CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, we cannot deny the importance of English language as it is used for communication between people from different countries around the world. We can say it is a prominent language which a million people use daily, even though they are not native speakers. Some people whose native language is not English use the language in their daily lives (Quirk. 1985).

English is a means to connect with each other. Native speakers play an important role in world economics, politics and education in other countries. Moreover, Thailand has been quickly growing in terms of sightseeing with the result that a million people experience different cultures and most are native English speakers. As a result, English is a crucial language that different people communicate. Due to the popularity of English world wide, it has become an international language or global language. Crystal (1987) mentions that about 300 million native speakers, 300 million second English speakers and 100 million people in general can speak English. It could be said that English language is important because it is the only one language that truly links the whole world together. Importance of the English is varied but it is influential travel business grown up very rapidly in a short period of time, especially, in the hotel business. English is required for communication and to do business with people in other countries, and to catch up with the advances that are being made in the field of business. In addition, English is used as a means to exchange idea and cultures, and to create good relationships between hotel business

people in different countries. The English language has a pivotal role for hotel staff enabling them to connect with hotel guests. Prachanant (2006) states that English language is necessary for hotel business straightly as a means to communicate, negotiate, and execute transactions with guests. On the other hand, the role of English language is crucial for the hotel business as a means to vital to respond to and greet with the guests, visitors or strangers. Because of the importance of the English language for hotel staff in communicating with their hotel guests, the initial greeting is paramount to a good relationship between staff and guests. Li Wei (2010) mentions that greetings are important as well as frequent in everyday social interactions all over the world. Greeting is an important way for hotel staff to make a good impression to the hotel guests. Countries around the world have different traditions, customs and formal greeting individuals and each other. For example, in Thailand people often greet to each other as "Where are you going?", "Where have you been?" and "What are you doing?". We can see the way of Thai people used is the question sentences. These greeting questions sometimes make foreigners confuse and wonder that why they want to know the other business. In addition, if we consider these sentences there is usual greeting that we use to greet each other. Also, Thai people have already known that what the meaning of the utterance is. In contrast, foreigners often do not understand because they just take a look of phrases or meaning but they do not know deeply about greeting respective in Thai people that transfer their meaning. Ackrapong - Thep (2000) points out that in Thai contexts, people always greet each other "Where have you been" or "Where are you going?" and the addressee may say, "I have been there" or "I'm going there" the speaker and the addressee seem to understand each other how to greet, they do not really want to know about the question asked. On the other hand, the communication will be completed if both

addresser and addressee are Thai. However, if either of the remarks were literally translated, a native-English speaking addressee would be upset because the speech act would be misinterpreted as a request for information instead of phatic communion. Ackrapong - Thep (2000) also indicates that many Americans living in Thailand complain about the way of Thais' greetings to them. If they get the questions like that, they try their best to give some information. The result is they do not have background knowledge about Thai greetings. "It is crucial to recognize that rules for the appropriate conduct of speech vary considerably from one society to another" (Wolfson. 1983: 3). To be successful in cross-cultural communication requires the knowledge of culturally bound rules (Clyne. 1981). However, Wannaruk (1997) mentions that different types of communication have different rules, which also vary across cultures. In the hotel business, the hotel staff (as hosts) should know the cultures of each guest in order to communicate effectively and successfully. Trudgill (1974) has stated that differences of this type between cultures might often lead, in cross-cultural communication, to misunderstanding and even hostility.

In conclusion, the findings of this study could be of great help in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in relation to culture, to get effectively of communication in greetings and replies to greetings between the hotel staff and the hotel guests, they have to know the intention of their interlocutors. On the other hand, studying the speech acts of greeting and replies to greetings in an international context helps one understand the language better and how it is used. Gaining knowledge of greeting and replies to greetings may enhance one's ability to communicate effectively and impressively in a cross-cultural setting.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The present research expected to study by following purposes;

1.2.1) To investigate what are the strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings employed by the hotel staff and the hotel guests in the hotel business;

1.2.2) To study how social status affects strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings in the hotel business.

1.3 Research Questions

The study focuses on the strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings employed by the hotel staff and the hotel guests which their utterances are in the hotels located in tourist attractions in Thailand. More specifically, the study is designed to answer the following two questions:

1.3.1 What are the strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings employed by the hotel staff and the hotel guests?

1.3.2 Is there any difference of the strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings when social status of the hotel staff and the hotel guests are related?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Speech act is an utterance which its purpose is to act as a practical role in communication i.e. language performs communicative acts. It serves as the minimal unit of analysis. Speech acts are conditioned by rules of conduct and interpretation (Searle. 1969). The ability to perform various speech acts is an important part of the development of communicative competence (Kwon. 2003). Since the way language is used in communication can differ considerably across cultures, sometimes following

norms that are culture-specific, language should be described as the appropriate way of speaking as judged by the speech community in which the language is used (Hymes. 1972).

The formal of greeting is unique for each country on the first meeting. The problem of contacting in communication between hosts and visitors will be fine if they are the same country and culture because they can understand each other. In contrast, it can be difficult between different countries (hosts and visitors) because the situation can become confusing and tense.

In terms of the hotel business, the hotel staff who work involved with greeting, may have limited knowledge of the routine of pragmatic strategies for responding to greeting as well as the sociocultural background of the hotel guests. Therefore, lack of knowledge of the target language may result in a communication breakdown. As a result, studying the responses of hotel staff to greeting in an interactional context helps one understand the language better and how it is used.

Moreover, social factors are important to effective communication because the hosts must use the appropriate words with the visitors. Social distance is one of the factors that determine polite behaviours (Leech. 1983; Brown & Levinson. 1987). Different countries also have different rules about social distance. The overcrowded nature of some Asian countries means that they are accustomed to talking to others from a very close distance. Watching a Japanese person talks at a party with a person from the western countries. The Japanese will step in and the westerner will step back. Speeding up is like a dance around the room (Hall. 1966). The host and the visitor like to keep distance from others and there are very specific social rules about how close they can go to others in particular situations. This social distance is also known as body space and comfort zone. Social distance and social status can have a great role

with greetings and replies to greetings so the host must be more careful not to invade personal space.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

1.5.1 The subjects of this study are 40 interlocutors of the hotel staff and the hotel guests who accommodate in the hotels located in the tourist attractions in Thailand.

1.5.2 The social status of the subjects in all 40 interlocutors is divided into 8 patterns as follows;

1.5.2.1 The male hotel staff greets and the male hotel guest replies,

1.5.2.2 The male hotel staff greets and the female hotel guest replies,

1.5.2.3 The female hotel staff greets and male hotel guest replies,

1.5.2.4 the female hotel staff greets and female hotel guest replies,

1.5.2.5 The male hotel guest greets and the male hotel staff replies,

1.5.2.6 The male hotel guest greets and female hotel staff replies,

1.5.2.7 The female hotel guest greets and male hotel staff replies and

1.5.2.8 The female hotel guest greets and the female hotel staff replies.

1.5.3 An attempt will be made to show how usages differ according to situations and the social status between the speaker and the listener.

1.5.4 Since this research is limited not only in terms of the numbers of subjects but also in terms of the instrument. What has been discovered in this study might not be generalizable and applicable to other settings business.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

The present study defines "the hotel staff, the hotel guests, the strategies used in greetings, the strategies used in replies to greeting, speech acts and social status as follows:

1. "Speech acts" refers to the strategies used in greetings and replies to greetings which employed by the hotel staff and hotel guests or the utterance of their interlocutor's intention to process their goals in greeting and reply to greeting.

2. "Greeting strategies" refers to the utterance used in greeting or semantic formulas which all the hotel staff and the hotel guests employed in their conversations. There are four types of this study; the first type is "to greet people" such as hallo, good morning/ afternoon/ evening, etc, the second type is "to meet people" such as hallo, how are you?, (I'm fine, thank you) how are you?, I'm very well, thank you, and how are you? etc, the last third type is "to introduce people and to be introduced" such as this is….., I'd like you to meet.., May I introduce you to…., respond: hallo, how do you do?, How do you do, and etc. These greeting are strategies based on greeting anatomy from the theory of Van Ek and Alesander (1996). The last type is "to request for information" such as "Did you just get home?" "Where are you going?", etc. This last greeting strategies based on the theory from Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

3. "Replies to greeting strategies" refers to the utterance used in replies to greetings or semantic formulas which all the hotel staff and the hotel guests employed in their conversations. There are three types of this study; the first is "the word that cannot be analyzed into meaningful subparts" such as, "hi", "hello", etc.", the second is "The Identifiable subparts", for example, "good morning", "good-bye", "see you, etc.", the third is "The utterances at special occasions" such as words of

congratulation or condolence. These reply strategies are based on replies to greetings strategies anatomy from the theory of Suzuki (1968).

4. "Hotel business" means the standard hotels around Thailand which offer hospitality to guests. The standard hotels refer to the accommodation offering rooms, services, facilities and furnishings at an internationally acceptable standard which will satisfy guests (Adamson. 1989).

5. "The hotel staff" refers to the people who are working in the position of front desk or receptionist in the hotels located in Thailand.

6. "The hotel guests" refers to the visitor, guest, customer who is checking in the hotel, asking for information or staying in the hotel sites in Thailand.

7. "Social status" refers to the influences on individual behavior attributable to the social values and/or behavior of the groups to which an individual belongs or aspires to belong. In this study, social status refers to gender of both the hotel staff and the hotel guests.

1.7 An Overview of the Chapter

This chapter proposes the background of the study. There is a description of purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms. In order to achieve the purposes of the study and to answer the research questions, the research first reviews related literature and previous studies. The literature will be in the next chapter. These can be seen in chapter 2 which includes a literature review on the language of hospitality, speech acts, speech acts of greeting and replies to greeting, politeness theory, factors affecting the speech acts production, previous studies related to the present investigation. In Chapter 3 the research methodology will be presented. It will

discuss the main research methods including, population and participants, method of data collection, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research findings for the present study by timetable of greeting and replies to greetings strategies used in this study. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings of the present study in response to the research questions, including discussions of the research findings and recommendations for further studies.

1.8 Summary of the Chapter

In summary, this chapter presents the background of the study, purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study and definitions of key terms. The next chapter reviews the related literature on the language of hospitality, speech acts, speech acts of greeting and replies to greeting, politeness theory, factors affecting the speech acts production, previous studies related to the present investigation.