The University of San Francisco

USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

Master's Theses

Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects

Spring 5-18-2018

An Interlanguage Pragmatic View: The Influence of Vietnamese Native Language and Culture on Their L2 Production and Comprehension

Tram Vo
vomaitram@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.usfca.edu/thes

⊙ Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, and the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Recommended Citation

University of San Francisco

An Interlanguage Pragmatic View:
The Influence of Vietnamese Native Language and
Culture on Their L2 Production and Comprehension

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Tram Mai Vo
May 2018

An Interlanguage Pragmatic View:
The Influence of Vietnamese Native Language and Culture
on Their L2 Production and Comprehension

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Tram Vo

May 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

_____   May 5, 2018
Instructor / Chairperson   Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my great appreciation to my family who constantly provide me with spiritual and financial support throughout my years of study. Without their unfailing encouragement, I would not have been able to pursue this lifelong learning opportunity and the achievement of this master degree would not have been possible.

I am also particularly grateful to Professor Kenneth Van Bik, my research supervisor, who gave me his utmost support, valuable instruction and constructive critiques during the development and completion of this thesis. My special thanks are also extended to Professor Sedique Popal for giving me his profound knowledge about second language acquisition, which set inspiration for me to pursue this teaching career path.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my classmates who have been my companions on this lengthy journey. Their presence has brought a myriad of joy and life experience that I could not obtain just through academic work.

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores language performance of Vietnamese English learners from an interlanguage (IL) pragmatic perspective. Pragmatic competence has been set alongside with linguistic competence to the contribution of successful intercultural communication. It is clear that pragmatic knowledge of the L1 has influenced the production of learners' IL and L2. This thesis uses comparative approach in analyzing language production of native speakers of English and native speakers of Vietnamese, and comparing it with the IL produced by Vietnamese learners to examine the differences in pragmatic performance among the three groups. These data are also analyzed quantitatively from cultural viewpoints of the mother tongue and the target language. The paper then explains some internal and external factors resulting in negative pragmatic transfer. Finally, it provides some pedagogical recommendations for teachers to help Vietnamese learners improve their competence in L2 sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. The methods presented here stress on the important role of language educators and instructors in terms of building cross-cultural awareness as well as pragmatic competence in the target language in addition to teaching grammatical structures.

ABBREVIATIONS

NSs	Native speakers
IL	Interlanguage
ILP	Interlanguage pragmatics
L1	First language
L2	Second language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
SLA	Second language acquisition
VNS	Vietnamese native speakers
ANS	American native speakers
VLE	Vietnamese learners of English
VLAE	Vietnamese learners of Australian English
AENS	Australian English native speakers
NSE	Native speakers of English

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.Statement of the problem

While the knowledge of linguistic structures of a language is crucial in communicative competence, it is by no means the only factor contributing to a successful verbal interaction. That is to say, to be able to carry out and accomplish the objective of a conversation, besides linguistic knowledge, an individual has to understand the interlocutor's culture and behavior, specifically, what the implicature of an utterance might be. Misinterpretation usually occurs in cross-cultural interactions. The significance of pragmatic competence is illustrated in Thomas' assertion (as cited in Ho, 2002) that if a lack of linguistic knowledge can cause unintentional mistakes, which is typically forgivable in intercultural communication, a subtlety of pragmatic failure might make speakers appear to be aberrant or even arrogant. Simply put, it is not what one says, but how and when one should say it are decisive factors of a favorable conversation. And that is why we have pragmatic competence, the ability to communicate and decode effectively the intended meanings of an utterance.

In contrast to various aspects of English grammatical structures which are widely taught in public institutions in Vietnam, the subject of pragmatic competence is usually overlooked or even neglected. Even though Vietnamese students are proficient in remembering and applying the grammar rules, their inadequate pragmatic knowledge hinders them from carrying out a smooth conversation with native speakers of English. Most pragmatic failure is drawn from inappropriate applications of their previous knowledge of their own culture and values, known as negative pragmatic transfer, and an

unawareness of the L2's norms. When English native speakers are conversing with a Vietnamese in English, they usually feel something is wrong in their interlocutor's utterances because they do not sound natural, or English-like. The purpose of this thesis is to point out some noticeable differences in L2 production made by Vietnamese learners of English that are deviated from L2 native speakers as a result of negative pragmatic transfer, though positive transfer will be briefly discussed. The thesis is based on many contrastive research and studies on the L1 baseline data from Vietnamese native speakers, the interlanguage (IL) data from Vietnamese learners of English, and the target language baseline data from English native speakers (Takahashi, 1995). It will also provide plausible explanations for their pragmatic failure. The paper will hopefully shed light on the significance of teaching cross-cultural knowledge as well as pragmatic competence in language classroom, which has been left out for a long time in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum in Vietnam. As Thomas (as cited in Franch, 1998) points out, "pragmatic failure ... often passes unchecked by the teacher or, worse, it is attributed to some other cause, such as rudeness, and the student is criticized accordingly".

1.2.Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is twofold. First, to garner an adequate number of previous studies relating to pragmatic transfer by Vietnamese learners of English so as to give more in-depth analyses of their IL performance. Specifically, speech acts, politeness and terms of address are the focus points. In that sense, this thesis is rather a compilation of some notable differences in L2 production by Vietnamese learners from native speakers of English. In order to understand why they produce the target language in

certain manner, some primary aspects of Vietnamese culture and language are studied to uncover to what extent they impact the L2 production and comprehension. The project also provides readers with greater elaboration on Vietnamese culture compared to previous studies on pragmatic transfer conducted by Vietnamese scholars. Ultimately, the researcher wants to raise awareness for English native teachers as well as Vietnamese English educators of some considerable affects of Vietnamese pragmatics on their IL and L2 production. Then this thesis stresses on a concern for pragmatic competence among language learners rather than the linguistic part per se.

1.3. Research Questions

At the end of the thesis, this study aims to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the core perception that underlies the behaviors and communicative style of Vietnamese people, in general, and Vietnamese learners of English, in particular?

2. To what extent does Vietnamese pragmatic knowledge influence the L2 production of the learners?

3. How does the learners' interlanguage differ from native speakers of English in terms of pragmatics?

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This thesis is based on two primary concepts of pragmatics: speech act theory and politeness theory.

1.4.1. Speech Acts theory

Speech acts are "actions that carried out through language" (Finegan, 2004). Through everyday utterances, we can refuse an invitation, express an apology or gratitude, correct somebody when we think they are wrong, or compliment a kind act. People use their language to perform three main kinds of acts: locution, illocution, and perlocution. Locution refers to the saying, or the utterance per se, whose interpretation is based on its grammatical form. Illocution means the intention of the speaker. A locution can carry many illocutionary acts, and vice versa, an illocution can be conveyed through many locutions. Illocutions often require hearers to take further actions (Wardhaugh, 1998, 283), defined as perlocution. For example, a locution *I am cold* can carry its illocutionary force *Please close the door* or *Please adjust the thermostat setting*, therefore causing the listener's act of closing the door. In this case, we can say that the speaker has successfully achieved her perlocutionary force (Wardhaugh, 1998, 283-284).

1.4.2. Politeness Theory

Politeness is ruled by social cultural norms of a particular area or country, which "prescribe a certain behavior, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context" (Fraser, 1990). A manner is considered to be polite when it agrees with those norms; conversely, impoliteness occurs when the action conflicts with the norms (Fraser, 1990). The concept of politeness is strongly related to the theory of face which Brown and Levinson (1987) identify as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself". The authors define two aspects of *face*: positive face and negative face. Positive face is the concept of wanting to be recognized by the others, while negative face is the desire in which "one's action is not impeded" by others.

Brown and Levinson assert that in individualist cultures, "many speech acts are considered face-threatening acts" (Kachru & Smith, 2008) because it contradicts the addressee's "face wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). An act is called negative face-threatening speech act when it seems to restraint the hearer's "choice of action" (Kachru & Smith, 2008) such as requests, suggestions, reminding and threats, as the utterance *If I were you, I would stop thinking about that issue.* Positive face-threatening acts are those that threaten positive face of the hearer by expressing an ignorance of the emotion and desire of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987) such as expressions of disapproval, criticism, and inappropriate use of address terms. For instance, the utterance *I think you have put on some weight* might hurt the positive face want of the addressee because it can be a taboo topic that he or she does not wish to hear (Kachru & Smith, 2008).

2.2.5.1. Positive politeness

Positive politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is "approach-based, 'anoints' the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, S wants H's wants". That is, speakers using positive politeness strategies tend to approach the problem by indicating some common aspects with the hearers. Positive politeness is used to enhance solidarity and rapport among individuals through the employment of compliments, casual language use, and an emphasis on friendship (Wardhaugh, 1998).

2.2.5.2. Negative politeness

Negative politeness is "avoidance-based", explained as "oriented mainly toward partially redressing H's negative face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Interactants employing negative politeness are aware of the hearer's "territory and self-

determination", thus show respect for the negative face of the hearer by not intruding on his or her willingness of taking an action. Strategies of negative politeness include, but not limited to, the use of formal language, deference, apologies, and indirectness (Wardhaugh, 1998).

1.5.Methodology

Two research approaches are employed for this study: comparative approach and qualitative approach. First, the researcher identifies the most noticeable aspects of pragmatics that represent sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfers of Vietnamese learners, which are speech acts realization strategies, politeness perception and the use of address terms. Second, various articles on Vietnamese perception of speech acts in their language and the target language are gathered to exemplify the researcher's viewpoints. In particular, at some points, data of the same speech acts produced by Vietnamese native speakers in Vietnamese and in English are compared to investigate whether or not their L1 culture and language influence the linguistic production in the L2. At another point, some articles in relation to pragmatic transfer are collected and analyzed qualitatively from the cultural and linguistic perspectives of Vietnamese learners.

1.6.Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study are numerous. First, not all aspects of pragmatics are mentioned in the study. That means, only a small number of case studies of pragmatic transfer by Vietnamese English learners are brought into consideration in this paper. Moreover, it is important to note that in order to reduce the complication of the research, other nonverbal aspects of pragmatics such as intonation and nonverbal behaviors are not

taken into account, although they are crucial in the interpretation of utterances. Lastly, the objectivity of the analyses of all data might be affected by the researcher's viewpoints who is a Vietnamese native speaker.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The essence of the study lies on an attempt to provide deeper and thorough understandings about pragmatic transfer in the case of Vietnamese learners. It presents Vietnamese and English educators with brief yet core knowledge of how the Vietnamese perceive the surrounding environment in terms of social behaviors and context, which builds grounds for their production and comprehension in the foreign language. Furthermore, it also raises a concern for cross-cultural teaching in language classrooms in Vietnam, where the teaching of pragmatic competence is still lacking. Finally, the study tries to show that a comparative approach in cultural aspects of the first and target languages is essential for students in the perception of politeness of the target language.

1.8. Definition of Terms

Apologies: a face-saving act that the speaker offers to the hearer to admit the responsibility for conducting some behaviors that may harm the hearer's benefits (Ellis, 2008, 172-186).

Communicative competence: the ability to produce and comprehend a language successfully in social contexts. Communicative competence includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (R.L.Trask, 2005, 28).

Complaints: utterances that the speaker uses to express disapproval or unpleasant feelings towards a past or ongoing action caused by the hearer (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991, 154-165).

Compliments: a type of speech act that speaker employs to express politeness and interest in the hearer (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991, 154-165).

Criticisms: the act of giving judgement or opinions about the quality of something (Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

Cross-cultural: associated with two or more different cultures.

Curriculum: all the courses designed for a particular subject (Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

EFL: the teaching of English to speakers of other languages who live in a country where English is not a main language (Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

Grammar: the rules of how words and sentences are formed in a certain language (R.L.Trask, 2005, 73).

Imperative: a type of sentence used to give order or direct request to do something (Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

Intonation: variation in the pitch of voice in spoken language (R.L.Trask, 2005, 88)

Kinship terms: a list of words used to refer to relatives. Each language has a distinct system of kinship terms (R.L.Trask, 2005, 90).

Modality: a linguistic system used to express the speaker's attitude to a proposition such as obligation, permission, prohibition, etc. In English, modality is expressed through the use of model verbs (can, could, may, might, will, would, should, shall, must, etc.) and

lexical means (likely, probably, possibly, have to, etc.) (R.L.Trask, 2005, 125; Cruse, 2006, 109-110).

Modifier: a linguistic element that is attached to a primary element in order to provide more information about that element (R.L.Trask, 2005, 126). A modifier can be a single word, a phrase, or a dependent clause. For example, in the noun phrase *a beautiful skirt,* the modifier *beautiful* gives additional information about the quality of the skirt.

Qualitative approach: a type of research methods in applied linguistics used to explain certain social behaviors. Data can be varied from description of behaviors or events to narratives and visual record (Holliday, 2015, 49-60).

Requests: a kind of speech acts used to ask the hearer to (not) perform an act according to the speaker's interests (Ellis, 2008, 172-186).

Terms of address: a system of linguistic means used by a certain society to address someone. A term of address can be a word (Professor), a phrase (your Highness), name (Paul), or title (Ms.) (Nordquist, 2017).

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

Pragmatic transfer is an interdisciplinary field that involves the investigation of pragmatic knowledge and interlanguage of language learners. The literature will first give brief explanation of each area, then follow with a review of related studies. In particular, research on the case of speech acts and politeness in different languages will be examined. Studies on pragmatic transfer by Vietnamese learners are also subjected to scrutiny.

2.2. Review of the Literature

2.2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics, analyzing the interpretation of an utterance in certain social contexts. Pragmatic competence means that the utterance is socially acceptable in a given context. Therefore, the study of pragmatics is critical because many times, the intended meaning is different from what is saying. For decades, pragmatic competence, despite being the most challenging subject for language learners to acquire (Franch, 1998), had not been in the focus in the realm of second language acquisition (SLA). That is, learners might have sufficient knowledge to collect words, and implement their syntax rules to construct a sentence correctly, but it does not necessarily mean that this sentence is spoken in an appropriate circumstance and manner. Mastering when, how, and where to articulate a certain line is a much more sophisticated skill than excelling in knowledge of grammatical structures. As Bardovi-Harlig (2000) puts it, "High levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant high levels of pragmatic competence".

Pragmatics is twofold: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics deals with "the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings" (Kecskes, 2012). Bardovi-Harlig (2000) explains it in a simpler way: "the linguistic competence that allows speakers to carry out the speech acts that their sociopragmatic competence tells them are desirable". For example, the utterances *Thank you* and *I deeply appreciate it* are both expressions a person can choose from his pragmalinguistic repertoire to express gratitude to another. However, his choice is a

reflection of his "attitude and social relationship" (Rose & Kasper, 2001) to the interlocutor, which belongs to the field of sociopragmatics, described by Leech as "the sociological interface of pragmatics" (as cited in Rose & Kasper, 2001). It appears that sociopragmatics can be drawn from the background and cultural knowledge of L1 communicators, serving as the foundation for the interpretation and performance of language use in any context.

Numerous research on pragmatics has been conducted cross-culturally. Perhaps the largest study was the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns project. By using Discourse Completion Tasks, it elicited responses of requests and apologies in L1 and L2 from 1,946 informants (Roever, 2015) who are native speakers of Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian (Blum-Kulka & Olshstain, 1984). The perception of indirectness in relation to politeness, for example, was put into consideration in the analysis of request speech act in Hebrew and English (Blum-Kulka, 1987). The findings revealed that the levels of the two concepts were not comparable to each other. The most indirect strategies, for instance, were not necessarily perceived as the most polite by the two groups.

2.2.2. Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP)

ILP involves two interdisciplinary areas: interlanguage, the study of the development of learners' second language acquisition, and pragmatics, the study of linguistic use in a certain context. According to Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), ILP does not merely study the acquisition of nonnative speakers' production and comprehension of communicative patterns in a second language, yet is related to intercultural style, a

unique communication style that characterizes and separates from the cultures of their

first and target languages.

Research on ILP has investigated L2 acquisition at pragmatic level. In the study

of complaint speech act produced by Indonesian learners of English, with discourse

completion tasks in oral form as the instrument, Wijayanto, Agus, Laila, Malikatul,

Prasetyarini, Aryati, & Susiati (2013) found that directness was favored by the

informants, especially in conversations with hearers who were unfamiliar and lower in

social status. A recent study (Montero, 2015) examined refusal strategies performed by

students who majored in English teaching as a foreign language in a university in Costa

Rica. The data shows that the participants tended to opt for indirect strategies rather than

the direct ones.

2.2.3. Pragmatic Transfer

Pragmatic transfer studies the impact of learner's culture and language "on their

IL pragmatic knowledge and performance" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Pragmatic

transfer is classified into two types: positive and negative. Positive transfer occurs when

learner's L1 knowledge is pertinently applied to IL and L2; whereas negative transfer

implies the irrelevant transfer of learners' L1 pragmatic knowledge to their IL and L2;

therefore seen as an interference to pragmatic acquisition. At the sociopragmatic level,

negative transfer can affect learners' abilities to carry out successful speech acts such as

expressing apologies, refusals, responding to invitations, compliments, as well as their

choice of politeness strategies (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). At the pragmalinguistic

level, negative transfer can influence speakers' use of forms and language to change the

value of politeness. For example, the apology *"Sorry for my carelessness. I will compensate you another one"* from a Vietnamese learner of English is probably a literal translation from the L1 to the target language (Nguyen, 2012). Nevertheless, negative transfer might also derive from an attitude towards cultural identity. That is, advanced learners might deliberately deliver speech acts that highly reflect their cultural values due to their desire to distinguish themselves from the target community and their purposeful loyalty to L1 cultural patterns (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

Evidence of pragmatic transfer has been studied by many linguistic scholars and educators. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared speech act performance of refusals of Japanese English speakers, English native speakers, and Japanese native speakers with the employment of Discourse Completion Tasks as the research instrument. The results demonstrated an influence from Japanese learners' L1 patterns to language production in L2 at three levels: the order of semantic formulae, the frequency of semantic formulae, and the content of semantic formulae.

Using Assessment Questionnaires and Dialog Construction, Bergman and Kasper (1993) examined apologies made by Thai learners of English, and native speakers of American English. The former group was found to greatly differ from the latter group in terms of strategy choice, and pragmatic transfer was reported to account for half of the differences.

A number of ILP studies have investigated the interference of Vietnamese pragmatics in the performance of English language learners. The results of these studies will be first summarized in Table 1, then analyzed in more detail in section 3.

Study	Focus	Participants	Data collection instruments	Main results
Nguyen 2010	Compliments responses by VLE	10 VNS, 10 NSs, 10 VLE	Discourse Completion Tasks	Learners tend to perform more non-agreement strategies than NSs
Vu 2013	Complaints by VLE	20 VNS, 20 NSs, 20 VLE	Metapragmatic Questionnaires and Discourse Completion Tasks	Learners' choice of strategy depends greatly on social power status compared to NSs
Nguyen 2012	Apologies by VLE	30 VNS, 30 NSs, 30 VLE	Metapragmatic Questionnaires and Discourse Completion Tasks	Both learners and NSs performed similar strategies, but learners tend to avoid the acknowledgment of responsibility in higher-lower status
Nguyen 2008	Criticisms by VLE	36 VLE, 12 VNS, 12 NSs	Oral peer-feedback task, written questionnaires, and interview	Learners's use of strategy seems to be more offensive than NSs' counterparts
Vo 2012	Requests by VLE	20 VLE, 20 NSs	Discourse Completion Tasks	Learners' strategy use is less diverse than NSs' counterparts

Table 1. Interlanguage Pragmatics of Vietnamese learners of English

2.3.Summary

The literature reviewed here sets the foundation for the current study. Besides providing clear understanding about the subject matter, it helps the researcher in the process of shaping her viewpoints and research objectives. This section shows that most of the studies on Vietnamese learners explore pragmatic transfer through the analyses of speech act realization patterns. In light of such investigations, this thesis further covers a broader examination on different aspects of pragmatics: speech acts, politeness, and address terms. It also emphasizes sociocultural aspects of the language learners that affect their production and comprehension of the target language.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

3.1. Brief knowledge of Vietnamese value system

Similar to most of other Asian countries which are heavily influenced by the philosophy of Confucianism, Vietnamese culture is classified as collectivism. In contrast with individualism whose focus is on "personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, voicing one's own opinion, freedom, innovation, and self-expression" (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Smallwood, 2003), people in collectivistic societies are group-oriented. They work and live together, maintain group harmony and collaboration based on shared interest and common values, prioritize communal relationships, and treasure traditional values. The characteristics of collectivism are embodied in Vietnamese community through its own primary cultural values: *tinh thần cộng đồng* ('community spirit'), *tinh thần tương thân tương ái* ('spirit of solidarity'), and *sự tôn trọng lẫn nhau* ('mutual respect').

Community spirit, or "collective spirit" (Vo, 2016), is one of the most prominent

features in the Vietnamese value system. It is manifested through dedication to the family,

harmony, and individual identity. Needless to say, the Vietnamese are family-oriented.

The family is the foremost priority and governs all actions, behaviors, and relationships

of an individual. A Vietnamese household generally consists of three generations.

Although nuclear family structure is growing among younger generations nowadays, it is

crucial to emphasize that they still preserve a solid relationship with their parents and

grandparents by regular visits and caring actions. In a Vietnamese family, parents hold the

responsibility to nurture and educate their children in their entire childhood and

adulthood. It is common for Vietnamese parents to voluntarily provide financial support

for their offsprings' education after adolescent age. The children, on the other hand, show

respects to their parents through filial piety, the most important virtue of a Vietnamese

individual. Filial piety, as an influence from both Confucianism and Buddhism, a

dominant religion in this country, is expressed through respectful manners, obedience,

and ultimately being materialistically and spiritually responsible for their parents'

welfare, especially during golden years. Failing to fulfill these obligations results in

severe criticism from the in-group members and society despite one's personal success

and social status.

Another feature of Vietnamese community spirit is harmony. Maintaining healthy

and harmonious relationships is vital in Vietnamese society. Whether the interlocutors are

in or out group, the Vietnamese try their best to refrain from conflicts by hiding their

unpleasant emotions or not voicing their opinions when they contradict others.

A deviation from the original concept of individual identity is another feature that sets Vietnamese apart from Western counterparts. One is trained from the very beginning of one's life that he or she is not a separate individual yet a part of a group, a member of a family, and a cell in a community. Family backgrounds, social relationships, and educational accomplishments are important elements in identifying Vietnamese people. That is not too much to say that the accomplishment or failure of an individual can be attributed or credited to the family or the group one belongs to. The phenomenon of group-based individual identity is evident in the way of Vietnamese addressing themselves as 'we' instead of 'I' when giving personal thoughts (Phan, 2008). And because a person is likely a representative of a certain group, family's reputation is built upon the behavior and achievement of that individual (Nguyen, 2002). When an individual succeeds especially at a young age, a compliment such as 'Her/his parents raise him/her well' or 'The mother knows how to teach the child' is prevalent to hear.

In addition to *tinh thần cộng đồng* ('community spirit'), *tinh thần tương thân tương ái* ('spirit of solidarity'), another cultural value characterizes Vietnamese community. *Tinh thần tương thân tương ái* is manifested through interdependence and empathy. Interdependence is expressed through strong bondings and rapports among family members. Parents show love and affection to children and vice versa, siblings give mutual help to one another, and relatives maintain harmonious relationships and frequent contact. Empathy is shown to people of out-group members, which is known as *đồng cảm* (literally means 'same feeling') (Vo, 2016). The Vietnamese show their sympathy and compassion towards people who are facing adversity by being more considerate in their

attitude and delivery of utterances, which is well promoted through some proverbs such as *lá lành đùm lá rách* (literally translated as 'good leaves protect and help torn leaves') or *thương người như thể thương thân* (literally translated as 'show your love to others as if they are a part of your body' or 'Do as you would be done by').

Last but not least, one of the most significant shared value of Vietnamese society is *sự tôn trọng lẫn nhau* ('mutual respect'), shown through politeness, obedience (Nguyen, 2002), and linguistic means. Children are taught at a very young age to show respect to others with regards to their age, status and position, in which age is the decisive factor in the matter. Seniors hold absolute respect from younger generations regardless of their status and position. Children show respects to their parents through obedient behaviors and respectful words. Conversely, the elderly also express their politeness to subordinates through proper manners and verbal behaviors. Additionally, respect is expressed through terms of address and mitigating devices which will be discussed in more detail in the later part.

3.2. Positive pragmatic transfer

Since positive pragmatic transfer is seen as facilitation in L2 performance and comprehension, it has not been scrutinized thoroughly by researchers compared to negative transfer. Another reason is that the distinction of whether the transfer belongs to the activation of learners' universal pragmatic knowledge or to their L1's counterparts is still unidentified (Takahashi, 1995). However, thanks to some empirical research of Vietnamese scholars and students whose major is English and Linguistics, it appears that Vietnamese and English speakers do share some similarities in politeness perceptions of

speech act realization strategies. Because negative pragmatic transfer stems from the differences in L1 and L2 values, we can assume that the similarities between the two languages might create positive transfer that eases their use of the target language.

In a recent study on indirectness and directness in American English and Vietnamese conducted by Le (2012), it shows that both groups preferred directness to indirectness when "they want to elucidate a situation, reveal a truth or get to the point briefly". Her study also illustrates that both Vietnamese and American employed the use of indirectness strategies to minimize face-threatening acts and maintain politeness. It accords with the findings of Nguyen (2015) about the speech act of expressing satisfaction in American and Vietnamese, in which directness strategies were preferable to both groups. In another research on apologies made by Vietnamese native speakers, Vietnamese EFL learners and English native speakers, Nguyen (2012) also asserts that all three groups of informants employed similar apology strategies in given situations. In particular, they all used 'an expression of apology' along with other strategies[1]. These are evidence of positive pragmatic transfer from Vietnamese learners' L1 to their L2 production and perception.

3.3. Negative pragmatic transfer

It can be said that pragmatic failure is attributed to negative pragmatic transfer, which in fact receives enormous attention from linguists and SLA researchers. As Franch (1998) states, "lack of culturally relevant information, irrespective of linguistic

---

[1] Apology strategies involves the use of **'an expression of apology'** *(I'm sorry, I apologize)*, 'an explanation or account' *(I was too busy)*, 'an acknowledgment of responsibility' *(It is my fault)*, 'an offer of repair' *(I'll buy you a new one)*, 'promise for forbearance' *(I will never do it again)*, 'concern for the hearer' *(Are you hurt?)* [for more detail see Nguyen, 2012, p.20]

proficiency, was a more powerful constraint in the inhibition or promotion of pragmatic transfer." In this paper, I will discuss three primary elements of pragmatics which clearly demonstrate linguistic and cultural influences of Vietnamese on EFL acquisition and production. They are speech acts, politeness, and forms of address.

3.3.1. Speech acts

Speech acts have always been the most common aspect to be investigated in pragmatic research. A great number of studies have been conducted to examine the impact of Vietnamese language and culture on the use of speech acts by Vietnamese learners of English. The following section will discuss two kinds of speech acts: responses to compliments and criticisms.

3.3.1.1. Responses to compliments

Giving compliments is always a pleasant manner to create rapport and strengthen relationships whether with in-group or out-group members. Although compliments differ culturally, the way people receiving compliments undoubtedly reflects their belief and culture. Cultural values significantly impact attitude and perception of the receivers, therefore leading to a particular way of responding to a compliment. In her interlanguage pragmatic research, to investigate transfer effects of Vietnamese pragmatics on the production of English speech acts of Vietnamese learners of English, Nguyen (2010) conducted a comparative study with discourse completion tasks as the instrument. Ten Vietnamese native speakers (VNS) whose majors varied from maths, physics, literature, etc., ten native speakers of English who are residents of Virginia, America (ANS), and ten Vietnamese learners of English (VLE) who were senior university students in English

teaching program were asked to fill in their responses to compliments in certain situations. Not only does the study show differences in language use among the three groups, but it also reaffirms learners' IL production as a reflection of their culture and mother tongue.

First, the responses to compliments of the three participant groups were distinct in terms of strategy use and its frequency. VNS and VLE were found to use fewer agreement strategies[2] than ANS though both groups used more agreement strategies than non-agreement ones[3]. Within the same strategy, VNS and VLE shared similar compliment response sub-strategies, whereas different sub-strategies were performed by ANS. To illustrate, for the agreement strategies, ANS produced a high frequency of 'appreciation tokens', 'comment acceptance', 'comment history', and 'return'. In contrast, these sub-strategies were less performed by VNS and VLE. Interestingly, none of VNS or VLE used 'comment history' in response to compliments. Similarly, pragmatic transfer is evident in the variety of their choice of non-agreement sub-strategies. In particular, the number of non-agreement sub-strategies used by the two Vietnamese groups was high in 'question', 'disagreement' and 'scale down'. No data was found about ANS performing 'qualification' in response to compliments.

---

[2] Agreement compliment response strategies express an agreement to the speaker's compliments by performing strategies such as '**appreciation tokens**' *("Thanks", "Thank you")*, '**comment acceptance**' *(Thanks; I like it, too.)*, 'praise upgrade' *(I look thinner with this dress, right?)*, '**comment history**' *(I bought it last year)*, 'reassignment' *(It is a birthday gift from my mother)*, and '**return**' *(You look great today, too!)* [Herbert's taxonomy of complement responses from Nguyen, 2010]

[3] Non-agreement compliment response strategies express a refusal to the speaker's compliments by performing strategies such as '**scale down**' *(It is darker than I thought)*, '**question**' *(Really?)*, '**disagreement**' *(I don't really like it)*, '**qualification**' *(It's OK, I like yours better)*, and 'no acknowledgment' (silence) [Herbert's taxonomy of complement responses from Nguyen, 2010]

Furthermore, the content of compliment within the strategy use also varied. The data shows that even in situations when American speakers' inclination was to modestly refuse the compliments, they still employed 'appreciation tokens' prior to 'disagreement' *("Thank you but I am not that good. I'm glad you like it though.")*; on the contrary, the former strategy was not found in utterances produced by VNS and VLE who solely used 'disagreement' such as in (1) and (2):

      (1) VNS: "Không đâu. Tôi còn phải học hỏi thêm ở mọi người."
            (No. I have to learn from everyone.)
      (2) VLE: "No. That's just a small thing that everyone could do."

                                (Nguyen, 2010)

Interestingly enough, 'appreciation tokens' produced by the Americans were sometimes followed by affirmative sentences to emphasize the addressers' effort of fulfilling the tasks while VLE combined it with promising commissives. The phenomenon is obvious in a circumstance where there is a distance of power and social status between the interlocutors. Let's look at the following examples, in which participants need to respond to a compliment from their teachers for their excellent presentations:

      (3) ANS: Thank you. I worked hard.
      (4) VLE: Thanks. I will try more.

                                (Nguyen, 2010)

These responses undoubtedly distinguish American individualism from Vietnamese collectivism. Known for "their devotion to individualism" (Althen & Bennett, 2011), the Americans see themselves as separate individuals. Children are taught to make their own decision and take responsibility for it, thus, should also be proud of

their accomplishment. In (3), the student had a tendency to attribute the accomplishment to one's individual self and admit how hard he/she had tried to achieve it. Vietnamese people, on the other hand, are trained to practice humility to the extent that one should be modest and not boastful about her/his achievements. A plain acceptance to a compliment, especially from seniors, is regarded as impolite and haughty. In the above responses, although the Vietnamese students were happy at the teacher's acknowledgement of their outstanding performance, they took it humbly by kindly "rejecting" the compliment (as in (1) and (2)) or accepting it with a promise that they would do even better in later jobs (as in (4)). Hence, the "I will try more" line is likely interpreted as "I will try my best to not disappoint you next time".

At the pragmalinguistic level, VLE sometimes literally translated their L1 answers to L2, as the following response: "*You exaggerate too much. I think it's as normal as the others*" probably translated from the Vietnamese statement *Bạn nói quá lên rồi. Mình nghĩ nó cũng bình thường (như những nhà khác) thôi*. Although these kinds of pragmatic transfer do not necessarily result in miscommunication, the utterances might sound unnatural in the ears of English native speakers, who might, or might not tolerate cross-sociolinguistic differences.

3.3.1.2. Criticism

Act of criticizing is considered a problematic speech act not only for learners but also for native speakers of the target language (Nguyen, 2008). In her study, Nguyen (2008) found that VLE and Australian native speakers had distinct choice of strategies, semantic formulae and mitigating devices when performing the speech act. Similar to the

preceding study, she also surveyed three different student groups: 36 Vietnamese learners of Australian English as a Foreign Language (VLAE) who were attending English program to prepare for their undergraduate and graduate study in Australia, Vietnamese native speakers, and 12 Australian English native speakers (AENS). After class, these students were asked to write a short essay. Then they worked in pairs to give feedback for their partner's writing. Through the analysis of conversations recorded during their verbal transactions, it shows that VLAE differed from AENS in criticizing to the extent that they performed more indirect criticisms[4] (45%) than the other group (31%). Similarly, less direct criticisms[5] were found in the production of the speech act by VLAE (55%) compared to AENS (69%).

Firstly, the learners and Australians employed various strategies when using direct criticism. VLAE were prone to perform less 'statement of the problem' than AENS. As with AENS, it seems likely that AENS preferred generalizing to directly pointing out the problems probably as a way to save face for the interlocutors. For example, the comment *"You had a few spelling mistakes"* produced by AENS is more general than *"And there some incorrect words, for example nowadays"* elicited from VLAE. When it comes to indirect criticisms, it is interesting that those produced by VLAE did not have an

---

[4] Indirect criticism refers to the covert feedback by correcting, giving advice or suggesting to the listeners' work and actions. It covers strategies such as 'correction' (*books not book*), 'indicating standard' *(this sentence should be shorter)*, **'demand for change'** *(you must do it now)*, 'request for change' *(I'd like you to change it to)*, 'advice about change' *("You should change")*, 'suggestion for change' *(It would have been better if you could)*, 'expression of uncertainty' *(I am not sure if we need to have five paragraph or not)*, 'asking/presupposing' *(Have you proofread your essay?)*, or other hints *(I prefer a more quite environment)* [see Taxonomy of Criticism on Nguyen's paper (2008) for more detail]

[5] Direct criticism means the explicit comment on the listeners's work and actions. It includes strategies such as 'negative evaluation' *(It is not a good choice)*, 'disapproval' *("I don't like")*, 'expression of disagreement' *(I disagree)*, **'statement of the problem'** *(the table is not very clean)*, 'statement of difficulty' *(I don't understand your reasoning)*, and 'consequences' *(You might get low grade if you submit this essay)* [see Taxonomy of Criticism on Nguyen's paper (2008) for more detail]

ameliorating effect on this face-threatening act, but seemed to be forceful to the hearer (Nguyen, 2008). To illustrate, there are some cases in which the learner group used 'demand for change', which was not performed by AENS at all. The result has notably affirmed sociopragmatic transfer. While in individualistic cultures, interactants tend to avoid interference in each other's business, or if mandatorily, try to minimize it, in Vietnamese collectivistic society, it is a social norm to give advice and suggestion to their acquaintances. Nguyen (2008) discovered 69% of learners thought that giving advice was a polite manner of indirect criticism because "Vietnamese people usually advise one another, seniors advise juniors, people of the same age advise one another. This is a good way which is accepted by the society. It is soft."

Secondly, the influence of L1 pragmalinguistics might be a reason for learners' avoidance of L2 structures (Franch, 1998), as exemplified in the case of Vietnamese learners who made no use of high level of modality such as *could have done, would have done* compared to AENS (Nguyen, 2008). It could be that in Vietnamese there is no such grammatical form, thus students tend to ignore this structure or have problems of employing it. When it comes to suggestion, the Vietnamese use mitigating devices such as *nên (should), có thể (can), sao em không (Why don't you)*. Nguyen explains that it might also stem from the dearth of pragmalinguistic knowledge about the effective use of syntactic modifiers to reduce the harshness of utterances and lessen face-threatening in performing criticizing speech act. The lack of Vietnamese equivalent grammatical structure and L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge is the causes of the differences in their linguistic production from native speakers.

3.3.2.Politeness

3.3.2.1. The transfer of Vietnamese politeness to IL and L2 production

3.3.2.1.1. The concept of politeness in Vietnamese culture

In order to understand why Vietnamese learners of English speak in a certain way, it is worth tracing back to the source underlying their behavior and thinking, namely their cultural values. As explained above, the notion of face explained by Brown and Levinson stresses on the individual characteristics of one's face and identity. Nevertheless, this concept to some extent cannot account for all aspects of politeness in Vietnamese culture taking into consideration of their group-oriented behavior (Nguyen & Ho, 2013).

There exist two important features of politeness in Vietnamese culture: *lễ* (rules of propriety, rites, morals, proper conducts) and *tình cảm* (sentiments) (Nguyen & Ho, 2013). The former reflects the influence of Confucian philosophy, referring to the cultural norms one needs to follow in social communication. According to Vu (1997), the Vietnamese perceive politeness through the notions of *lễ phép* (respectfulness/showing respect to elders or superiors), *đúng mực* (propriety), *khéo léo* (tactfulness), and *tế nhị* (delicacy), which are classified into two types: *lịch sự lễ độ* (respectful politeness) and *lịch sự chiến lược* (strategic politeness). Respectful politeness comprises of respectfulness and propriety, and is used to maintain and enhance social relationships. At a very early age, Vietnamese children are taught rules of etiquette through *tiên học lễ, hậu học văn* (literally translated as one needs to study morals prior to literature), or *lời chào cao hơn mâm cỗ* (a proper greeting is more important than a banquet tray), to show respects for seniors through *kính lão đắc thọ* (one will live longer if one respects the

elderly), and to behave properly in front of people who have equal or lower status through *kính trên nhường dưới* (show honor to superiors, cede to subordinates) (Nguyen & Ho, 2013). Respectful politeness can be carried out by using linguistic devices such as kinship terms, honorific address (as shown in table 1 and 2 respectively) and lexical means which have similar functions (Vu, 1997).

Term	Relation to ego	Non-kinship usages
sơ	great-great paternal/maternal grandfather/grandmother	
cụ/cố	great paternal/maternal grandfather/ grandmother	very elderly person
ông	grandfather (different terms are used for paternal grandfather *(ông nội)* and maternal grandfather *(ông ngoại))*	a man about grandfather's age
bà	grandmother (different terms are used for paternal grandmother *(bà nội)* and maternal grandmother *(bà ngoại)*)	a woman about grandmother's age
ba / bố	father or father in law	
mẹ / má	mother or mother in law	
anh	elder brother, husband or elder male cousin	an older man, boyfriend, or polite use to a man regardless of status and age
chị	elder sister or female cousin	an older woman, or polite use to a female regardless of status and age
em	wife, younger brother/sister or cousin	a younger person or girlfriend
bác	father's elder brother/sister	an elder person about parents' age
bác gái	father's elder brother's wife	a female elder person about parents' age

Term	Relation to ego	Non-kinship usages
dượng	father's elder sister's husband or stepfather	
cô	father's sister	a woman about parents' age or female teacher
dì	mother's sister	
chú	father's younger brother	a man about parents' age
cậu	mother's brother	(in 2nd person) a close friend (Northern dialect)
mợ	mother's brother's wife	
thím	father's younger brother's wife	
con	offspring, nephew or niece	a young person about offspring's age
mình	spouse	(in 1st person) a close friend
ông xã	husband	
bà xã	wife	

Table 2. Vietnamese kinship terms and address (adapted from Ngo, 2006)

Term	Meaning
thầy	male teacher or monk
Người (always written with start case)	a highly respected person
Ngài (always written with start case)	a highly respected person (male)
bác sĩ	doctor
giáo sư	professor

Table 3. Honorific Address

Polite modal particles[6] are excessively used along with kinship terms to show

proper respect towards the addressees, especially to the older generations, as in (5a-c):

(5a) Responding to a senior's question:
Vâng / Dạ (Yes)
Polite modal particles

(5b) Greeting a female friend of mother:
Con   chào   cô   ạ. (Hello, aunt)
Offspring greets aunt honorific

(5c) Thanking grandfather for a nice manner:
Dạ   con   cám ơn   ông! (Thank you grandfather!)
Honorific offspring thanks   grandfather

(Adapted from Vu, 1997)

Strategic politeness, on the other hand, comprises of *khéo léo* (tactfulness) and *tế*

nhị (delicacy), and more "associated with communicative intents and interactional

efficacy". It can be carried out through the use of both direct or indirect strategies with

mitigating terms, as in (6a-b):

(6a) Criticizing an employee in an indirect mode:

Hình như dạo này cậu   có   điều gì   không ổn?
Seem   recently you (semi-casual) has something out-of-order?
(Is something wrong with you recently?)

(6b) Asking a male stranger for the time in direct mode with mitigating devices
Xin lỗi,   anh   làm ơn xem hộ mấy giờ rồi?
Excuse, elder brother do favor look help what time
(Could you tell me the time please?)

(Vu, 1997)

Vu points out that strategic politeness is likely more compliant with Brown &

Levinson's politeness strategies since they both function to serve specific communicative

goals, while respectful politeness is on par with the local culture and traditions, which is

---

[6] These words include words denoting levels of respect to the addressees.

more valued and prominent in Vietnamese verbal communication than strategic politeness.

The second feature, *tình cảm* (sentiments)*,* emphasizes harmony among people in a community. It is expressed through behaviors such as "care, intimacy, bond, and mutual help" (Nguyen & Ho, 2013). *Tình cảm* is promoted in Vietnamese society and culture through the ideas of *lối sống tình cảm* (a sentiment way of life), or *tình làng nghĩa xóm* (love among people in a community). Proverbs such as *dĩ hoà vi quý* (making peace is precious) or *một điều nhịn chín điều lành* (a bad compromise brings hundreds of happiness) teach people to suppress and dilute negative emotions in order to maintain social harmony and solidarity relationships.

Lễ and *tình cảm*, according to Nguyen & Ho (2013), form the concept of social face in Vietnamese communities as Mao states, "a public image that is on loan to individuals from society" (as cited in Nguyen & Ho, 2013), which significantly contradicts to the universal content of face defined by Brown and Levinson (1987), referring to "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 61).

3.3.2.1.2. From Vietnamese politeness to IL & L2 production and perception

The concept of respectful and strategic politeness lay the foundation for everyday conversations in Vietnamese society. The choice of politeness strategies by the Vietnamese is based on three factors: social roles, social status, and age. In their research on requests and politeness in Vietnamese as a native language, Nguyen and Ho (2013) found that Vietnamese youth frequently used direct request or positive politeness strategies in delivering request speech act to people of equal power and also to those of

higher power but with lesser frequency. Particularly, 'imperative', and 'performative'[7]

were over performed compared to other strategies, as illustrated in (7a-b):

(7a) A friend blatantly asks his roommate to return the book to the library

Mày   ơi   tao bảo   này
Address term (casual) vocative I   tell   alignment marker
(Hey let me tell you this)

Hôm nay tao   không có   tiết ở trường
Today   I (casual) not have class at school
(I don't have class today.)

Tao   có   quyển sách hôm nay
I (casual) have classifier book today
(I have a book)

Đến hạn trả   ở   thư viện
due   return at library
(due today)

Mày   cầm đi   trả   hộ tao   nhớ.
You (casual) hold go return help me (casual)   alignment marker
(Help me return it.)

(7b) A student directly asks a teacher for deadline extension using 'performative'

strategy

Cô   ơi hôm nay là đến ngày em nộp cho cô
Teacher vocative today   be   due   I submit for teacher
(Today I am supposed to submit it to you)

chương 2 của khoá luận   ạ
chapter 2 of   thesis   honorific
(chapter 2 of my thesis)

mà tuần   trước em ốm quá
but week before I   sick so
(but I was really ill last week)

'Mood derivable' (Imperatives) and 'performative' are direct strategies in the speech act of request. Some examples of 'mood derivable' are *Clean the house* or *Give it to me.* 'Performative' contains perforative verbs denoting request such as *request, tell, ask for help, beg)* (Nguyen & Ho, 2013; Blum-Kulka, 1987, 131-146).

nên em vẫn chưa viết xong ạ
so I still not yet write finish honorific
(I have not finished it yet)

em vẫn còn phần về data analysis.
I still remain part about data analysis.
(I have not finished the data analysis part yet)

Em xin cô để tuần sau em nôp,
I beg aunt (female teacher) let week after I submit
(I would like to ask for your permission to submit it next week)

được không ạ?
okay no honorific
(is that possible?)

(Nguyen & Ho, 2013)

The aforementioned examples in (7a-b) solidify the contradiction of Vietnamese politeness to the relation between politeness and indirectness theorized by Brown and Levinson. Depending on the intensity of the face-threatening acts, interlocutors may choose the following possible strategies, as illustrated in ascending order of indirectness (Blum-Kulka, 1987):

(A) to perform the act badly without redressive action (directness);

(B) to use positive politeness strategies by seeking solidarity with the hearer;

(C) to use negative politeness strategies to indicate that his response is not coerced and give him an 'out';

(D) to perform the act in an ambiguous way so that the speaker can avoid taking responsibility for doing it.

In request speech act, 'mood derivable' (imperative) and 'performative' are considered the most direct strategies because the speaker explicitly perform the request without giving the addressee an option to refuse or a way 'out'; whereas 'hints[8]' is the

---

[8] 'Hints' including 'strong hints' *(Your room is such a mess)* and 'mild hints' *(Are you done eating?* (an implication to clean up the table)) are indirect strategies of request patterns.

most indirect way as the intention is only implied in the utterances (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Based on the theory of Brown and Levinson, indirectness should be used in a speech act with a high level of imposition such as request. Nevertheless, the case is hardly applied in Vietnamese culture. Instead of relying on syntactic means, the speakers lessen face-threatening of utterances by an excessive use of lexical means such as address terms, honorifics, vocative or alignment marker (Nguyen & Ho, 2013). For instance, in (7b), despite the gap of power and social distance between two interlocutors, directness is still socially acceptable and does not necessarily mean invoking an offense.

This study is in accordance with the research findings of Vo (2012) where the author describes a situation of a Vietnamese student carrying over her L1 sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics to the use of L2. When asking an Australian stranger for an assistance, she produced positive politeness strategy *"Excuse me! Please get that book down for me. I can't reach it."* While *please* means *xin vui lòng* in Vietnamese and the utterance is considered positive politeness and is socially acceptable in most cases in her L1 culture, it might be misunderstood by the Australian who possibly misjudged her as being tactless (Vo, 2012). In individualistic cultures, the speakers need to consider the status of the interlocutors and the imposition level of the utterance to decide which politeness strategies would be appropriate. In such a situation, negative politeness should be employed, giving the interlocutor a space to refuse or a freedom to choose if she or he wants to conduct the action or not. This notion of negative face is less emphasized in Vietnamese culture, in which people pay more attention to solidarity and interdependent relationships among group members. It shows a significant contradiction to Levinson's

theory of politeness, in which imperatives are universally considered as disrespectful (Cutting, 2015). In addition, Vo's study also shows that most VLE used solely Query Preparatory[9] of indirect request strategies whereas the Australians employed this strategy alongside with others such as Obligation Statements[10], Strong Hints[11] and Consultative Questions[12]. Query Preparatory is overused by Vietnamese learners because it fits with their L1 norms. When asking for help, Vietnamese people tend to use the formulae S + *có thể (can, could)* + V + *được không? (ok no?)*. They therefore transfer this pragmalinguistic feature to their IL performance.

3.3.2.2. The influence of politeness hierarchy to the production of IL and L2

3.3.2.2.1. Understanding hierarchy in Vietnamese society

To understand conversational style of the Vietnamese, whether they converse in their native tongue or in other languages, it is vital to mention the rules of social order in the community. The Vietnamese hierarchical system is dependent on two factors: age and occupation (Vo, 2016). In most circumstances, the notion of age regulates verbal behaviors as well as attitude of the interlocutors. In a conversation between two non-familial Vietnamese, it is crucial for them to recognize each other's approximate age so as not to violate the social norms, which might affect negatively the interpersonal relationships and lead to a failure in achieving communicative goals. If the age gap is not

---

[9] Utterances containing reference to preparers conditions as conventionalized in any specific language *(Can you please show me how to get to the post office)*

[10] Utterances which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act *(You must do your homework)*

[11] Utterances which include partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act *(Your music is too loud.)*

[12] Utterances in which the speaker seeks the hearer's cooperation *(Do you think you can refill the gas within today?)*
[See request strategies in Vo (2012) for more detail]

obvious between two interlocutors and one do not know whether the other person is older

or younger than oneself, it is a cultural behavior to ask for his/her year of birth. This

knowledge assists the interlocutors two things in terms of politeness strategy: (1) to

address that person properly and (2) to behave properly in front of that person. Then the

rules of the conversation are based on the framework of familial relationships (Vo, 2016).

That means, an older interlocutor is regarded as an older person in one's own family and

thus should be treated as so; and similarly, a younger interlocutor is considered as a

younger member in one's own family and thus should be treated as so. The comparability

between age difference and familial relationship is manifested through the ubiquitous use

of kinship terms in address (as shown in table 1). For instance, when interacting with a

male colleague who seems to be at the same generation of the speaker's parents, despite

his professional position, it takes for granted that the speaker should show respect to him

as if he is a senior in his/her family, hence should address him by a kinship term that he/

she uses to call his/her uncle (*chú/bác)*.

Occupation is another major factor that defines a Vietnamese's social status and

family's reputation accordingly. The Vietnamese think highly of people who achieve a

certain level of scholarly accomplishment and contribute to the society in some ways (Vo,

2016). It appears that teaching profession is one of the most noble jobs together with

others such as doctors, lawyers, and architects. Teachers are educators who provide

academic knowledge receiving the same level of respect along with monks who help with

spiritual training. Both are addressed with honorific terms: *thầy* for male teachers or

monks, and *cô* for female teachers or nuns. A high regard for educational jobs is

expressed through the proverbs: *Một chữ cũng là thầy, nửa chữ cũng là thầy* (literally translated as "a person who teaches you even a word or only half of a word deserves to be your teacher"), or *Không thầy đố mày làm nên* (literally translated as "You cannot succeed without a teacher"). When it comes to these professions, age differences become secondary (Vo, 2016). The social status of teachers, either spiritually or academically, is equal to one's parents. They receive high respect not only from their students but also from the students' parents, who treat them as if they are their own teachers. That is to say, the same address terms for teachers are used by both the students and the students' parents most of the time. In modern Vietnamese society, when the parents and teachers have a long-term and close relationship, they can shorten the social distance by calling each other with kinship terms.

Considering age and occupation as the two primary units of measurement of respect in Vietnamese community, the hierarchical level of a hearer in relation to the speaker is shown in Figure 1:
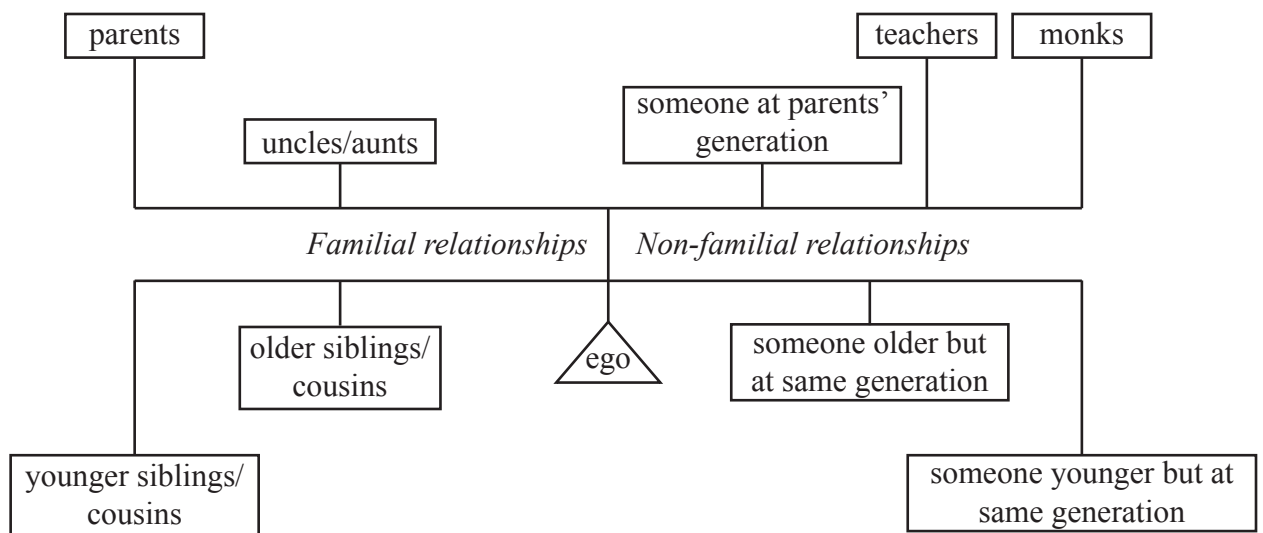

Figure 1. Vietnamese social hierarchy in relation to familial relationships

3.3.2.2.2. The case of complaint speech act

The concept of hierarchy in Vietnamese society to a certain extent gives reasons for the choice of politeness strategies of Vietnamese speakers when communicating in English. The performance of complaint speech act is an ultimate example of L1 pragmatic transfer to IL production. Complaining is considered a high level of face-threatening act for it challenges the hearer's current action to a degree that it might require an additional modified action as an amendment.

To investigate negative transfer made by Vietnamese learners of English in complaint speech act, Vu (2013) compared written responses elicited from three groups of participants: native speakers of Vietnamese (VNS), native speakers of English (NSE), and Vietnamese learners of English (VLE). It turns out that although all the three groups varied their choice of strategies in accordance with power distance, the variation of complaint strategy distribution of the two Vietnamese groups was in greater extent than English native speakers.

First, Vu shows that when the speaker has higher status than the hearer, VLE and VNS preferred to be more direct than NSE. 'Hints'[13] is one of the most favorable strategies used by NSE and the least by VLE and VNS. The evidence of negative transfer is also obvious in the use of 'explicit blame on behavior' and 'explicit blame on person'[14] strategies. They were prevalently observed in the responses of the two Vietnamese

---

[13] The most indirect strategy of complaint speech act (off record) *(The camera had functioned well before I gave it to you.)*

[14] 'Explicit blame on person' *(How careless you are!)* and 'explicit blame on behavior' *(Lying is a bad habit.)* are the two most and second direct strategies of complaint speech act.
[See Vu (2013) for more detail]

37

groups; English native speakers, on the other hand, barely employed 'explicit blame on behavior' to address complainees. Interestingly, no data for the use of 'explicit blame on person' was found for NSE. Below is examples of complaints to a child suddenly cutting in line to get on a bus from Vu's data (8a-c):

(8a) NSE: "Where's your parent?" ('hints')

(8b) VNS: "Em không nên như vậy vì như thế là không ngoan đâu."

(You shouldn't do this because this is not a nice behavior.)

('explicit blame on behavior')

(8c) VLE: "What you are doing is not polite at all" ('explicit blame on person')

(Vu, 2013)

When it comes to equal power, negative pragmatic transfer is evident when VNS and VLE employed more 'hints' strategies than NSE. Again, 'blames' were more favored by the two Vietnamese groups than by NSE who rarely performed 'explicit blame on person' and did not use 'explicit blame on behavior' at all in complaining.

In circumstances when the complainer has lower social status than the interlocutor, the frequency of the use of complaint strategies is reversed. Even though all the three groups performed less direct strategies, particularly, 'blames' were opted out and 'hints' was the most common, VNS and VLE were still more indirect than NSE. The Vietnamese used 'hints' at a significantly higher frequency than the English. In contrast, the number of 'modified blame'[15] used by NSE was almost double compared to the other groups. The distinctions in communication styles between the English and the

---

[15] Another direct complaint strategy *(You should have done it earlier.)* [See Vu (2013) for more detail]

Vietnamese are well observed in the scenario when a student feels the need to correct the professor for calling his/her by a wrong name (see 9a-c).

(9a) NSE: "Sir, I guess you called me by wrong name" ('modified blame')

(9b) NSV: "Thưa thầy tên em là…" ('hints')

(9c) VLE: "Sir, my name is…" ('hints')

(Vu, 2013)

The phenomena of the overuse of 'blame' strategies to people of lower or equal status and the excessive use of indirect strategies to superiors by VNS and VLE exemplify an important feature of the Vietnamese hierarchical society: the elderly hold absolute respect from subordinates. A young person is less likely to challenge a superior to the extent of choosing to keep silent to save that person's face. Likewise, the Vietnamese believe that it is a positive attitude for a younger person to listen to advice and life coaching from an older one because of his/her greater knowledge and experience in life. This hardly applies in English speaking countries, where the emphasis is on individuals and personal interests. In such cultures, despite the gap of age, social status and power, the level of imposition should be kept modest. Vu (2013) predicts that Vietnamese learners might likely violate the cultural norms of the target language if they apply this rule of L1 sociopragmatics to the production of IL in conversations with people of lower status.

3.3.3. Terms of address

Apparently, Vietnamese system of forms of address is much more complex and sophisticated than the English one. English native speakers generalize their address terms

by referring the addresser as 'I' and the addressee as 'you', which in fact does not denote the interlocutors' relationships and age. In contrast, Vietnamese communicators' choice of addressing each other is mainly based on a hierarchical system. If a Vietnamese observes or overhears a conversation between two other Vietnamese speakers, without asking, he or she can predict their relationship since "each specific relation determines its own forms of address" (Ngo & Tran, 2001).

The Vietnamese system of address terms lies on three primary components: formality, status, and attitude (Thompson, 1965). For example, if a child's father is also her teacher, in class, she will call him *thầy* (referring to male teacher) while at home, she will address him *ba (father)*. The addresser's status involves age, sex and social position, in which age seems to play a crucial role in communication. A manager who is younger than his employee still has to address that person *chị (older sister)* or *anh (older brother)*. Besides kin terms (such as *em* as younger brother or younger sister, *chú/bác* as uncle, *cô/ dì* as auntie), which are highly common in address and reference, professional status is also used. A patient, for instance, will call his or her doctor *bác sĩ* (literally means doctor). The use of only a person's first name who has higher social status or older than the addresser without his or her title is considered disrespectful and insolent in Vietnamese culture.

As a result of the unfamiliarity with Western cultures and the lack of pragmatic competence, Vietnamese English learners tend to transfer their address and reference system to L2 production. When studying in the university in Vietnam, my classmate usually called our British entrepreneur lecturer by his occupational status*"Teacher!"*.

Probably knowing this is a way of addressing transferred from Vietnamese language and culture, which showed her respect to him as an instructor, he teased her by responding *"Yes, student?"*. That could be because he had been living in Vietnam for an extended period of time and therefore understood the local culture. Unfortunately, there are many people who are not aware of cross-cultural differences, and therefore might feel offended when being mistakenly addressed.

In a recent survey conducted by Nguyen (2014), he found that there was a large number of Vietnamese students having problems of addressing their teachers, neighbors and homestay parents in English while they were studying abroad. While the Vietnamese call their teachers by occupational status, the English have different forms of address. In most cases, teachers in English speaking countries prefer to be called by their given names. However, some Vietnamese students might feel that it is disrespectful to their teachers; thus they tend to add formal title prior to the instructor's first name, e.g. *Mr. Paul.*

3.4. Summary

The analyses of the data collected above describe a complication in the case of linguistic performance of Vietnamese English learners. Despite the fact of being proficient users in terms of the rules of English grammar, there are many other hindrances in the production of the target language. That is, Vietnamese language and culture contribute a considerable role in the acquisition of pragmatic competence of the speakers. The Vietnamese value system, politeness perception and social hierarchy result in both positive and negative pragmatic transfer in the learners' IL. The most visible effects of

these transfers are well observed through the studies of speech acts realization strategies, politeness value and strategy choice, and the use of address terms. Because of the different perceptions between their L1 and L2, the learners comprehend and evaluate politeness value differently, thus vary their strategy choice accordingly that makes a deviation from the target language norms.

While it is quite obvious that positive transfer facilitates learners' pragmatic competence due to the similarities of pragmatics components between the two languages, it is superficial to claim that negative transfer, however, causes only failure in cross-cultural communication. Apart from its undesirable effects as the name implies, deviation from the L2 norms is sometimes only a reflection of the learners' L1 culture and does not always appear to be "intrusive or offensive". As Zegarac and Pennington (2000) explain it clearly, negative transfer is named so because of the dissimilarities of pragmatics that learners bring from their L1 to the production and perception in L2, not because of its negative influences. The authors demonstrate that when L2 production occurs to be distinct from the target norms, NSs might make an excuse for the nonnative responses that they simply are not aware of the cultural differences, not that they are being deliberately impolite. In the case of Vietnamese learners, this phenomenon is evident in sociopragmatic transfer of employing more 'hints' strategies by NSV and VLE than by NSE when complaining to addressees of higher status. The transfer is classified as 'negative' because the data shows there is a significant difference from native speakers' baseline data but it does not necessarily lead to a failure in communication. Based on the theory of politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987), 'hints' are considered off record and

the most indirect way in complaint speech act. In situations when formality is a must, it is always better to be more polite and respectful than being casual and might appear to be tactless or even rude. No one will ever misjudge a person who wants to show respect to them. In that sense, the "negative transfer" does not affect communication at all. It then depends on the interlocutor to adjust the conversation to the level that he or she feels comfortable. If the interlocutor wants to maintain a distance with the addresser, he or she will just keep the conversation going as the way it is. However, if one wants to appear to be more casual, one can shorten the distance by giving verbal signals such as responding in a way that makes the other feels at ease or explicitly telling the person that it is not necessary to speak too formally. In the case of address terms, for instance, while using first name is preferred in Western high schools by native teachers, it is not degradable to be called with a formal title. Indeed, this situation mostly takes place in language classroom, where teachers have modest understanding of the learners' culture. It is then the teacher's choice to either accept the way to be addressed or tell the students to just call him or her by the first name.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

The transfers of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics from L1 are always intertwined that makes up a whole new style of communication in learners' IL (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). There is a variety of reasons resulting in pragmatic transfer of language learners. With regards to Vietnamese learners of English (VLEs), the analysis of the causes of pragmatic transfer is divided into two categories: internal factors and

external factors. It is important, though, to note that internal factors I refer in this context

are factors that are within the learners' ability to control. External factors, on the other

hand, are ineluctable in language learning in Vietnam. From my perspectives, internal

factors are likely to cause pragmalinguistic transfer while external factors might possibly

lead to sociopragmatic transfer, although there are times that the latter can also have

impact on the retrieval of L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge of language learners.

Internal factors that can account for the occurrence of pragmalinguistic transfer of

VLEs are twofold: the lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge, and the insufficient linguistic

competence in the target language. First, the insufficient repertoire of L2

pragmalinguistics can result in learners' strategy choices that are probably not

contextually appropriate according to native speakers' norm. It is obvious in the cases of

criticism where VLEs did not take advantage of the mitigating effects of modality, or of

the misuse of positive politeness strategy in a situation when negative politeness would

be more relevant in performing request speech act. In addition, when learners are facing a

situation that resembles their cultural patterns, without enough linguistic repertoire in the

L2, either does the production of IL heavily reflect their L1 linguistic structure or is a

translation from the mother tongue, which can be exemplified by the overuse of the

model verb "can" in the production of criticism speech act or as in the case when the

learners responded to compliments in English from an equivalent Vietnamese

sentence:"*You exaggerate two much. I think it's as normal as the others.*" This well

supports Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) claim in which they asserts that "when a learner is

faced with familiar social situations in the new language, the first natural step is to try

and translate the most conventional routine in the first language verbatim into the new language".

Some external factors that are likely to cause sociopragmatic transfer of VLEs are the dearth of sociocultural knowledge of the target language, and the influence of Vietnamese culture. The lack of sociopragmatic knowledge of language learners can stem from the lack of exposure to L2 in Vietnamese language setting. It is still a country where English plays only a secondary role. The opportunity of having a meaningful and constructive conversation with NSs is in shortage, unless students invest a great amount of money to study in language centers. Thus, it can be said that the linguistic knowledge they are acquiring from textbook is only theory-based, with no real practice. As Vo (2012) points out, speech acts are neither taught explicitly nor context-sensitive to the students' current situation. Even when speech acts are overtly presented, lessons about this English skills are not thoroughly planned and prepared. Most of the time the situations taught are not diverse in terms of social distance and status. Let's look at a speaking section in Advanced English textbook for grade 12 students in Vietnam's public schools (page 51-52). It was printed in 2009 and the main content is solely written in English by Vietnamese educators with the exception of the glossary section that has translation. The purpose of this part is teaching how to ask for and give advice. Although it is helpful that several strategies of giving advice are given such as "Well, I think", "Why don't you", "Maybe you should", "If I were you, I'd", "You'd better", the simplicity of the communicative situations makes the activity somewhat impractical. Particularly, there is only one role play scenario in which students practice to use the

model sentences to give advice to their classmates about careers after high school. The issue is similar to what Paulston and Bruder (1976) asserted: "We all teach the WH questions early in the curriculum, but we don't teach the questions you can and cannot ask". The unbalanced instruction between linguistic structures and social rules can lead to generalization of L2 among learners (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). That is, students might misunderstand that they can apply the above strategies to any situation neglecting the social distance between interlocutors. In real life situation, sometimes they need to employ more complicated strategies in order to soften their utterances, especially when communicating to those with higher social status. In such cases, they might fail to achieve a communicative goal because of the inappropriate application of strategy choice. Thus, it would have been more practical if the textbook could provide more diverse contexts and classify the strategies according to the politeness perception of the L2's cultural norms. What is more, when speakers are lacking cultural knowledge of the L2 norms, they are likely to "base their politeness perception in L2 on those in L1" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Their "nonnative perceptions of sociopragmatic norms" cause deviation of their IL from native speakers of English, as in the case of Vietnamese students' showing a preference for 'demand for change' which was not employed by NSs when criticizing or adding formal title to teachers' first name. Sociopragmatic transfer also happens because of cultural impact from their L1 (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). This process, I believe, usually, occurs subconsciously. Regardless of mastering politeness value and strategies in the target language, it is unavoidable for them to not be influenced by the L1's cultural norms. It is obvious in the case of responding to

compliments, in which VLEs had a penchant for refusing the compliments by employing more non-agreement strategies than agreement strategies compared to native speakers; or in the situation of learners' obviously performing a higher frequency use of indirect strategies than NSs in lower-higher status contexts in complaint speech acts.

External factors can also cause pragmalinguistic transfer due to the pressure of spontaneous speech (Nguyen, 2008). In the case of criticism speech act, when interviewing why learners used such strategies, they admitted that due to the urge of giving immediate feedback in verbal transaction, they did not have adequate time to retrieve the most appropriate strategy for the situations. In fact, their written responses appeared to be more tactful and less offensive than their spoken language. Some might argue that this happens because of the lack of communicative practice and competence; however, I still classify it as an external factor since for some difficult speech acts such as criticisms or complaints, even native speakers of English need to have time to think and even have to plan prior to their performance (Nguyen, 2008).

In closing, it is sufficient to say that the external factors might result in a more profound impact on learners' linguistic production in the L2 because they are likely to strengthen the influence of internal factors. For instance, the lack of diversity in planning out the curriculum of teaching politeness strategies in performing speech acts probably leads to the lack of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge of the target language. Therefore, it is necessary for both learners and educators to recognize the root of the causes so as to give them more adequate concern and find feasible solutions. Moreover, even though learners are competent English users, as long as they are not

aware of the subtle differences in communication styles between L1 and L2 and are ready to acculturate to a new culture, it might impede their full ability to become proficient language users, both linguistically and pragmatically.

4.2. Recommendations

4.2.1.Implications for further research

Two things might be taken into consideration for further research. The first is the reevaluation of Discourse Complete Questionnaire. Although DCQ has proven to be an effective tool in human research, it by no means can mirror all aspects of language learners. Pragmatic transfer should be observed through the production of speech acts, however, since the survey is conducted through written form which does not require spontaneous responses, it merely reflects somewhat the learners' pragmatic knowledge in the L2. It is recommended, then, a thorough study on this subject should be done using other research instruments in verbal form such as interview, discourse completion questionnaire in oral form, or verbal report. The last instrument, verbal report, is especially useful for the elicitation and analysis of learners' thought process (Cohen, 1996). Second, other aspects of pragmatics such as intonation, dexis and conversational implicature, which might carry some evidence of pragmatic transfer, should be investigated. For example, English intonation produced by Vietnamese EFL learners is less expressive and less sensitive to contexts than by native speakers probably because they deliver the speech in English based on their L1 rules.

4.2.2.Pedagogical implications

It is important to note that even advanced learners cannot develop pragmatic competence to native-like level since "a commendable knowledge of language will not necessarily lead to a corresponding level of pragmatic knowledge required for appropriate communication" (Tajeddin, 2008). Vo (2012) asserts that pragmatic transfer can be attributed to the lack of exposure to English settings. It is in congruence with the research of Matsumura in which he investigated the differences in pragmatic competence of 137 Japanese learners of English (Tajeddin, 2008). He argues that pragmatic development likely depends on the extent to which a learner is exposed to the target language rather than on his or her L2 level. That means, a L2's context is crucial in language learning. However, in a country where English is a foreign language and instructional time is limited such as Vietnam, a rising concern is how students would have more opportunities to be in contact with authentic contexts of the target language. Vo (2012) suggests that educators should design and maximize communicative activities so that learners can develop their "ability in both receptive and productive skills". Many studies have proven the efficacy of explicitly teaching pragmatics in language class. Advanced Iranian learners of English, for instance, were observed to improve their perception of request, apology, and complaint speech acts after practicing activities such as teacher-fronted discussions, cooperative grouping and role-plays (Tajeddin, 2008).

I would like to add that the awareness of L2 norms is also essential in fostering pragmatic competence. An explanation of Western cultures in language class will equip students with sufficient sociolinguistic knowledge to interact in cross-cultural contexts. For example, when introducing American greetings, instructors should explain that *How*

are you? functions as *Hello* but not as a real question concerning the interlocutor's

condition at the communicative moment. In addition, it would also be beneficial if

students are aware of the differences and similarities between their L1 and L2 , which can

hopefully lower negative pragmatic transfer (Franch, 1998).

　　　　To make this project more practical, I would like to conclude with some effective

teaching techniques that are designed by Olshtain and Cohen (1991), which might be

beneficial for Vietnamese learners to minimize pragmatic failure and increase

communicative competence. These techniques teach students not only diverse linguistic

forms to carry out a speech act, but also an awareness of the distinctions in sociolinguistic

rules between the L1 and L2. The purpose of these activities thus can be said trifold

(Olshtain & Cohen, 1991):

　　　　(A) help student to be exposed to the most common realization patterns

　　　　(B) raise awareness of social factors that influence strategy choice

　　　　(C) create opportunities for students to practice different types of politeness

strategies

　　　　Those five different methods are: diagnosis assessment, model dialog, evaluation

of a situation, role-play activities, and feedback and discussion. I will later explain these

methods by using requests as example, instead of apologies as in the original text.

Activity 1: Diagnosis assessment

　　　　The point of this step is to provide teachers with students' level of understanding

about different speech act strategies. This top-down approach can also trigger students'

background knowledge about ways of expressing a speech act in the target language. For

example, students might choose which request strategies they think would be appropriate in scripted situations. For beginner levels, teachers might use multiple choice questionnaire to avoid the problem of linguistic competence, as in (10):

(10) You are in a coffee shop and you want to know what time it is but you forgot your watch/phone. A high school student who is sitting on the next table is wearing a watch. Which of the following requests would be most appropriate?

a. Excuse me! What time is it?
b. Excuse me! Can you please tell me the time?
c. Excuse me! Could I ask you the time please?

(Adapted from Olshtain and Cohen, 1991)

An analysis of students' responses would enhance the teacher's ability to adjust the teaching plans and objectives accordingly. For example, if a majority of the class select (a), an assumption might be drawn that students do not recognize the imposition level of the act and its corresponding semantic formulae, if most of the choices are (b), we might interpret that they have mediocre knowledge of request formulae patterns, if they choose (c), which is the most appropriate, they have adequate understanding of the politeness level of request strategies.

For intermediate or advanced learners, teachers can employ opened-ended questionnaires in oral form that is suggested by Eslami and McLeod (2010, 21). The same questionnaire can be reused but opting out the multiple choice, students then can work in groups to discuss various options to ask a stranger for the time. According to the aforementioned study on request speech act, it is predicted that, in the case of Vietnamese

learners, the formula "Can you please" would be the most common linguistic choice. The teacher might then conclude that these students transfer their pragmalinguistics from L1 to L2.

Activity 2: Model dialog

This method helps students to gain knowledge about different speech act strategies that are used in authentic contexts. This activity consists of two steps:
A.Students listen/read and identify requests in each dialogue. For beginners, dialogues should be simple and short. English subtitle can be an aid to enhance their intelligibility.
B.Students are given different conversations but without background information of the situations, and have to predict the relationship between interlocutors. Are they acquaintances, strangers, or family members? What are their relative age? Olshtain and Cohen asserts that this step will assist learners with the realization of those influential factors in the delivery and choice of speech acts strategies. For instance, an activity that students might do is matching dialogues with their corresponding pictures. They might work in groups to discuss reasons of their choice and explain which parts of the semantic formulae make them think so. Students at low proficiency levels might speak in their native language as the purpose of this exercise is to help students get to know the sociocultural and sociolinguistic rules of English.

A variety of situations which match their appropriate choice of strategy is crucial in this step. To illustrate, the model dialogue should connote the nuances of directness levels between "Give me the book" and "Can you please give me the book?", for beginners, or between more advanced structures such as "Would you mind driving me to

school tomorrow?" and "I am wondering if I could get a ride to school with you tomorrow", for upper level learners.

Activity 3: Evaluation of a situation

An elaboration of contextual situations will strengthen students' knowledge of the social factors that affect strategy choice. For instance, learners practice to decide whether or not a request is suitable in a particular situation. They should work in groups or in pairs, to discuss why or why not it is relevant. This step can be followed up by having students identify various request strategies (Eslami & McLeod, 2010) in which they are given a set of different request types and have to categorize them from the most direct to indirect. This activity will shape students' awareness of English native speaker's perception on politeness value.

Activity 4: Role-play

This is a chance that students can practice what they have just learned. For advanced learners, scenarios might be more complicated which requires them to employ complex structures such as using both external modifiers and internal modifiers. They can be provided with cue cards that denote situations in which a performance of a speech act is needed. For example, a person who is lost asks a stranger for help, or a brother requests his sister to clean the house. This activity can be carried out in beginning or low-intermediate level classes as well, in a more controlled approach. For instance, among three request types: "Could you please", "How about", "Would you mind", they would need to choose the most appropriate one to conduct the speech act in a given circumstance.

<u>Activity 5:</u> Feedback and discussion

This final step is significant in the role of activating students' subconscious perception of politeness strategy choice. Students might want to discuss with the teacher the similarities and differences between strategy use in their first and foreign languages, which might help them understand and get used to the L2 norms. For example, if students are mistaken that the strategy "Can/Could you please" might be employed in most situations according to their L1's norms, it is the teacher's responsibility to point out that this model might not be appropriate in certain L2 contexts depending on the imposition level of the requests and interlocutors' relationship, and that they would need to speak in a more indirect manner by the use of other strategies such as "I am wondering if", or "Would it be possible for you". He/she can also explain how English native speakers perceive politeness in tandem with indirectness. Incase it is a Vietnamese teacher teaching beginner students, conversations should be carried out in their mother tongue to guarantee that they fully comprehend the cross-cultural issues.

Educators, though, need to know that these aims of these techniques are not to ask students to excel pragmatic knowledge in the target language, yet rather to hopefully help them to be more aware of L2 culture and its comparable linguistic structures, thus possibly to be "better listeners and react more appropriately to what native speakers say to them" (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991).

The preceding teaching methods would be extremely effective if educators, either native speakers or nonnative speakers of the target language, master pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics of both the L1 and L2. If English native teachers, for example, have

an adequate understanding about Vietnamese sociolinguistic rules, it would be easier for them to adjust their techniques to a more culture-sensitive style. Moreover, the students will feel more respectful because of the fact that their teacher also appreciate their cultural value and tradition, which might boost their motivation to learn and explore another culture. Incase native teachers are not aware of the students' culture, it is advisable that they should be considerate and show their interest in learners' feedback and thoughts since this is an opportunity to dig deeper into their introspective process of acquiring a new language. If teachers are Vietnamese, understanding L2 pragmatics helps them to teach students the similarities and differences between the two languages, which might hopefully lower the probability of pragmatic transfer. To sum up, a direct pedagogical approach to pragmatics of the target language should be implemented in language classroom, as Kasper & Schmidt (cited in Franch, 1998) put it: "pragmatic knowledge should be teachable."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Althen, Gary, & Bennett, Janet (2011). *American Ways* (3rd ed.). Boston, USA: Intercultural Press.

Andersen, Peter A., Hecht, Michael L., Hoobler, Gregory D., & Smallwood, Maya. (2003). Nonverbal Communication Across Cultures. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (73-90). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen (2000). Exploring the Interlanguage of Interlanguage Pragmatics: A Research Agenda for Acquisitional Pragmatics. *Language Learning, 49*(December 1999), 677-713.

Beebe, Leslie M., Takahashi, Tomoko, & Uliss-Weltz, Robin. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. S. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (55-73). New York: Newbury House Publishers.

Bergman, Marc L., & Kasper, Gabriele. (1993). Perception and Performance in Native and Nonnative Apology. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (82-101). New York: Oxford University Press.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana (1987). Indirectness and Politeness in Requests: same or difference? *Journal Pragmatics, 11*, 131-146.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, & Olshstain, Elite (1984). Request and apologies: a cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics, 5*, 196–213.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, Andrew D. (1996). Developing the ability to perform speech acts. *SSLA, 18*, 253-267.

Cutting, Joan (2015). Pragmatics: A Resource Book for Students (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Eslami, Zohreh R., & McLeod, Kent D. (2010). It's 8 o'clock in the morning-Are you watching television? Teaching Indirect Requests. In D. H. Tatsuki & N. R. Houck (Eds.), *Pragmatics: Teaching Speech Acts* (19-28). Maryland: TESOL.

Finegan, Edward (2004). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Boston, Massachusetts USA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Franch, Patricia Bou (1998). On Pragmatic Transfer. *Studies in English Language and Linguistics, 0*, 5-20.

Fraser, Bruce (1990). Perspectives on Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14*, 219-236.

Kachru, Yamuna, & Smith, Larry E. (2008). Parameters of Politeness. In *Cultures, Contexts, and World Englishes* (41-58). New York: Routledge.

Kasper, Gabriele, & Blum-Kulka, Shoshana. (1993). Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Introduction. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (3-13). New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

Kecskes, Istvan. (2012). Sociopragmatics and Cross-cultural and Intercultural Studies. In K. Allan & K. M. Jaszczolt (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Pragmatics* (600). New York, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Le, Ha Thu (2012). Directness in Conversations in American English and Vietnamese - A Comparative Study. (BA Thesis), Dong Thap University,

Montero, Rosberly Lopez (2015). Most common refusal strategies used by students of English teaching as a foreign language. *Revista De Lenguas Modernas, 23*, 137-148.

Ngo, Binh N., & Tran, Bac Hoai (2001). The Vietnamese Language Learning Framework. *Journal of Southeast Asian Language Teaching, 10*, 25-36.

Nguyen, Linh Thi Thuy (2015). Expressing Satisfaction in American English and Vietnamese. *VNU Journal of Science: Foreign Studies, 31*(4), 25-36.

Nguyen, Ly Huong (2012). The Speech Act of Apology Made by Vietnamese ESL Learners: An Interlanguage Pragmatic Study. (M.A), Vietnam National University, Ha Noi.

Nguyen, Minh Thi Thuy (2008). Criticizing in an L2: Pragmatic Strategies used by Vietnamese EFL Learners: The University of Auckland Library.

Nguyen, Quyen Thi Hong. (2010). Pragmatic Transfer in Compliment Responses by Vietnamese Learners of English. BA Thesis. School of Education. Can Tho University.

Nguyen, Thi Thuy Minh, & Ho, Gia Anh Le (2013). Requests and Politeness in Vietnamese as a Native Language. *Pragmatics, 23*(4), 685-714.

Nguyen, Trung Tien. (2014). An English-Vietnamese Cross-Cultural Communication Study on Using Addressing Form and Its Potential Culture Shock. Graduation Paper. Foreign Language Faculty. Hai Phong Private University.

Nguyen, Tuong Hung (2002). Vietnam: Cultural Background for ESL/EFL Teachers.

Olshtain, Elite, & Cohen, Andrew. (1991). Teaching Speech Act Behavior to Nonnative Speakers. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (154-165). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Paulston, Christina Bratt, & Bruder, Mary Newton (1976). Teaching English as a Second Language: Techniques & Procedures. Massachusetts: Winthrop Publishers.

Phan, Huong Thi Thu (2008). How Vietnamese culture influence on learning and teaching English.

Roever, Carsten. (2015). Researching pragmatics. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in Applied Linguistics* (387-399). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Rose, Kenneth R., & Kasper, Gabriele. (2001). Pragmatics in Language Teaching. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (1-9). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tajeddin, Zia. (2008). Functions and Good Language Learners. In C. Griffiths (Ed.), *Lessons from Good Language Learners*: Cambridge University Press.

Takahashi, Satomi (1995). Transfer in Interlanguage Pragmatics: New Research Agenda. *Studies in Languages and Cultures, 11*.

Thompson, Laurence C. (1965). *A Vietnamese Grammar*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Vo, Thi Lien Huong (2012). Linguistic and Cultural Features of Requests: Some Implication for Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language. *Journal of Science, 70*, 71-85.

Vo, Thi Lien Huong (2016). The Ethnopragmatics of Vietnamese: An Investigation into The Cultural Logic of Interactions focusing on the Speech Act Complex of Disagreement. (Doctor of Philosophy Doctor's Thesis), Griffith University.

Vu, Huong Thi Thanh (1997). *Politeness in Modern Vietnamese.* (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Toronto.

Vu, Thu Ha. (2013). *Negative Pragmatic Transfer in Complaining by Vietnamese EFL learners*. MA's thesis. English Linguistics. Vietnam National Univeristy. Hanoi.

Wardhaugh, Ronald (1998). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (3rd ed.). Massachusetts, USA 02148: Blackwell Publishers.

Wijayanto, Agus, Laila, Malikatul, Prasetyarini, Aryati, & Susiati, Susiati (2013). Politeness in Interlanguage Pragmatics of Complaints by Indonesian Learners of English. *English Language Teaching, 6*, 188-201.

Zegarac, Vladimir, & Pennington, Martha C. (2000). *Pragmatic Transfer in Intercultural Communication*.