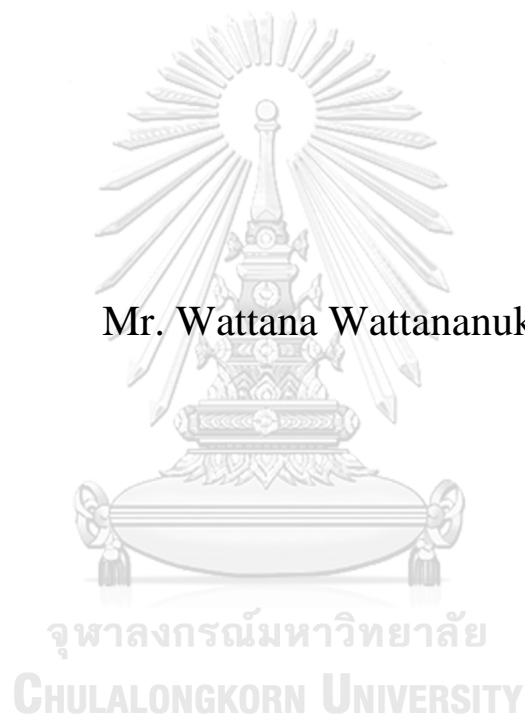


Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Investigation of Pragmatic  
Transfer in Responses to English Tag Questions by L1 Thai  
Learners



Mr. Wattana Wattananukij

An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in English  
Department of English  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Chulalongkorn University  
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วิจัยปฏิบัติการภาษาในระหว่าง: การศึกษาการถ่ายโอนทางวิจัยปฏิบัติการในการตอบ  
คำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนที่ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง



สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
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Thai Learners  
By                                      Mr. Wattana Wattananukij  
Field of Study                      English  
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Accepted by the FACULTY OF ARTS, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
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วัดนา วัดนานุกิจ : วจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาในระหว่าง: การศึกษาการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้าย  
 ภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนที่ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง. ( Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Investigation of  
 Pragmatic Transfer in Responses to English Tag Questions by L1 Thai Learners) อ.ที่ปรึกษา  
 หลัก : รศ. ดร.ณัฐมา พงศ์ไพโรจน์

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษ  
 (English tag questions) ของผู้เรียนที่ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง โดยอิงจากทฤษฎีวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาใน  
 ระหว่าง (Interlanguage Pragmatics) โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ (Pragmatic Transfer)  
 (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) กลุ่มผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยประกอบด้วย กลุ่มควบคุมที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา 1 กลุ่มและกลุ่มทดลอง  
 2 กลุ่ม กลุ่มควบคุมได้แก่ผู้ที่เป็นผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งจำนวน 3 คน เพื่อใช้เป็นข้อมูลอ้างอิง และกลุ่มทดลองได้แก่ผู้เรียนที่มี  
 ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่ง โดยแบ่งเป็น 2 กลุ่มตามระดับสมรรถภาพภาษาอังกฤษ กล่าวคือ กลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับกลาง  
 (intermediate learners) และกลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับสูง (advanced learners) โดยประกอบไปด้วย 16 คนใน  
 แต่ละกลุ่มทดลอง งานวิจัยนี้เก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบสอบถามชนิดเติมบทสนทนาแบบพูด (an oral discourse completion  
 task) และแบบเขียน (a written discourse completion task) (Blum-Kulka, 1982) เพื่อวัดการตอบคำถามห้อย  
 ท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบบอกเล่าและปฏิเสธ ทั้งในแบบการพูดและการเขียน ผลการวิจัยหลักได้เผยให้เห็นว่าผู้เรียนที่มีภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งมี  
 ปัญหาในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบปฏิเสธมากกว่าการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบบอกเล่า ซึ่งเป็นผลมาจากการ  
 พึ่งพาแบบแผนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาไทยไทยอย่างเห็นได้ชัดของผู้เรียนชาวไทย นอกจากนี้ผลการวิจัยยังแสดงให้เห็นว่า การถ่ายโอน  
 ทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ที่เป็นผลมาจากลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ที่แตกต่างกันของการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษและการตอบคำถาม  
 ห้อยท้ายภาษาไทยนั้นก็ยังคงปรากฏอยู่ในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษทั้งในแบบการพูดและการเขียนของผู้เรียนชาวไทยทั้งสอง  
 กลุ่มสมรรถภาพภาษาอังกฤษ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับกลางมี  
 ลักษณะคล้ายเจ้าของภาษาน้อยกว่าการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับสูง กล่าวคือ การตอบคำถาม  
 ห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับกลางแสดงให้เห็นถึงการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์มากกว่าการตอบ คำถาม  
 ห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มผู้เรียนที่มีสมรรถภาพระดับสูง สำหรับการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้าย  
 ภาษาอังกฤษทั้งในการพูดและการเขียนนั้น ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่าการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบปฏิเสธในรูปแบบของการเขียน  
 แสดงให้เห็นถึงการถ่ายโอนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์มากกว่าการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบปฏิเสธในรูปแบบของการพูด จึง  
 สันนิษฐานได้ว่าผู้เรียนชาวไทยตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษในการพูดได้คล้ายเจ้าของภาษามากกว่าในการเขียน ผลจากงานวิจัยนี้คาดว่า  
 จะช่วยอธิบายได้ถึงประสิทธิภาพในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนชาวไทยที่มีภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งและการพึ่งพาแบบ  
 แผนทางวจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาไทยในการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษ งานวิจัยนี้มีนัยทางการเรียนการสอน กล่าวคือผู้สอน  
 ภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทยควรแก้ไขให้เห็นถึงความแตกต่างของการตอบคำถามห้อยท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบปฏิเสธและการตอบคำถามห้อย  
 ท้ายภาษาอังกฤษแบบบอกเล่า

สาขาวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ  
 ปีการศึกษา 2563

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต .....  
 ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก .....

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KEYWORD: Interlanguage Pragmatics, Second Language Acquisition, Pragmatic Transfer, Responses to English Tag Questions, L1 Thai learners, L2 English

Wattana Wattananukij : Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Investigation of Pragmatic Transfer in Responses to English Tag Questions by L1 Thai Learners. Advisor: Assoc. Prof. NATTAMA PONGPAIROJ, Ph.D.

The research investigated pragmatic transfer in responses to English tag questions by L1 Thai learners based on the theory of interlanguage pragmatics, specifically pragmatic transfer (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). There were two participant groups: a native control group and two experimental groups. The control group consisted of three native English speakers formulating the baseline data. The experimental groups were categorized according to their English proficiency levels: the intermediate and the advanced groups, with 16 participants in the learners' group. An oral discourse completion task and a written discourse completion task (Blum-Kulka, 1982) were employed to elicit the participants' responses to English affirmative and negative tag questions in two modalities, speaking and writing. The major findings cast light on the L1 Thai learners' problems in responding to English negative tag questions, rather than positive ones, as a result of their strong reliance on the Thai pragmatic norm. The results also showed that pragmatic transfer, which resulted from different linguistic patterns of responses to English tag questions and responses to Thai tag questions, was evidently found in both advanced and intermediate L1 Thai learners of English in both modalities. However, the responses to English tag questions by the intermediate group was less native-like than the advanced group's responses and manifested a higher degree of pragmatic transfer than the advanced groups' responses. Concerning pragmatic transfer in the two modalities, the responses to English negative tag questions in writing manifested a greater degree of pragmatic transfer than those in speaking. It is assumed that L1 Thai learners produced more native-like responses to English tag questions in oral production, rather than in written production. The findings of this research are expected to elucidate the performance of the L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions in both modalities and their dependence on L1 Thai pragmatic norm in responding English tag questions. This study yielded some pedagogical implications in that English language teachers in Thailand should focus more on differentiating responses to English negative tag questions from those to English affirmative tag questions.

Field of Study: English  
Academic Year: 2020

Student's Signature .....  
Advisor's Signature .....

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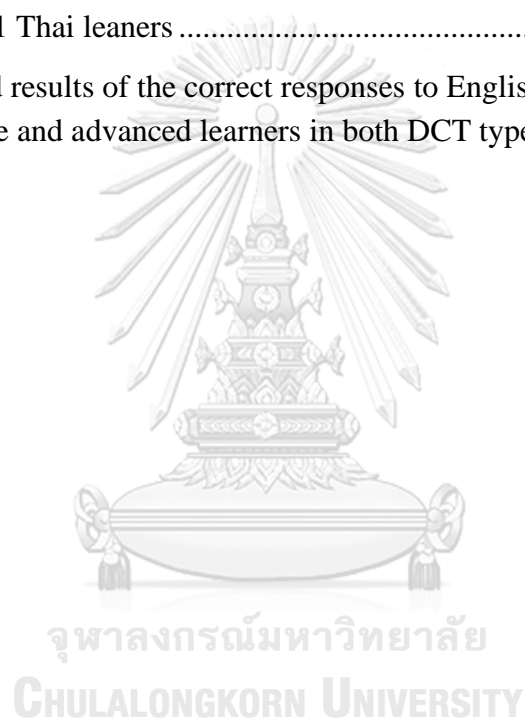


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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Within the discipline of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Interlanguage (IL), the systematic knowledge of a second language (L2) learner depending on both these learners' first language (L1) and the target language (Selinker, 1972), has been well-attested and continuously studied. A number of interlanguage studies have focused on syntax (E.g. Akbarnezhad et al., 2020; Kong, 2020), morphology (E.g. Adejare, 2019; Prapobratanakul & Pongpairoj, 2019), and phonology (E.g. Contreras, 2018; Sridhanyarat, 2017). However, not only does interlanguage involve the three mentioned subfields of linguistics, but it also entails pragmatics. Later introduced by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) concerns how nonnative speakers use and acquire the ability to produce and understand communicative action—how language is used in its sociocultural context, for example, using speech acts, participating in conversation, and sustaining interaction in conversation (Kasper, 1997) - in their L2.

Under interlanguage pragmatics, considerable attention has been given to negative pragmatic transfer, which leads to linguistic deviations from native norms. With respect to L2 learners, negative pragmatic transfer has resulted in their hindrance to correctly produce their L2 targets. ILP has been widely studied in the Thai context, most of which are speech act-oriented, for example, apologies (Bergman & Kasper, 1993), apologies and thanks (Intachakra, 2004), refusals (Weerachairattana & Wannaruk, 2016), and compliment responses (CRs) (Phoocharoensil, 2012). In contrast, only one study focused on the language use aspect is Chantharasombat and Pongpairoj (2018) on an investigation of negative responses to English negative Yes/No questions.

One of the most problematic structures in English is English tag questions. A number of research concerning the acquisition of English tag questions have been conducted in both L1 and L2 acquisition. In the domain of L1, it has been argued that even young native speakers of English produce variability of the structure in English

tag questions (Dennis et al., 1982; Weeks, 1992). In L2 contexts, the acquisition and the production of English tag questions have been investigated among L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds, such as L1 Japanese (Dairong & Huiyuan, 2009), L1 Chinese (Dairong & Huiyuan, 2009; Zhang, 2010), L1 Arabic (Al-Nabtiti, 2012), L1 Swedish (Brasch, 2013), and L1 Indonesian (Syamsiah, 2011). Despite an array of studies regarding the acquisition of English tag questions by L2 learners from different L1s, only two academic articles related to how speakers in different L1 respond to English tag questions. The first study focused on problems of L1 Korean learners in responding to English tag questions (Shaffer, 2002), and the other claimed that L1 Japanese speakers encountered difficulty in answering any negative questions, which potentially caused problems in English language classrooms in Japan (Akiyama, 1979).

As far as the Thai context is concerned, to the best of my knowledge, there has never been any studies exploring responses to English tag questions by L1 Thai learners. There has been only a claim that the issue of responses to English tag questions is highly problematic (Senawong, 1999). Therefore, this current study will be designed to essentially fill the gap by looking into the problems of responses in different modalities, i.e. speaking and writing.

## **1.2 Research questions**

1. What is the correlation between L1 Thai learners' different English proficiency levels and responses to English tag questions in different modalities, i.e. speaking and writing?
2. To what extent do L1 Thai intermediate learners, in comparison to L1 Thai advanced learners, demonstrate pragmatic transfer in responses to English tag questions in speaking and writing?
3. To what extent is pragmatic transfer demonstrated in L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions in speaking, in comparison to writing?

## **1.3 Objectives**

1. To seek the correlation between L1 Thai learners' different English proficiency levels and responses to English tag questions in different modalities, i.e. speaking and writing.

2. To examine the degree of pragmatic transfer demonstrated in L1 Thai intermediate learners' responses to English tag questions in speaking and writing, in comparison to the degree of pragmatic transfer demonstrated L1 Thai advanced learners' responses to English tag questions in speaking and writing.
3. To examine the degree of pragmatic transfer demonstrated in L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions in speaking, in comparison to writing.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

1. The variables of different English proficiencies and different modalities will affect how L1 Thai learners respond to English tag questions.
2. L1 Thai intermediate learners will produce less native-like responses to English tag questions whereas L1 Thai advanced learners will produce more native-like responses to English tag questions.
3. Responses to English tag questions in speaking by both L1 Thai intermediate learners and L1 Thai advanced learners demonstrate a higher degree of pragmatic transfer while those in writing by both learner groups demonstrate a lower degree of pragmatic transfer.

The next chapter presents related theories and previous studies in relation to responses to English tag questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, literature reviewed is as follows: (2.1) Related theories, (2.2) Previous studies, (2.3) Responses to Thai tag questions and responses to English tag questions, and (2.4) Responses to English tag questions by L2 learners with different L1s.

#### 2.1 Related theories

##### 2.1.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP)

Under the discipline of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) is termed as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3). To shed light on the definition provided, it is of note that ILP is regarded from a perspective on pragmatics where learners’ linguistic comprehension and production of linguistic action based on contexts and based on learners’ prior language knowledge are investigated.

Interlanguage Pragmatics can be considered as one of the branches of SLA research. ILP is one of the subfields of interlanguage studies, namely interlanguage phonology, interlanguage morphology, and interlanguage semantics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). ILP, considered one of the approaches to study pragmatic failure, follows methodology in interlanguage studies (Selinker, 1972) in that ILP researchers compare learners’ IL production and comprehension with L1 and L2 data (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 12). Then, it yields the research tools to establish how learners’ pragmatic performance differs from their L2 and how learners’ L2 is influenced by their L1, leading to a major concern of ILP research where the interaction of learners’ L1 influence is explored along the interlanguage toward the L2 norm (Bou-Franch, 2012; Chantharasombat & Pongpairoj, 2018; Franch, 1998; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

More precisely, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) claimed that the first potential impediment to learners' use of general pragmatic knowledge base is their rudimentary knowledge of L2 linguistics. Secondly, learners' lack of pragmalinguistic competence as well as negative transfer of L1 sociopragmatic norm are mentioned. Lastly, readiness to stay loyal to L1 socio-cultural patterns is counted. All mentioned significantly cause deviations from the native norm. That is, the three aforementioned factors inhibit L2 learners from producing native-like linguistic action patterns.

### 2.1.2 Pragmatic Transfer

The definition of pragmatic transfer has been provided throughout a few decades. Having been referred to as sociolinguistic transfer by Wolfson (1981), as discourse transfer by Odlin (1989), and as cross-linguistic influence by Beebe et al. (1990), the term was specifically defined by Kasper as "...the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information (1992, p. 207, as cited in Franch, 1998)".

Pragmatic transfer, as in the notion of Kasper (1992), obtains from interlanguage pragmatic studies. Kasper (1992) divided pragmatic transfer into two types: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, based on Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983). In detail, the first one pertains to illocutionary force and politeness values whereas the latter concerns socially appropriate linguistic behaviour. The classification briefly discussed is advantageous to theoretical and cross-cultural pragmatics, to language teaching, and to interlanguage pragmatic studies (Franch, 1998).

Franch (1998) offered the most obvious dichotomy of pragmatic transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer. While positive transfer, or facilitative transfer, refers to "pragmatic behavior or other knowledge that displays consistent across L1, IL, and L2", negative transfer, or interference, refers to "the influence of L1 pragmatic competence on IL pragmatic knowledge that differs from L2 target" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). However, it is worth noting that negative transfer is of ILP researchers' attention, since the deviations of learners'

pragmatic production from L1, the effects of self-representation, and the hindrance to successful communication all result from negative transfer.

Owing to the attention considerably paid to negative transfer, transferability constraints, the conditions which promote or inhibit transfer need to be mentioned. The three constraints are learners' linguistic proficiency and degree of dependence upon their L1 influence; learners' cultural competence and willingness to adapt L2 linguistic action patterns and use, and learners' exposure to L2 knowledge and duration of stay in L2 context (Franch, 1998).

The next section presents some previous studies where pragmatic transfer from L1 Thai to L2 English was mainly focused.

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

### **2.2.1 Previous Studies under the Scope of Pragmatic Transfer from L1 Thai to L2 English**

There have been a number of research concerning pragmatic transfer from L1 Thai to L2 English. The previous studies related to Pragmatic Transfer include apologies and thanks (e.g. Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Intachakra, 2004; Khamyod & Alsonjarung, 2011), refusals (e.g. Wannaruk, 2008; Weerachairattana & Wannaruk, 2016), compliment responses (e.g. Phoocharoensil, 2012), and responses to negative yes/no question (e.g. Chantharasombat & Pongpairoj, 2018). These results from all these studies reveal learners' negative pragmatic transfer from L1 patterns of Thai to L2 English production.

Despite the fact that the aforementioned studies provide strong evidence regarding negative pragmatic transfer from L1 Thai to L2 English, most studies are more likely to be classified under speech acts, rather than second language acquisition. Only one study concerning negative responses to English negative Yes/No questions (Chantharasombat & Pongpairoj, 2018) is strongly associated with second language acquisition.

Chantharasombat and Pongpairoj (2018) investigated the negative responses to English negative Yes/No questions. Negative pragmatic transfer produced by L1 Thai speakers with low English proficiency level was



hypothesized. For the data collection, Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was administered to 14 participants whose L2 English proficiency levels range from low to advanced. The hypothesis was confirmed in that learners from low English proficiency group were more likely to rely upon their L1 Thai pragmatic and therefore demonstrated more negative transfer to their L2 English production influenced by Thai pragmatic, as opposed to their higher- level counterparts.

It can be seen that pragmatic transfer has a negative impact upon responses to English negative Yes/No questions. The next part presents previous studies concerned with the acquisition of English tag questions under both L1 and L2 acquisition.

#### 2.2.2 Previous Studies regarding the Acquisition of English Tag Questions under L1 and L2 acquisition frameworks.

In this section, previous literature in relation to the L1 and L2 acquisition of English tag questions are generated as follows: (2.2.2.1) Previous Studies on the First Language Acquisition of English Tag Questions, (2.2.2.2) Previous Studies on the Second Language Acquisition of English Tag Questions, and (2.2.2.3) previous studies regarding the acquisition of tag questions under L1 and L2 acquisition frameworks.

##### 2.2.2.1 *Previous Studies on the First Language Acquisition of English Tag Questions*

This section presents previous studies concerning L1 acquisition of English tag questions.

Dennis et al. (1982) investigated the production of English tag question by 50 Toronto schoolchildren who were recruited based on their average intelligence and English-speaking language history. There were five age groups: 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14, each of which had five boys and five girls in total. The main research instrument was JAWS tag test, which contained 24 affirmative statements and 24 negative statements specifically indicated by not or never. Out of the 48 sentences, three types of verbs were equally generated: the auxiliary verb be (16 sentences), the verb can (16

sentences), and no auxiliary verbs which required a do-support in forming a tag (16 sentences). The participants were asked to recall 48 sentences and form tag questions for each sentence. The results revealed that 4 types of errors were found from the production: pronominalization, verb, polarity<sup>1</sup>, and inversion. The first two types of errors were much improved in the production data of 8- and 12-year-old participants. For the inversion errors, they could not be calculated due to the limited number inverted utterances. However, the polarity errors could be seen in every age group. The variance of polarity production was reported, and it seemed that the participants performed on polarity better with older age.

Weeks (1992) examined how preschoolers produced tag questions and whether they followed the polarity-contrast principle. Two groups of participants included four preschoolers with lower language skill (i.e., some language disorders) and five preschoolers with higher language skills. The participants were told a story and required to answer some comprehension questions. Then, the researcher asked the participants to repeat, one by one, a series of tag questions. The results showed that the high-level children produced tag questions more correctly than the low-level children did. From the qualitative data, polarity-matching errors could be found in more negative tag questions (E.g. Mary didn't go downstairs, did she?) than positive tag questions (Mary took a bath, didn't she?).

These two studies of the acquisition and production of English tag questions under the domain of L1 English emphasized that polarity errors, especially in the negative tag questions, occurred even among L1 English speakers at the young age.

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<sup>1</sup> Polarity, also known as tags, is one reduced interrogative clause, such as *did he?* and *didn't he?*. It is intentionally used to seek confirmation of the previous statement. The polarity contrasts with the previous statement as can be seen from the following basic structures: (1.) negative clause + positive tag and (2.) positive clause + negative tag (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 787).

### 2.2.2.2 Previous Studies on the Second Language Acquisition of English Tag Questions

The literature on English tag questions in this section provides an overall picture of how English tag questions have been widely investigated.

Dairong and Huiyuan (2009) investigated the acquisition of negator features existing in double negations, yes/no questions, and tag questions in English, Japanese, and Chinese. The researchers recruited six groups of subjects—three different educational levels of Chinese learners and three different educational levels of Japanese learners—and one control group—English native speakers. All subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire which tested their accuracy of production of related structures. The results concerning English tag questions revealed that the produced sentences by Chinese learners were more accurate than those by Japanese counterparts. However, the highest percentage of accuracy performed by Chinese learners was only 69%, which was considered quite low. The low rate of accuracy can be attributed to negative transfer from the L1 of subjects, Chinese and Japanese,

Zhang (2010) examined erroneous English tag questions produced by Chinese learners by focusing on types and causes of the error. The researcher applied the framework of Error Analysis and found that Chinese learners' deviant English tag questions can be described in five sources of errors based on the concept of intralingual errors. Zhang claimed that Chinese learners tended to rely much on invariant English tag questions<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Her mother was ill, right?) since the pattern of Chinese tag questions considered the invariant forms was negatively transferred to Chinese learners of English.

Alotaibi and Alotaibi (2015) investigated how 70 Kuwait EFL learners form English tag questions and whether the English proficiency levels of the learners would play a key role in their correct test answers. The

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<sup>2</sup>Invariant tag questions are non-canonical forms of tag question which break grammatical rule. Either verbs or nouns used in the invariant tags do not accord with the preceding sentence. Some examples of the invariant tags are *ininit* (Torgerson et al., 2011), *yeah?*, *Eh?*, *Ok?*, *Right?*, and *Innit?* (Stenström et al, 2002).

participants were asked to complete a multiple-choice test to measure their awareness of the syntactic structures of English tag questions. The findings revealed that Kuwait EFL learners failed to be aware of the syntax of English tag questions and the level of English proficiency did have an impact on their correct answer.

Brasch (2013) investigated whether Swedish students with different proficiencies were able to produce canonical question tags with reverse polarity. The participants were 22 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and 23 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. These participants were required to complete two tests: the former tested the concept of subject and verb agreement and the latter tested the ability to canonical reverse polarity in unfinished sentences. The results showed that the L1 Swedish participants were perfectly incapable of producing tag questions with contrasting polarity; however, they were still in their developmental process of the structure in question.

Syamsiah (2011) studied the production of English tag questions by 30 L1 Indonesian students who were in the second year of State Junior High School 4 Kota Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia. All the subjects were asked to complete two tests: a 15-item multiple choice and a 10-item cloze test. These two tests were comprised of a number of grammatical difficulty area, such as tenses, modals, subject there, subject that, imperatives, and requests. The results showed that the most difficult areas of English tag questions encountered by the subjects were imperative sentences, closely followed by request sentences. The researcher suggested that assigning more grammatical drills could help students improve their production of English tag questions.

The studies discussed above are not directly associated with the focus of the current study: responses to English tag questions. They, however, cast light on responses to English tag questions in that L1 Thai speakers having difficulty in forming the correct forms of English tag question are thus likely to produce a deviant form when responding to English tag questions because of negative transfer from the learners' L1.

## 2.3 Responses to Thai tag questions and responses to English tag questions

This section explains Thai tag questions and responses to English tag questions.

### 2.3.1 Responses to tag questions in Thai

As explained by Iwasaki and Horie (2005), a tag question is used when an individual requires confirmation from the addressee. To be more specific, Higbie and Thinsan (2002), provided certain forms of Thai tag questions: (1.) /chây máy/, (2.) /mây chây rú/, and (3.) /chây rú-plàaw/.

In addition, Smyth (2002) and Senawong (1999) stated that yes/no answers are reversed in Thai when compared to English. While in standard English, native English speakers say ‘Yes (I did)’ and ‘No (I didn’t)’, in Thai, Thais say ‘Yes (I didn’t)’ and ‘No (I did)’. Some examples of responses to Thai tag questions are as follows:

- 1) A: māj dāj paj rk rt  
 NEG<sup>3</sup> COMP<sup>4</sup> go PAR<sup>5</sup> QUES<sup>6</sup>  
 ‘You didn’t go, didn’t you?’  
 B: khâ? māj dāj paj  
 PAR NEG COMP go  
 ‘Yes, I didn’t go’

(Taken from Senawong, 1999, p. 24)

- 2) A: He isn’t going, is he?  
 B: No, he is going too.

(Taken from Higbie & Thinsan, 2002, p. 63)

<sup>3</sup>NEG = negative (Senawong, 1999, p. 31)

<sup>4</sup>COMP = completive verb (Senawong, 1999, p. 31)

<sup>5</sup>PAR = sentence particle (Senawong, 1999, p. 31)

<sup>6</sup>QUES = question marker (Senawong, 1999, p. 31)

- 3) A: khun mây rúu chây máy?  
 you NEG know yes QUES  
 You know, don't you?'  
 B: chây (mây rúu)/mây chây (rúu)  
 yes (NEG know)/NEG yes (know)  
 Yes (I don't know)/No (I do know).

(Taken from Chantharasombat & Pongpairoj, 2018, p. 194)

### 2.3.2 Responses to tag questions in English

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) threw light on answering to English tag questions in *The Cambridge Grammar of The English Language*. They stated, “In *Yes, it is* and *No, it isn't*, the *yes* and *no* can be regarded as a special type of adjunct, a polarity adjunct, which agrees in polarity with the clause”. They added that *\*Yes, it isn't* and *\*No, it is* are ungrammatical when they are used to respond to English tag questions. The following example is some grammatically correct responses to tag questions in English:

- 4) A: He has gone, hasn't he?  
 B: Yes (he has)/No (he hasn't).  
 5) A: He hasn't gone, has he?  
 B: Yes (he has)/No (he hasn't).

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 848)

Moreover, Murphy (2015) emphasized that in answering a negative question the meaning of *yes* and *no* is as follows:

- 6) A: You are not going out today, are you?  
 B: Yes. (= Yes, I am going out.) /  
 No. (= No, I am not going out.)

(Murphy, 2015, p. 104)

## 2.4 Responses to English tag questions by L2 learners with different L1s

This section offers some previous literatures regarding deviant responses to English tag questions produced by L2 learners with different L1 backgrounds.

Shaffer (2002, p. 219) described two types of committed errors by L1 Korean learners of English. The first error type was called, “L1 syntax-influenced errors”, and the second one was called, “culturo-syntactically related errors”. With respect to responses to English tag questions, the second type was included here. In the Korean society, it was considered impolite when younger people refused to older people, which was regarded as, “Principle of Least Opposition”. This said principle led to a deviant from of responses to English tag question by L1 Korean speakers. In greater detail, L1 Korean speakers tended to respond to English tag questions with the negative clause preceded by an affirmative adverb of response, in order to providing the hearer with more positive responses. Some examples from Shaffer (2002) could be seen below:

7) You don't have any questions, do you?

\*Yes, (I don't.)

(Shaffer, 2002, p. 229)

8) Isn't this Hong Gildong's house?

\*Yes, it isn't.

(Shaffer, 2002, p. 230)

In addition, canonical responses to English tag questions by native English speakers and Japanese speakers were delineated by Akiyama (1979). In English, acceptable responses to English tag questions were yes or no according to speakers' intention. Unlike English, Japanese speakers answered hai, which means, “what you just said is correct”, and, iie which means, “what you just said is not correct”. Accordingly, the distinction between these two ways of responses to English tag questions is the source of L2 committed errors made by L2 Japanese learners of English. Specifically, L2 Japanese speakers were prone to answer English tag questions by depending on the sense of the agreement between the question and their own intention. A conclusion regarding from Akiyama (1979) is shown below.

*“Japanese speakers answer yes whenever the statement form (e.g., You aren’t going) of the question agrees with the intention (i.e., I am not going) and no whenever it disagrees with the intention (i.e., I am going).”*

(Akiyama, 1979, p. 488)

Akiyama also concluded that the pattern of responses to Japanese and English affirmative tag questions is similar, but the pattern of responses to Japanese and English negative tag questions is reversed.

The two studies provided empirical evidence of how L1 Korean and L1 Japanese learners of English produced deviant structures of responses to English tag questions. Pragmatic transfer considered the root cause of the deviations discussed.

At this stage, according to previous studies on pragmatic transfer from Thai to English and on English tag questions under SLA frameworks, it is obvious that L1 Thai speakers tend to have difficulty in producing the canonical forms of English structure, especially English tag questions, owing to negative pragmatic transfer from their L1. More specifically, the fact that L1 pragmatic transfer considerably hinders L1 Thai speakers in their performance based on L2 norms of English and that the responses to tag questions in Thai and English are markedly different, strongly reinforces the hypothesis of this present study that deviations of responses to English tag questions produced by L1 Thai speakers are due to negative pragmatic transfer from L1 Thai pragmatic competence.

Although the literature of Senawong (1999) briefly explained how Thai speakers responded to English tag questions with the deviant forms, to the best of my knowledge, the studies of responses to English tag questions under the area of pragmatic transfer from L1 Thai to L2 English have not been conducted. This particular study was therefore conducted to fill the gap by investigating how L1 Thai speakers produce their responses to English tag question. To add values to the study, different English proficiency levels of L1 Thai speakers and two modalities of writing and speaking are also considered.

The next chapter elaborates on participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis pertaining to this study.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology is presented, i.e., participants (3.1), instruments (3.2), data collection (3.3), and data analysis (3.4).

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants were divided into two groups: a native English speaker control group and two experimental groups. The control group consisted of three (one male and two females) native speakers of American English. Their ages were 21, 33, and 38. Each of them was originally from different states in the U.S.: Hawaii, Tennessee, and Florida. All of them were born and raised in their own states, growing up speaking English as their native tongue. It is of note that the main purpose of recruiting the control group was that they could formulate the baseline data<sup>7</sup> for this current study.

Concerning the two experimental groups, they were composed of 16 intermediate L1 Thai learners of English and 16 advanced L1 Thai learners of English. All the thirty-two undergraduate students were from three universities in Thailand and two universities overseas: Chulalongkorn University (n = 26), Thammasat University (n = 3), Civil Aviation Training Center (n = 1), Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific (n = 1) and University of California, Berkeley (n = 1). The participants studied in a wide range of faculties including Arts (n = 16), Engineering (n = 3), Political Science (n = 3), Pharmacy (n = 3), Dentistry (n = 2), Commerce and Accountancy (n = 1), Education (n = 1), Law (n = 1), Veterinary Science (n = 1), and Aviation Management (n = 1).

In terms of their English scores, they were divided into two proficiency groups: the advanced proficiency group (n=16) and the intermediate proficiency group (n=16). The participants who were qualified for the advanced group were required to have a minimum CU-TEP score of 99 or a minimum IELTS score of 7, both of which can be compared to a C1 of CEFR levels. In contrast, the participants who were qualified for the intermediate group were required to have a minimum CU-TEP score of 35 or a

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<sup>7</sup> Baseline data is the performance of native speakers in a particular task. It is collected from native speakers. In second language acquisition research, the baseline data plays an important role in that it is used to be compared to the data elicited from non-native speakers (Richards, 1980).

minimum IELTS score of 4, both of which can be compared to a B1-B2 of CEFR levels (Wudthayagorn, 2018). Their amount of time learning English in an academic classroom setting was approximately 10 years. The participants' first language was Thai, and their ages ranged from 18 to 24. (See details of the population with respect to their faculty, age, CU-TEP/IELTS scores and English proficiency levels in Appendix 1).

### **3.2 Instruments**

All instruments employed in this present study were in English. Aside from the CU-TEP and IELTS scores used to classify participants into groups based on their English proficiency levels, Discourse Completion Tasks (Blum-Kulka, 1982), an oral DCT and a written DCT, were used as major instruments to elicit the participants' responses to English tag questions. The participants in both English proficiencies and the native control group were asked to complete both tasks in English in order to reveal their performance in their responses to English tag questions and to attain the baseline data of responses to English tag questions, respectively.

#### **3.2.1 Experts' validation (The index of Item-Objective Congruence)**

To produce the spoken and written DCTs, the researcher first drafted all the test items and distractors, some of which were freshly created and some of which were adapted from other sources, for the two DCT types. After the completion of the first draft, the researcher sent all the test items used in both the oral and the written DCTs to three lecturers who were native English speakers and had them validate the accuracy of the language used in the tasks so that the tests would be congruent with the research objective.

The following three experts were recruited in this study. The first expert (a native American English speaker) was teaching at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. The second and third expert (native New Zealand English speakers) were teaching English at AIMS, a tutorial school located in Bangkok, and Concordian International School in Bangkok, Thailand, respectively.

The validation was proceeded based on the Index of Item-Object Congruence (IOC) (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976) as shown in the table below. The IOC result of every test item was calculated and supposed to rate between 0.50 – 1.00, which was regarded as an acceptable score. For this current study, the IOC score of all the test items in the cloze test was 0.918 (See Appendix 2).

*Table 1: Scoring and Criteria according to the Index of Item-Objective Congruence*

Scoring	Criteria
+1	The expert was certain that the test item was congruent with the objectives
0	The expert was uncertain the test item was congruent with the objectives.
-1	The expert was certain the test item was not congruent with the objectives.

The IOC scores were calculated by the researcher using the following formula.

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N}$$

$\sum R$  : The total number of the experts' scores

N: The number of the experts

### 3.2.2 Oral Discourse Completion Task

An oral discourse completion task (Oral DCT) was used to evaluate production of test takers' routines and formulaic expressions (Culpeper et al., 2018). The oral DCT elicited the participants' pragmatic competence and real-time knowledge processing aspects.

To produce the oral DCT, recordings of situation and question parts were dubbed by two American male speakers originally from Carolina and Arkansas, the U.S., respectively. After the process of making the recordings for the oral DCT was completed, the oral DCT were ready to be used in the study.

In terms of the number of items in the oral DCT, it contained six items, each of which included one situation and one four-turn dialogue. Specifically, in the four-turn dialogue, it was composed of two question turns designed to elicit

the participants' spoken discourses, and the other two blank turns left to be answered based on the situations given. These six items can be further divided into three groups: positive questions (n = 2), negative questions (n = 2), and distractors (n = 2) which included one wh-question and one yes/no question.

Some examples of the test items featured in the oral DCT are as follows.

9) **Situation 1:** Shawn's going to see the new sci-fi movie tonight. You like all types of sci-fi works and would love to go too, but you need to babysit your little sister as your parents will be away.

Shawn: I heard you enjoy reading sci-fi novels. So, I guess you **also like sci-fi movies, don't you?**

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Shawn: "Then why not join me for the new sci-fi movie tonight?"

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

The English tag question in the **situation 1** above was intentionally designed to be the affirmative English tag question: an affirmative matrix and a negative tag. Specifically, the affirmative matrix was *So, I guess you also like sci-fi movies*, and the negative tag was *don't you?*.

10) **Situation 2:** You're at a party and you're suddenly not feeling quite well. You think it might be the drink had made you sick. You want to go to the restroom, but you don't know if you can make it on your own.

Party guest: Excuse me. **You're not feeling well, are you?**

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Party guest: Would you like some help?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

The English tag question in the **situation 2** above was intentionally designed to be the negative English tag question: an negative matrix and an

affirmative tag. Specifically, the negative matrix was *You're not feeling well*, and the affirmative tag was *are you?*.

Apart from the examples of the test items, the distractors featured in the oral DCT were divided into two types: a question with *verb to do* and a question with *modal verbs*.

See the complete oral discourse completion task in Appendix 3.

### 3.2.3 Written DCT

The written DCT was used to investigate L2 speech act production (Blum-Kulka, 1982). The written DCT was employed in a number of research to investigate transfer L1-based speech act strategies to learners' L2 and evaluate their L2 pragmatic development (Culpeper et al., 2018).

In order to produce the written DCT, after the test items and distractors of the written DCT were validated by the three experts in the step of 3.2.1, they were then ready to be used to elicit data from the participants.

Like the oral DCT, the written DCT contained six items, each of which included one situation and one four-turn dialogue. Specifically, in the four-turn dialogue, it was composed of two question turns designed to elicit participants' spoken discourses, and the other two turns include one declarative statement and one blank left to be answered based on the situations given. These six items can be further divided into three groups: positive questions (n = 2), negative questions (n = 2), and distractors (n = 2) which included two *yes/no* questions. The examples of the test items featured in the written DCT are as follows:

- 11) **Situation 3:** You're a new student in the class. Lucy comes and talks to you.

Lucy: Hi, I haven't seen you before. You are new here, aren't you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Lucy: I'm Lucy. It's nice to meet you.

You: My name is Hayden. Nice to meet you too.

The English tag question in the **situation 3** above was intentionally designed to be the affirmative English tag question: an affirmative matrix and a negative tag. Specifically, the affirmative matrix was *You are new here*, and the negative tag was *aren't you?*.

12) **Situation 4:** You've invited a British friend over to your place for some Thai food. You're unable to handle spicy food because it irritates your stomach. So, you decide to cook Hoy Tod (Oyster Omelette) and Kai Yang (Grilled Chicken).

British friend: The food doesn't seem spicy. What are they?

You: You're right. They're not spicy. They're Hoy Tod and Kai Yang.

British friend: I've always thought that all Thai people love spicy food. You don't eat spicy food, do you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

The English tag question in the **situation 4** above was intentionally designed to be the negative English tag question: a negative matrix and an affirmative tag. Specifically, the negative matrix was *You don't eat spicy food* and the affirmative tag was *do you?*.

Apart from the examples of the test items, the distractors featured in the written DCT were divided into two types: a question with *verb to do* and a question with *verb to be*.

See the complete written discourse completion task in Appendix 4.

### 3.2.4 Pilot Study

The oral and written DCTs was pilot tested with three groups of participants which consisted of an intermediate group, an advanced group, and a native control group. For the native control group, they included three native American English speakers, each of whom was from Hawaii, Tennessee, and Florida. These pilot participants reached the required qualification in terms of

level of English language proficiency as mentioned in the part of participants (See 3.1). The pilot study was conducted on Zoom, a computer software application which was used as an online classroom and as the data collection (Archibald et al., 2019), due to the outbreak of Covid-19 from November 4, 2020 to December 3, 2020. The overall process was smooth and the task then did not need to be adjusted.

### 3.3 Data collection

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 during the data collection process and the order for every citizen to stay at home to decrease the risk of contracting coronavirus, as encouraged by the government of Thailand, the oral and written DCTs were administered to the participants via Zoom, a computer software application used extensively as an online classroom by university lecturers and educators. The researcher provided the participants with directions in Thai for a thorough understanding of both DCTs. In addition, it is important to note that the tasks were administered in a counterbalanced order in order to prevent the order effects, which was where the English tag question forms which appeared in the former task might influence how the participants performed on such English tag question in the latter task (Kim, 2010). Hence, the first eight intermediate participants and the first eight advanced participants were asked to complete the oral DCT and the written DCT, respectively. The other eight intermediate participants and the other eight advanced participants were asked to complete the written DCT and the oral DCT, respectively.

With respect to the administration of the oral DCT, after the researcher provided the participants with a brief explanation of the task in Thai, the researcher used the *share screen* function on Zoom in order to play the recordings to the participants. In order to play the recording of each item, the situation and the questions were played, respectively. When it came to the response turn, the researcher paused the recordings to allow the participants to respond. For the administration of the written DCT, the researcher sent the pdf file of the written DCT to the participants via email. The participants were not allowed to consult any dictionaries while completing the written DCT and to finish the test within 20 minutes.

### 3.4 Data analyses

With reference to the constructions of responses to English and Thai tag questions formerly discussed in the literature review section (See 2.4), the participants' responses will be considered either deviant production or target-like production. In greater detail, the deviant response was scored 0 when they failed to match the situation given, and the target-like response was scored 1 when they matched the situation given.

As in the example below **Situation 5** (from the oral DCT), the target-like response in the first blank must be *yes* or any affirmative responses based on the situation provided. On the other hand, if the response to this tag question was *no* or any negative responses, the response was considered deviant.

13) **Situation 5:** You're planning to go to California to visit your grandmother next month. Your American teacher is aware of your plan, so he'd like to ask you about the details.

American teacher: You're going to visit your grandmother, aren't you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

American teacher: That's good! When?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Moreover, as in the example below **Situation 6** (from the written oral), the target-like response in the blank must be *no* or any negative responses based on the situation provided. On the other hand, if the response to this tag question was *yes* or any affirmative responses, the response was considered deviant.

14) **Situation 6:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your university has asked all students to study online. Online classes don't start until tomorrow. Today you're free to help your mom do some chores.

Mom: I heard your classes don't begin till tomorrow.

You: Yeah, that's right, mom.



Mom: In that case, you can help me do some chores. You aren't busy today, are you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

In terms of score calculation of the two DCT tasks, 1.) the intermediate participants' total score in the oral and written DCTs, 2.) the advanced participants' total score in the oral and written DCTs, and 3.) the control group' total score in the oral and written DCTs, were separately calculated into percentages by applying the following formula.

$$score = \frac{\sum R}{N} \times 100$$

$\sum R$ : The total number of the correct answer(s) of each participant

N: The total number of the test items done by each participant

More specifically, the following calculations of the scores of the responses to English tag questions were separately made into percentages: 1.) the intermediate participants' total score of responses to English tag questions in the oral and written DCTs, 2.) the advanced participants' total score of responses to English tag questions in the oral and written DCTs, and 3.) the control group participants' total score of responses to English tag questions in the oral and written DCTs.

The next chapter presents results and discussion of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

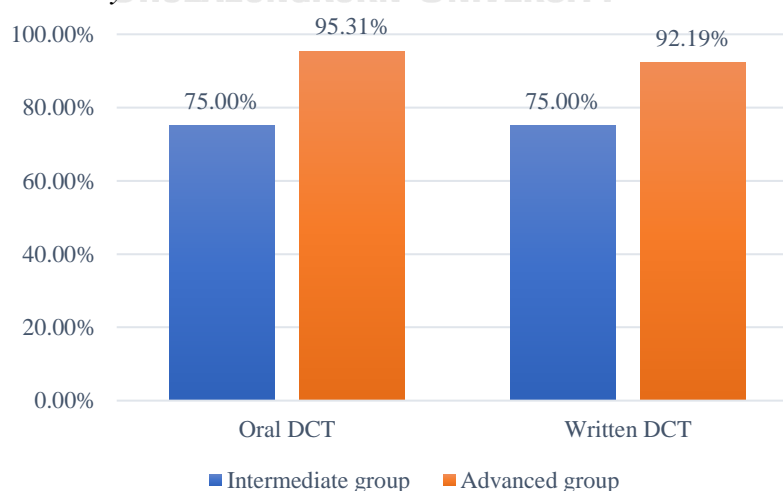
This chapter reports results and provides discussions concerned with the responses to English tag questions elicited from the two DCT tasks, namely, the oral DCT and the written DCT, as previously discussed in 3.2.

The overall results of the responses to English tag questions by the L1 Thai learners are presented in Table 2 and Figure 1. The overall results of the two experimental groups demonstrated that the advanced group scored better on both oral and written DCTs (95.31% and 92.19%, respectively). The intermediate group scored lower on both DCTs with equal scores for each (75%).

*Table 2: Overall results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the oral and written DCTs by L1 Thai learners*

Proficiency level	Oral DCT	Written DCT
	Percentages (Raw scores)	Percentages (Raw scores)
Intermediate group	75.00% (48/64)	75.00% (48/64)
Advanced group	95.31% (61/64)	92.19% (59/64)

*Figure 1: Overall results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the oral and written DCTs by L1 Thai learner*



Based on hypothesis one of this study, variables of different English proficiencies and different modalities will affect how L1 Thai learners respond to English tag questions. The present study seeks a relationship between the L1 Thai learners' different English proficiencies and different modalities, both of which probably affected how L1 Thai learners responded to English tag questions. As Table 2 and Figure 1 show, the advanced learners seemed to perform well on both speaking and writing, 95.31% and 92.19%, respectively. In other words, the advanced learners' performance indicated that they tended to respond more native-like responses to English tag questions which were, for example, either Yes, it is (or any affirmative responses) or No, it is *not* (or any negative responses). Moreover, it can be seen that, despite the slight difference, the L1 Thai learners could perform marginally better on the oral production task than the written production task.

In contrast to the advanced learner group, the intermediate learner group was prone to respond to English tag questions with more deviations. That is to say, the intermediate learners responded to English tag questions which deviated from canonical ways to respond to English tag questions, such as answering with either *\*Yes, it is not* or *\*No, it is*. The intermediate learners' less native-like responses to English tag questions were found to be in line with Shaffer (2002) and Akiyama (1979). With respect to deviant answers, Shaffer (2002) reported that L1 Korean speakers tended to respond to English tag questions with the structure of *yes + negative sentences*, which is considered ungrammatical in standard English. What is more, Akiyama (1979) reported that the responses to English negative tag questions and the responses to Japanese negative tag questions were opposite.

Another important point to be discussed is that the L1 Thai intermediate learners correctly responded to English tag questions at the exactly similar results, 75%, for both oral and written production. It then can be interpreted that the L1 Thai intermediate learners were still in their developmental process of the production of responses to English tag questions.

To summarize, the correlation was found that the L1 Thai advanced learners produced more target-like responses to English tag questions in both speaking and writing at the very high percentages, whereas the L1 Thai intermediate learners produced less target-like responses to English tag questions in both speaking and

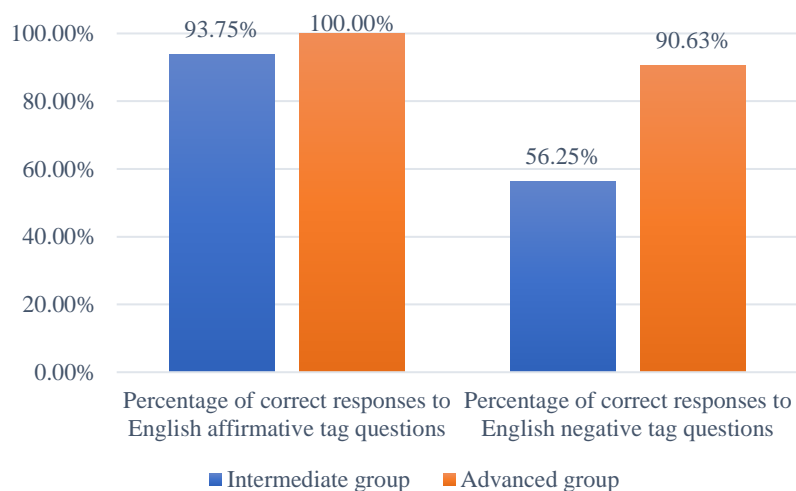
writing at the very same percentage. Based on hypothesis one which states that the variables of different English proficiencies and different modalities will affect how L1 Thai learners respond to English tag questions, hypothesis one is partially confirmed, since the two different modalities—oral and written—merely correlated with the L1 Thai advanced learners' responses to English tag questions, but not the L1 Thai intermediate learners' responses to English tag questions.

Concerning the pragmatic transfer demonstrated in responses to English tag questions by the L1 Thai intermediate and advanced learners, hypothesis two of this study is that L1 Thai intermediate learners will produce less native-like responses to English tag questions whereas L1 Thai advanced learners will produce more native-like responses to English tag questions. With the overall results, it was apparent that the intermediate learners produced less native-like responses to English tag questions than the advanced learners in both oral and written DCTs as presented in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 2 and 3.

*Table 3: Detailed results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the oral DCT by L1 Thai learners*

Proficiency level	Oral DCT	
	<i>Percentages of correct responses to English affirmative tag questions</i>	<i>Percentages of correct responses to English negative tag questions</i>
<b>Intermediate group</b>	93.75% (30/32)	56.25% (18/32)
<b>Advanced group</b>	100.00% (32/32)	90.63% (29/32)

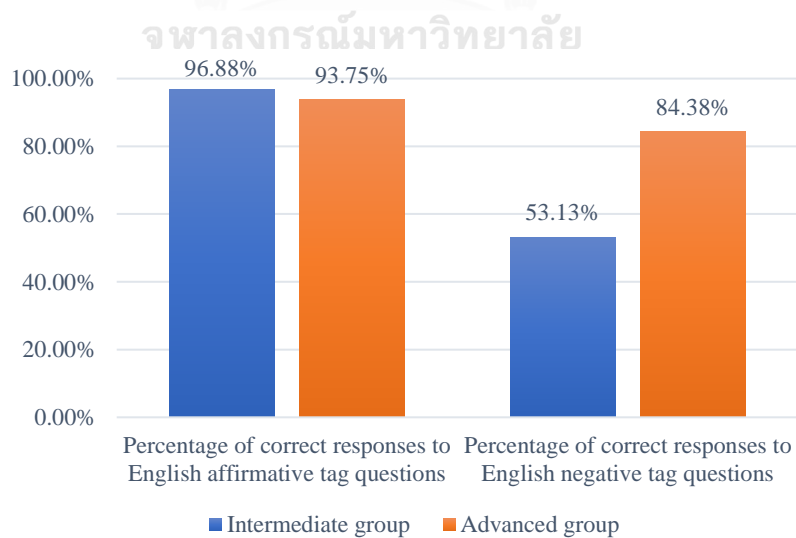
*Figure 2: Detailed results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the oral DCT by L1 Thai learners*



*Table 4: Detailed results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the written DCT by LI Thai learners*

Proficiency level	Written DCT	
	Percentages of correct responses to English affirmative tag questions	Percentages of correct responses to English negative tag questions
Intermediate group	96.88% (31/32)	53.13% (17/32)
Advanced group	93.75% (30/32)	84.38% (27/32)

*Figure 3: Detailed results of the correct responses to English tag questions in the written DCT by LI Thai learners*



That is, the L1 Thai intermediate learners' responses to English tag questions showed a higher degree of pragmatic transfer, which indicated that the intermediate learners were still dependent on their pragmatic knowledge in their L1 Thai. In contrast to the intermediate learners, the advanced learners' responses to English tag questions revealed a lower degree of pragmatic transfer which, signified that they seemed to be less dependent on their pragmatic knowledge in their L1 Thai. By way of explanation, the L1 Thai intermediate learners tended to produce *yes* + negative sentences to respond to English negative tag questions, which represents how Thais normally respond to Thai tag questions, such as *khâ? mâj dâj paj* (= \*Yes, I didn't go.). The examples of the deviations by the L1 Thai learners are as follows: \**Yes, I don't eat spicy*, and \**Yes, I'm not busy today*.

Another intriguing point is particularly worthy of mention. Some intermediate and advanced participants had nearly equal English proficiency scores. For instance, in this study, two intermediate participants had CU-TEP scores at 98, and two advanced participants had CU-TEP scores at 99. Despite the close score range, their performance in both tasks, as suggested by the data, represented their English proficiency levels well. Specifically, the two advanced participants produced all target-like responses to English tag questions (100%) in both tasks. In contrast, the two intermediate participants produced target-like responses (50%) and deviant responses (50%) to English tag questions in the exact same proportion.

Hypothesis two, which states that L1 Thai intermediate learners will produce less native-like responses to English tag questions whereas L1 Thai advanced learners will produce more native-like responses to English tag questions, was confirmed, as the Thai pragmatic norms of responding to Thai tag questions were more likely to be transferred to the L1 Thai intermediate learners' responses to English tag questions, rather than to those by L1 Thai advanced learners. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Chantharasombat & Pongpairoj, 2018). This might be further explicated that the L1 Thai learners were able to produce responses to English tag questions which contained a lower degree of pragmatic transfer in both oral and written production when they achieved an advanced level of English language proficiency.

With respect to the pragmatic transfer demonstrated in responses to English tag questions in the oral and written production by the two participant groups, the results

revealed that the responses to English negative tag questions in both oral and written DCTs were less native-like, or negatively pragmatically transferred from L1 Thai, as previously presented in in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 2 and 3.

More specifically in the responses in the oral DCT, as presented in Table 3 and Figure 2, the percentages of correct responses to English tag questions by the L1 Thai intermediate and advanced learners were illustrated. The scores of each proficiency group were generated as percentages of correct responses to English affirmative and negative tag questions, respectively. For the percentages of correct responses to English affirmative tag questions, the intermediate learners' scores stood at 93.75%, whereas the advanced learners' score amounted to 100%. For the percentages of correct responses to English negative tag questions, the intermediate learners scored 56.25%, while the advanced learners scored 90.63%.

It is apparent that both intermediate and advanced learners performed worse on answering English negative tag questions than on answering English affirmative tag questions. In other words, the L1 Thai learners' responses to English negative tag questions demonstrated a higher degree of the pragmatic transfer than those to English affirmative tag question in oral production.

More particularly in the written DCT, as Table 4 and Figure 3 show, the percentages of correct responses to English tag questions by the L1 Thai intermediate and advanced learners were provided. The scores of both participant groups were generated as percentages of correct responses to English affirmative and negative tag questions, respectively. With respect to the percentages of correct responses to English affirmative tag questions, the intermediate learners' scores were at 96.88%, whereas the advanced learners' score were at 93.75%. It was worth mentioning, that even though the intermediate learners' scores were higher than the advanced learners' scores, the difference was considered small. Concerning the responses to English negative tag questions, the intermediate learners were at 53.13%, while the advanced learners scores were at 84.38%.

It can be seen that both intermediate and advanced learners responded to English negative tag questions far worse than they did to English affirmative tag questions. Hence, the L1 Thai learners' responses to English negative tag questions demonstrated

a higher degree of the pragmatic transfer than those to English affirmative tag questions in written production.

At this stage, it is evident that the L1 Thai pragmatic norm was most likely to be transferred to the responses to English negative tag questions by the intermediate and advanced learners in both DCT types.

However, hypothesis three of this study states that responses to English tag questions in speaking by both L1 Thai intermediate learners and L1 Thai advanced learners demonstrate a higher degree of pragmatic transfer while those in writing by both learner groups demonstrate a lower degree of pragmatic transfer. Table 5 and Figure 4 are provided to illustrate detailed results of the responses to English negative tag questions by the intermediate and advanced learners in both oral and written DCTs.

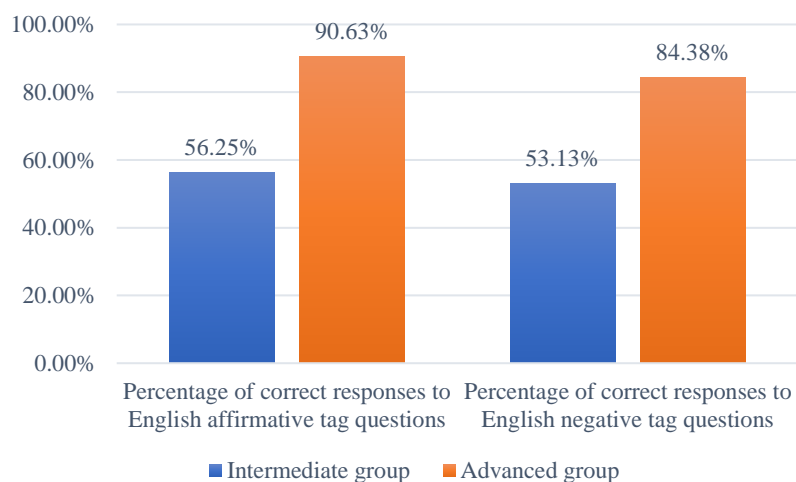
Based on Table 5 and Figure 4 below, the advanced learners' responses to English negative tag questions in the written DCT (84.38%) were less native-like than those in the oral DCT (90.63%). Remarkably similar to the advanced learners' responses, the intermediate learners' responses to English negative tag questions in the written DCT (53.13%) were less native-like than those in the oral DCT (56.25%). From the comparison, it is clear that the responses to English tag questions in oral production by both L1 Thai intermediate and advanced learners demonstrated a lower degree of pragmatic transfer, whereas those in written production by both learner groups revealed a higher degree of pragmatic transfer.

*Table 5: Detailed results of the correct responses to English negative tag questions by the intermediate and advanced learners in both DCT types*

<b>Proficiency level</b>	<b>Percentages of correct responses to English negative tag questions in oral DCT</b>	<b>Percentages of correct responses to English negative tag questions in written DCT</b>
<b>Intermediate group</b>	56.25%	53.13%
<b>Advanced group</b>	90.63%	84.38%

*Figure 4: Detailed results of the correct responses to English negative tag questions by the intermediate and advanced learners in both DCT types*





Such a result concerning the pragmatic transfer in the two modalities failed to confirm hypothesis three, which is that the responses to English tag questions in oral production by both L1 Thai intermediate and advanced learners showed a lower degree of pragmatic transfer, while those in written production by both learner groups manifested a higher degree of pragmatic transfer.

With hypothesis three rejected, it could be reasonable to assume that the structure of English tag question was highly regarded as one of the very unique phenomena of spoken language (Tottie & Hoffmann, 2006, p. 284). In addition, Holmes (1982, p. 61) stated that the English tag questions were considered as, “considerable conversational skills”, for speakers to be able to apply and precisely interpret. In a similar vein, Jovanović and Pavlović (2014) also shed light on the use of tag questions in spoken language that the construction of tag questions was more typically used in the spoken form than they were in the written form, since it indicated informality in communication.

All the evidence previously presented uncovered the reason why the L1 Thai learners’ responses to English tag questions in the oral DCT demonstrated a lower degree of pragmatic transfer. By way of explanation, due to the fact that the structure of English tag questions is generally used in a spoken discourse, rather than a written discourse, the L1 Thai learners of both proficiency groups were more able to orally produce responses to English tag questions, which contained less pragmatic transfer from their L1 Thai norms. In contrast, as mentioned that English tag questions were not

frequently used in written language, the L1 Thai learners of both proficiency groups ineffectively produced written responses to English tag questions which resulted in more pragmatic transfer from their L1 Thai norms.

Another possible factor from some English textbooks specifically for L1 Thai learners could be of use to cast light on the L1 Thai learners' ability to orally answer English tag questions correctly. To illustrate, the textbook *Your Space 3 Student's Book* (Hobbs & Keddle, 2005, pp. 88-91), which was purposefully designed for ninth grade students in Thailand based on the Basic Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008), contained one unit (Unit 9), where the language focus concerns how to form tag questions and how to respond them. Three dialogues provided included some examples of responses to English tag questions in context of dialogue, which can help L1 Thai learners practice and achieve communication purposes. As well as in a textbook for university students in Thailand, for example, *the textbook English for Communication* (Pibulnakarin & Pokthitiyuk, 2012, pp. 3-4), students are provided information of how to produce canonical English tag questions and how to produce native-like responses to those questions. It can be implied that English textbooks for the L1 Thai learners in both secondary school and higher education levels play a great role in improving the L1 Thai learners' performance of responding to English tag questions.

Based on transfer of training<sup>8</sup> (Selinker, 1972), the textbooks which were designed particularly for the L1 Thai students in both secondary and higher education levels encouraged them to learn and practise responding to English tag questions in speaking, rather than in writing. Undoubtedly, the L1 Thai learners were more capable of responding to English tag questions in the spoken language, rather than written language.

The next chapter will present a conclusion as well as pedagogical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

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<sup>8</sup> Transfer of training is one of the five major interlanguage processes of second language acquisition (Selinker, 1972). The transfer of training takes place depending on how L2 learners are taught. Moreover, the factors leading to the transfer of training are also the quality of textbooks and pedagogical approaches of teachers.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

The present study aimed at investigating the pragmatic transfer demonstrated in the L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions in speaking and writing. By seeking the degree of pragmatic transfer in the responses to English tag questions in the two modalities, the oral discourse completion task and the written discourse completion task were employed in order to elicit the data. The results revealed that the L1 Thai advanced learners produced more target-like responses to English tag questions at very high percentages in both modalities, while the L1 Thai intermediate learners produced less target-like responses to English tag question at the same percentage in both modalities. Also, with respect to the participants' different levels of English language proficiency, it is evident that the advanced learners seemed to produce more native-like, or less pragmatically transferred responses to English tag questions in comparison with the intermediate learners' responses. In addition, in relation to the two different modalities of production, the L1 Thai learners' responses to English negative tag questions in writing demonstrated a higher level of pragmatic transfer than those in speaking.

Based on the results, it could be inferred that the pragmatic transfer demonstrated in the L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions would become less, as the L1 Thai learners' English language proficiency levels reached the advanced level. Also, it could be rightly assumed that the L1 Thai learners' reliance on their Thai pragmatic norm was still found especially in their responses to English negative tag questions.

This current study yielded twofold implications: pedagogical and linguistic. For pedagogical implications, as the findings regarding the pragmatic transfer in the L1 Thai learners' responses to English tag questions were provided, they could help English language teachers in Thailand to design effective lesson plans and create teaching materials for teaching how to respond English tag questions effectively in both speaking and writing. More specifically, English language teachers should focus on differentiating between responses to English affirmative tag questions and responses to

English negative tag questions, in order to increase awareness of the different linguistic patterns of the responses in both speaking and writing. For linguistic implications, it could be clearly seen that pragmatic transfer plays a great role in the L1 Thai learners' responses to English negative tag questions, especially in written production.

The limitation of this study is the number of participants per group in this study was relatively small. Therefore, more participants should be added for more generalizability in future research.

Last but not least, the following recommendations can feasibly be extended and implemented in future research. First, future studies can possibly include other pronouns, namely, He, She, We, and They, modal verbs, namely, Can, May, and Will, and other tenses, in order to be more conclusive. Second, future studies can investigate L2 learners' perception to obtain more insight into their comprehension of responses to English tag questions and also to make a comparison and contrast between L2 learners' perception and production.

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**APPENDICES**



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
**CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY**

### Appendix 1

#### Details of the population with respect to their faculty, age, and CU- TEP scores

Intermediate group				Advanced group			
No.	Faculty	Age	IELTS/ CU-TEP Scores	No.	Faculty	Age	IELTS/ CU-TEP Scores
1.	Arts	18	75 (CU-TEP)	1.	Political Science	22	99 (CU-TEP)
2.	Arts	19	89 (CU-TEP)	2.	Arts	18	105 (CU-TEP)
3.	Commerce and Accountancy	19	92 (CU-TEP)	3.	Aviation Management	18	99 (CU-TEP)
4.	Pharmaceutical Sciences	24	96 (CU-TEP)	4.	Engineering	18	8 (IELTS)
5.	Education	20	59 (CU-TEP)	5.	Arts	22	101 (CU-TEP)
6.	Veterinary Science	19	5.5 (IELTS)	6.	Arts	22	110 (CU-TEP)
7.	Arts	21	83 (CU-TEP)	7.	Arts	22	100 (CU-TEP)
8.	Pharmaceutical Sciences	23	88 (CU-TEP)	8.	Arts	21	8.5 (IELTS)
9.	Pharmaceutical Sciences	24	56 (CU-TEP)	9.	Arts	20	7.5 (IELTS)
10.	Engineering	21	72 (CU-TEP)	10.	Law	20	105 (CU-TEP)
11.	Arts	19	95 (CU-TEP)	11.	Arts	19	8 (IELTS)
12.	Arts	20	76 (CU-TEP)	12.	Political Science	20	8 (IELTS)
13.	Arts	22	94 (CU-TEP)	13.	Arts	19	7 (IELTS)
14.	Dentistry	19	81 (CU-TEP)	14.	Arts	22	8.5 (IELTS)
15.	Dentistry	19	98 (CU-TEP)	15.	Arts	19	106 (CU-TEP)
16.	Political Science	24	98 (CU-TEP)	16.	Engineering	19	8.5 (IELTS)

## Appendix 2

### The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC)

**Description:** The index of congruence is to validate the quality of this instrument. Please indicate your agreement according to the following scale by placing a tick mark (✓) in the box.

Scoring +1	=	Certain that the test item is congruent with the objectives
Scoring 0	=	Uncertain whether the test item is congruent with the objectives
Scoring -1	=	Certain that the test item is NOT congruent with the objectives

#### Remarks

1. The first expert is Mr. Michael Crabtree, a native speaker of American English. He now works as a lecturer at the Department of English, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.
2. The second expert is Ms. Alisa Khrisanapant, a native speaker of New Zealand English. She now works as an English teacher at AIMS, Bangkok, Thailand. Born and raised in New Zealand, she holds BA in Consumer and Applied Science and MA in Entrepreneurship from University of Otago, New Zealand. She also receives a certificate in TESOL from English Language Matters School, Dunedin, New Zealand.
3. The third expert is Mr. Richard Charles Mountain, a native speaker of New Zealand English. He now works as an English teacher at Concordian International School, Bangkok, Thailand

The participants are required to complete the following conversations by responding promptly to the questions as they would say in real situations.

### Objectives

1. To ensure the test items are grammatical and sound natural to native English experts.
2. To confirm the validity of the test items since they are to be used to investigate the acquisition of pragmatic transfer in response to English tag questions by L1 Thai speakers in L1 Thai learners.

Test items	The first expert's opinion	The second expert's opinion	The third expert's opinion	IOC Results	Suggestions
<p><b>The first task: the spoken discourse completion task</b></p> <p><b>Test item 1</b></p> <p><b>Situation:</b> Lintel, a computer chip manufacturing company, currently has a job opening in its Finance department. You who believe that hard work is the key to success are interviewed by Lintel's Finance Manager Mike Gates.</p> <p>Mike Gates: Now, let me ask you a few quick questions. You do not mind working long hours, <b>do you</b>?</p> <p>You: _____.</p> <p>Mike Gates: Why?</p> <p>You: _____.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	
<p><b>Test item 2</b></p> <p><b>Situation:</b> Shawn's going to see the new sci-fi movie tonight. You like all types of sci-fi works and would love to go too, but you need to babysit your little sister as your parents will be away.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	<p>Change from "You also like sci-fi movies." to "So I guess you also like sci-fi movies."</p> <p>Change from "Why don't you join me for the new</p>

<p>Shawn: I heard you enjoy reading sci-fi novels. So, I guess you also like sci-fi movies, <b>don't you?</b></p> <p>You: _____.</p> <p>Shawn: Then why not join me for the new sci-fi movie tonight?"</p> <p>You: _____.</p>					<p>sci-fi movie tonight." to "Then why not join me for the new sci-fi movie tonight?"</p>
<p><b>Test item 3</b></p> <p><b>Situation:</b> You're at a party and you're suddenly not feeling quite well. You think it might be the drink had made you sick. You want to go to the restroom, but you don't know if you can make it on your own.</p> <p>Party guest: Excuse me. You're not feeling well, <b>are you?</b></p> <p>You: _____.</p> <p>Party guest: Would you like some help?</p> <p>You: _____.</p>	+1	0	+1	0.67	<p>Change from "How can I help you?." to "Would you like some help?"</p>
<p><b>Test item 4</b></p> <p><b>Situation:</b> You're planning to go to California to visit your grandmother next month. Your American teacher is aware of your plan, so he'd like to ask you about the details.</p> <p>American teacher: You're going to visit your grandmother, <b>aren't you?</b></p> <p>You: _____.</p> <p>American friend: That's good! When?</p> <p>You: _____.</p>	0	+1	+1	0.67	

<p><b>The second task: the written discourse completion task</b></p> <p><b>Test item 1</b></p> <p><b><i>Situation:</i></b> You're talking about hobbies with your friend, James. You normally play the guitar after doing your homework.</p> <p>James: What're your hobbies?  You: I play music.  James: That sounds cool! I bet you play the guitar, <b>don't you?</b>  You: _____.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	
<p><b>Test item 2</b></p> <p><b><i>Situation:</i></b> You've invited a British friend over to your place for some Thai food. You're unable to handle spicy food because it irritates your stomach. So, you decide to cook Hoy Tod (Oyster Omelette) and Kai Yang (Grilled Chicken).</p> <p>British friend: The food doesn't seem spicy. What are they?  You: You're right. They're not spicy. They're Hoy Tod and Kai Yang.  British friend: I've always thought that all Thai people love spicy food. You don't eat spicy food, <b>do you?</b>  You: _____.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	
<p><b>Test item 3</b></p> <p><b><i>Situation:</i></b> You're in a new student in the class. Lucy comes and talks to you.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	



<p>Lucy: Hi, I haven't seen you before. You are new here, <b>aren't you?</b></p> <p>You: _____.</p> <p>Lucy: I'm Lucy. It's nice to meet you.</p> <p>You: My name is Hayden. Nice to meet you too.</p>					
<p><b>Test item 4</b></p> <p><b>Situation:</b> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your university has asked all students to study online. Online classes don't start until tomorrow. Today you're free to help your mom do some chores.</p> <p>Mom: I heard your classes don't begin till tomorrow.</p> <p>You: Yeah, that's right, mom.</p> <p>Mom: In that case, you can help me do some chores. You aren't busy today, <b>are you?</b></p> <p>You: _____.</p>	+1	+1	+1	1	
<p><b>Average Result:</b> 0.918</p>					

### Appendix 3

#### Oral Discourse Completion Task

**Instructions:** Complete the following conversations according to the given situations. Promptly respond to the questions as the way you would say them in real situations.

1. Situation: Shawn's going to see the new sci-fi movie tonight. You like all types of sci-fi works and would love to go too, but you need to babysit your little sister as your parents will be away.

Shawn: I heard you enjoy reading sci-fi novels. So, I guess you also like sci-fi movies, don't you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

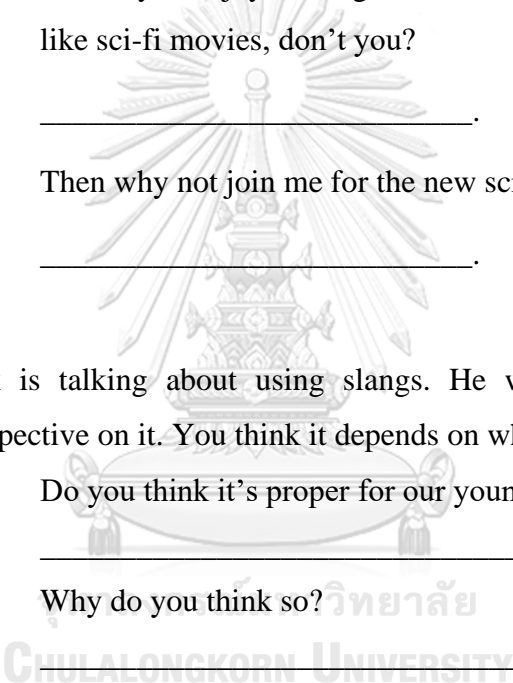
Shawn: Then why not join me for the new sci-fi movie tonight?"

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Situation: Jack is talking about using slangs. He would like to know your perspective on it. You think it depends on what context they use them.

Jack: Do you think it's proper for our youngsters to use slangs?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Jack: Why do you think so? 

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Situation: Lintel, a computer chip manufacturing company, currently has a job opening in its Finance department. You who believe that hard work is the key to success are interviewed by Lintel's Finance Manager Mike Gates.

Mike Gates: Now, let me ask you a few quick questions. You do not mind working long hours, do you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Mike Gates: Why?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Situation: You're at a party and you're suddenly not feeling quite well. You think it might be the drink had made you sick. You want to go to the restroom, but you don't know if you can make it on your own.

Party guest: Excuse me. You're not feeling well, are you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Party guest: How can I help you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Situation: It's time for lunch, but you're not so hungry. Moreover, you still had some leftover burgers from this morning. You decided to remain at the office and prepare documentation for the afternoon meeting instead.

Colleague: Would you like to go out for lunch with me?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

Colleague: Are you sure you don't need anything?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Situation: You're planning to go to California to visit your grandmother next month. Your American teacher is aware of your plan, so he'd like to ask you about the details.

American teacher: You're going to visit your grandmother, **aren't you?**

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

American friend: That's good! When?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix 4

### Written Discourse Completion Task

**Instructions:** Complete the following conversations according to the given situations. Promptly respond to the questions as the way you would say them in real situations.

1. Situation: You're talking about hobbies with your friend, James. You normally play the guitar after doing your homework.

James: What're your hobbies?

You: I play music.

James: That sounds cool! I bet you play the guitar, don't you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Situation: A tourist is asking you for the direction. You are willing to help him.

Tourist: Excuse me. I'm sorry to trouble you, but do you mind telling me where the nearest train station is?

You: \_\_\_\_\_. Keep walking straight ahead. After you pass the library, you have to turn left. Take your first right and it's across from the bus station

Tourist: Thank you so much.

You: My pleasure.

3. Situation: You've invited a British friend over to your place for some Thai food. You're unable to handle spicy food because it irritates your stomach. So, you decide to cook Hoy Tod (Oyster Omelette) and Kai Yang (Grilled Chicken).

British friend: The food doesn't seem spicy. What are they?

You: You're right. They're not spicy. They're Hoy Tod and Kai Yang.

British friend: I've always thought that all Thai people love spicy food. You don't eat spicy food, do you?

You: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Situation: You're a new student in the class. Lucy comes and talks to you.  
Lucy: Hi, I haven't seen you before. You are new here, aren't you?  
You: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Lucy: I'm Lucy. It's nice to meet you.  
You: My name is Hayden. Nice to meet you too.
5. Situation: At the airport immigration, you inform immigration police that you are here on vacation.  
Immigration police: Good morning. Can I see your passport?  
You: Here you are.  
Immigration police: Thank you very much. Are you here on business?  
You: \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Situation: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your university has asked all students to study online. Online classes don't start until tomorrow. Today you're free to help your mom do some chores.  
Mom: I heard your classes don't begin till tomorrow.  
You: Yeah, that's right, mom.  
Mom: In that case, you can help me do some chores. You aren't busy today, are you?  
You: \_\_\_\_\_.

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