

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE REFUSAL SPEECH ACT OF
TURKISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

by

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Abstract

This study investigates and compares politeness strategies of Turkish learners of English (TLE) and American English speakers (AE) when they produce the speech act of refusal in English. A total of 24 participants took part in this study and each of them completed a background survey, an open role play and a semi-structured interview. The role-play asked all of the participants to refuse a party invitation offered by a classmate/colleague and was audio-recorded. The refusal interactions were coded according to the classification proposed by Beebe et al. (1990), and the sequence of the refusal interactions (i.e., head act, pre- and post-refusals) was also examined. The results showed that providing excuse/reason/explanation was the most preferred strategy by both groups overall, but closer examination of the strategy revealed that the TLE group was more specific in their explanations compared to the AE group. In addition, when the conductor of the role play insisted on the invitation, the AE group continued to refuse without giving specific reasons, whereas the TLE group chose to provide elaborate reasons upon insistence. During the interview session after the role play, the TLE group commented on cultural factors that influenced their choice of refusal strategies. Based on the findings, this study also proposed implications of the teaching of pragmatics in the English as a second language (ESL) context.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Language is a tool for communication. People interact with each other with means of sound, sign, and gestures. The concept that forms the language itself seems to carry specific features that are shared by all languages, that is every language follows certain patterns in putting together sounds, words and sentences that project meaning. However, realization of those patterns differ across languages. For example, the word “apple” in English is realized as “manzana” in Spanish, “Apfel” in German and “elma” in Turkish. Speakers refer to the same fruit, even though they assign the meaning to the same object with different words. Although the relationship between the words and their meaning may seem quite clear in this example, it might not always be the case. Oftentimes what people say and what they actually mean can differ significantly. For example, when a friend says “can you pass me the salt?” when dining at a restaurant, she is most probably not curious about your ability in spite of the modal verb “can”, rather what she is asking you is to give her the salt. The reason she chooses to use the expression instead of directly saying “pass me the salt” lies under politeness principles and cultural conventions. In American culture, indirect requests are considered more polite compared to direct ones. Somehow, speakers of American English share this knowledge and have the ability to interpret the underlying meaning, and communicate successfully. However, a language learner may not be able to recognize the function of these utterances, since this type of language knowledge is heavily dependent on context, and is ingrained in its culture. What a learner naturally would do in such situations is to apply the sociopragmatic conventions of his native culture, which might lead to unsuccessful communication, and offend participants of the interaction.

Performed in response to requests, suggestions, offers and invitations, refusals are speech acts that are performed in all languages. However, the way speakers refuse differs across cultures; some prefer direct “no”, while others are more cautious and avoid saying “no”. That is, the preference for degree of directness is informed by cultural norms, which influence language use, and language production that is following these cultural norms is realized as politeness by speakers. In this case, failing to refuse appropriately may have immediate social consequences for speakers such as risking interpersonal relationships.

In the case of language learners, refusals not only have an important place in cross-cultural communication, but are also reported to pose great challenges to their interaction with speakers of the target language. However, less attention has been given to how learners express refusals in relation to native speakers. In particular, considering the cross-cultural differences existing between Turkish and American English speakers in refusals (e.g., Bulut, 2003; Moody, 2011), Turkish learners of English may encounter considerable difficulties when they learn how to communicate refusals in English. Therefore, the current study attempts to examine the production of refusals of Turkish learners of English and to explore the possible differences between American English speakers and Turkish learners of English in order to understand the underlying factors that lead to learners’ pragmatic choices. In addition, this study discusses possible implications for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) based on the findings.

This study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of basic concepts, theoretical approaches, and previous studies relevant to this study. Chapter 3 gives a detailed introduction to the methodological issues important for addressing the research questions in this study. Chapter 4 presents results obtained from the instruments used in this study. The findings are discussed in Chapter 5, based on previous studies and theoretical approaches reviewed in

Chapter 2. Lastly, Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of this study and discusses directions for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the language use from speakers' and hearers' perspective, and explores the effects utterances have on the participants of communication. Pragmatics studies how the meaning is transferred, its relationship with context, the intention of the speaker, and factors that affect the choices made by the speaker. Pragmatics is divided into two branches: (1) pragma-linguistics, which is related to linguistic forms or strategies that are used to convey communicative acts with relation to meaning; (2) socio-pragmatics, which refers to social factors that constrain the realization of communicative acts.

2.2 Speech act theory

In communication, speakers use language to do things other than describe reality. In addition to making statements such as “the sky is blue”, speakers make utterances with certain intentions that have an effect on the listeners. Offering an apology, making a request or complaint are some of the acts that a speaker can perform. Speech act theory, therefore, defines and classifies the speech acts that are realized by language speakers. In this section, development of speech act theory is discussed and the classification of the speech acts is provided.

In his lectures more than a half century ago at Oxford, which were later reproduced in a book titled “How to do things with words”, J. L. Austin (1962) proposed that apart from the general type of “nonsense”, utterances perform an action other than its literal meaning (p. 6-7). For instance, the utterance “I take you to be my lawfully wedded husband/wife” that is said in a marriage ceremony is not only stating or reporting something, but also performs the act of marrying by altering status of the relationship between two people. Due to the additional act they carry, Austin termed this type of utterances as *performative*. However, in order for performatives

to be considered valid, it is necessary that they are uttered with words that are context appropriate, and the speaker or the hearer also performs certain type of actions as a consequence. To illustrate this, if we consider the previous example, marriage would not meet the requirements to be considered legal unless the sentence was uttered under predetermined social conditions (Thomas, 1995).

So far, we understand by the analysis of the meaning Austin proposed that when a speaker utters a sentence with employing linguistic conventions, the speaker also performs associated intention that is realized as a linguistic act to the hearer (Oishi, 2006). Later, Searle (1969) developed Austin's ideas on language with a hypothesis that states "speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises and so on... that are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements" (p. 16). In addition to the semantic rules in which speech acts are realized to indicate the meaning, Searle pointed out to distinct sub acts that speakers perform which are categorized under the general form of speech acts as the following:

Locutionary act: Uttering words (morphemes, sentences) = performing utterance acts

Illocutionary act: Performance of an act in saying something (e.g., stating, questioning, commanding, promising, etc.)

Perlocutionary act: Consequences or effects on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs, etc. of hearers (e.g., hearer closes the door in response to a request to do so)

(Searle, 1969, p. 24-25)

Oftentimes in the literature, scholars also refer to speech acts as illocutionary acts, because the performance of this type of act carries the core meaning and signals the speaker's intention to the hearer. Perlocutionary act, on the other hand, is the result of illocutionary act, and

the realization of it depends on how the hearer interprets the message conveyed by the speaker; certain illocutionary acts may or may not have an effect on the hearer (e.g., promise, advice).

Below is the Celce-Murcia and Olshtain's (2007) classification of speech acts revised from Searle (1975) originally. According to this classification (Table 2.1), the speech act under study (i.e., the refusal speech act) belongs to the category of commissives.

Table 2.1 Five Fundamental Speech Acts

Act	Definition	Example
Declaratives (Performatives)	are speech acts that “change the world” as a result of having been performed.	“We find the defendant not guilty!”
Representatives	are speech acts that enable the speaker to express feelings, beliefs, assertions, illustrations, and the like.	“Today, tomatoes can be grown in the desert.”
Expressives	express psychological states of the speaker or the hearer such as apologizing, complaining, complimenting, congratulating.	“Congratulations on your graduation.”
Directives	are speech acts that enable speakers to impose some action on the hearer such as commands, orders, requests.	“Be quiet!”
Commissives	are speech acts whereby the speaker takes on or refuses some responsibility or task and are, therefore, face-threatening to the speaker, or imposing on the speaker.	“I’ll stop by tomorrow, I promise.”

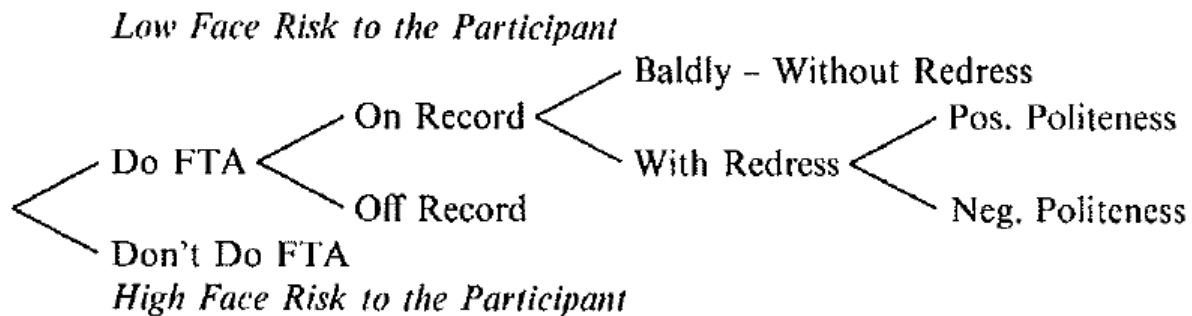
2.3 Politeness theory

Basic concept of the theory formulated by Brown and Levinson (1987) is the assumption that “all competent adult members of a society have ‘face’, the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61). Face consists of two types:

- (a) Negative face: being independent; freedom of action and freedom of imposition
- (b) Positive face: self-image that is appreciated and approved by others

Face is a sensitive notion that can be lost (e.g., humiliated, embarrassed), maintained, and enhanced (e.g., praised) through written and spoken communication. Ideally, in everyday interaction, people aspire to maintain each other’s face, since everyone’s face is dependent on each other. Thus, they tend to cooperate when encountered with face threatening acts (FTA) such as requests (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Below is the illustration of communication strategies according to their degree of politeness:

Figure 2.1 Possible Strategies for Doing FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.69)



Based on the chart, speakers may (1) avoid performing the speech act if it has high face risk to the addressee; (2) be bald on record by direct expression (3) be off record by expressing the speech act with some degree of ambiguity for negotiation; (4) fulfill hearer’s positive face wants; (5) maintain hearer’s negative face wants in order to achieve politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that in many or perhaps all cultures, which strategy the speaker will

choose and the seriousness of an FTA is influenced by social factors (i.e., social distance, power, ranking of imposition). For instance, people would employ different strategies for expressing a request to their boss compared to a close friend. That is to say, people have a tendency to mitigate their speech acts in order not to “lose face” by impolite expressions.

2.4 The speech act of refusal

Performed in response to other speech acts such as offers, invitations, suggestions and requests, the speech act of refusal indicates that one is not willing to do something. Since the speaker declines to obligate themselves from taking future action, the speech act of refusal belongs to the category of commissives (see Table 2.1). However, in order for refusals to be performed without flaws, the acts must meet certain conditions. Below are the felicity conditions for the speech act of refusal (adapted from Barron, 2003, p. 128).

Table 2.2 Felicity Conditions for Refusals

Types of rules (conditions)	Refusal
Propositional content	S predicates a future act to H .
Preparatory	S is not able to perform A .
Sincerity	S does not want to be obliged to do A .
Essential	Attempt by S to inform H that S will not do A .

(**S** refers to speaker; **H** refers to hearer; **A** refers to act)

According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, the speech act of refusal is one of the face threatening acts in communication. They are very complex in that negotiation of face is actualized by taking turns between the speaker and the hearer. While offers, invitations, suggestions and requests pose a threat to the hearer’s negative face by impeding their independence, refusals pose a threat to hearer’s positive face by implying that their wants are not desirable. In this case, the person who refuses encounters a specific challenge. In order to be

polite, he needs to save his negative face as well as mitigate the threat his refusal poses to his interlocutor's positive face. Consequently, in order to "save face", speakers employ various strategies to negotiate the interaction with their interlocutor (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 62-68).

Beebe et al. (1990) have categorized different components of refusal strategies, such as direct, indirect refusals and adjuncts. Direct refusals are precise and clear in meaning (e.g., no, I can't come tonight), while indirect refusals include mitigation devices to save the hearer's positive face. In addition, adjuncts are remarks used to mitigate refusals, but could not stand alone to function as a refusal. Table 2.3 presents some of these refusal strategies as well as the examples in English.

Table 2.3 Refusal Strategies Adapted from Beebe et al (1990)

Refusal Strategies	Examples
<i>Direct</i>	
Performative verbs	"I have to decline"
Negative ability	"I can't."
<i>Indirect</i>	
Reason/Explanation	"I have to study."
Regret	"I'm sorry."
Past acceptance	"If I would have known sooner, than I would be able to make it."
Repetition	"Friday?"
Postponement	"I will let you know."
Hedge	"I don't know."
<i>Adjuncts</i>	
Positive opinion	"That's a good idea, but..."
Gratitude	"Thank you for the invitation, but..."
Pause fillers	"Uhh/well/uhm"

In the current study, data was coded according to this scheme proposed by Beebe et al. (1990), and a few of the refusal strategies presented in Table 2.3 was stated.

2.5 Research on cross-cultural comparisons of the refusal speech act

An overwhelming number of studies in the field of pragmatics have focused on cross-cultural comparisons of two or more languages. Researchers have investigated the similarities and differences that might exist between the languages with the aim to understand how the differences might affect the actual usage of language in cross-cultural communication. With regard to the speech act of refusals, existing research on the refusal speech act provides us with a broad understanding of the use of refusal strategies in different languages and cultures. For the purpose of this study, this section reviews the studies that have explored the use of refusals between Turkish and American English speakers.

The number of studies on cross-cultural differences between Turkish and American English speakers has been very limited, but the findings have provided interesting insights into the realization of the speech act of refusals between the two cultural practices. For example, Bulut (2003) investigated performance of refusals between speakers of American English and Turkish, who were all undergraduate students at universities in the United States and in Turkey. To elicit the production of refusals, the study employed written Discourse Completion Task (DCT), in which participants wrote their production in response to scenarios. The analysis results revealed that American English speakers and Turkish speakers followed a very similar pattern in their choice of strategies; for example, excuse/reason/explanation, negative ability (e.g., direct “no”), attempt to persuade (e.g., self-defense, negative feeling) were the most frequently used strategies among the two groups. In addition, Moody (2011) examined and compared how Turkish and American English speakers refused requests, offers, suggestions, and invitations.

Similar to Bulut (2003), it employed written DCT to solicit the production of refusals. According to frequency analysis for refusal strategies for invitations, American English speakers preferred to use reasons, statements of regret (e.g., regret), and gratitude (e.g., thanks), while Turkish used reason with the most regularity. In addition, Turkish participants preferred more indirect refusal strategies (e.g., reason/explanation), whereas Americans used more direct strategies (e.g., negative ability).

2.6 Research on interlanguage development of the refusal speech act

Previous studies have shown that there are noticeable differences between American English speakers and second language (L2) learners when they produce refusals (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Beebe et al., 1990; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Hong, 2011; Tanck, 2002). Especially from a cross-cultural perspective, refusals can become a “sticking point” for language learners (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56). This is because at various proficiency levels, learners may employ the strategies from their first language (L1) as a primary strategy, which may result in negative pragmatic transfer leading to inappropriate utterances in L2 contexts, if the pragmatic feature of L2 is different from L1. This section reviews the studies that have investigated the use of refusal strategies of Turkish learners of English in different learning contexts (i.e., EFL vs. ESL settings).

2.6.1 Learners in EFL Settings

Bulut (2003) investigated interlanguage development of the refusal speech act of Turkish learners of English. In the study, the researcher used both written and oral DCT (i.e., participants complete a dialogue orally according to the scenario read by the researcher) to elicit production of refusals of L2 learners, American English speakers and Turkish speakers, who were all student participants. The results showed that the learner group performed differently according to

the instruments. In the written data, the learner group followed a similar order of preference for refusal strategies as American English speakers; that is, the order of reason/explanation, negative ability and attempt to persuade. In the oral data, however, the learner group was found to have followed the same order as Turkish speakers; that is, reason/explanation, attempt to persuade, and negative ability. Such differences might be explained by the use of written and oral data. It is often stated in the literature that written DCT as a data collection tool in the field of pragmatics has a number of disadvantages; participants write either stereotyped appropriate responses or what they think they should say, rather than what they actually say in the situation (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Boxer, 1996; Tran, 2004). In contrast, oral DCT in this study might have stimulated participants towards authentic performance of refusals. Likewise, the length of utterances differed between written and oral data. Findings showed that the learner group's refusal responses were longer than American English in written data. On the other hand, in the oral data American English group produced the longest responses. These findings seem to indicate that the mode of data (i.e., written or oral) makes a difference in measuring learners' speech act production.

While Bulut (2003) examined student participants' use of refusal strategies, Ekmekci (2015) explored the differences between native and non-native instructors' production of refusals. All the participants in the study were working as English instructors at a university in Turkey. Data were collected by written DCT adapted from Beebe et al. (1990), which included one scenario in which participants refused an invitation. Unlike Bulut (2003), neither group preferred to use statements of regret. In addition, non-native speakers employed statements of positive opinion as an adjunct (e.g., I'd love to but I need to finish a project for Wednesday) at a higher percentage, but the native speakers used more statements of alternative (e.g., can we go

another time?). Overall, the study concluded that even though non-native speakers used more varied strategies and produced relatively longer responses to refusal prompts, their production seemed to differ considerably from native speakers. Findings and discussion of this study is particularly relevant to the current study, because the results demonstrated that proficiency in L2 might not be an indicator of pragmatic competence. Since the non-native participants of the study were teachers of English, they were expected to demonstrate high linguistic competence in the language. However, the results did not support this assumption, which indicates that factors other than proficiency might play a role in the production of the speech act of refusal.

According to a more recent study, Capar (2014) investigated how Turkish learners of English used refusal strategies when they had to say ‘no’. The participants were 62 female students at a public school in Turkey. Their level of English Proficiency was represented by B1.2 level according to Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), equivalent of intermediate high according to the standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In addition to using written DCT to collect production data, the researcher conducted interviews with 10 participants who were randomly chosen after completing the DCT. This study found that stating reason and regret were the most preferred strategies by Turkish learners of English when they expressed refusals. Compared to English speakers, the learners used shorter and less varied strategies of refusals. According to the interviews conducted after the DCT, the author concluded that pragmatic transfer may have occurred because all of the 10 participants stated that they imagined the scenario took place in Turkey when they completed the DCT. This study provides us with more specific results on the use of refusal speech act, especially it is innovative in incorporating interviews to elicit participants’ perspectives on their production process.

2.6.2 Learners in ESL Settings

Situated in an ESL setting, Moody (2011) also compared production of refusal speech act between Turkish learners of English and American English speakers. Fourteen Turkish-English bilingual speakers who studied at a university in the United States participated in the study. In response to written DCT, the Turkish learners used reason and statement of regret as primary strategies, while American English speakers preferred negative ability and reasons. The higher percentage of regret in the L2 learners' data suggested negative pragmatic transfer. With regard to the content of reason/explanation, both native speakers of English and Turkish learners of English were found to be vague when they provided reasons/explanations within refusals.

Lastly, Sadler and Eroz (2002) examined English refusal speech acts produced by native speakers of American English and Turkish learners of English in order to determine if the participants' native language played a role in their production of refusals. Each group included 10 participants (5 females, 5 males) who were studying at a university in the United States. All participants were given written DCTs that were adapted from Beebe et al (1990), which included 12 situations that were designed to elicit refusals for requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. Analysis of the refusal strategies showed that there was no significant difference between learners and American English speakers; that is, learners refused invitations regardless of the hearer's status and women used explanations and reasons at a higher rate than men. However, in response to an equal-status case (dinner at a friend's house), 60% of the men preferred statement of regret (e.g., I'm sorry) as a strategy, while only 20% women did so. Unlike previous studies, researchers did not find negative pragmatic transfer to play a role in learners' production of refusal speech act in English. According to the researchers, one possible factor that led to this result was participants' high level of English proficiency, which seemed to

conflict with the findings of previous studies. They also stated that the results should not be considered conclusive because of relatively small number of participants, and stated a call for further research.

To summarize, while current literature has contributed to our understanding of the production of refusals of Turkish learners of English, it is not without problems. The review above shows that the majority of previous studies have employed written DCT as the main data collection method. Though the written DCT is easier to implement and collect data in a relatively short amount of time, many researchers, such as Rose (1994) and Golato (2013) have criticized the written DCT for being too artificial and dependent on the participants' idea of what they think they would say vs. what they would actually say in the same situation in real life may differ. In addition, Nelson et al. (2002) suggests that the use of written DCTs may be suitable for the gathering of pragmalinguistic data, but it may not be appropriate for such speech acts as refusals because they are so threatening to one's face.

Compared to the speech act of request, which is the most studied speech act in interlanguage pragmatics, Turkish-English refusals have received less attention. The majority of studies are limited to EFL contexts, where pragmatic input that second language learners get is scarce, in terms of both real life experience and formal instruction. Therefore, responding to the need for investigation on the speech act of refusal in ESL contexts, this study is aimed to contribute to the current literature with the purpose of exploring how Turkish learners of English communicate refusals in the United States with an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What type of refusal strategies are employed by the participants of the study overall?
2. Is there a preference for particular strategies by American English speakers and Turkish learners of English?

3. What factors might contribute to the preference for particular strategies?

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Participants

Twenty-four participants volunteered to participate in this study. Twelve of them were Turkish learners of English who was residing in the United States when taking part in this study, and the other 12 participants were native speakers of American English who do not speak Turkish.

The 12 Turkish learners of English all spoke Turkish as their first language. Their ages ranged from 22 to 35, mean being 27,75. Seven of them were female and five were male. Nine of them were graduate students enrolled at a U.S. Midwestern university, majoring in different areas such as industrial and mechanical engineering, economics, applied linguistics and technology, history, marriage and family therapy. Among the other three learners, one was an exchange undergraduate student, one was working in the United States after completed her master's degree, and the third was residing in the U.S. with her family.

Based on standardized English proficiency test (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) scores, all of the Turkish participants were advanced-level learners of English (i.e., TOEFL: above 105; IELTS: 7). They all had enrolled in formal English language courses in Turkey for a minimum of five years before coming to the United States. At the time of this study, their length of residence in the U.S. ranged from four months to 10 years. In addition, they reported that they frequently interacted with their advisors, friends, or roommates in English.

The 12 native speakers of American English were all students enrolled at the same university. Eight of them were graduate students, with one being an undergraduate. Their ages ranged from 22 to 28 with a mean of 24,4. Seven of them were female and five were male. They were majoring in second language acquisition or political science.

3.2 Instruments

Three types of instruments were used to elicit data in this study: a background survey to gather demographic information of the participants, an open role play to elicit spoken realization of the target speech act in a simulated context, and a semi-structured interview to obtain participants' reflections and perspectives on their performances, which helped the researcher understand possible reasons behind their linguistic choices.

The background survey included items to elicit participants' demographic information, such as age, gender, educational background, major, English proficiency test scores (if any applicable), years of formal instruction in English and informal contact with L2 English (e.g., time spent speaking English outside of classroom, school or university). The information was used to help further analyze the data in consideration of the possible effects of individual factors and learners' contact with the target language.

Considering time constraints and obstacles in eliciting naturalistic data from participants such as dependence of refusal speech act performance on other initiation (i.e., requests, invitations, suggestions, offers), this study employed an open role-play, which enforces participants online oral productions and considered as an approximate alternative to real life productions. An open role play is a simulation of social interaction with a predetermined scenario, which specifies roles and goals for actors who perform the role play, but the outcome of the interaction cannot be predetermined. One of the advantages of the open role play as a data elicitation tool is that it allows multiple turns in conversation with a beginning and a closing. It also enables participants to negotiate their interaction. Therefore, the elicited data can be considered to resemble real-life interaction. The role play in this study included one scenario, in which the participants would perform the role of a new student/colleague at a university and

refuse an invitation to a party from a fellow student/colleague, performed by the researcher. Before performing the role play, the participants were provided with role play cards with a short summary of the situation and the information to be included in the conversation. In addition, both roles were asked to converse about daily topics before the invitation and refusal, as this trend is observed in real-life dialogues, which will serve as a warm-up sequence. Then, when the researcher felt that the participant was reasonably relaxed in the role-play, the invitation was given to the participants with a hope that they would accept. As instructed in the role-play cards, the participants were to decline the invitation. Based on the participants' responses, the researcher would insist on the invitation in order to convince the participant in a positive manner. However, again, according to the role cards, the participants would choose to refuse, even though the researcher may sound convincing. At this point, the researcher would end the role play.

After the participants completed the role-play, they were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview in which participants were asked to reflect on their production process; that is, how they expressed refusals responding to the researcher's elicitation. The interview involved eight questions, asking the participants about their self-evaluation of the response, the reason of their choosing the specific refusal strategy, their prior experiences with English refusals, and whether they had received any instruction in English refusals. Even though the researcher designed these questions beforehand, additional follow up questions were also asked based on the participants' responses.

3.3 Procedures

The researcher first advertised the study to potential participants and then scheduled a meeting with each of the interested participants in a quiet lab. During the meeting, the participants were given sufficient time to read the consent form as well as to ask any questions

they may have had. After the participants signed the consent form, they were asked to fill out the background survey. Then the researcher instructed the participants to read the role play cards and encouraged them to think about the scenario and their roles in it as well as to take notes prior to acting out. After the participants were ready to start the role-play, the researcher conducted the role-play as the role-play cards instructed. The role-play lasted 3-5 minutes and were audio-recorded. Immediately after the role-play, the researcher conducted an interview with each participant, which was also audio-recorded. The interview lasted 10-30 minutes, depending on the participants' time commitment and answers.

3.4 Data Analysis

For the current study, a total of 24 refusal interactions were recorded and transcribed. The recordings were coded into different strategies according to the categorization (i.e., direct, indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals) proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) (see Appendix A). An example is provided below.

This Friday (repetition)? That sounds really nice (positive opinion), but I don't feel I'm in a good shape right now actually (reason). I don't know (hedge) in five days maybe I'll get better (future condition), but for now, I don't think I will make it (negative ability).

The sequence of refusal interactions was also examined according to the different functions of strategies (Felix-Brasdefer, 2004): (1) pre-refusals: strategies that initiate the refusal negotiation and prepare the addressee for an upcoming refusal (e.g., that sounds fun); (2) head acts: the minimal unit to realize refusals (e.g., I'm busy, I can't come); (3) post-refusals: strategies that follow the head act, emphasizing, justifying, mitigating, or concluding the refusal response (e.g., I'm sorry, thank you for the invitation). If a direct strategy (e.g., no, I can't) of a refusal was present, it was coded as the head act; otherwise, the first indirect strategy (e.g.,

reason/explanation, regret, repetition) in the sequence was coded as the head act of the refusal. The strategies used before or after the refusal head act were coded as pre- or post-refusals. In addition, each refusal interaction consisted of two episodes: first refusal in response to the initiating act by the researcher (i.e., invitation), followed by negotiation of the refusal in response to insistence by the researcher. After the researcher analyzed the data, descriptive statistics were used by calculating the frequency and percentage of strategy use, refusal sequence and content of explanations.

With regard to participants' interview responses, each participant was assigned a nickname of their choice to preserve anonymity. Content analysis was also conducted to learn about the participants' perspectives on cross-cultural differences and their possible influence on refusal realizations.

Chapter 4 - Results

This study examines and compares refusal strategies utilized by Turkish learners of English and speakers of American English in response to an invitation. According to the research questions, this section presents results with regard to the types of strategies employed by both groups overall, preference for particular strategies by each group of participants, and the factors that contributed to the preference for particular strategies.

4.1 Usage Frequency of Refusal Strategies

Research question 1 investigated the refusal strategies employed by Turkish learners of English (TLE) and American English (AE) speakers overall. According to the data, refusal strategies were classified into two types: (1) main strategies that can be used to realize the speech act of refusal, and (2) adjuncts which are strategies that could not stand alone as refusals, but modify the main strategy. Table 4.1 shows usage frequency of the main refusal strategies utilized by the two groups.

Table 4.1 Usage Frequency (%) of Refusal Strategies Used by TLE and AE

Strategies	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Reason/explanation	12	33.3	11	31.4
Negative ability	6	16.6	9	25.7
Regret	4	11.1	2	5.7
Hedge	3	8.3	1	2.8
Repetition	3	8.3	2	5.7
Postponement	2	5.5	3	8.5
Set condition for future	1	2.7	0	0
Request for information	1	2.7	3	8.5
Positive agreement	1	2.7	0	0
Possibility of future acceptance	1	2.7	1	2.8
Indefinite reply	1	2.7	2	5.7
Statement of alternative	1	2.7	0	0
Past acceptance	0	0	1	2.8
Sum =	36	100	35	100

As Table 4.1 shows, both speakers of American English and Turkish learners of English employed 13 different strategies. American speakers used a total of 35 strategies, whereas the TLE group employed a total of 36. Providing reason/explanation (e.g., I have other plans) for refusals was the most employed strategy for both groups overall; the TLE group used this strategy 33.3% of the time, while the AE group utilized it by 31.4%. The second most frequently used strategy was the direct refusal realized by negative ability (e.g., I can't). Even though American speakers seem to prefer to use this strategy with a higher frequency (25.7%), the TLE group also used this strategy as their second preferred by 16.6%. Another difference worthwhile to mention is that the TLE group expressed refusals using regret (e.g., I'm sorry) by 11.1% and

hedge (e.g., I am not sure) by 8.3%, which is slightly more than the American English speakers who used regret by 5.7% and hedge by 2.8%. With regard to the strategy of requesting for information (e.g., what time is the party?), American English speakers utilized it with a relatively higher frequency (8.5%) compared to Turkish learners of English (2.7%).

In addition to these strategies, both groups used adjuncts to mitigate their refusals, which are remarks that could not stand alone to function as a refusal (e.g., I'd love to, but...).

Table 4.2 Usage Frequency (%) of Adjuncts to Refusal Strategies

Adjuncts	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Positive opinion	11	61.1	8	42.1
Gratitude	3	16.6	2	10.5
Pause fillers	3	16.6	6	31.5
Willingness	1	5.5	0	0
Sum=	18	100	19	100

As Table 4.2 shows, both groups used three types of adjuncts (i.e., positive opinion, gratitude, pause fillers) to mitigate their refusals, but the adjunct of willingness (e.g., actually I would like to come) was only used by the TLE group with a low frequency. Among the three types of adjuncts used by both groups, the most utilized was positive opinion (e.g., that sounds fun), though it seems to be more preferred by L2 learners (61.1%) compared to American English speakers (42.1%). Pause fillers (e.g., uhh, well, uhm etc.), however, were utilized more by American speakers (31.5%) than Turkish learners of English (16.6%).

4.2 Sequence of refusal interactions

Sequence of refusal interactions was also examined according to the different functions of refusal strategies; that is, pre-refusals (i.e., initiating refusals), head acts (i.e., expressing

refusals) and post-refusals (i.e., mitigating/concluding refusals) with an aim to explore how strategies are organized in real-time conversations.

4.2.1 Head acts

Head acts represent the minimal unit in the sequence that communicates refusals. Head acts can be either realized as direct (e.g., I can't make it tonight) or indirect (e.g., I have an exam tomorrow). The data in this study reported three different types of strategies that were used as head acts. Negative ability (e.g., no/I can't) was categorized as direct, whereas reason/explanation and postponement (e.g., can I let you know later?) was coded as indirect. Table 4.3 shows the frequency and percentage of the three types of refusal head acts used by speakers in response to an invitation.

Table 4.3 Usage Frequency (%) of Strategies as Head Acts

Head acts	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Direct				
Negative ability	5	41.6	7	58.3
Performative verb	0	0	1	8.3
Direct subtotal=	5	41.6	8	66.6
Indirect				
Reason/explanation	7	58.3	3	25
Postponement	0	0	1	8.3
Indirect subtotal=	7	58.3	4	33.3

According to the percentages, American speakers predominantly preferred the direct strategies (66.6%) over indirect ones (33.3%). On the other hand, Turkish learners used indirect strategies more (58.3%), even though 41.6% of them utilized direct strategies as well. During the

interviews after the role play, many learners commented on their perceptions of saying “no” directly. Below is an example from one of the learners:

“I am a polite person, I cannot just say no without any reason...I just cannot say no, I have to give some explanations and say it’s just because of me that I cannot attend. “

Even though the inclination to state the reason instead of declining the invitation directly might result from individual characteristics, a considerable number of Turkish participants who commented on their preference to state the reason in their refusals might imply that their production of refusals was influenced by native cultural norms, which will be discussed in the discussion section.

4.2.2 Pre-refusals

Pre-refusals are composed of one or more strategies that initiate the sequence and prepare the hearer for the upcoming refusal. Table 4.4 shows the frequency and percentage of pre-refusal strategies utilized by both groups.

Table 4.4 Usage Frequency (%) of Strategies as Pre-refusals

Pre-refusals	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Positive opinion	9	40.9	7	31.8
Pause fillers	2	9.09	6	27.7
Hedge	2	9.09	0	0
Gratitude	2	9.09	1	4.5
Repetition	3	13.6	1	4.5
Reason/explanation	1	4.5	3	13.6
Request for information	1	4.5	3	13.6
Willingness	1	4.5	0	0
Indefinite reply	1	4.5	1	4.5
Sum=	22	100	22	100

Pre-refusals not only start negotiation of refusals, but also externally modify the head act within the refusal sequence. According to Table 4.4, even though the total number of pre-refusals employed by both groups was the same (i.e., 22), the use of particular type of pre-refusal varied between two groups.

The most common pre-refusal employed to initiate the negotiation for both groups was positive opinion. Example (1) illustrates the refusal interaction produced by a Turkish learner of English.

- (1) 1 *I would love to come and join you,* (Pre-refusal--Positive opinion)
2 *but you know, as I said I will go to Turkey, so before that I have to finish my*
proposal and projects, so I don't have time for party. (Head act--Explanation)

The TLE data revealed that 40.9% of the L2 learners preferred to use positive opinion to modify their head acts, which was also a routine utilized by American speakers at a similar rate in the data (31.8%). Pause fillers (e.g., well, uhm), however, were more frequent in American English data (27.7%) than the TLE data (9.09%).

4.2.3 Post-refusals

Post-refusals are strategies that are used to highlight, repeat, rationalize, soften, or end the refusal sequence. While some speakers choose to employ one or more strategies, the others may not utilize any post-refusals at all. Table 4.5 shows the frequency and percentage of post-refusals used by both groups.

Table 4.5 Usage Frequency (%) of Strategies as Post-refusals

Post-refusals	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Reason/explanation	3	18.7	5	31.2
Regret	4	25	2	12.5
Postponement	2	12.5	2	12.5
Positive opinion	2	12.5	1	6.2
Repetition	0	0	1	6.2
Hedge	0	0	1	
Possibility of future acceptance	1	6.2	1	6.2
Past acceptance	0	0	1	6.2
Statement of positive agreement	1	6.2	0	0
Statement of alternative	1	6.2	0	0
Indefinite reply	0	0	1	6.2
Gratitude	1	6.2	1	6.2
Pause fillers	1	6.2	0	0
Sum=	16	100	16	100

According to Table 4.5, the TLE group preferred to use regret by 25%, which is twice as much as those used by American speakers (12.5%). On the other hand, American speakers favored reason/explanation more (31.2%) to mitigate their refusals, in comparison to Turkish learners of English (18.7%). Another point that is not reflected in the table is that 33.3 % of the participants from each group did not employ any post-refusals at all.

Example (2) illustrates strategies produced by a Turkish learner of English in a post-refusal sequence.

(2) 3 ...so, I don't think that I can make it

(negative ability--head-act)

4 sorry

(regret--post-refusal)

5 *maybe next time* (possibility of future acceptance--post-refusal)

The most preferred post-refusal strategy for Turkish learners of English was regret (i.e., 25%), while American English speakers used reason/explanation to mitigate main refusals with the highest frequency (i.e., 31.2%), as illustrated by the example below.

(3) 1 *I just don't know if I can go* (negative ability--head-act)

2 *because I have a lot to do this weekend and I might be going to Kansas City*

(reason/explanation--post-refusal)

3 *I don't know* (hedge-post--refusal)

4.3 Content of explanations for refusals

Reason/explanation was the most frequently used refusal strategy by both groups (see Table 4.1); participants of the study expressed various explanations when they refused the invitation. According to Beebe et al. (1990), pragmatic transfer can occur not only in preference of strategies and sequential organization of refusals, but also in the content of strategies. Since the reason/explanation was the most preferred refusal strategy by both groups overall, the content of this strategy was analyzed in order to explore what type(s) of explanations were considered appropriate and the differences between Turkish learners of English and American English speakers. With regard to the content of explanations on the first episode (i.e., first conversational turn) of refusal negotiations, Table 4.6 shows the percentages of specific reasons expressed by both groups.

Table 4.6 First Episode Content of Explanations (%)

Content	TLE		AE	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Have exam(s)/paper(s)	4	33.3	2	16.6
Accompany girlfriend on an event	1	8.3	0	0
Will rest	2	16.6	1	8.3
Will work	0	0	1	8.3
Recently moved/unpacking	1	8.3	0	0
Go to another party	1	8.3	1	8.3
Specific explanations Sum=	9	75	5	41.6
Busy/Pre-planned activities (no specifics)	1	8.3	4	33.3
No reason	2	16.6	3	25
No specifics/reason Sum=	3	25	7	58.3
Total=	12	100	12	100

According to Table 4.6, the TLE group preferred to use having exams/papers as an excuse (33.3%), whereas American English speakers seemed to provide explanations that they were busy or had pre-planned activities without giving specific explanations. An intriguing point that was found in the data was that 16.6% of the Turkish participants and 25% of the American speakers chose not to provide any reasons in their refusals. With a closer examination of the data, it was found that the TLE group who did not provide specific reasons or no reasons at all in the first episode of their refusals, offered specific reasons upon insistence of the researcher, who worked as the conductor of the role-play. However, this was not the case with American

speakers; they consistently refused without giving any explanation to their interlocutor. Below is an example of the role play data from a Turkish learner of English.

(4) Turkish learner of English (B: Blair, R: Researcher)

B: 1 *Oh thank you so much for your invitation, but generally Fridays I have like a fixed schedule with my friends. I will try to stop by, but... Definitely I would love to, but I have other plans, I am sorry.*

[First episode refusal-no specifics]

R: 2 *Oh, too bad! It would be a lot more fun the more people we have, and by the way you don't have to stay too long! You can just stop by and say hi.*

[Researcher insisting on the invitation]

B: 3 *Yeah, but before that I am always helping a lady to take out her dogs because she is too old, 70 years old. She is living with the pets and I am helping her take care and then I have, I promised my friend to meet up. I really like to come and enjoy with you guys, but I am sorry I cannot make it.*

[second episode-specific explanations]

Initiating the refusal sequence for the first episode, the learner employed multiple strategies such as gratitude, future possibility etc., in addition to providing reason/explanation. Utilized as the refusal, she expressed the reason twice in the first episode, but the reason was not specifically explained. On the contrary, the participant elucidated and elaborated on the details of the reasons upon insistence from the conductor of the role play. Another noteworthy point of this interaction was the switch from an indirect head act in the first episode to a direct head act in the second episode upon insistence. She was able to mitigate the direct refusal with detailed

explanations to save the interlocutor's positive face, and emphasized the illocutionary force of the refusal to prevent further insistence, which posed a threat to her negative face.

As for the comparison, an example of refusal sequence in American speaker data is presented below.

(5) American English speaker (P: Participant, R: Researcher)

P: *That sounds, I mean, that sounds great, but I just, uhm, I actually feel overwhelmed right now and uhm I think I'm gonna have to decline. Sorry.*

[First episode-no specifics]

R: *Are you sure? It will be a lot more fun the more people we have, and you don't have to stay long!*

[Researcher insisting]

P: *That's really sweet, but I think especially not that week for sure, I mean, I have extra stuff going on my schedule, so I won't be able to make it. Thanks for the invitation though.*

[second episode-no specifics]

The American speaker began the refusal sequence with stating positive opinion (i.e., that sounds great), then expressed the reason without specifying any details. The first episode of the interaction continued with a direct head act (i.e., I'm gonna have to decline) and ended with regret (i.e., sorry) that mitigated the head act to save interlocutor's positive face. Upon insistence from the conductor of the role play, in the second episode, the speaker continued to refuse by providing reasons. Even though the second reason provided more explanation compared to that in the first episode, still, it was not as specific or detailed as the reason provided by the Turkish learner of English. Concerning the preference for head acts in the second episode, the American

English speaker consistently used direct head act with an acoustic emphasis on negation (i.e., I won't be able to make it) followed by gratitude to soften the illocutionary force of the refusal.

These two examples are representative of the rest of the data for both groups in the same case. In addition, the three learners who gave unspecific reasons/no reasons in the first episode of their refusals (see Table 4.6) chose to provide elaborate explanations in the second episode after insistence. However, out of the seven American speakers who were vague in their reasons initially, five did not prefer to specify their reasons further upon insistence.

John and Placebo who are L2 learners commented on this point during the interview sessions.

“Initially it is not appropriate that you say something like this but if the person insist on your participation, then I think it is natural response in order to express why you could not make it”

John

“When I am talking with people, I feel that I need to state the reason, if I just say “no”, it is kind of rude. Especially if you are my friend you should know the reason...If I say no, the relationship can be destroyed, I just want to keep my relationship with my friends...For example, my American friends, they say “no, I am sorry” and that’s it. Some of them give reasons, others not.”

Placebo

John and Placebo’s insightful remarks on the situation informs us more about how their interpretation of social and cultural conventions affected the linguistic choices they made, which might indicate differences between American and Turkish cultural norms regarding how to communicate refusals. The factors that might contribute to the preference for particular strategies will be further discussed in the discussion section.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This study examines the refusal strategies used by Turkish learners of English and American English speakers when they refused an invitation to a party from a new friend/colleague. The results show that the total number of refusal strategies used by both groups in the first episode of a refusal sequence were similar, but the distribution of the strategies varied between the two groups and a number of differences was discovered.

Regarding the use of main refusal strategies, reason/explanation was found to be the most frequently used strategy by both groups. This finding shows that Turkish learners of English performed in a native-like way by providing an excuse as a significant part of a refusal interaction. During the interview sessions, Blair, a Turkish learner of English commented on the value and importance of stating a reason in a refusal in real-life interactions: “I would definitely say like, ‘oh I’m sorry, I cannot make it, because of this reason’. It’s kind of rude if I don’t say that (the reason), I have to say it (refusal) politely.”

With further examination of the refusal head acts, American English speakers were found to employ direct strategies (i.e., I don’t think I can attend) at a higher frequency than Turkish learners of English, who were found to be more indirect (i.e., providing reasons) in their refusals. This finding is parallel to the study of Moody (2011), whose data suggested preference of indirectness by Turkish learners of English. Nonetheless, Turkish participants of the current study seemed to have been aware of the differences that exists between the ways Americans and Turkish prefer to refuse. According to Maestro, a Turkish participant of the current study, refusals constitute different feelings in both cultures. During the interview session he said: “I feel like in Turkish, when I say ‘no’ to people, it feels like I’m offending them. In American culture, I don’t feel the same way. People say ‘no’ easier than people in Turkey. There is definitely a

cultural difference.” His comments suggest that in Turkish culture, refusing directly might not be preferred because of the risk of offending the hearer. In addition, refusals are face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987), therefore Turkish participants chose to resort to explanations, instead of directly saying ‘no’, in an attempt to minimize the threat to hearers’ positive face. Another Turkish participant Malcolm X stated his dis-preference for direct refusals and said “...I don’t refuse people in a bad direct way, I give some good reasons to refuse them....” In summary, the reason why the majority of Turkish learners of English preferred indirectness in their main refusals is that they were following politeness norms of their native culture.

Participants also employed strategies that functioned as pre- and post-refusals, which emphasized or mitigated the head acts. Both groups used stating positive opinion (e.g., that sounds nice) most frequently as pre-refusals. However, considering pre- and post-refusals combined, American English speakers preferred reason/explanation with a higher percentage compared to Turkish learners of English. This corresponds to the previous finding related to the value of directness in refusal head acts in American culture. Even though Americans tend to express their refusals directly, they soften the force of the refusals by providing explanations to save their interlocutors’ face. To restate the findings, while Turkish learners of English preferred to use reason/explanation as their refusal head acts, American English speakers chose to use reason/explanation to modify their head acts with a higher percentage. Another difference found in the data was that Turkish learners of English used regret as a post-refusal strategy twice as much as American English speakers. This finding is in line with previous research such as Moody (2011), Capar (2014), Sadler and Eroz (2002). These studies all found that regret was expressed with a higher frequency by Turkish learners of English. Ashley, a Turkish participant in this study, referred to extensive use of regret in Turkish refusals during the interview and said:

“... as I talk in Turkish...I would say too much sorry, ‘I feel so bad, I’m so sorry, I really wanted to be there’...”. Her comments imply that learners seemed to have negatively transferred the strategies from their native language to express refusals in L2 English, which might explain the higher frequency of regret found in Turkish learners’ data.

With regard to content of reasons and explanations, the data show that it also varied across both groups. The most frequently used reason for communicating refusals by Turkish learners of English was related to academics (i.e., have exams/papers due). The same content was found in American English speakers’ data as well, however with a slightly lower percentage. The fact that the majority of the participants were graduate students at a university might explain the high frequency of use of academic reasons in the data. One Turkish participant, Tez ladka mentioned this point in his interview and said: “since I’m doing PhD, I have a lot of deadlines I have to catch up, paper deadlines, proposal deadlines, research meetings. I can always use this reason.”

According to the data, 58.3% of American English speakers either stated pre-planned activities without specific explanations, or did not give any reasons at all in their refusals. By contrast, such content of explanations was reflected in Turkish learners’ data by 25%. One of the Turkish participant Nesli stated: “American friends don’t explain very much. In our culture, Turkish people explain more, give you excuses, even if you did not ask.” The learners’ tendency to provide the reason according to Turkish cultural norms was found more salient when the conductor of the role play insisted on the invitation. All Turkish learners who did not provide specific reasons or no reasons at all at first, stated detailed explanations upon insistence. However, this trend was not reflected in American speakers’ data; each of the American participants continued to refuse without further explanation. In the interview sessions, many

Turkish participants described that the most significant difference between Turkish and American refusals was that Turkish people insist more on the invitation. One learner Blair expressed her observations as following: “In Turkey they will never stop asking why, so you have to have really good excuses. You have to explain more, and it is gonna hurt your friend or friendship, so you have to be careful about that.... (Americans) If you say I cannot make it, they will never ask why, so you can directly say ‘oh I’m sorry I cannot make it’ or ‘I’m tired I’m going home’. That’s normal for them, it’s not impolite...”. Another learner Malcolm X also shared his insights on the point: “Turkish people are more sensitive on this case, they take it (the refusal) personal and they insist more. If you refuse Turkish many times, probably you can break their hearts. Our people are emotional, Americans are very logical.” The learners’ interview responses indicate that Turkish learners of English still heavily relied on pragmatic conventions in Turkish culture to communicate refusals, though they were all advanced-level learners of English and many of them had been studying and living in the target language environment for many years.

To sum up, Turkish learners of English employed the strategy of reason/explanation with a native-like competency; the strategy appeared in learners’ data with almost the same frequency as it was in American speakers’ data. However, learners employed this strategy to communicate the refusal indirectly, while American English speakers preferred direct refusals and used reason/explanation either before or after to mitigate the force of the refusal. Interviews with L2 learners suggested that this trend may have rooted in differences in cultural norms. Similarly, the high frequency of use of regret by Turkish learners of English may be attributed to negative transfer as well. Another difference found in the data was that Turkish learners of English were more sensitive to insistence compared to American English speakers. All the Turkish participants

who refused the invitation without a specific explanation provided explicit reasons upon insistence. However, this trend was not observed with American English speakers; they continued to refuse without providing more specific explanations. The comments from Turkish learners of English suggested that in Turkish culture insistence is one of the politeness strategies employed by the interlocutor, and insistence is interpreted by the refuser as a cue to provide explicit reasons. As a result, Turkish learners of English were inclined to follow their native cultural norms.

The results showed that even though Turkish participants in this study were advanced-level learners, they still showed significant differences from native speakers in their refusal performances. This finding is parallel to the study by Ekmekci (2015). Despite the fact that the participants in his study were non-native teachers of English who demonstrated high linguistic competence in the language, their refusal performances differed considerably from native speakers of English. The results of Ekmekci (2015) can be attributed to the fact that the study was conducted in Turkey, where participants might not have had contact with native speakers in their daily lives, which resulted in negative pragmatic transfer from their L1. However, the effects of the type of context (i.e., EFL vs. ESL) seems void considering the fact that Moody (2011) and the current study were conducted in ESL settings, where L2 learners reported on abundance of opportunities to interact with American English speakers outside the classroom, but these studies reported non-target-like performances of learners. What it implies may be that regardless of the amount of input and practice opportunities L2 learners might have, pragmatic features may still be insalient to learners because the differences between the pragmatic norms of L1 and L2 usually are not as subtle. For instance, in the current study Turkish learners of English commented on overhearing native speakers' conversations to grasp the structures used in

refusals. In this way, L2 learners were able to identify that reason/explanation was an important strategy to include in the refusal sequence. However, they were less successful in noticing that American English speakers used reason/explanation to mitigate their direct refusals. As a consequence, Turkish participants negatively transferred their native cultural norms (i.e., use of reason/explanation as an indirect refusal) into the L2. With this point, the need for instruction on socio-pragmatic features of L2 in classroom becomes apparent, since simply immersing in the target culture is shown to be not sufficient.

The results of this study have a number of pedagogical implications for classroom teaching in both ESL and EFL settings. First, teaching materials can be designed according to socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic features of the target language to facilitate learners' pragmatic awareness. Second, metapragmatic discussion about L2 pragmatics contributes to learners' metapragmatic consciousness, and lead them to reflect upon their own choice of strategies according to specific contexts. Third, explicit instruction of cross-cultural differences regarding various speech acts can raise both teacher's and learners' awareness on factors that contribute to appropriate realizations of speech acts. Lastly, the role play scenario used in this study may be adopted to help learners practice how to offer invitation and express refusals in the classroom.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This study examines how Turkish learners of English express refusals in response to an invitation from a new friend/colleague. The results showed that even though Turkish participants were advanced-level learners, they still showed considerable differences from native speakers in their refusal performances.

Providing reason/explanation was found to be the most preferred strategy by both groups in the data, suggesting that the performance of Turkish learners of English concerning using this strategy as a part of the refusal sequence was native-like. With regard to head acts of refusals, the minimal part of the refusal sequence that communicates the refusal speech act, American speakers employed direct strategies (e.g., I can't come), while Turkish learners of English preferred indirect strategies (e.g., I have to attend another party). A possible explanation for this difference was revealed in the interview sessions with Turkish learners of English; many participants reported that in Turkish culture refusing directly is considered offensive, therefore Turkish people have the tendency to use indirect strategies. Speakers also used pre- and post-refusal strategies to either highlight or mitigate the main refusal. Most frequently used pre- and post-refusal strategies all together was found to be stating positive opinion (e.g., that sounds great) for both groups. In addition, Turkish learners of English employed regret (e.g., I'm sorry) with a higher percentage than American speakers of English. One learner expressed in the interviews that using regret in part of the refusals is a strategy commonly used in the Turkish language, which might explain the overuse of regret found in the data. Content of reason/explanation analysis showed that the majority of the American English speakers did not provide any reasons or used pre-planned activities as a reason/explanation for their refusals, but Turkish learners of English were found to be more specific in their reasons/explanations.

Furthermore, Turkish learners of English were sensitive to insistence; they tended to provide specific reasons/explanations when conductor of the role play insisted on the invitation.

American speakers of English, on the other hand, continued to refuse the invitation without specifying the reasons further.

The results indicated that advanced-level Turkish learners of English were inclined to negatively transfer their native language norms into their L2, even though they reported having ample opportunities to interact with American speakers of English in ESL contexts. This point clearly indicates that abundance of input and practice in the host culture is not sufficient to attain native-like pragmatic competence. From a pedagogical perspective, the results of this study demonstrates that instruction in pragmatic functions is needed for language learners to achieve appropriateness in refusals. In order to facilitate learners' pragmatic development, socio-pragmatic features of the target language can be included in teaching materials, instructions and discussions in the classroom.

This study contributes to our understanding of the drive behind the production of refusal speech act of Turkish learners of English. However, due to the relatively small number of participants recruited for the study, the results may still be rather tentative. In addition, researcher's identity as a Turkish learner of English herself might have affected refusal production of Turkish participants. In order to further explore the pragmatic development of Turkish learners of English, future research should include a larger sample with a longitudinal design to explore developmental patterns of learners' pragmatic competence.

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Appendix A - Classification of Refusal Strategies (Adapted from Beebe et al., 1990)

Direct Strategies

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Performative verbs | I have to decline. |
| 2. Negative ability | I cannot make it. |

Indirect Strategies

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Reason/explanation | I have other plans. |
| 2. Regret | I'm sorry. |
| 3. Hedge | I don't know/Let me think. |
| 4. Repetition | This Friday? |
| 5. Postponement | I will let you know? |
| 6. Set condition for future | In five days, maybe I'll get better. |
| 7. Request for information | What time is it? |
| 8. Possibility of future acceptance | Maybe next time. |
| 9. Indefinite reply | I'm not sure if I'll have time, but we'll see. |
| 10. Statement of alternative | Can you change the date? |
| 11. Past acceptance | If it was earlier, then maybe I would be able to... |

Adjuncts

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Positive Opinion | I would love to, but... |
| 2. Gratitude | Thank you for the invitation. |
| 3. Pause fillers | Well/uhm/oh |
| 4. Willingness | ...but <u>I would love to attend actually</u> , can I let you know later? |

Appendix B - Role Play Scenarios

Role-play participants:

You are a new student/colleague at the department and are sharing an office with other students/colleagues. Today, when you walk into the office, after some greetings one of your new friends/colleagues approaches and tells you about a dinner party he/she is planning on. After talking about some details, he/she invites you to his/her party. The social talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play informants below).

In the card for the role-play informants/participants:

- (In the office and after some greetings) Please respond to the question about a paper that was due on the weekend.
- Your new friend/colleague will invite you to his/her party. When you are invited, please refuse the invitation.
- Please continue to refuse, if your new friend/colleague insists on the invitation.

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life.

Role-play conductors:

You are a new student/colleague at the department and are sharing an office with other students/colleagues. Today, when you walk into the office, after some greetings one of your new friends/colleagues approaches and tells you about a dinner party he/she is planning on. After talking about some details, he/she invites you to his/her party. The social talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play informants below).

In the card for the role-play informants/participants:

- (In the office and after some greetings) Please respond to the question about a paper that was due on the weekend.
- Your new friend/colleague will invite you to his/her party. When you are invited, please refuse the invitation.
- Please continue to refuse, if your new friend/colleague insists on the invitation.

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life.

Appendix C - Background Questionnaire

Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female
3. Mark the highest educational level that you have completed

___ Associate's degree or vocational/technical school

___ Bachelor's degree

___ Graduate school (___ Master ___ PhD)

___ Other (specify) _____

4. Course of study at university (major): _____

Have you ever taken any proficiency tests in English (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, EPT, etc.)?

_____ If yes, what are your scores in four skills? Overall score: _____

Listening: _____ Reading: _____ Speaking: _____ Writing: _____

If no, please give a self-assessment of your current English proficiency. In the boxes below, rate your language ability in English. Use the following ratings: 0) Poor, 1) Good, 2) Very good, 3) Native/ nativelylike

Language	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
English				
Your self-evaluated proficiency in English (novice, intermediate, or advanced)				

5. How many years have you enrolled in English language courses? Please specify.

In Turkey: _____

In the U.S.: _____

In other countries: _____

Have you studied English outside of school or university (e.g., participate in conversation club,

private lessons, having language partners/tutors, etc.)? If yes, please specify.

What has your English study focused on (i.e., Grammar and grammar exercises, translation, conversation, reading, listening, speaking, writing skills)? Please specify.

6. How many hours a week do you speak English out of the class?

With whom do you speak English? _____

Purpose: _____

7. Please specify the time you spent in the United States and other English-speaking countries (if applicable) and the purpose(s) of your travel (e.g., studying, touring, etc.)

In the United States: _____

In other English-speaking countries (please specify country and amount of time):

8. Nickname: _____

(Select a Nickname to identify you in this study. Once we begin, you will be identified only by your nickname)