we are sorry	A3
I am / we are sorry + title	A4
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry	A5
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry + title	A6
I am / we are sorry to + inform / tell you... + keep you waiting	A7
I am / We are (very/terribly) sorry for/about/because	A8
We are regretting to advise you that	A9
We apologise	A10

Table 5.4a: Frequency distribution of 'Types of Apology' by individual student across all situations: Group A and B

	Types of Apology																					
Apology / Student	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	Sub-totals	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	Sub-totals
	Group A											Group B										
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
9	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

10	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	3	3	5	3	4	2	0	0	0	1	21	0	4	2	6	0	0	3	0	2	0	17	17

Table 5.4b: Frequency distribution of 'Apology' by individual student across all situations: Group C

Apology / Student	Types of Apology										Sub-totals
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Totals	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	0	7

Table 5.4c Aggregated Frequencies of 'Apology' across Group A, B and C

Types of Apology	Group A (N=20)	Group B (N=20)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
sorry	3	0	0	3
sorry + title	3	4	0	7
I am / we are sorry	5	2	0	7
I am / we are sorry + title	3	6	0	9
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry	4	0	0	4
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry + title	2	0	0	2

I am / we are sorry to + inform/tell you....	0	3	3	6
I am / We are very/terribly sorry for/about ..	0	2	2	4
We are regretting to advise you that...	0	0	2	2
We apologize	1	0	0	1
Overall Totals	21	17	7	45

Group A was the only group whose participants used ‘we are sorry’ in the data. Many of the interviewed Group A participants explained that they used ‘we are sorry’ to represent the airline’s position in order that passengers would not expect the individual service provider to take responsibility for problems that may have occurred. It was also observed that Group A was the only group whose participants emphasized different degrees of apology. For example, ‘I am so/very/really sorry’ or ‘we are so/very/really sorry’. 10 out of 20 participants in Group A explained in the focus group that they believe the utterances ‘I am so/very/really sorry’ or ‘we are so/very/really sorry’ are more polite than ‘I am sorry’. In other words, Group A participants tried to reduce the degree of imposition that is put on the listeners by using the additional adverbs ‘so’, ‘very’ or really’, e.g. ‘*I am really sorry for the inconvenienced caused to you*’, ‘*I am so sorry you missed the important meeting.*’ to deliberately emphasize their sincerity for the inconvenience caused to the listeners (passengers). By applying the expression ‘so/very/ really sorry....’ it actually demonstrates that their understanding and care about the listener’s problems is in accordance with the classification of the supportive moves ‘empathy’, which the speaker tries to reduce the degree of imposition that is put on the listener by showing the speaker’s consideration for the listener’s problems (Blum-Kulka, 1984).

Next, Table 5.4c showed that Group A and Group B participants using the supportive moves ‘apology’ such as ‘sorry’, ‘I am sorry’ or ‘we are sorry’ before issuing a request in the data but none of the airline staff used ‘sorry’, ‘I am sorry’ or ‘we are sorry’ before making request. Group B used the wording ‘sorry’ or ‘I am sorry’ less frequently than Group A participants. Group B participants’ underuse of the expressions ‘sorry’ and ‘I am sorry’ showed that they are aware of the potential problems that may arise when providing services. Some Group C participants used the following wordings to apologize, such as ‘I am sorry to + inform/tell you...’, ‘we are I am/We are (very) sorry for/about in the data while none of Group A participants used these expressions. The above results suggested that Group B participants with airline working experience are “more airline staff like”.

5.2.4 Internal Modifiers

The internal modifiers were analysed based on Blum-Kulka’s & Olshtain’s classification (1984, p. 203); syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders. The internal modifiers were analysed and compared among the three research groups; Group A, B and Group C airline staff, in terms of types and frequency. Regarding the distribution of syntactic downgraders in the three groups, the data shows that the interrogative as the only syntactic downgraders was used by Group A, while Group B and Group C used three types of syntactic downgraders: *negation*, *embedded if clause* and *consultative device*.

The data also shows that the politeness marker is preferred by all three groups. In the previous sections it was noted that Group A participants preferred using conventional direct strategies such as *locution derivable* (see Table 5.2) and Group C participants

favour using conventional indirect strategies - *preparatory* (see Table 5.2c) when making requests to passengers. Consequently we can hypothesise that Group C participants would use the politeness marker more frequently than the other two research groups. It was therefore surprising to discover that it was Group A that used the politeness marker the most, while Group C used the politeness marker the least. The reason for the pervasiveness of the politeness marker 'please' in Group A was explained in the interviews with Group A participants. The participants believed that if they used the politeness marker when making requests of passengers, the passengers were more likely to comply with the requests and less likely to feel offended, mirroring the explanation offered by this group for adopting the "more the better" approach in considering supportive moves. The interviews revealed that Group A participants (the group that also preferred the Direct Request Strategies in 19 of 20 situations) used the politeness marker as a means to further soften the impact of their requests.

5.3 Summary

Regarding the use of request strategy, the results indicated that the three research groups' order of preference for the three main request strategies was the same. The Conventional Indirect strategy is most frequently used and the Non-conventional Indirect strategy is used the least by three groups. Such a result accords with previous studies on requests, that the Conventional Indirect instead of the Non-conventional Indirect strategy was the predominate strategy in performing the act of request (Blum-Kulka, & House, 1989; Byon, 2004; Liao, 1997; Trosborg 1995; Yu, 1999) because the Conventional Indirect strategy, a formulaic way to express requestive intentions, enables the illocutionary force of speakers' requests to be expressed clearly

(Blum-Kulka, & House, 1989; Marquez Reiter, 2000) instead of being likely misinterpreted as the Non-conventional Indirect strategy, the most opaque according to CCSARP, would be.

As to the usage of alerters amongst the three research groups, the results revealed that Group B participants' replies were very similar to Group C participants'. Group B participants' replies employed the language conventions used in the airline community while Group A did not. When analysing the types and frequency of supportive moves used by the three groups, the results showed that Group A participants adopted more varied types of supportive moves to soften the impact of their English requests in one particular situation among the three research groups. However, Group C was the group that used fewer types of supportive moves compared with the other two groups. It also brings to attention that Group B participants' types of supportive moves were rather similar to Group C's. For example, Group B and C (airline staff) were the only two groups using the supportive moves "empathy" and avoiding the "accept responsibility". In addition, although the Group C was the only group that avoided using the supportive move - *compensation* in any situations, Group B used this supportive moves only in Situation 8, which also indicated that Group B participants were very aware of the consequence of using the two supportive moves "accept responsibility" and "compensation". To sum up Group A and Group B participants' use of alerters, supportive moves and request strategies in the First DCTs data demonstrated that Group B participants' replies were very close to Group C's in comparison with those of Group A. Group B participants' replies in the First DCTs data indicated the importance of the placement for developing participants' pragmatic awareness and competence.

Chapter Six

Analysis of Second Set of Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)

6.1 Introduction

In this research participants' English proficiency was also taken as a variable to examine the differences in the request behaviour of hospitality and tourism university students. This chapter presents data from the Second DCTs, examining the proficiency variable and look at changes in 'request behaviours' in high and low proficiency groups before and after placement in order to answer the research question 2:

What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels in Group A? At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in appropriate pragmatic use of language after placement?

The request strategies in Second DCTs utilized by Group A participants with a low-proficiency in English, were analysed and compared to those used by Group A participants with a high-proficiency in English. Moreover, observations are offered on how English proficiency appears to influence a subject's approach to making requests.

6.2 The Second DCTs results

In order to answer the Research Question 2, in the following sections the responses from Group A-HP-before and Group A-LP-before in the First DCTs were compared with those from Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after in the Second DCTs and Group C airline staff to see whether there were any differences in terms of alerters,

supportive moves and the types of strategies and internal modifiers in the head act before and after placement.

6.2.1 Alerters

The alerters used by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after were analysed and compared in terms of types and frequency in the Second DCTs. The results are summarized and illustrated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Aggregated Frequencies of 'Alerters' across Group A-LP-after, Group A-HP-after and Group C

Alerters	Group A-LP-after (N=12)	Group A-HP-after (N=8)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Sir	18	20	24	62
Mr.	2	0	10	12
Madam	1	2	9	12
Miss	1	3	7	11
Ms.	0	2	0	2
lady	0	0	0	0
gentlemen	2	0	2	4
ladies and gentlemen	0	0	0	0
Dear Mrs. + surname	1	0	0	0
Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss + surname	15	15	95	125
hello / hi	2	2	0	4
hello, sir / madam	1	2	0	3
Good morning/afternoon	1	1	0	2
Excuse me	17	10	0	27
Excuse me, sir	4	12	0	16
Excuse me, Mr.	1	0	0	1
Excuse me, madam	3	0	0	3
Excuse me, Miss	3	5	1	9
Excuse me, Ms.	0	0	0	0

Excuse me, lady	0	0	0	0
Excuse me, Mrs.	0	0	0	0
Excuse me, men	0	0	0	0
Excuse me, Mr. and Mrs.	1	0	0	1
Excuse me, everyone	1	1	0	2
Zero alerters	167	85	52	304
Overall Totals	240	160	200	600

Comparing the alerters used by Group A-HP-before and Group A-LP-before in the First DCTs with those used by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after in the Second DCTs, notably, in the Second DCTs both Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after used the alerters ‘hello + sir/Miss/madam’ which did not appear in the First DCTs (see Table 5.1d, p. 189). The possible explanation for this is they followed the check-in procedures (as follows).

Step 1: Greeting

Airline staff: Good morning/afternoon/evening, sir/madam.

Step 2: Request passengers for travelling documents

Airline staff: May I have your passport/visa/ticket, please?

Step 3: Request passengers to put the luggage on the scale.

Airline staff: Would you put your luggage on the scale please?

Step 4: Requirement from passengers

Passenger:

(1) I'd like to have a window seat.

(2) I have ordered a special meal on the flight.

Step 5: Gratitude

Airline staff:

(1) Thank you and wish you have a pleasant flight.

(2) Thank you for flying with us and enjoy your flight.

(Quoted from Taiwanese airlines staff training handouts, 2007, 2nd edition)

In the check-in procedure, the airline employees are required to initiate the service by greeting the passengers. Therefore, the alerter 'hello' was used by two research groups to welcome passengers when delivering services at check-in counters. Apart from using the word 'hello' to greet the passengers, Group A-LP-after participants were found to use 'dear', which is appropriate in written form. In addition, it was observed that the participants from Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after addressed the passengers by surname when providing service. Two airline managers in the interviews indicated that airline staff are required to provide exemplary customer service by 'treating passengers individually'. One of the ways to make passengers feel they are being recognized and respected as individuals is to address them by their surname or title. Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants' usage of 'Mr./Ms./Miss + surname' complies with the review of international airlines' best customer service policies.

6.2.2 Head Acts: Request Strategies

The request strategies used in the Head Acts by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after in the Second DCTs were compared with those used by Group A-HP-before and Group A-LP-before in the First DCTs to see whether there were any differences in the use of request strategies before and after placement. The analysis of the request strategies is based on the classification adopted by the CCSARP project

(Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) with slight modifications as noted in Table 4.6 (see pp. 163-164).

Request strategies used in the Head Acts by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after were compared in terms of types. The results showed that Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after used the same request strategies in the Second DCTs. Interestingly, when comparing the types of the request strategies, the data revealed that Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after employed the same request strategies in the Second DCTs as Group B and the Staff Group in the First DCTs. This result suggested that Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants became “more airline staff like” after one year working experience in the airline as they tended to use more indirect strategies to reduce the impact of making requests to passengers.

One difference noted between Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after data was the frequency of using request strategies. The data showed that the frequency of using direct strategies among Group A-LP-after is higher than Group A-HP-after (see Table 6.2). The Low Proficiency Group favoured using the conventional Direct strategy - *Locution derivable* when making requests to passengers.

Table 6.2: Aggregated Frequencies of ‘Request Strategies’ (Head Acts) across Group A-LP-after, Group A-HP-after and Group C

Request Strategies		Group A-LP-after (N=12)	Group A-HP-after (N=8)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Direct Strategies	Mood Derivable	45	22	27	94
	Explicit	0	0	0	0
	Performative				
	Hedged	0	0	0	15

	Performative				
	Locution Derivable	96	51	21	162
	Want statement	16	5	12	33
	Sub- totals	157	78	60	312
Indirect strategies	Suggestory	7	20	41	58
	preparatory	74	59	99	225
	Sub totals	81	79	140	283
Non- conventional indirect	Strong hint	2	3	0	5
	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0
	Sub-totals	2	3	0	5
	Overall Totals	240	160	200	600

With regard to the frequency of using the conventional indirect strategy- *suggestory* and *preparatory*, the frequency of using indirect strategies among Group A-HP-after was higher than Group A-LP-after. In addition, it was observed that there were three Group A-HP-after participants who avoided producing request speech acts in Situation 6, where the passenger is required to stay overnight and take the flight the following day because the flight was delayed due to mechanical problems. For example,

1. I am terribly sorry but flight XX is delayed due to mechanical problems. Our next flight won't be available until tomorrow. We will arrange an overnight accommodation and make sure you get a confirmed booking on tomorrow's flight. I am very sorry for the inconvenience.

(Group A-HP-after participant 2's reply)

2. Mr. X. We apologize our flight to Sydney will delay till 6am tomorrow morning from HKG due to the maintenance problem and we will arrange the hotel accommodation for you in HKG tonight.

(Group A-LP-after participant 5's reply)

3. Mr. XX I feel sorry to advise you that flight XX will delay until tomorrow morning. We will arrange you to tomorrow first available flight and offer you to stay one night in hotel. (Group A-HP-after participant 8's reply)

The above three examples show the three high proficiency participants avoided producing request speech acts as suggested in the DCTs. Although the researcher failed to elicit request speech acts from these participants due to their avoidance, it nonetheless demonstrated that participants with high proficiency were aware of the face-threatening nature of the speech act of request and made efforts to avoid it. These high proficiency participants' replies were the same as some of the participants from the First DCTs and airline staff. Their replies comply with the airline managers' interviews statement that "airlines do not dare to 'request' passengers to do something they can only seek for their cooperation". The word "cooperation" defined by the airline managers was that airline employees are not senior enough to be in a position to order passengers to do something.

6.2.3 Supportive Moves

The supportive motives used by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after were analysed and compared in terms of types and frequency (see Table 6.3). In Table 6.3,

the number refers to the frequency of the particular type of supportive moves that was used in 20 situations.

Table 6.3 Aggregated Frequencies of 'Supportive Moves' across Group A-LP-after, Group A-HP-after and Group C

Supportive Moves	Group A-LP-after (N=12)	Group A-HP-after (N=8)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
Preparatory	0	0	0	0
Pre-commitment	0	1	6	7
Grounder	210	136	154	500
Disarmer	0	2	4	6
Empathy	10	7	18	35
Apology	12	7	7	26
Accept Responsibility	1	0	0	1
Compensation	0	0	0	0
Reassurance	3	4	8	15
Gratitude	4	3	3	10
Overall Totals	240	160	200	600

As illustrated in Table 6.3, in the Second DCTs Group A-HP-after participants employed 7 types of supportive moves such as *pre-commitment*, *grounder*, *disarmer*, *empathy*, *apology*, *reassurance* and *gratitude*, whereas Group A-LP-after participants only employed 6 types of supportive moves - *grounder*, *empathy*, *apology*, *reassurance* and *gratitude* (see Table 6.4). The external modifiers *grounder* is most frequently used by Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after in many situations. It seems that providing explanations for requests is an effective strategy for Group A-LP-after, Group A-HP-after and Group C. Ellis (1992, p. 12) found external modification occurring in the initial stages of interlanguage requests to be limited to grounders, i.e., to justifications, explanations or reasons. The reason behind the use of grounders is that “as external modifiers, grounders might be easier to use as they do

not require the knowledge to include them in the request head” (quoted from Alcon-Soler, 2008, p. 132). It was also observed that the supportive moves *disarmer* was only found in Group A-HP-after. One possible explanation for this is “because they require more elaboration than grounders” (Alcon-Soler, 2008, p. 136).

In the following, the examples of Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants’ usage of grounders are illustrated.

Group A-LP-after replies:

1. but the flight is closed for check in. Would you please take next flight?
(Group A-LP-after participant 4’s reply)
2. because of some mechanical problem, the flight you booked isn’t until tomorrow morning. You have to stay overnight. We will pay all fee of hotel.
(Group A-LP-after participant 5’s reply)
3. Due to aviation security check, your luggage over-weight too much. Maybe you need to repackage or pay for the excess. (Group A-LP-after participant 8’s reply)
4. But according to the regulations, your baggage exceeds the baggage allowance, we must make this charge. (Group A-LP-after participant 12’s reply)

Group A-HP-after replies:

1. The check-in counter was closed, so we’re afraid can’t let you get on the flight. You can take the next plane, I’ll check schedule for you. (Group A-HP-after participant 1’s reply)

2. I'm sorry that the flight is closed for check-in. Would you like to take next flight if there's any vacancy? (Group A-HP-after participant 3's reply)
3. I'm sorry the flight has been overbooked. Would you like to take the next flight? (Group A-HP-after participant 6's reply)
4. Your visa has been expired so that we can't check you in now. (Group A-LP-after participant 7's reply)

Apart from using a grounder to explain the purpose of the request and reduce the threat to the hearer's face, the *disarmer* is another external modifier, which can be used to "provide reasons to 'disarm' the addressee from the possibility of a refusal" (Alcon-Soler, 2008, p. 136). The *disarmer* was only found in Group A-HP-after participants' replies in the data before and after placement (see Table 6.4, pp. 234-235). One possible explanation for this is 'because they require more elaboration than grounders' (Alcon-Soler, 2008, p. 136). In this study only three Group A-HP-after participants used the external modifier *disarmer*, which was in line with the findings in Alcon-Soler's research that *disarmer* is not commonly found in EFL data. The following examples were quoted from Group A-HP-after.

5. I know that you must be very upset about the flight delay. (Group A-HP-after participant 4's reply)
6. I understand you are very unhappy about the seat arrangement. (Group A-HP-after participant 5's reply)
7. I know you are very frustrated about the flight delay. (Group A-HP-after participant 4's reply)

A revealing finding emerged when the participants' use of the supportive moves *gratitude* and *empathy* were analysed. Before placement Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants tended to use these two supportive moves more frequently than after placement. The reason for the decreased use of *gratitude* and *empathy* was that in the focus group interviews participants explicitly mentioned that their senior staff have told them to “cut the conversation short and brief while interacting with passengers since there were many passengers waiting to be served.” Therefore, in order to be efficient they typically told the passengers what to do instead of making requests to them and also skipped the expressions such as ‘I know you must be very upset about it’ or ‘thank you for your cooperation’.

Regarding the usage of supportive moves - *apology*, it is noted that there were some differences between Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after data in terms of the content of the *apology* (see Table 6.4). The frequency distribution of types of apology by individual student from Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after across all situations is outlined in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Aggregated Frequencies of ‘Apology’ across Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after

Types of Apology	Group A-LP-after (N=12)	Group A-HP-after (N=8)	Group C airline staff (N=10)	Totals
sorry	2	0	0	3
sorry + title	2	1	0	7
I am / we are sorry	2	0	0	7
I am / we are sorry + title	2	1	0	9
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry	1	0	0	4
I am / we are (so/very/really) sorry + title	1	0	0	2

I am / we are sorry to + inform/tell you....	0	2	3	6
I am / We are very/terribly sorry for/about ..	1	2	2	4
We are regretting to advise you that...	0	1	2	2
We apologize	1	0	0	1
Overall Totals	12	7	7	45

As illustrated in Table 6.4, the frequency of using ‘sorry’ or ‘I am sorry’ among Group A-HP-after participants was lower than Group A-LP-after participants. Moreover, after placement Group A-HP-after participants have used the expression such as ‘I am / we are sorry to inform/tell you...’, ‘I am / we are sorry for/about ...’, ‘We are regretting to advise you....’ In contrast to Group A-HP-after, none of Group A-LP-after participants used the apology ‘we are regretting to advise you’. Group A-LP-after participants still used the same types of apology ‘sorry’ and ‘I am sorry’, compared to their replies before placement. This suggests that Group A-HP-after are aware of the potential problems that may arise by using ‘sorry’ and ‘I am sorry’ when providing services and they are grammatically competent to identify the pragmatics differences between the expressions ‘I am sorry’ and ‘I am sorry to + Verb’ and using the expression “I am sorry to + Verb” to avoid liability.

In the First DCTs both Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after tended to use ‘sorry/I am sorry’ or ‘sorry/I am sorry + title’, to initiate the conversation when providing service. Nevertheless, there are significant changes in Group A-HP-after participants’ replies in the Second DCTs. Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants’ use of apologies in their replies were selected and shown as follows. The examples are quotes from data collected which includes some grammatical errors.

Group A-LP-after participants' replies:

1. Sorry, Miss. Our check-in counter is closed.
(Group A-LP-after participant 1's reply)
2. Sorry, madam. Let me double check with my supervisor.
(Group A-LP-after participant 3's reply)
3. Sorry, sir. I know you just transit here, but in our company the luggage allowance just 20 kg, and your luggage is overweight.
(Group A-LP-after participant 4's reply)
4. I am sorry that the flight is closed for check-in.
(Group A-LP-after participant 5's reply)
5. I feel sorry. The counter is closed before 40minutes.
(Group A-LP-after participant 9's reply)
6. I am really sorry but the flight is closed for check-in.
(Group A-LP-after participant 10's reply)
7. We are very sorry about that.
(Group A-LP-after participant 11's reply)
8. I am sorry to tell you that your baggage is over the free allowance.
(Group A-LP-after participant 12's reply)

Group A-HP-after participants' replies:

1. Sorry, madam, the flight is closed because you are too late. I will contact my supervisor if there has any chances to let you get on the plan.
(Group A-HP-after participant 2's reply)
2. I am sorry, madam. Our counter is already closed for check-in.
(Group A-HP-after participant 3's reply)
3. I am sorry that the flight is closed for check-in.

(Group A-HP-after participant 4's reply)

4. I am sorry for the flight delayed. (Group A-HP-after participant 5's reply)

5. We are really sorry because of the flight delay.

(Group A-HP-after participant 6's reply)

6. We are sorry for the heavily booked. (Group A-HP-after participant 7's reply)

7. I am very sorry to tell you that your baggage is over the free allowance...

(Group A-HP-after participant 5's reply)

8. I am sorry to waste your time here... (Group A-HP-after participant 6's reply)

9. I'm sorry to inform you miss, your visa is expired.

(Group A-HP-after participant 1's reply)

9. I am sorry to tell you the flight is closed.

(Group A-HP-after participant 2's reply)

11. I'm sorry to inform you this madam, because of your late show, you're not able to be in this flight. (Group A-HP-after participant 7's reply)

12. We are regretting to advise you that the flight is closed for check-in.

(Group A-HP-after participant 8's reply)

The comparison between the two research groups' replies showed that after placement some participants from Group A-HP-after participants avoided using the expressions, which were frequently used by Group A-LP-after participants, such as 'sorry/I am sorry' at the beginning of the conversation with passengers. Instead they used the expressions such as 'I am sorry to tell you', 'I'm sorry to inform you', 'We are regretting to advise you', 'I am sorry to waste your time', 'We are sorry for the heavily booked' to avoid apologizing to passengers in the Second DCTs. The result revealed that Group A-HP-after participants were more aware of avoiding liability as they believed these expressions to be socio-pragmatically inappropriate in English. In

this sense, we may state that learners' pragmatic awareness increased in line with their proficiency level.

6.2.4 Internal Modifiers

The internal modifiers were analysed based on Blum-Kulka's & Olshtain's classification (1984, p. 203); syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders. Regarding the distribution of syntactic downgraders in the three groups, the data shows that the *interrogative* is the only syntactic downgrader used by Group A-LP-after. The syntactic downgraders such as *negation*, *embedded if clause* and *consultative device* only appeared in Group A-HP-after participants' replies in the Second DCTs. The examples of the *negation*, *embedded if clause* and *consultative device* produced by Group A-HP-after participants are displayed below (see Example 1 and Example 2).

Group A-HP-after participants' replies:

1. If you really want to check in your bag, I'm afraid I'll charge the excess baggage.
(Group A-HP-after participant 3's reply)
2. Excuse me. I wonder if you wouldn't mind downgrading to Economic Class?
(Group A-HP-after participant 5's reply)
3. It would be great if you could help us solve out this problem.
(Group A-HP-after participant 6's reply)
4. I would appreciate it if you could help us solve out this problem.
(Group A-HP-after participant 7's reply)
5. Sir, Would it be all right if we put you to another flight since this flight is fully booked? (Group A-HP-after participant 8's reply)

One possible explanation for Group A-LP-after participants not employing the above internal modifiers may be because *negation* and *embedded if clause* involve a more complicated pragmalinguistic structure, which the participants from the low linguistic proficiency may find difficult to produce.

Regarding the type of lexical/phrasal downgraders involved, the result showed that both Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants frequently resorted to the politeness marker *please*. One of the possible reasons for both Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants' preference for using politeness markers was that the participants believed that if they used the politeness markers when making requests, the passengers were less likely to feel offended and more likely to comply with the requests. It was also observed that Group A-LP-after employed the word *please* more than Group A-HP-after participants. It seems that the frequency of the use of *please* decreased as the participants' proficiency level increased. A possible explanation for this distinction in the use of *please* was that it may be connected to the learners' proficiency level or grammatical competence. As reported by Bardovi-Harlig (1996), "internal modifiers may involve particular syntactic knowledge, while the use of *please* does not necessarily imply knowledge of subordination or of complex syntactic structures" (cited in Alcon-Soler 2008, p. 56). The result suggested that the use of *please* is related to the participants' proficiency.

6.3 Summary

In concluding the differences between Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants' replies, the data showed that the frequency of using direct strategies for Group A-LP-after participants is higher than Group A-HP-after participants (see

Table 6.2 pp. 228-229). Group A-HP-after participants used more indirect strategies than Group A-LP-after participants (see Table 6.2 pp. 228-229). Group A-HP-after participants demonstrated greater improvement compared with Group A-LP-after participants in the pragmatic development. Yet, Group A-LP-after participants' lack of linguistic competence restricted their capacity to produce pragmatically appropriate utterances.

The relationship between pragmatic competence and learners' language proficiency was also analysed in this study. Request strategies were compared between Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after in terms of types and frequency of strategies. As to the types of request strategies, Group A used 4 of 5 types of direct strategies: *Mood derivable*, *Hedged performative*, *Locution derivable*, *Want statement* in the First DCTs, while Group B and Group C airline staff only employed *Mood derivable*, *Locution derivable* and *Want statement*. However, in the Second DCTs the data revealed that both Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants employed the same request strategies as Group B and Group C. This result suggested that both Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants became "more airline staff like" after one year placement in the airline companies as they avoided using direct strategies in an attempt to reduce the impact of making requests. Although both Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after participants used the same request strategies as Group C, when comparing the frequency of request strategies, one difference was noted between Group A-LP-after and Group A-HP-after data. The data showed that the frequency of using direct strategies for Group A-LP-after is higher than Group A-HP-after (see Table 6.2). The high proficiency participants demonstrated equivalent pragmatic development that was greater than the low proficiency participants. Furthermore, Group A-LP-after participants' deficient linguistic and grammatical

knowledge restricted their capacity to produce linguistic actions, which sometimes lead to pragmalinguistic failure. The results suggested that the development of pragmatic competence is closely related to that of linguistic competence. Thus, what is at issue for airline English instructors is to design airline English courses more precisely to meet the needs of low proficiency students in order to develop their pragmatic competence. The teaching implication for airline English will be discussed in Section 8.3 (see pp. 324-330).

Chapter Seven

Analysis of Interview Data

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the qualitative data derived from face-to-face interviews with two airline managers. The data are represented in two parts: (a) airline managers' qualitative comments on participants' DCT responses in 8 situations and (b) managers' rankings on the participants' appropriateness into a 4-point scale evaluation.

This chapter presents data from interviews with 2 airline managers in order to explore explicitly the research question 3:

To what extent do participant responses in the DCTs conform to airline managers' expectations of appropriate verbal behaviours by check-in staff?

From an ESP perspective, this research question is crucial as pinpointing the requirements of the airline directs how airline English teachers locate the target language use for their ESP learners. In this study, the participants' replies were evaluated by experienced airline customer service managers who are capable of judging whether their answers meet the service principles in staff training and standards of proper language uses at check-in counters. In order to appreciate their criteria of evaluating the research participants' data, it seems fundamental to investigate the following three questions: what is politeness for experienced airline managers? What language should be used and how do they expect it to be expressed? Are there any social rules?

In this chapter, my systematic analysis with examples helps diagnose the reasons why some instances were considered opposed airline customer service principles by those airline managers in Taiwan. To follow up, I also depict airline managers' feedback in detail in these specific examples, selected from both First and Second DCTs. All the participants' replies were carefully dissected by two using scales: Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP) and Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle for the pragmatic analysis. When examining the results by adapting Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP) as analytical tools, some interesting interpretations are found in analysing the manager's feedback. Although some participants' replies were appraised as appropriate on the basis of airline managers' concept of politeness, yet they seem to violate Grice's (1975) maxim of Quality in the CP. Nevertheless, their airline customer service principle of showing empathy for the customers' feelings, closely comply with Leech's politeness principle of the conversational maxims- the sympathy maxim.

Next, some possible explanations are given to justify the differences between both Group A (2nd year students) and Group B (4th year students) participants' perceptions of politeness and those of two airline managers'. Finally, a summary of the results are presented in the following section.

7.2 Airline Managers' comments on participants' First DCT responses

In this study, airline managers were invited to evaluate the appropriateness of all participants' DCT responses on a 4 point scale, however, airline managers only offered their comments toward the participants' replies in 8 situations (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12) as most common encounters. One of the managers pinpointed 7 situations

(1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 12) out of 12 as most frequent occurrences at the check-in counters while the other one only recognised 6 of the situations (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12). In order to equally compare the two airline managers' comments on the participants' replies in the same situation, both of them were invited to give comments for the same 8 situations.

In order to provide a clear illustration of the 8 situations discussed in the following sections, the results of the analysis are described in numerical order. Two airline managers in the interview regarded Group A participants' replies in Situation 1 (see below) as inappropriate because Group A participants requested passengers to 'take the next flight' due to the closure of the check-in counter.

Situation 1.

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight.

The data indicated there were some differences between the replies from Group A and Group B. For example,

Group A participants' replies:

1. The flight is closed for check-in counter. Could you wait for next flight?

(Group A participant 3's reply)

2. I am very sorry but the flight is closed. Can you take the next flight?

(Group A participant 4's reply)

3. I can't help you to take your flight on time. Could you mind take the next flight.
(Group A participant 8's reply)
4. We are very sorry. You need to take next flight. (Group A participant 10's reply)
5. Sorry, would you please take next flight because this flight was closed for check-in.
(Group A participant 11's reply)
6. I am very sorry about you but the flight is start going. You have to take next flight.
(Group A participant 12's reply)
7. The flight will departure. Could you get next flight? We will soon to set up your
seat. (Group A participant 17's reply)
8. Our check-in is already closed. Would you stay in the airport for a while? I will try
to assist you to taking the next flight. (Group A participant 18's reply)
9. As for your safety, we can't let you get on this flight. It's against our company's
rule and you've missed the check-in time so would you please take the following
flight? (Group A participant 19's reply)

The two airline managers were surprised by some of the expressions from Group A participants, in particular occurrences of promising passengers may sometimes cause further complications if airliners fail to keep the promises. For instance, the expression "we will soon to set up your seats" made the listeners expect the possibility of boarding on the next flight. Two airline managers further elaborated that the participants should never promise passengers anything before it had been authorized especially in the heavy traffic periods. The staff's implicit suggestion of catching the next flight is likely to create a misunderstanding between them and the passenger that may result in passenger complaints.

After evaluating Group B participants' replies in Situation 1, two airline managers concluded that Group B participants' responses can be divided into two types: the first type is similar to Group A participants' and the second type is closer to Group C airline staff's responses (see Table 7.1). According to two airline managers' comments on Group B participants' replies in Situation 1, 60% of participants' replies are "more airline staff like" and 40% of participants' replies are similar to Group A participants'. That is to say, only half of Group B participants have acquired the language convention rules used in airline service during the placement so that they were able to give appropriate answer to this question.

Table 7.1 Group B Participants' Replies

Type 1= Airline Staff like, Type 2= Group A like

	Content of the Reply
Type 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maybe you can get next available flight. Let me check the reservation, please wait moment. 2. Can I suggest you take next available flight? 3. Would you making changing your flight schedule because our flight was already closed before 40 minutes. 4. Could you wait a moment? I have to ask my supervisor if it's ok to let you get on the flight. 5. I am afraid you need to take the next available flight.
Type 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Can you take the next flight? 7. Sorry, would you please take next flight because this flight was closed for check-in. 8. You've missed the check-in time so would you please take the following flight? 9. You have to take next flight. 10. Could you wait next flight, due to the flight situation is closed? 11. Would you like to take the next flight?

The two airline managers indicated that airline staff have been instructed in customer service training not to suggest or request passengers to 'take the next flight' when dealing with a situation like Situation 1. The reasons are as follows. Firstly, the next flight's loading might be over-booked. Under this circumstance, the passenger may not be able to 'take the next flight'. Both of the airline managers explained that on the basis of the customer service training, the appropriate response in Situation 1 would be for the staff to emphasise the word 'available' meaning that they cannot promise that passengers will be able to get on the 'next flight'. By using this airline staff only suggests passengers should take the next flight, but did not guarantee that passengers would be able to get on the flight. By doing so the airline staff could avoid potential complaints from passengers. Airline managers explained that if airline staff would like to suggest passengers to take the next flight the staff should inform the passengers that they will check the flight loading first. Example 2 'Can I suggest you take next available flight?' is also considered a good reply, although there are some grammatical errors. The airline staff emphasized the word 'available' meaning that they did not promise that passengers will be able to get on the 'next flight'. From example 1 and 2, one can see that airline staff only suggested passengers take the next flight but did not guarantee that passengers can get on the flight. By doing so the airline staff could avoid potential complaints from passengers. Another alternative for ground staff is suggesting passengers to change their flight schedules such as in Example 3. Sometimes the airline staff may need advice from their supervisor in regards to the problem they encounter; for example (Example 4) 'The flight is already closed. Could you wait a moment? I have to ask my supervisor if it's ok to let you get on the flight.' However, example 4 was not found in Group A data. The possible reason for that is Group A participants did not know how to deal with this situation as they have no practical airline work experience.

According to the results of the Focus Group Interview, Group A participants explained that they were not taught in class about the appropriate reply in a situation like Situation 1 before their placement in airlines. One reason perhaps, is the significance of the use of the word ‘available’ is not recognized by the airline English teachers and therefore, they were not able to raise the students’ awareness of the differences between the expressions ‘take the next flight’ and ‘take the next available flight’ when dealing with the late arrival passengers.

Linguistic analysis showed that Group A participants’ replies such as ‘could you take next flight?’ or ‘You have to take next flight.’ were grammatically correct except the missing articles ‘the’. However, their replies were considered inappropriate by airline managers based on customer service principles. The result of the analysis showed that students are not only required to speak English ‘accurately’ in work, but also speak English ‘appropriately’ based on airline customer service principles, which should be noted and addressed adequately by airline English teachers or textbooks.

In the following section, the participants’ replies in Situation 4 are discussed rather than in Situation 2, as not all situations received comments from the managers. That is, airline managers only provided comments to the participants’ replies in Situation 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12.

Situation 4:

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a

transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

After evaluating Group B participants' replies in Situation 4, two airline managers concluded that Group B participants' responses can be categorized into two types: one type is similar to Group A participants' and the other type is more similar to Group C's replies. According to two airline managers' comments on Group B participants' replies in Situation 4, it is noted that 70% of participants' replies are 'more airline staff like' while the other 30% of participants' replies are similar to Group A participants'. That is to say, more than half of Group B participants have acquired the language convention rules used in airline service scenarios during the placement.

In order to investigate what request strategies are actually employed to approximate 'more airline staff like' replies, in the following section the types of request strategies used by Group A and Group B are carefully analysed and shown in Table 7.4 and 7.5 respectively.

Table 7.4 Types of Group A participants' request strategies in Situation 4

Situation	One passenger's luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight.	
Main category	Subcategory	Examples
Direct Strategy	Mood Derivable	NIL
	Explicit Performative	NIL
	Hedged Performative	NIL

	Locution Derivable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You need to pay the excess weight. 2. You need pay extra charge. 3. You must pay for it. 4. You have to pay the excess baggage charge, please. 5. I'm afraid you should pay the excess luggage charge. 6. We need you to pay for the excess baggage charges. 7. We have to charge you the excess. 8. We have to charge for the excess weight 9. If your luggage over-weight we need to charge the excess. 10. So sorry we just follow our airlines regulations and need to collect over-weight charge with you.
	Want Statement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We hope you pay for the excess baggage charge for the safety.
Conventional Indirect	Suggestory Formula	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you don't want pay the excess charge, you can mail it to the place you get.
	Query Preparatory	NIL
Non-conventional Indirect	Strong hint	NIL
	Mild hint	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under the airlines regulations, luggage in excess of twenty kg is charged. 2. According to our luggage rules, the excess baggage fare has to pay. Your luggage is already over-weight.

Table 7.5 Types of Group B participants' request strategies in Situation 4

Situation	One passenger's luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight.	
Main category	Subcategory	Examples
Direct Strategy	Mood Derivable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you want to take this flight, you just pay the excess baggage charge. 2. Please pay the excess baggage fee or you are

		against the airplane safety.
	Explicit Performative	NIL
	Hedged Performative	NIL
	Locution Derivable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have to pay the excess charge for the flight safety. 2. You must pay the excess luggage. 3. You must pay the excess luggage charge. 4. You have to pay excess charge. 5. Maybe you need to pay for the excess luggage charge. 6. If you don't pay for the excess luggage charge you can't take the flight. 7. We have to charge you (for) the excess baggage. 8. I must charge you the excess baggage whether you are a transit passenger or not.
	Want Statement	NIL
Conventional Indirect	Suggestory Formula	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have to pay for it or give up your duty free. 2. You can carry some baggage on the airplane to save the charges. 3. Maybe I'll charge you for excess weight or you have to give up something. 4. You have to give up something or I'll charge you for excess weight.
	Query Preparatory	NIL
Non-conventional Indirect	Strong hint	NIL
	Mild hint	NIL

The analysis of data showed that although Group A used more direct strategy than Group B in terms of the degree of directness based on the CCSARP coding scheme

(Blum-Kulka, and Olshtain, 1989), Group B used the most direct strategy *Mood Derivable*, yet there are only two examples in this situation, while none of Group A participants used it. The linguistic form of *Mood derivable* – imperatives, in most cases in English, signals that the utterance is an order, and it can be mostly considered impolite. For example, if a ground staff asks one passenger to hand over his/ her travel documents by saying: ‘Give me the passport’. In this sense, this strategy seems the least favoured means of making a request in English.

The following two examples show that two participants from Group B selected bald-on-record directness which maximized the potential for conflict between the passenger and the participant. These two replies were considered by the two Taiwanese airline managers as rude and inappropriate when dealing with excess baggage problems.

1. If you want to take this flight, you just pay the excess baggage charge.

(Group A participant 1’s reply)

2. Please pay the excess baggage fee or you are against the airplane safety.

(Group A participant 7’s reply)

However, airline managers also said that that the reason Group B participants provided these two replies is understandable, as in many cases, some passengers refuse to pay the excess baggage charge in a very impolite and rude manner, such as shouting or swearing. Thus, many airline employees tended to deal with these kinds of passengers with less patience and use less polite language. One of the airline managers further elaborated that it is comprehensible that many airline employees tended to lose their patience especially in dealing with very rude passengers.

Nevertheless, even if the passengers are in a very impolite manner, airline employees should nonetheless maintain an impersonal and professional manner.

Looking at the structure and segmentation of a request made by Group A participants in the following example, it was found that Group A participants typically used a grounder before a request and after it. For example,

1. According to our over-weight rule, we have to charge for the excess weight.

(Group A participant 6's reply)

2. Every one has to pay for the excess luggage charge, including you, sir!!

(Group A participant 12's reply)

In this example 'according to our over-weight rule' is a reason given before the request 'we have to charge for you the excess weight' and '*Every one has to pay for the excess luggage charge, including you, sir!!*' is another reason given after the request. Thus, in this study a reason that was given before a request was termed as a 'pre-request grounder' whereas a reason given after a request was a 'post-request grounder'. In the above example, the pre-request grounder 'according to our over-weight rule' is a statement. '*Every one has to pay for the excess luggage charge, including you, sir!!*' is the post-request grounder. Airline managers explained that the expression 'including you, sir!' is inappropriate as it implies that the hearer has no superiority over other passengers and deserves no special treatment. This expression is considered quite rude and it would only be used for those who were being very aggressive themselves. However, a Group A participant indicated in the interview what he really meant by the expression 'including you' is that 'everyone is required to equally pay for the excess luggage charge and there is no exception for anyone.' The

findings from the analysis showed that students' imperfect linguistic competence resulted in communication breakdown and misunderstanding.

The following example is another case in which Group A participants' replies may be considered impolite due to their deficient linguistic competence. For example,

3. We have to charge you the excess baggage. I am sorry about that, but our airline company has rules about the excess baggage, so can you understand?
(Group A participant 2's reply)

The expression '*so can you understand*' in the post-request grounder '*but our airline company has rules about the excess baggage, so can you understand*' may be considered aggressive. Group A participants explained in the focus group interview that they hoped the passenger could understand what they explained. In other words, Group A participants tried to say '*did I make myself clear?*' but due to their deficient linguistic competence they said '*so can you understand*' instead.

Two airline managers also noticed that the above replies, Example 1 and 2 from Group A were considered very inappropriate and may cause passengers to complain. They explained that the participants' replies in Example 1 and 2 were considered very rude especially the expression 'including you, sir', 'so can you understand' which imply that the passengers are not smart enough or too stupid to understand the staff's explanation. The airline managers said the participants' aggressive and confrontational manner may result in passenger complaints. Another example was also considered very inappropriate by the two airline managers.

4. Because your first flight don't want you safety in the flight. If the airplane was over-weight, it was dangerous so we hope you to pay the excess baggage charge for safety. (Group A participant 13's reply)

In Example 3, the participant used a positive politeness strategy which maximized the potential for conflict, in that the participant requested the passenger to pay the excess baggage charge, creating an imposition and putting the judgement first in saying that 'Because your first flight don't want you safety in the flight.' The two Taiwanese airline managers also commented that the participant criticised the other airline for not considering passengers' safety as the leading statement, which may cause serious problems and complaints from the other airline.

In addition, the two airline managers pointed out in the interview that the use of words 'rule' 、 'policy' or 'restriction' should be avoided when providing services to customers. However, it was found that many of the participants from Group A and Group B have overused the above mentioned words. The occurrence of using the words 'rule' 、 'policy' or 'restriction' from both research groups are as follows.

Table 7.6 The words 'rule' 、 'policy' and 'restriction'

Group A Participants' Replies	Group B Participants' Replies
1. each company has its own rules	6. every airlines has its rule/regulation
2. according to our rules	7. according to our company rules
3. according to our regulation	8. according to our regulation
4. according to our company rules	9. according to our company policy
5. Our company has different rules	10. due to our company safety rules

The above examples shared something in common, which is that the words ‘rules’ and ‘regulations’ were used. Both airline managers indicated that an expression such as ‘according to airline policy/regulation you are required to’ is strictly prohibited when airline staff offers services. The expression, ‘under this circumstance’ is suggested instead of using the expression ‘‘according to airline policy/regulation. The reason for it is that using the words ‘policy’, ‘rule’ or ‘regulations’ would make passengers feel they are forced to follow the rules, especially ‘your company’s regulations’ which may irritate passengers. Both airline managers further said that in their experience of dealing with complaints there were many cases showing that whenever the ground employees provide reasons such as ‘according to our company rules’ before making requests many passengers argued ‘why should I follow your company’s rule? I am not your staff’. Thus, in order to reduce the potential for passenger complaints the airline employees are advised to avoid the words ‘rule’ , ‘policy’ or ‘restriction’ when delivering services to passengers.

The results showed that 50% of Group B participants and 63% of Group A participants have used the words ‘policy’, ‘rule’ or ‘regulations’. This suggests that in Situation 4 neither Group A nor Group B provided appropriate responses to the situation. The result of the analysis pointed out that Group B participants’ being on placement hasn’t improved their performance, in terms of conventions or language. This should be addressed by airline English teachers.

Situation 5:

The passenger is a young woman from Russia travelling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

When dealing with passengers with expired travel documents, the two airline managers noted that 46% of Group B participants' replies are considered more appropriate than Group A participants'. The types of replies to Situation 5 from both research groups are as follows.

Table 7.7 Group A and Group B's replies in Situation 5

Group A Participants' Replies	Group B Participants' Replies
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your visa is expired.2. Your visa is expired,3. Your visa is not correct.4. (Because) Your visa is overdue.5. Your visa has been expired.6. you can't use your visa.7. we can't recognize your visa.8. you have a little problem about your visa9. Because your visa has some problems.10. because you are travelling with an expired visa,	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your visa is expired.2. You must apply the visa again.3. Miss, your visa has some problems. Could you please show me the expired date of your visa?4. May I ask our staff at the information counter there to assist you to contacting the visa office about your visa?5. It seems to be that your visa is expired. Could you show me your visa expired date?6. Is your visa valid until June 20, 2009?

The airline managers explained that airline staff will avoid using the words such as 'expire' or 'overdue' when checking passengers' travelling documents since airline staff are not as knowledgeable as the Immigration and Customer officers; consequently they might make mistakes and cause problems due to lack of awareness of the current immigration policy. One of the airline managers said that once there was an airline employee who refused to let a passenger board since their visa had expired. However, the Immigration and Customer officer verified the passenger's visa and claimed that the passenger was holding a valid visa. The passenger then complained about the airline employee being unprofessional and filed for compensation for his loss of time and money and this was upheld. Since then airline staff have been trained to be very careful and use the word 'valid until'. When the airline staff checks passengers' documents the staff should use expressions such as 'sir/madam, your visa/passport is valid until ...' and invite passengers to explain their visa status. By doing this it will reduce the potential for making mistakes and causing problems. From the above examples although Group B participants used the word 'expired' in the data the participants also confirmed with passengers their visa status. Therefore, it is still considered appropriate. The two airline managers commented that Group B participants' responses in Situation 5 are more appropriate than Group A participants'.

Looking closely at the linguistic structures of the grounder used by Group A and Group B participants, Group A participants tended to use the linguistic structures such as 'S+be+adj', 'S+has+P.P', 'S+can't+Verb' and 'S+V+O' to declare that the passengers' visa is expired followed by the request. On the other hand, Group B participants demonstrated a wider range of linguistic structures of the grounder in Situation 5 (see Table 7.7). Interestingly, it was found that 60% of Group A

participants provided explanations (*grounder*), such as ‘your visa is expired’ or ‘your visa has expired’ before making requests. On the other hand, Group B participants used a ‘pre-sequence’ in the replies, which prepares the ground for a further sequence and signals the type of utterance to follow, to ascertain whether the passengers’ visa is expired or not first, then move on to confirm the passengers’ visa status. It is this move which made airline managers comment that Group B participants’ replies in Situation 5 are more appropriate as they prompt passengers and not airline staff to confirm that their visa is expired.

During placement, Group B students seemed not to avoid using words such as ‘expire’ or ‘overdue’ when checking passengers’ travel documents. Though this fact is nothing to do with requests and politeness, yet according to the airline manager’s statement, “ground staff’s inappropriate use of these words had previously caused some problems and also caused passenger complaints. Avoiding any possibility for causing passenger complaints is one of the priorities in terms of providing good quality service.” Even the avoidance of using these words - ‘expire’ or ‘overdue’ - is not directly relevant to my research questions, yet it is actually related to linguistic elements that are employed to provide good quality service. Therefore, in order to instruct students of the language conventions in the airlines context, the avoidance of using the words ‘expire’ or ‘overdue’, should also be covered in airline English courses.

Table 7.8 Linguistic structures of the grounder

Group A Participants’ Replies	Group B Participants’ Replies
1. S+be+ adj: ‘Your visa is expired.’ ‘Your visa is overdue.’	1. S+be+ adj: ‘Your visa is expired.’ 2. S+has+P.P

<p>‘Your visa is not correct.’</p> <p>2. S+has+P.P: ‘Your visa has expired.’</p> <p>3. S+can’t+ Verb: ‘we can’t recognize your visa.’</p> <p>4. (Because) S+V+O: ‘you have a little problem about your visa’ ‘Because your visa has some problems.’ ‘because you are traveling with an expired visa’</p>	<p>‘Your visa has expired.’</p> <p>3. Could you please + Verb: ‘Could you please show me the expired date of your visa?’</p> <p>4. May I + Verb: ‘May I ask our staff at the information counter there to assist you to contacting the visa office about your visa?’</p> <p>5. Interrogative: Is + S + adj? ‘Is your visa valid until June 20, 2009?’ ‘Is your visa expired?’</p>
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Situation 6

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn’t until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

In Situation 6 the airline managers noticed that some of Group A (2nd year students) participants’ replies are not appropriate. For example,

1. You have to stay overnight. It’s our fault. We will pay for you the hotel and meal. (Group A participant 6’s reply)
2. Due to the mechanical problem the flight can’t be take off. You must stay overnight and our company will deal with the compensation part. (Group A participant 7’s reply)

3. We will provide a discount if you don't mind stay overnight. (Group A participant 12's reply)
4. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning so you must stay overnight, we will give a room and some compensation. (Group A participant 14's reply)

Both airline managers took the view that one of the important things for the airline staff to keep in mind is that when providing services airline staff must be very careful about verbally accepting responsibility for any problems that arise as admissions could have legal consequences that require compensation. In Situation 6 the airline staff should first explain to passengers that the flight delay is due to a mechanical problem which is unexpected. Passengers' safety is always the airline's top priority therefore mechanical maintenance or repair is necessary and crucial. Explanation and then seeking passengers' understanding is the correct strategy to adopt instead of taking the blame and accepting responsibility such as 'It's our fault' and raising the issue of compensation such as 'our company will deal with the compensation part.'

The result showed that none of Group B participants used the strategy of accepting responsibility or compensation in Situation 6. The following examples are from Group B's replies.

1. You need to stay overnight in Taiwan tonight because your flight is delayed because of mechanical problems. (Group B participant 1's reply)
2. Due to mechanical problems the flight is delayed. I am afraid you need to stay overnight and take the following day. (Group B participant 4's reply)
3. The flight is delayed due to mechanical problems. We'd like to ask you to stay overnight and take the next day flight. We'll arrange hotel. (Group B participant 5's reply)

4. Due to some problems your flight delayed in Hong Kong. I think you have to stay overnight for the flight. We will offer you the food ticket. (Group B participant 9's reply)
5. We'd like to ask you to stay overnight because we are not sure that the airplane is safe enough to take off. We'll escort you to the transit hotel and offer you the meal coupon. (Group B participant 10's reply)
6. The flight isn't until tomorrow morning. We will offer meal coupons and hotel with all passengers. (Group B participant 13's reply)

From the above examples one can see that instead of providing compensation Group B offered different services – including accommodation and meal coupons. The data revealed that 75% of Group B participants' replies comprised offers of accommodation and meal coupons while 55% of Group A participants only requested passengers to stay overnight without offering accommodation and meal coupons. Airline managers commented that under this circumstance Group B participants' replies are appropriate. Therefore, Group B participants' replies were more appropriate than Group A participants' in Situation 6.

Situation 7:

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

The two airline managers pointed out that many of Group A participants' replies might offend passengers and lead to passenger complaints in Situation 7. The following examples are quoted from Group A participants' replies.

1. *Your passport have some problem*, please wait a moment, we will help you to deal with this thing quickly. (Group A participant 6's reply)
2. *Your passport have some problem*, would you please go to the service counter for help? (Group A participant 8's reply)
3. *The passport that you have on hands have some problems*, could you wait here until we confirm this passport is ok? (Group A participant 9's reply)
4. *I am sorry your passport has some problems* you cannot check-in. (Group A participant 10's reply)
5. For the safety check *we have to copy your passport*. (Group A participant 11's reply)
6. *May I have your passport?* This way please. We have a routine check. (Group A participant 12's reply)
7. *Because your passport is suspicious passport*, would you mind let the next passenger deal with his thing. (Group A participant 13's reply)
8. Your passport have to change new one *because your passport is very suspicious*. (Group A participant 15's reply)
9. Would you please stay for *while the police would like to check your passport*. (Group A participant 19's reply)

Two airline managers explained that when dealing with suspicious or fraudulent, travel documents airline staff should not alert passengers by using an expression such as 'something wrong with *your passport*' or '*your passport has some problem*' as

airline staff should inform airport immigration officers first and then let them deal with the passenger with suspicious or fraudulent travel documents. Instead of using the above expression airline staff should make an excuse such as ‘the computer system seems to have some problem’ and quickly ask other colleagues to inform the relevant department to deal with the passenger’s problem. In addition, as mentioned earlier, airline staff are not as knowledgeable as Immigration Officers and might not be able to verify passengers’ passports. If passengers are holding valid travel documents airline staff’s inappropriate expression might offend passengers and cause complaints. In Example 9, the participant’s expression ‘*Would you please stay for while the police would like to check your passport*’ seems to imply that the passengers are criminals, which might result in a passenger’s serious protest.

However, the analysis of the data revealed that Group B participants used the excuse such as ‘the computer system seems to have some problem’ when dealing with passengers’ suspicious travel documents, which conforms to airline customer service principles. The result suggested that Group B participants with airline working experience are once again “more airline staff like” as they are aware of the potential problems that may arise by using the expression ‘your passport is very suspicious.’ The following examples are quoted from Group B participants’ replies.

1. *Our computer system has some errors, so could you please wait for a moment?* (Group B participant 3’s reply)
2. *The computer system seems to have some problem. Could you move to the other counter please? I would call the other to deal with.* (Group B participant 5’s reply)

3. I am afraid would you please wait a moment? *The computer has some problem.* (Group B participant 6's reply)
4. Could you please just wait for a second? *My computer just encounter some problem,* let me check-in for you at the other counter. (Group B participant 7's reply)
5. *There seems to be a problem with our computer data.* Can you please wait for a while? (Group B participant 18's reply)

Airline managers said in the interview that new airline employees will be advised to blame the computer in this situation by other senior staff on the basis of customer service training. Therefore, Group B participants' replies such as '*Our computer system has some errors*', '*the computer system seems to have some problem*', '*My computer just encounter some problem*', '*There seems to be a problem with our computer data*' are considered as appropriate answers. Nevertheless, the above replies seem to violate the Grice (1975) maxim of Quality in the Cooperative Principle (CP), these are: quantity, quality, relation and manner.

According to Grice's CP (1975), if speakers violate the maxim of quality, they deliver the wrong information to hearers. Namely, maxim violation becomes a deliberate lie, when the speaker is really trying to deceive the listener. Grice also defines that maxim flouting is when the speaker implies something beyond what he/she said and the hearer knows not to take the words literally but to understand the underlying implied meaning or connotations. The above Group B participants' replies shows that they did not tell the passengers' about their false travel documents as Group B participants did not want to raise the passengers' awareness of their false or suspicious passports and cause problems. In Situation 7, Group B participants are flouting the maxim as the

violation is deliberate.

Situation 8:

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in Business class, which he had booked, because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Both airline managers in the interview said that when handling the situation like Situation 8, airline staff must remember to apologise sincerely and show empathy for customers' feelings. Airline staff who focus only on follow-up actions without addressing the customers' emotions would have omitted a key component in excellent service – the “heart” factor. An outstanding airline staff member must be able to prioritise actions and show empathy effectively. The airline customer service principle of showing empathy for customers' feelings, in fact, complies with Leech's Politeness Principle and with conversational maxims; in particular the sympathy maxim. Sympathy Maxim “minimize antipathy between self and other” and ‘maximize sympathy between self and other” (Leech, 1983, p. 132), include such polite speech acts as commiserate and express condolences. This group of speech acts is also included in Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants and needs.

Situation 8 describes that where a Business class passenger was very unhappy about the service and according to airline customer service principles, airline staff must deal with the frustrated passengers with patience and show empathy for the passenger's feelings. Regarding the participants' replies in Situation 8, both of the two airline managers commented that Group B participants' replies are appropriate as they handled the situation with patience and showed empathy to the passengers. In the following examples, quoted from Group B participants' replies, Example 6 is considered the best reply in this circumstance.

1. Business class is all full now. Is that ok to arrange you to Economy? (Group B participant 1's reply)
2. I can understand why you are so angry with our service. (Group B participant 2's reply)
3. Our plane is really full. Would you take the Economy seat or would you mind to take next flight? (Group B participant 4's reply)
4. I am sorry that you waiting for long time. (Group B participant 6's reply)
5. Because the flight is heavily booked. All of the business eat is full. Would you mind downgrading and we will provide some meal coupons to you? (Group B participant 16's reply)
6. I know you are very angry under this circumstance but we don't have any business class seat now. Could I ask you to consider taking Economy seat? (Group B participant 18's reply)
7. I understand that you have a confirmed booking in the business class. Due to our heavily booked, would you take the Economy seat? (Group B participant 19's reply)

Many of Group A participants' replies were considered by the two airline managers as inadequate and even against the customer service policies. The following examples are quoted from Group A participants' replies.

1. It's my fault, but the flight is overbooking. Can you change to economy seat?
(Group A participant 2's reply)
2. It's our company's fault. There are no seats available in business class. Can you sit economy class? We will give you discount next time. (Group A participant 4's reply)
3. The flight is overbooking. Can you take the economy seat we still serve you like Business class? (Group A participant 6's reply)
4. Because the business class and first class is full, so would you change to the economy class, our airline will compensation to you? (Group A participant 8's reply)
5. Would you mind sit in the Economy and we will give you what you suppose to get? (Group A participant 11's reply)
6. Would you mind taking the Economy seat? We will return the rest money and give you some gifts for apologizing. (Group A participant 13's reply)
7. Our business class is overbooked. We arrange you to the economy class if you accept our arrangement; we'll give the discount of your seat. (Group A participant 14's reply)
8. Because Business class is heavily booked. We need you to take the Economy class. Really sorry. Could you lower your voice? Thank you! (Group A participant 15's reply)
9. Can you take the economy seat because our business class is fully occupied and will you please reduce voice? (Group A participant 18's reply)

10. Could you calm down please? You have bothered the others. I am afraid you have to take the economy seat but we can give you compensation to next flight you take. (Group A participant 20's reply)

As mentioned earlier, airline staff are instructed to avoid accepting responsibility for any problems that may have occurred. However, 50% of Group A participants used supportive moves - accepting responsibility and compensation. The airline managers indicated that expressions such as 'it's my fault', 'it's our company's fault' or 'our airline will compensation to you' and 'we can give you compensation to next flight you take' appeared frequently in the data, which were quite inappropriate since further complications might arise.

"It seems that Group A participants will provide whatever passengers required as long as they are not angry and comply with the participants' requests", was the impression of the two airline managers after reading Group A's replies in Situation 8. The offers which Group A participants provided, when making requests of passengers include 'we will give you discount next time', 'we still serve you like Business class', 'we will give you what you suppose to get', 'We will return the rest money and give you some gifts for apologizing', 'we'll give the discount of your seat'. The offers are various but none are practicable.

In addition, the two airline managers also pointed out that one of the customer service principles which stand for 'Tender', 'Listen' and 'Care' (TLC) is crucial when dealing with difficult passengers such as angry and frustrated passengers. Airline staff should deal with difficult passengers with a tender attitude and voice, listening to passengers carefully and patiently, expressing sensitivity to and concern for

passengers' problems thus initiating empathy. However, Group A participants' replies in this situation would only make passengers more furious and frustrated because of their expressions such as 'Could you lower your voice? Thank you!', 'and will you please reduce voice' and 'Could you calm down please? You have bothered the others'. These expressions have revealed the speakers' irritation and impatience which are contrary to TLC, the customer service policy. Group A participants' replies may aggravate the situation rather than appease the passenger.

The airline managers commented on the above replies and said that ground staff should always remember that when dealing with passengers their replies should be based on the customer service principle of TLC. However, when dealing with 'difficult' passengers, ground staff need to be polite and yet assertive by saying "I understand you are very frustrated about the situation but we can't sort this out while you are talking in that offensive manner.' Group A participants' replies, such as "Could you lower your voice? Thank you!', 'and will you please reduce voice' and 'Could you calm down please?' showed that they were trying to resolve the problem by asking the passenger to calm down which may aggravate the situation. This showed that Group A participants failed to use appropriate language when dealing with difficult passengers due to a lack of airline customer service training.

Both airline managers commented on Group A and Group B participants' replies in Situation 8, in which "Group B participants' replies are not one hundred percent correct in terms of customer service policy but their replies are acceptable". Group A participants' replies in Situation 8 suggested that they were more lacking in knowledge of airline customer service policies than Group B participants.

Situation 9:

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement.

What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

In Situation 9 both airline managers commented that some of Group A participants' replies are considered acceptable, however, some of them are inappropriate and may offend passengers, which are quoted as follows.

1. We're sorry that we can't arrange you to sit together. But it's time to let children be independent and we'll take care of them especially. (Group A participant 1's reply)
2. Ok, if you want to sit together, when you boarding the flight, you could ask someone to change the seat. (Group A participant 3's reply)
3. The flight has no side by side seats; you and children can't sit together, so if you need sit together, you have to get on next flight. (Group A participant 7's reply)

Airline managers indicated that the participant's reply in Example 1 was disrespectful. The participant's response suggested the parents were not aware of their own child's need. It was invasive and unprofessional. The passenger would have every right to file a complaint with the airline for these comments. The passengers would also not feel like the promise to look after their children was made with sincerity as they were not

told who would be looking after them or where they would be. Next, the participant's reply in Example 2 shows that the airline staff did not express sufficient care about the passenger's problems and approached the situation with a careless attitude and impatience, which is contrary to the customer service principle of TLC. The participant's reply in Example 3 is not very helpful. On the contrary, the participant appears to be confrontational and dismissive of the passenger. Conversely, Group B participants' replies are more appropriate. The following three examples are good replies considered by airline managers. For example,

1. Can you go to the boarding gate there is staff will help you change the seat?

(Group B participant 7's reply)

2. Please ask the group staff in the boarding gate to help you change the seat.

(Group B participant 12's reply)

3. I will call our boarding gate staff to help you change seat. Can you contact the boarding gate they will help you? (Group B participant 15's reply)

Situation 12:

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Airline managers pointed out that some of Group A participants' responses in Situation 12 may confuse passengers (see Table 7.9). The following examples are from Group A and Group B participants' replies.

Table 7.9 The content of the Grounder

Group A Participants' Replies	Group B Participants' Replies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You come here late. 2. You are so late. 3. You came here so late. 4. I'm afraid you couldn't check-in. 5. You already over the check-in time. 6. Because the flight is closed for check-in, 7. Because you missed the check-in, 8. Our check-in is closed. 9. This flight is closed for check-in. 10. The flight will be departure. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The counter is closed. 2. This flight is closed. 3. The flight is closed for check-in. 4. The flight has already closed. 5. The system of this flight was closed.

Airline managers suggested that Group A participants' responses may confuse passengers and cause complications. The passengers would suppose that they still have the chance to get on the flight when the airline staff said 'you are so late'. However, the following sentence 'I will arrange you take next flight' explicitly informed the passengers that they were not able to get on the flight due to late arrival at the airport and it might lead to passengers' complaints. It seems that Group A participants made a grammatical error as they confused the differences between the meaning of 'so late' and 'too late'. The above two replies made by Group A participants may cause communication breakdown between the participants and passengers due to Group A participants' imperfect linguistic competency.

7.3 Airline Managers' Interview: Feedback of 2nd DCT

7.3.1 Rating: High and Low Proficiency Group's Replies

The appropriateness of replies was ranked by the two airline managers according to the following four ability-level criteria.

Table 7.10 Rating Scale for Reply Appropriateness in the Second DCTs

Customer Service Principles	Score	Criteria
	4-5: Excellent	The reply complied with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are appropriate.
	3-4: Good	The reply mostly complied with the customer service principles. Service language manners are fairly appropriate.
	2-3 Fair	The reply partially complied with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are not really appropriate, but acceptable.
	1-2: Poor	The reply did not comply with the customer service principles. Service language, etiquette and manners are least appropriate and acceptable.

Each Group A participant’s score for each situation was based on the appropriateness of the response. A participant’s appropriateness score for one situation had a range from 1 to 5 points.

The scores in the Table 7.10-1 are an average of the scores (before placement) awarded by the two airline managers. Group A participants’ individual scores given by airline manager A are shown in 7.10-2 and the scores from airline manager B are shown in 7.10-3. In comparison with Table 7.10-2 and 7.10-3, it is noted that the scores given by two airline judges were not significantly varied. Although these two managers are actually from different airline companies with different backgrounds, their scores agreed with each other’s. The scores in the Table 7.10-4 are an average of the scores (after placement) awarded by the two airline managers.

Table 7.10-1 Group A average scores (before placement) awarded by 2 Airline managers

Participant: Part.

Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total	
1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.1	2	2.2	2	2	2	2	2	2.2	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.5	2	2	41.3	
2	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	46.4	
3	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	3	3	3.5	3	2.7	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.7	56.4	
4	3.5	3.0	2.8	3	2.4	3	1.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.5	54.5	
5	3.0	2.0	2.5	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	3	2.4	2.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	53.7	
6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	3	2.5	3	3	2.8	2.5	3	3	2.8	3	2.5	2.5	3	2	2.5	53.1	
7	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	3	3	3	2	2.5	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	2	2.4	2.5	2	50.4	
8	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	2	2.5	45.5	
9	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	46.2
10	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	51.5	
11	1.5	2.0	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	3	1	2	2	2	2	2.5	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	42.5	
12	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	1	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	1	2.5	2	45	
13	2.5	2.5	2.0	2	2	3	2	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	46.5	
14	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	1	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	49	
15	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.5	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	46.5	
16	2.0	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	47	
17	2.5	2.5	2.0	2	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	41.5	
18	1.5	2.3	2.0	2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	47.3	

19	1.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	48.5
20	1.5	2.5	2.0	2	2	2.5	3	1	1.5	2	2	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2	1.5	2	39.5

(High proficiency participant: No. 1~8, Low proficiency participant: No. 9~20)

Table 7.10-2 Group A scores (before placement) awarded by Airline manager A Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20
1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	1.5	2.0	2.0
2	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0
3	3.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.2	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.4
4	3.0	3.0	2.6	3.0	2.4	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.2	2.5	3.0	2.5
5	3.0	1.5	2.5	2.5	3.4	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.7	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5
6	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.0	3.0
7	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.4	2.5	2.0
8	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.5
9	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0
10	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5
11	1.0	2.0	2.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5
12	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.2	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	1.0	2.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	1.0	2.5	2.0
13	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0
14	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	3.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5

15	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.5	2.5
16	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0
17	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
18	1.0	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0
19	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5
20	1.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0

(High proficiency participant: No. 1-8, Low proficiency participant: No. 9-20)

Table 7.10-3 Group A scores (before placement) awarded by Airline manager B Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20
1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.2	2	2	2	2	2	2.2	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.5	2	2
2	2.4	2.0	2.5	2.4	3	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.2	2	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2
3	2.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.5	3	3	3	2.2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
4	4	3	3	3	2.4	3	1.0	3	3	2.5	2	3.5	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.4	2.5	2	2.5
5	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.2	2.5	2.0	3	2.3	2	2.5	3	3	2.5	3.0	2.3	2.5	3	3	2.5
6	2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	3	2.5	3	3	2.6	2.5	3.5	3	2.8	3.0	2.5	2.5	3	2	2.5
7	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	3	2	2.5	3	3	2.5	3.0	2.5	2	2.4	2.5	2
8	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2.5	2.5	2	3.5	2	2.5
9	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2
10	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5

11	2.0	2	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5
12	3	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	3	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	1	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	1	2.5	2
13	3.0	2.5	2	2	2	3	2	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2
14	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	1	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5
15	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.0	2	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.5	2.5
16	2	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0
17	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
18	1.0	2.2	2.0	2	2	2.5	3	3.0	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.6	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2
19	1.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.5	2.5
20	1.5	2.5	2	2	2	2.5	3	1	1.5	2	2	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2	1.5	2

(High proficiency participant: No. 1-8, Low proficiency participant: No. 9-20)

Table 7.10-4 Group A average scores (after placement) awarded by 2 Airline managers Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total
1	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.2	2.8	2	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.3	2.4	47.6
2	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.8	3	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.3	2.4	52.9
3	3.5	3.4	3.4	3	3.2	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.6	2.4	3	3.5	2.5	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.4	2.5	3.4	3	66.1
4	4	3.4	3.4	3.6	2.8	3.5	3	3.8	3.5	2.5	3.4	3.8	3	3.4	3	3	3.4	3	2.5	2.5	64.5
5	3.5	3	3	3	3.4	3.5	3.2	2.2	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.4	3	3	2.8	3	3	3	3	3	59.8
6	4	3	3	3	2.8	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	3	3	3.5	2.5	3.3	3.8	2.5	2.5	2.8	3	3.3	62.5
7	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.8	3	2.5	2.6	2.9	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.6	2	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.5	56.1
8	2	2.5	2.6	3	3	2.5	3	2	1.5	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	3	2.6	2.6	3.5	2.5	2.5	51.5
9	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.8	3	2.8	2.5	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.5	2	52.8
10	3	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.5	3.5	3	3	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.7	3	3	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9	57.6
11	2	2.3	2	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.8	2	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3	1.5	2	2.5	45.6
12	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.8	1.8	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.4	2	2.4	2.4	1.5	2	2.4	47
13	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.2	3	2.8	3.2	3.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	2.5	3.8	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.7	2	55.7
14	1.8	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.5	3	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.6	3	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.6	51.5
15	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.7	2	2.7	2.7	53.7
16	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.8	2.8	1.8	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	49.7
17	3.8	2.5	2.5	2	2.6	2.8	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.3	1.8	2.5	2	49.1
18	3	2.5	2	3	3.8	3.4	3	3	3.5	2	2	2.5	3.4	3	2.8	3	2.8	2.8	3	2.5	56.5
19	1.8	2	2	2	2	2.3	2	1.8	2.3	2	2	2	1.8	2	2.2	2	2	1.8	2	2	40

20	2.7	2.5	2.3	3	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.5	3	2.3	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.8	2	1.5	2.8	2	2	49.1
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(High proficiency participant: No. 1-8, Low proficiency participant: No. 9-20)

Both high and low proficiency participants' individual scores for each situation before and after placement is shown in Table 7.11-1, 7.11-2, 7.11-3 and 7.11-4 (see Appendix 9-12). Table 7.11 demonstrates that the aggregate scores for 'Appropriateness' by individual participant in low and high 'proficiency' groups.

Table 7.11 Aggregate Scores for 'Appropriateness' by individual participant: low and high 'proficiency' groups

	Low Proficiency Group			High Proficiency Group	
Participant	<i>Before placement</i>	<i>After placement</i>	Participant	<i>Before placement</i>	<i>After placement</i>
1	46.2	52.8	1	41.3	47.6
2	51.5	57.6	2	46.4	52.9
3	42.5	45.6	3	56.4	66.1
4	45	47	4	54.5	64.5
5	46.5	55.7	5	53.7	59.8
6	49	51.5	6	53.1	62.5
7	46.5	53.5	7	50.4	56.1
8	47	49.7	8	45.5	51.5
9	41.5	49.1			
10	47.3	56.5			
11	48.5	40			
12	39.5	49.1			
(Aggregate)	551.0	608.3	(Aggregate)	401.3	461.0

totals				totals		
Mean (x)	45.9	50.7		Mean (x)	50.2	57.5
standard deviation	3.39	5.05		standard deviation	5.25	6.65

The results of the data analysis (see Table 7.11) pointed to the fact that both high proficiency and low proficiency participants' overall performance after placement is better than before placement. That is to say it is not only the high proficiency participants that actually benefit from placement but also the other group.

In addition, looking closely at the individual improvement after placement, according to Table 7.11, Group A high proficiency participants (e.g. participant No. 3, 4 and 6) have made greater progress in their replies after placement. The possible reason for these three participants' improvement in overall performance is that these three participants worked in the international airlines during placement and their assigned duty provided them more access to native English speakers such as American, British, Australia or Canadian. The other five participants working in different airlines had more opportunities to interact with non-native English speakers such as Japanese, Korean or Chinese. The analytical result suggested that having more contact with native English speakers did help the three participants to achieve greater improvement. Thus, more interactions with native English speakers will foster the participants' pragmatic development to appreciate formulaic language that closely bonds to the demands of communication.

What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels (high and low proficiency) in Group A? At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in the development of pragmatic competence after placement? Both an independent *t*-test and a paired *t*-test were conducted to respond to the second research question of this study. An independent samples *t*-test aimed to compare participants' concurrent differences from the Low and High proficiency groups.

The independent *t*-test results indicated that in Time 1 there existed significant differences between Low proficiency group participant's scores (the means = 45.917, the standard deviations = 3.363) and High proficiency group participant's scores (the means = 50.163, the standard deviations = 5.256), $t = -2.214$, $p < 0.05$). The data also revealed that in Time 2 there remained significant difference between Low proficiency group participant's scores, (the means = 50.692, the standard deviations = 5.051) and High proficiency group participant's scores (the means = 57.625, the standard deviations = 6.657), $t = -2.651$, $p < 0.05$. In other words, it was evident that given DTCs scores from airline managers to High proficiency group were higher than those to the Low proficiency group both in Time 1 (before placement) and in Time 2 (after placement).

In light of this fact, attention is arised to discover the answer to the research question 'at which level of proficiency group did make more progress in the development of pragmatic competence after placement?' Thus, in order to statistically examine any significant differences between these two groups in two periods of Time 1 (before placement) and Time 2 (after placement), a paired *t*-test was therefore employed.

The paired *t*-test results showed that there was evident score differences between Low proficiency group participants' (the means = 45.917) in Time 1 (before placement) and those (the means = 50.692) in Time 2 (after placement), the degree of freedom = 11, $t = -3.293$, $p < 0.05$. Moreover, the paired *t*-test analysis also reflected that there existed a considerably big gap between High proficiency group participants' scores (the means = 50.163) in Time 1 and the scores (the means = 57.625) in Time 2, the degree of freedom = 7, $t = -11.264$, $p < 0.05$. As far as the finding of a paired *t*-test was concerned, it suggested that both High and Low proficiency group did actually make progress in request behaviours after the placement. However, Low proficiency group displayed a somewhat lower mean score than High proficiency group after placement. In other words, the statistically analysed results demonstrated the factual tendency that the higher participants' proficiency levels are, the better progress they can make from their placement experience.

The next sections will compare the differences between the high proficiency and low proficiency participants' responses before and after placement and attempt to account for them.

7.3.2 The Appropriateness of the Reply

The content of Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants' replies in the Second DCTs were examined by the two airline managers from two international airlines in Taiwan and are displayed as follows. The examples are quotes from data collected which includes some grammatical errors.

Situation 1:

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in.

The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure.

The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight.

What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Comparing Group A-HP-before and Group A-HP-after participants' replies, the results showed that many Group A-HP-after participants followed the standard service procedure. If the passenger wasn't allowed to check-in the ground staff firstly needs to explain the reasons for requesting passengers to proceed to the information counter to re-arrange his/her flight schedule and take the next 'available' flight. Many Group A-HP-before participants suggested (see Group A-HP-before Participant No.2 and Participant No.6 before placement replies) the passenger should 'take the next flight' since the flight has closed for check-in. However, after placement, the expressions 'if there's any vacancy' or 'if you can take the next available flight' were used by many Group A-HP-after participants, which implies that the participants were aware that the consequence of suggesting or requesting passengers to 'take the next flight' may lead to passenger complaints if eventually the passenger was not able to take the 'next flight'.

Moreover, the two airline managers both agreed that the expressions used by Group A-HP-after participants such as 'I can check your ticket if it has any limit' or 'I will check your ticket and the flight availability' reveal that the participants have professional knowledge of the ticketing policy. Certain types of air tickets such as bargain tickets have restrictions in terms of seats and travel dates. Therefore, when

offering this kind of suggestion the ground staff need to check whether there are any restrictions on the passenger's ticket. From the above replies of Group A-HP-after participants the two airlines managers stated that the participants have been well trained during the placement to deal with late arrival passengers. Some of Group A high proficiency participants' replies before and after placement are displayed as follows.

Group A high proficiency participant No.2's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I am sorry but the flight is closed for check-in. We do apologize for the inconvenience.	Hello, Madam. I'm sorry to tell you the flight is closed, and the check-in time is 40 minutes before the flight departure. Please wait a moment. I'll contact our supervisor if you can take the next available flight.

Group A high proficiency participant No.6's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Please wait a moment. I'll do my best to get you on next flight.	I'm sorry that the flight is closed for check-in. Would you like to take the next flight if there's any vacancy?

Group A high proficiency participant No.17's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry, the flight has been closed. Would you like to take the next flight?	Sorry Madam, the flight is closed because you are too late. I'll contact my supervisor if there has any chances to let you get on the plane. If not possible, I will check your ticket and the flight

	availability to transfer you to the other flight.
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Group A high proficiency participant No.20's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry ma'am, according to the company regulation, you should be here before the check-in counter is closed. But I suggest you can take next available flight.	I'm sorry madam. This flight is boarding now and the check-in system is closed. If you don't mind, I can check your ticket if it has any limit. If not, we can help you to take next flight to your destination.

Comparing Group A-LP-before and Group A-LP-after participants' replies, we also found that some participants' replies even after placement still failed to comply with the airlines customer service principles. For example, the expressions '*It's not an easy thing for you to run fast to the gate, if you get on this flight, your luggage will not be in your destination, it's a bad thing for you!!*' (Group A-LP-after participant No.8 replies) and 'maybe your luggage shouldn't be in your destination' (Group A-LP-after participant No.7 after placement replies) were both regarded as inappropriate explanations. The former one implies that the ground staff had grave doubts about the passenger's ability to run. The latter one may trigger another problem if the passenger replied to the ground staff "*It's ok, I don't care about my luggage. Or I run very fast.*" It was stated by one of the airline managers that in accordance with training ground staff "do not provide any explanations which may lead to a more difficult situation to handle." In addition, the model auxiliary 'should', used by Group A-LP-after participant No. 7 in the sentence 'maybe your luggage shouldn't be in your destination', is a very inappropriate model auxiliary. This result showed that some of Group A low proficiency participants neither spoke English

correctly due to their imperfect linguistic competency, nor spoke appropriately in work based situations in accordance with airline customer service principles, due to a lack of airline customer service training.

Group A low proficiency participant No.5's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry Ms. The flight you've booked has closed in this moment, owing to time constrain, we are not able to get you and your baggage on board. I would offer you next available flight.	Miss, our flight have to check in at least 2 hours for paper work. And you didn't catch on time. So we can't let you get on the flight. But we can let you go on the next flight.

Group A low proficiency participant No.7's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry ma'am. For international flights, you are required to be at the airport at least 2 hours before the departure time. Maybe I can help you to plan another flight.	Madam, could you take next flight to Hong Kong? We almost at boarding time. It's a distance from here to gate, otherwise, that's will be rush, maybe your luggage shouldn't be in your destination. So, don't worry, we will plan you the best way for you.

Group A low proficiency participant No.8's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry ma'am, for international flights, you are required to be at the airport at least 2 hours before the departure time. Maybe I can help you plan another flight?	Could you take the next flight to Hong Kong? It's not an easy thing for you to run fast to the gate, if you get on this flight, your luggage will not be in your destination, it's a bad thing for you!!

Group A low proficiency participant No.13's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Well, I'll try and see if I could put you on another flight.	I would like to offer you next available flight. Beside that, would you like to inform anyone. We can advise your friend or your family about you late arrived.

Group A low proficiency participant No.15's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I can't let you check-in this time, but you have to check-in at least 2 hours before the departure time at next time, because this is rules. Sorry.	Sorry, Ms, the flight you booked is closed. We can arrange a seat of the next flight to Hong Kong to you.

In order to investigate the reasons for providing the reply "*It's not an easy thing for you to run fast to the gate, if you get on this flight, your luggage will not be in your destination, it's a bad thing for you!!*" the participant from the Low Proficiency Group was interviewed in the Focus Group Interview. The participant explained that the motivation for using this expression was "*I just want to be nice to the passenger and warn him it's a very long way to run*". The participant's reply was another example showing that the participant's lack of pragmatic and linguistic competence may lead to passenger complaints.

In addition, airline managers pointed out that some explanations provided by Low Proficiency participants in after placement replies were inadequate. For example, the expression 'And you didn't catch on time. So we can't let you get on the flight,' (Participant No.5 after placement replies) may imply that the passenger should be

blamed for being late, which is against one of the key airline customer service principles, in which staff never blame passengers in any circumstance. Nonetheless, airline staff blamed passengers nonverbally, by asking them to pay the charge. Judging from the airline managers' comments about Group A-LP-after participants' performance, it seems that Group A-LP-after the participants' performance was not significantly different from that of pre-placement students. The results of paired t-test showed that it is not only the high proficiency participants that actually benefit from placement but also the other group.

Situation 13

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers appear to be afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Based on one of the customer service principles of TLC, the following replies from the high and low proficiency participants would potentially make passengers more furious and frustrated because of their expressions. For example, 'Could you calm down please?', 'Please don't angry and listen to me!', 'you can't handle the problem with angry.' These replies from the participants did not solve the passenger's problem at all. On the contrary, they may worsen the situation since these expressions have fully revealed the speakers' irritation and impatience which may

possibly upset passengers and are likely to cause passenger complaints afterwards. Some of the high and low proficiency participants' replies are displayed as follows.

Group A high proficiency participant No.2's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry sir. We can arrange other airline if you want to. I'd like to apologize for any inconvenience that this has caused you.	<i>Sir, please calm down.</i> If you don't mind we can transit you to other flight if it's possible.

Group A high proficiency participant No.6's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
We just very sorry for you. But we are trying to transfer your seat for other airline. Please wait, we offer some jelly and cookies in our VIP zone. You can take a rest.	I'm sorry sir, the weather is not good to take off, for your safety, we can't let you get on this flight; miss a meeting is a small thing, missing your body is a big thing to your family!!

Group A high proficiency participant No.17's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I will try my best to arrange other flight for you. So <i>would you please calm down?</i> We already have commissioner to solve the problem.	We are very sorry about flight delayed. I'll try and see if I could put you on another.

Group A low proficiency participant No.7's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sorry, Mr. <i>Please don't angry and listen to me!</i> We'll search the next flight for	I'm very sorry for your inconvenient. I'll try to make you get another flight. Could

you. Wait a minute.	you wait for me for a while?
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Group A low proficiency participant No.11's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sir, we are very sorry for you. If you love to, we could try to put you on another airline. I'll do my best.	Mr. sorry, but <i>you can't handle the problem with angry</i> . Can we talk about this situation in private?

Group A low proficiency participant No.13's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Excuse me, sir. We are sorry about delay. But now just keep wait. If you allow we can provide VIP room for you for free. Hope that can let you feel better.	Sir, <i>please calm down</i> . We are checking other airlines does they have destination flight now.

Situation 18:

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

The following high proficiency participants' replies have shown that before placement Group A-HP-before participants tended to make direct requests to passenger for paying the excess baggage charge and after placement Group A-HP-after participants use more indirect requests. For example,

Group A high proficiency participant No.10's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I suggest you, the over-weight cost a lot! I think you should make them as a cargo. It's more cheaper for you.	Could you take something carry on to the flight? Our carry on baggage can be 7 kilo per piece and one passenger can carry one piece, also give up some not important things for 2 kilo, I just charge you a little money for 2 or 3 kilo. Could you make cooperation for me?

Group A high proficiency participant No.18's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry the rule is rule. If you don't pay for the excess baggage charge I can't let you board the flight.	If it is possible to take something out to carry-on? Because your luggage is too heavy. If you are not trying to reduce weight we still have to charge you. So, I think the best way to solve this problem is take something out.

Instead of directly requesting passengers to pay for excess baggage, after placement both Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants provided passengers with options about the arrangement of excess baggage. For example,

Group A high proficiency participant No.9's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I understand how inconvenient and frustrating this must be for you. However this is the only thing I can do. I really wish I could do more but I am afraid I have to make this charge.	Sorry, sir. You only can have twenty kilograms for check luggage. Your luggage is over-weight so you need to pay for the excess weight or you can take out something to make your luggage lighter.

Group A high proficiency participant No.14's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I understand how inconvenient and frustrating this must be for you. We know that you are our frequent flyer. Unfortunately this is the only thing I can do. I really wish I could do more but I am afraid you have to pay for the excess baggage.	I am sorry sir. You can reorganize your baggage or pay the excess weight expense.

Group A low proficiency participant No.3's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sorry, sir. Your baggage is overweight. If you refuse to pay the excess baggage, I'm afraid I can't give you the boarding pass to you. According to the air safety restriction, you'll damage the air safety.	Sorry, sir. No matter the other airline how to tell you about this. Our baggage allowance is 20 kg. I can just give you more three kg allowance. Now all you can do is pick something up remove to carry-on baggage or pay the excess charge.

Group A low proficiency participant No.7's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Excuse me, Mr. On safety consideration, sometime we can let you over-weight. But today we have to limit your luggage weight. In order to safety, maybe you can reduce your luggage.	I'm sorry to tell you that your luggage is over the free allowance and there will be a charge for the extra weight. But you can reorganize your baggage or pay the excess weight expense.

Overall, after the assessment of Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants' replies the two airline managers respectively made the following comments on the two research groups' after placement replies. Firstly, they both

agreed that after placement both Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after have made some improvements in their customer service skills. For example,

Group A low proficiency participant No.3's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sorry ma'am. Because the flight is very full. So your booking seat has been cancelled. You have to take another seat.	Sorry, ma'am. This flight is very full today. And now the flight is approaching to closed for check-in. So you could not get the seat you booked on-line in advance. I try to give the better one to you from seats available.

Group A low proficiency participant No.8's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry. The flight is very full. We can't arrange your seat side by side. If you we can, we will ask the cabin crew to help you to sit together.	I'm sorry. This flight is heavily booked. I tried to give you the seat near your children. If you could sit together, we will inform you before boarding.

Group A low proficiency participant No.11's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sorry, sir. Your luggage is over-weight. According to our regulations, you need to pay over-weight charge.	May I give you some suggestions? I think you have some options. Take something you don't really need out, or remove some to your hand carry. Or even you can send your luggage by airline cargo, that will be more cheap.

Secondly, the two airline mangers in the interviews indicated respectively that from Group A-HP-after participants' replies after placement it shows that Group

A-HP-after is aware of avoiding using words, such as *'policy'*, *'rule'* or *'regulations'*. In the following Example 1, the Participant No.14 from Group A-HP-after changed the wording from *'regulations'* before placement to *'limitation'* after placement showing that the participant was aware of avoiding using *'killing words'*.

Group A low proficiency participant No.14's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
According to regulations, each company has its rule. I'm sorry your luggage is over-weight and I'm afraid that you'll have to pay for the overweight baggage. Would you like to pay in cash or by credit card?	Hello Sir. Actually each company has their baggage weight limitation. And now your baggage is a little too heavy. There's two ways you can go, pay the excess baggage fee or take out some unnecessary items to the suitable weight. Thank you.

In addition, the two airline managers stressed that there were several cases of staff uttering the expression *'your problem'* did make many passengers feel unpleasant. This wording of *'your problem'* may somewhat imply that the airlines and ground staff seem to have no obligation to assist in the matter. After receiving these types of replies some passengers even responded angrily to the ground staff, such as *"I have no problem!!! This is your problem, not mine!!!!"* In the following example, one of the airline managers commented, that the Participant No. 9 stopped using the wording *'solve your problem'* after placement showing that s/he was more careful of the wording used since inadequate expressions may cause passenger complaints."

Group A high proficiency participant No.9's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Sorry, sir. The flight is closed for check-in. I will contact with my supervisor to solve your problem.	Sorry, the flight is closed for check-in. I will asked my supervisor if it possible to let you get on the flight. Please wait a moment.

Thirdly, the two airline managers both noticed that some participants from the Low Proficiency Group started a sentence with the wording 'sorry' or 'I am sorry' in the data both before placement and after placement. According to the airline customer service training, airline staff should be very careful of using the expression 'I am sorry' when delivering a service. The reason for this is to avoid liability because the two utterances 'sorry, sir/madam' and 'I am sorry, sir/madam' may imply that the airlines failed in their duty of care, and moreover it implies the passenger is right and that gives the passenger some advantage to ask for compensation.

One of the airline managers said that he had dealt with some difficult situations caused by the airline staff's usages of the expression 'I am sorry' when providing service to passengers. For example, in some cases airline staff need to charge passengers for excess baggage based on the airline policy. Some inexperienced staff used the expression 'I am sorry, sir/madam' at the beginning of the sentence when asking passengers to pay for the charge. Some passengers refused to pay for the excess. The passengers argued that the airline staff apologized for asking them to pay for the excess, i.e. the airline staff should not charge them for the baggage, therefore they refused to pay the fine. The managers explained that some passengers tried to take advantage of the airlines by manipulating the communication misunderstanding between airline staff and passengers. Thus, based on the airline

customer service principles when airline staff interact with passengers the ideal attention getter is the expression ‘excuse me, sir/madam’, ‘Mr./Ms/Miss + Surname’ or *title (sir/madam/Miss)* in order to avoid taking the onus since the expression ‘excuse me’ is more neutral and does not imply the airline has done something wrong.

Under circumstances such as flight delays or over-booking, airlines staff need to make an apology to the passengers for the inconvenience caused. Apart from that airline staff should not apologise in instances of late arrival passenger, expired travel documents or overweight luggage. When dealing with overweight luggage airline staff should avoid saying ‘I am sorry. Your luggage is overweight’. Airline staff should recognise that it is the responsibility of the passengers to remain within the luggage weight allowance and not the airlines. Nevertheless, airlines staff are allowed to express concern when informing passengers that their luggage is overweight, such as ‘I am sorry to inform you that’

Regarding the usages of ‘sorry/I’m sorry’, both airline managers discovered there were some differences between Group A-HP-after and Group A-LP-after participants’ replies. Before placement quite a number of Group A-LP-before participants used the expression ‘Excuse me, Sir/Madam’, nevertheless, after placement the wording ‘sorry/I’m sorry’ were still used by some of Group A-LP-after participants. However, the following examples show that after placement Group A-HP-after participants tried to avoid using ‘sorry’ and ‘I am sorry’ when initiating the sentence, which complied with the principles of airline customer service. The differences of the usages of attention getters before and after placement replies quoted from low proficiency and high proficiency participants respectively,

are displayed as follows. The following examples are low proficiency participants replies.

Group A low proficiency participant No.1's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Excuse me. Your visa are expired so we can't issue boarding pass for you. You can ask information counter to solve your problem.	Sorry, Miss, your visa is expired. You need to change your visa.

Group A low proficiency participant No.4's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Excuse me. Because of your passport have some problem. We need to check it again.	Sorry, miss. I will ask more employee to deal you problem. Because you have a suspicious passport need more time to handle.

Group A low proficiency participant No.12's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Excuse me, ma'am. Would you please check your visa? It's valid until last month. You need to change your visa.	Sorry. Because you traveling with an expired visa. You could not go traveling. It's illegal, if you don't have effective visa.

Group A low proficiency participant No.19's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm afraid the flight is very full. So we can not change the seat arrangement.	I'm very sorry. We will do our best to arrange the seats closer to your family.

Group A high proficiency participant No.9's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry, ma'am. However we'll do our best to arrange the seats closer to your family members.	Madam, I'll send a message to boarding gate, they will help you to ask if any other people to change the seat with you.

Group A high proficiency participant No.17's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
Good morning, ma'am. I need to apologize that I can't let you check-in now.	Excuse me, madam. I'm sorry that I can't check you in now.

Group A high proficiency participant No.18's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm sorry sir. Your luggage is too heavy. You must reorganize your baggage or pay the excess baggage charge.	We are regretting to advise you that your luggage is over-weight.

Group A high proficiency participant No.20's replies

1 st DCTs Before Placement	2 nd DCTs After Placement
I'm very sorry, madam. Your visa is expired.	Hello, madam. I am sorry to tell you that you have an expired visa.

7.4 Summary

This chapter explored the differences between airline managers' perceptions of politeness and that of Group A and Group B participants. Two airline managers commented that Group B participants' replies are more professional than Group A

participants' based on the two groups' overall performance recorded in the data of the First DCTs. That is, Group B participants demonstrated their awareness of airline customer service principles in their replies. They also showed how their communicative abilities contributed to providing quality service by following the airline language conventions and the conception of politeness based on airline customer service principles. On the other hand, although Group A participants used lots of politeness wordings, they were more likely to offend passengers due to their lack of knowledge of airline language conventions and airline customer service. The result of the study suggested that placement experience improved participants' ability to communicate with passengers in service encounters in a more pragmatically appropriate way.

Regarding Group A-HP-after, Group A-LP-after participants' performance in the Second DCTs, the results indicated that after one-year placement both the high and low proficiency participants were aware of company policy and customer service principles when providing a service to customers. However, concerning individual improvements before and after placement, the high proficiency participants' performance was better than low proficiency participants'. The performance of low proficiency students after a-year long airport placement was almost identical to those of pre-placement students. The result of the study suggested that language proficiency is one of the major factors influencing the participants' growth of pragmatic competence.

Chapter Eight

Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This research aims to examine the effect of airline placement experience on Taiwanese university students' development of L2 pragmatic competence in their request realization. The research specifically focuses on the speech act of requests because on the basis of my airline visiting reports from 2000 to 2006, airline managers pointed out that Taiwanese airline ground staff make English requests to passengers frequently when they engage in intercultural communication. As noted in my seven years of visiting reports, the majority of students gave positive feedback about airline placements. In this study I hypothesized that airline placement experience has a certain degree of positive effect on pragmatic development as it offers hospitality university students an opportunity to develop L2 pragmatic competence. I also explored to what extent Taiwanese university students develop pragmatic competence in terms of their request realization when they were exposed to the target speech community - the airline service environment, for a one year long period.

Among the research on requests, hitherto the effect of airline placement on the pragmatic development of Taiwanese hospitality university students in terms of their request realisation has been neglected. This thesis employed qualitative method in order to explore the interlanguage requests produced by Taiwanese university learners of English, in particular on the pragmatic and social cultural perspectives. This research aims to focus the students' pragmatic needs and their difficulties

which would be of particular value for airline English teachers to consider how to develop effective instruction for speech act communication and intercultural pragmatic learning in their teaching materials and curriculum design. Thus, Taiwanese university hospitality students could acquire the sufficient communicative competence to meet the requirements of the airline service encounters.

This chapter will restate the three research questions, summarise and discuss the findings in relation to the DCTs and interviews in the light of related research and theory. Conclusions based on the findings are presented and then followed by a discussion of the implications for Airline English Teaching and recommendations for future research directions in this area.

8.2 Summary of Research findings and Theoretical Implications

The present study investigated the pragmatic competence of Taiwanese university students in making requests. In particular, it was aimed at examining the factors that influenced the students' pragmatic competence in making request. Data were analysed to provide answers to three research questions, which are restated below with a summary of the analysis and findings.

8.2.1 Comparison of Three Groups' Request behaviours in First DCTs

The first research question addressed by the study is:

What are the differences between Group A (2nd year students before placement), Group B (4th year students after placement) and Group C's (airline staff) request behaviours?

The differences between Group A (2nd year students), Group B (4th year students) and Group C's request behaviours are described as follows. Firstly, regarding the use of the request strategies, Group A participants without any airline working experience used more direct strategies than Group B participants with one-year working experience, while Airline employees, with at least three-year working experience, employed direct strategies the least. This result revealed that the participants with airline working experience (with daily exposure to the L2, but who received no instruction in pragmatics) became more like airline staff, i.e. they are inclined to use indirect strategies to reduce the impact of making requests to passengers, while Group A participants used more direct strategy. Group B participants' replies seem to reveal that through their full exposure in airlines contexts, participation in social interactions with passengers and also co-workers' professional assistance, Group B participants gradually came to internalize target language conventions and cultural norms and therefore develop their own communicative competence in EFL in the workplace. L2 learners' year-long exposure to the target speech community has a positive influence on their pragmatic development. This result supports the findings of Bouton (1992, 1994) and Felix-Brasdefer (2007), that learners' exposure to the target community is an important factor in pragmatic development. Learners are able to gradually approximate native speakers' norms and follow the politeness strategies of the L2 culture.

Secondly, in the data, it was found that when making requests Group A and B participants adopted the direct strategy of 'want statements'. There is a rather interesting issue here. Did the forms of Group A and B participants' usage want statements reflect L1 strategies? The evidence of L1 transfer can be seen from the use of linguistic forms 'I hope that...' and 'I'd/we'd like to ...' by Group A and B participants. As Yu (1999, p. 300) pointed out, it seems that sometimes Chinese direct forms consist of both direct and indirect components at the same time. Many of their direct forms were issued via 'want statements'. This kind of Chinese direct strategy is frequently conveyed through 'I hope that...' type of utterances, in which the expressed hope is itself a conventionally indirect request that relates to the hearer's ability or willingness. However, referring to the use of Conventional Indirect strategies (CID) (e.g. How about taking the next flight?), Group C and Group B were found to use more CIDs than Group A did in the First DCTs. The result reveals that only 20% of Group A participants were found to use Non-conventionally Indirect strategy in their replies. One possible explanation for it may be that these learners still had not acquired adequate sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic abilities to use non-conventional indirectness, as non-conventionally indirect strategies depend heavily on contextual situations and do not have obvious features that could be generalized from their surface forms. Although all the participants of Group A, B and Group C produced conventionally indirect forms, there was a substantial difference among these three groups' conventionally indirect behaviours. Comparing Group A participants' responses with those of Group C, none of Group A participants and only 30 % of Group B participants used the past tense forms of verbs (e.g., 'I wondered..') or modal verbs (e.g. 'Could I ...') to soften the imposing force of their requests, but Group C often employed these devices in their requests.

Thirdly, in relation to the usage of the Non-conventional Indirect strategy- Strong hint, Group A participants comprised the only group using the strategy in their data (see Table 5.2c, p. 204). The results suggested that the Conventional Indirect approach was the most frequently employed strategy by three of the research groups in performing the speech act of requests. Such a result confirmed previous studies on requests (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Byon, 2004; Liao, 1997; Marquez Reiter, 2000; Trosborg, 1995; Yu, 1999; Zhang, 1995a). The Conventional Indirect strategy enables the illocutionary force of a speaker's request to be expressed explicitly as compared to the Non-conventional Indirect strategy (i.e. strong/mild hints).

In addition, the evidence of L1 transfer was also found in Group A participants' usage of the direct strategy. Therefore, a question needs to be addressed here: did the forms of learners' Conventional and Non-conventionally Indirect requests, such as in like their direct ones, reflect L1 strategies? As Yu (1999) indicates that conventional indirect strategies exist in both Chinese and English and are commonly used by native speakers, this may be the reason why learners had little difficulty learning how to use these strategies to issue requests in L2 since they had experience with similar forms in their L1.

Fourthly, it was found that in comparison with Group B and Group C, Group A participants adopted a greater variety of supportive moves in one particular situation. Nevertheless, Group C that used fewer types of supportive moves compared with the other two research groups. Many of Group A participants explained that they believed that when considering supportive moves in making requests of passengers a "the more the better" approach was part of a playing-it-safe strategy that would result in passengers being more likely to comply with the requests and less likely to

feel offended. Group A participants' preference for offering more information when required violated the principle of quantity (Grice, 1975). The differential use of supportive moves by participants in Group A can also be explained with reference to pragmatic transfer. The result supports the findings from different areas of interlanguage studies (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1986; Farch and Kasper, 1989; Kasper, 1982) which have indicated that "L2 learners are likely to observe a 'the more the better' principle as an implementation of a playing-it-safe strategy during the intermediate phase of their interlanguage development" (Farch and Kasper, 1989, p. 245).

Fifthly, the analysis showed that *grounder* as a supportive moves stands out as the most frequently used by the three research groups (see Table 5.3c, p. 213). The speakers applied grounders to explain or justify the reasons for the request. *Grounders* are used when the speaker explains or justifies the reasons for the request, e.g. "I forgot to bring my pen. Could I borrow yours?" It seems that providing explanations for requests is an effective strategy for the three research groups in which it is possible to transfer the responsibility of the offence to another party or source as suggested by Fraser (1981).

Evidence of L1 transfer can also be seen in the use of supportive moves from 'information sequencing' in discourse. In Kirkpatrick's (1991) and Zhang's (1995a) studies, native English speakers employed the grounder most often after the request has been issued, yet, Chinese speakers used it most frequently before the core request. In this study, it was observed that the grounders were employed most often before the requests, which suggest that learners' performance in L2 was closely related to their L1 style (Yu, 1999, p. 299).

In addition, it was noticed that both Group A and Group B used the wording ‘sorry’ or ‘I am sorry’ before addressing the passenger by their titles in their responses. For example,

1. ‘*Sorry, sir.* I am afraid you are late for check-in. You are not allowed to check-in this flight.’ (Group A participant 11’s reply)
2. ‘*I am Sorry, Lady.* Your luggage is overweight. You have to pay for the overweight.’ (Group A participant 5’s reply)
3. ‘*Sorry, madam.* You arrived late and your seat has already released. You need to take another seat.’ (Group B participant 19’s reply)

This suggests that Group A and Group B participants might be influenced by the Chinese concept of politeness and directly translated them into English forms. This kind of expression of an apology is widely used by speakers to show politeness by firstly apologizing for whatever trouble that their requests may cause to listeners. This finding is in line with Yu’s study (1999). According to Yu’s data, which indicated that Taiwanese learners tended to utilise English forms of Chinese external modifiers such as ‘*zhenbaoqian*’ (I’m truly sorry) or *duibu1qi* (I’m sorry / excuse me) before making every request in order to express adequate politeness. However, the Airline Staff Group was the only group employing the ‘*alerters*’- ‘Mr./Ms./Miss + surname’ before initialising a request to passengers in their responses. It showed that Airline Staff Group participants intentionally avoided using the wording ‘sorry’ or ‘I’m sorry’ before making requests to passengers. They were particularly aware of the use of the wording ‘sorry’ or ‘I am sorry’ as the ambiguity of the meanings of ‘I am sorry’ may lead to misunderstandings. The wording ‘I’m sorry’ can mean ‘I sympathise with you’, meaning I feel how you feel (e.g. ‘My car was stolen’- ‘Oh, I

am sorry’) and it can also mean ‘I apologise’, admitting fault (e.g. ‘You forgot to bring my notebook’ – ‘I am sorry – I was in a hurry).

8.2.2 Effects of linguistic proficiency on pragmatic competence development

According to a learner needs-based approach, it is necessary for ESP practitioners to investigate the gap between students’ current and target competencies. ESP specialists also need to determine what their students need at a certain proficiency level and what they will likely need to be able to successfully communicate to reach their target goals. As Belcher (2009, p. 3) indicated that “It is probably safe to say that most language instruction attempts to address learners’ present needs, having gauged current proficiency levels (e.g. elementary, intermediate, advanced) with the help of test scores or educational background information.” Thus, in this study, the participants’ English proficiency was considered as a variable in terms of the pragmatic development. Referring to the second research question,

What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels in Group A? At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in appropriate pragmatic use of language after placement?

In order to address research question 2, ‘What are the differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels in Group A (high and low proficiency)?’ descriptive analysis of the types of linguistic expressions used by participants of different proficiency is conducted.

The results of the study showed that there are some differences between the request behaviours before and after placement employed by the two English proficiency levels in Group A. What caused the differences between these two groups? It suggested that the alerters play a major functional role. Regarding the usage of alerters, it was found that there are significant changes in Group A high proficiency participants' replies in the Second DCTs as compared to those of low proficiency (see Table 6.1, pp. 225-226). In the First DCTs both Group A low and high proficiency participants tended to use 'sorry/I am sorry' or 'sorry/I am sorry + title' to initiate the conversation when providing service. After placement 60% of participants from Group A-HP-after used the supportive move - *apology* 'I am sorry to inform/tell you...', 'I am sorry about ...' or 'We are regretting to advise you....', whereas all of Group A-LP-after participants still used the same types of apology 'sorry', 'I am sorry' or 'excuse me', in comparison with their replies prior to placement. Group A-HP-after participants were able to identify pragmatic problems about the expression 'I am sorry' and used the expression "I am sorry to + Verb" to avoid liability, which also demonstrated their pragmalinguistic competence. Although, Group A-LP-after participants might be aware of the pragmatic differences between the two expressions however, they failed to demonstrate it in their production due to lack of a pragmalinguistic competence, which seems to support Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1993, p. 298) observation that "knowing that one needs to do something is logically prior to knowing how to do that same thing." The result of the study indicated that the participants at a high level of linguistic proficiency showed greater pragmatic awareness and were more sensitive to pragmatic infelicities than the participants with lower linguistic proficiency.

Next, with respect to the quantitative analysis of request strategy in the Second DCTs, the analysis showed that developments in participants with high proficiency were observed, in that they shifted to more indirect forms with increasingly mitigated and syntactically complex utterances; whereas low proficiency participants in Group A used direct, unmitigated requests. The high proficiency participants in Group A were characterized by a more balanced use of indirect requesting strategy; whereas the low proficiency participants in Group A displayed overuse of the most direct strategy type. It shows that when these advanced learners make requests, they are aware of the face-threatening nature of the requests and try to reduce the impact that they might cause. Despite this, maybe the participants with low linguistic proficiency are aware but they can't make indirect requests due to their deficit linguistic knowledge.

Indirect requests, which require speakers to transform statements into interrogatives like "Could you do X?" are syntactically more complex than direct requests. Compared to indirect requests, direct requests, which take the form of imperatives or declaratives, are relatively straightforward and easy to produce. The qualitative analysis shows that Group A low proficiency participants tended to use direct requests- imperatives (e.g. Please pay the excess baggage charge.) or in the syntactic construction of 'You must/should/need to...' Group A low proficiency participants found it easier to produce direct requests, thus they were more likely to utilize them. This tendency was manifest in the high percentage of direct requesting strategies in comparison with the high proficiency participants in Group A. Their limited proficiency restricted their performances. From this standpoint, it seemed natural for the low proficiency participants in Group A to use a high frequency of direct request with high frequency in this research. The above finding corroborates Scarcella's (1979) contention that low-level L2 speakers preferred direct, imperative requests to

all types of addresses and tended to show little variety in their politeness strategies and politeness features.

The impact of the proficiency level in the choice of internal and external modifiers to the head act has also been considered a factor within this study. With regard to the usage of supportive moves, the results of the analysis reveal that in the Second DCTs Group A participants with higher linguistic proficiency employed 7 types of supportive moves such as *pre-commitment*, *grounders*, *disarmer*, *empathy*, *apology*, *reassurance* and *gratitude*; whereas the low proficiency participants in Group A only employed 6 types of supportive moves such as *grounders*, *empathy*, *apology*, *reassurance* and *gratitude* (see Table 6.3, p. 231). High linguistic proficiency participants produced particular external modifying sub-types such as *pre-commitment*, *disarmers*, whereas *grounder* were more equally distributed between the high proficiency and low proficiency participants in Group A. The possible reason for the two research groups preferring to use *grounder* is that *grounder* are easier to use because it does not require the knowledge to include them in the request head. This finding is supported by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003, p. 169) who pointed out that ‘the higher proficiency learners used a greater number and variety of supportive moves than the lower proficiency groups’.

Focusing on internal modifiers use, Group A high proficiency participants’ mean frequency of utilizing syntactic downgraders and lexica/phrasal downgraders is higher than low proficiency participants. High proficiency participants in Group A produced more syntactically complex sentences to avoid making speech act requests. For example, the *negation*, *embedded if clause*, *consultative device* frequently appeared in high proficiency participants’ replies. On the other hand, low

proficiency participants employed fewer downgraders than their counterparts, while they frequently resorted to the politeness marker *please*. I attribute this distinction in the production of internal modifiers to the learners' proficiency level or grammatical competence. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) and Hassall's (2003) finding may explain Group A low proficiency participants' high frequency of using the politeness marker *please*. From an acquisitional perspective, as claimed in previous studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Hassall, 2003), internal modifiers, like the underused downgraders (e.g. the *negation*, *embedded if clause* and *consultative device*), may call for more complex pragmalinguistic structures, which the participants with low linguistic proficiency may find difficult to produce. The use of *please* either preceding or following the request head act, does not necessarily imply knowledge of subordination or of complex syntactic structures. In this study, the low linguistic proficiency participants' limited linguistic knowledge resulted in a lower frequency of the use of internal modifiers in the Second DCTs; this was confirmed the previous findings in this study.

As discussed above, the results showed that there are identifiable changes in the request behaviours employed by participants of different proficiency levels prior to placement and after placement. Low proficiency participants showed their awareness of pragmatics language skills after placement, however, their over use of the most direct strategies, high frequency of the use of the politeness marker 'please' and low frequency of the use of internal modifiers may stem from their limited linguistic abilities. They do not have the linguistic resources available to produce pragmatically appropriate utterances. In a closer look into the participants' utterances, it was found that low linguistic proficiency participants' utterances tended to be grammatically incorrect. Some of the utterances contained minor grammatical errors, whereas others

contained major ones that can obstruct the speakers' real intention. These participants lacked the ability to apply their language knowledge to the real situations effectively. Most of them merely provided simple responses without extended well-organized information. These participants experienced pragmalinguistic problems, which following Kasper & Rose's (2002) study, can fully explain the cause of the low linguistic proficiency participants' failure in pragmatic performance. Kasper & Rose (2002) pointed out that certain aspects of pragmatics are closely bonded to proficiency in grammar, and therefore are problematic for learners who have deficit knowledge of grammar. Moreover, learners' level of grammatical competence may influence the degree of pragmatic transfer found in their productions and also act as a constraint on the development of their pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1998). The results of the study suggested that grammatical competence is not only necessarily a prerequisite for the pragmatic development but rather influential in the participants' growth of pragmatic competence progression. From the above discussion, the researcher concluded that L2 proficiency positively affects speech act production. Learners must attain a particular level of linguistic ability before they are able to use language in real contexts adequately.

Comparing with low proficiency participants' preference to the use of direct strategy, high proficiency participants were characterised by a more balanced use of indirect requesting strategy and produced more syntactically complex sentences to avoid making speech act requests. Although they demonstrate great improvement in the pragmatic development, there are still some pragmatic failures found in their replies due to insufficient pragmatic knowledge. The findings of the study supported Hoffman-Hicks's (1992) and Li's (2007) view that linguistic ability is necessary for pragmatic competence, but it is not sufficient for pragmatic competence.

Hoffman-Hicks's (1992) study investigated the relationship between two kinds of language competence, linguistic and pragmatic, in the overall competence of 14 learners of French as a foreign language. She concluded from her study that linguistic competence is necessary, but only linguistic does not guarantee pragmatic competence. In a similar study, Li (2007) examined the relationship between two kinds of competence of 42 Chinese English learners with different levels of proficiency (high- and low-levels) in BeiHang University. The researcher adopted the College English Test-4 (CET-4) test paper to test participants' linguistic competence and the bi-lingual Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to measure their pragmatic ability.

In addition, some high proficiency participants who had more opportunities for contact with native English speakers develop their request strategies more L2-like. Comparatively speaking, the participants with high proficiency who had fewer opportunities to interact with native English speakers seem to have limited progress in terms of request strategies. In this sense, we may state that the participants' pragmatic development can be boosted by more interactions with native English speakers because they personally encountered with genuine demands of communication in reality.

Regarding the question 'At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in the development of pragmatic competence after placement?' in the study, the independent t-test analysed result indicated that High proficiency participants' scores were higher than those to the Low proficiency group both in Time 1 (before placement) and in Time 2 (after placement). The paired t-test analysis revealed that both High and Low proficiency group make progress in request behaviours after

placement. However, L2 learners with higher linguistic proficiency tend to show better pragmatic development than L2 learners with lower linguistic proficiency after one-year placement. These two *t*-tests indicated that attendees from High proficiency groups were actually equipped with better pragmatic ability before their placement and moreover they made even relatively better improvements in the duration of placement in terms of their pragmatic proficiency. The participants' failures in pragmatic performance in the study have aroused an awareness that L2 learners' linguistic and grammatical knowledge should absolutely take how to build up the acquisition of L2 sociopragmatic competence into pedagogical consideration.

Regarding the question 'At which level of proficiency do participants make more progress in the development of pragmatic competence after placement?' in the study, the independent *t*-test analysis indicated that High proficiency participants' scores were higher than those to the Low proficiency group both in Time 1 (before placement) and in Time 2 (after placement). The paired *t*-test analysis revealed that both High and Low proficiency group make progress in request behaviours after placement. However, L2 learners with higher linguistic proficiency tend to show better pragmatic development than L2 learners with lower linguistic proficiency after one-year placement. These two *t*-tests indicated that attendees from High proficiency groups were actually equipped with better pragmatic ability before their placement and moreover they made even relatively better improvements in the duration of placement in terms of their pragmatic proficiency. The participants' pragmatic failures in pragmatic performance in the study have raised an issue here, which is L2 learners' linguistic and grammatical knowledge should be taken into consideration in terms of the acquisition of sociopragmatic competence.

8.2.3 Airline Customer Service – Politeness Conception

This section moves on to look at the third research question:

To what extent do participant responses in the DCTs conform to airline managers' expectations of appropriate verbal behaviours by check-in staff?

This question was mainly addressed by analysis of the airline managers' interview data, which sought to investigate the differences between their perceptions of politeness and that of Group A (including Group A-before, Group A-HP-after, Group A-LP-before, Group A-LP-after) and Group B participants. In this study, airline managers primarily examined the content of the replies rather than the English linguistic features, themselves, therefore, airline managers' language proficiency is not the major issue in this study. In ESP, it is a given that "learners of English should try to emulate the ways of communicating of those already members of these communities" (Basturkmen, 2006, p. 3).

According to the two airline managers' overall comments on Group A and Group B participants' performance in the First and Second DCT data, they both agreed that Group B participants' replies were more professional than Group A in terms of the content of the replies.

Airline managers indicated that Group B participants' replies not only demonstrated their professional airline knowledge but also knowledge of language conventions in the airline industry, which made Group B participants' replies more appropriate than Group A participants'. They further explained that although both Group A and B

participants were aware of service language manners and using lots of politeness wordings, Group A participants seemed more likely to offend passengers due to their different conception of politeness, which might be due to their lack of knowledge of airline language conventions and airline customer service.

Judging from the airline managers' comment about airline service management participants' performance, Group B participants' replies in the data showed that their conception of politeness was closer to the airline managers' compared with those of participants without placement experience. One reason for this tendency might be the placement experience in the airlines. Students in the working environment had no choice but to use English language as the medium to deliver service to passengers. They tended to actively engage in the target language uses, which enhanced their pragmatic awareness and linguistic production. In this sense we can state that exposure to the target speech community - airlines contexts, specifically a year-long airport placement, does play a positive role in the development of pragmatic understanding and use of language, as it improves sociopragmatic competence for all participants, despite of proficiency levels. The overall trend for the students is that they approximate airline ground staff of the target culture both in the degree of face work involved in socio-pragmatically different situations and in the activated request procedures. The students become members of an airline community, learning to participate in its culture through the socialisation practice. Apart from being best known to anthropologists for their researches on language socialisation, Ochs and Schieffelin (1995) have also made important contributions to linguistics and to the study of children language acquisition. Ochs and Schieffelin define 'socialisation' as the process by which infants, children, and foreigners become members of the particular community, learning to join in its culture, using linguistic

as well as ethnographic methods. They also further their finding that the processes of enculturation and socialisation do not occur apart from the process of language acquisition.

As above discussed the exposure to the target speech community does play a positive role in the development of pragmatic understanding and use of language, as it seem to improve sociopragmatic competence for all participants, despite proficiency levels. A question needs to be asked here as to ‘what exactly is it about the placement experience that improves their ability to communicate in service encounters in a more pragmatically appropriate way?’ During the placement, students had numerous opportunities for extended, meaningful contact with the target language- airline English. They were able to know what work-related language is expected, and in turn, to judge what standard of performance is required, especially since the language used in service cycle is so repetitious. The airline check-in service cycle comprises a series of predictable interactive activities and behaviour patterns, all of which have attached clusters of identifiable standardized linguistic requirements and these exemplify the characteristics of airline English. These activities provide the participants with ample opportunities for workplace English proficiency to develop. By repeated exposure to the airline service field, learners are able to familiarize themselves with the context, a process that makes the input comprehensible.

Moreover, the students not only learned about the customer service skills in customer service training but also ‘acquire’ the skills in work through the practice of customer service skills learned in training and also honed their skills in work through the interaction with passengers. The students have been taught about the

customer service concept in customer service training. The students have learned about specific English - including appropriate exponents of the functional language taught in customer service training and practised in work. Meanwhile, received in their duties directly from passengers, especially from native English speakers allows them to cultivate and improve their pragmatic ability.

In addition, the results of the study revealed that airline placement offers the opportunity for students to engage in a large number of social interactions with members of the target language and culture. Through these interactions, students became socialized into the pragmatic norms and practices of the L2 and thus improved their pragmatic development since authentic native English speaker input represents the source of knowledge of pragmatic issues for learners and consistent interaction with native English speakers enables the participants to practice language conventions taught in customer service training as formulaic language is tied to the demands of communication.

The results of the analysis showed that exposure to the target speech community, especially a year-long airport placement is relatively influential in the students' pragmatic development. What Group B students had acquired during the airline placement are summarised and described as follows:

1. The types of alerters used by Group B participants are very similar to that of airline staff. Group B participants used 'Ms' to address females because the marital status of a woman can be difficult to assess.
2. Group B participants' usage of 'Mr. + surname' complies with Taiwanese airline customer service policies to show formal respect to passengers.

3. Group B participants tended to apply indirect strategies more often to reduce the impact of making requests to passengers.
4. Group B participants were aware of the possible problems that could arise from using the supportive moves - *compensation* and *accept responsibility* and therefore were careful not to use these two supportive moves.
5. Group B participants avoided using the supportive moves - *apology* such as 'sorry' and 'I am sorry' before issuing a request because they were aware of the potential problems that may arise by using 'sorry' and 'I am sorry' when delivering service.
6. Group B participants used the supportive moves - *empathy* to reduce the degree of imposition that a listener may feel by showing they cared about the listener's problems.

The improvement Group B participants have acquired during the placement suggested that a year-long airport placement had positive influence in the students' pragmatic development. This leads to the following question:

Do the students need to be taught in class if the exposure to the target speech community, a year-long airport placement, can improve Taiwanese students' pragmatic ability?

Though the researcher appreciates the notion that the longer of learners' exposure time to the target speech community, the better progress of pragmatic ability learners can make, yet some major obstacles occurred for pragmatic development during students' airline placement. The obstacles are briefly described as follows.

Firstly, the results of the study also showed that there are pragmatic aspects that the students did not acquire, even after students were immersed in the target community. There are language conventions which Group B participants failed to acquire that are used in airlines on the placement, such as:

1. Avoiding the use of words 'policy', 'rule' or 'regulation' when making requests
2. Avoiding the use of words such as 'expire' or 'overdue' when checking their passengers' travelling documents.

Therefore, in ESP teaching it is useful, even important, to ascertain what constitutes appropriate language conventions and approved target behaviour in the target community.

Secondly, language proficiency is one of the major factors influencing the participants' growth of pragmatic competence based on our findings in the previous section. The results of paired t-test showed that it is not only the high proficiency participants that actually benefit from placement but also the other group. The only difference lies in the progress range. High proficiency participants' scope of progress in sociopragmatic competence was much greater than low proficiency participants'. High proficiency participants' scope of progress in sociopragmatic competence was much greater than low proficiency participants'. The possible explanation for the poor effect of placement on low proficiency participants is that they do not have the linguistic resources available to produce pragmatically appropriate utterances. As Kasper & Rose (2002) indicated that certain aspects of pragmatics are closely related to proficiency in grammar, and therefore are problematic for learners without the requisite knowledge of grammar. The notable gap in participants' language

proficiency differences made their replies become valuable evidence that students should reach at least a minimum level of English before they go on placement, especially when the purpose of the placement is to develop their ability to use English in a specific professional context.

Thirdly, although students with better performances in the linguistic and grammatical knowledge tended to improve their sociopragmatic awareness and show equivalent pragmatic development above that of students with lower proficiency, yet some of the high proficiency participants' replies were still neither pragmalinguistically nor sociopragmatically appropriate. Fourthly, another obstacle for students' pragmatic development during their airline placement is the lack of corrective feedback given to students on the inappropriate pragmatics. 35 out of 40 student participants said in the focus group interview that 'airline staff may provide corrective feedback on customer service skills or strategy; they did not correct us regarding grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation'. The reasons for lack of corrective feedback about linguistic forms and pragmatics may be related to airline staff's communicative competence. Although students did benefit significantly from implicit socialization regarding airline language convention, a lack of feedback may have indicated to students that their behaviour is pragmatically appropriate when it is not.

With the findings of obstacles for students' pragmatic development obtained through the needs analysis, the teaching of pragmatics in the classroom may be a good way to help students sharpen their awareness of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic rules of TL - English and push students towards higher levels of pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Thereafter, what is at issue for both airline English course designers and instructors is how to tailor airline English courses more precisely to

meet the needs of these students in terms of syllabus, teaching methods and materials. As to the students' pragmatic needs and failure that I focus on in this study, my suggestions for the pedagogical purposes are described in the following section.

8.3 Implications for Airline English Teaching

This study has some implications for airline English teaching, which are described as follows.

1. Teacher qualifications

The focus group interview results indicated that there existed a certain degree of a learning gap between what learners were taught in the classroom and what learners actually encountered in the real working context. The current airline English course design and teaching methods in NKUHT lack careful consideration of how to build up learners' awareness of linguistic pragmatics. Many participants in the focus group interview reflected that they were only taught grammatical linguistic components in class, but nothing concerned with the appropriateness of the language uses. One of the possible reasons for airline English teachers neglecting learners' pragmatic development is as Wolfson (1989) explained that either ESP teachers were not aware of the importance of pragmatic awareness for learners' pragmatic development or teachers themselves lacked pragmatic knowledge. Having highlighted teaching problems in airline English courses in NKUHT, we can conclude that students need to sharpen their awareness in school as the traditional teaching techniques fail to instruct them what they would actually encounter in their future airline employment soundings. Therefore, apart from pedagogically enhancing the linguistic elements, students

should also be taught the pragmatic appropriateness; that is what exactly airline service demands most.

In addition, the co-teaching with airline expert participation seems to be an effective alternative to the conventional airline English teachers' self-reflection upon what he/she is doing in the classroom. Academic institutions should consider inviting airline managers regularly to join airline English courses. Thus, students not only benefit from absorbing the first-hand practical airline customer service experiences, but also airline English teachers acquire authenticity from front-liners' language conventions and taboos from the airline customer service perspective.

2. Increase instruction hours

In my study, from the results of the focus group interviews, my students said they were aware that in their working environment there is a gap in their ability to fulfil airline tasks that require a more comprehensive command of English and after the completion of the airline placement they realized what exactly they needed to fill the gap. They indicated the instruction hours for the airline English course in their university curriculum are insufficient. They demanded at least more than 2 hours per week to improve their linguistic and grammatical knowledge, especially the use of specific English – exponents of the functional language and pragmatic ability.

My research demonstrates that the experts' opinions may be more valuable in helping teachers implement a syllabus which develops learners' language use in a professional context. However, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) pointed out that

learners' opinions deserve equal attention. It is vital to understand learners' subjective needs because their learning motivation might greatly influence learning efficacy. The results of the study objectively indicated the importance of considering students' subjective needs as students are reliable sources of information about their own needs, because they are relatively familiar with the work of airline ground staff based on their placement experience. What airline English course administrators and designers can do is recognise learners' subjective needs and try to extend airline English instruction hours to meet learners' needs.

3. Reduction of large class size

Airline English classes in NKUHT are large classes, in which 50 students in a class makes it difficult for teachers to control students and guide their learning. The biggest problem is that meeting individual student needs can be difficult or impossible. Students are getting less individualized instruction because the teacher's attention is divided over a large group of people. Moreover, teachers must initiative activities, such as group work and discussions, to keep all of students participating with the goal of improving their communication skills. However, these classroom activities are affected when it comes to teaching large classes. Thus, ESP courses like airline English should always avoid operating in large classes. Careful placement exams should be done before the course starts. Thus, students with almost the same target language proficiency levels can benefit from learning from each other.

4. Remedial ESP Proficiency Course

The results of the analysis suggested that learners must attain a particular level of linguistic ability in order to use language in real contexts adequately. Thus, academic institutions should consider offering supplementary remedial ESP proficiency courses to students with low proficiency so that those students can improve their linguistic competence in order to pass the airline English course.

5. Classroom Instruction

Some studies suggested that classroom instruction in pragmatics can be effective in enhancing L2 learners' pragmatic competence (cf. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Rose, 2005). Shively's (2011) findings suggested that explicit in-class instruction on requests were revealed to have a positive influence on some of the students' requesting behaviour. Rose and Kasper's (2002, p. 255) study reported that "pragmatics has shown that explicit instruction of the target language pragmatic rules is effective in acquiring pragmatic competence." Some research indicated that without any instruction in pragmatics, learners tend to acquire pragmatic competence in the L2 rather slowly (cf. Baron, 2003; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1985; DuFon, 1999). Therefore, both high and low proficiency students should be explicitly instructed in order to raise their awareness about basic concepts in pragmatics, the impact of context on language use, and how language conveys pragmatic information.

6. Task-based airline English syllabus

The Airline English syllabus is suggested to be task-based because a task-based

approach to language teaching allows for a needs analysis to be matched to identify student needs (Rooney, 2000).

Nunan (2001, para. 4) provided a definition of task-based syllabus.

Task-based syllabuses represent a particular realization of communicative language teaching. Instead of beginning the design process with lists of grammatical, functional-notional, and other items, the designer conducts a needs analysis which yields a list of the target tasks that the targeted learners will need to carry out in the 'real-world' outside the classroom Nunan (2001, para. 4).

According to Richards (2001, p. 162) two types of tasks have been used as the syllabus basis: pedagogical and real-world. Task-based learning has proved a popular method for many ESP courses, such as legal English programmes (Northcott, 2012) and ESP courses for airport information desk staff (Liang, 2010). Task-based learning can help learners by placing him/her in a situation equivalent to the real world and developing language through its use and get the focus of the learners toward achieving a goal where language becomes a tool and making use of language they have. Task-based learning defined by Northcott (2012, p. 4) is as follows:

Premised on a strong view of CLT, learners engage in the performance of a task (either real-world or pedagogical) where the focus is on meaningful activity and reaching an outcome. The use of language is a tool for the successful completion of the task and the focus is not on the successful production of target forms of the language (Northcott, 2012, p. 4).

Airline English teachers should make use of deep-end strategy, so that learners are encouraged to make use of the linguistic resources they have to rehearse the kinds of situations they will find themselves in on placement. For example, learners will

perform a real-world task such as role-playing as ground staff deal with passenger's over-weight baggage in an airline check-in encounter. Airline English teachers can develop a set of exercises to facilitate the acquisition of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. The exercises are aimed at identifying, as well as making requests. For example, airline English teachers can encourage students to collect examples of naturally occurring data in order to develop awareness of the importance of the context. The examples of naturally occurring data can be formed as the basis of a teaching resource. Airline English teachers can invite students to discuss the appropriateness of the requests in the naturally occurring data, and then follow up the discussions with role plays. Moreover, airline English teachers can encourage students to think about how a particular speech act differs in Chinese and identify whether there is any language transfer in either a positive or negative way in order to raise the awareness of language transfer.

This study also brings some implication for the large-scale proficiency tests for their future improvements. On the basis of aforementioned studies (Roever 2011; Sirikhan & Prapphal, 2011; Jianda, 2006), they pointed out that there may be a lack of pragmatic issues in most language proficiency testing (TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.). It is also observed in the study the proficiency tests fail to completely reflect the levels of participants' pragmatic ability, especially in terms of politeness that is regarded as the appropriateness of language use and one of the most essential elements in airline customer verbal communication. Hence, this study also arises the awareness for the large-scale proficiency tests, such as TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS to integrate pragmatic competence measurement with four conventional language skills' ones.

8.4 Future research

This study provides an initial investigation on the English request realisations of Taiwanese hospitality university students. To completely understand the norms and patterns of this speech act, the following suggestions may serve as guidelines for future research.

Firstly, the variables of ‘language proficiency’ were examined in the study. The effects of language proficiency on Group A participants’ development of the speech acts of request were evaluated in the study. This research did not set out to conduct an overall investigation of how and to what extent linguistic proficiency influences L2 learners’ sociopragmatic progress as the range of subjects in such a study would be impractical. In addition, lack of ground staff language proficiency records in this study makes it unable to compare with student groups for further analysis. Nevertheless, this research can serve as a preliminary study for future researches on involving with airline staff’s individual language proficiency and cross examine with current collected data.

Secondly, many scholars have suggested that the individual’s speech behaviour is likely to be affected by the speaker-dominant relation or relations in which the speaker is very close to the hearer or interlocutors do not already know one another (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Hong, 1993; Wolfson, 1989). Hence, in addition to the aforementioned variables, despite that language proficiency and placement experience were carefully examined in the study, further studies could be designed to examine how contextual variables (e.g. social distance, social dominance, gender, age, educational background and length of experience in post) affect airline staff’s request

behaviours. A measurable research objective would be to certain whether these variables significantly affect how airline staff's request behaviours in the workplace. An understanding of such effects on request behaviours could have important implications for airline communication in-service training.

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Appendix 1
Transcriptions of focus group interview- before pilot study

Participant	Content	Notes
Moderator	Hi! Everyone. Thanks for joining the meeting. Please share with everyone what kind of impressive situations that you have come across at the check-in counter in work.	
H	Late arrival passengers.	
K	Oh, yes.	Participant K nodded her head.
A	It happens very often.	Participant B, C, D, F and K nodded their heads.
G	Three or four times within a week.	
Moderator	Late arrival passengers?	
F	Yes. Some passengers arrived at the airport 20 minutes before the departure time. It's so crazy.	
B	Yeah.	The rest of participants nodded their heads.
H	Most of them will beg us to let them check-in.	
A	When they knew that they were not allowed to check-in, some of them were very angry and shouted to us.	
Moderator	Did you change your minds and let passengers got on the flight if they shouted to you?	
G	No way!!	
C	Hmmm... well. It depends.	Participant A, B, D, G, H and K nodded their heads.
D	We need to ask for supervisor's permission first.	
A	Yeah.	
H	Sometimes the supervisor said OK, if they have no	

	check-in luggage.	
B	Sometimes passengers arrived at the check-in counter rather late and what made it worst was they had some luggage to check-in, the over-weighted ones!!	
C	Oh, it happened to me a couple of times.	
D	Me too.	
G	It happened to me once that I told them the computer was already closed so I could not assist them to check-in. They kept begging me again and again but there was nothing I could do about it.	
A	Once there was a young man arrived at the check-in counter just 25 minutes right before the flight departure time with a piece of luggage to check-in. However, my supervisor did allow him to check in and catch the flight.	
Moderator	Why?	
A	He is young so he can run faster!! Haha... !	
F	That's true. We will put passengers' physical condition into consideration. If it happens to an old man or woman then, he or she is very likely to be asked to take the next flight instead.	
Moderator	What about over-weight luggage? Did you charge passengers for over-weight luggage?	
D	Yes, I did.	
G	Well... If the passenger's carry-on luggage was less than 8 kg weight allowance, then I would say 'would you mind taking something out from your suitcase into your handbag?' If the passenger's carry-on luggage was over the weight limitation, I would ask him to pay for the over-weight kilograms.	
B	Yes, me too. I will say: Excuse me, Sir. Your luggage is already over weight for the ticket allowance. Do you have any hand-carry luggage with you? If the answer is 'yes', I would say, "I suggest you take something out from the check-in luggage otherwise you need to pay the excess	

	baggage fee.	
C	I will say ‘I am sorry, Sir. Your baggage is overweight. Would you mind picking up something from your luggage to be your carry-on baggage?’.	
Moderator	Is it difficult to ask passengers to pay for the excess baggage charge?	
D	Yes, it is.	
A	A little bit.	
E.	Very difficult.	
A	It’s ok for me.	
Moderator	Why is it difficult?	
G	They might be angry.	
C	And complain about our service.	
F	Oh, yes. They will say: I want to talk to your manager!!	Participant B, C, E and G nodded their heads.
B	Yes! Hehehe...	
Moderator	Have anyone of you received any complaint from passengers so far?	
A	I haven’t got any so far. The company actually only gives us extra 3 kg-baggage allowance in case it is needed. So we always explain to our customers that it is the company’s policy we have to follow. If 3 more kg allowance still can’t make them happy with our explanation, then we will have no choice but looking for the our supervisor’s help.	
Moderator	Was there any passenger refusing to pay for the excess baggage charge?	
E	Many passengers often excuse themselves for not having any money to pay for it at first and refuse to pay for the overweight fee. Eventually we have to ask the supervisors to deal with this sort of situations for us. What the supervisor normally does is to give them additional 2 kg baggage allowance. If the passenger still insists not paying the charge, then the supervisor would inform the passenger that he or she cannot get on board. This is a company’s black-and-white policy we have to obey, otherwise	

	other passengers will require for the same treatment when they travel with us next time.	
D	Western passengers are actually quite reasonable and understanding. They normally accept our explanations and realise that we have done our best to help them by giving extra baggage allowance.	
Moderator	Is there any other situation that you encounter frequently at check-in counters?	
C	Flight delay.	
B	Sometimes the flight delayed because of the late arrival of its previous flight to Taiwan.	
Moderator	Are there any complaints from the passengers?	
E	Oh, of course.	
F	Yes.	
D	Some passengers were very angry and shouted to us.	
F	Although sometimes we have already made announcements to inform passengers that the flight would be delayed due to some technical problems, yet there always were some annoyed passengers refused to take the reasons and even evoked other passengers to make all the situations get worse and total lose control. Therefore, how to choose appropriate expressions to deal with these angry passengers should be instructed in Airline English class.	
C	For instance, ground staff will label passengers who need wheelchairs as special assistance passengers rather than disable passengers.	
B	Our supervisors constantly remind us that we should avoid using 'delay' in our announcements which might lead passengers' anxiety and no-ending questions.	
Moderator	Delay?	
B	Yes. We are suggested to rephrase the announcement as " schedule changed to XXX" instead of " flight is delayed till XXX."	
A	I feel stressed when talking to Non English Native	

	speaker passengers because the English language is not their mother tongue so that it's difficult to communicate with them in English. They always kept talking to me in their own languages and it's really frustrating.	
D	Oh, actually I felt stressed when I talked to the Americans because their mother tongue is English and they might judge my based on my English ability.	
G	mmm..I feel the same way.	
C	I felt frustrated when I talked to passengers who are non English native speakers. It's really misleading sometimes because we barely understood each other at all. On the other hand, English Native passengers somehow could get my points even though my English is not good enough and it's relatively easier for me to understand their speaking.	
F	Talking to Non-native English speaker passengers made me stressed. Sometimes I really could not understand what they were talking with their strong accents, especially Indian passengers. There happened an Indian passenger asking me the location of the toilet. He kept saying "Wi, Doa Dei" for many times. I had no clue at all about what he was talking about, so I kept repeating "pardon me" , 'sorry" and " would you please say it again?".	
Moderator	What's his reply?	
F	He was very furious because he had already repeated for 6 times but I really could not understand him at all. He was angry and I was really frustrated. Then I started to guess the meaning of the key word by saying different words in English and eventually, when I said "toilet" he nodded his head with a relief expression.	
E	I felt nervous when I talked to Non English native speakers. I always pissed them off if they did not	

	understand what I tried to convey. On the other hand, English Native speaker passengers seemed more patient and tolerant if I couldn't understand what they are talking about.	
Moderator	Is it difficult for you to communicate with foreign passengers?	
A	Yes, a little.	
C	Me too.	
B	I will be less confident when I face Western passengers.	
Moderator	Why?	
C	Simply because their mother tongue is English, I become more aware of the accuracy of the English vocabulary.	
D	Honestly speaking, I was a bit nervous to request foreign passengers to do something, such as request their paying for the excess service charge.	
Moderator	Why were you nervous?	
B	English proficiency.	
A	Language problems.	
C	I have to be polite. I need to be very careful. I mean I have to be very careful to show the verbal politeness otherwise they might be annoyed for my asking them to pay the charge.	
D	Once I had a call from the supervisor asking me to apologize to one particular passenger for my colleague's bad attitude in asking his / her paying for the excess baggage. We simply did not want to receive any complaint letter from the passengers.	
B	I believe sometimes the intonation is very important in expressing. Tough our English is not good enough to fully express our meanings, yet the intonation, facial expression and attitude can be helpful tools in our communications. So I think they are more important than the English language itself.	
Moderator	What do you mean by "facial express"? Can you explain it more specifically?	
B	For example, in order to demonstrate that I feel	

	sorry for him to pay for the extra fee, I would say “sorry sir, your luggage is overweight. So would you mind taking something out or you prefer paying for the excess charge” with a sympathy expression and intonation.	
Moderator	Do you mean using sympathy expression and intonation turns to be your strategy to avoid offending passengers when you make requests to passengers?	
B	haha..Yes, it certainly is. To make them feel not offended is my secret method. Because my English is not good enough so I have to make most use my body language to communicate with foreign passengers.	
C	I don’t know what kind of strategy or attitude I should take to make passengers feel I am friendly. For example, I can smile easily when I talk to American but I can’t smile at all when I face British.	
Moderator	Why?	
C	They seemed rather distant to me. No matter what you said to them, they always replied to you “thank you” without any facial expression. They would not have any small talks with me at all. I really don’t know how to deal with the British passengers and even make them feel I am friendly. I always constantly confirm their understanding about what I am talking about since they had very few responses in returns.	
E	I feel much more comfortable and relaxing to talk to the American passengers comparing with talking to the British ones.	
G	British people seem to be more distant and serious.	
Moderator	Which one is more comprehensible to you, American English or British English?	
D	American English.	
Moderator	Why?	
C	Pronunciation.	

A	Vocabulary.	
H	British is ok for me. I found that French are quite proud and not easy to communicate with. There was a French passenger told me that he can't speak English but when I talked to him in English he nodded his head. It seems he can speak English but he doesn't want to speak English. So I feel difficult to talk to French people.	
G	I think we should be instructed in airline English classes about how to communicate with passengers from different cultural backgrounds.	
B	During our airline placement, we realise what we have learned in class was not actually much helpful to us in work.	
D	Yeah, not much.	The rest of participants all nodded their heads.
A	Yes. The teacher had no relevant airlines background knowledge and the handouts he gave to us were rather standardized and simple. However, The real situations at the check-in counters are far more complex. For example, the passengers will always refuse to pay for the overweight luggage charge, but in the textbook passengers seem very cooperative with the penalty. We were not genuinely taught in class how to deal with this kind of situations properly.	
G	We haven't been instructed in class how to request passengers politely that we need badly at work.	
D	The school did provide Airline English course to use, however, two hours per week was not enough at all.	
C	Yes, we need more.	Participant A, D, E and G nodded their heads.
A	Ten hours per week !!! hahaha...	Participant B, C, E and G were

		laughing too.
Moderator	What do you expect to learn from the airline English in class?	
G	We need to improve our speaking and listening skills.	
A	Airline English terminology.	
B	We need to learn how to provide explanations to passengers in English in different situations, such as aircraft technical problems, flight information enquiries, etc.	
C	And unexpected situation handling.	
D	How to communicate with the transit passengers when they missed the connecting flight due to flight delay. It happened frequently.	
F	Passengers were actually more concerned about whether their needs to be fully satisfied rather than whether we have a casual conversation with airline employees or not.	
E	For example, re-issuing tickets, seat arrangement, itinerary planning.	
D	and luggage handling.	
		All participants were silent for about 10 seconds.
Moderator	OK. Is there any other situation that you encounter frequently at check-in counters?	
		Participant A, B, C, D, F shook their heads and said nothing.
Moderator	OK. Thank you very much for your attendance. Your opinions are very much appreciated.	

Appendix 2
Sample of Discourse Completion Test

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student from Korea who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male from Turkey and looks very impatient because there are 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in Business class, which he had booked, because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers appears to be afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

Appendix 3
Consent Form
English for Airline Purposes Research Study

We would like to invite you participate the questionnaire and the interviews. If you are happy to do this, we would be grateful if you could sign the Consent Form. We can assure you that the study will be completely CONFIDENTIAL and ANONYMOUS:

- Your name will not be used.
- The practice will not be identified.
- The questionnaires and the recordings will be destroyed when the study is complete.

I have read and fully understood the information and am willing to take part in the English for Airline Purposes Research Study.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4

Discourse Completion Test – Group C airline staff

Introduction

There are 20 fact situations described in the test. Please kindly write down what you would say if you were presented with these situations.

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry but our flight is closed for check in. There are many standard procedures we must complete before departure of our flight and these procedures requires time. So we are unable to accept any passengers once our flight is closed. May I arrange you on our next available flight which departs at XX:XX?

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student from Korea who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mrs XX, we have got 5 minutes until flight is closed, can you please repack your baggage so it is in a suitable condition for check in? Here is a courtesy box and some tapes if you need.

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male from Turkey and looks very impatient because there are 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mr XX, I am afraid that your baggage is overweight. Our free baggage allowance is 20kg per person. I can help you by giving you an extra 5 kg free of charge under supervisor authority but for the other extra 10kg, I will have to charge you...

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mr. XX. I am afraid that the excess bag charge is based on each individual travel basis. Different airlines might have different allowance. I do believe what you experienced in your previous trip. However I will have to charge you under today's situation.

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mrs. XX. From your passport, I see your visa has already expired. Would you like to contact the Russian embassy or the travel agency that helped with your visa and see if there is any other way for you to get a visa as soon as possible? We can help you rebook your flight at the ticketing counter.

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

Mr XX. I am terribly sorry but flight XX is delayed due to mechanical problems. Our next flight won't be available until tomorrow. We will arrange an overnight accommodation and make sure you get a confirmed booking on tomorrow's flight. I am very sorry for the inconvenience.

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry Mrs XX, there seems to be a problem with our computer data and your passport. Can you please wait for a while? (meanwhile we should have staff with inspection duty contact immigration officer, and the check in staff can continue with next passengers)

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in Business class, which he had booked, because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am terribly sorry I understand that you have a confirmed booking in the business class but we really don't have any more business class seats available right now. Would you like to consider again for a seat in the economy class and we will definitely offer compensation for your inconvenience. Or would you like to consider taking an earlier or later flight with business class seats available?

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

I am very sorry but most of the passengers on this flight have already checked in and there is no other seat available. And we are not allowed to change passengers' seats without their permission. I understand that you would like to sit with your children so I have selected nearby seats for you. If you don't mind, we can arrange a later flight for you where there are still seats available together. Or if you prefer to stay on the same flight, you can also try to ask the other passengers to change seats with you on the aircraft.

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Sumimasen...this way, please. (and use hand gesture and body language to escort passenger to the line)

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mr. XX , we will arrange the wheel for you right through to the gate and the escort on arrival has been arranged. Regarding your baggage, it seems there is overweight for 12 kgs. I am afraid that I have to charge you for the excess baggage.

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry but our counter is already closed for check in. Even if you have no baggage, there is still standard procedures such as weight/ balance calculation and passenger manifest clearance which requires us time to organize before each flight. I will help you contact our passenger control and see if it is still possible to help you check in. But please arrive at least one hour before departure.

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers appears to be afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am very sorry Sir, we understand that you have an important meeting but we are working as fast as we can to get our aircraft available. I have checked other flight alternatives for you and would you consider taking XX airline's flight which departs at XX?

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Sorry to interrupt, but may I ask you to keep your voices down because there are also other passengers here. Also, may I help you dispose of your beer cans because security officers may deny you boarding on an aircraft if they feel you are intoxicated.

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry ma'am, I see you originally had an advanced seat reservation , but because ASR can only be kept until 1.5 hours before flight departure, and now it is 50 min before flight departure, our counters are about to close I can only give you a seat other than your original ASR. I am sorry about that but please remember to be at the airport at least 1.5 hour before departure next time.

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry but I don't speak Italian. Would you please translate for me to your friend in Italian? Your friend's visa has expired and so due to regulations, I cannot issue a boarding pass for your friend. He will need to get a valid visa from the embassy or through help from travel agency. Here is a number for reservations, and he can rebook through this number when his visa is ready.

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

Sorry sir. Can you speak slowly? (Use body language and easy English to show passenger the direction. If the counter is not too busy, the staff can directly escort passenger to the washrooms.)

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I have already given extra 5 kg free of charge. Since you have very little carry on, would you like to take some stuff out as carry on and we will charge you less. Or would you like to have the rest of the baggage by mail shipment so it would be less expensive.

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Mrs XX, I am sorry but there is a limit of one carry-on per person. Since you still have free baggage allowance left for check-in, would you consider checking in one of your carryon bags? Please make sure there are no valuables or fragile items inside.

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

We are sorry because of the mechanical problem that the flight is not able to make it on the schedule time ,we will upgrade your ticket for the next flight. We are really sorry about the delay and the inconvenience caused.

Appendix 5
1st Discourse Completion Test (DCT) –
Group A-LP-before participant No.7

Introduction

There are 20 fact situations described in the test. Please kindly write down what you would say if you were presented with these situations.

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry ma'am. For international flights, you are required to be at the airport at least 2 hours before the departure time. Maybe I can help you to plan another flight.

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student from Korea who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I am sorry. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes, would you please repack the luggage to avoid break it.

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male from Turkey and looks very impatient because there are 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Your luggage is over-weight. You must pay extra money. It's the law.

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

According to our over-weight rule, we have to charge for the excess weight. Everyone has to pay for the excess luggage charge, including you, sir!!

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry, miss. Because your visa is overdue we can't issue your boarding pass.

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

Due to the mechanical problem the flight can't be take off. You must stay overnight and our company will deal with the compensation part.

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

The passport that you have on hands have some problems, could you wait here until we confirm this passport is ok?

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in Business class, which he had booked, because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Because Business class is heavily booked. We need you to take the Economy class. Really sorry. Could you lower your voice? Thank you.

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

We're sorry that we can't arrange you to sit together. But it's time to let children be independent and will take care of them especially.

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

line up, please (speak simple English, with the body language).

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Your luggage is 12 kg over-weight. We have to charge you for the excess, and we will help you to boarding flight.

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

You are so late. I will arrange you take next flight.

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers appears to be afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry, Mr. Please don't angry and listen to me! I will try and see if I could put you on another flight, OK?

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Excuse me. You must lower your voices or you will bother other people.

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Because you haven't arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure, so we can't keep your seat for you. You have to take next flight, please.

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Could you translate for me to let him know his visa has expired, we couldn't let him pass. So could he please to deal with this part first?

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

Sir, sorry. Could you please say that again? (take note)

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Excuse me, Mr. On safety consideration, sometime we can let you over-weight. But today we have to limit your luggage weight. In order to safety, maybe you can reduce your luggage.

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry, lady. These carry-on luggage are over-weight. For you and other passengers comfortable, we have to charge you for the excess.

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

Our company will be responsible for your compensation part. So could you please stay here for one night?

Appendix 6
1st Discourse Completion Test (DCT) –
Group B participant No. 1

Introduction

There are 20 fact situations described in the test. Please kindly write down what you would say if you were presented with these situations.

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

This flight was closed, I am afraid you need to take the next available flight. We have another flight leaving TPE at xxx arriving HKG at xxx, just late about 20 minutes, may I check-in this flight for you?

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student from Korea who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Miss I suggest you repack your luggage in 5 minutes.

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male from Turkey and looks very impatient because there are 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry, Sir for your long waiting but I have to tell you your baggage is overweight about 5kg. Can you take some out? The overweight charge from TPE to XXX is \$xxx per kg.

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sir, we are different company so due to our company safety rules please pay the excess baggage fee or you are against the airplane safety.

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Miss. Could you please show me the expired date of your visa?

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

Due to mechanical problems the flight is delayed. I am afraid you need to stay overnight and take the following day.

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Excuse me, Miss. Our computer system has some errors, so could you please wait for a moment?

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in Business class, which he had booked, because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I know you are very angry under this circumstance but we don't have any business class seat now. Could I ask you to consider taking Economy seat?

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

I will call our boarding gate staff to help you change seat. Can you contact the boarding gate they will help you?

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Come here ! (with body language)

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry, sir. Your luggage is over-weight. I suggest can try to pick up things as a carry-on luggage.

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I need to ask my supervisor. Maybe we can help you this time but next time you need to check-in before one hour.

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers appears to be afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

We do apologize for your inconvenience and I totally understand how angry you are. Would you like to try another airline?

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Excuse me sir. Here are public area and many people are waiting behind you. Could you do me a favor lower your voice?? And depend on airline regulation could you please stop drink beer?

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry man, on-line in advance need arrive at the airport lease one and half hour flight departure but you are late.

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Could you help me to translate that his visa is expired so that we can't issue him a boarding pass.

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

Sorry sir. Can you speak slowly? Maybe you can say the key word?

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry, sir. Your luggage is over-weight. For flight safety please pay for the excess or repack your baggage.

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Madam, your hand carry baggage is over weight. Would you like to put those in your check-in baggage?

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

We are really sorry about the delay and the inconvenience caused. We will provide you with meals and accommodation in a hotel near the airport.

Appendix 7
2nd Discourse Completion Test (DCT) –
Group A-HP-after participant No. 1

Introduction

There are 20 fact situations described in the test. Please kindly write down what you would say if you were presented with these situations.

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry to inform you this madam, because of your late show, you're not able to be in this flight, we don't want you to rush time so the unexpected injury won't happen, even so, don't worry we will arrange the nearest flight for you.

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry miss, we are closing the counter for this flight in 5 minutes, we might arrange next flight for you if you don't pack the baggage within the time.

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male and looks very impatient because there are about 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee ?

I am sorry sir, according to the regulation of on flight luggage ,you're luggage is over weight, if you don't give up something you don't want to bring on airline ,you might have to pay the excess luggage charge.

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

We are sorry to waste your time here, but there is a problem that we need to solve here before get on the airplane, your luggage is over weight, there might be mistake ,because the previous airline didn't notice that your luggage is already over weight, if you don't pay he excess baggage charge, you might not be able to get on the airplane.

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry to inform you miss, your visa is expired ,if you really need to get on this flight ,you might have to pay the fine .

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger to that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

we are sorry for the flight delay, if you really need to be on this flight ,we could arrange another flight from another airline for you as soon as possible .

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

i am sorry miss, we will send another person who can speak Russian to ,explain the problem that we are facing ,might take up some of your time .

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in his booked Business class because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

We are sorry for the heavily booked, the supervisor will be here in a minute to explain the problem that we are facing, will offer you some discount for the next flight.

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

We are sorry miss, because this flight is fully booking so you won't be able to seat together, if you insist on seating together we can arrange next flight as soon as possible .

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

I'll speak Japanese to him, explain if he didn't line up ,might not be able to make it on time .

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry to inform you Mr, your luggage is over weight , do you want to take out some of your things as a carry-on luggage ?

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sir ,if you don't have any luggage for checking we you might need to run as fast as possible ,or you might not be able to make it on time .

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers are looking afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

we are really sorry because of the flight delay ,if you want, we can arrange next flight as soon as possible but not our airline.

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Hello, everyone! We know you guys must be very exciting and happy for the moment , but if you don't lower your voice there might be some of people complain about it ,at that time it won't be that happy as now .

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry to inform you this mr. because the flight is fully booking today ,we have to cancel your reservation because of you late show, but there will be another flight which is ok for you .

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello, mr. or miss. , we might need your help to explain to this passenger because one of the expired visa they are not able to travel together.

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

Sir, are you looking for XXX? Can you repeat again?

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Im sorry to inform you this mr.you might have to give up some of your luggage ,and these luggage we can leave here until some one take this for you ,or you could share the kilogram with other person who is willing help you.

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Sorry to inform you madam, you might have to take out some of your things from the carry-on-luggage as check-in luggage so you won't have to pay he excess luggage charge.

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

We are sorry because of the mechanical problem that the flight is not able to make it on the schedule time ,we will upgrade the ticket for the next flight.

Appendix 8
2nd Discourse Completion Test (DCT) –
Group A-LP-after participant No.7

Introduction

There are 20 fact situations described in the test. Please kindly write down what you would say if you were presented with these situations.

[Situation 1]

A passenger arrives late at the airport and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger arrives at the airport 40 minutes before the flight departure. The passenger is an elderly female from Hong Kong with one check-in luggage. She is hoping that the airline employee will let her get on the flight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Madam, could you take next flight to Hong Kong? We almost at boarding time. It's a distance from here to gate, otherwise, that's will be rush, maybe your luggage shouldn't be in your destination. So, don't worry, we will plan you the best way for you.

[Situation 2]

The passenger is a female student from Korea who would like to check-in two pieces of luggage. However one of her suitcases is not properly packed. The check-in counter will be closed in 5 minutes and the passenger is required to repack the luggage very quickly. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello Sir...you must be hurry up due to the flight will close in 5 minutes, if you need our help really, please let us know

[Situation 3]

The passenger is a middle-aged male from Turkey and looks very impatient because there are 15 passengers ahead of him in the line. The passenger's luggage is over-weight. As an airline ground staff working at the airport check-in counter, you have to explain to the passenger the policy for over-weight luggage and request that the passenger pay for the excess luggage charge. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello Sir...I need to tell you first, one passenger just can check-in 20kg and the carry-on baggage is 7kg. But our company will give passenger check-in luggage must limit to 25kg, Sir, I need you to repack your check-in luggage under 25kg, thanks you

[Situation 4]

The passenger is a young man from Korea. His luggage is over-weight so the airline employee has to charge him for the excess weight. However, the passenger refuses to pay the excess baggage charge and argues that he is a transit passenger and the airline for his previous flight did not charge him for excess baggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello...Sir I didn't know why the first station agree it for you. Our company could let you check-in total weight to 25kg that is the maximal weight. Sir I need you to repack it. If you doubt that I said you could go for our information counter to check again. Thank you.

[Situation 5]

The passenger is a young woman from Russia traveling with an expired visa. The airline cannot issue her a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time dealing with this passenger. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello miss xxx, Would you know your visa was expired? Because I input your passport information that computer was rejected so I couldn't issue a boarding pass for you. Could you contact your travel agency to check about the visa problem, and change your reservation?

[Situation 6]

An airline employee explains to the young male passenger from Australia that Flight XX from Hong Kong is delayed due to mechanical problems. The next flight isn't until tomorrow morning. As an airline employee you need to advise the passenger to that he must stay overnight and take the flight the following day. What would you say to the passenger?

Yes sir, due to the mechanical problems that we contact our engineer and engineering DEPT, they are makes it for maintenance now, But sir I need to tell you a news would you mind we will change your booking to tomorrow morning? We are apologetic about it

[Situation 7]

The passenger is a young woman from Romania holding a suspicious passport. She speaks very little English. There are 13 passengers waiting behind the passenger. You have to deal with the situation very quickly in order to serve the rest of the passengers. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello miss xxx, Would you wait a Mont. Due to I try to input the passport information to link the "Advance Passenger Information System" by U.S. Immigrant bureau create, but their system have some problem so I couldn't check-in boarding bass for you that I need to tell our duty officer, please wait a moment.

[Situation 8]

A middle-aged male passenger from Germany has been waiting to check-in for 30 minutes. When it's his turn to check-in the airline employee is unable to allocate the passenger a seat in his booked Business class because the flight is heavily booked. The passenger refuses to be downgraded despite the fact that there are no seats available in Business class. He's raising his voice and using foul language. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello Sir, let you to wait for a long time! Due to this flight are full about business class so I need to tell our duty officer to make a available business class seat for you so could wait a moment thanks you.

[Situation 9]

Three passengers from Thailand arrive at the airport one hour before their flight departure. One of the passengers is a female adult and the other two passengers are a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year old girl. The flight is very full and there are no side by side seats remaining. The family members will be unable to sit together. The passengers are really upset about the arrangement. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Yes madam, I will try to make seat together with your children, but I couldn't guarantee for you due to this flight is full today. If we have available seat we will change yours and your children's boarding bass. When you get the gate just contact our colleague has any new news?

Thank you.

[Situation 10]

A group of elderly Japanese passengers are blocking the check-in counter. The Airline employee must request that the passengers line up for check-in. However, the passengers speak very poor English. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Hello Sir, this way please.

[Situation 11]

The passenger is an elderly male from New Zealand. He is a special needs (wheel chair access) passenger. He has one piece of luggage to check-in. His suitcase is 30 kg which is 12 kg over-weight. He has no carry-on luggage. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello Sir, Would mind I ask you have any family come with you? Due to your luggage is over-weight so I need you to repack or I tell our information counter colleague to assist you repack your luggage but you just could take 25kg that is the maximal weight. If your check-in luggage is over 25kg, you should pay the over-weight charge. One kilogram over-weight charge is 973 TWN dollars.

[Situation 12]

A young male passenger from Canada arrives at the check-in counter 40 minutes before the flight departure and the flight is closed for check-in. The passenger is begging the airline employee to let him get on the flight since he has no luggage to check-in. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Yes Mr.xxx, I will ask our duty officer could reopen the system check-in for you? But I couldn't guarantee for you! Due to you are late our check-in time and the system are close. If couldn't check-in for you. Please go to our information counter tell the colleague to change you booking to next flight or the other flight by our company

[Situation 13]

The middle-aged male passenger from Germany is informed at the check-in counter that his flight will be delayed for two hours. After two hours he's advised that there will be a further delay. The passenger is really upset about the flight delay since he will miss a very important meeting. The passenger is raising his voice and using foul language and other passengers are looking afraid of him. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Ex passenger flight to khh-hkg-pvg

I'm very sorry for your inconvenient. I'll try to make you get another flight. Could you wait for me for a while?

[Situation 14]

A team of American basketball players are lining up to check-in. Some of them are drinking beers and talking loudly while they are waiting. The airline employee must request that the passengers lower their voices and dispose of their beers. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee?

Good day, Sirs would mind to keep your voice down a little bit? So we won't disturb the other passenger. Would your mind don't to drink much more due to drink much more aren't good for your health and when we boarding the cabin crew check you couldn't on board this flight we will follow the safety regulations cancel your flight Thanks you.

[Situation 15]

A middle-aged female passenger from Turkey has booked a seat on-line in advance and was required to arrive at the airport at least one and half hour before departure. The passenger arrives at the airport 50 minutes before the flight departure. The airline employee had to release the passenger's reserved seat to another passenger since the flight is very full. What you would say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Yes, Madam due to this flight is full load so we cancel your on-line check-in seat for the other passenger, so....madam could you wait a moment. I will tell our duty officer to release the other available seat for you. Please wait a moment.

[Situation 16]

Two male friends from Italy are checking in their luggage together. One of the passengers is travelling with an expired visa and speaks very poor English. The airline employee is unable to issue this passenger a boarding pass. The check-in counters are very busy so the airline employee cannot spend too much time on explaining the situation to the passenger. The airline employee would like to ask the other passenger to explain the situation to his friend. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Hello Mr. xxx, your visa was expired so I couldn't check-in for you. Would you contact your travel agent to solve your visa expired and your reservation. Thanks you

[Situation 17]

An Indian passenger comes to the check-in counter and asks for the location of the toilets. The airline employee has difficulty in understanding the passenger's English. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee? What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the Indian passenger?

Yes Sir, I'm on duty couldn't leave my counter. Would you mind go for the airport service counter due to they will take you go or tell you where are the restroom.

[Situation 18]

The passenger is a young male student from Spain. His luggage is 15 kg over-weight so the airline has to charge him for the excess. However, the passenger says he has no money to pay for the excess and begs for extra luggage allowance. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

I'm sorry to tell you that your luggage is over the free allowance and there will be a charge for the extra weight. But you can reorganize your baggage or pay the excess weight expense.

[Situation 19]

The passenger is a middle-aged female from Australia travelling with four pieces of luggage. The passenger would like to check-in two pieces of luggage and carry on two pieces. The passenger's two pieces of check-in luggage are 40 kg which is not over-weight. However the passenger's carry-on pieces are 10 kg over-weight. What would you say to the passenger if you were the airline employee?

Madam, your check-in luggage isn't over weight but passenger carry-on baggage just could take one piece. So Madam I need you put some things to your luggage. If you want to try take two pieces. When you get the gate the other staff will off-load your carry-on baggage. So Madam repacks your carry-on baggage please, Thank you.

[Situation 20]

The passengers are an old couple from France. Their flight has been delayed due to technical problems. They've been informed of the delay by airline employees. After they have been waiting for three hours at the airport they were informed that all the passengers will be transported to the airport hotel to stay overnight since it will take another few hours for the flight engineers to solve the problems. The couple is very upset about the arrangement and asks for compensation. What would you say to the passengers if you were the airline employee? The French couple speaks very little English. What strategies would you use in order to communicate with the French passenger?

Dear Mrs.XXX and Mr. XXX. We all are done our best and we prepare the airport hotel let your to take a rest. Due to this flight technical problems couldn't finish at today. This is our fault. Please trust us. When we have new news will contact with your first.

Appendix 9

Table 7.11-1 Group A-HP-before participants' Overall Performance Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total
1	2	2	2	2.3	2.1	2	2.2	2	2	2	2	2	2.2	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.5	2	2	41.3
2	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.3	2	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	46.4
3	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	3	3	3.5	3	2.7	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.7	56.4
4	3.5	3	2.8	3	2.4	3	1.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.5	54.5
5	3	2	2.5	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	3	2.4	2.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	53.7
6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	3	2.5	3	3	2.8	2.5	3	3	2.8	3	2.5	2.5	3	2	2.5	53.1
7	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	3	3	3	2	2.5	3	3	2.5	3	2.5	2	2.4	2.5	2	50.4
8	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	2	2.5	45.5

Appendix 10

Table 7.11-2 Group A-HP-after participants' Overall Performance Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit18	Sit19	Sit.20	Total
1	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.2	2.8	2	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.3	2.4	47.6
2	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.8	3	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.3	2.4	52.9
3	3.5	3.4	3.4	3	3.2	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.6	2.4	3	3.5	2.5	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.4	2.5	3.4	3	66.1
4	4	3.4	3.4	3.6	2.8	3.5	3	3.8	3.5	2.5	3.4	3.8	3	3.4	3	3	3.4	3	2.5	2.5	64.5
5	3.5	3	3	3	3.4	3.5	3.2	2.2	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.4	3	3	2.8	3	3	3	3	3	59.8
6	4	3	3	3	2.8	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	3	3	3.5	2.5	3.3	3.8	2.5	2.5	2.8	3	3.3	62.5
7	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.8	3	2.5	2.6	2.9	3	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.6	2	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.5	56.1
8	2	2.5	2.6	3	3	2.5	3	2	1.5	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	3	2.6	2.6	3.5	2.5	2.5	51.5

Appendix 11

Table 7.11-3 Group A-LP-before participants' Overall Performance Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total
1	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	46.2
2	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	51.5
3	1.5	2	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	3	1	2	2	2	2	2.5	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	42.5
4	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	1	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	1	2.5	2	45
5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	3	2	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	46.5
6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2	3	1	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	49
7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	1.5	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	46.5
8	2	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	47
9	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	41.5
10	1.5	2.3	2	2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	47.3
11	1.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	48.5
12	1.5	2.5	2	2	2	2.5	3	1	1.5	2	2	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2	1.5	2	39.5

Appendix 12

Table 7.11-4 Group A-LP-after participants' Overall Performance (After Placement) Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total
1	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.8	3	2.8	2.5	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.5	2	52.8
2	3	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.5	3.5	3	3	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.7	3	3	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9	57.6
3	2	2.3	2	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.8	2	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3	1.5	2	2.5	45.6
4	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.8	1.8	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.4	2	2.4	2.4	1.5	2	2.4	47
5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.2	3	2.8	3.2	3.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	2.5	3.8	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.7	2	55.7
6	1.8	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.5	3	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.6	3	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.6	51.5
7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.7	2	2.7	2.7	53.7
8	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.8	2.8	1.8	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	49.7
9	3.8	2.5	2.5	2	2.6	2.8	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.3	1.8	2.5	2	49.1
10	3	2.5	2	3	3.8	3.4	3	3	3.5	2	2	2.5	3.4	3	2.8	3	2.8	2.8	3	2.5	56.5
11	1.8	2	2	2	2	2.3	2	1.8	2.3	2	2	2	1.8	2	2.2	2	2	1.8	2	2	40
12	2.7	2.5	2.3	3	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.5	3	2.3	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.8	2	1.5	2.8	2	2	49.1

Appendix 13

Table 7.11-5 High Proficiency Group's Overall Performance Comparison (Before and After Placement)

Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit18	Sit19	Sit.20	Total
1	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.6	0	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	-0.1	0.1	0.4	-0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	6.3
2	0.5	0.5	0	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.2	0	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	0	0	0.2	0.3	0.4	6.2
3	0.5	0.9	0.9	0	0.7	0.8	0.8	0	0.6	-0.3	1	0.5	-0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	8.8
4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5	1.5	0.8	0.5	0	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.9	0.5	0	0.6	0.5	0	0	10
5	0.5	1	0.5	0	0.6	1	0.7	-0.8	0.4	0.3	0.7	-0.6	0	0.5	-0.2	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	6.1
6	1.5	0.5	0.5	1	0.3	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.5	-0.5	0.5	0.8	0	0	-0.2	1	0.8	8.9
7	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.8	0	-0.5	-0.4	0.9	0.5	-0.2	-0.5	0	-0.4	-0.5	0.9	0.2	0.4	0.5	4.3
8	0	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.5	0	6

Appendix 14

Table 7.11-6 Low Proficiency Group's Overall Performance Comparison (Before and After Placement)

Participant: Part. Situation: Sit

Part.	Sit.1	Sit. 2	Sit.3	Sit.4	Sit.5	Sit.6	Sit.7	Sit.8	Sit.9	Sit.10	Sit.11	Sit.12	Sit.13	Sit.14	Sit.15	Sit.16	Sit.17	Sit.18	Sit.19	Sit.20	Total
1	0.3	0.3	0	0.3	0.8	0.5	1.3	1	0.7	0	0	0	0.2	0	1	0	0	0.2	0	0	6.6
2	0.5	0.4	0.2	-0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	0.6	-0.1	-0.2	0.2	0.5	0	0.4	0.4	0.2	-0.1	0.4	6.1
3	0.5	0.3	-0.5	1.8	0.2	0.1	-0.2	1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	-0.3	0.3	0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-1	0	0	3.1
4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0	0	0	-0.2	1.3	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-0.6	1.2	-0.1	1	-0.1	-0.1	0.5	-0.5	0.4	2
5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	1.2	0	0.8	1.7	1.5	0	0	0	0.5	0	0.8	0	0	1	0.2	0	8.5
6	-0.7	0.1	0.1	-0.2	-0.5	0.8	-0.5	2	-0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	-0.5	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.1	2.5
7	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0.2	7.2
8	1	0	0	1	0.8	0.3	-0.2	0	0.5	0	0	0	-0.5	0	0.3	0	0	-0.5	0	0	2.7
9	1.3	0	0	0	0.6	0.3	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	-0.2	0.5	0	7.1
10	1.5	0.2	0	1	1.8	0.9	0	0.5	1	0	-0.5	0	0.9	0	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	8.7
11	0.3	-0.5	-0.5	0	0	-0.2	-1	-0.7	-0.2	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.7	-0.5	-0.3	-0.5	-0.5	-0.7	-0.5	-0.5	-3.5
12	1.2	0	0.3	1	0.8	0.2	-0.3	1.5	1.5	0.3	0.5	0	1	0	0.8	0	-0.5	0.8	0.5	0	7.8