

English Speech Act Realization of “Refusals” among Iranian EFL Learners

LA RÉALISATION DES ACTES DE DISCOURS DE "REFUS" EN ANGLAIS PARMIS LES APPRENANTS ALE IRANIENS

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Abstract: Speech act of refusal has been one of the important topics in the discourse pragmatic research over the past few decades. In fact, pragmatics plays a very important role in the process of communication and the action of refusal is performed in our daily lives and in a variety of situations. Therefore, in the present study, the researcher has tried to investigate how Iranian EFL learners followed different pragmatic patterns to produce the speech act of refusal and what strategies they used in different situations and under various conditions. And also to examine if their use of the strategies were dependent on gender and finally to see if there was any difference in the type of strategies used by students at different levels of education at the university. So, forty eight students, both males and females were randomly selected to be representative of the accessible population from the students studying at different levels of education at the university; that is, twenty MA students majoring in TEFL and twenty eight BA students majoring in English Literature at Shiraz University. Thus, the students were given a questionnaire on discourse completion test (DCT). In the present study, the researcher benefited from a qualitative mode of inquiry for the analysis of discourse pragmatics; that is, the obtained data from the questionnaires were first codified and then each refusal was classified, analyzed and interpreted based on a modified version of Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies. The results indicated that Iranian EFL learners usually followed implicit or indirect strategies to talk to their interlocutors or hearers and express their intended meaning in a way that they would not cause any offence or threaten their listener's face. Moreover, indirect speech act usually denoted politeness in the Iranian context as well. In other words, the mostly common strategies used by Iranian learners were excuses, explanations, or reasons following or preceding a sense of regret. Regarding gender differences, due to the limited number of the participants who were mostly females, the researcher in this study could not draw any definite conclusions. Finally, no difference was found between the participants in both levels of education in using the aforementioned strategies.

Key words: Discourse Pragmatic; Pragmatics; Refusal Speech Act; Refusal Strategies; Iranian Context

Resumé L'acte de discours de refus a été un des thèmes importants dans la recherche sur le discours pragmatique des dernières décennies. En fait, la pragmatique joue un rôle très important dans le processus de communication et l'action de refus est réalisée dans notre vie quotidienne et dans une variété de situations. Par conséquent, dans la présente étude, le chercheur a tenté de déterminer comment les apprenants ALE iraniens ont suivi de différents schémas pragmatiques pour former

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l'acte de discours de refus et quelles stratégies ils ont utilisées dans de différentes situations et de diverses conditions. Il essaie aussi d'examiner si leur utilisation des stratégies était dépendante du sexe et enfin de voir s'il y avait une différence dans le type de stratégies utilisées par les étudiants à des niveaux de l'éducation différents à l'université. Ainsi, 48 élèves, des garçons et des filles ont été sélectionnés au hasard pour représenter la population accessible des étudiants à des niveaux de l'éducation différents à l'université, soit vingt étudiants MA avec la spécialisation en EALE et vingt-huit étudiants BA avec la spécialisation en littérature anglaise à l'université de Shiraz. Ainsi, les élèves ont reçu un questionnaire sur le test de complétion de discours (TCD). Dans la présente étude, le chercheur a bénéficié d'un mode qualitatif de l'enquête pour l'analyse de la pragmatique de discours, c'est-à-dire, les données obtenues à partir des questionnaires ont d'abord été codifiées et ensuite chaque refus est classé analysé et interprété en fonction d'une version modifiée de la taxonomie des stratégies de refus de Beebe et al. (1990). Les résultats indiquent que les apprenants ALE iraniens ont généralement utilisé des stratégies implicites ou indirectes à parler à leurs interlocuteurs ou auditeurs et ils expriment leur sens voulu d'une manière qui ne causerait pas de tort ou de menaces face à leurs auditeurs. Par ailleurs, l'acte de discours indirect signifie habituellement la politesse dans le contexte iranien. En d'autres termes, la plupart des stratégies communes utilisées par les apprenants iraniens ont été des excuses, des explications ou des motifs qui suivent ou précèdent un sentiment de regret. En ce qui concerne les différences des sexes, comme les participants étaient principalement des femmes, le chercheur de cette étude ne pouvait pas tirer de conclusions définitives. Enfin, aucune différence n'a été observée entre les participants à ces deux niveaux de l'éducation en utilisant les stratégies ci-dessus.

Mots-clés: Discours Pragmatique; Pragmatique; Acte de Discours de Refus; Stratégies de Refus; Contexte Iranien

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INTRODUCTION

From among the different issues involved in discourse studies, one that has received a lot of attention over the past few decades is pragmatics. Yule (1996) defined pragmatics as “the study of intended speaker meaning” (p.127). Pragmatics includes “the study of how speakers use and understand speech acts” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). It is worth mentioning the fact that pragmatics plays a very important role in the production and perception of the language. That is why interlocutors use different strategies during their conversations in order to express their intended speech acts. On the other hand, one of the main factors in the process of communication is pragmatic competence. How interlocutors produce and perceive the language in different situations is a significant issue that has been investigated so far by different researchers since creating inappropriate utterances would lead to misunderstanding or even breakdowns in communication. Accordingly, knowing this matter is very essential especially for second language learners because they do not have enough knowledge of the target language and as a result, they would be influenced by their first language and transfer their pragmatic knowledge of their native language to the target language.

Moreover, the ability to produce and understand speech acts in each given language has been considered as a component of communicative competence. Actually, individuals' styles differ from each other in the process of communication. Accordingly, Nelson et al. (2002) stated “One method of examining communication style is to use small and comparable units of discourse; so, speech acts have been used for this purpose” (p.42). The term speech act includes actions such as requests, suggestions, compliments, apologies, complaints, and refusals. In the present study, the researcher selected the speech act of refusal for two reasons: first, this concept is among the most complex issues in the process of communication and deals with such phenomena as face-saving activities and second, due to the fact that every day and in every situations people perform the act of refusal frequently, one of the important topics in research on discourse pragmatics has been considered to be the speech act of refusals. Honglin (2007) defined speech acts of refusal as “the utterance, which is spoken out to perform the action of refuse” (p.67). In other words, “A refusal is a speech act by which a speaker “denies to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor” (Chen et al., 1995, p. 121 cited in Bella, 2010, p.2). In fact, the speaker commits himself or herself not to do an action; that is, refuse to do something. This action should be done carefully; otherwise, it threatens the listener's face. Indeed, speech act of refusal differs in different cultures and under different communicative situations. Accordingly, considerable attention has been paid to the issues related to speech acts over recent years.

Felix-Brasdefer (2006) believed in the importance of refusal and declared “from a sociolinguistic perspective, refusals are important because they are sensitive to social variables such as gender, age, level of education, power and social

distance” (p.2160). Since refusal speech acts are considered as face-threatening acts; so, protection of face is an important subject that each person tries to concern while communicating. As a result, a wrong use of speech acts such as a direct refusal may threaten the speaker’s face. Thus, Delen (2010) believes that if someone is grammatically competent, it does not mean that he or she is pragmatically competent too.

Despite large number of research done in pragmatic issues in general and speech acts in particular, they are still among the most popular topics that researchers try to investigate because of their dynamic features especially in the realm of teaching. The concept of this issue is reported by Delen (2010): “speech acts are not a new topic for researchers; on the contrary, they have been very popular since their emergence in the late 1960s” (p.692). Finally, although a relatively large number of studies done on issues related to different types of speech acts and based on the fact that “research concerning L2 pragmatic competence often focuses on learners’ speech act behavior, primarily by contrasting nonnative with native performance” (Yu, 2011, p.1128), little research has been done especially in the context of Iran to investigate only the speech act of refusal among non-native speakers. Accordingly, in this study, the researcher has tried to investigate pragmatic transfer of refusal speech act among non-native speakers of English and considered this issue as a research gap thus bridging this gap by the present research. In other words, the researcher wanted to explore the type of strategies used by the Iranian EFL learners, to examine if their use of the strategies are dependent on gender and finally to see if there is any difference in the type of strategies used by students at two different levels of education at the university; that is, both at MA and BA levels.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aims of the present study were to investigate how Iranian EFL learners who were considered as advanced learners followed different pragmatic patterns to produce the speech act of refusal and what strategies they used in different situations and under various conditions. And also to examine if their use of the strategies were dependent on gender and finally to see if there was any difference in the type of strategies used by students at two different levels of education at the university; that is, both at MA and BA levels.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the above mentioned purposes, the following research questions were put forward:

1. What are the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners regarding the speech act of refusal?
2. Are the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners dependent on gender?
3. Does the level of education (BA and MA) have any effect on the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section deals with the literature review outlining the relevant issues regarding pragmatics in general and speech act of refusal in particular. Accordingly, the researcher provides a review of both theoretical and the empirical research studies that investigated the speech act of refusal.

Theoretical Research Related to Pragmatics in General and Speech Act of Refusal in Particular

Literature revealed that discourse pragmatic studies are not a new phenomenon. This can be understood in the words of Delen (2010) who said “Pragmatics has been both a controversial and a popular topic in language research since 1960s and its rising to prominence occurred with the emphasis put on the communicative aspect of language. Pragmatic is simply the study of meaning in interaction” (p.692). Accordingly, different researchers and theorists reported different statements regarding pragmatics. For example, Cutting (2002) declared “pragmatics and discourse analysis are approaches to studying language’s relation to the contextual background features” (p.1). In a similar way, Sanders (2005) stated

language pragmatics takes as axiomatic that when people speak, what is said (sentence meaning) is a factor in, but not a determinant of, the speaker’s meaning—the meaning of saying the sentence (utterance meaning). Sentences are considered in language pragmatics to exist, with the particular form and lexicon they comprise, only as that which was uttered by someone to particular others in particular circumstances for a social or practical reason (p.17).

However, a new dimension to discourse studies called speech acts has been introduced by theorists recently. That is why in the past few decades, most research investigations have been on different types of speech acts. For example, Bella (2010) reported "the literature on refusals is quite extensive and spreads from cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics to education and psychology" (p.2). He also continued "most of the relevant studies focus on refusal strategies, politeness, face and facework, and the learning of refusals by second language learners" (p.2).

In fact, theoretical studies in pragmatics specifically in speech acts started with the work of Austin and Searle. According to Honglin (2007)

The Oxford philosopher John L. Austin presented Speech Acts Theory. The American philosopher John R. Searle, who had studied under Austin in the fifties, subsequently became the main proponent and defender of the former's ideas. Searle further developed the speech act theory; especially he put forward the famous indirect speech act theory (p.64-65).

As a result, Guidetti (2000) declared that "Authors like Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), the originators of speech act theory, define the illocutionary component of an utterance as the social act (asserting, promising) performed by a speaker when the utterance is produced" (p. 570). In line with these statements, various researchers defined speech acts differently. For instance, Sanders (2005) stated "Speech act theory focuses on the functionality of utterances in terms of what differences they make to the social standing of speakers and/or hearers" (p.18). Similarly, Cutting (2002) believed that "speech act theory describes what utterances are intended to do, such as promise, apologies and threaten" (p.2). Literature also showed that speech act theorists divided speech acts into two types; that is, direct and indirect speech acts. Cutting's (2002) belief about both direct and indirect speech act was that "much of the time, what we mean is actually not in the words themselves but in the meaning implied"; In the same way, "Searle said that a speaker using a direct speech act wants to communicate the literal meaning that the words conventionally express; there is a direct relationship between the form and the function" (p.19). Moreover, speech acts can be analyzed on three different levels as Cutting (2002) stated

The first level of analysis is the words themselves. This is the locution, 'what is said'. The second level of analysis is what the speakers are doing with their words. This is the illocutionary force, 'what is done in uttering the words', the function of the words, the specific purpose that the speakers have in mind. The last level of analysis is the result of the words. This is known as the perlocutionary effect, 'what is done by uttering the words'; it is the effect on the hearer, the hearer's reaction (p.16).

Likewise, there are two main classifications of refusals; that is, direct and indirect. However, speakers can use other linguistic resources when they refuse, such including a reaction of solidarity before or after refusing. This is known as an adjunct. In this study, the researcher followed a modified version of Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification of refusals taken from Allami and Naeimi (2011). (See Appendix A)

Empirical Research Related to Pragmatics in General and Speech Act of Refusal in Particular

Literature revealed Empirical work on pragmatics has focused on different types of speech acts such as requests, suggestions, compliments, apologies, complaints, and refusals in various situations and under different conditions. Over the past few decades, researchers have studied speech act of refusals through comparing and contrasting different languages and among native and non-native speakers. Refusals have also been investigated cross culturally; that is, researchers compared refusals in different languages. For example, in the study done on the comparison of refusal speech acts among Chinese and American English, Honglin (2007) came to the conclusion that both Chinese and American used varied expressions to refuse something and also their directness in refusals varied with situations and cultures. Both languages employed both direct and indirect speech act of refusals. Americans were more direct than Chinese in their refusals but Chinese considered refusals as face-threatening acts; thus, they used politeness strategies in their refusals. In addition, "the Chinese tend to emphasize restoring relationship between people, while the Americans emphasize solving the problems in question" (p.67). Similarly, Nelson et al. (2002) conducted a study on the comparison of refusal speech acts among Egyptian Arabic and American English. Results of the study showed that both groups followed the same strategies with similar frequency in making refusals. In a similar way, Kanemoto (1993) investigated the refusal strategies suggested by the writers in American English and Japanese. The results indicated that Japanese avoided a clear refusal, mentioned a third party as a reason for their refusal and also used a pretended reason for their refusals. In Japanese culture, refusal meant not only a "no" to a request but also to personal relationships while refusals in American English were clear and they do not have to say their reasons for refusal. Sadler and Eroz (2001) also reported the Turkish and Americans used fillers while refusing followed by an utterance to express their gratitude and appreciation toward the addressee, while the speakers of Lao used utterances of regret which were followed by adjuncts. Comparing with each other, the Turkish refused less than speakers of other languages. Besides, they did not answer very differently in different types of refusal situations; that is, refusing a request was followed by an excuse or explanation, along with uttering some sorts of regret. In

an invitation situation, they expressed their regret while they wanted to refuse a person with a higher status. To refuse an offer, they used gratitude and appreciation following an excuse or reason. Finally, to refuse suggestions, they used strategies such as bringing a reason, explaining, or excusing. Correspondingly, Bresnahan et al. (1999) carried out a study to see how Chinese from Singapore and Taiwan responded to the speech act of requests differently. The results showed that Singapore Chinese were more direct and preferred more to accept the request from a friend than Chinese in Taiwan. However, Taiwan Chinese were more indirect and tried to soften their tone of voice as a kind of refusal strategy. Al-Issa (2003) also examined the sociocultural transfer of the speech act of refusals by Jordanian EFL learners and compared their responses with native speakers of English. The results indicated that sociocultural transfer seemed to influence the EFL learners' responses; that is in the content of the semantic formulas used by them. This type of transfer was considered as a reflection of cultural values transferred from Arabic to English. Moreover, in a study done by Shimura (1995), Japanese used incomplete sentences to perform the speech act of refusal to avoid direct refusals in order to show their politeness. Finally, Moriyama (1990) in his study classified the refusal strategies into four types: 1) direct refusal which was used in close relationship, 2) telling a white lie when the intention of the hearer became more important than the intention of the speaker or when the speaker could not control the act of refusal, 3) postponing response also used with close friends and 4) making an indefinite response by smiling.

Other groups of researchers have investigated the same issues from other points of view. That is, they investigated gender differences or the effect of instruction on the strategies used by interlocutors or even they examined pragmatics in general. For example, Morrow (1995) conducted a study to see the effect of instruction in ESL context on the production of speech acts. The results indicated that instruction helped the learners to perform the speech acts of complaints and refusals more clearly, more politely, and more native-like. However, in King and Silver's (1993) study on intermediate ESL students, the results showed that instruction had little effect on the refusal strategies used by the learners. Regarding gender differences in using refusal strategies, a research was done between Taiwanese females and American females on the speech act of refusal specifically about dating because it dealt with both explicitness and politeness. Findings of the study illustrated that although the Taiwanese tended to be more direct in refusing dates, both groups used negative politeness strategies (Widjaja, 1997). Similarly, Garcia (1992) compared the politeness strategies used by male and female speakers in refusing an invitation. Both groups went through two stages: 1) invitation-response in which both groups used politeness strategies to show their respect toward their addressee, and 2) insistence-response in which both groups used politeness strategies to show their solidarity toward their addressee. In a similar way, Liao and Bresnahan (1996) in their study contrasted refusal strategies used by American and Chinese university students, both males and females. They concluded that both groups refused requests from their teacher more easily than from their friends or families. Moreover, Chinese provided more reasons than Americans for their refusals. Women used more strategies than men to refuse someone of higher status. Americans usually began a refusal with a positive response, followed by a refusal, such as I'd love to, but...; but, Chinese seldom used this kind of strategy.

Concerning pragmatic issues, Ikoma and Shimura (1993) conducted a study on pragmatic transfer among advanced American learners of Japanese. The results of the study showed that three cases of negative transfer were recognized about American learners of Japanese: 1) they did not offer alternatives as native speakers, 2) they used 'no, thank you' in communication with others because of its resemblance to English and 3) they did not use incomplete sentences. Similarly, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) carried out a comparative research on the improvement of pragmatic competence between Japanese learners of English and Native Americans. The results showed that although native language influenced learners in both the EFL and ESL contexts and also among learners with both lower and higher proficiency levels, in the EFL context the effect was stronger. Moreover, in ESL context, negative pragmatic transfer existed and the reason was that since they were more at ease in speaking English, they express themselves in a way that seemed usually Japanese.

Summing up the literature on speech act of refusal, it is clear that pragmatics plays a very important role in the production and perception of the language. Although a relatively large number of studies done on issues related to different types of speech acts, little research has been done especially in the context of Iran to investigate only the speech act of refusal. This declaration can be supported through Alcon's (2005) words who stated "research conducted in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context reports that the range of speech acts and realization strategies is quite narrow" (p.418). So, the researcher considered this issue as a research gap thus bridging this gap by the present research. As a result, in this study, the researcher wanted to explore the type of strategies used by the Iranian EFL learners, to examine if their use of the strategies are dependent on gender and finally to see if there is any difference in the type of strategies used by students at two different years of education at the university; that is, both MA and BA students. As a result, this study is going to be among one of the several research studies conducted so far in order to investigate the pragmatic transfer of speech act among Iranian EFL learners.

METHOD

In this part of the study the researcher has explained first very briefly the data collection methods, the participants, and the instruments which were used. Then, this part has been followed by the data analysis for which the researcher made use of only a qualitative mode of inquiry for the analysis of discourse pragmatics. According to Ary et al. (2006, p. 504), one of the standards of rigor for research in a qualitative study is dependability or trustworthiness. As they stated dependability is “the extent to which variation can be traced or explained.” In order to establish and enhance dependability, the best criterion used in this study was the one suggested by Ary et al. (2006); that is, “documentation”. The strategy used for this criterion was “Audit trail”. “It documents how the study was conducted, including what was done, when, and why” (Ary et al., 2006, p. 509). In audit trail or documentation everything is documented clearly for further reference.

Participants

The participants in the present study consisted of forty eight students, both males and females. They were selected from the students studying at different levels of education at the university; that is, twenty MA students majoring in TEFL and twenty eight BA students majoring in English Literature at Shiraz University. In fact, they were randomly selected to be representative of the accessible population in order to see if there was any difference in the type of the strategies used by them at different levels of education and whether their gender affected the type of strategies used by them.

Instruments

The only instrument used by the researcher in this study was a questionnaire based on Beebe et al.’s (1990) work. In fact, making use of the questionnaire is considered as a more uniform and standard way of gathering data (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). The questionnaire consisted of 12 situations in the form of a written discourse completion test (DCT) (See Appendix A). The researcher’s reason for selecting this questionnaire was that this type of questionnaire was among the most popular instruments used in collecting data to investigate different types of speech acts. Moreover, according to Ary et al. (2006, p. 504), one of the standards of rigor for research in a qualitative study is dependability or trustworthiness. As they stated, dependability is “the extent to which variation can be traced or explained.” In order to establish and enhance dependability, the best criterion used in this study was the one suggested by Ary et al.; that is, “documentation”. The strategy used for this criterion was “Audit trail”. “It documents how the study was conducted, including what was done, when, and why” (Ary et al., 2006, p. 509). In audit trail or documentation everything is documented clearly for further reference.

Data collection

To collect data, the researcher made use of only one source, namely, a questionnaire on discourse completion test (DCT). Accordingly, the questionnaires were distributed among forty eight students, both males and females studying at different levels of education at the university; that is, twenty MA students majoring in TEFL and twenty eight BA students majoring in English Literature at Shiraz University. The allocated time to answer the questions was thirty minutes. There were twelve situations related to the speech act of refusal to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions in the DCT. These twelve situations were in the form of a conversation and students were asked to put themselves in each situation and respond as if they were in the actual conversation.

Data analysis

In the present study, the obtained data from the discourse completion test (DCT) were analyzed and interpreted. That is, all twelve situations were first codified and then each refusal was classified based on a modified version of Beebe et al.’s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies. Refusal strategies were divided into three main types: (1) direct refusals, (2) indirect refusals and (3) adjuncts to refusals. (See Appendix B)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the present study was to explore how Iranian EFL learners followed different pragmatic patterns to produce the speech act of refusal and what strategies they used in different situations and under various conditions. And also to examine if their use of the strategies were dependent on gender and finally to see if there was any difference in the type of strategies used by students at different levels of education at the university. The study started by surveying the related literature on pragmatics in general and speech act of refusal in particular. Moreover, to answer the questions raised, the researcher made use of a qualitative mode of inquiry. First, the researcher codified the obtained data; that is, each individual’ speech acts, based on a modified version of Beebe et al.’s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies taken from Allami and Naeimi (2011). Then, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the obtained data.

Codification of the Data

While codifying the obtained data from the questionnaire (DCT), the researcher noticed that several points were repeatedly mentioned by the participants in different situations. In the following, the participants' statements were put forward for each situation (i.e. request, invitation, suggestion, and offer).

Refusal of Request

The situations 1, 2 and 12 were regarded as a request. In these situations, the participants were supposed to refuse a request. The majority of the participants used indirect strategies such as an excuse, a reason or an explanation in order to refuse a request which were sometimes preceded or followed by a sense of regret. Following were some statements uttered repeatedly by most of the participants in situation 1 in which an employee requested his or her boss for a raise:

- “You know we have employed some new employees; so, it’s not possible for the time being.”
- “Sorry to say that, but it is not possible for us to increase your salary now.”
- “Yes, you’re one of the best workers; but frankly saying, this seems to be impossible. I’m also in need of money, sorry.”
- “Sorry, there are lots of financial problems ahead. We need to be more careful in spending money.”
- “Of course, you are one of my best workers, but I’m sorry to tell you that I’m not in a proper condition to increase your pay right now.”

Following were also some statements expressed frequently by most of the participants in situation 2 in which someone asked one of his/her classmates to borrow his/her notes:

- “Sorry, because my handwriting is terrible this time. I wrote very quickly that session; so, you will be faced with a lot of problems while reading.”
- “I really like to help you, but I’m sorry, I also need the notes for tomorrow’s exam. I’m sure others can help you.”
- “You know I’m really sorry, I need to study them tonight, it’s better to ask someone else.”
- “Unfortunately, I don’t have my notes with myself now.”

Subsequent statements were expressed repeatedly by most of the participants in situation 12 in which a boss asked an employee to stay and work for an extra hour or two:

- “Sorry, I have an appointment you’d better tell me before.”
- “I’m so sorry but I have something urgent to do so I have to leave.”
- “I am so sorry sir. I wish I could help you. I have a necessary appointment today and I will be so grateful to you if you let me go. However I excuse you very much.”
- “Sorry to say so, but I should keep my promise and go home early.”
- “Oh, excuse me. I’m not feeling well. I would be so thankful if you just let me go.”
- “Sorry but I thought it would just take as usual so I’ve already planned to leave earlier today.”
- “Is it possible to finish it up tomorrow? I’m really in a hurry now.”
- “I’m really sorry. We have some guests tonight, and I have to go home as soon as possible.”
- “Please pardon me for saying this, but I have to go, it’s very late.”

Findings from the obtained data showed that although Iranians were indirect in conveying their messages, they used fewer adjuncts such as fillers in their statements to refuse something. Few of them mentioned the following answers using pause fillers in situation 1:

- “Well, I know you are a credit to my job here. I really wish I could, but uhm... you know that things do not go well. I mean the miserable income doesn’t let me do it now.”
- “uhm, you see, I don’t know how to say... uhm, you are a good worker but at the present time sorry I can’t do so.”

Regarding the use of pause fillers in situation 2, participants’ responses were as follows:

- “Uhm..., you see, mine is not complete either!”
- “Oh well, what can I say? You know so many people asked me, but if I give it to you they may get upset.”
- “Uhh, I think you’d better ask someone else. Mine is not complete this time.”

In situation 12, participants also mentioned:

- “Well, I like so, but sorry, there’s a problem. I should visit my doctor one hour later. I Hope you accept my apology.”

“Uhh, I’m sorry, my friend needs an urgent help.”

Moreover, some of the interlocutors also used gratitude or appreciation as another type of adjunct in order to refuse a request. The subsequent statements uttered in situation 1:

“I really appreciate you and I’m quite satisfied with your job but sorry! That is the amount I pay to every other workers here. I cannot discriminate.”

“Yes, of course I know you are the best in your work. I always appreciate your working but I’m sorry I can’t increase your salary.”

“I appreciate your responsibility; however, it is not possible for me to pay you more.”

“Actually, I have always been satisfied with your job and responsibility; however, the financial problems we have recently faced do not let an increase in the payments. Believe me I would do so if I could.”

However, in situation 2 and 12, none of the participants used a statement of gratitude or appreciation in order to refuse a request. On the other hand, others used hedging to refuse a request. Following were stated in situation 1:

“We are going to face bankruptcy; so, I’m not sure whether I can help you or not.”

“I’m not sure because of the economic problems.”

Regarding the use of hedging, in situation 12, none of the participants used hedging but a few respondents in situation 2 mentioned the following:

“I’m not sure, since as you know the exam is tomorrow and sorry I have to go quickly to study; so, you have to make a copy right now but as you see the copy center is closed.”

“I don’t know... since I myself need them tonight.”

Furthermore, very few of the participants uttered their refusal directly; however, their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, a reason or regret too such as the following in situation 1:

“No, the current financial situation of the bookstore does not let us for that; I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t give you any promotion.”

“I can’t do so, sorry.”

“I’m afraid to say that for the time being I cannot afford any raise in your salary.”

“Sorry, I know you are in need of money but because our sales are low, I can’t pay more than this.”

“Sorry, there would be no raise in your condition.”

However, concerning situation 12, participants did not use direct speech act of refusal at all. But following were also expressed in situation 2 as a kind of direct refusal:

“So sorry, it was taken so much time to take these notes. And it is unfair to give them to others who did not care about the class.”

“Oh, boy, I can’t. You know the book is all Greek to me and I’ve got only one day to study.”

“I like to but I can’t. I want to study them. I think it had better take part in the classes and take notes.”

Refusal of Invitation

The situations 3, 4 and 10 were considered as an invitation. In these situations, most of the participants were supposed to refuse an invitation. Like the previous situations, most the participants used indirect strategies such as an excuse, a reason or an explanation in order to refuse an invitation which were sometimes preceded or followed by a sense of regret. Following were some sentences uttered frequently by most of the participants in situation 3 in which a salesman from another company invited his/her interlocutor to dinner:

“Thank you for your invitation but I was invited somewhere else so sorry, I have to go there.”

“Thank you for your intimate invitation. I have to excuse you, because I am so busy at that time.”

“Sorry, I’m dead busy these days.”

“Sorry I have another appointment at that time.”

Following were also some statements expressed commonly by most of the participants in situation 4 in which a boss invited the interlocutor to an unplanned party:

“Sorry, but the next Sunday is my birthday party. I hope you accept my apology.”

“I am sorry but I was invited to a wedding party.”

Really! So sorry but next Sunday my husband and I are going to celebrate our first anniversary with our families and some friends!

“I’m sorry I have other plans that time.”

Subsequent statements were said commonly by most of the participants in situation 10 in which someone invited his/her friend to dinner:

“I’d love to but I myself will have a guest that night.”

“Thanks. I was invited to another party.”

“Sorry, Tomorrow, I have a really difficult exam.”

“I wish I could, but I am busy on Sunday night.”

“Thank you my friend, but I wonder if I could. I have to prepare the report on due time.”

“No thanks, I’m dead beat and want to rest all the weekend.”

“Really? Thank you but we’ve already been invited to a birthday party at that time. That’s a pity!”

Furthermore, like the previous situations, very few of the participants uttered their refusal directly; however, their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, a reason or regret too such as the following in situation 3:

“Please accept my apologies; I cannot be there since I have another business.”

“Oh, I’m too sorry; I can’t accept your kind invitation. Of course it is an honor but I’m too busy these days. I don’t have time even to polish my shoes.”

“I’m afraid; I don’t think so since I’ve already managed to firm up one with another company.”

In situation 4, only one of the participants followed a direct strategy to refuse a situation:

“Pardon me for saying this I cannot go because I have to meet my parents next Sunday.”

This is true for situation 10 too:

“No, thank you so much; I have something urgent to do.”

In the following statements, some of the interlocutors in situation 3 also used both gratitude or appreciation and statement of positive opinion as two types of adjuncts in order to refuse an invitation:

“Thanks a million; that would be very kind of you. But, I wonder if I could. I have already set another appointment.”

“I appreciate your favor but unfortunately I have an appointment tomorrow night. Do apologize but we could set it for another day.”

“Thank you very much, I’ll really enjoy it, but I have to be at home till 9 o’clock.”

“That’s kind of you, but I am sorry I am very busy.”

“That’s such a generous offer, but I’m afraid I cannot.”

“That’s a good idea but I’m so busy these days...so sorry.”

“Thanks a lot, but I’m afraid I can’t accept your invitation since I must attend a meeting.”

Similarly in situation 4, the participants mentioned the following statements:

“That’s very kind of you but I’ve promised my children to take them to the park that day.”

“Oh...that would be very kind of you, but for next Sunday we plan to go on a short trip.”

“This is an honor to me, but I can’t make it. I’m too busy these days.”

“I really appreciate your invitation, but I should say that we have been invited by an old friend of mine earlier this week.”

“That would be my pleasure. But, I’m not sure whether we could come. I guess my wife has already planned something else.”

“That’s great, I’d really love to, but I’m really busy on Sunday.”

In situation 10 also, some sentences were uttered as follows:

“Really? That’s a good idea, I really did like to join you but I have to study for an exam, thanks a lot.”

“It sounds great .I would like to but I have an appointment with my dentist.”

“You are so welcome but I have a necessary appointment at that time.”

Regarding the use of fillers, except for situation 10 in which only one of the participants used a filler (e.g., "Uhm, I'd really love to but I promised my aunt to spend Sunday night with her."), in the other two situations (3 and 4), none of them used any fillers at all.

Refusal of Suggestion

The situations 5, 6 and 8 were viewed as a suggestion. In these situations, the participants were supposed to refuse a suggestion. Resembling the previous situations, a large number the participants used indirect strategies such as an excuse, a reason or an explanation in order to refuse a suggestion which were sometimes preceded or followed by a sense of regret. Following were some statements uttered frequently by most of the participants in situation 5 in which a friend suggested a new diet:

- "Sorry to say this but before you, different people told me what to do and how to go on a diet but they were useless."
- "But I follow a diet suggested by my best diet specialist".
- "you know I am really tired of these diet programs. They are all useless."
- "Oh, no, come on! Going on another diet."
- "Kidding me! I prefer stop breathing rather than going on a diet!"

Following were also some statements expressed commonly by most of the participants in situation 6 in which a boss made a suggestion to his/her employee to be more organized:

- "I promise to do it in the future."
- "I have given it a try 10000 times, but it fails!"
- "Sir, this is the first time that it happens to me."
- "I know that would not work."
- "You are right but don't you think notes will make a mess themselves?"
- "I'm so sorry, and thank you for your suggestion. But I promise to find a way to deal with it."
- "Yes sir, But I prefer to do things in my own ways and I usually manage everything this way. Thanks for the suggestion."

Subsequent statements were also articulated frequently by most of the participants in situation 8 in which a student made a suggestion to his/her teacher to do more conversation practice:

- "Sorry, I prefer to follow my own procedure."
- "If you pay attention to the title of your course, you'll find nothing than grammar."
- "Sorry, we should stick to the syllabus prescribed by the university."
- "Excuse me dear, but I have to confess that this is not feasible now. You should have talked to me about it earlier."
- "I know my job better than you all. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched!"
- "Learning grammar is an essential element for conversation."
- "I try to see your recommendation for the next semester."
- "Oh, you are right, but you know the time is short and we do not have much time to spend on conversation."

In situation 5, few participants mentioned the following answers using pause fillers:

- "Well! I didn't mean to that extent!"
- "Oh, well, I'm sorry but I have to stick just to my own diet not new ones."
- "well, I'm on a diet thanks."

Regarding the use of pause fillers in situation 6, participant's responses were as follows:

- "Well, thank you for the advice. I don't think it is necessary because it doesn't take me a lot of time to find them."

In situation 8, participants also stated:

- "Well, Look, there are reasons for me not to do so my dear! You'll find it out later on!"
- "Uhh, As a matter of fact, my experience as a teacher tells me that my way of teaching is more appropriate for your class."

Moreover, similar to other situations, some of the interlocutors also used gratitude or appreciation as another type of adjunct in order to refuse a request. The subsequent statements were uttered in situation 5:

“That’s nice of you but, I think it won’t work on me.”

Situation 6:

“Thanks sir for your kind suggestion, but this is the first time it happens.”

Situation 8:

“Thank you for the suggestion but you should know that we have to move along our predetermined program.”

“You’re right, I myself find grammar boring but the focus of the course is on grammar rather than on speaking actually. Thanks for your nice suggestion anyway.”

“That’s not a bad idea, but I think it is better to work on grammar a bit more before moving on to conversation practice.”

“Thanks for your suggestion but you know it’s the way that is determined by department it’s not possible for me to change it.”

“Thanks for your kind suggestion but I know what I’m doing dear, everything has been planned beforehand.”

“That seems good but we are completely organized with our lesson plan. You know it’s the middle of the term...!”

Regarding the use of hedging, none of the participants used hedging in situations 6 and 8 but in situation 5 a few of the participants mentioned:

“Thanks but I’m not sure.”

“I don’t know if it works out!”

Furthermore, in situation 8, participants did not use direct speech act of refusal at all. Very few of the participants uttered their refusal directly; however, their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, reason or regret too such as the following in situation 5:

“No, thank you I’m really full.”

“Diet? I cannot undertake such nonsense activities.”

In situation 6, only one of the participants used a direct strategy:

“You are right sir, but I cannot manage myself as you do.”

Finally, only in situation 6, they made use of adjunct to refusal; that is, they used statement of positive opinion. But again it followed by an indirect refusal:

“That’s a great idea but I try to manage my plans on my mind.”

Refusal of Offer

The situations 7, 9 and 11 were considered as an offer. In these situations, the participants were supposed to refuse an offer. Similar to the previous situations, in these situations also a large number the participants used indirect strategies such as an excuse, a reason or an explanation in order to refuse a suggestion which were sometimes preceded or followed by a sense of regret. Following were some statements uttered frequently by most of the participants in situation 7 in which a cleaning lady offered to pay for the broken vase:

“Don’t worry it’s not as important as you think. But thanks for your consideration.”

“Sad at the broken china? No, there is no need to pay for it; it’s ok.”

“Come on. You have been so careful every time and it is just an accident. Don’t feel worry about the cost. It is nothing to be talked at all.”

“Don’t mention it, no need to pay for that. Just be relax and more careful!”

“Come on! No problem. Take it easy.”

“Oh, no, I know it was just a mistake.”

“Never mind, It is not very important. Forget it.”

“No need. Don’t worry. That was just an accident.”

Following were also some statements expressed commonly by most of the participants in situation 9 in which a friend offered another piece of cake:

“A little piece? Oh, no. It’s too much for me.”

“You know I should be more careful about my diet.”

“Even a little piece will be counted in my diet.”

“I ate like a horse! No more...”

“I’m really full. Thanks.”

In situation 11 in which a boss offered a raise and promotion, following statements were expressed commonly by most of the participants:

“You know I really like the place I am so; I really can't afford being anywhere else rather than here.”

“I see that would be great if I could go there but I have many businesses here.”

“I’m really happy to hear this good news but as a matter of fact, it’s very difficult for me to buy a ticket plane every day, so I have to stay here.”

With regard to the use of pause fillers, in situations 7 and 9, nobody used fillers. But, in situation 11, some sentences were uttered as the following:

“Well, I’m already satisfied with my job, here. Thank you.”

“Well, I think I can’t accept your valuable suggestion. It’s not easy for me to move to Hick town.”

“Well. That’s your kindness but I’m really pleased with my position and prefer to stay here.”

Moreover, some of the interlocutors also used gratitude or appreciation as another type of adjunct in order to refuse a request. The subsequent statements uttered in situation 9:

“No thanks, you know I’m on a diet.”

“No, thank you, I have made a pig out of myself.”

“No, thanks, I'm really full.”

“No thanks, I am on diet.”

“No thank you, I’ve had enough.”

“No, I'm really full up to the brim, thank you.”

“No thanks; I really can’t eat anything more.”

In situation 11, the sentences uttered were as follows:

“I really do appreciate your favor. Honestly, I know it’s an opportunity not for everyone but I really cannot move to another city.”

“That's nice of you but it is really very hard for me and my family to move to another city.”

“I would really appreciate your kind offer but the commuting is really difficult for me.”

“You have always been kind to me but I think if you let me continue my job here I will be more successful sir.”

“Thank you. You’re your offering sounds pretty well. But actually my family and I don’t like to leave this city.”

“Thanks sir, but you know travelling to Hick town is too difficult to me.”

“Thanks for your great offer but I am attached to this city I cannot leave it.”

“Thank you sir but since I have to leave town and have an everyday flight, I’m afraid I have to say no.”

Regarding the use of hedging and the use of adjunct to refusal, only in situation 11, the participants mentioned:

“I don’t know. The first and foremost problem is that I don’t want to leave my town.”

“That’s a good offer but I can’t be away from my family.”

“Sorry, sir, But I don’t think so; because traveling too much is really frustrating for me, no matter how much my salary would be.”

“The position is great, but I can’t accept it because of my family.”

Furthermore, very few of the participants uttered their refusal directly, in none of the situations, they used a direct strategy.

Having codified the obtained data and with these issues in mind, in what follows, the results of the study for each research question were presented and discussed one by one.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners regarding the speech act of refusal?

Although all participants answered differently to different kinds of refusal situations; that is, they used various expressions to convey their meaning, they had more or less the same intentions behind their words. According to Al-Issa (2003) the sociocultural transfer seemed to influence the EFL learners' responses. Accordingly, in this study, through

analyzing the content of the participants' refusals, a path of pragmatic transfer from Iranian culture was seen obviously since Iranians usually could not say "no" directly to their addressees. That is why they preferred to use indirect strategies in refusing to different situations. Accordingly, the researcher concluded that Iranian EFL learners usually followed implicit or indirect strategies to talk to their interlocutors or hearers and express their intended meaning in a way that they would not cause any offence or threaten their listener's face. Therefore, most of the participants preferred to use indirect strategies in order to protect both their interlocutor's face and their own face. Hence, Stadler (2011) declared

The terms 'explicit' and 'implicit' are frequently features in speech act and politeness research and refer to the level of directness with which a speech act is expressed. According to Blum-Kulka (1987), implicitness and politeness have been considered to represent scalable parallel dimensions in the literature on politeness and explicitness. Historically, a high level of explicitness has been associated with a low degree of politeness, while implicitness has frequently been associated with a high degree of politeness (Lakoff, 1990; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Werlen, 1983) (p.36).

Moreover, indirect speech act usually denoted politeness in the Iranian context as well. According to Georgalidou (2008) "politeness is probably a universal parameter of linguistic communication; so, the term refers to the protection of face as a process that affects linguistic choices" (p.75). In order to support this claim, one of the researchers stated "refusals are closely associated with matters of politeness, since "speakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or, more seriously, rude or insulting" (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991, p.4). In addition, in a study done by Shimura (1995), Japanese used incomplete sentences to perform the speech act of refusal to avoid direct refusals in order to show their politeness.

As a whole, to answer the first question, the researcher concluded that most of the participants tended to use excuses, explanations, or reasons following or preceding a statement of regret. However, the mostly common strategy used by Iranian learners was the use of the expression of regret followed by an excuse or reason. Regarding offers, many used gratitude to refuse an offer along with an excuse or a reason as well. Concerning requests, learners used an excuse or an explanation in order to refuse a request which were usually followed by a sense of regret. This is also true about refusing an invitation or a suggestion.

Literature also showed that speech act theorists divided speech acts into two types; that is, direct and indirect speech acts. Cutting's (2002) belief about both direct and indirect speech act was that "much of the time, what we mean is actually not in the words themselves but in the meaning implied". The results in the present study indicated that Iranian EFL learners made use of both direct and indirect strategies to refuse a situation depending on the purposes behind their intentions. Similarly, in the study done on the comparison of refusal speech acts among Chinese and American English, Honglin (2007) also reported that both languages employed both direct and indirect speech act of refusals. However, through analysis of the responses, the researcher came to the conclusion that the most commonly strategies used by Iranian EFL learners were indirect strategies. In a similar way, Kanemoto (1993) investigated the refusal strategies suggested by the writers in American English and Japanese. The results indicated that Japanese avoided a clear refusal, mentioned a third party as a reason for their refusal and also used a pretended reason for their refusals.

Lastly, like Sadler and Eröz (2001), who reported that the Turkish and Americans used fillers followed by an utterance to express their gratitude and appreciation toward the addressee, while the speakers of Lao used utterances of regret which were followed by adjuncts, Iranian EFL learners also used fillers followed by a statement of regret, appreciation, or adjuncts depending on the situation in which they were involved.

Research Question 2: Are the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners dependent on gender?

Due to the fact that the number of the participants was not large, accidentally most of the participants were females in comparison to males. That is why the researcher in this study could not draw any definite conclusions regarding gender differences among Iranian EFL learners about using the aforementioned strategies.

Research Question 3: Does the level of education (B.A. and M.A.) have any effect on the strategies used by Iranian EFL learners?

Indeed, all the participants who were considered as advanced learners of English responded to each situation more or less in the same way in both levels of education. That is why the researcher could not find a clear cut boundary between the two groups regarding the strategies they used. Nevertheless, it seemed that even being an advanced learner did not guarantee that he or she had high levels of pragmatic competence. This can be supported through another researcher's words. Bella (2010) stated "high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee high levels of pragmatic competence" (p.20).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Due to the fact that pragmatics plays a very important role in the process of communication and the action of refusal is performed in our daily lives and in a variety of situations, refusal speech act has become one of the important topics in the discourse pragmatic research over the past few decades. Therefore, in the present study, the researcher has tried to investigate how Iranian EFL learners followed different pragmatic patterns to produce the speech act of refusal and what strategies they used in different situations and under various conditions. And also to examine if their use of the strategies were dependent on gender and finally to see if there was any difference in the type of strategies used by students at different levels of education at the university. That would be better to do this type of research with a comparison of native speakers and non-native ones. But because of the inaccessibility to the native speakers, the researcher had to conduct her research with only non-native ones. The findings of the present study are significant in a way that they can be applicable to those learners interested in increasing their knowledge of pragmatics in general and speech act of refusal in particular. They provide a useful path for those researchers interested in discourse pragmatic studies as well. Moreover, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other contexts since in different contexts and under different conditions, the results might be different. So, the researcher suggested another replication of this study so that the importance of pragmatic competence specifically regarding speech acts increases.

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APPENDIX A

Beebe et al. (1990) DCT, taken from Allami and Naeimi (2011, pp.401-402)

The following questionnaire has been designed for a research project working on the pragmatic transfer of the speech act of "refusal" among Iranian EFL learners. Please read the following 12 situations. After each situation, you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "you." Respond as you would in actual conversation.

Male Female

Age: _____

Major: _____

Affiliation: _____

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

Worker: As you know, I have been here just over a year now, and I know you have been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.

You: _____

Worker: Then I guess I will have to look for another job.

2. You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes.

Classmate: Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?

You: _____

3. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a printing machine company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants in New York.

Salesman: We have met several times to discuss your purchase of my company's products. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest at Lutece in order to firm up a contract.

You: _____

Salesman: Perhaps another time.

4. You are a top executive at a very large accounting firm. One day the boss calls you into his office.

Boss: Next Sunday, my wife and I are having a little party. I know it is short notice, but I'm hoping all my top executives will be there with their wives. What do you say?

You: _____

Boss: That's too bad. I was hoping everyone would be there.

5. You are at a friend's house watching TV. He / She offers you a snack.

You: Thanks, but no, thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My clothes don't even fit me.

Friend: Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?

You: _____

Friend: You should try it anyway.

6. You're at your desk trying to find the report that your boss just asked for. While you're searching through the mess on your desk, your boss walks over.

Boss: You know maybe you should try and organize yourself better. I always write myself little notes to remind me of things. Perhaps you should give it a try!

You: _____

Boss: Well, it's an idea anyway.

7. You arrive home and notice that your cleaning lady is extremely upset. She comes rushing up to you.

Cleaning Lady: Oh God, I'm so sorry! I had an awful accident. While I was cleaning, I bumped into the table, and your china vase fell and broke. I feel just terrible about it. I'll pay for it.

You: (knowing that the cleaning lady is supporting three children)

Cleaning Lady: No, I'd feel better if I paid for it.

8. You're a language teacher at a university. It is just about the middle of the term now and one of your students asks to speak to you.

Student: Ah, excuse me, some of the students were talking after class recently and we kind of feel that the class would be better if you could give us more practice on conversation and less on grammar.

You: _____

Student: OK, it was only a suggestion.

9. You are at a friend's house for lunch.

Friend: How about another piece of cake?

You: _____

Friend: Come on, just a little piece?

You: _____

10. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this friend's husband / wife.

Friend: How about coming over for dinner Sunday night? We're having a small dinner party.

You: _____

Friend: OK, maybe another time.

11. You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

Boss: I'd like to offer you an executive position in our new offices in Hick town. It's a great town _ only three hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position.

You: _____

Boss: Well, maybe you should give it some more thought before turning it down.

12. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave work.

Boss: If you don't mind, I'd like to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work.

You: _____

Boss: That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

APPENDIX B

Classification of refusal strategies (a modified version of Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies, taken from Allami and Naeimi, 2011)

1. Direct

A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")

B. Non performative statement

1. "No"

2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

2. Indirect

A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry..." "I feel terrible...")

B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you...")

C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night.")

D. Statement of alternative

1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather do..." "I'd prefer")

2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., Why don't you ask someone else?)

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have...")

F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"; "I promise I'll...")

G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")

H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")

I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)

2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")

3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion);

Insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "that's a terrible idea!")

4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.

5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay.")

6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can.")

J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

1. Unspecific or indefinite reply

2. Lack of enthusiasm

K. Avoidance

1. Nonverbal

a. Silence

b. Hesitation

c. Do nothing

d. Physical departure

2. Verbal

a. Topic switch

b. Joke

c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")

d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")

e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

Adjuncts to refusals

1. Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea...")

2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")

3. Pause filler (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "uhm")

4. Gratitude/appreciation