A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF REFUSAL TO INVITATIONS
BY ENGLISH AND PERSIAN NATIVE SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT
This study is an attempt to investigate English and Persian university students’ behaviors in refusing the invitation. To this end, 60 participants (30 English and 30 Persian speakers) took part in the study. They were administered an open ended questionnaire in the form of discourse completion task (DCT) in which they had to refuse the invitation of interlocutor. The findings were then analyzed according to taxonomy of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz’s (1990). The findings showed that the participants of the two groups tended to employ indirect strategies more than direct ones in refusing the invitation of interlocutors. Moreover, reason, regret and appreciation were the most frequently used strategies by both English and Persian native speakers. Overall, the results of the study revealed that cross-cultural communication between English and Persian native speakers in refusal to invitations is not problematic as there are more similarities than differences between these two groups in using the refusal strategies. It is hoped that this study could add to the body of knowledge about pragmatic behaviors in general and refusal to invitation in particular.

KEYWORDS: Pragmatics, Refusal to invitation, DCT, Persian, English.

REFERENCES


**Appendix A: refusal taxonomy**

**I. Direct**

1. Using performative verbs (I refuse, I turn down(your invitation)
2. Non performative statement
   a) No
   b) Negative willingness/ability (I can't, I won't, I don't)
II. Indirect

1. Statement of regret (I'm terribly sorry, I’m afraid, unfortunately…)

2. Wish (I wish I could help you)

3. Excuse, reason, explanation (I have an exam tomorrow, I’m not feeling well)

4. Statement of alternative
   a) I can do X instead of Y (I'd rather…, I'd prefer…)
   b) Why don't you do X instead of Y (Why don't you ask Sara?)

5. Set condition for future or past acceptance (If you have told me earlier, I could…)

6. Promise of future acceptance (I'll come next time, I promise …)

7. Statement of philosophy (You should be more careful.)

8. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
   a) Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (I won't be any fun to refuse an invitation)
   b) Guilt trip (waitress to customers who want to sit a while: I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.)
   c) Criticize the request/requester (You always miss the classes)
   d) Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request (Would you please record the lecture for me?)
   e) Let interlocutor off the hook (Don't worry, That's ok)
   f) Self-defense (I'm doing my best, I haven’t done anything wrong.)

9. Avoidance
   a) Nonverbal (Silence, Hesitation, Doing nothing, Physical departure)
   b) Verbal (Topic switch, Joke, Repetition of part of request (Sunday?), Postponement (I'll think about it, I will let you know), Hedge (I don't know, I'm not sure about it.)

III. Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (That's a good idea, Your suggestion is noted, I'd love to…)

2. Statement of empathy (I realize you are in a difficult situation.)
3. Pause fillers (uhh, well, oh, uhm)

4. Gratitude/ appreciation(I appreciate the offer)

5. Alerter (professor, my friend, Jack)

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8. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

a) Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (I won't be any fun tonight to refuse an invitation)

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

c) Criticize the request/requester (You always miss the classes)

d) Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request (Would you please record the lecture for me?)

e) Let interlocutor off the hook (Don't worry, That's ok)
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