Discourse Analysis of Cross-Cultural Post-Requests in English Persuasive Correspondence in the Thai Business Context

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Abstract: In written business discourse, letters of request can be regarded as one of the most frequently used types of persuasive correspondence. This study attempts to shed light on one particular rhetorical feature of the business letter of request: the post-request. The corpus of 80 English request letters, 42 of which are written by Thais (TH), and 38 of which are written by native English speakers or Non-Thais (NT), was analysed in terms of the use of post-requests. A substantial proportion of the letters contained post-requests (68 out of 80, or 85%). Among these 68 letters, 37 are TH letters (54.41%), and 31 are NT letters (45.59%). The functions of post-requests can be divided into four main categories: reminder, thanks, anticipation and offer. Although many post-requests contain a combination of two or three functions, the NT writers use the ‘single-function’ post-request more extensively than the ‘multi-function’ one, while the TH writers tend to use both types of post-requests equally. The findings reveal that ‘thanks’ is the most frequently used function of post-requests both on its own as a single function and with another function(s) especially ‘anticipation’. It is evident that the TH writers generally use more formulaic expressions of thanks as well as more expressions of appreciation as elaborated thanks. They also prefer to combine ‘thanks’ with ‘anticipation’ whereas the NT writers favour either ‘thanks’ or ‘anticipation’ only. The TH writers use more ‘offer’ than the NT writers do. ‘Reminder’ is rather uncommon and generally appears with ‘thanks’ and/or ‘anticipation’. The TH post-requests are normally longer and sometimes consist of many sentences expressing thanks and anticipation in a more repetitive yet formal way. The findings are worth noting for future development of cross-cultural request strategies for communicative effectiveness and innovation of advanced materials and methods in teaching English business request writing to EFL learners.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, Post-requests, Request strategies, Persuasive business writing

Introduction

As a request can be considered as a goal-oriented activity which can enhance the business if it is successful, letters of request invariably play an important role in written business communication both in the local and international or cross-cultural contexts. In Thailand, over the past few decades, there has been an increasing amount of business correspondence written in English for external and internal communication both locally and transnationally. By the end of 2015, the ASEAN Community will be actively formed, whereby English is the language for communication. However, little cross-cultural research has been done in the area of persuasive business discourse analysis. This study attempts to fill the gap and shed light on the use of post-requests in cross-cultural letters of request.

Eighty business letters of request were collected from selected Thai companies in the private sector, public sector and state enterprises on a voluntary basis upon my request. The participating companies selected their business correspondence for me,
consisting of outgoing correspondence texts and/or incoming correspondence texts from their foreign counterparts, and mostly from English-speaking countries. One common criterion in my data collection was that each sample of business correspondence had to relate to the Thai business context; that is, it was either sent out by a Thai company or was received as an incoming message by a Thai individual or company. In this way the data could incorporate the correspondence written by both Thais and non-Thais especially native speakers of English from the foreign counterparts of those Thai employees. To ensure confidentiality, some names, phone numbers and addresses in letter samples presented here were changed. However, their content remained intact.

Thirty-eight letters were written by Thais (TH) and forty-two letters were written by native speakers of English or Non-Thais (NT). Almost all letters were written by different writers, most of whom are male. There are only a few sets of up to 3 letters, each of which was written by the same writer. The native English speakers are either from the United Kingdom or the United States of America. They or their companies have some business contacts with Thailand. Although I could trace the nationality of the writer of each letter, it was not always possible to know the relationship between the writer and the reader or the recipient. Therefore, this study does not discuss issues of power and status in the analyses. Gender issues are also excluded as they are not the focus of the study. The sources of the letters vary from small local Thai companies to multinational corporations as well as the public sector. The purposes of the writers are to ask for information, help, cooperation and/or approval, and, in a few cases, donation.

Background and Definitions

In his book called “Genre and Second Language Writing”, Hyland (2004) defines ‘letter’ as a genre. While personal letters are under the genre of ‘recount’, request letters can be classified into the genre of ‘persuasive text’. (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 1999, Bhatia 2010, Connor 1996, Hyland 2004, Kong 1998 & 2006, Powell 1991, Warren 2013) In their research into requests and status in business correspondence, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996, p. 640) formulate a working definition of request as follows: “a legitimate attempt by the writer to get the reader to perform an action required by the business circumstances through evoking the reader’s need for compliance on the grounds of corporate and personal motivators such as necessity, duty and goodwill”.

They briefly introduce the terms ‘pre-request’ and ‘post-request’, which are separate from requests, in their model called structural representation of written requests. In this model which consists of compulsory (C) and optional (O) components, the ‘optional’ post-request consists of emphasis, expansion and thanks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>(C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Request</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[alerter (object, reference, etc.) or request supportive move]</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request(s)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ subordinate requests</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Request</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[emphasis, expansion, thanks]</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salutations</td>
<td>(O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996, p. 647)
The following NT example (NT07) from my corpus illustrates how the above model can be applied to analyse the structure of the request letter:

CS First Boston (Hong Kong) Limited

Alpha Electron Public Company
18/7 Moo 19, Suwintawong Road,
Amphur Bang-num-priow, THAILAND

December 4, 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please note that I am interested in obtaining information concerning your organisation, could you please send me two copies of your last annual report and third quarter earnings. If possible please add me to your distribution list for future publications. I have attached a mailing address label for your convenience.

I thank you in advance for your assistance. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to call me on (852) 2784 0634.

Regards,

Anthony Robert Gardner
Vice President
Head of Syndicate, Asia

Although there is no further clarification in Bargiela-Chappini and Harris (1996), it is obvious that pre-requests and post-requests are different from main or core requests. Recent research tends to study the overall structure of either request letter or request email, focusing on the generic structure, rhetorical approach and/or intertextuality/interdiscursivity. (Bhatia 2010, Chakorn 2004 & 2006, Ho 2011, Kong 2006, Warren 2013) In search of the definitions for both ‘pre-request’ and ‘post-request’, I then follow Yli-Jokipii (1994) in her contrastive analysis of written business requests in Finnish and English. Interestingly, she does not differentiate both pre-requests and post-requests from core requests. She regards the three as a whole,
which forms her overall data for analysis to which she refers as the requestive message: “The requestive message may thus consist of the core alone, or of the core plus one or more expansions, which may precede, follow or surround the core.” (ibid., p. 32) However, she does recognise the existence of pre-requests and post-requests as separate entities by saying, “When necessary, the expansions preceding the core will be singled out as pre-request expansions and correspondingly those following the core will be referred to as post-request expansions.” (ibid., p. 78)

It is obvious that the definition of a post-request has not been made clear in previous research on request analysis. Yli-Jokipii (1994) simply mentions that the expansions following the core request(s) are post-request expansions. However, she does not go into any further detail. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) briefly introduce the term ‘post-request’. They go on to provide only a brief explanation of ‘post-request’ in brackets: ‘[emphasis, expansion, thanks]’. (ibid., p. 647) In order to facilitate the selection process of post-requests in the corpus, I established my own set of criteria for identifying post-requests:

A post-request must follow the core request(s). As a result, it normally appears towards the end of the letter. It is an expansion of the core request(s) that acts as (1) a reminder which echoes, emphasises or summarises the core request(s), or as (2) a closing remark which expresses anticipation, offer (as a gesture of goodwill facilitating the request), and/or thanks to the reader. It can also be a combination of both (1) and (2).

For example, in the NT sample letter (NT07) presented earlier, there are 2 post-requests. The former expresses thanks, and the latter expresses an expansion or an offer of contact so as to facilitate the request. Other examples of post-requests from my corpus are as follows:

‘We thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity, and urge you to help make a difference to someone’s life today.’ (TH01)

‘Thank you very much again for your help with our publications and we look forward to hearing from you in the future.’ (NT09)

‘I would like to thank you in advance for your help in supplying us with data.’ (NT12)

**Data Analysis**

Taking into account the above set of criteria, a substantial proportion of the request letters overall contained post-requests (68 out of 80, which equals 85%). Of the 68 letters with post-requests, 37 are TH letters (54.41%), and 31 are NT letters (45.59%). The table below will show the statistics of these letters in terms of their length of text:
Table 1. Number of Post-requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. of letters with single or two-paragraph texts that have post-requests</th>
<th>No. of letters with multi-paragraph texts that have post-requests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>7 (out of 7)</td>
<td>30 (out of 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>6 (out of 15)</td>
<td>25 (out of 27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The number in each bracket represents the total number of the letters in each group with particular length of text.

In the group of single and two-paragraph texts above, post-requests are found in all TH letters (100%), but in only 6 out of 15 NT letters (40%). There is no particular distinction in the group of multi-paragraph texts since both TH and NT letters have post-requests in a similar proportion. However, in this group, there is a range of one to four ‘post-request’ sentences in each letter. Most NT letters have one ‘post-request’ sentence (only 2 out of 25 have two sentences) whereas two, three and four ‘post-request’ sentences are found in thirteen TH letters (nine, two and two respectively). These multiple post-request sentences normally summarise the core requests and express thanks and/or anticipation of the reader’s cooperation. For example,

‘Any kind consideration on this matter will certainly be welcomed and most appreciated.

Thank you very much in anticipation for your kind help. I would be grateful if you could let me know the Wilton Park’s decision in due course.’ (TH43, forth and fifth paragraphs)

‘Thank you very much in advance for your kind assistant (sic.) and support.

Looking forward to hearing from you by return fax.’ (TH50, third and fourth paragraphs)

‘Accordingly, we are looking forward to hearing the information from you. I hope you will give us the opportunities to perform our new merchandise to the market worldwide.

Thank you for your attention. We shall be very grateful indeed for your help.’ (TH53, fifth and sixth paragraphs)

Perhaps it can be assumed that since the TH letters are normally longer than the NT letters, their post-requests tend to be longer in order to summarise the core requests. From the above examples, we can see that the TH writers express their anticipation and/or gratitude to the reader in a more formal way. This could result from cultural or linguistic transfer. Now we will move on to discuss functions and linguistic realisation of post-requests. It should be noted that all post-requests in 68 letters would be analysed as a whole. I will not differentiate between the post-requests from letters with single and two-paragraph texts and those from letters with multiple-paragraph texts since they are of similar nature and the number of post-request sentences does not always indicate the number of functions. The functions of post-requests in terms of single and multiple functions will be first discussed, followed by an exploration of the nature of each function in relation to its linguistic realisation.
According to the corpus, the functions of post-requests can be divided into four main categories: *reminder, thanks, anticipation* and *offer*. Although many post-requests contain a combination of two or three functions, it seems that the NT writer here prefers to use the ‘single-function’ post-request rather than the ‘multi-function’ one. Of all 31 NT post-requests, 24 are single-function post-requests whereas only 7 are multi-function post-requests. The TH writer tends to use both types of post-requests in a similar proportion, that is, 19 single-function, and 18 multi-function post-requests.

### 1.1 Single-function Post-requests

The single function means that a post-request is of one of the four categories mentioned above. Of all 68 letters with post-requests, 43 letters [19 TH (44%) and 24 NT (56%)] have ‘single function’ post-requests. They can be categorised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Reminder</th>
<th>Thanks</th>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TH N=19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13 (68%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT N=24</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>16 (67%)</td>
<td>7 (29%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These post-requests are always short, and mostly contain one sentence. It is noticeable that the number of the TH post-requests in this category is smaller than that of the NT post-requests, with no ‘reminder’ and much less ‘anticipation’. Examples of single-function post-requests are as follows:

**[Reminder]**

‘As we would like to have the information soonest possible, kindly give this matter your urgent attention.’ (NT24)

**[Thanks]**

‘Thank you in advance.’ (NT08)
‘Thank you very much.’ (TH15)
‘Thank you for your kind consideration.’ (TH16 & TH18)
‘We thank you for your kind co-operation.’ (NT11)
‘Thank you for your attention. We shall be very grateful indeed for your help.’ (TH53)

**[Anticipation]**

‘Awaiting for your earliest reply.’ (TH13)
‘I look forward to meeting you.’ (NT26)
‘Looking forward to hearing from you soon,’ (TH54)
‘We look forward to hearing from you.’ (NT56)
[Offer]

‘If you have any questions, please feel (sic.) free to contact us.’ (TH33)

‘For your convenience while you were in BKK, you will be provided with mobile phone no. 01-888-9999 or pager no 151 or 152 call 432100 or if you would like to have anything, please feel free to let me know.’ (TH04)

The ‘single’ function coding is adopted whenever the focus is on one main function of each clause. Sometimes a clause may contain other minor function(s), but I will only look at its main function. In the first example (NT24) under ‘reminder’ above, the terms ‘soonest’ and ‘urgent’ suggest a sense of urgency, but the main function of the whole clause is to remind the reader of the request. Thus this post-request is considered as ‘reminder’. Another example is ‘Thank you in advance.’ (NT08). This clause may implicitly convey a sense of anticipation which expresses through the term ‘in advance’. However, its main function is ‘thanks’. Of all the four functions, ‘thanks’ is the most popular type among the single-function post-requests in the corpus.

1.2 Multi-function Post-requests

The post-requests in this category contain multiple functions, a combination of either two or three functions. 25 letters [18 TH (72%) and 7 NT (28%)] have this type of post-request. They can be categorised in the following table:

Table 3. Multi-function Post-requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Thanks + Anticipation</th>
<th>Thanks + Offer</th>
<th>Thanks + Reminder</th>
<th>Thanks + Anticipation + Offer</th>
<th>Thanks + Reminder + Anticipation</th>
<th>Offer + Reminder + Anticipation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TH N=18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT N=7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The positions of each group of functions are flexible and do not have to be in the orders presented above.

The TH post-requests tend to extensively use the pattern of ‘thanks + anticipation’. The NT post-requests are much smaller in number and none of them uses the pattern ‘offer + reminder + anticipation’. Both TH and NT examples are as follows:

[Thanks + Anticipation]

‘Thank you very much again for your help with our publications and we look forward to hearing from you in the future.’ (NT09)

‘Your prompt reply would be very much appreciated and thank you for your kindest cooperations (sic.) and best assistance at all times.’ (TH20)

‘We do hope to receive your kind attention. Thank you very much.’ (TH52)

‘Many thanks for your help, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.’ (NT62)
[Thanks + Offer]

‘Thank you for your time and help. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please indicate on the questionnaire.’ (NT02)

‘I thank you for your assistance. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to call me on…’ (NT07)

‘Thank you for your kind co-operation. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact…’ (TH49)

[Thanks + Reminder]

‘I would very much appreciate it, if you would let me know about my request, especially about Ms Pornpa-nga’s and my accommodation, before our travel to Singapore.’ (TH31)

‘I would like to thank you in advance for any information or publications that you are able to send for our library.’ (NT42)

[Thanks + Anticipation + Offer]

‘Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Khun Nararat Nonthachart at 321-9876. Thank you for your kind consideration. We look forward to meeting with you in person as scheduled.’ (TH04, third and fourth paragraphs)

[Thanks + Reminder + Anticipation]

‘Any kind consideration on this matter will certainly be welcomed and most appreciated. Thank you very much in anticipation for your kind help. I would be grateful if you could let me know the Wilton Park’s decision in due course.’ (TH43, fourth and fifth paragraphs consecutively)

‘Accordingly, we are looking forward to hearing the information from you. I hope you will give us the opportunities to perform our new merchandise to the market worldwide. Thank you for your attention. We shall be very grateful indeed for your help.’ (TH53, fifth and sixth paragraphs consecutively)

[Offer + Reminder + Anticipation]

‘Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact… We hope to receive your valued promotion support and to host a very successful cosmetic event in Thailand for the year 2001.’ (TH37)

Post-requests with multiple functions tend to be longer than those with a single function. It can be noted that one post-request sentence here may have more than one function. (e.g. NT09, TH20, TH31, NT42) Many post-requests in this category have
multiple sentences, each of which sometimes represents different functions of post-requests. (e.g. TH04, TH37, TH43, TH53) The post-requests with three functions are often written consecutively in different paragraphs. (e.g. TH43, TH53)

To sum up, a composite table of the functions of post-requests with the summary of discussion is presented below:

**Table 4. Functions of Post-requests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>TH vs NT post-requests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Single-function</td>
<td>Reminder, Thanks, Anticipation</td>
<td>This type of post-request are short and concise (mostly consist of one clause). 44% are TH post-requests while the rest 56% are NT’s. ‘Thanks’ is the most used function. ‘Reminder’ alone is not found in TH post-requests, and ‘Offer’ is not found in NT post-requests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TH=19, NT=24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Multi-function</td>
<td>Thanks + Anticipation, Thanks + Offer, Thanks + Reminder, Thanks + Anticipation + Offer, Thanks + Reminder + Anticipation, Offer + Reminder + Anticipation</td>
<td>The combination of functions seems to make the post-requests longer with the use of complex clauses. 72% are TH post-requests, whereas just 28% are NT’s. The most used pattern is ‘Thanks + Anticipation’. ‘Offer + Reminder + Anticipation’ is not found in NT post-requests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TH=18, NT=7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the light of this linguistic realisation, the nature of the functions of post-requests would be exemplified more clearly. Based on my data, there are some common linguistic features that typically realise each function of post-requests. The ‘single’ function coding is adopted in each example. Although some examples have multiple functions, I will concentrate on the points related to the linguistic realisation which are underlined and/or written in bold. This observation is presented in Table 5, followed by a discussion.

**Table 5. Linguistic Realisation of Post-requests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of function</th>
<th>Linguistic realisation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Reminder      | 1.1 Lexical item(s) related to the request(s) | ‘As we would like to have the **information** soonerest possible, kindly give this **matter** your urgent attention.’ (NT24)  
‘We hope to receive your valued **promotion support** and to host a very successful cosmetic event in Thailand for the year 2001.’ (TH37) |
| 2. Thanks | 2.1 Plain thanks (no explanation of what ‘thanks’ is for) | ‘Thank you very much.’ (TH15)  
‘Thank you.’ (TH44)  
‘Thank you so much and looking forward to hearing from you.’ (TH68) |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2.2 Elaborated thanks (more subtle and strategic form of thanks in which the writer states the reason for thanking the reader) | [Expression of thanks]  
‘Thank you for your time and help.’ (NT02)  
‘Thank you very much for your kind help.’ (TH51)  
‘We thank you for your kind co-operation.’ (NT11)  
[Expression of gratitude]  
‘I would be grateful for any help you can provide.’ (NT40)  
‘Thank you for your attention. We shall be very grateful indeed for your help.’ (TH53)  
[Expression of appreciation]  
‘We will highly appreciate you for this act of kindness.’ (TH47)  
‘We would gratefully appreciate your consideration with this matter.’ (TH55) |
| 3. Anticipation | 3.1 The idiom ‘look forward to’ | ‘Thank you very much again for … and we look forward to hearing from you in the future.’ (NT09)  
‘We will look forward to hearing favourable response from you as soon as possible.’ (TH47)  
‘Accordingly, we are looking forward to hearing the information from you.’ (TH53) |
|  | 3.2 The verb ‘hope’ | ‘We do hope to receive your kind attention. Thank you very much.’ (TH52)  
‘I do hope you can help with this request. Thanking you in anticipation.’ (NT57) |
|  | 3.3 Appreciative strategies | ‘Your prompt reply is appreciated.’ (NT38)  
‘Thank you for your kind cooperation, we shall be pleased to hear from you soon.’ (TH19)  
‘We thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity, and urge you to help make a difference to someone’s life today.’ (TH01 – asking for donation) |
| 4. Offer | 4.1 If-clause (beginning with ‘If’ or ‘Should’ with a politeness marker ‘please’, offering an inducement and/or facilitation to strengthen the | ‘If you would like further information on the Forum or to be added to the mailing list for our newsletter please indicate on the questionnaire.’ (NT02)  
‘Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact myself or ....’ |
The function of ‘reminder’ is mainly realised by the lexical items or key words (written in bold) that echo (e.g. TH31, TH43), emphasise (e.g. NT24) or summarise (e.g. TH37) the core requests. It is considered a reminder when a post-request signals the entire core request or part of it. This function is found in 8 post-requests, usually with ‘thanks’ and/or ‘anticipation’. There is also a case in which the post-request functions as a reminder with an implication of flattery (as underlined):

‘Your contribution would surely make this important event a success. I look forward to hearing from you.’ (TH58)

‘Thanks’ is the most frequently used function of the post-requests in my corpus. It can appear on its own or with other functions as presented in Tables 2 and 3. 53 out of 68 letters with post-requests or 80% contain ‘thanks’ either on its own or with one or two more functions. My data suggest that there are two main types of ‘thanks’; that is, plain thanks and elaborated thanks. The NT writers tend to use a more variety of patterns of ‘thanks’ than TH writers as they include ‘Thanking you in anticipation for…’ and ‘Many thanks for…’ as well as ‘I/We + (would like to) thank you (in advance) for…’. The TH writers prefer to use a more formulaic expression of thanks ‘Thank you (very much) (in advance) for…’. The terms ‘in advance’ or ‘in anticipation’ also convey the sense of expectation/anticipation. However, they are not explicit enough to establish the function of ‘anticipation’ in this context as I adopted the single-function coding and the main focus here is ‘thanks’. The TH post-requests use expressions of appreciation more frequently than the NT ones. Both plain and elaborated thanks reveal some assumption by the writer that the reader will comply with his/her request.

‘Anticipation’ is the second most used function of post-requests in my corpus. There are 28 out of 68 letters with post-requests that contain ‘anticipation’ statements either alone or with one or two more functions, which accounts for 41%. The NT writer tends to use ‘anticipation’ on its own rather than with other functions whereas the TH writer prefers the combination of functions. In general more TH post-requests contain ‘anticipation’ and the most popular pattern is ‘Anticipation + Thanks’. It should be noted that in her analysis of request, Yli-Jokipii (1994) regards ‘anticipation statements’ as requests because she does not differentiate pre-requests, requests and post-requests. She reveals that anticipation statements are the most common type of routine declarative requests in her corpus. She says, ‘Anticipation statements are realized by a lexical item denoting hoping, liking to do (sic.), looking forward and awaiting, etc…’ (ibid., p. 173) This is similar to the linguistic features of the anticipation statements in my corpus in which the idiom ‘look forward to’ is most extensively found. Yli-Jokipii (1994, p. 127) states that the use of ‘look forward’ formula in the closing position is comparable to the prosodic means included in leaving-taking turn in spoken exchange. The use of the verb ‘hope’ and appreciative strategies is mostly found in TH post-requests which mainly contain another function such as ‘thanks’.

‘Offer’ can be considered as a facilitating move that helps soften tone of the request letter by making the request seem less condensed or brief. In general, ‘offer’ tends to
convey a gesture of goodwill which may be an inducement and/or an offer to accommodate what the reader may need. The writer attempts to show goodwill to the reader, who is supposed to comply with the main request(s), by assuring the reader that full support is available if needed. This function is found in 9 TH and only 2 NT post-requests, mostly in the form of ‘if-clause’ with the politeness marker ‘please’.

**Conclusion**

This study attempts to shed light on cross-cultural post-requests written in English in the Thai business context. The main findings report on the discoursal features and linguistic realisations of the post-requests. The functions of post-requests are of four types: Reminder, Thanks, Anticipation and Offer. From this corpus, the NT writers use the ‘single-function’ post-request more extensively than the ‘multi-function’ or combination one, while the TH writers tend to use both types of post-requests rather equally. ‘Thanks’ is the most frequently used function of post-requests both on its own as a single function and with another function(s) especially ‘anticipation’. The linguistic realisation was presented in Table 5. It is evident that TH writers generally use more formulaic expressions of thanks although they tend to use more expressions of appreciation as elaborated thanks. They also prefer to combine ‘thanks’ with ‘anticipation’ whereas NT writers favour either ‘thanks’ or ‘anticipation’ on its own. The TH writers use more ‘offer’ than the NT writers do. ‘Reminder’ is rather uncommon and generally appears with ‘thanks’ and/or ‘anticipation’. The TH post-requests are normally longer and sometimes consist of many sentences expressing thanks and anticipation in a more repetitive yet formal way. The mood types in both TH and NT post-requests are either declarative or imperative with the politeness marker ‘please’.

This cross-cultural discourse analysis reveals that the TH writers tend to include more explanations to strengthen their requests. They also use more expressions of gratitude and/or appreciation in their main requests in addition to those expressed in the post-requests. (Chakorn, 2006) Perhaps these features can be viewed as Thai-style request strategies. The overall investigation manifests the diversity in culture and language use which distinguishes the request writing of Thais from that of native English speakers. The differences can lead to possible risks of communication discrepancies for both parties. The NT request letters may be viewed as ‘too brief, too direct or straightforward’ if they include no post-request especially the expression of gratitude. The TH request letters may be seen as ‘too polite or too redundant’ if they include extensive post-requests.

The overall investigation manifests the diversity in English language use which distinguishes Thai-style business letter of requests from western-style ones. In line with Bremmer (2008) whose study has proposed more textual support for students, the findings from this study could also be used in teaching business request writing to EFL learners as well as in developing advanced materials and methods for communicative effectiveness in cross-cultural business communication; for example, an emphasis should be made on developing intercultural competence by acknowledging linguistic and cultural differences in request writing across cultures.
References


