

Developing Nonverbal Communication Competence in
Requests and Refusals of Thai University Students:

The Intercultural Interaction Model

การพัฒนาความสามารถในการสื่อสารผ่านอวัจนภาษาในการขอร้อง
และปฏิเสธแก่นักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย:

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้รายงานผลการศึกษาความสามารถในการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาในการกล่าวขอร้องและปฏิเสธของนักศึกษาชาวไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศโดยใช้โมเดลการสอน Intercultural Interaction Model (IIM) และศึกษาการรับรู้ต่อโมเดลการสอนนี้ของผู้เรียน ใช้การวิจัยปฏิบัติการในชั้นเรียนเป็นระเบียบวิธีวิจัย โดยจัดการเรียนการสอนเป็นระยะเวลา 45 ชั่วโมง ผสมผสานกิจกรรมพัฒนาความตระหนักรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมและการอภิปราย อภิวัตน์ปฏิบัติศาสตร์ศิลปะพจนานุกรม กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือ นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีจำนวน 45 คน ในมหาวิทยาลัยสำหรับนักศึกษาอาชีพแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดนครปฐม เก็บข้อมูลโดยการแสดงบทบาทสมมติและแบบสอบถาม เจ้าของภาษาจำนวน 3 คนให้คะแนนการสื่อสารอวัจนภาษาผ่านการสบตา การแสดงสีหน้าและการสัมผัสโดยปรับใช้เกณฑ์ของ Damnet (2008) ใช้ค่าเฉลี่ยร้อยละ และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐานในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณและใช้การเทคนิคการสรุปในการวิเคราะห์ความคิดเห็นของผู้ประเมิน (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004) ผลการวิจัยแสดงพัฒนาการในการสื่อสารผ่านการสบตา การแสดงสีหน้าและการสัมผัสของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง รวมถึงผู้เรียนยังมีการรับรู้ต่อนวัตกรรมการสอนในเชิงบวก

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of an investigation of Thai EFL students' nonverbal communication competence in making requests and refusals after using the Intercultural Interaction Model (IIM), and an examination of the students' perceptions of the IIM were also examined. The teaching sessions lasted for 45 hours and they were conducted through the integration between pragmatic consciousness-raising

activities (PCR) and metapragmatic discussion of movie sequences. Classroom action research was employed. The participants were 45 engineering students at a higher vocational university in Nakhon Pathom. Data were gained from pre- and post-test role-play and a set of questionnaire. Three native raters applied a NVC rating sheet adapted from Damnet (2008) in evaluating the students' use of eye contact, facial expressions, and touching. Means, percentages, and standard deviation were employed to analyze the quantitative data, while the raters' comments were analyzed using a technique of summarizing (Marzano et al., 2004). Findings revealed improvement in the use of the three nonverbal cues and the students appeared to have positive perceptions of the IIM innovative program.

Keywords: Nonverbal communication, requests, refusals, pragmatic consciousness- raising (PCR), metapragmatic discussion

Background of the Study

The introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the late 70s to early 80s has had great influences in several areas of English learning and teaching (Rose & Kasper, 2001). In particular, the promotion of nonverbal communication competence in classroom has been proposed (Hismanoglu & Hismonoglu, 2008; Sandoval & Jara, 2012; Surkamp, 2014). However, the practice has long been neglected in EFL contexts (Buza, 2015; Damnet, 2008; Elfatih, 2005; Sandoval & Jara, 2012; Surkamp, 2014). This might result from three challenging aspects. Firstly, some nonverbal communication (NVC) is culturally-bound (Elfatih, 2005;

Hismanoglu & Hismonoglu, 2008). Likewise, no NVC teaching models have been established yet. Finally, commercial course books feature inadequate NVC contents (Carlile, 1993; Perez, 2006). Thus, teaching NVC is challenging for nonnative teachers.

On the contrary, teaching NVC in EFL classroom is not all doom and gloom. Pragmatic consciousness-raising activities (PCR) and metapragmatic discussion may be applicable. The PCR aims to expose learners to the pragmatic aspects of language, both L1 and L2, and provides them with the analytical tool they need to reach their own generalization concerning appropriate language use in a specific context (Rose, 1999). Likewise, metapragmatic discussion of movie sequences, a method employed to develop pragmatic awareness (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2015), might be possible to develop NVC ability as movies are good sources of nonverbal communication (Damnet, 2008; Nigussie, 2015).

Consequently, in order to fulfil the gaps in teaching NVC in Thailand, this study employed a teaching model, namely the Intercultural Interaction model (IIM) to develop Thai students' ability to communicate nonverbally. In addition, the students' perceptions of the innovative program were also examined. The following research questions were set to obtain the intended descriptions of the phenomena.

1. To what extent do students make eye contact, facial expressions, and touch in requests and refusals through the Intercultural Interaction Model?

2. How do students perceive the implementation of the Intercultural Interaction Model in learning nonverbal communication?

Related Literature

1. Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication (NVC) refers to a form of communication other than words, but is closely linked to the verbal elements and cannot be separated (Knapp & Hall, 2007, p. 5). The benefits of NVC in communication include three main areas. Firstly, NVC facilitates interpretation of messages (Hismanoglu & Hismonoglu, 2008; Surkamp, 2014) as the use of nonverbal cues can complete the oral parts of the message (Sandoval & Jara, 2012). Hence, the interpretation of the message is more feasible and mutual understanding between the interactants is also promoted by using nonverbal cues. Secondly, NVC signifies social parameters of interactants (Surbamp, 2014), for example, performing eye contact reflects relationship between people involving in the interaction (Elfatihi, 2005). Finally, NVC prevents misunderstanding, which might occur in intercultural communication (Buza, 2015) as a part of users' strategic competence (Sandoval & Jara, 2012).

NVC consists of various elements. Of all the elements, eye contact, facial expressions, and touching are considered influential in human communication. The first element, eye contact, refers to how people look at each other when communicating. According to Knapp and Hall (2010, p. 358), the functions of eye contact include facilitating social interaction, reflecting relationship between interactants, monitoring feedback, and expressing emotions. Similarly, facial expressions are

associated with any forms of expressions through the face, i.e. eyebrows and mouth. The emotions depicted on the face are very complex (Knapp & Hall, 2010) and pivotal in human communication (Elfatih, 2005). Facial expressions take significant roles in revealing one's emotional states, providing feedback, and organizing the flow of information (Elfatih, 2005; Knapp & Hall, 2010). Finally, touching might convey different meanings from one culture to another (Elfatih, 2005; Knapp & Hall, 2010). As a result, communication breakdowns in intercultural communication are likely to occur from the culture-based interpretation. The functions of touching range from reflecting relationship, eliciting reaction, and reflecting feelings (Knapp & Hall, 2010).

Previous literature on NVC can be categorized into two groups. The first area of studies, which is commonly found in EFL contexts, refers to the studies on teachers and students use of NVC in classroom. The results of these studies confirm significant roles of NVC in the setting, for example, NVC builds good relationship between teachers and students (Elfatih, 2005), facilitates better teaching and learning outcomes (Barabar & Caganaga, 2015; Surkamp, 2014), as well as promotes learning atmosphere (Sandoval & Jara, 2012). However, only a few studies focused on promoting the students' ability to employ nonverbal cues (Damnet, 2008; Worrawong, Charttrakul, & Damnet, 2017). In particular, Damnet (2008) discovered positive results of developing NVC competence for Thai students by using films and role-play. Similarly, Worrawong, Charttrakul, and Damnet (2017) used project-based activities based on CEFR to promote learners' NVC competence and found more

appropriate performances of NVC. Thus, more studies on promoting NVC competence are necessary, particularly in EFL context where people with different backgrounds interact in English.

2. Nonverbal Communication in Making Requests and Refusals

Nonverbal communication competence is considered essential when people make requests or refusals considering its impacts on both the speakers and the listeners. First of all, requests refer to the act of causing intrusive imposition to the listener (Blum-Kulka & Oshtain, 1984). The requester may be reluctant to express the intention because both the listener and the speaker tend to lose face easily (Blum-Kulka & Oshtain, 1984; Brown & Levinson, 1987). As making requests is face-threatening, speakers across languages put significant effort in minimizing the imposition by employing indirect strategies instead of direct ones, whereas direct strategies are clearer and easier to be interpreted (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2015). Hence, NVC might promote better understanding between interactants. Similarly, refusals refer to disapproval of the others' idea, which also threaten their face (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2015). Refusals can be classified into four subcategories: refusals to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2015; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Thus, due to the face-threatening characteristic of the two speech acts, appropriate application of nonverbal cues, particularly eye contact, facial expressions, or touching can reduce the directness of the expressions used as nonverbal communication promotes understating of the oral part of the medium (Sandoval & Jara, 2012). In contrast, incongruence between

the two elements can cause problems since NVC can repeat or conflict the verbal messages in interaction (Knapp & Hall, 2010, p. 12). Consequently, promotion of learners' ability to convey requests and refusals nonverbally becomes crucial, especially in the EFL contexts.

3. Developing Nonverbal Communication in English Classroom

As mentioned earlier, promotion of NVC competence might be inadequate in EFL contexts for three reasons. First, interpretation of NVC is based greatly on cultures of the users (Elfatihi, 2005; Hismanoglu & Hismonoglu, 2008). Thus, nonnative teachers might find it challenging to teach NVC while trying to comply with the native norms. Next, the pedagogy for teaching NVC is controversial. Even though efforts have been made, including the mention of NVC ability in CEFR by applying role-play, simulation, or problem-solving activities (English Language Institute: Office of Basic Education and Commission, 2015), in practice more guidance is inevitably necessary (Surkamp, 2014). Finally, the issue concerning teaching materials is also disturbing as commercial materials lack content on NVC (Carlile, 1993; Perez, 2006). Consequently, considerations should be made in selecting the effective teaching pedagogy and the teaching materials.

The Intercultural Interaction Model (IIM) might be a pioneering teaching approach in developing NVC in EFL classroom. The teaching model includes two teaching methods. The first is the pragmatic consciousness-raising method (PCR), which is a traditional pragmatic teaching pedagogy. Learners are exposed to appropriate use of English, both the verbal and nonverbal elements (Rose, 1999). Meanwhile, they

are sensitized to external factors that influence language use as well as the variables that regulate those factors (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Rose, 1994). Hence, PCR can promote appropriate use of both expressions and nonverbal cues. The other method applied in the IIM is metapragmatic discussion, which refers to how the teachers and learners explicitly express their ideas about pragmatic use of expressions that they have seen or heard (The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.), NVC in this context. The method has potential in promoting NVC ability, particularly the discussion of movie sequences because learning NVC through movies provides opportunities for learners to expose to NVC in native speaker contexts (Damnet, 2008), while learners are potentially able to gain more understanding of appropriate use of nonverbal cues (Damnet, 2008; Nigussie, 2015; Roell, 2010).

Research Methodology

This study applied classroom action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Seliger & Long, 1983) as the major approach to conducting the research. The method can bring out changes in the teacher and students (Coghlan, 2007; Jones & Eric, 2004). In this context, the researcher took roles as a teacher-researcher. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed for data analysis to assure the validity and reliability of the answers to the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

1. The Innovative Program

In this study, an innovative teaching program, namely the Intercultural Interaction Model (IIM) was implemented. The innovative class lasted for 15 weeks and pragmatic consciousness-raising activities (PCR) as well as metapragmatic discussion of movie sequences were implemented. Participants were 45 engineering students. The teaching process consisted of three phases: the explicit teaching of native speakers' nonverbal communication, the discussion of four movie sequences featuring requests and refusals, and two sets of the interviews with native speakers of English.

Data Collection

1. Research Instruments

Research instruments were two sets of role-play and a set of questionnaire. Role-play provides realistic communicative data (Gass & Houck, 1999; Kasper & Dahl, 1991), which can illustrate changes in participants' nonverbal communicative performances. Next, the task expands opportunities for Thai students to communicate in English in EFL contexts (Wongsothorn, Hirunburana, & Chinnawong, 2006) as chances in communicating in English outside the classroom are limited. Moreover, role-play can raise awareness of cultural competence, which is an important factor in successful interactions (Donahue & Parsons, 1982) even though it usually takes a lot of time to be implemented (Islam & Islam, 2012; Shapiro & Leopold, 2012). The questionnaire, on the other hand, elicits self-reported data (Griffie, 2012) from students, which was a

crucial source for investigating their perception towards the IIM innovative program. Both of the tools can save both time and money and are easy to be administered (Gillham, 2011).

2. Data Collection

The role-play aimed to investigate the students' nonverbal communication ability. Requests and refusals were paired to make a scenario. This study focused on the ability of students to evaluate two social parameters: social power and social distance (Cohen, 2010; Brown & Levinson, 1987) when communicating non-verbally. Student A took a role as a lecturer (higher status), who turned down a request of Student B (low status) for late registration and requested the student to participate in an interview. However, Student B refused to join the interview. Thus, each student performed both requests and refusals. Three native speakers employed a role-play rating sheet adapted from Damnet (2008). The criteria originally consisted of 8 elements of nonverbal cues with three scales. However, only 3 nonverbal cues eye contact, facial expressions, and touching were included in this study after the researcher initially studied the clips and found that these elements were outstanding. The scale of 1 referred to limited use of the nonverbal cue, while 2 referred to acceptable or appropriate use of the nonverbal cue, and 3 referred to overuse of that nonverbal cue (Appendix A). The raters evaluated 45 recordings of role-play and inter-rater reliability was conducted to assure the agreement among the raters (Landis & Koch, 1997). The method assisted in calculating consistency of the rating scores

by multiple raters (Hallgren, 2012). In this study, the method of percent agreement was conducted (McHugh, 2012), in which the raters were paired and their agreement was examined. The items with agreement were marked with “0,” while those with different scores were with “1.” The result was .70 referring to substantial agreement.

In addition, a set of questionnaire was designed based on Wilhelm & Pei (2008) and Oz (2014). The form included two sections: students’ background information and perceptions of the IIM program. All the items were in five Likert- Scales. Two methods were employed to improve its validity and reliability. First, index of item- objective congruence or IOC was conducted to ensure content validity or correlation between the questions and their objectives. Four experts in ELT were asked to evaluate every item. The items with minimum scores of .75 were acceptable (Turner & Carlson, 2003), while items with lower scores were revised. The other method was reliability test referring to investigation of internal consistency (Coakes, Steed, & Price, 2008). The revised form was distributed to ten engineering students who shared similar characteristics to the respondents in the real study. The results were recorded into SPSS and Cronbach Alpha was calculated through the program. The alpha was .73, which was acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

3. Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied for data analysis. Firstly, descriptive statistics, i. e., means, percentages, and standard deviation, were applied in the analysis of the scores from the

three native-raters and the data from the questionnaire. The method was applied because it assisted in identifying and describing pattern of the data (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, n.d.), the students' ability to communicate nonverbally and their perceptions of the IIM innovative program in particular. Meanwhile, a summarizing technique was employed in interpreting additional comments of the raters on the students' NVC through role-play. The method allowed the researcher to discover themes of the data (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004). The researcher studied the comments and coded the data into three fixed categories: eye contact, facial expressions, and touching and established the main ideas relating to the three focal categories.

Findings

1. Appropriateness of Students' Nonverbal Communication

Table 1. Appropriateness of students' nonverbal communication

Roles	Eye Contact		Facial Expressions		Touching	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Students	1.75	1.8	1.63	1.63	1.67	1.8
Lecturer	1.7	1.88	1.58	1.8	1.67	1.8

Table 1 demonstrates that the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test in all categories and the scores were closer to the scale of 2, except the post-test facial expressions by a student to a lecturer. Facial expressions to a lower status student achieved the highest advancement,

from 1.58 to 1.80. The second best performances of the students' NVC when making requests and refusals was found in touching. From 1.67 the scores moved up to 1.80 in both roles. This means that the ability was closer to native speakers' norms. Similarly, the mean scores of 1.75 and 1.70 in eye contact climbed to 1.80 and 1.88, respectively. In contrast, the facial expressions to the lecturer barred at 1.63.

In brief, the IIM innovative program had positive impacts on the students' abilities to transfer their requests and refusals as the mean scores were closer to the scale of 2 after the participation, except the facial expressions from a lower status student to an unfamiliar lecturer. Their use of the three nonverbal cues was rated as acceptable or appropriate use of the nonverbal cue with regard to what would be expected to be communicated in the verbal context and the norms of native speakers.

2. The Raters' Reflection on the Students' Nonverbal Communication

2.1 Eye Contact

In the pre-test, eye contact the students used was perceived to be appropriate in two areas. Firstly, according to the raters' native norms, the students made natural eye contact. Meanwhile, the eye contact could reflect confidence of the students. In contrast, limited use of eye contact in some recordings was noticeable. However, in the post-test, the raters realized that it was with improvement, but still with some inappropriate characteristics. To be specific, some improvement in most recordings was observed. In contrast, Rater A still observed inappropriate use of the NVC cue, which needed to be improved.

2.2 Facial Expressions

In the pre-test, two aspects of the appropriate use and the inappropriate use were provided by the native-raters. Concerning the appropriate use, firstly, the students' facial expressions were regarded as natural. At the same time, the facial expressions reflected friendliness. However, the facial expressions were inappropriate in two aspects. One of the unacceptable features was overuse of the NVC cue and inadequate facial expressions in some recordings. Similarly, the findings in the posttest revealed two areas of the raters' reflection. First, some improvement was noticeable, for example, the students made adequate and natural eye contact. In contrast, in some recordings the ability to convey eye contact was still inadequate.

2.3 Touching

According to the pre-test, two areas of the raters' comments on touching were revealed. Overall, the native-raters noticed the naturalness of how the students touched each other, whereas inappropriate touching was found when some students touched themselves in a distracting way. Regarding the post-test, the findings indicated that the students' touching was evaluated to be improved in some areas, but still with some inappropriate practices. The use of touching was seen to be improved, for instance, the touching showed their kindness. On the other hand, the touching was also perceived to be unacceptable, for example, a student touched a lecturer to express his request when it was not necessary.

To conclude, according to the analysis of the raters' comments, two aspects of their reflection were obvious. First, IIM classes might be beneficial to the development of the students' abilities to communicate through eye contact, facial expressions, and touching. At the same time, some limited and unacceptable practices in the use of the three nonverbal cues were still found. Thus, the promotion of nonverbal communication in the IIM innovative program might be necessary.

3. The Students' Perceptions of the IIM Innovative Program

The results through the questionnaire covered six areas of the students' perceptions of the IIM innovative program. They included 1) the teaching and learning activities, 2) the materials, 3) the teacher, 4) the learners, 5) the course evaluation, and 6) the overall advantages. A five point Likert-scale was employed and the interval ranges of the mean scores were calculated and interpreted as illustrated below:

4.51-5.00	means Strongly agree
3.51-4.50	means Agree
2.51-3.50	means Fairly agree
1.51-2.50	means Disagree
1.00-1.50	means Strongly disagree

Table 2. Summary of the students' perceptions of the IIM innovative program

No.	Items	\bar{X}	S.D.
1	The teaching activities: PCR activities	4.11	.58
2	The teaching activities: Metapragmatic discussion	3.92	.86
3	The teaching materials	4.18	.70

No.	Items	\bar{X}	S.D.
4	The teacher	4.63	.50
5	The learners	3.38	.83
6	The evaluation	3.81	.93
7	The advantages of the IIM innovative program	4.16	.71

Table 2 shows the students' positive perceptions of six elements of the IIM innovative program and the advantages of the program. Regarding the teaching methods, the students agreed that the PCR activities promoted the opportunities to learn nonverbal communication, their use of English in real communication, and confidence in using English ($\bar{x} = 4.11$). Likewise, the students agreed that the metapragmatic discussion activities enhanced their notice of NVC, learning from authentic English communication in requests and refusals, and their motivation.

Similarly, the students agreed that the materials not only were interesting, but also promoted understanding of the lessons and learning achievement ($\bar{x} = 4.18$). Next, the students strongly agreed on the teacher's performance ($\bar{x} = 4.63$), particularly the efforts made in preparing the lessons. In contrast, as learners, the students fairly agreed that the innovative program of IIM could improve their knowledge in making requests and refusals and they were fairly active in asking questions and eager to prepare for class ($\bar{x} = 3.38$). Likewise, they agreed that the evaluation through role-play promoted their confidence ($\bar{x} = 3.81$). Finally, the table indicates that overall the students agreed that the IIM innovative program was advantageous to them ($\bar{x} = 4.16$), particularly in

terms of the awareness of the necessity of using appropriate English relating to the social power of interactants and awareness of nonverbal communication.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. The Intercultural Interaction Model and the Students' Nonverbal Communication Competence

Regarding nonverbal communication, the findings from the quantitative data confirmed the positive impact of IIM on the students' use of the three nonverbal cues. That is to say, the students were capable of using more appropriate eye contact, facial expressions, and touching in transferring requests and refusals after participating in the IIM innovative program (see Table 1). To be specific, the students' use of eye contact, facial expressions, and touching became acceptable or appropriate from being limited before attending the IIM class. In particular, the progress in the use of facial expressions to a lower-status-interactant was the most outstanding, followed by touching and eye contact, respectively.

The findings confirm the favor of students' exposure to appropriate use of both verbal and nonverbal cues in transferring requests and refusals and the promotion of sensitivity of external factors i.e. social power and social distance (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Rose, 1994) during the implementation of IIM. This might be because of the two major teaching methods in the IIM innovative program. Firstly, during the PCR phase, after the teacher explicitly taught the strategies and use of

nonverbal cues in making requests and refusals, the students performed an interview with native speakers of English asking them to fill up WDCTs. During the explicit teaching through PPT slides and the interview, the students might have noticed the use of verbal and nonverbal expressions and were aware of the influences of the contextual factors. This is congruent with Schmidt's (1990; 1993; 2010), who proposes that learners must pay attention to or be aware of certain forms so that in the later stage those forms can finally be used as intakes. Secondly, the metapragmatic discussion of movie sequences in the IIM class appeared to be advantageous. It is in line with Damnet (2008) who maintained that learning NVC through movies provides exposition and examples for learners to communicate nonverbally in native speaker contexts, while learners are potentially able to gain more understanding of appropriate use of nonverbal cues (Damnet, 2008; Nigussie, 2015; Roell, 2010).

Although there was some improvement, the raters commented on some students' limited eye contact and facial expressions, and overuse of facial expressions, including inappropriate touching of oneself after participating in the IIM class. This might be because of the transfer of NVC from the students' culture (Kasper & Rose, 2001) as Thais interpret the use of nonverbal cues such as eye contact or facial expressions differently from native speakers, for example, direct eye contact can be viewed as rude or invasive in Thai culture (Cultural Atlas, 2018). Thus, the students might try to be polite by avoiding eye contact, which is different from western culture. The circumstance confirms roles of culture on the students' nonverbal behavior (Knapp & Hall, 2010).

In addition, even though using movie sequences might be beneficial to most students, some of them found this authentic pragmatic resource challenging, since the questionnaire results indicated the students agreed that the movie sequences were interesting and enjoyable, while the ability to improve understanding of the lesson by the material was much smaller.

2. Students' Perceptions of the Intercultural Interaction Model

The other areas of the finding showed that the students perceived the IIM innovative class as beneficial to their learning of communicative English, particularly NVC. This might result from three main features of the IIM innovative program. Firstly, the PCR activities and metapragmatic discussion extended the opportunities for the students to learn NVC and provided them chances to learn and communicate in real situations through the interview with native speakers and the discussion of movie sequences. In addition, the innovative course also boosted their confidence and motivation to use English (see Table 2). This affirms that the methods facilitated learners to notice relationships between verbal and nonverbal communication in making requests and refusals (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Secondly, the teaching materials such as the PPT, the worksheets, and the movie sequences gained the students' interest and resulted in higher achievements (see Table 2, $\bar{x} = 4.18$). The PPT featured authentic research-based information about request and refusal strategies as well as nonverbal communication, which can boost learners' motivation and

learning achievement (Ahmed, 2017). However, the low mean of the students' agreement on the movie sequence requires consideration of applying the material in class, especially for learners with poor English proficiency.

Finally, the students also strongly agreed on the helpful performances of the teacher in the IIM class, especially on the lesson preparations and assignment of tasks (see Table 2, $x\bar{=} 4.63$). This reflected the teacher/ researcher's role as a facilitator, who tried to improve students' learning (Harrison & Killion, 2007; S. & Usha Rani, 2016) by preparing for class and offering clear instructions for task processing.

3. Suggestions for Further Studies

Due to some limitations of this study, three suggestions for further studies are proposed. Firstly, nonnative raters should be recruited as it is necessary not to consider the norms of the British and American raters applied in the judgement of the students' use of nonverbal cues as the only available standard. This is because English is now used among nonnative speakers and the aims of using English are to ensure mutual understanding between speakers and improve interpersonal relationship (McKay, 2003). Thus, relying exclusively on the native norms might be invalid. Secondly, further studies should include other nonverbal cues such as gestures, space, or tone and intonation to raise learners' awareness about how nonverbal norm differs in different cultural contexts. This is because even though use of some nonverbal

cues is universal, some of the cues such as space are culturally specific. Thus, learners need more knowledge about roles of cultural value on NVC.

4. Conclusion

This research report presents an investigation of Thai university students' nonverbal communication competence through an innovative program, namely the Intercultural Interaction Model (IIM). Pragmatic consciousness-raising activities and metapragmatic discussion of movie sequences were employed to enhance the students' NVC competence. In addition, their perceptions of IIM were also examined. The findings indicated improvement in the students' NVC along with their positive perceptions of the innovative program. Based on the results, promoting learners' awareness of NVC through explicit teaching of NVC, interaction with native speakers of English, and including discussion of NVC in movie sequences could be undertaken as an early effort. In addition, regardless of the students' positive perceptions of overall teaching materials, more considerations of using movies in enhancing EFL learners' NVC competence is necessary, particularly for learners with low English proficiency.

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