The Effect of Gender on Realization of Refusal of Suggestion in Formal and Informal Situations among Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The knowledge of the speech acts of refusals has the crucial role in daily communication to save the interlocutor’s face and to be polite. This study aimed at investigating the gender differences in realization of the usage of refusal strategies of suggestion in formal and informal situations. The participants consisted of 60 (30 females and 30 males) at intermediate level. The applied instrument in this study was Discourse Completion Test. Based on chi-square analysis, the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depended on the different social distances. The frequency of realized and applied strategies in refusals was not statistically different between the female and male learners.

Key words: Gender; Formal and informal situation; Refusal strategies; Speech acts of refusals; Suggestion

1. Introduction

Due to the communication in the community, it should be considered not only the linguistic competence as the knowledge of vocabulary, and grammatical rules, etc, but also the pragmatic competence as the knowledge of language use, speech acts, and etc. One of the crucial factors in the speech acts field is the refusal of speech acts, which is considered in this study.

Refusal is the negative reply to someone’s invitation, offer, request, and suggestion. It is a hard task to refuse native or non-native speakers, especially refusing in a foreign language that the speakers have a lack of sufficient knowledge about the refusals. Refusing would be risky because of applying the improper refusal utterances which cause the listener’s face to be threatened or cause the interlocutor’s to be misunderstood, and also show the speaker’s impoliteness.

The aim of this study was to explore the type of strategies in realization in order to use refusal of suggestion among Iranian males and females intermediate level of language proficiency in formal and informal situation through considering social
distance and the learners' respondents to each situation is considered to check their respondents are related to the learners' sex whom they interact to people in every day communication.

Although there are so many studies in realization of speech acts of refusals in different dialects and languages, there have been conducted few studies of refusal of speech acts, such as suggestion in Iranian context, especially in an intermediate level; in contrast, most of them have been done in academic levels. So, as we believed, the application of speech acts refusals is not limited to the academic participants. Accordingly, a variety of participants with a variety of language proficiency levels have also been chosen as the population of the study. Thus, the researchers made an attempt to realize if there was a significant difference in the use of suggestion strategies between males and females. We also made an effort to scrutinize the refusal strategies used by both genders in terms of refusal of the suggestions.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Theoretical background

This part gives different definitions for pragmatics, refusals speech acts, cooperation principles, conversation, and sub categories of refusal speech acts. Yule (1996), defined pragmatics as the study of wanted talker's meaning. Pragmatics plays a very crucial role in the understanding and production of the language. According to Thomas (1983), Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language efficiently in order to gain a special aim and to comprehend language in context and non-native speakers must use the knowledge of language and pragmatics. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), Pragmatics is the study of how talkers apply and comprehend speech acts.

Kasper (1997) believed that pragmatic competence is the awareness of what is (not) proper in the context. When someone want to integrate to other one, he/she initiate with greeting, introducing a topic, turn taking, and non-verbal communication. People who don’t know the use of social language may use improper words, phrase, sentence, and language within their communication, and may change the topic suddenly and frequently. Safonts (2005) believed that there was a need for preparing systematic pragmatic in recognizing and applying special speech acts.

EFL learners may present perfect grammatical speech, but they may face difficulty in social norms of the target language, this happens because of the absence of pragmatic competence to uphold grammatical competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Dorney 1998; Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). Felix-Brasdefer (2006) in a sociolinguistic domain stated the importance of refusals, because of their sensitivity to social variables, e.g. age, gender, level of education, power and social distance. Esłami-Rasekh and Fatahi (2004) emphasized that the awareness of EFL learners’ interaction with native speakers may bring pragmatic failure because of the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the socio-cultural norms of the target society. According to Kasper (2001), pragmatics plays a remarkable role in L1 and L2 classroom research. It should be taught from first year of language learning, especially in aspects of the issues of politeness, and appropriateness.

Cheng (2005) stated that pragmatic competence is a key aspect to comprehend the speech acts and their properness in a special context. Delen (2010) said Pragmatics emphasis is on the language communication. Simply, pragmatic is the study of meaning in interaction. According to Esłami-rasekh and Mardani (2010), Iranian EFL learners have pragmatic problems that are caused by the lack of the speech acts knowledge. They often fail to identify the proper use of speech acts in EFL educational settings. In EFL context, pragmatics is conceptualized as pertinent to speech acts, language uses, and politeness linguistic (Fioramonte & Vásquezand, 2011). Honglin (2007) defined speech acts of refusal as the, expression that is spoken loudly to do the action of refuse.
2.1.1 Speech acts

Speech acts, have been defined as the utterances and the total situations in which the utterances are issued (Austin, 1962). Also, he added that there is a close relationship between language use and speech acts. According to Sanders (2005), speech act theory focuses on the utilization of formal sayings regarding what diversity they make to the social status of hearers and/or speakers.

2.1.2 Cooperation principles

Grice (1975) stated that the role cooperative principles are to make your parlance, at the occurred speech by accepted aim or talk swap direction in which you are used. Grice lists four maxims in cooperative principles such as Quantity: be informative; Quality: be truthfully; Relation: be relevant; Manner: be brief and orderly and avoid ambiguity. And also he mentioned that if nothing went in conversation, nothing would happen. According to Lavor and Trudgill (1979), the listener must set up what was said, and construct from a variety of clues, the affective state of the speaker and profile of his identity.

2.1.3 Conversation

One important principle in use of conversation is the adjacency pair. Utterances that co-occur for example: question/answer, request/acceptance/reject, complaints/apology/rejection, Complement/ acceptance/ refuse. According to Schegloff and Sacks (1973), “Adjacency pairs” are the certain sequential speech turns that is closely related and managing them successfully is a main component of “conversational competence”. Our focus is on the adjacency pair of suggestion-refusal. Conversation is also a cooperative principle that includes two or more participants, each one must have the chance to participate in turn taking that we engage in it with no difficulty and skillfully. Tannen (1987) recognized New Yorker’s style as conversational cover part which was a lot of talking, while others are talking in random conversation. Later, she (1994) called this kind of concurrent speech as the cooperative cover parting that is supportive.

According to Schegloff (2000), maybe there is just one person who speaks at a time and that person is understood to be the one whose turn it to speech as an exception.

2.1.4. Speech acts of refusal

According to Takahashi and Beebe (1987), refusal is the lack of ability to say ‘no’ obviously and politely that has led to insult conversers by many non-native speakers. Refusals are complicate speech acts that need long progression of negotiation, cooperative attainments, and face-saving change in the direction to provide lodging disobedient nature of the act (Gass & Houck, 1999).

2.1.4.1 Directness and indirectness

There are two kinds of refusal speech acts, directly and indirectly. As Brown and Levinson (1987) claim, the speaker can use special strategies such as directness, indirectness, and polite states to avoid quarrel. According to Tanck (2002), refusal occurs when a speaker says no to an invitation or request directly or indirectly. An indirect refusal may increase the degree of intricacy; speaker has to select the appropriate form(s) to alleviate the negative influence of a direct refusal (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008).
2.1.4.2 Face Threatening Acts (FTA)

According to this concept, in every day communication, one may threat the others’ self-image. These acts impede the freedom of action of negative face, and the one’s intended wish that is desired by the others positive face by either the hearer and speaker, or both of them. In refusals, the hearer’s positive face may be threatened because they may infer utterance which is not favored by the speaker. According to Ramos (1991), the skill of refusing one’s invitation, offer, request, or suggestion is more important so as not to hurt his/her feelings.

2.1.4.3 Politeness theory

Goffman (1967) is one who early influenced the politeness, and described it as the admiration of particular person that shows to another through evasion or submission of rituals. Leech (1983) considers the politeness as a behavior that produces and continues the compatible interaction and as the part of interpersonal communication. He states that indirect speech acts are more polite because of their increase in optionality degree. He presents six maxims for the politeness principles as Tact: Maximize profits to others; Generosity: Maximize price to self; Approbation: Maximize censure of self; Modesty: Maximize glorification of others; Agreement: Maximize pact between self and others; Sympathy: Maximize affinity between self and others. The common aspects in (Brown & Levinson’s, 1978, 1987; Lakoff’s, 1975; Leech’s, 1983) ideas’ are the universality of their principles for linguistic politeness. Kasper (2006) define politeness as a linguistic behavior which is imagined as a dependent variable settled by the context value.

2.1.4.4 The concept of face

According to Brown and Levinson (1978) “Face” is something that is emotionally expended for future benefit, and can be misplaced, well kept, or increased and must be continuously served in mutual action. When we don’t understand the other one, we give the non-verbal or non-threatening reaction to them. By doing this, we consider the face of ourselves and the hearer into account.

2.2. Related studies

According to (Boxer, 1993; Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990), gender and speech behavior are interwoven and interrelated to each other. The refusal of people requires various linguistic patterns and their gender differences. 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. 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.

Widjaja (1997) stated that, studied refusal strategies among Taiwanese and American females on the speech act of refusal specially about dating. Findings of the study revealed that the Taiwanese were inclined to be more direct in refusing, and the negative politeness strategies were reported to have been used by both groups.

Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002) investigated differences and similarities between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals that used the adjusted discourse - completion test (DCT) according to Beebe et al (1990) model. Participants composed of 30 American interviewers and 25 Egyptian interviewers. Each refusal was divided to its constituent's strategies. Data analysis was according to mean frequencies of direct and indirect strategies, and the impact of converser social status on strategy use. Results revealed that both groups utilized the same strategies and frequencies in their refusals. The findings showed that they failed to reveal the socio-pragmatic complexity of face - threatening act in refusals.
Lah, Sattar, and Suleimani (2011) worked on the refusal of request. The aims were to find the favored semantic formula used by Malay academic students in Malaysia to refuse a request in an academic context. The participants were 40 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The data was accumulated by DCT and was analyzed according to the refusal taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990). The findings showed that participants were different in their refusal ways. Regret, and giving excuses or explanations were the favored formula. The choice of these semantic formulas implies the effect of Malaysian culture on respondents’ realizations of refusals in English.

Javanmardi and Sahragard (2011) worked on refusal situations such as refusal of request, order, suggestion, and invitation in EFL context among twenty MA and twenty eight BA students of both males and females who were randomly selected. They applied DCT questionnaire as a material. The results showed that Iranian learners applied both direct and indirect strategies to refuse a situation. The mostly common strategies which are utilized by learners were 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. Concerning requests, learners applied 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. For the low number of the participants that accidentally most of the participants were females in comparison to males, therefore, the researcher could not draw any conclusions toward gender differences among Iranian EFL learners. According to their level, all the learners in both levels of English was more or less in the same level, so the researcher could not find a clear-cut boundary between the two groups regarding the strategies they used.

Azizi Abarghoui (2012) investigated the 40 Iranian EFL learners who were composed of 20 male and 20 female and 40 (20 male and 20 female) native speakers of Australia for considering the strategies of refusal of request, and he used the DCT to elicit the data. The results revealed that Iranian EFL learners care for apply limited strategies for the interlocutor’s request. Refusal patterns are very different from non-natives’ to natives’ speakers, though they do share some similarities.

Guo (2012) worked on both Chinese and American refusal speech act from the perspectives of cross-cultural communication by using a modified version of the discourse completion test (DCT) developed by Beebe et al. (1990). The subjects was 60 US college students and teachers and 60 Chinese college students and teachers are interviewed. The findings showed that there are more similarities than differences among the Chinese and Americans in making refusals in their suggestion, offer, invitations, and request toward different level of social distance. Both groups preferred to utilize indirect refusal strategies rather than direct strategies and the strategies of reason, statement of alternative, and regret. American groups applied a greater number of direct strategies than the Chinese subjects on average. The differences can be caused by cultural differences between Chinese and American Culture.

2.3. Research questions

1) Does the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depend on the social distance?
2) Does the frequency of realized and applied strategies in formal and informal situation in refusal of suggestion depend on learner’s gender?
3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were consisted of 100 students including 50 males and 50 females. Having taken the Preliminary English Test (PET), 60 individuals including 30 males and 30 females were selected as the participants of the study. Accordingly, two groups of participants (group of males and group of females) were formed so that the types of strategies used by each group could be assessed and any significant difference between two groups could be analyzed.

3.2. Instruments

The instrument which was used in this study was a questionnaire based on a more uniform and standard way of eliciting data. This is the most popular instruments which have been used in collecting data to investigate different types of speech acts. Wolfson, Marmor and Jones (1989) described that the use of DCT, eliciting instrument, is an efficient way to collect a lot of information in a short period of time. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen target situations in written form of discourse completion test (DCT). The questions were open ended form.

3.3. Procedure

The procedure which was done in this study was on the way that participants received eighteen English written situations, and then they were asked to answer to each situation. These situations were in conversation form and learners should put themselves into those special situations and answer to those questions. The questionnaire was coded based on the variables of the study like the kinds of strategies of refusal: direct (D), indirect (IND), and adjunct refusal (A); formal and informal situations which considered social distance with three levels: acquaintance (A), intimate (I), and stranger (S); and sex relationship with two levels: same (S), opposite (O). The data was coded based on the strategies which were applied in each situation by the researcher. Then the frequency of refusal strategies which had been used among the three levels of social distance was compared with each other.

There are more studies which have been done by considering the semantic formula according to Beebe & Takahashi’s (1990) model of speech acts of refusal, but this study just considered the types of semantic formulas as the followings:

I. Direct: in this strategy, the refuser frankly turns down the suggestion. Direct strategies cause negative effects and are highly face threatening acts. For example: No; I can’t do it. (D)

II. Indirect: Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) state that the indirect verbal style “refers to verbal messages that camouflage and conceal speakers’ true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation” (p.100). For example: I’m sorry; I should pick up my son at the airport. (IND)

III. Adjuncts: This strategy includes the extra changes to save the speaker’s positive face. For example: I’d love to come, but I can’t; (A)

The example with considering all variables of refusal strategies would be: No, I don’t think so Mary; I will solve it by myself. That would be coded as [IND], [IO].

To collect data, the discourse completion test (DCT) questionnaire was distributed among 60 males and females in Zaban Negar institute in Tehran. The time allocated was twenty minutes. There were eighteen situations for the refusal of suggestion in the DCT. This research made use of the qualitative mode for the analysis. The questions were in open-ended form.
According to pilot study analysis, the participants were consisted of 2 females and 2 males, and the validity of the questionnaires was 0.8 and the internal consistency of items was 0.7.

The reliability of the items of the questionnaire was calculated by alpha-cronbach, and to observe the reliability of the current study coding, three raters were considered for this study.

The qualitative analysis was computing the average of the refusal ways in social distance by considering the frequency and Std. Residual, which were analyzed by SPSS 17 within descriptive analysis due to the applied questionnaire responses. The analysis of crosstabs (two-way chi-square) is run to probe any significant differences in the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion on the different social distances. The frequencies, percentages, and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) applied for the refusal of suggestion. The analysis of crosstabs (two-way chi-square) is run to probe any significant differences in the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion on the different social distances. The frequencies, percentages, and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) applied for the refusal of suggestion. The analysis of crosstabs (two-way chi-square) is run to probe any significant differences in the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion on the different social distances.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 4.1 below shows the reliability statistics of the discourse completion test administered to the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Reliability Index</th>
<th>Reliability Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCT</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Cronbach's Alpha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in table 4.1 above, the result of reliability is .82 and the inter-item correlation matrix is computed as 1.00 for both males' and females' questionnaires, and according to Pearson correlations for both questionnaires was r = 1 and Correlation is significant at the .020 level (2-tailed) according to overall alpha level which was set at p<0.5, the questionnaires was valid. Based on the outcomes of the research, we can now deal with the research questions:

The first research question of this study asked whether the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depend on the social distance. In order to answer this question the analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square) was used to explore any significant differences in the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion on the different social distances.
Table 4.2  *Frequencies, percentages and std. residuals: participants’ application of refusal of suggestion on social distance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Social distance</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Social distance</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Social distance</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Social distance</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 above shows the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the refusal of suggestion (direct, indirect and adjunct) on social distance (acquaintance, intimate, and stranger). The former two indices are descriptive and should be interpreted horizontally, i.e. within each group; while the latter – Std. Residual – is an inferential index.
Based on which conclusions as to the significance of the differences between the three situations of using of strategies can be made. This index should be interpreted vertically for using each of the strategies by the three social statuses. Std. Residuals beyond +/- 1.96 Field, show that the utilization of the strategies is not random; hence significantly beyond expectation. Based on the results displayed in Table 2, it can be concluded that 38.9 percent of the participants used direct strategies on acquaintance, while 48.9 percent applied direct strategies on intimate, and 49.2 percent utilized direct strategies on stranger. Hence the participants expressed refusals by using more direct strategies to interlocutors on strangers.

Moreover, 53.9 percent of the participants used indirect strategies in acquaintance, while 44.7 percent applied indirect strategies on intimate, and 40.8 percent utilized indirect strategies on stranger. Therefore the participants expressed refusals by using more indirect strategies to interlocutors on acquaintance. Besides, 7.2 percent of the participants used adjunct strategies on acquaintance, and 6.4 percent applied adjunct strategies on intimate, but 10.0 percent utilized adjunct strategies on stranger. So the participants showed refusals by using more adjunct strategies to interlocutors on strangers.

Examining Std. Residuals indicates that only one of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond +/- 1.96. The application of indirect strategies in acquaintance (53.9%, Std. Residual = 2.1>1.96) is significantly above expectation.

Table 4.3 chi-square test for application of refusal of suggestion on social distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>15.638</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Valid Cases 1080

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 28.33.

The results of chi-square ($x^2$ (4) = 15.638, $p = .004$, $p < .05$) in Table 4.3 indicate that the differences are statistically significant. Therefore as the second research question which was does the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depend on the social distance, we can claim that the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depends on the social distance.

The second research question of this study inquired whether the frequency of applied strategies to people of social distance in refusal of suggestion depends on learner’s gender. The analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square) was employed to investigate any significant differences in the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion between the females and males. Before running Chi-square, the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the refusal of suggestion (direct, indirect and adjunct) by females and males on acquaintance (see Table 4.4), intimate (see Table 4.5), and stranger (see Table 4.6) were computed Examining Std.
Table 4.4 *Frequencies, percentages and std. residuals; application of refusal of suggestion to males and females of ‘Acquaintance’ social distance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>-.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 below shows the frequencies and percentages of the application of refusal of suggestion to males and females of ‘Intimate’ social distance.

### Table 4.5 Frequencies, percentages and std. residuals; application of refusal of suggestion to males and females of ‘Intimate’ social distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 below shows the frequencies and percentages of the application of refusal of suggestion to males and females of ‘strange social distance.’
Table 4.6: Frequencies, percentages and std. residuals; application of refusal of suggestion to males and females of ‘Strange’ social distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Residual</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residuals revealed that none of the above mentioned statistics are chosen significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are not beyond +/- 1.96 for the three acquaintance, intimate, and strange levels of social status between females and males.
Table 4.7 Chi-square test for application of refusal of suggestion by males and females of Acquaintance, Intimate, and Stranger social distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Distance</th>
<th>N of Valid Cases</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>2.791*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>.910*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1.339*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square Test according to Table 4.7 failed to find any significant difference in the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social distance in refusal of suggestion between females and males on all three levels of social distance, i.e. ‘Acquaintance’ with \( \chi^2(2) = 2.791, p = .24, p > .05 \), ‘Intimate’ with \( \chi^2(2) = .910, p = .63, p > .05 \), and ‘Stranger’ with \( \chi^2(2) = 1.33, p = .51, p > .05 \) in which \( p \) value for all three levels of social status was well above .05 level of significance. According to second research question as the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social distance in refusal of suggestion does depend on learner’s gender or not, it was retained. In other words, female and male respondent answered the DCT questions almost similarly.

The initial aim of this study was to investigate how Iranian EFL learners produce the refusal of suggestion and what strategies they used in different situations of acquaintance, stranger, and intimate distance person, and also to check whether their applied strategies were dependent on gender. The researcher exposed the learners to the questionnaires and learners should put themselves in each specific situation and reject each of the situations. The time which is allocated to complete the questionnaire is twenty minutes. In next step, the researchers coded the learners’ responses. And then the intra-raters applied in this study.

Dearth of the research in refusal of suggestion in an intermediate level in Iranian EFL context led the researcher to deal with refusal of suggestion to people with deferent level of social distance. The results were analyzed with regarding the different kinds of refusal strategies; the frequency of refusal strategies to people of acquaintance, intimate, and stranger social distance; and the refusal strategies due to considering the gender differences.

The finding of this study is compatible with Vaezi (2011) Social distance and power play a vital role in production of refusal among Persian native speakers. This study lends support to Guo (2012) Direct strategies were more frequently used among intimates. Participants applied more indirect refusal strategies rather than direct ones. In different situations, social distance and power impact the choice of refusal strategies.

The frequency of applied strategies in different levels of social distance situation in refusal of suggestion is not statistically
different between the female and male participants. So they applied strategies in the same way. Females are a little more sensitive to the opposite gender (male), by using less direct strategies than males. Males used more strategies when they refused people of opposite gender than females. Males refused people of the opposite gender with many more ‘NO’ phrases.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate into the preferred strategies of refusals of suggestion applied by Iranian female and male intermediate learners in formal and informal situation. This study probed into the refusals of suggestion to acquaintance, intimacy, and stranger distance. According to the questionnaire data, learners' realization and application of refusal strategies were depend on the interlocutor's social distance. Females and males were not different from each other due to their refusal strategies and they revealed the same number of strategies of refusals when they interacted with people of the three social distances levels. Both genders used more direct strategies in their refusal of the people of the cross sex society gender than the single sex society.

There are limitations in this study, the first one is the method of the (DCT) as a data collection instrument which is hard to say how written answers would actually represent the spontaneous interaction; and the second one is the lack of the learners' knowledge of pragmatics and speech acts, according to Tanck (2004), even fluent speakers may have the lack of pragmatic knowledge that caused the interlocutors to be face threatened, so EFL learners should be aware that social status and social distance play a crucial roles when refusing, and their improper refusals may make them rude, impolite, and vague.

Speech acts of refusals of suggestions are so important because they have a crucial role in daily communication. EFL learners should know how to use the appropriate refusals of suggestion in order to save the interlocutor’s face and to be polite when they meet people in formal and informal situations.

More interesting aspects of refusals of speech acts for future researches will be recommended by considering the effects of gender on nonverbal communication in refusals of suggestion, the effect of age on the refusals of suggestion in the EFL context, the effect of gender on refusals to invitation in Iranian intermediate learners as an EFL context, the effect of age and gender on promising as a speech acts in EFL context, the effect on gender and age on the apologizing in the EFL context, The effect of gender on blaming in the EFL context, The effect of gender and proficiency level and socio-status on the Iranian EFL blaming, the effect of gender and power on the Iranian EFL apology, and the effect of gender in better performance and tendency in situational willingness to communicate with Iranian EFL context.

A teacher should pay more attention to helping learners avoid pragmatic failures by teaching them the pragmatic knowledge. According to Zheng and Huang (2010) teachers should provide learners with the communicative rules, social conventions, and values of the target nation. This study supported the importance of comprehending refusals of speech acts in intermediate level, so EFL teachers should design the tasks which expose the learners to different pragmatic information that help them to carry out the speech acts and refusals of speech acts properly according to the people's social status and social distance. Language instructors should develop pragmatic ability by designing contextualized, task based activities that expose the learners to different kinds of pragmatic input and producing the proper output. Language instructors should instruct language forms and functions in the context of communicative oral activities in formal and informal situation in order to carry out speech acts successfully. The sociolinguistics information should be placed into the L2 curriculum and the text books from the beginning levels of language learning. Language instructors should teach how to do speech acts in FL in different situations of social status, social distance.
References


Mouton de Gruyter.


ters.


Author Bio

Fariba Hedayatnejad has M.A in TEFL. She has done some experiment in CAP. Her areas of interest are linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics.
Appendix A

Females’ Questionnaire

**Situation 1:** You are watching your favorite movie in your room. Your male friend comes to your room, and he shows one action movie package and suggests you to stop your movie and instead watch the action movie.

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 2:** You are going to the book store with your female friend, and you have no idea for buying the proper book for your research. She says “look at this! This research book would be good, complete, and helpful.”

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 3:** You are a staff, and your manager asked you to prepare a report for the last month performance of the company, and you lost the documents and you trying to find them in different files and shelves. The manager watches you in this situation and says “perhaps you should organize and keep the documents in the one special file for each month.”

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 4:** You are an English professor for the foreign students and today you want to take an exam. Students ask you that they are not ready for the exam, and suggest you to postpone that for the next session, for their better performance.

You……………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 5:** You are two sisters. One day you want to go for shopping and buy a pair of sneakers with your sister, and you don’t have much money to buy original shoes. Your sister says “that you should go to the bazaar; they sell the original shoes cheaper than the other places.”

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 6:** You are an instructor for an airline ticketing course. You have scheduled a session on the first date of the next week which was on the holiday, because you are in a hurry to finish the course soon. One of the female students asks if you could change the session to the two next weeks; for some of the students want to go to holiday.

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 7:** You are a teacher of painting and it’s the middle of the term, one of your students asks to speak to you. One of the male students says: “I’m sorry, our classmates think that the applied practices in our class is not enough. Would you please give us more different practices in the class?”

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 8:** You are one of the staffs in an industry company and your male boss asks if he can borrow your car for few days. Your car has broken down, and you say ”I can’t borrow my car because it needs to be fixed. The boss says “I know that you’ve two cars now; why don’t you fix your car in my brother’s vehicle workshop?”

You: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Situation 9: You are driving your brother to school and you say that you can’t pick him up after his class, because you want to go for shopping. Your brother says “you should postpone your shopping for the other day.”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 10: You are a worker at the company, and you want to take three days leave for the weekend, but the administrative department won’t let you to leave. One of your male colleagues sees you in this situation and says “I can come to the company and work instead of you.”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 11: You are a participant in an English class, you ask one of your female classmates that if she can borrow her notes. She says “Oh, we have an exam tomorrow, why don’t you read the book carefully? That would be helpful.”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 12: You are on holiday in abroad, and you meet a male taxi driver, he is supposed to drive to the six star hotel, but he drives you into his son’s hotel which is a four star hotel, and suggest you to stay here.

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 13: You are an assistant to a male French teacher, and you want to learn French language fluently, at the end of the institute's hour, you are going to leave, the teacher says ”why don't you stay more and practice French language with me?”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 14: You are a receptionist of a hotel, and a female guest says ”someone smokes in the non smoking area, and you should snuff him.”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 15: You are a student in a Business course class. One of your female lecturer’s house is near yours and suggests you to pick her up every day from her home.

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 16: You ask one of your male friends to borrow some money. You say “may I borrow 200 bucks? I need that money to buy a present for my father’s birthday.” He says “I don’t have enough money, but you can refer to Roxana, because I know that she has that much money.”

You: ........................................................................................................

Situation 17: You are a student at a University. You want to go home. In the university parking area you see that the tires of your car were flat. A female student, who you do not know before, approaches and suggests you for a lift home.
Situation 18: You are a ten years old girl. Your mother wants you to turn off the TV and study for tomorrow’s lesson. She suggests you to do your homework immediately to have more free time to watching TV.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

Males’ Questionnaire

Situation 1: You are watching your favorite movie in your room. Your female friend comes to your room and she shows the action movie package and suggests you to stop your movie and instead watch the action movie.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

Situation 2: You are going to the book store with your male friend, and you have no idea for buying the proper book for your research. He says “look at this! This research book would be good, complete, and helpful”.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

Situation 3: You are a staff, and your manager asked you to prepare a report for the last month performance of the company, and you lost the documents and you trying to find the documents in different files and shelves. The manager watches you in this situation and says “perhaps you should organize and keep the documents in the one special file for each month”.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

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Situation 5: You are two brothers. One day you want to go for shopping and buy a paired of sneakers with your brother, and you don’t have much money to buy original shoes. Your brother says “you should go to the bazaar; they sell the original shoes cheaper than the other places”.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

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You: ………………………………………………………………………

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You: ………………………………………………………………………

Situation 9: You are driving your sister to school and you say that you can’t pick her up after her class, because you want to go for shopping. Your sister says “you should postpone your shopping for the other day”.

You: ………………………………………………………………………

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You: ………………………………………………………………………

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You: ………………………………………………………………………

Situation 14: You are a receptionist of a hotel, and a male guest says “someone smokes in the non smoking area, and you should snuff him.”

You: ………………………………………………………………………

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money to buy a present for my father’s birthday.” She says “I don’t have enough money, but you can refer to Roxana, because I know that she has that much money”.

You: …………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 17:** You are a student at a University. You want to go home. In the university parking area, you see that the tires of your car were flat. A male student, who you do not know before, approaches and suggests you for a lift home.

You: …………………………………………………………………………………

**Situation 18:** You are a ten years old boy. Your father wants you to turn off the TV and study for tomorrow’s lesson. He suggests you should do your homework immediately, to have more free time to watch TV.

You: …………………………………………………………………………………
Appendix B

The taxonomies of speech acts of refusals based on the Beebe and Takahashi (1990)

| Direct: | 1. Performative. |
|         | 2. Non-performative statement: |
|         |   a. "No" |
|         |   b. Negative willingness |
|         | 1. Excuse/reason/explanation |
|         | 2. Wish |
|         | 3. Statement of alternative: |
|         |   a. I can do X instead of Y |
|         |   Why don't you do X instead of Y |
|         | 4. Statement of regret; |
|         | 5. Promise of future acceptance; |
|         | 6. Set condition for future or past acceptance |
|         | 7. Statement of philosophy; |
|         | 8. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor: |
|         |   a. Threat/statement of negative consequences to the requestor, |
|         |   b. Guilt trip, |
|         |   c. Criticize the request/requester, etc. |
|         |   d. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request, |
|         |   e. Let interlocutor off the hook, |
|         |   f. Self defense |
|         | 9. Acceptance that functions as a refusal: |
|         |   a. Unspecific or indefinite reply, |
|         |   b. Lack of enthusiasm |
|         | 10. Avoidance: |
|         |   a. Nonverbal, |
|         |   b. Verbal |
|         | Topic switch, |
|         | Joke, |
|         | Repetition of part of request, etc., |
|         | Postponement, |
|         | Hedging, |
|         | Ellipsis, |
|         | Hint |

| Adjuncts to Refusals | 1. Gratitude/appreciation, |
|                      | 2. Statement of empathy, |
|                      | 3. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement |