

KHẢO SÁT QUAN ĐIỂM NGƯỜI DÙNG NGOẠI NGỮ VỀ NGUYÊN TẮC HỢP TÁC VÀ NGUYÊN TẮC LỊCH SỰ TRONG GIAO TIẾP

Nguyễn Minh Trí, Đào Xuân Phương Trang**

Trong bối cảnh hiện nay, quá trình toàn cầu hóa đang ngày càng mở rộng trên toàn thế giới ở nhiều lĩnh vực về kinh tế, văn hóa xã hội và các ngành nghề khác. Từ đó, tiếng Anh trở thành phương tiện giao tiếp cốt lõi đối với mọi người đến từ nhiều bối cảnh văn hóa-xã hội khác nhau. Chính vì thế, những yêu cầu về năng lực giao tiếp liên văn hóa đang ngày càng cao do sự khác biệt về các đặc điểm văn hóa-xã hội. Mục tiêu chủ đạo của quá trình giao tiếp chính là đạt được mục đích giao tiếp theo một cách phù hợp nhất. Bài báo hướng tới phân tích quan điểm của người nói tiếng Anh đối với các nguyên tắc hợp tác và nguyên tắc lịch sự trong giao tiếp thực tiễn giữa những người đến từ các nền văn hóa khác nhau. Dữ liệu thu thập thông qua mẫu hỏi trên đối tượng là người nói tiếng Anh phi bản ngữ. Kết quả cho thấy, đối tượng khảo sát thường dùng ngôn ngữ dựa trên cảm quan mà ít chú ý đến tính phù hợp trong nền văn hóa của người đối diện, dẫn tới nhiều trường hợp đánh mất tính lịch sự trong giao tiếp và gây hiểu lầm giữa người nói với nhau. Đồng thời, người dùng thường ngộ nhận về hiệu quả của quá trình giao tiếp mà không chú ý đến các nguyên tắc hợp tác trong giao tiếp. Trong một số trường hợp, người dùng vẫn bỏ qua một vài nguyên tắc về hợp tác hoặc lịch sự để đảm bảo mục đích giao tiếp. Bài báo cũng hướng đến đề xuất một số giải pháp để tăng hiệu quả của việc ứng dụng các nguyên tắc về hợp tác và lịch sự trong giao tiếp đối với người dùng.

Từ khóa: năng lực ngữ dụng, nguyên tắc hợp tác, nguyên tắc lịch sự.

The current era has witnessed a rapid rate of globalization all over the world in various fields, such as economy, culture and society and other aspects. Thus, English language has become one of the key means of communication for many people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, there is a growing demand for intercultural communication competence due to the differences in socio-cultural characteristics. The ultimate purpose of communication is to achieve communication goals in the most appropriate way. This paper aims to analyse the perspectives of English speakers towards cooperative principles and politeness principles in intercultural communication. Data were collected via surveys with non-native English speakers. The findings reveal that the participants are often unaware of the appropriateness of their language use in the other interlocutor's culture, which might result in misunderstandings and impoliteness in communication. Furthermore, the communicative effectiveness is often taken for granted without proper attention to cooperative principles. In some cases, the participants sacrifice either cooperative or politeness principles to achieve the goal of communication. This study also proposes a number of techniques to maximize the effectiveness of cooperative principles and politeness principles in communication.

Keywords: pragmatic competence, cooperative principles, politeness principles.

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AN EXPLORATION ON LANGUAGE USERS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES AND POLITENESS PRINCIPLES IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

1. Introduction

The use of English as a lingua franca has become a widespread trend in the global context. Similarly, the influx of foreigners to Vietnam for education, business, and tourism has fostered the blossom of English as a means of communication where multi-languages coexist. However, mastering English language does not guarantee successful communication, especially in cross-cultural conversations. This is due to the fact that communicative competence requires not only the tacit knowledge of a language but also the ability to use it appropriately (Hymes, 1972, cited in Al-Tayib Umar, 2006). In other words, pragmatic mistakes might be evident obstacles to mutual achievement of communicative goals (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In the field of pragmatics, Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principles are among the key theories as these aspects are unavoidable in any communication context. In reality, little is known as to how much language users are concerned about these principles and how their level of awareness of these principles affects their cross-cultural conversations. This paper, therefore, looked into the perspectives of English speakers to Cooperative Principles and Politeness in authentic interactions with people from other cultures with an aim to obtain insights into the aforementioned issues.

Consequently, implications can be drawn to benefit language use in general, and language teaching and learning in particular.

It is undeniable that flouting or violating Cooperative Principles is remarkably popular in communications regardless of interactors, conveyed messages, and interaction contexts. Noriko's research in (2000) indicates that politeness strategies mainly cover a certain very limited type of interaction even though they theoretically have the potential to apply to various types of interaction. Studies have also revealed that power relationship, social distance, and degree of imposition constrain communicative action universally, but the values of these factors vary from context to context (Sadeghghli & Niroomand, 2016). Peng (2019) draws out implications from her study that people with different thinking modes might have different tendency in observing the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle in communication.

Variations in the application of Cooperative Principle and Politeness have been noted over time, yet whether language users' perspective to the use of these constructs contribute to such variations has not been investigated. Similarly, literature has offered little evidence as to whether the communication

participants' personal view has any relevance to their employment of Cooperative Principle and Politeness.

Aim of the study

This paper aims to analyze the perspectives of English speakers to cooperative principles and politeness strategies in authentic interactions among people from different cultures. Based on the findings, implications are suggested, and a number of techniques to maximize the effectiveness of cooperative principles

and politeness in further practical communication are also proposed.

1. Literature review

1.1. Pragmatic competence

In theory, an individual with communicative competence possesses grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like about the language being used, as well as social knowledge on how and when to use utterances appropriately (Wen, 2004).

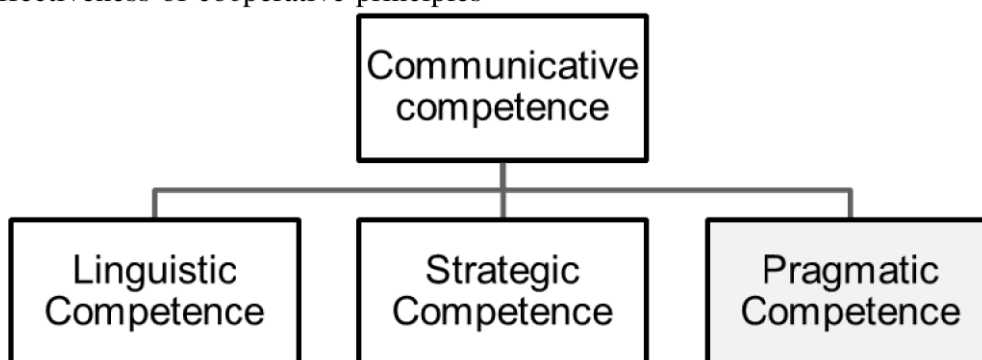


Figure 1: Wen's Model of Communicative Competence (2004, p.175)

The acquisition of socio-cultural rules, widely known as pragmatic competence, is crucial to language users Al-Tayib Umar (2006). This means that being able to communicate what one wants to say and understand what the message conveyed by the other speaker(s) in any socio-cultural context is a necessary skill for language users. For example, without adequate knowledge on how language works in its relevant context, a language user might face difficulty figuring out the relationship between what is said and what is understood in spoken and written discourse. Culture shock may result in miscommunication among interlocutors

(Quang, 2020). Thus, for a language user, to avoid communication breakdown, linguistic and pragmatic competences should be systematically developed and learned (Kasper & Rose, 1999).

1.2. Cooperative Principles

When participating in conversations, people assume that there is a set of principles which direct their interpretation of what is being said. This set of principles must be observed and abided by both speakers and listeners to allow the conversation to go smoothly and prevent irrelevant or nonsense information interfering with the speech flow.

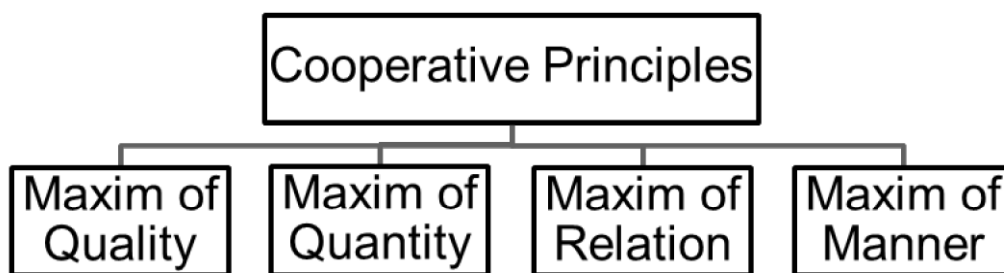


Figure 2. Grice's Cooperative Principles (1975)

This set of principles, which underlies all communication, is referred to as Cooperative Principles (Grice, 1975). Cooperative Principles are based on four sub-principles, or maxims, including quality, quantity, relation and manner. The maxim of quality requires people to say what they believe to be true and have adequate evidence for. The maxim of quantity means that the speaker needs to provide with enough details for communication but not excessively adequate. The relation maxim refers to relevance, and the manner maxim is associated with explicit, brief and orderly contribution to interaction.

Despite the apparent explanation of Cooperative Principle, failure to obey the conversational maxims still accidentally or purposefully happens in daily communication. In reality, people do not always follow cooperative principles. For example, unfavorable information would be concealed rather than revealed to hearers. A maxim might also be opted out for ethical or legal reasons (Cutting 2008).

It is understandable due to the fact that the Cooperative Principles are not so universal as to be capable of applying to all language communities (Keenan, 1976, cited in Leech, 1983). In other words, there are significant intercultural differences in cooperative behavior (Mey, 2001).

1.3. Politeness

While Cooperative Principle suggests the maxims that should regulate people's communication in terms of truthfulness, informativeness, relevance and style, it is not fully applied to all speech acts. This is when another notion comes to pragmatics to give explanations about why people choose to express themselves in a particular way in written and spoken discourse. Politeness, referring to the establishment and maintaining of friendship, include six maxims, namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, Sympathy Maxim (Leech, 1983).

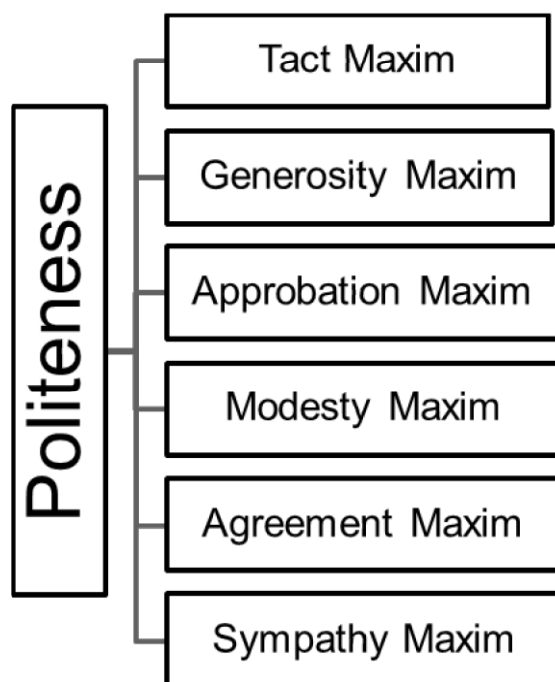


Figure 3. Politeness (Leech, 1983)

It is noticeable that while the Tact Maxim requires users to reduce the feeling of harm or expense to hearers and encourage the sense of benefits to hearers to fulfil their demand or interest, the Generosity aims to prioritize the role or position of hearers to be higher than the speakers and eliminate the advantages to speakers. On the other hand, the Approbation and Modesty maxims concentrate on increasing the praise to hearers and dispraise to speakers. In the last two maxims, hearers frequently expect to receive the sense of sympathy and agreement from speakers to maintain their positive faces. In this sense, the speaker gives benefits to the hearer as much as possible in order to make communication smooth and let the other speaker(s) feel respected and get good feelings.

On the basis of Leech's theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce the notion of 'face' in order to refer to 'politeness' in the broad sense. In a typical interactional context, people tend to maintain two types of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face can be understood as the positive and consistent image people have of themselves, and their desire for approval. On the other hand, negative face means the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction. Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) assume that most speech acts are inherently face-threatening, and that politeness is involved in redressing those face threatening acts. These linguists proposed three main mechanisms for performing speech acts which are positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness. Positive politeness is

the strategy to support or enhance the addressee's positive face, while negative politeness is used to soften the encroachment on the addressee's freedom of action or freedom from imposition. Finally, off-record politeness, means flouting one of the Cooperative Principle's maxims on the assumption that the addressee is able to infer the intended meaning.

This paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

What are the perspectives languages users towards cooperative principles and politeness?

This research question is followed by three sub-questions:

1. *Which maxim of cooperative principles is users' priority?*

2. *Which maxim of politeness is users' priority?*

3. *What factors cause the conflict between cooperative principles and politeness?*

2. Methodology

2.1. Setting and participants

The study was conducted via the survey and interview of 100 English language users who are Vietnamese and use English as a foreign language in the field of English-related majors. Their language proficiency ranged from B2 to C1 in Common European Framework for Reference (TOEIC 700+ or IELTS 5.5 – 8.0). The participants had to attend a

lecture about Politeness and Cooperative Principles to understand the concepts and relationships among the maxims of Politeness and Cooperative Principles so as to provide opinions with full understanding of the questions being asked.

2.2. Methods

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was implemented in the study to investigate objective and subjective elements regarding the research questions.

Survey

A questionnaire of 10 questions related to the role of different factors that were influential in conversational process was delivered to 100 participants to investigate their attitudes to the significance of the various maxims of cooperative principles and politeness. The questionnaire includes open-ended and close questions so that both qualitative and quantitative data can be obtained. The open-ended questions aims to gain more insights of language users towards the negotiation of Cooperative Principles and Politeness Principles and obtain the information about the conflict of two sets of principles. A pilot study was also conducted to evaluate the reliability of questionnaire and the figure calculated via Cronbach's Alpha was 0.872 which was higher than 0.7 to prove the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on Grice's Cooperative Principles (1975) and Leech's Politeness (1983).

3. Results

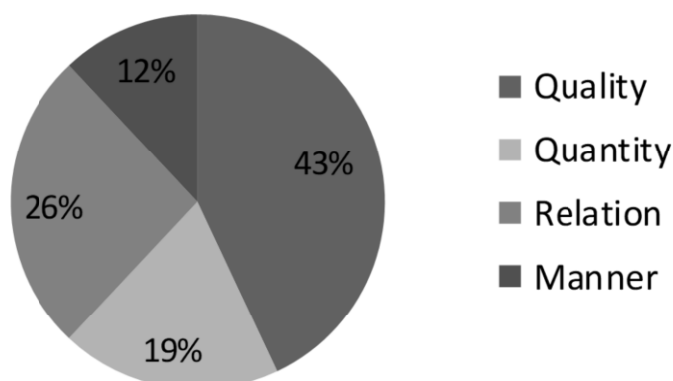


Figure 4. Internal comparison of Cooperative Principles

Figure 4 demonstrates the percentages of four cooperative maxims in internal comparison. The majority of participant, 43%, considered the quality maxim to be the most important that communicators

should follow in conversational situation. In addition, the relation maxim accounted for roughly a quarter while the quantity maxim occupied 19%. The least proportion was the maxim of manner at 12%.

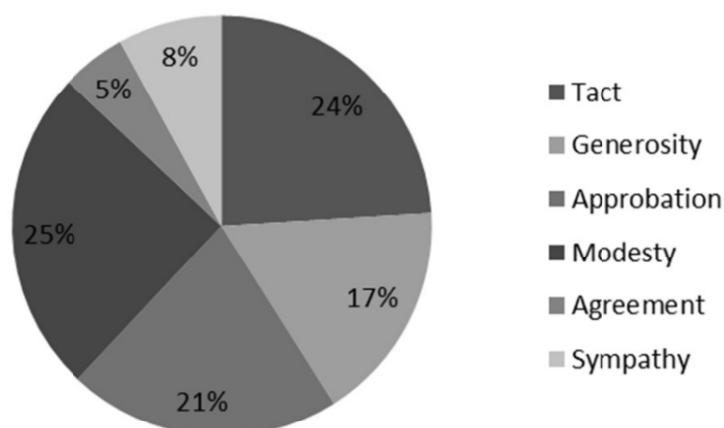


Figure 5. Internal comparison of Politeness Principles

Figure 5 illustrates the proportion of Politeness principles that were chosen to be the most integral in communication. As can be seen from the diagram, 25% of participants voted for modesty maxim while the figure of tact maxim was similar

at 24%. Furthermore, roughly a fifth of participants chose approbation maxim whereas the percentage of generosity maxim was 17%. Additionally, the rates of agreement maxim and sympathy maxim were 5% and 8% respectively.

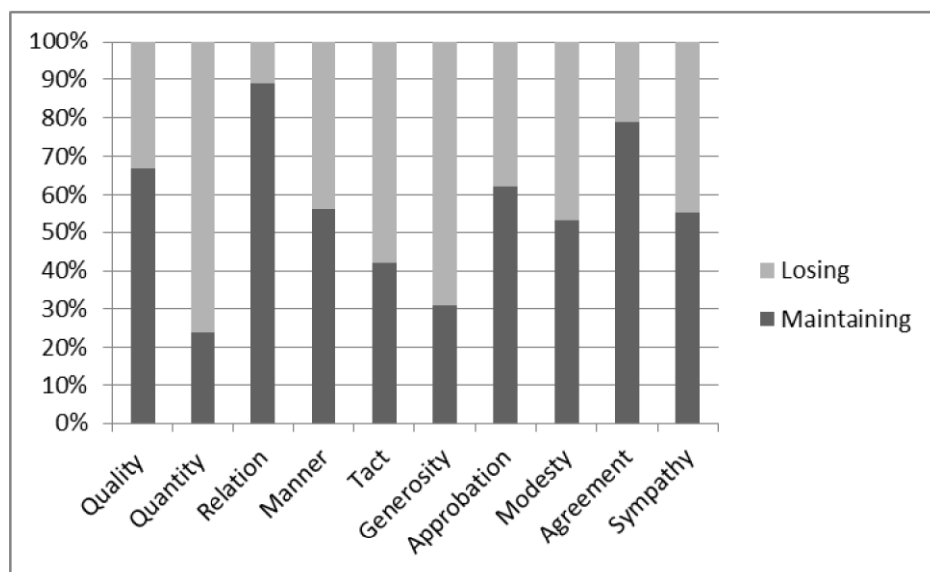


Figure 6. The percentage of maintaining communicative maxims

Figure 6. represents the extent to which participants maintained or/and sacrificed the maxims of Politeness including tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim, and Cooperative Principles including quality maxim, quantity maxim, relation maxim, and manner maxim in actual conversational interactions. It is clear from the chart that the majority of maxims were ensured while certain maxims were flouted or violated. The maxim of relation accounted for the highest proportion at 89% while the least one was the maxim of quantity at 24%. Roughly a half of participants were successful in maintaining the maxims of manner, modesty, and sympathy. Moreover, the percentage of generosity maxim was nearly a third meanwhile that of tact maxim was 42%. It is worth pointing out that the figure of maxim of agreement was nearly 80%.

4. Discussion

Language users' perspectives to cooperative principles

Based on the collected data, it seems the maxim of quality was strongly prioritized to be strictly followed in the majority of communicative situations. The ultimate purpose of communication is to obtain the intended aims or goals that drive speakers to conduct the communication (Peng, 2019). The expression of reality in conversation is beneficial to both speakers and hearers to directly observe and achieve the communicative purposes, which ensures the success of oral interactions. However, in some cases like talking about marriage life or salary, hearers refuse to tell the truth if the speakers' topics are too sensitive or personal. The act of ensuring the maxim of quality may lead to confusion, face loss, or discomfort in connotative implication.

In addition, the maxim of relation only attracted a quarter of attention due to miscommunication between speakers and hearers. The obedience of this maxim allows two communicative participants to keep track, understand, and prepare for the interaction in a more purposeful and appropriate manner. The violation of this maxim frequently occurs when hearers do not intend to answer the first interaction (Grice, 1975). They are unpleasant in those situations; hence, it is essential to change the topics to avoid the direct or indirect responses. However, speakers can be misled or confused of the flow of the communicative processes when the interactions are off-topic.

Furthermore, the maxim of quantity was not believed to be severely followed, which is opposite to the primary assumptions of the researchers. Vietnamese speakers have the tendency to make longer utterances than sufficient ones due to the differences in Vietnamese and foreign cultures. This finding was aligned with Mey's finding of the roles of culture in communication (2001). Habitual conversational styles in Vietnamese interactions are expressed via pre-sequences, indirect speech acts, or euphemism to ease the authority of speakers in communication. The employment of sufficient information may cause shyness, impoliteness for speakers and confusion, discomfort for hearers. Thus, this maxim is not always obeyed in most of interactive situations.

Additionally, the sensitivity of emotional perceptions prevents language

users to maintain the maxim of manner. Vietnamese speakers utilize different ways to send indirect utterances by the assistance of certain figures of speech such as metaphor, idioms, or connotation. They regularly deliver ambiguous utterances which could be understood with two or more meanings to demand for the sensitivity of hearers to obtain. This may lead to confusion, face loss for hearers.

Language users' perspectives to politeness

Politeness was generally defined by the research participants as the rule that speakers should respect hearers in all cases and eliminate the possibility of discomfort. It is important to avoid mentioning personal or private topics in communication such as income, age, or marriage. This is the evidence that the current communicative style of Vietnamese youngsters has the tendency to respect individualism as Western styles. The tact maxim and modesty maxim were thought as two key elements to be taken into consideration in politeness as communicative participants commonly expect to receive support, or benefits from others rather than losing their privileges. When the interactions pose danger to their personal value or merits, they can lose their engagement or motivation to maintain the conversation. Also, the violation of this maxim is considered the selfishness and inconsiderateness from speakers. Meanwhile, it is sensitive to some extent to show personal achievement in Vietnamese culture.

Hearers regularly expect to be acknowledged with what they have gained or obtained and speakers are supposed to hide or reduce the explicit expressions of their accomplishment. This, therefore, encourages the comfort and respect between speakers and hearers.

Moreover, the maxim of generosity is relationally antonymous to the maxim of tact. This maxim is assumed to show the support, kindness, and appropriacy to hearers. It is necessary to reduce personal advantages and give priority to the hearers in order that they can ensure the security of benefits in communication. If this maxim is not followed, it can result in similar consequences as the violation of maxim of tact. Whereas, the maxim of approbation indicates the consideration to respect the face of hearers by acknowledgement of their achievement and reduction in criticism; hearers should be appraised to maintain their status and positive face.

Finally, the violation of maxims of agreement and sympathy is attributable to the disagreement in perceptions or ideas that prevent speakers to express similar interaction or responses to fulfil the expectation of hearers. This partially contributes to the absence of sympathy when communicative participants do not commonly put themselves in others' shoes. The message delivery via verbal language is expected to attract identical intellectual cognitions; however, this assurance of these maxims is often ignored due to the differences in perspectives.

Language users' perspectives to the conflict between politeness and cooperative principles

There is no doubt that it is significant to follow cooperative principles and politeness strategies to maintain certain values in authentic communication. Nonetheless, the real contexts require speakers to sacrifice some maxims to convey others, which results in the conflict of cooperative principles and politeness. The responses from the interview revealed that the participants prioritized the politeness rather than cooperative principles. Although, cooperative principles are integral to guarantee the success of information exchange, politeness are more preferable due to social and cultural identities of Vietnamese people.

In Vietnamese interactions, people regularly try to avoid telling the truth if that fact is harmful or impolite in communication. They opt for changing the topics or employing white lies which violates the maxim of relation and quality to ensure the maxim of approbation, agreement, and modesty. It is contrary to Western cultures in which people actively use direct speech acts to show their expressions for the majority of situations. Hence, the conversations between Vietnamese people and foreigners have to deal with certain obstacles such as confusion of indirect expressions, misunderstanding of intended meanings, or differences in references of entities.

Furthermore, the maxim of quantity is also ignored in some of participants'

conversation. While Western utterances are deemed concise and concrete, Vietnamese ones are more indirect and implicit. Vietnamese users' commonly apply the perception of their mother tongue when using English to communicate with foreigners. Hence, the expressions are longer and implicit to call for inference from hearers. Direct expressions from the perspective of Vietnamese are inconsiderate and inappropriate in daily conversations. The implementation of literal translation from native cultures of Vietnamese in interactions with foreigners can lead to misunderstandings and misleading due to the lack of suitability in the target language including grammatical structures and lexical resource as well as target cultures.

However, in some urgent contexts, politeness is still sacrificed to keep the ultimate purpose of communication such as doctor appointment, emergency, legal investigation. In brief, the negotiations of cooperative principles and politeness are supposed to be carefully considered based on some elements that are proposed by the research participants. First, the relationships between speakers and hearers should be one criterion to decide the topic and language use in conversations (Peng, 2019). Second, speakers are advised to take hearers' personality into account to determine appropriate responses to interact. Third, cultural and social identities also shape the discourses in the manner of message delivery.

5. Implication and limitations

The investigation on language users' perspectives on cooperative principles and politeness are beneficial and applicable in intercultural communication. The data collected are similar to theories and previous studies mentioned in literature review they contribute values to research in this field in a way that they lead to implications for language users to enhance intercultural communication competence. First, the dissimilarities in the manner of meaning interpretation between English and Vietnamese cultures are useful for Vietnamese learners to be aware of the huge disparity in order that they can produce appropriate utterances that can achieve primary purposes of communication as well as maintain politeness in the target language. Second, the study sheds a light on the significance of personal world view in the success of communication. It is recommended that language users should attempt to realize and understand personal features of their partners in communication to determine successful and suitable interactions that are acceptable in the target culture and eliminate speakers' self in interactions to avoid the presence of selfishness, disrespect, or discomfort. Finally, contextual factors including background knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and the purpose of the speech acts are also crucial to determine which maxims should be followed, flouted or violated in actual conversations.

This study had to confront different limitations in the process of collecting data. It is hard to ask for the participants' support to answer the questionnaire because it is conducted in the gap between two trimesters. In addition, the time is limited; therefore, the researchers cannot organize the interview to explore more insights in the participants' perspectives for their choices.

6. Conclusion

Pragmatic competence plays a significant role in accelerating the success of communication in the era of world integration. The study has realized the certain elements that intervened language users' process of communication with other people from different social and cultural background to raise the awareness of interlocutors of cooperative principles and politeness strategies. However, it is at the early stage of the field, other studies are recommended to investigate other factors such as profession, ethnography, or genders to maximize the success of communication.

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**ANNEX: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE LANGUAGE USERS' PERSPECTIVE
TOWARDS COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES**

I. PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION

1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your age?

II. QUESTIONS

1. Which maxim in Cooperative Principles is the most important?
 - A. Maxim of Quality
 - B. Maxim of Quantity
 - C. Maxim of Relation
 - D. Maxim of Manner
2. Which maxim in Politeness Strategies is the most important?
 - A. Maxim of Tact
 - B. Maxim of Generosity
 - C. Maxim of Approbation
 - D. Maxim of Modesty
 - E. Maxim of Agreement
 - F. Maxim of Sympathy

3. How much can you ensure the maxim in your actual communication?

	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Quality										
Quantity										
Relation										
Manner										
Tact										
Generosity										
Approbation										
Modesty										
Agreement										
Sympathy										

4. What factors influence your decision in following cooperative principles?
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5. What factors influence your decision in following politeness strategies?
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6. When are cooperative principles not ensured?
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7. When are politeness strategies not ensured?
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8. What are the conflict between cooperative principles and politeness strategies?
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9. When do you follow cooperative principles and sacrifice politeness strategies?
.....
10. When do you follow politeness strategies and sacrifice cooperative principles?
.....