

การศึกษาวัฒนธรรมข้ามวัฒนธรรมในธุรกิจโรงแรม

Cross-cultural Study on Speech Acts in the Hotel Business

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บทคัดย่อ

วัฒนธรรมเกิดจากการใช้ภาษาในสถานการณ์ต่างๆ พนักงานโรงแรมจึงจำเป็นต้องอย่างยิ่งในการทำความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมและวัฒนธรรมของแขกที่เข้ามาพักในโรงแรม ทั้งนี้เพื่อให้เกิดความประทับใจและเกิดประสิทธิผลในการสื่อสารวัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาในครั้งนี้เพื่อศึกษาประเภท และกลวิธีของวัฒนธรรมที่เกิดขึ้นระหว่างแขกที่เข้าพักในโรงแรม และพนักงานโรงแรม กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ คือ ผู้ใช้บริการโรงแรมและพนักงานโรงแรม จำนวน 60 คู่สนทนา ซึ่งได้มาโดยวิธีการเลือกแบบเจาะจง โดยเก็บบันทึกจากการสนทนาโต้ตอบของคู่สนทนา ข้อมูลที่ได้นำมาถอดความและเข้ารหัสตามประเภทของวัฒนธรรมตามทฤษฎีของออสติน (1962) และเซอร์ล (1969) หลังจากนั้นนำข้อมูลมาวิเคราะห์โดยใช้สถิติ ค่าความถี่ และร้อยละ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ผู้ใช้บริการโรงแรมและพนักงานโรงแรม ใช้วัฒนธรรม จำนวน 4 ประเภท ได้แก่ การกล่าวความจริง การกล่าวขี้หน้า การกล่าวแสดงออก และการกล่าวผูกพัน และใช้กลวิธี จำนวน 30 กลวิธี โดยกลวิธีที่ใช้มากที่สุดคือ การถาม การตอบ และการแนะนำ ตามลำดับ

ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้มีประโยชน์ต่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในอุตสาหกรรมบริการ และสามารถนำไปใช้เป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาหลักสูตรอบรมภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับบุคคลที่สนใจเกี่ยวกับธุรกิจโรงแรม

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ABSTRACT

Speech acts perform crucial functions in the hotel business. It is essential for the staff in the hotel business to understand the speech acts and the cultures of most hotel guests in order to communicate impressively and effectively. The purposes of this study were to examine the speech act types and to investigate the strategies used by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business. The participants were 60 interlocutors who were purposively selected. The method of data collection was recording of naturally occurring take-in-interaction. The obtained data were coded based on the speech act theory based on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The data were then analyzed by means of frequency and percentage.

It was found that the hotel guests and the hotel staff used four speech act types: assertives, directives, expressives, and commissives, with 30 strategies. The three most frequently used strategies were asking, answering, and informing, respectively.

The results of the study would be beneficial to the teaching and learning in the hospitality industry and would also be used as guidelines for designing English courses for those who teach or those interested in English for hotel business.

Keywords : Cross-cultural study, Speech acts, Strategy, Hotel business

Background of the Study

English is regarded as the most important language for communication worldwide. Also, it is a better channel in expressing thoughts and cultures and in making good relationships among people in different countries, so, English is used as a way to understand and transfer ideas among people around the world. Thai people are realizing the importance of English language in their daily life and in business works, especially in the tourism industry, such as travel agencies and hotel business. Since the hotel business is related to tourism, then its roles in earning incomes and creating job opportunities could be increased. Consequently, the hotel staff who directly deal with guests should improve their English in terms of the language of hospitality, because the hotel's purpose is serving people who are travelers and who need the best hospitality provided by hotel staff. In the hotel business, the hotel staff should understand the cultures of most hotel guests in order to communicate impressively and effectively. They should produce social and cultural language and be fully aware of the appropriateness of speech acts in the target language as well. However, different types of communication are varied across cultures and might lead to misunderstandings. (Searle. 1969 ; Trudgill. 1974 ; Wannaruk. 1997). As a result, it is essential for the hotel staff to understand the speech acts and strategies since speech acts are performed in real situations of the language used and strategies are the performances of



certain kinds of acts or functions. As mentioned above, speech acts perform crucial functions in the hotel business (Prachanant. 2006).

As mentioned above, the researcher is interested in knowing how speech acts occur between the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business, what types and how frequently are speech acts and strategies used. To the researcher's knowledge, few studies of speech acts in natural situations have been conducted in such situation. Most pay attention to situation sets and investigate the speech acts by using discourse completion tasks (DCT), role plays, etc. Hence, this study tries to give some understanding about types that hotel guests communicate to hotel staff when they need some help or information in real situations. In particular, the results of the study would be beneficial to the teaching and learning in the hospitality industry and can also be used as guidelines for designing English courses for those who teach or those interested in English for hotel business. Importantly, it may be useful for future research in the field of speech acts.

Purposes of the Study

1. To examine the speech act types produced by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business.
2. To investigate the strategies used by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business.

Research Questions

1. What are the speech acts types produced by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business?
2. What are the strategies used by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business?

Speech Acts

People perform speech actions through utterances which hold information for confirming and achieving the action. This is called speech acts (Allan, 1994; Yule. 2000). The terms of speech acts was invented by philosopher Austin (1962) in "How to Do Thing with Words" and further developed by Searle (1969). They have identified speech acts as a valid topic in pragmatics which presented the thought into linguistics that a human acts out while speaking; In short, it re-introduced thought in the same means. As proposed by Austin and Searle, when speakers say something, they do something at the same time. Speech acts can be divided into three kinds beyond the act of 'utterance' itself; locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act is the act of saying something meaningful with a grammatical structure. Illocutionary act is the act performed in saying the locution and intended by speaker, such as informing, asking, answering, and undertaking. Perlocutionary act is the consequential effects of an utterance on the hearer, or what is achieved by saying something. However, Austin (1962) interests in illocutionary act that might come across the "force" of a statement and transfer its performativity nature, so he proposes the main speech act types have five illocutionary acts. A clearer category of speech act types of Austin's notion were later developed by Searle (1969).

The five illocutionary acts are explained as follows:

1. Assertives are speech acts that tell people how things are. This type commits both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to the truth of the expressed situation, or a belief situation, such as answering, confirming, announcing, claiming, conjecturing, denying, describing, identifying, informing, insisting, and stating. The following examples are the assertives type:

- You have to buy the password to connect to Wi-Fi. (Answering)
- Confirm your oil massage at 3 p.m. tomorrow, sir. (Confirming)
- We have to charge you 600 baht for the late check-out. (Informing)

2. Directives are speech acts that attempt both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to take a particular action or do things, such as advising, asking, praying, requesting, suggesting, interrupting, and wishing. The following examples are the directives type:

- What time does the spa close? (Asking)
- Can I get a higher floor? (Requesting)
- Excuse me! (Interrupting)

3. Commissives are speech acts that commit both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to some future intended situations, such as inviting, offering, promising, undertaking, warranting, and threatening. The following examples are the commissives type:

- May I help you? (Offering)
- This way please. (Inviting)

4. Expressives are speech acts that express both the hotel guests and the hotel staff's attitudes and emotions towards a situation, such as accepting, apologizing, appreciating, complaining, criticizing, greeting, leave taking, regretting, thanking, and welcoming. The following examples are the expressives type :

- Okay. / That's fine. (Accepting)
- Hello. / Good morning (Greeting)
- Thank you. / Thanks a lot. (Thanking)

5. Declaratives are speech acts that bring both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to changes of external status, condition of a situation through utterances, such as appointing, christening, objecting, and pronouncing. The following examples are the declaratives type.

- I name this ship. (Christening)
- I appoint you a chairman. (Appointing)

In conclusion, an illocutionary act is adopted as basic understanding which classifies uses of language, such as to explain to people how things are, to try to get people to do things, to confide in people to doing things, to show feelings and attitudes and to bring about changes through utterances.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research has been conducted on the cross-cultural study on speech acts in the hotel business



with 60 token speech acts produced by interlocutors between the hotel guests and the hotel staff who were selected by purposive sampling technique. Since the study requires the naturally occurring data, this method may result in the time constraint of data collection and data analysis. The researcher transcribed the tape recordings and coded for the classification of illocutionary acts based on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Then, the coding was double-checked by three English experienced raters. Therefore, the data reported in this study are based on the five illocutionary acts only. Besides, this research requires an in-depth understanding of speech act types, the grammatical errors occurred are ignored.

Research Design

In order to complete the purpose, this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research designs for analyzing the collected data. The qualitative design was used according to the records of structured and unstructured interaction. The quantitative design was also adopted according to the coding system and frequency used. Therefore, mixed research designs were the most appropriate for the objectives of this study.

Population and Participants

The population of the study consisted of the foreign tourists who visited the attractions in Thailand and stayed in the hotels at least two nights, and the Thai hotel staff who worked in the hotels located in the famous tourist attractions in three parts of Thailand: center, east, and south, during the period of February - June 2012.

The participants of this study were 60 interlocutors between the foreign hotel guests and the Thai hotel staff who produced speech act types for coding and analyzing. There were 120 participants selected by purposive sampling technique based on gender and age.

Method of Data Collection

Since the present investigation required the naturally occurring data, the researcher decided to use the recording of naturally occurring take-in-interaction in collecting the data as Cohen (1996) presented that the data unconsciously show what the speakers say rather than what they would say. They were reacting to natural situations rather than to contrived and possibly unfamiliar situations. Also, Prachanant (2006) agreed that field observation and recording of naturally occurring take-in-interaction were certainly the best methods in collecting the data in pragmatics field.

Data Collection

The data were collected at the hotel business located in the famous tourist attractions in three parts of Thailand: center, east, and south, during the period of February - June 2012, mostly at the front desk. The data were recorded while the conversation occurred and then analyzed. The researcher collected some data by herself and some data were from the hotel staff.



Data Analysis

This part begins with the coding of speech act types produced by the hotel guests and the hotel staff. Then, the strategies used in the study are categorized. The last section displays the statistical analysis.

1. Coding

The data collected were analyzed by using ‘axial coding’ which is the process of relating codes such as categories and properties to each other (Borgatti. 2012). Here, the main discourse components; i.e. words, phrases, clauses, and/or sentences were coded into the relevant categories for speech acts theory based on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). To confirm that the coding of data was correct, intercoder reliability measures were performed. The three English experts work independently and record all of the strategies in each type of speech acts according to the initial coding completed by the researcher. After the coding was completed, the researcher tabulated, quantified and compared the main discourse components among each type. The frequency was chosen as the primary endpoint of this study.

2. Categorization

Based on the classification of speech act types of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the five speech act types which focus on illocutionary acts employed in the present study were categorized as follows:

2.1 Assertives are those kinds of speech acts that tell to people how things are. This type commits both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to the truth of the expressed situation or a belief situation, such as answering, confirming, informing, denying, announcing, claiming, describing, identifying, and conjecturing.

2.2 Directives are those kinds of speech acts that attempt both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to take a particular action or do things, such as advising, asking, praying, requesting, suggesting, interrupting, and wishing.

2.3 Commissives are those kinds of speech acts that commit both the hotel guests and the hotel staff to some future intended situation, such as inviting, offering, promising, and undertaking.

2.4 Expressives are those kinds of speech acts that express both the hotel guests and the hotel staff’s attitudes and emotions towards a situation, such as accepting, apologizing, appreciating, complaining, criticizing, greeting, leave taking, regretting, thanking, and welcoming.

2.5 Declaratives are those kinds of speech acts that bring both the hotel guests and the hotel staff about changes of the external status, condition of an object or situation through the utterance, such as appointing, christening, objecting, and pronouncing.

3. Statistical Procedures

The statistical analyses were carried out by using SPSS for WINDOW packages. The descriptive statistics defined as frequency and percentage were applied for analyzing the numerical distribution of speech acts type and speech act strategies.



Findings

This study was focused on two main points: 1) to examine the speech act types; and 2) to investigate the strategies produced by the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business.

1. Speech Act Types Used in the Hotel Business

The frequency and percentage of speech act types used in the hotel business based on the classification of speech acts of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) are shown in Table 1 below. The speech act types are listed in descending order as reported from those most frequently used to the least used based on the total frequency counting of both groups of participants.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Speech Act Types Used in the Hotel Business

Speech Act Types	Frequency	Percentage
1. Assertives	248	33.79
2. Directives	234	31.88
3. Expressives	219	29.84
4. Commissives	33	4.50
5. Declaratives	0	0.00
Total	734	100.00

As shown in Table 1, it indicates that there were 4 types of speech act used 734 times. The most frequently speech act types used in the hotel business was assertives ($f = 284$, 33.79%), followed by directives ($f = 234$, 31.88%), expressives ($f = 219$, 29.84%), and commissives ($f = 33$, 4.50%), respectively. However, the finding shows that declaratives was not found.

2. Speech Act Strategies Used in the Hotel Business

When consider to each strategy, the finding was shown in Table 2 below. The strategies are listed in descending order as reported from those most frequently used to the least used based on the total frequency counting of both groups of participants and then combine all strategies used.

Types	Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Assertives	Answering	107	14.58
	Confirming	28	3.81
	Informing	93	12.67
	Denying	6	0.82
	Announcing	3	0.41
	Claiming	2	0.27
	Describing	3	0.41
	Identifying	5	0.68
	Conjecturing	1	0.14
	Directives	Requesting	54
Asking		143	19.48
Wishing		14	1.91
Praying		1	0.14
Interrupting		16	2.18
Suggesting		5	0.68
Advising		1	0.14
Commissives		Offering	21
	Inviting	5	0.68
	Promising	3	0.41
	Undertaking	4	0.54
Expressives	Greeting	23	3.13
	Thanking	56	7.63
	Welcoming	15	2.04
	Accepting	63	8.58
	Appreciating	19	2.59
	Leave taking	23	3.13
	Regretting	7	0.95
	Apologizing	6	0.82
	Complaining	5	0.68
	Criticizing	2	0.27
	Total	734	100.00

Table 2 shows the overall frequency and percentage of speech acts and strategies used in the hotel business. It revealed that there were 30 strategies used 734 times. As a whole, the finding reported that the most frequently used strategy was asking ($f= 143, 19.48\%$), followed by answering ($f = 107, 14.58\%$) and informing ($f = 93, 12.67\%$), respectively. On the other hand, the three least strategies used at the same frequencies ($f = 1, 0.14\%$) were conjecturing, praying, and advising.

However, when consider to each type of speech acts, the findings are as follows:

1) The most frequently used strategy of assertives was answering ($f = 107, 14.58\%$), followed by informing ($f = 93, 12.67\%$) and confirming ($f= 28, 3.81\%$).



2) The most frequently used strategy of directives was asking ($f = 143, 19.48\%$), followed by requesting ($f = 54, 7.36\%$) and interrupting ($f = 16, 2.18\%$).

3) The most frequently used strategy of commissives was offering ($f = 21, 2.86\%$), followed by inviting ($f = 5, 0.68\%$) and undertaking ($f = 4, 0.54\%$).

4) The most frequently used strategy of expressives was accepting ($f = 63, 8.58\%$), followed by thanking ($f = 56, 7.63\%$), and the same frequencies used, such as greeting and leave taking ($f=23, 3.13\%$).

The following examples are the six most strategies used in this present study.

1) The examples of the asking are as follows: “Where is the spa?”, “Do you have any medicines?” and “For what’s time sir?”.

2) The examples of the answering are as follows: “The fitness is open, sir.”, “It’s opposite the lift over there.” and “I’m just waiting for my friend.” (FHG36).

3) The examples of the informing are as follows: “Your room is 915, on the ninth floor.”, “You can wait at the lobby.” and “If you need to iron you can contact the laundry.”.

4) The examples of the accepting are as follows: “Correct.”, “No problem.” and “That’s fine.”.

5) The examples of the thanking are as follows: “Thank you.”, “Thanks a lot.” and “Thank you for staying with us.”.

6) The examples of the requesting are as follows: “May I have 1,000 baht for key deposit.”, “I want to check out, please.” and “May I have the key?”.

Discussion and conclusion

1. Speech Act Types Used In the Hotel Business

The findings reveal that four speech act types were found in this study. The most frequently used speech acts type was assertives, followed by directives, expressives, and commissives, respectively. This finding is consistent with Bhodhirangsiyakorn (2010) who found that expositives or assertives was the most frequently speech acts used in the hotel dining business advertisements in Bangkok Post newspapers issued. It is possible to argue here that assertives was similar to directives in using. Also, they seem to play integral roles since assertives describe how things are while directives attempt the interlocutors to take a particular action or do things, e.g. the hotel guests usually ask for information and the hotel staff always answer and inform them of any information, so these clarify the communications. Also, expressives are used since the hotel guests and the hotel staff often express their feeling, e.g. accepting, thanking and greeting. Commissives, however, commit especially the hotel staff to some future action, e.g. offering and promising, so they are sometimes using. In summary, assertives, directives and expressives are generally used in the field of the hospitality industry. On the other hand, the result shows that declaratives was not used in the field of the hospitality industry, because it could change the external condition of the situations such as appointing and objecting.

2. Strategies Used in the Hotel Business



The frequencies of the strategies used were 734 utterances. With regard to the total number of strategies used, the hotel guests and the hotel staff produced 30 strategies. The most frequently used strategy was asking, followed by answering, informing, accepting, thanking and requesting. This finding is consistent with Dechabun (2008) who disclosed that requesting and thanking were the most frequently used unit in the hospitality services area. This is also supported by Laowtrakul (2006) and Sarabanchong (2005) who discovered that asking and answering occurred in communicative situation. These could explain that asking, answering, thanking and requesting are performed when the hotel guests and the hotel staff meet. The guests usually ask for the hotel facilities while the staff usually answer questions related to hotel information from their guests. Also, the guests and the staff always express their thankfulness when their requests were done. Thanking is the outstanding strategy in Thai society in order to show politeness as well. To summarize, it is likely that in the hospitality industry, especially the hotel business, the communicative processing usually involves with asking for information or things, answering the question, and informing information. Besides, it is possible to put more interesting strategies, such as accepting, thanking, requesting, confirming, greeting and offering.

Pedagogical Implications

1. The finding of this study showed that the most frequently occurred of speech act types were assertives and directives while the most frequently occurred of strategies were asking, answering, and informing. As a result of this, in teaching and learning speech acts, the teacher should pay attention to these types as well as strategies.

2. Since the finding found that some hotel staff used many short fragments statements, because they might not have sufficient English competence. In this way, the teacher should give students opportunities to attend special English courses such English for hospitality works for practicing in the new environment of professional practice.

3. In this study, the languages and cultures have close relationship. Consequently, the foreign language teacher, especially English, should have not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural knowledge. The teacher should let students understand how structures are used in real life interaction, especially in the intercultural speech acts.

Suggestions for Further Research

In order to gain a better insight into the speech acts use, the suggestions for further research are as follows:

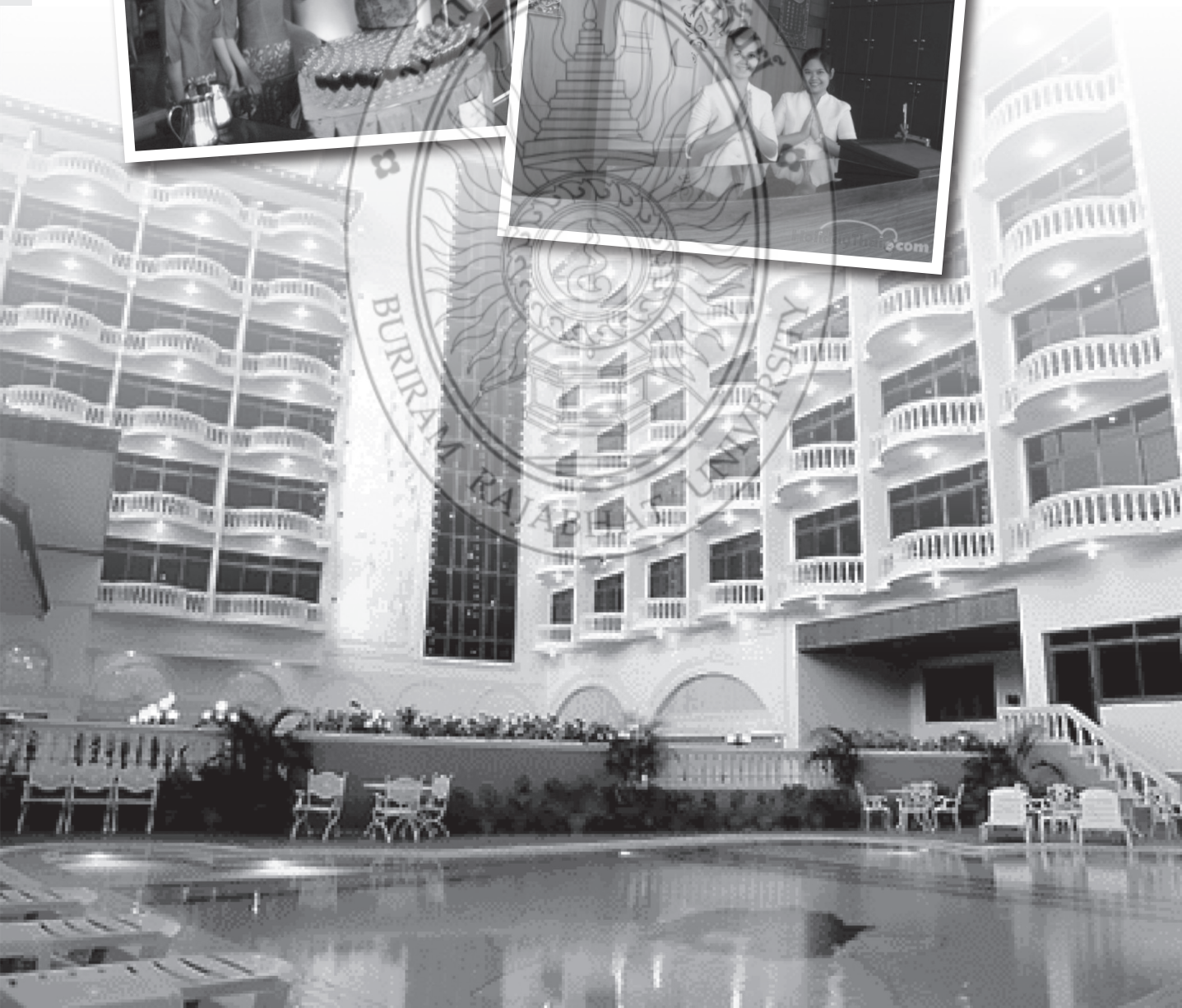
1. This research is limited not only in terms of the numbers of participants, but also in terms of the instrument. Future researchers should add more participants and should include other measurements, such as the written DCTs, role-plays and self-reports to explore the learner's pragmatic knowledge.

2. This study was conducted with the hotel guests and the hotel staff in the hotel business only



a few locations in Thailand. Thus the findings probably cannot generalize to other hospitality service areas. Further studies can be carried out in other parts of country, and other hospitality services, such as tourist agencies, restaurants, and airline services.

3. Further studies should investigate and compare the similarities or differences of speech acts produced between the hotel guests and the hotel staff in terms of gender, age, and educational background.





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