CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0   Introduction

There are so many studies done on how the use of requests varies across culture but studies on individual variability (gender, age and level of education) are still scarce. Apart from gender, there are not many researches done on the level of education. As such, this research hopes to contribute to the field where different groups of students at tertiary level opted for different choices in uttering requests.

Furthermore, within the same culture, the differences can be clearly seen with regards to the way people communicate with each other and in this context, how people utter requests. Requests play an important role in our lives as it is how people survive and live harmoniously in a society. Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the skill as to how this could be used to its very advantage. It is also vital to investigate whether the most crucial of the member of the society, i.e. university students, are aware of the importance of that knowledge.

5.1   Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study is to consider the variation in requesting behaviour among four groups of respondents from different programs and levels; Level 3 BAR and LAW and

Level 4 BAR and LAW. The data for this study comprised of a written Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which was administered to a total of 200 respondents. The DCT consisted of twelve situations grouped into six token sets allowing for all the possible combinations of the variables under study; social distance and dominance to be included. From the respondents' responses to the DCT, only the main request strategy was coded and analysed.

Based on the analysis, the results indicate that there is a difference in the use of the requests strategies between the respondents in the programs. Even though they belong to the same community, sharing the same culture with only a few insignificant differences in the social class with regards to status and family background.

One of the aims of this study is to look at the extent of the differences in choices of request strategies between the respondents in the two programs in uttering request. An interesting discovery has been interpreted and the result has answered all the three research questions formed at the beginning of the study. The students from both programs adopt similar request strategies in interaction in accordance to their level of proficiency.

The observation made based on the results was that between the two levels involved, the lower proficiency level, of both programmes favours the direct strategy as their primary choice followed by the conventionally indirect strategy. This may be due to the interference of their mother tongue. Their lack of language competence has affected the production of their choice of requests. As a result, the respondents tend to use forms of requests that they are familiar with, regardless of the lack of pragmatic appropriateness.

On the other hand, the respondents at the higher levels of both programs, tent to vary their choice of strategy more than the previous groups. The higher levels had used the direct, conventionally indirect and nonconventionally indirect strategies in all of the situations presented in the DCT. This further proves that the higher level of proficiency respondents have enough language competence to enable them to vary their choice of request strategies with pragmatic appropriateness. Thus, it is sufficient to conclude that the higher the level of proficiency, the better the pragmatic competence will be.

In reference to the contexts presented, the LAW students of both levels are more comfortable using the opt out strategy, where they chose not to respond to the scenario presented to them. On the contrary, none of the BAR students of for both levels felt comfortable using this strategy in any of the situations given. This particular revelation is in accordance to what has been enlightened by Asmah Haji Omar (1995) that the Malays tend to be indirect when conveying their desires and intentions. This is resulted by the Malay culture of not wanting to evoke conflict. Therefore, whatever intentions of which they wish to convey would have to be inferred. In the case of the respondents from the BAR program it is obvious that they preserve the strangers dignity by avoiding any conflicts.

Another revelation that was made was that the role of the social distance and dominance do affect the choice of strategy used. As stated earlier, with regards to the respondents from the BAR program, they may feel inclined to spare the stranger's dignity but they have no qualms in insinuating their discomfort of the stranger's presence. In order to insinuate their discomfort, they had chosen to use the nonconventionally indirect strategy to convey their request. The understanding of harmony also encourages the respondents to use this strategy in order to preserve the dignity of both parties and no callous feelings are likely to be evoked.

Observing the overall finding, it can be surmised that between the two programs (BAR and LAW), the respondents from the BAR program observed the notion of politeness more than the respondents from the LAW program. In addition, the assertion of power and social status did not deter the students from the BAR program to divert their choice and in so doing maintain their politeness. However, this is found to be lacking where the respondents of the LAW program are concerned.

5.2   Recommendation

It has been discovered that the respondents from the lower levels of proficiency for both programs selected the direct strategy in the overall situation sets presented in the DCT. In contrast, the respondents from the higher level chose to be less direct in their utterances of request by selecting the conventionally or the nonconventionally indirect strategies. These findings further enhance the theory that as learners' linguistic ability increases so does their pragmatic competence in the second language. Kasper (1997) recommended that in second language teaching, learning opportunities should be provided in order to develop pragmatic competence. In this context, a syllabus should be designed to accommodate the ability in enhancing students' pragmatic competence at tertiary level. Preferably, it should be introduced at the beginning of their enrolment into the matriculation centre. It is also highly recommended that the teaching of English linguistic politeness be included in the curriculum in a broader scope such as pragmatics in discourse with regards to the participants, setting, purpose and the social context.

5.3   Further Research

It has to be borne in mind that conclusions about learners' pragmatic competence on the basis of their elicited performance can be tentative. Further research as to the consideration

of whether differences in gender can be a factor to the different choices made in request should be delved into. A longitudinal study should also be endeavoured to find out about the acquisition and development of pragmatic competence in the second language.

5.4   Conclusion

The findings of this study have profoundly answered the research questions mentioned in the first chapter. Both programs do adopt the same request strategies but in different situations and at different levels. For instance, the respondents of lower levels (L3) of both LAW and BAR program have the tendency to be more direct in their approach of request. The higher levels of both programs (BAR and LAW), however, are more comfortable in using a more indirect strategy even in situations with higher degree of social distance and dominance.

The findings also illustrated that the respondents do vary their choice of strategies according to the situational context. Respondents from the LAW program of both levels chose to opt out or not respond to situations that they are not comfortable and familiar with. The conventionally indirect strategies are mostly used by all of the groups and most favoured by the L4 BAR.

Finally, looking at the aspect of social distance and social dominance, the deduction that can be made in this study, would be that are taken into consideration when the selection of choice in making a request by all groups is made. As can be observed, the penchant for the conventionally indirect strategy in situations with a higher degree of social distance and hearer dominating the speaker is much higher compared to other strategies.

Implications that can be made based on the results retrieved are the lower proficiency levels of both programs (L3 LAW and BAR) have little pragmatic competence. It can be clearly seen in the retrieved data, that the respondents from the LAW and BAR of the L3 did not use the nonconventionally indirect strategy as often as the respondents from the L4 of both LAW and BAR program.

Consequently, the respondents of the L3 of both programs have the tendency to use more direct strategy in the situations presented. This also implies that the respondents lack the pragmatic competence as they are used to the easier and uncomplicated sentence structure.

Thus, as recommended earlier, there is a need in improving students' pragmatic abilities and it should be introduced in the syllabi in order to promote the use of proper request strategies in the students' everyday interaction. It is also recommended that a new set of courses be introduced in the curriculum for students at the tertiary level to improve in the social communication skills. Such syllabus should provide ample exercises, with authentic materials, in order to give students sufficient practices to apply in their daily lives as they embark on their professional world.