

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the research, statement of the problem, research objective, research significance and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background

Every language has its own history. English language especially has a long way of history. The history begins from the old English period to the Modern English that is used by people as an international language now. During those periods, the language has spread out to many countries around the world. As a result, it is now spoken by many populations of people including the former British Empire countries, which some of them are now the members of The Commonwealth Nation. All of these countries use English either as their official language or second language. This proves that English is the most widespread language in the world (Algeo, 2010). Furthermore, this leads to bring many variations of the English language, such as the well-known American English, Singaporean English, Malaysian English, Australian English, Irish English, African English, Scottish English and many other variants of it.

Among these variations, American English is the one that is known the most regarding the fact that at least “70 percent of all English mother tongue speakers in the world (excluding creole varieties)” live in the USA (Crystal, 2003b: 60). The American English is so popular that it eventually surpasses the popularity of the original British English. Most people are more familiar with American English because it is used in many occasions, such as in Hollywood movies and also American songs. The popularity of American songs and movies affects in the introduction and spread of American English to the world (Jurigová, 2011). People from around the world now have the access to Hollywood movies and American song following the massive development of internet. They can easily watch movies and listen to songs in YouTube platform. Furthermore, the

United States being a superpower country also take an important role in the spread of American English since recently it was spread by American activities in world affairs (Algeo, 2010).

American English were bought by British tribes to the America in the early seventeenth century. Then, in 1828 Noah Webster made the first dictionary of American English titled American Dictionary of the English Language (Algeo, 2010). Basically it was the same language, but in a simplified form in order to make it easier to say and to write. The language is still the same but they want to make their own color.

There are some recognizable differences that distinguish American and British English such as lexical, grammatical and spelling differences. The words “flat” and “apartment”, “lift” and “elevator”, “autumn” and “fall”, “football” and “soccer”, are the common examples of lexical differences of British and American English respectively. Grammatical differences includes the preterite form of the words “dream”, “burn”, and “learn”. The preterite forms of those words end with –t in British English and –ed in American English. Spelling differences can be seen in the words “color” and “colour”, “center” and “centre”, “offense” and “offence”, “analyze” and “analyse”, “apologize” and “apologise”, and “organize” and “organise”. The former is in American English; the latter is in American English. Thus, from the point of view of non-native of both languages, it seem almost the same except for a few words mentioned earlier.

Regarding the aforementioned cases, there have been many studies on the comparison of American English and British English in the syntactic and semantic level. However, the differences can occur not only in those matters. It can occur in the pragmatic level as well.

Creese (1991), as a British living in America, states that she finds some differences in the way Americans and British use their language. In addition, she explains that there are “stereotypical views that the two cultures hold of each other, that is, the idea that English people are polite, indirect and cold as opposed to the Americans who are loud, direct and pseudo-friendly.” With this particular

characteristics, they will have different ways to apologize, complaint, invite, promise, request, and thank others. Therefore, this study will specifically focus on analyzing how they are different or similar in the use of thanking strategies.

Generally, thanking is defined as an act of showing gratitude feelings to someone who has given a favor to the speaker. The feelings and attitudes can be expressed through many strategies. Aijmer (2014) classifies the act of thanking into eight major strategies: 1) Strategy A: thanking somebody explicitly, 2) Strategy B: expressing gratitude, 3) Strategy C: expressing appreciation of the addressee, 4) Strategy D: expressing appreciation of the act, 5) Strategy E: acknowledging a debt of gratitude, 6) Strategy F: stressing one's gratitude, 7) Strategy G: expressing emotion, and 8) Strategy H: commenting on one's own role by suppressing one's own importance (self-denigration).

Several studies have been done to analyze the use of thanking strategies. Yoosefvand and Rasekh (2014) analyze the gender differences in the expression of gratitude by Persian speakers. The study shows that there are significant differences in the ways Persian male and female speakers use the speech act of gratitude in which the female speakers use gratitude strategies more than the male do.

Jung (1994) examines the basic functions of the act and responses to thanking expression in American English. He states that thanking expressions are used to express appreciation of benefits and to enhance rapport between interlocutors. These functions extend to the functions of conversational opening, changing, stopping, closing, leave-taking, and offering positive reinforcement. Its further use is to express dissatisfaction indirectly which often uses sarcasm and with different intonation.

Thus, this study will compare American and British English to see how they are different or similar in the pragmatic level through the speech act of thanking. The focus of this study is the use of thanking strategies in both dialects. The objects of this study are taken from selected Oscar acceptance speeches for the reason that those situations are likely to include many thanking strategies of the actors/actresses to those who have benefited them. Another reason is that the Oscar has been held

for almost a century so it has many winners from around the world mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom. Thus, the data will likely to cover many accents from around those countries. It is way more effective to choose the data this way rather than interviewing each and everyone of the American and the British to find out the way they express their gratitude.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Comparisons of American and British English has only been focused on the phonetic, semantic or syntactic level. Therefore, this study will focus on the comparison in pragmatic level by analyzing the differences of thanking strategies used by the actors/actresses from both countries in their Oscar's acceptance speeches. This problem is formulated into research questions as follow.

1. What thanking strategies are used by the American actors/actresses in Oscar acceptance speech?
2. What thanking strategies are used by the British actors/actresses in Oscar acceptance speech?
3. How are American and British actors/actresses similar or different in the use of thanking strategies?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to find the common thanking strategies used by British and American actors/actresses in their Oscar acceptance speeches as well as the differences of their choosing particular thanking strategies.

- a. To describe the thanking strategies used by the American actors/actresses in their Oscar's acceptance speeches.
- b. To describe the common thanking strategies used by the British actors/actresses in their Oscar's acceptance speeches.
- c. To compare how American and British actors/actresses are similar or different in the use of thanking strategies.

1.4 Research Significance

The results of this study are expected to gain some theoretical and practical significances.

Theoretically, the findings of this study are beneficial for:

- a. Being a reference for researcher who are interested in studying pragmatics and sociolinguistics and intend to conduct any further research of thanking strategies.
- b. Developing the object of the study of thanking strategies in pragmatics.

Practically, the results of this research are beneficial for:

- a. Enriching the knowledge of Linguistics for the students particularly in the field of pragmatics and sociolinguistics.
- b. Non-native speakers and English learners to explore many ways of thanking others from the native speakers of two major English variants.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

In order to give the reader a clearer explanation of this paper, the researcher provide a set of definition on some important terms discussed in this paper. The definition of those terms are as follow.

- a. Pragmatics
Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning in a particular context in order to understand how more gets communicated than is said and to know the expression of relative distance (Yule, 1996).
- b. Speech Act
Yule (1996: 47) defines speech acts as “actions performed via utterances.”
- c. Thanking strategies

Thanking strategies are the way people express their gratitude to others.

d. American

The word American in the phrase “American actors/actresses” and “American English” is an adjective that means anything related to the United States of America. American actors/actresses are those that were born or raised in America and prefer to speak with American English; American English is a variant of English which is native to America.

e. British

The same goes for the word British. British actors/actresses are those that were born or raised in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and speak with British accent.

f. The Oscars

The Oscars, also known as the Academy Awards, is the annual awards held by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in order to recognize the excellence in the film industry.

g. Acceptance speech

Acceptance speech is the speech that is given by someone who just receives an award.

h. British

The same goes for the word British. British actors/actresses are those that were born or raised in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and speak with British accent.

i. The Oscars

The Oscars, also known as the Academy Awards, is the annual awards held by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in order to recognize the excellence in the film industry.

j. Acceptance speech

Acceptance speech is the speech that is given by someone who just receives an award.