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**Mitigation Devices in Refusals to Requests: A Case Study of Oran
Spoken Arabic**

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to:

My beloved grandmother

My parents

My husband Amine

My son Islam

My siblings Hayet, Fatima, Souhila, Abed and Sara

My nieces and nephews

My family in law

My supportive friends Nesrine, Soraya, and Maroua

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Abstract

The present study endeavours to socio-pragmatically probe request-refusal encounters in Oran dialect. It addresses a threefold aim: (1) to dissect refusal strategies speakers of Oran dialect implement in response to requests; (2) to unpack the mitigation devices they use, and (3) primarily to unravel the effect of gender, social distance, and rank of imposition on the selection of refusal strategies and mitigation devices. To this end, data were elicited in dyadic conversations using a Discourse completion Task (DCT) with 200 participants, and through role plays involving 32 participants, which were supplemented by a post-hoc retrospective written report. Insights from qualitative and quantitative data analysis pointed to a clear leaning towards directness, especially by females. A cogent argument for this linguistic behaviour is their commitment to being clear and frank, which may diminish politeness. As a corollary, participants resorted to verbosity, employing a multitude of internal downgraders, as well as pre and post external supportive moves in a bid to remedy the potential face damage. In this respect, social distance appeared to outweigh rank of imposition in determining the choice of refusal strategies and mitigation devices. Ultimately, the gender differences exhibited in our study, in rebuttal to stereotypical generalisations about females' verbal demeanour suggesting that women are more polite than men, undergird the view that politeness is an assessment made by interlocutors and is largely contingent on context and culture, not a simple matter of inherited gender traits.

Keywords: socio-pragmatics, refusals, Oran dialect, gender, directness, mitigation, internal downgraders, external supportive moves

List of Phonetic Symbols

Consonants			Examples	
Symbol	Description	Arabic symbol	Transliteration	Gloss
ʔ	A glottal stop	ء	/ʔæna/	I
b	Voiced bilabial stop	ب	/bəlɪxʊf/	quickly
t	Voiceless alveolar stop	ت	/təɪbeni/	you bother me
ʒ	Voiced palato-alveolar fricative	ج	/ʒæjjə/	upcoming
ħ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	ح	/ħæʒa/	something
x	Voiceless velar fricative	خ	/xa:wi/	empty
d	Voiced alveolar stop	د	/da:r/	house
r	Voiced alveolar trill	ر	/ra:ni/	I am
z	Voiced alveolar fricative	ز	/zu:ʒ/	two
s	Voiceless alveolar fricative	س	/smehli/	forgive me
ʃ	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	ش	/ʃbæb/	nice
sʕ	Voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative	ص	/sʕa:ħbi/	my friend
dʕ	Voiced alveolar emphatic stop	ض	/dʕarwæk/	now
tʕ	Voiceless alveolar emphatic stop	ط	/tʕləb/	He requested
ʕ	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	ع	/ʕandi/	I have
ɣ	Voiced velar fricative	غ	/ɣadwa/	tomorrow
f	Voiceless labio-dental fricative	ف	/fi/	in
q	Voiceless uvular stop	ق	/qi:mtæk/	your value
g	Voiced velar stop	ك	/gæʕ/	all
k	Voiceless velar stop	ك	/kbi:ra/	big
l	Voiced alveolar lateral	ل	/li:l/	night
m	Voiced bilabial nasal	م	/mʊʃki/	problem
n	Voiced alveolar nasal	ن	/nrɔ:ħb/	We go
h	Voiceless glottal fricative	ه	/hbælti/	You are crazy
w	Voiced labio-velar semi-vowel	و	/wa:h/	yes
j	Voiced palatal semi-vowel	ي	/jla/	if

Vowels	Examples	
Symbol	Transliteration	Gloss
a:	/ʔa:di/	will
a	/hna/	here
æ	/bæʃ/	in order to
ʊ	/kol/	every
u:	/xu:ja/	My brother
ɒ	/nrɔ:ħb/	We go
ɔ:	/rɔ:ħi/	go
ɪ	nrɪvi:zi	I revise

i:	/tʰwi:la/	long
i	/nti/	You
e	/ʃfems/	sun
ə	/ bəzzæf /	many

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

D: Distance

DCT: Discourse Completion Task

DHA: Direct Head Act

F: Female

FTA: Face Threatening Act

IHA: Indirect Head Act

M: Male

Neg: Negative

OSA: Oran Spoken Arabic

PSS: Percieved Situational Seriousness

R: Rank of imposition

St: Situation

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

When we speak, we are not merely emitting words; we are acting upon them, going beyond the structural aspects of language. That is, the sound enunciated means something; the speaker means something; the hearer comprehends the purport of what is said (Searle, 1969); this epitomises quintessentially the way communication operates in human day-to-day social encounters. Put differently, speakers do not solely articulate utterances combining linguistic forms and structures; they actively enact actions through those utterances (Yule, 1996). In this vein, linguists, communication theorists, discourse analysts and anthropologists all agree that language fulfils myriad functions. Strictly speaking, any communication will have a mixture of two indispensable functions, including transactional function and interactional function, also termed *relational* dimension of verbal communication (Brown & Yule, 1983). In the former type, interlocutors use their linguistic abilities to transmit factual information. In the latter type, interactants use language to express social relations, i.e., exhibit solidarity and maintain social cohesion.

On the outer edge of the interactional function lies what is known as ‘phatic communion’ that includes exchanging small talk topics like inquiries about health, weather, and local events to break the ice for a conversation. Such kind of talks fosters interpersonal bonds among people. As it turned out, the use of language fulfils, to some extent, the two functions in tandem (Scollon, & Scollon, 2001).

One of the functions that often come up in everyday communication is speech acts (Austin, 1975) such as apologies, invitations, requests, and refusals. In this regard, a further subtle distinction is drawn between the *transactional* function of a speech act and its *interactional* function. The latter aspect of communication affects both *what* is said by performing expressive speech acts in a bid to reach an interactional effect, and *how* it is said, including the choice of such communicative strategies as endearment address terms and honorifics in order to demonstrate a certain form of interpersonal rapport.

Refusal speech act is a ubiquitous social phenomenon in all languages and cultures. Yet, the way speakers realise it differs within and even between cultures; some refusers favour an outright 'no', whilst others circumvent saying 'no' and opt for other more tactful alternatives instead. That is, the levels of directness and indirectness are eminently constrained by cultural conventions which indubitably affect language use. In this case, failure to enact a proper refusal may precipitate repercussions for interactants such as risking social bonds. However, when performed befittingly, refusals primarily serve to fulfil an interpersonal or interactional function of language.

Refusals invariably entail some degree of imposition on recipients. Due to the potential risk to both face (Goffman, 1967) and social bonds, refusers tend sometimes to use strategies to cushion the imminent imposition of their act. Hence, deciding an appropriate reaction to requests is an interesting case of politeness dilemma. Compliance may imperil the requestee's negative face and thus go against their desire not to be disturbed inasmuch it inflicts a burden on them. Declination, on the contrary, may jeopardise the requester's positive face. In either case, interlocutors, oftentimes, attempt to assuage any potential harm to one's face with recourse to a set of mitigation devices (Fraser, 1980) which fall within the ambit of either involvement or independence politeness strategies, perhaps both, depending on the contextual setting. Therefore, in every social encounter the interactants' core concern will be to safeguard their own face as well as that of their collocutors. As a corollary, there is "no faceless communication." (Scollon & Scollon, 2001, p. 48), i.e., there is no communication without face being an issue. Again, approaches to palliating this issue might differ widely across cultures.

By using mitigators, speakers seek principally to smooth the functioning of the transaction and oil its wheels by paying attention to the relational aspect using a multiplicity of politeness devices. Indeed, one of the core aspects in interactional language studies, politeness is conceived as a universal phenomenon, albeit targeted differently across cultures.

Succinctly, flat out refusals may jeopardise interactants' relationships whereas implicit refusals may fall short in transmitting their intended meaning. Accordingly, pragmatic discretion is called for and facework is inevitable.

Refusal speech act, as an omnipresent social phenomenon, has been the focus of an immense amount of research, including intra-lingual, cross-cultural, methodological comparisons, and interlanguage studies from different perspectives and in various settings and cultures. Despite the vast literature on refusals, there remains a paucity of Arabic-language research on this subject nonetheless, particularly in Algerian Arabic. In an effort to add to the existing body of research, this intra-lingual study seeks to examine the use of refusal strategies, internal smoothers, and external supportive moves when performing refusals to requests in Oran speech community from a socio-pragmatic standpoint in line with three sociolinguistic variables, namely gender, social distance, and weight of imposition.

Specifically, the present study tackles refusals within Oran, a vibrant coastal city in the West of Algeria, from a socio-pragmatic standpoint. Oran exhibits a compelling sociolinguistic landscape shaped by its multifaceted history, a richly diverse populace, and unique cultural influence. Its sociolinguistic profile encompasses Modern Standard Arabic, a modernised iteration of Classical Arabic, which serves as the primary language in key formal settings such as religious discourse, formal writing, education, media, and governmental affairs; Berber, the indigenous language of the Berber community in Oran; French, the language of scientific instruction often used in formal settings; and Algerian Arabic, the widely spoken mother tongue in Algeria and the vernacular variety used in everyday interaction, which incorporates influential aspects of various languages, and Oran dialect, as one of its regional varieties, is no exception. This local form showcases core influences from Arabic, Berber, French and even Spanish. Hence, Oran's colonial history had an indelible impact on language and culture. This impact appears in the way people perform various actions in their daily encounters such as making requests, congratulating, thanking, and so forth. Probing the impact of gender, social

distance, and rank of imposition on the way speakers of Oran Spoken Arabic (OSA) perform refusals to requests in recurrent situations is at the crux of the study at hand.

In a bid to achieve the end sought, the present research strives to provide insights into the following questions:

1. What refusal strategies do speakers of OSA opt for when making refusals to requests?
2. How do Oran Arabic speakers mitigate the potential threat to face in their request-refusal encounters?
3. To what extent do the social variables of gender, social distance, and weight of imposition affect the choice of refusal head acts, internal downgraders, and external supportive moves?

Focusing on the socio-pragmatics of refusals in one-to-one interactions, the first question aims at analysing the way speakers realise and structure their refusal acts. The second questions casts light on facework attempting to cover all types of mitigation devices utilised by participants. The third question seeks to explore the pragmatic aspects of refusal speech act in four different situations. That is, it examines whether respondents' choice of refusal strategies and the accompanying facework are more oriented towards deference politeness system or towards solidarity politeness system.

As tentative responses to the above questions, the ensuing hypotheses are suggested:

1. We anticipate that speaker' selection of direct and indirect refusal strategies depends primarily on their familiarity with the requester.
2. We hypothesise that speakers of OSA adopt various modification techniques based on the context in which the request-refusal interactions take place.
3. We also foresee that the selection of refusal strategies and mitigation devices in response to requests in OSA are variably influenced by the social distance between interactants, as well as by the weight of imposition on the addressee. However, we predict that gender might not be of substantial significance.

The fact that failure to appropriately deliver refusal, which is a politeness-sensitive speech act, can lead to social disharmony and give rise to misunderstandings among interlocutors gave the researcher the impetus to look after the remedial strategies that might be used to soften the anticipated offence of refusals to requests. Therefore, it is our ultimate purpose, in this dissertation, to set up a possible taxonomy of such mitigators that accompany refusals and scrutinise the contextual factors that are likely to affect speakers' linguistic choices.

The present thesis comprises five chapters. Each chapter ends with a concluding paragraph which distils its main elements. The inaugural chapter throws some light on the main theories with which this study started off. It is organised around subtopics intertwined with the pivotal essence of the study, namely pragmatics, socio-pragmatics, conversation analysis, speech act theory, politeness, and mitigation.

The second chapter provides a thorough examination of relevant literature on the research topic, synthesising studies that probed refusals in both Arabic and non-Arabic communities besides studies that explored mitigation, pinpointing gaps that the current study seeks to fill.

The third chapter demarcates the trajectory along which our study is oriented, accentuating the data collection techniques, the sample, and the process of data gathering. The chapter proceeds with delineating a categorisation scheme for both refusal strategies and mitigation devices that we drew upon for analysing data qualitatively. It also elucidates the statistical tests employed for analysing the DCT as well as the role-play data quantitatively.

The fourth chapter is devoted to enunciate the various types of refusals and mitigators that have been reported in the DCT data backed up by relevant illustrations, using tables and figures where appropriate. It also unravels the effect of social distance, rank of imposition as well as gender on the selection of refusal strategies and mitigation devices. The qualitative and quantitative findings are subsequently discussed within the same chapter, drawing connections with existing literature.

The fifth chapter, the final one, is chiefly allotted to a meticulous qualitative and quantitative depiction of the role-play interactions including both the refusal and attenuation devices used in all stages of the request-refusal sequences across two politeness systems. This chapter moves on to outline the key findings of the retrospective written reports. Post-analysis, there is a thorough discussion of the main outcomes in connection with previous research.

Eventually, the present study rounds off by drawing conclusions premised on the main findings. It revisits the research objectives and attempts to furnish in-depth responses to the research questions articulated earlier, showing how they have been addressed throughout the course of this study. The concluding section acknowledges the key caveats of the study and ultimately suggests forward-thinking recommendations for future research endeavours deemed appropriate from the results obtained. The proposed suggestions are chiefly geared towards the non-verbal and prosodic aspects of refusals, along with the data collection procedure that needs closer interrogation.

CHAPTER ONE:
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1.1 Introduction

In order to explore refusals to requests from a socio-pragmatic perspective, it is of paramount importance to take into account both theoretical and empirical studies within pertinent research arenas. The current chapter maps out the theoretical underpinnings of our work, demystifying some of the concepts that will keep recurring throughout the thesis and the main theories from which this research endeavour departs.

The opening section of this chapter offers a cursory glance at pragmatics as theory of language use, and some of its classic pillars, namely context, conversational implicature, speech act theory, and conversation analysis. The second section casts light on the socio-pragmatic aspect of language with a concerted attention given to politeness and mitigation.

1.2 Pragmatics

The foundation stone of the burgeoning field of pragmatics is irrefutably Grice's distinction (1957) between speaker's meaning and sentence meaning, alternatively labelled 'pragmatic meaning' and 'semantic meaning', respectively. Drawing sharp demarcations between these two meanings was the topic that stirred up a great deal of scholarly focus within pragmatics since its inception in the mid-20th century.

Defining "pragmatics" is itself one of the hotly debated issues in pragmatics, giving rise to discrepant views. Endeavours to define pragmatics remarkably preoccupied pragmatists in the 1970s and 1980s, without achieving a satisfactory solution. It has typically been characterised as an approach to studying how language is produced and interpreted with respect to contextual features, as opposed to semantics that pays attention to the literal denotative meaning of words. That is to say, the focal point of both semantics and pragmatics is the concept of meaning, but whereas semantic meaning is constant, context-insensitive and context invariant, pragmatic meaning is conventionally context-sensitive and fluctuates in distinct settings.

In this regard, Levinson (1983) reckoned that pragmatics accounts for non-literal meanings, foregrounding “context” as a pivotal element in pragmatics. It is also perceived as the interactive dimension of language study (Mey, 1993). An ostensive and more specific definition that offers a more user-centred view of pragmatics has been put forth by Crystal (1997) which postulates that pragmatics studies language in accordance with the users’ standpoint, their linguistic choices, the impediments they face in their social encounters as well as the impact of their language use on shaping the interaction between communicators. Further, Thomas (1995) succinctly defined it, as the exploration of how meaning is constructed and interpreted within interaction, emphasising the impact of spoken and written expressions on the interlocutors involved. Put differently, pragmatics emerges from the linguistic choices made by the speaker or the writer to transmit a specific illocutionary force or achieve a particular perlocutionary effect on the recipient. Such choices can be constrained by a combination of both universal conventions and context-dependent sociocultural norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In essence, all the aforesaid definitions consistently accentuate the interactive nature of pragmatics and the significance of context in shaping meaning.

1.3 Context

Context, as a central element in pragmatics, was defined by Leech (1983) as the background knowledge that is shared by the interlocutors and helps the hearer interpret the speaker’s intended meaning, i.e., the context of an encounter influences our interpretation and understanding of what we typically read and hear (Yule, 2006). Context is, therefore, a prerequisite for analysing language in its practical use as it steers meaning construction and interpretation.-

Besides context, other aspects of speech situation have been singled out, including addressers or addressees, the purpose(s) of an utterance, and the utterance as an enactment of a performative speech act (Leech, 1983). Accordingly, reference to one or more of these aspects will be a criterion of a pragmatic phenomenon.

One of the foremost topics in linguistic pragmatics revolves around context-dependent meaning. Two are of paramount importance. The first type is labelled as conversational implicature; the second is called deixis.

The former refers to the speaker's intended meaning which is tacitly conveyed rather than explicitly expressed. Consider Example (1) below in which Bill's reply implies that he cannot comply with the invitation as he is busy, even though he does not straightforwardly say that.

(1) Peter: Coming down to the [cinema] tonight?

Bill: I've got to finish a piece of work.

(Cruse, 2006, p. 3)

The latter, which is one of the classical examples of pragmatic phenomena, concerns the mechanism whereby different items, places, and times in various contexts are designated. The entity that is referred to by means of deixis is known as a *reference* (Cruse, 2006). Such indexical expressions as *we*, *you*, *over there*, and *last week* reference a speaker, an addressee, place, and time, respectively. The object referred to in a certain speech situation is, in effect, retrieved with recourse to the contextually available information.

More specifically, pragmatics centres on how meaning is shaped by context, analysing aspects of meaning in relation to awareness of the physical and social environment, the socio-psychological dynamics that impact communication in addition to the knowledge of the situational backdrop of spoken or written words as contended by Peccei (1999). In other words, pragmatics explores discourse in all its forms, paying particular attention to its meaning in interaction.

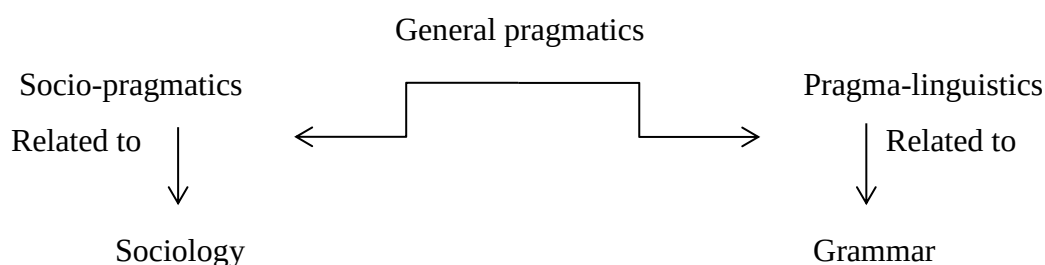
1.4 Socio-Pragmatics

A distinction between the two dimensions of pragmatics, namely pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics has been proposed by Leech (1983). Pragma-linguistics pertains to pragmatics that focuses on linguistic features, particularly grammar whereas socio-pragmatics refers to

pragmatics that studies the use of language in relation to sociology. It is “the sociological interface of pragmatics” Leech (1983, p. 10). This distinction is exemplified in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1

Model of General Pragmatics and its sub-divisions



Note. The main sub-divisions of pragmatics. Adapted from *Principles of Pragmatics* (p.11), by G. Leech, 1983, Longman. Copyright 1983 by Taylor & Francis.

In other words, from a socio-cultural standpoint, pragmatics delves into language use, analysing how social behaviour principles, such as social distance, are articulated. In socio-pragmatic studies, both linguistic and sociological categories are to be contrasted. Hence, studying linguistic forms and their functions in the given social context is the main concern of socio-pragmatics.

In short, the actual performance of pragmatic language use is principally influenced by various contextual elements, making it a very complex process. So, a careful design of the techniques that draw out participants’ realisation or interpretation of a particular pragmatic feature is of paramount salience (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011).

Additionally, one or more of the following social factors, namely the participants, setting, topic, and function influence language choice taking into account four staple dimensions, including a relational distance scale, a social status scale, a familiarity scale, referential and affective functional scales related to the purpose of interaction (Holmes ,1992). These dimensions alongside the foregoing social factors, Holmes averred, shape an effective framework for exploring language within its social setting. The current study examines refusals from both pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics perspectives.

Another topic covered by pragmatics is conversation analysis which primarily deals with the way a naturally occurring conversation is structured, its sequential organisation, and how participants co-operatively handle it (Swann et al., 2004). At this juncture, it is crucial to confer an ephemeral scrutiny of some notions in conversation analysis that are tethered to the topic of refusals.

1.5 Communicative Competence

The notion of communicative competence, originally set forth by Hymes in 1962 (as cited in Hymes, 1972), is conceived as a counter to the limited Chomskyan concept of linguistic competence, demonstrating the transition from studying language as an isolated system to considering it as part of communication.

Hymes' (1972) work emphasised the requirement to consider social setting, including extra-linguistic and sociocultural attributes, for using and understanding language appropriately in any given situation not a mere knowledge of the language codes. In this sense, communicative competence incorporates structural, social, cultural and functional knowledge as prerequisites in verbal interactions (Kaburise, 2011).

A central concept to conversation analysis, in particular to Hymes' (1972) communicative competence rules which are of direct relevance to contextual meaning, is speech event. The latter, being the basic feature of verbal communication in speech communities as pointed out by Gumperz and Hymes (1972), is defined as a culturally organised communicative exchange (Swann et al., 2004).

In his classic study of utterances, Dell Hymes (1972) pinpointed an ethnographic framework for analysing language accurately in distinct social contexts. This model encompasses eight basic contextual variables, which are the components of any speech event, encapsulated by the acronym SPEAKING, which stands for:

1. S = Setting and Scene: include the physical circumstances in addition to the psychological setting

2. P = Participants: involve the speaker and the listener as well as the audience members involved in an interaction
3. E = Ends: are the purposes and outcomes of an interaction
4. A = Act sequence: includes both the form and the the content of an utterance
5. K= Key: refers to the tone and manner of a speech act (formal , informal)
6. I = Instrumentalities: includes the language used and to the mode of interaction, whether it is spoken or written
7. N = Norms: include both the rules of interaction as well as interpretation of the speech
8. G = Genre: refers to the different types of spoken and written texts (interview, lecture, debate, advertisements, school essays)

Hymes' (1972) speaking model suggests a comprehensive tool to look at the way refusals are affected by a variety of contextual elements. It also helps in understanding and justifying people's orientation towards directness; indirectness, formality or informality, and how cultural norms and social dynamics shape the way refusals are performed and interpreted.

1.5.1 Adjacency Pair

One of the major concerns within conversation analysis is the sequential organisation of a conversation rather than considering utterances in isolation. That is, the focal point in the analysis of a turn-taking sequence, a series of consecutive turns, is adjacency pair. This term denotes a pair of words in which an initially produced utterance can anticipate and even determine the content of the subsequent utterance.

Some examples of adjacency pairs include question-answer, greeting-greeting, invitation-acceptance, offer-acceptance, and request-refusal and so on. The following are the general features of adjacency pairs as categorised by Schegloff and Sacks (1973):

- a. They encompass two utterances, namely a first-pair part and a second pair part.
- b. Emitted by different speakers
- c. Adjacently placed; that is, the second utterance immediately follows the first utterance

- d. The first-pair part determines what can take place as a second-pair part.
- e. The second utterance is conditionally relevant to the first.

The features stipulated above are not rigid and invariable, however. For example, the first and second parts of a pair are sometimes not closely adjacent. They can be separated by intervening side sequences (Jefferson, 1972), also referred to as insertion sequences (Schegloff, 2007). Below is an illustration of an opening question and its answer which have been disrupted by another question-answer pair (Renkema, 2004, p.166)

- (2) A. Can you tell me how to get to the mall?
- B. Do you see that big neon sign?
- A. Yes,
- B. You have to make a left turn there.

As can be seen in Example (2) above, instead of uttering the second part of the pair, B, at Turn 2, starts a side sequence by emitting the first utterance of a second adjacency pair which appeared in the form of a question. This insertion sequence has been ended by A providing an answer to B in Turn 3. The second part of the initial pair is eventually given by B in Turn 4. Therefore, a sequence can be expanded with one or more inserted sequences separating the original adjacency pair (Schegloff, 2007). Adjacency pairs can even be embedded within several sequence expansions. Hence, the two components of the initial adjacency pair might be significantly distant (Holtgraves, 2002).

In this regard, Holtgraves (2002) highlighted a similarity to Grice's (1975) framework for conversational implicature. His theory stipulates that violating a conversational maxim results in an inferred meaning. Likewise, failure to anticipate the second part of an adjacency pair will draw out an inference about the person who could not perform the anticipated second-pair part.

As it was just pointed out, an adjacency pair is basically a two-turn conversational sequence in which the second-pair part is fiercely relevant to the first-pair part, and immediately occurs next, in an adjacent position. An adjacency pair may have only one choice for the second-pair

part such as question-answer adjacency pairs; others may have two relevant options such as request-compliance or- refusal. Within the latter type of adjacency pairs, one response is typically preferred (compliance) and the other dispreferred (refusal) as categorised by conversation analysts (Hampel, 2005). Both preferred and dispreferred responses for some type of adjacency pairs are presented in Table. 1.1

Table 1.1

Examples of Preferred and Dispreferred Second Pair Parts of Adjacency Pairs

First-pair Part	Second-pair Part	
	Preferred	dispreferred
Question	Answer	Partial answer or Non-answer
Request	Compliance	Refusal
Invitation	Acceptance	Declination
Offer	Acceptance	Refusal

Under the premise of markedness, preferred turns are categorised as unmarked responses performed simply without elaboration unlike their dispreferred counterparts which are marked in various ways (Levinson, 1983). They may be delayed (Hampel, 2005), include an explanation (Antaki, 1994), and can even be preceded by reluctance displays (Pomerantz, 1984). Presented below are pairs of invitations and their responses:

(3) a. why don't you come up and see me sometimes?

b. I would like to.

(4) a. Uh if you'd care to come over and visit a little while this morning then I'll give you a cup of coffee.

b. hehh. Well that's awfully sweet of you; I don't think I can make it this morning. hh
huhm I'm running an ad in the paper and-and uh I have to stay near the phone.

(Atkinson & Drew, 1979, p. 58)

In Extract (3), the preferred response (acceptance) is immediate whereas the dispreferred response (refusal) in (4) is delayed by means of hesitators (hehh). Example (4) also witnessed the incorporation of other prefaces in dispreferred turns, including the insertion of the discourse

marker (well), and expressing appreciation (that's awfully sweet of you). Other frequent prefaces encompass token agreement ("yes, but...") when expressing disagreement and apologies when declining an invitation or refusing a request, for instance. Customarily, as can be seen in (4) above and (5) below, the speaker producing a dispreferred turn can put forth an account to explicate their choice of a dispreferred format over a preferred one. Also, preferred and dispreferred turns may defer in terms of indirectness. The former tends to be direct whereas the latter tend to be indirect. Example (5) below exemplifies the use of a delay (oh), appreciation (thanks), preface (well), indirectness (let me see), and account (I have a lot of dresses).

(5) B. she says you might want that dress I bought, I don't know whether you do.

A. Oh thanks (well), let me see I really have lots of dresses.

(Levinson, 1983, p.335)

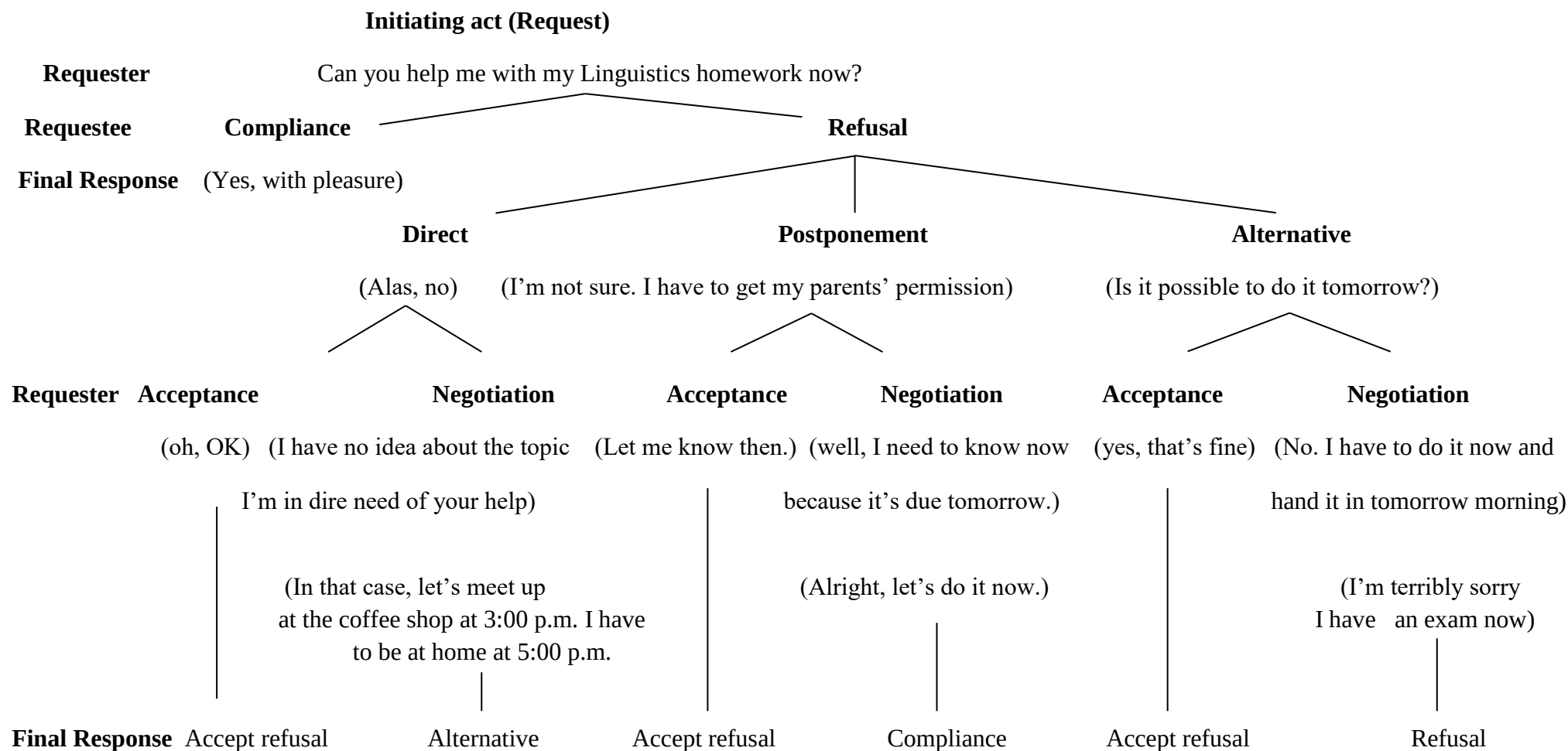
The inclusion of such features gives the means for the performer of the first-pair part to recognise that an unfavourable response is underway and therefore re-structure or revisit his utterance accordingly before the second-pair part is completed. It seems noticeably, therefore, that reference organisation links up quite nicely to the notion of face. In other words, dispreferred responses are marked by means of such mitigation devices as prefaces and expressions of agreement which resemble politeness strategies as surmised by, among others, Atkinson and Heritage (1984); Pomerantz (1984); Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

1.5.2 Dispreferred Responses: Refusals

From a conversation analytic point of view, as was explicated above, refusals are categorised as dispreferred second-pair parts which are commonly framed with mitigation strategies surrounding the head act in a conversational turn. Refusals are characterised by intricate structural patterns and pragmatically complex linguistic action thusly. This complexity is embodied in the different scenarios that might spring up in a request-refusal interaction as exhibited in Figure 1.2 overleaf.

Figure 1.2

Responses in a Request-Refusal Interaction Involving Negotiation



Note. This is an example of the possible responses in a refusal to request encounter. Adapted from *Interlanguage refusals: A cross-sectional study of Thai EFL learners' refusals in English* (p. 21), by C. Kasemsin, 2006. The University of Leeds.

The diagram showcases that requests can elicit responses of either compliance or refusal. The latter can be expressed directly by means of ‘No’ or indirectly via proposing an alternative or postponement, for instance. In either case, the refusal can either be accepted by the requester or delayed by means of negotiation. Straightforwardly, the diagram highlights negotiation as a staple feature of request-refusal interactions. In other words, a refusal can instigate a further request attempt or persistence stage which results in negotiation leading to different final outcomes.

Complexity of refusal speech act can also be demonstrated at the lexico-grammatical level as it encompasses lexical mitigators such as terms of address alongside syntactic mitigators like interrogatives, if clause, modals, and modifiers as posited by Nofsinger (1991)

Another potential outcome is abandonment of the conversation, as the requester may opt for ending the interaction without reaching a resolution with the refuser. Overall, if the requester does not accept the requestee’s refusal, they may choose to engage in negotiation using suitable insistence strategies or abandon the conversation altogether. However, the ultimate outcome of the interaction might or might not be mutually agreeable to both parties involved. Mutual satisfaction varies significantly across different cultures.

Insofar as politeness theory is concerned, refusals can be performed either baldly on record without redressives (a blatant ‘No’) or with redress by way of positive or negative politeness strategies. The employment of hesitation, for example, signals the speaker’s reluctance to carry out the face threatening act (henceforth, FTA) such as refusals. Other dispreferred markers like pre-external apologies are considered negative politeness strategies communicating speaker’s intention not to impinge on the interlocutor’s negative face and thereby remedy the impingement whereas appreciative tokens like “I would love to, but...” are regarded as face-saving strategies which serve to avoid disagreement (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Carrying out refusals cooperatively is thus a pragmatic challenge for language users (Kasernsin, 2006).

1.5.3 Episodes

Another unit for analysing refusals in extended conversational sequences is ‘episode’. An episode includes a coherent sequence of psychologically relevant units with a discernible beginning and an end, comprising an integral part of a whole interaction (Van Dijk, 1982). Likewise, an episode, in accordance with Gass and Houck (1999), is framed at one end by an opening eliciting act such as request, offer, or invitation and at the other end by either a dialogue unlinked to the opening act or a reiteration of the eliciting speech act. Also, an episode typically involves a response, either acceptance or refusal, pertinent to the triggering speech act. Therefore, all the talk within an episode is part of the persistence stage carried out in response to an opening speech act.

Adopting the notion of episode for analysing refusal responses in a request-refusal encounter, one could adequately capture the richness of all refusal moves. In this sense, a refuser may express refusal directly then suggests alternatives or promises for future acceptance within one episode; he might also provide a general reason for refusal and gradually develop it to a more specific, to a family oriented reason, for instance. The notion of episode is demonstrated in Example (6) below, from (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 57). It is about a non-native speaker who visited a native speaker. The host left his house to visit a neighbour and asked the guest (non-native speaker) not to allow anyone to enter her house. A woman, the host’s cousin, appeared and requested the non-native speaker to let her in to wait for her cousin inside the house. The non-native speaker has declined the request and the native speaker expressed her insistence through a chain of reiterated requests.

(6) NS: *oh come on*

NNS: *yeah*

NS: *just let me in*

NNS: *yeah uh*

NS: *just yeh let me in*

NNS: yeah oh so ah I think you had better to go neighbour's house to uh to meet him

NS: oh Quentin oh wh wh what neighbour's house is he at boy he's not going to hear the last of this

NNS: excuse excuse me I don't know

NS: you don't know whe-

NNS: yeah

NS: aiiii

NNS: but not so far from (here) maybe I (near the house)

NS: so what am I supposed to do drive around? I don't know his neighbours either

NNS: uh y-you can uh go by walk

NS: thank you thank you very much very kind of

NNS: yeah yeah yeah

NS: you I've driven f-13 hours and I can walk around in the neighbourhood and y-I don't know where I'm looking I don't know who t-whose house to go to?

NNS: but

NS: *come on come on just let me in let me in*

The example above illustrates one episode of refusal-request series. It begins with the native speaker making a request, the opening eliciting act, as indicated in the three italicised utterances, and terminates when the requester repeats the request in the last line (*come on come on just let me in let me in*) marking, in the meanwhile, the launching of a new episode.

It is worth noting that in lengthy conversational sequences, one episode does not always follow immediately on the heels of the previous one. In other words, episodes can be bridged by intervening materials (Gass & Houck, 1999).

Evidently, context governs meaning by relating it to psychological, cultural, and social attributes. Therefore, from a conversational analysis perspective, refusals function as dis-preferred second pair parts to an initial act (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Put differently, a refusal speech act is a post-event response emitted in response to a pre-event action. Accordingly, they preclude extensive planning by the refuser (Gass & Houck, 1999).

The gist of speech acts, and thereby of pragmatics, is doing things with language when speaking; whether speakers are informing, apologising, requesting, condoling, and so on. Another salient aspect tethered to pragmatics is linguistic politeness. An immediate clarification of the two topics is in order.

1.6 Speech Act Theory

A key pragmatic function of language is doing things with words. A speech act is “an act performed in saying something” (Lyons, 1977, p. 730). Historically speaking, the concept of speech act was first put forth by John Langshaw Austin, most notably in his seminal monograph *How to Do Things with Words*, published posthumously in 1962 which is one of the most crucial contributions to the philosophy of language in recent decades that launched a new era in pragmatics studies.

In his categorisation, Austin (1975) explored the concept of meaning as it pertains to human communication. More importantly, he drew a clear-cut distinction between *constative* statements, which are subject to being either true or false, and *performative* statements which are the doing of the actions per se.

He hypostatized three different features of performative speech acts, including the locutionary act which is the act of emitting a sentence with a particular reference and sense; the illocutionary act denotes the specific conventional force with a certain intended meaning. The latter brings about an effect on the hearer known as the perlocutionary act. To illustrate, by saying “could you close the window?” the speaker, the requester in this example, produces

this sentence (The locutionary act) to perform a request (The illocutionary act) which leads the requestee to either fulfil the request or refuse it (The perlocutionary act).

So far, drawing upon Austin's analysis of meaning, we understand that when a speaker emits an utterance, they also convey associated intention or implied meaning that is expressed as a linguistic act to the addressee, serving various functions such as greeting, apologising, requesting, and refusing.

1.6.1 Speech Act's Classification

In what follows, we will pin down Austin's (1975) taxonomy of speech acts alongside other taxonomies that have subsequently been brought to light in a piecemeal fashion.

1.6.1.1 Austin's (1975) Taxonomy

Austin (1975, pp. 151-161) categorizes the illocutionary act into five classes and lists examples for each:

1. Verdictives: involve exercising a judgement and giving a verdict such as estimate, reckon, assess, describe, analyse, rank, rule, locate, calculate, characterize, hold, date, measure, and rate.
2. Exercives encompass the exertion of power, rights, or influence such as order, warn, sentence, and advise.
3. Commissives: commit the speaker to undertake something such as promise, intend, mean to, swear, envisage, agree, favour, support, contemplate, and vow.
4. Behabitives: are related to attitudes and reactions to other people's social behaviour like greet, condole; congratulate, commiserate, compliment, curse, defy, bid farewell, and sympathise.
5. Expositives: are employed in acts of exposition in order to conduct an argument and expound views such as argue, regard as, affirm, deny, identify, report, mention, answer and postulate.

1.6.1.2 Searle's (1979) Taxonomy

According to Searle (1979), Austin seems to reckon that a classification of types of illocutionary acts is per se a classification of illocutionary verbs. In other words, two non-synonymous verbs signal different illocutionary acts.

Searle (1979, p. 12) enumerates some weaknesses in Austin's scheme; in descending level of significance:

1. The classification is straightforwardly not constructed on the basis of a systematic principle.
2. A wide array of verbs does not satisfy the definition given to their category.
3. There is too much overlap between categories and considerable internal heterogeneity within certain ones.
4. Not every verb listed qualifies as an illocutionary verb such as '*sympathise*', '*mean to*', and '*intend*', i.e., they are not performative.
5. An ongoing mix-up exists between verbs and acts;

Searle (1979, pp. 12-17) devised an alternative taxonomy revisiting Austin's:

1. Assertives: convey the speaker's commitment to the truth of the stated proposition and report statements of fact verifiable as true or false. They are seen, for example, in assertions, insinuations, claims, and suggestions.
2. Directives: get the listener to carry out an action. Their use may be seen in orders, commands, requests, and invitations.
3. Commissives: charge the speaker with obligations by committing them, at varying degrees, to carry out an action at some future stage. They are seen in promising, offering, threatening, refusing, and vowing.

1. Expressives: depict the speaker's mental or emotional stance on a prior event or situation specified in the propositional content. These include thanking, greeting, congratulating and condoling.

2. Declarations: if successfully performed, trigger an alteration in the current state of affairs, such as 'I bet', 'I declare', 'I resign' this court sentences you.

Arguably, in order for a speech act to be successfully carried out, it has to satisfy four felicity conditions:

1. The propositional content rule which stipulates that the act must have a certain meaning expressed by the propositional content of an utterance. An apology, for instance, is made by either a performative verb *apologise* or an expression like *I'm awfully sorry*.

2. Preparatory rule emphasises that the speaker is able to execute the act. For example, before performing an apology, the apologisee has to believe that he/she has done something wrong. Directives like requests have to meet the additional preparatory condition that the requester must have power over the requestee as Searle (1969) noted.

3. Sincerity rule provides that the utterance has to be made with a sincere intention to carry out the act. For an apology to be felicitous and successful, for instance, the apologisee has to be genuinely sorry for what he/she has done.

4. Essential rule emphasises that the speaker is bound to the truth of the stated proposition. For example, the apologisee's intention to carry out an act, an apology, must be accompanied by their acceptance and recognition of an unavoidable obligation to carry it out.

Analogously, in order for a refusal to be executed swimmingly and flawlessly, the act must conform to the previously listed conditions as Table 1.2 below shows

Table 1.2

Felicity Conditions for Refusal Speech Act

Type of condition	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.

Note. S refers to speaker; H refers to hearer; A refers to act

The felicity conditions for the speech act of refusal. Adapted from *Acquisition in interlanguage pragmatics: Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context* (p.128) by A. Barron, 2003. John Benjamins.

1.6.1.3 Leech's (1983) Taxonomy

Leech (1983, p. 104) pinpoints the illocutionary functions in accordance with their relation to the social goal of 'establishing and maintaining comity'.

- a. Competitive: the illocutionary goal competes with the social goal like ordering and begging.
- b. Convivial: the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal such as offering and greeting.
- c. Collaborative: the illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goal like asserting and announcing.
- d. Conflictive: the illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal such as threatening, and cursing.

Leech (1983) confines attention mainly to the first two categories of illocutions which typically entail politeness, namely competitive illocutions which are intrinsically discourteous

and convivial illocutions which are intrinsically courteous. Contrariwise, politeness is ‘largely irrelevant’ and ‘out of the question’ for collaborative and conflictive illocutions, respectively.

In short, the upshot of the previously listed taxonomies is that refusal speech act is classified as behabitive under Austin’s categorisation scheme and expressive in Searle’s, which fulfils a competitive illocutionary function according to Leech’s. Thus, refusals are high-risk FTAs performed either directly with the refuser’s intention being openly spelled out, or indirectly with the refuser’s intention being tacitly conveyed.

1.6.2Requests

To request is to ask for something in a polite and formal way. Requests, as speech acts, fall under the label of directives in accordance with Searle’s (1979) classification.

A request is per definition an FTA whereby the speaker (requester) seeks a favour from the hearer (requestee). That is, by making a request, the requester exercises control over the requestee’s intentional actions and, thereby infringing upon their negative face. Since the requestee may opt for declining rather than complying with the request, the requester may also encounter the risk of face damage themselves (Trosborg, 1995).

As an impositive speech act as, a request is enacted by the requester in order to influence the intentional behaviour of the requestee and get them to perform the direct or indirect action denoted by the propositional content of the request (Haverkate, 1984). As Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) proclaim, requests primarily place a burden on the addressee and thus call for attenuation to repair the potentially unwelcome impact. Similarly, fulfilling a request, according to Trosborg (1995), caters solely to the speaker’s interests, usually to the detriment of the hearer.

The speech act of request has been broken down by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) into three mains parts, including alerters, head act, and supportive move. Regarding the degree of directness, a substantial body of both theoretical and empirical studies has explored the

speech act of request, including, but not limited to, Searle (1979), House and Kasper (1981), and Blum-Kulka (1987).

At the theoretical level, Blum-Kulka (1987) classified request strategies based on the degree of directness into:

- a. The most direct requests realised by such means as imperatives;
- b. The conventionally indirect requests manifested by the use of indirect request;
- c. Nonconventional indirect requests typically communicated via hints and contextual clues.

At the empirical level, the three aforementioned levels have been broken down into distinct sub-levels called ‘strategy types’, including mode derivable, explicit performatives, hedged performatives, locution derivable, scope stating, reference to preparatory conditions, strong hints and mild hints. They form a scale of indirectness.

1.6.3 Refusals

As per Searle’s (1979) framework, refusal falls under the category of commissives since the speaker pledges (not) to undertake a future action. In other words, refusals take place when the speaker fails to take part in a speech act suggested by the interlocutor. In that sense, refusals are prone to imperil the addressee’s positive- face wants and feelings (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). As noted by Beebe et al. (1990), given that the refusal speech act is a high-risk FTA, indirectness usually exists to attenuate the risk of offending the interlocutors’ face.

From a socio-pragmatic point of view, Félix-Brasdefer (2008b) contended that what constitutes appropriate refusal behaviour differs not only across cultures but also among varieties of the same language. That is, effectively negotiating refusals involves selecting various direct, indirect, polite, and impolite strategies depending on the relationship between interlocutors, social power, age, gender, as well as the situation. In other words, refusal

speech act appears to be sensitive to such sociolinguistic variables as gender, social status, and social distance (Beebe et al., 1990). Besides, variation in the form, content, order, frequency and the function of refusals' semantic formulas depends on the eliciting speech act like invitation and request.

Refusals can also be realised via such delays as silence, partial repeats, minimal vocalisations or perturbations, or discourse markers as stated by Pomerantz (1984). Hence, Refusals "are often played out in lengthy sequences involving not only negotiation of a satisfactory outcome but face-saving manoeuvres to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act" (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 2).

Put succinctly, inasmuch as refusals are inherently offensive, certain mitigating devices and politeness strategies are utilised to assuage the unwelcome effects of this act.

1.7 Categorisation of Refusals

1.7.1 Rubin's (1983) Taxonomy

Several attempts have been made to delineate how refusals are enacted. One such attempt is Rubin's (1983) taxonomy, originally put forward in (1976), where she showcased various varieties of saying 'no' in many cultures. Her taxonomy includes both a form-function relation intrinsic to refusals, and perceived socio-cultural norms that govern the speakers' selection of refusal strategies. The framework of Rubin's taxonomy of refusals within the scope of speech act theory is outlined as follows (pp. 12-13).

1. Be silent, hesitate, show lack of enthusiasm
2. Offer an alternative
3. Postponement
4. Put the blame on a third party
5. Avoidance
6. General acceptance of offer but giving no details

7. Divert and distract the addressee
8. General acceptance with excuses
9. Say what's offered is inappropriate

Rubin's classification system, which has been derived from her observations of rejection instances in other cultures, portrays the intricacy of saying 'no' to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions as it reveals that there are many other ways to express refusals besides merely responding 'no'.

1.7.2 Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) Taxonomy

The most widely recognised categorisation scheme in cross-cultural and interlanguage studies on refusals is the one devised by Beebe et al. (1990). Their taxonomy was further adjusted, extensively applied to cross-linguistic refusal studies, and thus ramified, generating new insights along the way. It is primarily based on the notion of 'semantic formula' which is defined as a word, a phrase, or a sentence by which refusals are performed (Cohen, 1996). In Beebe et al.'s scheme, a distinction was drawn between semantic formulas, which were in turn grouped into two categories: direct and indirect refusals, and ancillary expressions known as adjuncts to refusals which accompany refusals but did not function as a stand-alone refusal act. This categorisation is presented in Figure 1.3 below.

Figure 1.3

Systematic Compendium of Refusal Strategy

I- Direct
A. <i>Performative</i> (e.g., "I refuse") B. <i>Non-performative statement</i> 1. "No" 2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")
II- Indirect
A. <i>Statement of regret</i> (e.g., "I'm sorry...", "I feel terrible...") B. <i>Wish</i> (e.g., "I wish I could help you....")

C. *Excuse, reason, explanation* (e.g., “My children will be home that night.”; “I have a headache.”)

D. *Statement of alternative*

1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., “I’d rather do...” “I’d prefer”)

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

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

F. *Promise of future acceptance* (e.g., “I’ll do it next time”; “I promise I’ll...” or “Next time I’ll...”- using “will” of promise or “promise”)

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

H. *Statement of philosophy* (e.g., “One can’t be too careful.”)

I. *Attempt to dissuade interlocutor*

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

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

3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., “Who do you think you are?”; “That’s a terrible idea!”)

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

5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it.” “That’s okay.” “You don’t have to.”)

6. Self-defense (e.g., “I’m trying my best.” “I’m doing all I can.”)

J. *Acceptance that functions as a refusal*

1. Unspecific or indefinite reply

2. Lack of enthusiasm

K. *Avoidance*

1. Nonverbal

a. Silence

b. Hesitation

c. Do nothing

d. Physical departure

2. Verbal

a. Topic switch

b. Joke	
c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., “Monday?”)	
d. Postponement (e.g., “I’ll think about it.”)	
e. Hedging (e.g., “Gee, I don’t know.” “I’m not sure.”)	
Adjuncts to refusals	
A.	Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (“That’s a good idea...”; “I’d love to...”)
B.	Statement of empathy (e.g., “I realize you are in a difficult situation.”)
C.	Pause filler (e.g., “uhh”; “well”; “uhm”)
D.	Gratitude/appreciation

Note. This is a list of refusal strategies and Adjuncts to Refusals. From *Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusal*. In R. C. Scarcella, S. D. Krashen & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp.72-73), by L.M. Beebe, T. Takahashi and R. Uliss-Weltz, 1990, Newbury House Publishers.

The classification scheme of Beebe et al. classification resembles, to some extent, to Rubin's, with both mirroring the intricacy of refusals in response to face-threatening initiating acts. What characterises Beebe et al.’s categorisation is their straightforward identification of refusals elicited from written DCTs.

Subsequently, some categories such as back channels that were not covered by Beebe et al.’s system have been added by scholars (Morrow, 1995; Gass & Houck, 1999), others have been omitted (Nelson, Carson , Al Batal & El Bakary, 2002) to refine the classification depending on the type of the opening eliciting act, the type of data as well as the methodology adopted.

1.7.3 Turnbull (2001)

Another framework for categorising refusals has been proffered by Turnbull (2001) in his research on pragmatic elicitation strategies for request-refusal interactions by which every utterance realised by the requestee was categorised as a refusal head act, or refusal of

compliance as labelled by Turnbull, can be articulated in various ways. Figure 1.4 delineates the two sets of Turnbull's categorization.

Figure 1.4

Categorisation of Acts that Occur in Request-Refusal Interactions

Categorization of acts that occurred in refusals
1. Apology
2. Acceptance of apology
3. Acceptance of compliance
4. Acceptance of refusal
5. Acceptance of thanks
6. Confirmation
7. Deferral Attempt
8. Endorsement
9. Excuse
10. Hold
11. Pre-closing
12. Positive regard
13. Request for confirmation
14. Refusal of compliance (or "head refusal")
15. Request for information
16. Supplying of information
17. Thanks
Types of refusal of compliance
1. Negate request ("No I don't think so")
2. Indicate unwillingness ("Then I guess I would prefer not to do it")
3. Performative refusal ("Then I'll have to say no")
4. Negated ability ("I just couldn't make it that early")
5. Identify impeding event/state ("Oh but I have to work on that day")

Note. This is a list of acts that accompanied refusals. From “An appraisal of pragmatic elicitation techniques for the social psychological study of talk: The case of request refusals”, by W. Turnbull, 2001, *Pragmatics*, 11(1), p. 49-54.

Turnbull's integration of such interactional features as 'hold' ("hold on a second,)", 'deferral attempt' ("can I get back to you?"), and 'request for confirmation' ("7 in the morning?") that are integral to request-refusal conversations, strictly speaking, to negotiation between the requester and the requestee, is one of the system's consequential features.

Regarding the categories of 'refusals of compliance', there are some parallels between Turnbull's, Beebe et al.'s, and Rubin's categorisation schemes. By way of example, Turnbull's 'indication of unwillingness' strategy is analogous to Beebe et al.'s 'negative willingness.' There is, however, a minor distinction between the two approaches. Whereas Turnbull distinguishes 'negated ability' from 'indicate unwillingness', Beebe et al. combined them under the heading of 'negative ability/willingness' as they believed to carry the same meaning.

To a great extent, the three previously demystified taxonomies are applicable to our data. Nevertheless, we will be adopting that of Beebe et al. for the simple reason that it subsumes Turnbull's scheme, and on account of the distinction that Turnbull (2001) made between the acts used to perform refusals and refusal of compliance which does not accommodate our data set. Rubin's taxonomy, on the other hand, was not opted for due to the lack of first-hand data source. Alternatively, as previously indicated, a tailored version of Beebe et al.'s system seems to be an apt choice for our data due to its reliability and comprehensiveness. The main adjustments to Beebe et al.'s taxonomy are elucidated in Section 3.6 below.

1.8 Politeness

1.8.1 What is Politeness?

A judicious way to commence this section is citing the words with which Richards Watts (2003) prefaced his book entitled '*politeness*' (2003,p.xi) which clearly echoed the complexity of politeness: "Writing an introduction to politeness is like being in mortal combat with a many-headed hydra. You've barely severed one head when a few more grow in its

place.” Watts’ statement pictured politeness as a multifaceted space entailing an utterly baffling process within which pinning down variables seems to be a daunting task. The following example (Adapted from Meyerhoff, 2006, p.81) encapsulates the issues that beset research attempts to define politeness, at its inception, in particular.

(7) “I’ll have an iced mocha”, Ellen, from New York, said. “An iced mocha,” repeated the waitress, at the Michigan restaurant. “Do you want whipped cream on that?” “You have to ask?” wondered Ellen in an ironic tone of voice.

Outside of New York, Ellen’s reply “You have to ask?” does not carry the meaning of an exuberant ‘yes’ that the waitress expected to hear. Indeed, ironic jokes, which are oftentimes exchanged between close people, are not expected from strangers in Michigan.

This example raises a vexed question on which there may be critical discrepant viewpoints: Is Ellen’s reply “You have to ask?” polite? In some communities, such a reply can be regarded as irrefutably brusque, and an alternative answer like ‘Yes, thanks’ would be favoured instead. On the contrary, by the standards of New York City, whence Ellen was brought up, she was demonstrating politeness. Cracking a joke with a stranger is, therefore, part of facework and constructing business exchange in a friendly way. So, the level of politeness is shaped by the norms people acquire during their upbringing.

Even more so, some languages have distinct forms for the same word that have to align with the nature of the interaction and speakers’ relationship. For instance, the verb ‘to eat’ in Japanese, is prone to a whole alteration as shown in the following example (adapted from Tsujimura, 1996).

(8) Tanaka: Sensei, keeki *meshiagari* –mas-u-ka?
Teacher, would you like some cake?’
Professor: Ee, *tabe*-mas-u Tanaka-san wa?
‘Yes, I’ll have some. Will you Tanaka?’

Tanaka: Hai, *itadaki*-mas-u Doomo.

‘Yes, I’ll have some. Thank you.’

As can be seen, the three italicised forms are different instantiations of the same word; each corresponds to a distinct situation. The same holds true for the polite suffixes attached to verbs and nouns, including ‘-mas’ used by the student and ‘-san’ used by the teacher when addressing his student. Notably, whereas the first honorific realisation ‘*meshiagari*’ expresses deference; the second form ‘*itadaki*’ shows that the student humbles himself with respect to his teacher. The form used by the teacher ‘*tabe*’, on the other hand, does not indicate social status differences. What is deemed polite or impolite is inevitably contingent upon the interlocutors’ divergent perspectives (Watts, 2003).

Intriguingly, politeness has witnessed an explosion of interest and empirical research which have proliferated within and across languages and cultures from around the world. Politeness studies, in essence, draw basically on what people say in a given communicative situation, reflecting an interface between linguistics and other different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Nevertheless, despite having underlying interdisciplinary ramifications, politeness is believed to primarily belong to pragmatics

As a core social and psychological principle that governs human interactions, politeness is systematically tackled in pragmatics as a crucial facet of interactional language studies. It is a pragmatic mechanism, in which a plethora of non-verbal and prosodic features work together in order to achieve smooth communication. As such, politeness is seen as “a language associated with smooth communication” Ide (1989, p. 22).

According to Eelen’s (2001) postulate, being polite entails meeting the hearer’s expectations by acting properly. This is to say that what determines whether politeness is called for or not is the hearer’s assessment of the speaker’s behaviour, rather than the speaker’s behaviour per se. Polite people, according to Holmes (1995), are those who

generally endeavour to offset the threat of inevitable FTAs such as requests and warnings using either mitigation or indirectness.

Politeness is, in fact, associated with showing deference and avoiding offence when interacting with people; this generalisation, nonetheless, does not consistently hold across all contexts and speech communities. Adopting a face-based approach, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) evince that in any communities, in certain contexts, showing lots of deference is rather unseemly and may even seem impolite. Instead, using in-group identity markers may polish the gears of interaction and avert offence.

Also, standing as one of the conversational alternatives that can be opted for at any juncture of the conversation, politeness is believed to emerge from the possibility of impoliteness (Mills, 2011). Being the counterbalance of politeness, impoliteness is being integrated into the analysis of politeness though they both function differently. That is, unlike politeness which aims at mitigating FTAs, impoliteness includes delivering purposefully verbal FTAs (Bousfield, 2008)

Be as it may, the bewildering equivocality in the employment of such terms as polite and politeness is still one of the major challenges that hinder anyone conducting politeness research. Alternatively, other terms, according to Watts (2003), like ‘emotive communication’, ‘tact’, and ‘politic behaviour’ have been put forward in an effort to solve the problem of terminology, but to little avail.

1.8.2 The Notion of Face

Part and parcel of politeness theory is the concept of face which was first introduced by the sociologist Erving Goffman (1967) and further developed by the linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978, 1987). Face, as a basic tenet of Brown and Levinson’s framework, has ignited a flurry of empirical research on politeness within and across cultures.

Goffman's postulate holds that all human beings possess a face which reflects their social personae. His sociological notion of face perceives a person's face as a public rather than personal property. Put another way, speakers' attention is paid to both their own face and the face of the addressees, displaying a self-defensive tendency in maintaining their own public image and a face-sensitive inclination to protect their interlocutors' face. Hence, face, as per Goffman, includes:

- Positive face: the desire to be appreciated by others;
- Negative face: the desire to be free and not interfered with.

Goffman terms the first desire positive face and the second desire negative face. The former stems from the basic human need to be appreciated and approved by the members of the group while the latter stems from the need to be unimpeded by others. Criticising what someone said, for instance, is classified as a face threatening speech act that imperils their positive face. Such directive speech acts as making an order or a request, on the other hand, may jeopardise the addressee's negative face as they impose a burden on them. As a corollary, as designated by Danesi and Rocci (2009), the facework aimed at maintaining the face of the interactants fosters two approaches to politeness, namely *solidarity politeness* which involves exhibiting goodwill and appreciation in order to reinforce the positive face, coupled with *respect politeness* which involves minding not to encroach on the other's personal territory, thereby preserving the negative face of the other. Significantly, the function of politeness is to undermine the FTA that might occur in a conversation as Goffman contends.

Building on Goffman (1967, 1971), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) further developed the notion of face. The latter, being intertwined with the English folk term of 'losing face', recognises politeness as a ritual, and regards the safeguarding of face in interaction as crucial to politeness. It is defined by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as "something that can be emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly

attended to in interaction” (p. 61) .That is, when people’s faces are threatened, a defensive act is expected which is likely to imperil the interlocutors’ faces in turn. In consequence, a mutual leaning towards maintaining each other’s faces is expected in a bid to achieve smooth and successful communication.

They also assumed that “while the content of face differs in different cultures, the mutual knowledge of members’ public self-image or face and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction are universal” (p. 62). According to Kasper (1997), however, Brown and Levinson’s approach to face has been questioned on the grounds that it primarily emphasises individualistic needs. The notion of face has undergone critical re-examination across diverse cultural contexts showing that linguistic politeness manifests differently in line with the cultural values upheld by a given society.

By way of illustration, the concept of face has been analysed in Igbo by Nwoye (1992) as consisting of two facets. The first facet termed ‘individual face’ refers to individual’s needs to meet their face-oriented desires and thereby foster a positive self-representation in public whereas the second one termed ‘group face’ denotes an individual’s inclination to align with their society’s cultural norms. Likewise, considering the face needs of both individuals and the group, Scollon and Scollon (2001) re-examined the notions of positive and negative face. They propound two aspects of face: involvement and independence. Involvement, on one hand, emphasises the common ground by means of such tactics as demonstrating attentiveness to others and reinforcing in-group affiliation by addressing people by their first names. Independence, on the other, highlights participants’ individuality by minimising assumptions, providing a range of alternatives to interlocutors, and employing formal names and titles. Interestingly, the primacy of involvement or independence hinges on the sociocultural standards upheld by the members of a specific culture (Félix-brasdefer, 2006).

Placencia (1996), drawing upon telephone conversations, confirmed that deference, as a crucial sociocultural value inherent in the concept of Ecuadorian face, is not used as a negative politeness strategy to maintain one's individuality as in Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), but rather to adhere to the group's socio-cultural conventions. Along similar lines, Mexicans, as collectivistic individuals, typically negotiate face indirectly by dint of continuous efforts to tactfully (re)negotiate a favourable outcome as Félix-Brasdefer (2006) found out.

Using recordings of face-to-face interactions among Akans in Ghana, Agyekum (2004) analysed Akan face metaphors with reference to the universal notion of face, classifying them into four main categories, namely pro-communicative expressions whereby a cordial communicative atmosphere between participants is fostered; anti-communicative expressions that distance participants from each other and thereby hinder communication; face-upgrading/ honouring expressions that reinforce the addressee's face by bestowing honour and demonstrating respect ; and face-demeaning/ threatening expressions which encompass both expressions that pose a risk to the individual's negative face and tarnish their image and those that impact an individual's desire for displaying a positive self-image ,and thus degrade them in the presence of others.

Analogously, the code of politeness of Maghrebi societies features some traits that go beyond Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) conceptual framework on politeness as Luca d'Anna (2014) found out. Put it another way, users of Maghrebi Arabic dialects exhibited a strong predilection for positive politeness tactics that underpin in-group solidarity and preserve social bonds owing to their collectivist orientation which prioritises the group's needs.

However, a study conducted in 1997 on Tunisian Arabic by El-Arbi supported the universality of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model in relation to the notions of face

and politeness. According to him, in traditional Tunisian Arabic, politeness is manifested mainly through honour, shame, and deference whereas in modern Tunisian Arabic, positive face is preserved via in-group identity markers displaying various levels of social distance.

Drawing on Agyekum's (2004) classification of face expressions in Akan community, Dali Youcef (2019) differentiated between two main categories of face expressions in Algerian culture, namely face upgrading/ honouring and face demeaning/threatening expressions. The former type includes expressions that are meant to uplift face and depict people's positive image by indicating, for instance, their seriousness, heaviness, and sincerity. The latter type includes offensive expressions that are employed to assail a person's face by using, for instance, insults, disgrace, and disapproval.

In summation, when interacting with others, individuals must consider the two kinds of face and utilise the appropriate politeness strategy accordingly. Some societies seem to exhibit a greater inclination towards positive politeness and conveyance of involvement; in others, equal attention is given to the positive and negative aspects of interactants' face desires. Hence, the projection of the two facets of face in social interactions is unequivocally culture-specific.

1.8.3 Approaches to Politeness

Politeness is of particular importance in communication. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, defining politeness is an enduring and arduous debate, giving rise to various views. In other words, there is no agreed ostensive definition for this concept as it has notably received the attention of a number of linguists. Among others, we may mention Lakoff (1973, 1975), Fraser and Nolen (1981), Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (1989), Mills (2003), and Scollon and Scollon (2001). Let us consider, in turn, each of them.

1.8.3.1 Robin Lakoff (1975)

The notion of linguistic politeness is, avers Lakoff (1975), developed by societies in a bid to alleviate offence in personal interactions. In accordance with her postulate, rules of politeness are essential prerequisites of language use besides rules of clarity. That is, politeness involves three major rules ‘Don’t impose,’ ‘Give options,’ and ‘show empathy (be friendly)’.

The first rule invokes that the social distance between collocutors must be taken into considerations in formal conversational interactions. The second rule entails deference and highlights the criticality of incorporating hedges as mitigating devices for the sake of politeness. The third rule stresses camaraderie and showing sympathy.

With respect to clarity, she claimed that too much clarity decreases politeness. Hence, Lakoff’s postulate leans primarily on Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle which constitutes four different maxims for achieving maximally efficient and cooperative communication, including:

- Maxim of Quality: highlights sincerity and truthfulness.
- Maxim of Quantity: underscores brevity and sufficiency.
- Maxim of Relation: accentuates relevance and pertinence.
- Maxim of Manner: emphasises perspicuity and avoidance of ambiguity.

Violating one of the maxims in communication often leads to a conversational implicature, where an additional meaning is inferred. Accordingly, interlocutors resort to violating the conversational maxims to imply a particular meaning and perform certain polite demeanour. All in all, Grice’s (1975) maxims suggest a structure to account for indirect speech, hence, understanding implicature

1.8.3.2 Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987)

Adopting Goffman's (1971) concept of face and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) propounded their ground-breaking theory of linguistic politeness. They posit that whenever interactants come into contact, they have to be heedful of 'face', the public self-image of the addressee that may either be threatened, lost, maintained or enhanced. They view some speech acts like refusals as intrinsically impolite and face-threatening as the threat to the hearer's face is embedded within these speech acts.

As trailblazers in the realm of modern politeness, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1978) made a distinction between negative politeness strategies which cater to the addressee's negative face wants by displaying deference, and positive politeness strategies that are utilised to avoid imposition and maintain the recipient's positive face by emphasising friendliness and enhancing in-group membership. In other words, negative politeness is typically shown by means of apologising for any possible offence, whereas positive politeness exhibits appreciation by means of paying compliments and thanking, for instance.

Given the mutual vulnerability of face, the conversationalist is faced with two possible paths to choose from: avoiding the FTA, or doing the FTA. When the FTA is unavoidable, the threat can be minimised through positive politeness strategies which aim to satisfy the hearer's positive face wants to be desirable and appreciated by others. The FTA can also be redressed by negative politeness strategies which seek to satisfy the hearer's negative face wants to be unimpeded by others such as showing deference and using honorifics.

Moreover, the selection of the suitable politeness strategies and remedial devices is heavily confined to the seriousness of the FTA. The latter is assessed in light of three pivotal culture-sensitive social factors, including social power which indicates the "vertical disparity between the participants in a hierarchical structure" (Scollon & Scollon, 2001, p. 52), social distance which refers to how close to each other are the interlocutors, and rank of imposition,

also termed as cost-benefit by Leech (2014), which is heavily contingent on the social situation. All three factors constitute the foundation upon which the speaker determines the potential face threatening nature of their speech act and the appropriate politeness strategy required to counteract its severity.

As Figure 1.5 below brings out, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) have designated a model of five strategies to be employed to save the addressee's negative face and enhance their positive face.

1. *Bald on record strategy*: is opted for to do the FTA with maximum efficiency *rather than* satisfying the interlocutor's face wants. It involves clarity, directness, and efficiency but ignores the recipient's face wants. That is, bald-on-recordness conforms to Grice's (1975) conversational principles but entails the biggest risk to face.
2. *On record with positive politeness*: addresses the hearer's positive face to please them via claiming reciprocity and in-group membership.
3. *On record with negative politeness strategies*: are directed towards the hearer's negative face by means of such redressive expressions as 'excuse me' to exhibit deference, especially towards strangers.
4. *Off-record strategies*: are very indirect strategies performed by dint of hints triggered by violation of Gricean Maxims via using metaphors, teasing, tautologies, contradictions, rhetorical questions, humour or irony to enhance solidarity among intimates.
5. *Not doing the FTA*: avoids saying anything.

Figure 1.5

Brown and Levinson's (1978,1987) Model of Linguistic Politeness

FTAs				
Lesser ↑ ↓ Greater Estimation of risk of face loss	Do the FTA	On record	1. Without redressive action, baldly	
			With redressive action	2. Positive politeness
				3. Negative politeness
		4. Off record		
	5. Don't do the FTA			

Once the seriousness of a request is assessed, for instance, the speaker chooses to either to go off-record using metaphors and irony (a), baldly on-record (b), or on record with or without mitigating devices. Performing an FTA with redress involves either positive (c) or negative politeness strategies (d). A requester may choose not to do the FTA .i.e., silence.

- a. 'I feel a bit cold here.'
- b. 'Suzan, close the window.'
- c. 'Suzan, *honey*, close the window.'
- d. '*Could you please* close the window?'

Thus, politeness is driven by a desire to save the interactants' self-images via various strategies. This awareness is embodied in three key factors, specifically power, social distance, and rank of imposition in a particular culture.

To distil the idea, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness scale ranges from the indirect strategies of going off record and keeping silence at the uppermost end of the politeness spectrum, to the direct bald on record strategies at the lowermost end of the politeness spectrum. However, this scale was subjected to criticism by, among others,

Grainger and Mills (2016) for associating indirectness with politeness and directness with impoliteness. Directness, instead, should be regarded as a means of displaying camaraderie, intimacy, and social affiliation as observed in German and Polish cultures; hence, what is deemed indirect in English might not necessarily be viewed as indirect in other linguistic contexts (Pavlidou, 2000).

1.8.3.3 Bruce Fraser and William Nolen (1981)

As posited by Fraser and Nolen (1981), politeness forms an integral part of a conversational contract between respondents. Therefore, to be polite is to obey the general terms of the contract. As such, interrupting the speaker, speaking unclearly and switching languages while speaking violate the terms of the contract, and thus denote impoliteness.

The inapplicability of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of politeness to collectivist communities like the Eastern communities was also a key point of discussion. Their model, which has been proposed as universal, is mainly concerned with the Western individualistic cultures, and hence its application is seldom validated and differs drastically across cultures.

They also claimed that most research on politeness focused on the definition of the term rather than understanding it as an interactive concept. Moreover, no clear-cut differentiation is demarcated between linguistic and non-linguistic politeness. Thus, a further distinction between such terms as politeness, formality, deference, civility, appropriateness, etiquette and tact is seriously required.

1.8.3.4 Leech (1983) Model of Politeness

Leech (1983); in a similar vein, views politeness as the avoidance of an offensive situation by dint of certain strategies. Politeness is not obligatory, however. People can be polite, or non-polite_ neither polite nor impolite.

Leech (2014) prefers using the terms on-record and off-record or hints instead. Additionally, He proposed the two terms neg-politeness and pos-politeness to replace Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) terms, negative politeness and positive politeness. Neg-politeness typically includes such strategies as indirectness, hedging, and understatement. Its function is to dilute the anticipated offense on the hearer. Pos-politeness, conversely, involves the utilisation of various intensifying strategies in a bid to strengthen or magnify the politeness of the utterance. Accordingly, failure to provide adequate neg-politeness may lead to disharmony and it is regarded as a sin of commission. Failure to give ample pos-politeness, in contrast, is considered a sin of omission (Leech, 2014).

In an attempt to rescue Grice's cooperative principle from major issues, Leech (1983) postulated a politeness principle as a critical complement, comprising six sub-maxims, namely the maxim of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy.

However, both Grice's (1975) and Leech's (1983) postulates have been criticised on the ground that not all communication is optimally cooperative. That is, uncooperativeness, as well as impoliteness must be considered (Trosborg, 1995). Besides, the proposed numbers of maxims have also been subject to criticism. In order to bypass this issue, Sperber and Wilson (1986) proposed a more general and explicit principle than the cooperative principle, *the principle of relevance*. They pointed out that all maxims can be condensed to the maxim of relation, given that relevance is a natural aspect of all exchanges and a pivotal element for achieving successful communication. They contended that the application of relevance principle, as a fundamental guideline for communication, is consistent and inescapable in all cases without exceptions, so the question is not about whether this principle is being upheld or infringed. In other words, relevance theory does not take into account the degree of politeness of behaviour in a given situation. It, instead, explains such acts as why opting for directness

may be more relevant than indirectness. Therefore, a further differentiation of the principle is needed.

1.8.3.5 The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (1989)

The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project, led by Shoshana Blum-kulka and her co-researchers Juliane House and Gabriel Kasper, explored the speech acts of requests and apologies drawing upon DCTs. They extensively influenced politeness thinking owing to their productive data gathering approach and accurate data interpretation. In accordance with their surmise, speech acts are often manifested through a sequence of utterances, not just a single one as posited in Austin-Searle tradition. Despite being widely criticised for its reliance on elicited rather than naturally occurring data, Blum-Kulka et al.'s model is still conceived as an influential framework for studying interlanguage pragmatics and thus remains a milestone in the field, due to its abiding influence.

1.8.3.6 Sara Mills (2003)

Mills (2003) views politeness as an assessment of the interlocutors that fluctuates in line with such contextual elements as gender, social class, race, context, as well as the individual's relationship with the community of practice. She refuted theories which assume that politeness is quality intrinsic to an utterance. According to Mill's postulate which stands in opposition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model, politeness does not necessarily denote a 'good thing'. The speech act of insulting, for instance, which is considered as inherently discourteous in Brown and Levinson's model, do in fact indicate low social distance and high degree of intimacy between the members of certain speech communities.

1.8.3.7 Scollon and Scollon (2001)

The concept of face has been accurately examined by Scollon and Scollon (2001) in accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory and Fraser's (1983) notion of Perceived Situational Seriousness (PSS) which, in turn, leans on the weight of

imposition, power, and social distance between interlocutors . They referred to positive and negative face as involvement and independence aspects of face, respectively. Their politeness model encompasses three face systems, namely the deference politeness system, the solidarity politeness system, and the hierarchical politeness system. The use of politeness strategies in these systems, therefore, hinges on three degrees of PSS; ‘deference’ which refers to Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) term of ‘social distance’; ‘solidarity’ which stands for ‘weight of imposition’; and ‘hierarchy’ which refers to ‘power’.

In a deference politeness system, collocutors perceive themselves as being socially equal (-Power), but with a distant relationship (+ Distance). They, thus, use independence politeness strategies. In a solidarity politeness system, the collocutors use involvement strategies as they see themselves equals in status (-Power) and with a close relationship (-Distance). In a hierarchical politeness system, one participant holds a super-ordinate position (+ Power) while the other holds a subordinate position (- Power). Irrespective of their social distance (+ Distance or – Distance), the former participant may employ involvement strategies whilst the latter may employ independence strategies. Scollon and Scollon’s (2001) politeness framework is distilled in the following table.

Table 1.3

Scollon and Scollon's (2001) Politeness Framework

Politeness System	Power	Distance	Examples of Discourse Strategies
Deference Politeness System (Independence)	–	+	Using formal names and titles among colleagues.
Solidarity Politeness System (Involvement)	–	–	Using first names and nicknames among friends.
Hierarchy politeness System (Both Independence and Involvement)	+	+	In a boss-employee interaction, for example, the boss calls the employee’s using his first name; the employee uses the boss’.surname with a title.

All things considered, given the limited applicability of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of linguistic politeness and their conceptualisation of face which highlights individualism and regards the speaker as an independent individual within society, the current study adopts Scollon and Scollon's (2001) politeness model which associates the concept of face with collectivism and group membership. Recognising others' face wants by means of face-work is, therefore, a staple component in every social encounter.

1.8.4 Politeness and Social Dimensions

Probing linguistic politeness and mitigation heavily hinges on the weightiness of the FTA which is typically calculated by three major social parameters, namely power, distance and rank of imposition.

Various politeness strategies are utilised to offset the projected weight of the FTA and redress any damage to the hearer's face. Since the situations for the present study seem to be frequently encountered by university students in campus life, social power is stabilised, and thus dispensed with. We will succinctly depict the two aspects that will be extensively drawn upon in the present study: (1) social distance and (2) rank of imposition. An immediate clarification is in order. Gender, as a social determinant of language use, is also elucidated below.

1.8.3.8 Social Distance

The relative degree of intimacy between interlocutors serves as a vital component in accounting for the levels of politeness behaviour across most cultures and perhaps all (Holmes, 1995). Broadly speaking, people typically express positive politeness most frequently to intimates and friends, and negative politeness more often to unfamiliar individuals through the selection between nickname, first name, title, and last name. This factor has been considered staple in several theoretical models that have remarkably tackled

the issue of linguistic politeness, including, among others, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Leech (1983), and Wolfson (1988).

Social distance is viewed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as a fundamental social aspect in all cultures. They outlined the main factors in assessing the relative social distance and the degree of solidarity, including sharing a common membership in a certain community, falling under the same gender classification, and the frequency of interaction between people. The salience of these factors, they contend, must be estimated in relation to context. All these differences appear in people's politeness behaviour.

People's linguistic politeness behaviour or linguistic 'tact' as termed by Leech (1983) principally depends on the relative social distance between interactants, and entails consideration of both the roles individuals hold in a given situation as well as their degree of familiarity. To exemplify, a teacher might use an imperative form to ask a student to do his homework but not make him a cup of coffee.

Speech behaviour, according to Wolfson (1988), is typically more frequent and elaborated between acquaintances and friends than it is between intimates or strangers. Therefore, relationships that fall at both ends of the social distance scale, namely the most intimate and the most estranged are resistant to change and entail no careful work compared to relationships that fall in the middle of the social distance scale. Simply put, a seemingly similar behaviour characterises the two extremes of social distance spectrum, namely minimum which refers to intimates and maximum which refers to complete strangers. Thereby, people do not express linguistic politeness adequately to individuals who fall into these categories. Conspicuous distinctions, however, are evident in relationships that lean more toward the centre, namely acquaintances and friends using profuse and explicit politeness forms.

Clearly, the conceptualization of social distance exhibits cross-cultural variability and is interpreted differently among researchers. Generally, however, as social distance increases, there is a concomitant increase in the employment of negative politeness strategies. This appears, for example, in the enactment of expressive speech acts indirectly and elaborately. Contrarily, low social distance is reflected in the employment of positive politeness strategies, exemplified by endearments and nicknames among friends and family members.

1.8.3.9 Rank of Imposition

Considerable emphasis has also been placed on rank of imposition as a crucial factor in selecting patterns of politeness behaviour. As previously stated, Leech (1983) defines the degree of imposition as cost-benefit. Further, Beltrán and Melchor-Couto (2013) point out that the degree of imposition which relates to the topical nature of what is being refused is often conceptualised on a scale, from high to low.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) emphasise that the absolute degree of impositions in a particular culture and certain situation is conditioned by the desires' extent of the two facets of face. In requesting something, for instance, a high degree of imposition will occur if the speaker asks for a big favour, demanding significant time and effort such as borrowing a car; a moderate imposition like helping someone with their homework requires less effort or time; whilst a low degree of severity will exist in the case of small requests like passing a pen, requiring minimal effort. Thereby, the speaker must be mindful of social norms and politeness while trying to moderate the force of the FTA in order to achieve successful communication.

Since the recipient's perception of imposition depends considerably on the cultural norms of the language community, as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) regard, participants, in the current research endeavour, were asked how much of a burden or imposition they felt during speech act, classifying imposition situations from the lightest to the highest ones. In general

terms, negative politeness tends to characterise formal settings, whilst positive politeness occur more often in casual and less formal situations.

The degrees of closeness and the burden that the speaker might feel, as well as social status are prerequisites in assessing the appropriate, and may be the optimal, degree of politeness in language. Nonetheless, relative power or hierarchical status is beyond the ambit of the current study as the latter involves students of the same social status.

1.8.3.10 Gender

Gender inequity in language use has grabbed scholars' attention in various research arenas, resulting in discrepant standpoints and theories. Before digging deeper into troublesome gender issues, a clear-cut distinction has to be drawn apropos of the utilisation of the notions sex vis-à-vis gender.

Gender, as a linguistic term, refers to the grammatical category whereby word-classes are analysed and sex is signalled in the structure of human languages like Indo-European and Australian languages displaying such contrasts as masculine, feminine, and neuter. In German, for example, nouns can be masculine, feminine or neuter. In the phrase “die helle Sonne... sie scheint” (the bright sun ... it shines'), the article *die*, the adjective *helle* as well as the pronoun *sie* take a feminine form to agree with the feminine noun *sun*. Gender in such a case is referred to as grammatical gender (Swann et al., 2004, p. 121).

Gender, as a social phenomenon, has also sparked off a surge of interest among scholars, specifically sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists, and social psychologists who delved into disparities between males' and females' speech patterns across multiple linguistic contexts, often indexing various gender-based language features.

Roughly speaking, earlier studies (1960s, 1970s) prevalently used the term sex, but from the 1980s onward, gender has been more widely adopted, marking the differentiation between sex as a biological trait and gender as a social construct. Subsequently, gender has been

tackled in a piecemeal fashion as a social attribute in a large body of research on variationist sociolinguistics, language change, and interactional sociolinguistics which conceived disparity in males's and females's speech as a social phenomenon instigating social explanation. Strictly speaking, a vast bulk of early variationist sociolinguistic research has focused on male-female variation with respect to the use of prestigious forms and vernacular linguistic features besides gender-based power differences in language use.

Among the most seminal works on gender equity in language use is that of Jespersen (1922) which aligns with the Deficit theory of language and gender. Jespersen (1922) pinpointed four dimensions of women's speech, namely avoidance of taboo expressions and offensive language, competitive linguistic behaviour, engagement in interactive discourse, and adherence to traditional and conservative speech norms. Owing to their relatively substantial employment of euphemisms, courteous forms, and various politeness formulas in addition to their reluctance to use swearing, females were depicted as 'more conservative' than males. Besides, women's speech was not only delineated as diverging from men's speech patterns but also as limited in vocabulary. In the Meanwhile, genius and variability were attributed to men. In addition to being more direct than women when expressing their opinions, men were found to employ a greater range of strategies for both topic launching and development in conversation than do women. Finally, whereas women were portrayed as linguistically quicker, men were conceived as slower and are thus better.

Essentially, gender variable entered linguistics from the standpoint of sexism against women. As such, interest in gender was patently induced by the dissatisfaction with the social order and attempts to social change rather than academic contingencies. The emblem of this transition was marked by Robin Lakoff's article 'Language and women's place' (1973, 1975) which catalysed a robust body of empirical research on language and gender. Lakoff's (1973) work, being at the vanguard of feminist linguistics, ascribed gender inequity in women's

linguistic practices to their social marginalisation. It aimed at sorting out the problem of linguistic gender inequity, looking for possibility to adjust, and even change, linguistic features in a bid to correct social equity; and enriching studies on language and gender. Unfortunately, only the third goal has been largely fulfilled.

Lakoff's (1975) claims provoked both criticism and endorsement in gender-related studies. To exemplify, the study of Dubois and Crouch's (1975), convincingly refuted her postulate that women employ more tag questions than men. Eakins and Eakins (1978), on the other hand, contended that the use of such linguistic mechanisms as hedges, politeness formulas, and tag questions reinforces the subordination and marginalisation of women in academic settings. Conclusively, Lakoff's assumptions ignited a spate of research, extending to languages beyond English such as Shibamoto's (1985) study on Japanese women's language.

As a corollary, from the inception of sociolinguistic gender studies, sex-specific speech behaviour has been approached from the perspectives of Dominance and Difference seeking explanations for the reasons behind emphasising or de-emphasising gender-based disparities in language use.

Intriguingly, linguistic differences between the two genders, as per the Deficit theory, were attributable to their different personalities. Such differences, within the Dominance theory, were believed to be a by-product of power and inequality between the two sexes. In this sense, men's conversational dominance mirrors their political and cultural dominance in society. On the other hand, under the Difference theory, which proliferated in the 1980s, gendered linguistic patterns were regarded as manifestations of inter-ethnic and cross-cultural differences. Proponents of the Difference theory like Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990), to name but two authors, vouch for the view that boys and girls may acquire distinct sociolinguistic subcultures owing to their different socialisation background rather than dominance or subordination differences. Accordingly, variation in socialisation patterns led

boys to prioritise social status and self-assertion, whereas girls were gravitated toward involvement and comprehension. Hence, this theory, in rebuttal to the Deficit and Dominance theories, de-emphasised social power disparity.

Turning to some specific examples, women were proved to be more inclined to choose standard variants than men in speech communities, where standard and prestigious forms are paralleled, as New York (Labov, 1990), and Norwich (Trudgill, 1984), to mention but a few. Evidently, as it turned out, it was variationist sociolinguistics that introduced ‘gender’ as an independent social attribute, along with social class, age, and style to provide an explanation for variation and explore language change.

Overall, the central focus of gender studies was initially on how language and/or linguistic interaction consolidate uneven power relationships between men and women. Yet, researchers’ interest incrementally shifted from system oriented studies to empirical research on the relationship between gender, interaction, discourse, and communication (Pavlidou, 2011).

To wrap things up, we label someone as polite and well-bred, or alternatively as someone brusque or impolite with reference to certain features of their use of language. As suggested by Holmes (1995), politeness can be expressed via a variety of strategies even within one culture. In other words, both the cultural and social contexts are crucial in the study of politeness. Accordingly, understanding the society’s values entails an accurate identification of polite behaviour in a certain culture. Some cultures prioritise solidarity-oriented positive politeness and deeply appreciate it over distance-oriented negative politeness, while the contrary may be true in other cultures.

1.9 Mitigation

Every discussion apropos of mitigating FTAs can be subsumed under Scollon and Scollon’s (2001) surmise that “any communication is a risk to face” (p.48); it is a risk not

only to the speaker's face but also to the hearer's. For that reason, mitigation is indispensable. Fraser (1980) referred to mitigation as the modification of an act. It entails the attenuation of the imposing impact of the illocutionary force of an utterance on the hearer and reduces risks of self-contradiction and losing face through using a set of mitigating devices (Caffi, 1999). In this vein, by mitigating, interactants can avoid both running unnecessary risks and rifts in social relationships.

Mitigation falls into two categories. *Self-serving mitigation* shows the speaker's desire to be excused for performing the act in order to mitigate the hearer's unwelcome response; thereby the speaker modifies an effect which affects them. *Altruistic* mitigation, on the other hand, is modifying the impact of the utterance on the recipient. The two types of mitigation can co-occur (Fraser, 1980).

Accordingly, four aspects of mitigation were enumerated by Fraser (1980). First, mitigation is the softness of the potential unwelcome effects of an utterance on the addressee and not an existing unpleasant state on the part of them. Second, mitigation is a modification of unwelcome impacts only. Third, emphasising the force of an utterance is not a mitigating strategy. Being very effusive when thanking someone, for example, does not mean that the speaker is mitigating the effect of his utterance on the addressee.

The fourth feature of mitigation is that it is not the same as politeness. He claimed that mitigation entails politeness, whereas the contrary is false. According to him, mitigation addresses the speaker's negative rather than the positive face.

An array of linguistic and extra-linguistic devices are essentially used to assuage FTAs. A distinction is drawn between downgraders and upgraders. Downgraders enfold the mitigating devices that are used to soften request force, whilst upgraders involve devices that intensify the request force. The two categories are further grouped into internal and external softeners or modifications in relation to their location in the utterance (House & Kasper, 1981).

1.9.1 Internal versus External Mitigation

Beyond the differentiation between upgrading and downgrading modifiers, another crucial distinction emerges in the realm of mitigation, specifically, that between internal modifiers and external modifiers. Embedded within the head act itself, internal modifiers are not requisite for identifying its illocutionary force but contribute to upgrading the potential positive impact, and in the meanwhile, downgrading its negative effect. Constituting pre and post sequences, external modifiers, by contrast, are supportive elements which mainly influence the context in which the utterance is enacted, thereby indirectly modify the force of the speech act (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). See Appendix C for a synopsis of internal and external modifications.

In a similar fashion, another categorisation of supportive moves has been propounded by Leech (2014). According to him, internal modifiers fall into such categories as politeness markers (*please*), appreciative openings (*I would be so thankful if, I would appreciate it if*), downtoners like diminishers (*a bit, a little, a tiny bit*) which denote smallness of the cost to the addressee as shown in the example below:

(9) 'Can you speak up *a bit* please?

External mitigators, on the other hand, fall into such strategies as vocatives, thanks, and apologies. Further, Leech (2014) separated external modifiers from supportive moves. The term supportive move is, according to him, applicable when the head act is either preceded or followed by a stand-alone move or an independent speech act as amplified in Example (10) below where the head act (a request) is preceded by an independent apology which functions as a supportive move:

(10) 'Sorry to bother you. Could you close the door?

External modification encompasses supportive moves of various kinds such as reasons and explanations which may manifest either antecedent or subsequent to the head act as

categorised by Edmondson (1981) and Farech and Kasper (1989). Drawing upon their schemes, Blum-Kulka (2005) made a distinction between the pragmatic functions of both internal and external modification. Whilst internal mitigation addresses positive politeness, display in-group affiliation, and stresses involvement, external mitigation indicates deference, and thus addresses conversants' negative face. Contrariwise, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), emphasise that internal modifiers function as negative politeness strategies whereas external supportive moves function as positive politeness devices. The same standpoint has been espoused by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008).

A further distinction is made between mitigation and hedging. Lakoff (1973) referred to expressions like *sort of*, *kind of*, *roughly*, *pretty much*, *loosely speaking*, *more or less*, *somewhat*, *rather*, *in essence*, *strictly speaking* and *basically* as hedges. He defined hedges as the words which implicate fuzziness and thus make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. By contrast, Fraser (1980) contended that the sense of fuzziness or vagueness is different from the sense of softness associated with mitigation. Therefore, hedging words are not necessarily mitigating devices.

Glasser (2014) identified three mitigation patterns for refusal. No initial mitigation pattern involves the lack of pre refusals; initial mitigation only involves the use of pre refusals only whereas sandwich mitigation involves the use of both pre and post refusals. Different categorisation of mitigation patterns was put forward by Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010). They used the term simple verbal responses for internally-mitigated head act and complex verbal responses for externally-mitigated head acts. The latter involves supportive moves that are introductory or subsequent to the head act.

Overall, one of the most lively and contentious debates within the field of pragmatics concerns the demarcation of the elusive boundary between the universality versus culture specificity of speech acts and politeness theory. Austin (1975) and Searle (1969, 1975), for

instance, claimed for universality of realising speech act. Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), on the other hand, claimed for universality of politeness theory. In other words, speech act realisation, politeness theory, and mitigation are generally perceived universal across all cultures, even though they are susceptible to cultural elaboration (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987).

It should be emphasised at the outset, however, that our research endeavour was not intended to examine the validity of Brown and Levinson's postulate in relation to the participants' dialect. It was, rather, adopted as a paradigm for the determination of the relevant contextual variables included in the design of our data collection instruments. Besides, the face-saving strategies explicated in their postulate have also been taken into account in the categorisation of refusals.

The current study centres predominantly on the mitigating function of internal and external mitigation devices in Algerian Arabic, specifically Oran dialect. It concentrates on the selection of lexical as well as syntactic mitigators which function as downgraders, meant to internally cushion the force of the refusal head act in addition to the utilisation of pre and post supportive moves, meant to externally attenuate the refusal head act. Therefore, what is analysed in this study is the way Oran Arabic speakers mitigate their refusals to requests and the extent to which this mitigation is influenced by context.

1.9.2 Conclusion

Given that the overarching aim of this study is to look at how refusals to requests, as a dispreferred response, can be performed politely in OSA, the present chapter portrayed the theoretical underpinnings upon which our data categorisation and analysis are based. It has also given a succinct overview of existing models of refusals, politeness and mitigation. We now turn to a review of related literature, synthesising prior studies that have addressed analogous issues.

CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

A plethora of intra-lingual, cross-cultural, methodological comparisons, and interlanguage studies have been carried out on refusals from different perspectives and in various settings. Intra-lingual studies examine speech act realisation within a single language or culture, like Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) study on refusals in Mexican Spanish. Cross-cultural studies compare the realisation of speech acts in two or more distinct languages such as Kwon's (2004) comparative study of refusal strategies in Korean and American English. Studies on the methodological issues examine the effectiveness of various data collections instruments in speech acts research, like Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan's (2011) study on research methodologies in pragmatics, specifically on the data collection instruments used for eliciting refusals to requests, and Kasper and Dahl's (1991) survey on methodological issues. Interlanguage or learner-centred studies focus on non-native speakers' comprehension and performance of speech acts as compared to native speakers of L1 and L2. Sample studies include Al-Issa's study (2003) on the realisation of refusals by Jordanian learners of English as a Foreign language, Bulaeva's (2016) study on requests' enactment by Japanese and Russian native speakers and Russian Japanese foreign language learners, and Shishavan and Sharifian's (2013) research on the employment of pragma-linguistic strategies by Iranian English language learners when refusing invitations, requests, offers, and suggestions in their first (Persian) and second (English) languages, among others.

Current research on the refusal speech act offers interesting insights into the use of refusal strategies in various languages and cultures. In this respect, previous studies on the implementation of refusals fall into two primary categories. Research falling within the first category concentrated on a comparative examination of the communication norms across different languages and cultures when realising the speech act of refusal. The second category

of refusal studies pertains to inter-language pragmatics which tackled the difference between native and non-native speakers' pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996).

Our research endeavour builds upon the intra-lingual and culture specific research by pinpointing the mitigating devices speakers of OSA use in their request-refusal exchanges from socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic perspectives. Part and parcel of language, Pragma-linguistics seeks to figure out which strategies are opted for to perform an illocutionary act. Socio-pragmatics, on the other hand, aims at examining the contexts in which the selected strategies are appropriate.

This chapter undertakes a comprehensive review of existing literature, thereby constructing the conceptual base upon which this study is predicated. The first section casts a brief glance over requests and refusals in relation to politeness. The second section targets non-Arabic studies of refusals to request whereas the third section is confined to Arabic studies of refusals to request. The chapter proceeds with an in-depth examination of prior research on mitigation. The last section ends with a delineation of research gaps and a contextualisation of the present study in the research arena.

2.2 Requests, Refusals, and Politeness

Insofar as politeness is implicated, requests, according to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983) are intrinsically FTAs that need to be minimised in order to avert the possibility of risking one's face. They underscore the significance of indirectness as a polite behaviour. However, a distinction is drawn between indirectness and politeness in communication. Contrary to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) postulate, Blum-Kulka (1987) reckoned that indirectness in language does not necessarily entail politeness. It can be interpreted as impolite if it were used between close friends as Grainger and Mills (2016)

note. Similarly, Mulken (1996) posit that although indirectness does not equal politeness, it is a strategy to avoid impoliteness.

In parallel, Félix-Brasdefer (2005) posited that directness is a situation-dependent strategy that is used by Mexican speakers as an indication of closeness and affiliation rather than impoliteness. On the contrary, Chen's (2007) study on the non-compliance strategies utilised by native English speakers and those employed by Chinese EFL learners demonstrated that whereas native speakers seek to assert individuality via being truthful, clear, and direct, the EFL learners attempt to avoid embarrassment, maintain solidarity, and save face using indirectness.

The use of directness and indirectness in requests has also been tackled by, among others, Abuarrah, Lochtmann and Lutjerhams (2013), Hassan and Rangasawmy (2014), Atamna (2016), and Ghait and Khaouli (2020).

2.3 Studies of Refusals to Requests in the Non-Arab World

One of the trail-blazing scholarly contributions in the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics is Beebe et al.'s study (1990) on refusals. They delved into the speech act performance of Japanese, Hebrew, and English native speakers and Japanese and Hebrew ESL learners with a special focus on comparing Japanese learners of English with native speakers of English and Japanese. Using a DCT, they uncovered evidence of negative transfer in Japanese refusals in terms of the order, the frequency, and the content of the semantic formulas. The latter were parsed into direct and indirect semantic formulas which are linguistic expressions employed to excuse a refusal, and adjuncts to refusal which co-occur with a refusal but cannot be employed to convey a refusal on their own.

Drawing on the head act-supportive move categorisation of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) paradigm of politeness strategies, Garcia (1992) looked at the way male and female Peruvian Spanish speakers make a request and respond to it in a

bid to inspect cross-gender similitudes and/or discrepancies. Data analysis revealed a predilection for deference over camaraderie when making requests and an inclination towards establishing camaraderie with interlocutors when responding to it. Gender differences, nevertheless, displayed nothing of note.

Using naturally-occurring data, a DCT, and a metapragmatic judgement task, Chen (1996) explored the beliefs and attitudes of both native English speakers and Chinese advanced learners of English as a second language towards the way in which refusals should be expressed. Results revealed a straightforward predisposition towards truthfulness, directness, clarity, and effectiveness on the part of native English speakers and avoidance of embarrassment on the part of the learners.

Through the use of a written DCT and rating scales to gauge directness, Liao and Bresnahan (1996) found out that in a bid to swiftly terminate an awkward exchange, Chinese participants were typically more predisposed to be brief, employing fewer tokens in refusing a request. In business context, however, such behaviour might be misinterpreted by Western negotiators owing to their possible inability to deduce a refusal from unelaborated strategies. Moreover, unlike Americans who appeared to frequently use expressions of positive opinion prior to declining a request or an invitation, Chinese participants seldom opted for this strategy in order to avoid misunderstandings of later acceptance.

Analogously, Gass and Houck (1999) scrutinised the performance of refusals to suggestions, offers, invitations, and requests by native speakers of English and native speakers of Japanese with low to intermediate English proficiency. They stressed the salience of open role plays in identifying three characteristics of dynamic interaction, including confirmation, request for clarification and information, and agreement. These interaction aspects remain largely unexplored in much of the previous research on refusals.

In the same vein, Kwon (2004) examined refusal realisation in Korean and in American English taking into consideration the status of the interlocutors. She elicited such semantic formulas as statement of relinquishment and asking questions that are conspicuously absent from Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy. Her data showed that Koreans utilised more direct refusal semantic formulas and more mitigation devices than their American counterparts. Koreans exhibited a heightened sensitivity to their addressees' social standing than the American English speakers.

A more refined contribution to the analysis of refusals was proffered by Félix-Brasdefer (2006). Building upon role plays and retrospective verbal reports, he explored the refusal linguistic politeness formulas utilised by male monolingual native speakers of Mexican Spanish across both formal and informal contexts. His study focused on three aspects of politeness, including politeness system and strategy use, degree of formality, and the notion of face. His findings exhibited that face is negotiated via formulaic and semi-formulaic politeness expressions. He asserted that face needs are primarily geared towards group-related considerations, stressing involvement over independence.

In an effort to recast the issue of refusals' realisation by American native speakers and Iranian EFL learners, Allami and Naeimi (2011) explored the occurrence and composition of refusal semantic formulas in relation to learners' linguistic competence. The DCT findings uncovered differences in terms of social status among both Iranian and American speakers, and pragmatic transfer among EFL learners, advocating for the necessity of grasping the sociocultural values associated with the target language to minimise pragmatic communicative breakdowns.

Eliciting data from a DCT, Bulut (2003) dived deeper into the way speakers of American English and Turkish undergraduate students at universities in the United States and in Turkey perform refusals. Results exhibited a strikingly similar pattern in their selection of refusal

strategies. Additionally, excuse, reason, explanation, negative ability, and attempt to persuade appeared to be the most frequent strategies among the two groups. In much the same way, indirectness seems to be a predominant choice of refusal strategy by Turkish university instructors of English as Tuncer (2016) found out. Participants showed high preference for indirect refusals the most, adjuncts the next, and direct refusals the least. Besides, her data exhibited that the interlocutors' status plays a pivotal role in determining the number of refusal strategies employed.

Collecting data from three soap operas, Han (2013) found out that interactants' age was of paramount importance in selecting polite refusals in Korean language. Distance between interlocutors, however; appeared to override age differences among family members. Specifically, daughters-in-law typically used *Yo*-form and honorifics to decline their mothers-in-law's requests or suggestions. His findings indicated that circumlocution in the form of excuses and justifications was the most prevalent strategy among Korean women. Social status appeared to have a robust influence on Korean EFL learners' implementation of refusals as Lee (2013) found out.

A comparison of the way in which people deliver refusals in two Western cultures, namely Spanish and German was carried out by Siebold and Busch (2014). The key takeaway from this research is that the Spanish speakers patently inclined towards indirectness by means of reasons and explanations, postponement, and expressions of insecurity. Conversely, German speakers were more likely to employ direct rejection strategies and clear-cut answers with substantial pragmatic transparency alongside supportive moves in the form of appreciation formulas. Such strategies signal positive politeness and demonstrate German speakers' heightened attentiveness to the positive face needs of their interactants.

Using guided conversations as a data collection tool, Verzella and Tommaso (2020) undertook a cross-cultural pragmatic investigation in which they evaluated the similarities and

distinctions between speakers of American English and Speakers of Italian in terms of their realisation of refusals to request. Their conclusions disclosed that the two groups avoided refusing requests bluntly and resorted to redressive actions instead. Speakers of American English utilised such positive face strategies as praise and encouragement to attenuate the negative effect of refusals. Contrariwise, speakers of Italian were keener to employ negative face strategies by means of an array of lengthy explanations and apologies than their American counterparts. Taken together, such findings show that marked differences in relation to speech act performance can be detected even among groups of the same cultural orientation.

Insofar as social distance between interlocutors is concerned, Félix-Brasdefer (2008b) analysed refusals socio-pragmatically in two sociocultural contexts, specifically Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Results revealed that while Mexicans opted for indirect mitigated refusals, the Dominicans showed preference for direct unmitigated refusals. In other words, whereas the Mexicans demonstrated an orientation toward independence, the Dominicans exhibited an inclination towards involvement.

Using recordings of naturally occurring conversations and direct observation, Azwan (2018) parsed the effect of social distance on making refusals to request used by the members of Ambonese community in Indonesia. The findings showed that Ambonese people tend to adopt the positive politeness system in their interaction with strangers. In solidarity politeness system, when interacting with intimates, they utilise such sub-strategies of positive politeness as proposing new solutions, telling jokes, making promises, and employing various forms of address. In hierarchical politeness system, Ambonese people are more likely to be indirect using negative politeness strategies like apology, and giving deference. Likewise, Javanese teachers in Balikpapan tended to use indirect strategies which usually cause

misunderstandings according to Retnowaty's (2018) investigation of Javanese refusal strategies in relation to interlocutors' social status.

A recent study by Hayati (2024) compared adjuncts to refusals employed by Japanese native speakers and Indonesia Japanese learners in a refusal exchange across all stages using video-taped role plays in a close friend's request-refusal setting. Both groups appeared to use adjuncts in their refusal encounters; nevertheless, results yielded no statistically remarkable disparity in this regard.

In their attempt to pinpoint the favoured semantic formulas utilised by Malay university students, Abdul-Sattar, Che Lah, and Suleiman (2011) found out that regret and providing excuses or explanations were the preferred choices for declining requests. According to them, the selection of refusal strategies is highly influenced by Malay culture.

Age and socio-economic status reflected a robust effect on making refusals in English among the members of Berkum Training College in Ghana as Sarfo (2011) pointed out. According to his findings, direct refusals generally come from elder and higher-status collocutors to younger and lower-status collocutors. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, are typically inter-and-intra-age and status-based. Likewise, Salmani Nodoushan (2016) highlighted the significance of age and education in the use of performative and non-performative refusals in Persian.

Targeting the concept of face in line with such sociolinguistic variables as gender in Akan community, Agyekum (2004) averred that sometimes what men consider less face damaging women may view it as an FTA. For example, a joke may be considered less face threatening by men and as an insult by women.

A gender-based study was conducted by Ren and Woodfield (2016) on females' date refusals in popular reality TV shows in China. The primary intent of the study was to ascertain whether Chinese females express involvement or independence in their refusals. The

findings showed that Chinese females mainly used apologies and reasons. They also used, though to a lesser degree, such adjuncts as expressing gratitude and providing positive comments in conjunction with direct refusal strategies. Ren and Woodfield (2016) reached the conclusion that Chinese females exhibit a preference for involvement-based politeness over independence-based politeness system. Gender was also of central importance in the selection of rejection strategies by Germans and Japanese as Grein (2007) found out.

Moreover, the utilisation of refusal strategies by Thai EFL university students was discussed by Boonsuk and Ambele (2019). Their findings affirm that there are two main ways of enacting refusals, namely direct and indirect ways. Adjuncts to refusals; nevertheless, were not found in their data. Additionally, two novel sub-strategies, encompassing advice-giving and lack of empathy were recognised in their data.

A cursory examination of the aforementioned studies underscored the significance of social and contextual variables on the choice of directness and indirectness and other politeness features such as elaborateness and mitigation.

2.4 Studies of Refusals to Requests in the Arab World

Refusals have been subjected to in-depth scrutiny in the Arab world from different perspectives drawing on a multiplicity of data collection tools. Building upon a DCT, Al-kahtani (2005) investigated the realisation of refusals to invitation, request, offer and suggestion in American, Arab, and Japanese cultures from a cross-cultural standpoint, taking into account the subjects' social status. Differences in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas were found, but not across all situations. However, the impact of social distance and rank of imposition was beyond the sphere of his study.

A comparison between the refusal realisation strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners and those used by native speakers of Yemeni Arabic and native speakers of English was made by Al-Eryani (2007). Results revealed that the two language groups implemented an identical set

of refusals strategies. However, the contextual factors variably affected the frequency and content of semantic formulas in each language group.

Drawing upon enhanced open-ended role plays, Morkus (2009) compared the realisation of refusals to requests and offers in Egyptian Arabic by American learners of Arabic as a foreign language to that of native speakers of Egyptian Arabic and native speakers of American English, taking into consideration the social status of the interactants. He explored structure of refusals from a discourse analytic perspective. His findings exhibited important disparities between the two learners groups and native speakers of Egyptian Arabic in terms of the occurrence of direct and indirect refusals. Variation in the frequency as well as the content of refusal semantic formulas with respect to social standing has also been demonstrated in Abdul-Sattar, Che Lah, and Suleiman's (2009) intralingual study on Iraqi refusals to suggestion.

Using the DCT, Nelson et al. (2002) tackled a cross-cultural study of the commonalities and disparities between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals. Findings revealed that both groups adopt similar refusal strategies with similar frequencies of enacting refusals. The findings, however, did not unveil the socio-pragmatic complexity of refusals.

To fill this gap, Morkus (2014) carried out a comparative study of the realisation of refusals in Egyptian Arabic and American English using context-enhanced role plays. He investigated the influence of interactants' social status on the realisation of refusals to requests and offers. His findings indicated that Egyptians were more inclined towards verbosity and indirectness when interacting with someone of high social status than their American counterparts. Besides, while Egyptians opted for family-oriented reasons as supportive strategies, Americans used personal reasons instead. In the same vein, Hussein (2017) undertook a comparative study between Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers with respect to their performance of refusals to apology, request, and invitation. Hussein solicited

the realisation of refusals by means of closed-ended role plays. As a result, both groups sometimes, though not unequivocally, yielded the same results. Culture appeared to play a pivotal role in selecting such strategies as invoking God's name by Egyptians. Contrariwise, there was a little allusion to God among Americans.

Refusals in Egyptian Arabic have also been compared to refusal in Saudi Arabic by El-Dakhs (2018) using a DCT. Results exhibited that while Egyptians tended to use direct strategies and elaborate responses; Saudis used various combination patterns and displayed stronger gender-based variation.

Another gender-based study compared Saudi and American refusals to requests and invitations, and it was conducted by Al-Ghamdi and Alqarni (2019). Their findings showed that both American and Saudi females utilise the same strategies when implementing refusals, yet with different frequencies according to degree of intimacy and the social standing of the interlocutors. Likewise, both groups of participants, Jordanians and Americans, were in agreement with regard to refusal strategies. However, Jordanians exhibited a greater inclination toward adopting indirect strategies than their American counterparts according to Al-Shboul and Huwari's (2016) findings.

Refusals' appropriateness in relation to both culture and linguistic accuracy among Omani EFL university students was analysed by Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016). By means of a DCT, they elicited refusals to requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. Their research outcomes demonstrated that students' responses were mostly inappropriate and inaccurate primarily due to the strong influence of their cultural norms and their excessive use of directness, reflecting a deficiency in knowledge regarding the significance of social standing in issuing refusals.

It is worth highlighting that none of the afore-cited Arabic linguistic investigations examined the effect of the three ties of the face system on selecting the refusal strategies.

Most of research focused merely on social status. To fill this lacuna, Jasim (2017) investigated refusals of requests and offers as implemented by Iraqi Arabic speakers, British English speakers, and Iraqi learners of English in relation to the interlocutors' status, interpersonal distance, degree of imposition, and gender using both the DCT and the role-play data collection instruments. The refusals utilised by the three groups varied in accordance with the eliciting method. Moreover, the contextual factors variably influenced refusal realisation from one group to another.

The deployment of verbal and non-verbal strategies in articulating refusals in response to promotional offers in two shopping malls in Dubai has been investigated by Al-Okla (2018). The findings showed that the majority of participants tended to reject promotions non-verbally using hand gestures, avoidance, and nodding heads. Conversely, only two verbal strategies have been employed. The researcher attributed such findings to the respondents' cultural background, their English language proficiency as well as the degree of imposition on them.

From a different perspective, an accurate pragmatic analysis of presidential speeches during the Arab Spring Revolutions has been carried out by Abd El Samie (2016) with a focus on Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. She provided a rich comparison between the speeches of Bin Ali, Mubarak, and Qaddafi in terms of such pragmatic tools as speech acts, politeness, impoliteness, and deixis.

In the Algerian context, a comparative study of the linguistic politeness strategies adopted in the realisation of requests and refusals of request in both Algerian Arabic and British English has been undertaken by Lounis (2019). It found out that whereas social distance seems to heavily affect the realisation of requests and refusals in Algerian Arabic, social status is of paramount importance in British English. Thus, whereas the British participants showed an inclination towards negative politeness, Algerians, who appear to opt for

directness over indirectness in making requests and refusals, demonstrated an orientation toward positive politeness.

In an attempt to examine the sociocultural transfer in Algerian EFL learners' refusals to requests and offers, Tobbi (2024) collected her data from Algerian native speakers of Arabic, Algerian EFL learners in addition to American native speakers of English using a DCT and retrospective interviews. The findings exhibited sociocultural transfer at the level of semantic formulas' choice and content, characterised by a clear inclination towards directness, providing elaborated reasons to save face, avoiding statements of positive opinion, postponements in order not to open the horizon for later compliance, and expressing gratitude overwhelmingly.

The existing body of literature on the speech act of refusal reveals that both the linguistic as well as the cultural backgrounds shape the way refusals are expressed. Despite of the fact that no unequivocal boundary is discernible between East and West, most of the studies previously cited seem to uphold the conjecture that speakers from Western communities utilise different politeness strategies than their Eastern counterparts (Leech, 2007). It further shows that language mastery, social power, social distance, age, and gender of the interlocutors govern the choice and the frequency of verbal and non-verbal refusal strategies as well as the level of directness involved. Still, mitigation in refusals to requests has not been thoroughly studied.

2.5 Research on Mitigation

As demystified in prior iterations examining mitigation within the domain of speech acts, refusals require a lot of modifications (Caffi, 1999). Additionally, Bella (2011) suggested that like requests, refusals can be constructed as head acts which may undergo internal and/or external modification. Let us take up some of the studies that investigated mitigation in further detail.

A comparative study of the distributional patterns of politeness markers in the Dutch and French speech communities by Mulken (1996) disclosed that the Dutch tend to use internal lexical downgraders to moderate the illocutionary force of the request head act, whereas the French subjects soften their requests by adding external supportive moves. She attributed the differences in using politeness markers and repair strategies by the Dutch and French subjects to a difference in social norms.

In her study on Greek learners' divergences in applying internal and external modifications, Economidou-Koetsidis (2008) backed up Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) standpoint, lucidly arguing that internal downgraders function as appeals to the hearers' negative rather than positive face. She contended that the Greek learners of English appear to prioritise minimising impositions over emphasising closeness and involvement. She also stressed the impact of the contextual elements of power, familiarity, and rank of imposition on the amount and type of modification chosen. As viewed through the prism of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness framework, as social power, the interpersonal distance between interactants, and the weight of imposition associated with the speech act increase, the risk to face needs intensifies, warranting a higher level of indirectness from the speaker. Again, pursuant to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) postulate, greater social power, increased social distance, and a higher rank of imposition necessitate a proportionate level of attenuation from the speaker (Economidou-Koetsidis, 2008).

There seems to be an interface between regional dialectology and the choice of modification strategies as exhibited by the intra-lingual study of Félix-Brasdefer (2010) on pragmatic variation in two varieties of Spanish, specifically that of Mexico-City and San José, Costa Rica. In addition to the effect exerted by social status on the appropriate selection of modification strategies in females' requests, region appears to exert some significant effect on the enactment of requests as well.

The impact of the PSS on the choice of supportive moves by Persian speakers in their requestive speech acts has been evaluated by Salmani Nodoushan and Allami (2011). The PSS appeared to be of enormous importance not only in the selection of internal and external supportive moves, but also in the number of discourse moves in the requestive acts.

Abdolrezapour and Dastjerdi (2012) carried out a cross-cultural study on mitigation in refusals. They compared the mitigation techniques utilised by Persian and American native speakers in formal and informal refusal settings. Their results revealed that Iranians use more external mitigating devices than Americans do. Unlike Americans, Iranians appear to be more attuned to social dimensions, notably social power and social distance in their selection of mitigating devices. Likewise, social distance and social status variably affected the use of hedges and the external pragmatic modifier “Taarof” in performing refusals in Persian. Gender, however, does not seem to be an important factor in employing both hedges and the different structures of ‘Taarof’ as reported by Shobeiry (2021).

Arabic social-pragmatics, however, seems to lag behind in this regard. To distil the idea, there is a notable dearth of empirical studies pertaining to mitigation in the Arab world. Primary attention was given to the Arab ESL/EFL learners’ use of internal and external softeners in their interactions in English. Among scholarly works on Arabic that dealt with mitigation is that of Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) which compared structural composition of requests in emails produced by Jordanian non-native English speakers and American English native speakers. Their findings reported a remarkable difference in relation to the strategic use of internal downgraders. Particularly, Jordanian learners of English tend to underuse syntactic mitigators and frequently use lexical/phrasal mitigators.

In the same vein, Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) compared linguistic mitigation devices in American and Jordanian students’ requests. The findings revealed that non-native speakers used delayed requests, extensive supportive moves alongside religious expressions

which fulfil a communicative function of promoting solidarity with the requestee. The use of these strategies has also been regarded as an indicator of the learners' interlanguage communicative competence development which encompasses elements of both first and second language.

In his study of the utilisation of request mitigators by Omani learners of English, Abdul Amir (2015) found out that Omanis limit their utilisation of mitigators to syntactic devices, particularly modals. They nonetheless exhibited a discernible reluctance to incorporate lexical and discoursal mitigating devices in comparison to native speakers who used a wider range of all types of mitigators.

Using mixed and same-sex recorded exchanges by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, Al kayed, Al-zu'bi, and Alkayid (2020) investigated politeness strategies and pragmatic modifiers adopted to execute the speech act of refusal. The findings of their research demonstrated that Jordanians tended to integrate direct and indirect strategies into complex forms rather than using them separately as a polite way to save others' face. Besides, in a bid to soften their refusals, Jordanians used external modifiers more frequent than internal modifiers. Their study further suggested that the employment of both refusal strategies and pragmatic modifiers is heavily affected by culture. The impact of culture is evidently reflected in their tendency to use religious expressions to mitigate their refusals. The prevalent use of the multifunctional discourse marker, 'Wellahi', which is form of oath or swearing as a request softener is also demonstrated by Al-Khawaldeh (2018). Likewise, in her study of swearing as a refusal marker in Algeria, Bennacer (2021) found out that Algerians, irrespective of their regional belonging and the dialect they speak, employ swearing as an adjunct to refusals to save face and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Drawing upon 115 naturally occurring haggling exchanges, Boucif and Benhattab (2022) investigated the utilisation of both refusal strategies and mitigation devices by male vendors

in a popular and thriving market in Oran, Algeria. The findings exhibited a clear orientation towards indirectness and an integration of both direct and indirect refusal strategies. As for mitigation, vendors appeared to extensively use such post-externals as apology, grounders, and invoking God's name. Vendors' penchant for wordiness and elaborateness highlight the interactional function of refusals in haggling transactions.

Nevertheless, in their study of refusals to offers in Algerian Arabic, Benbouya and Rabab'ah (2022) found out that Algerian Arabic speakers opted for direct refusal strategies, specifically negative willingness/ ability, to refuse all status interlocutors' offers.

As a corollary, the social dimension of face is of considerable importance in societies like Algeria which attach greater importance to communal rather than individual propensities (Dali Youcef, 2019). In other words, the strong preference for positive politeness over negative politeness in Arab societies has been tied to their collectivist nature, wherein the needs of the group take precedence over those of individual members (Luca D'Anna, 2014).

Upon reviewing the literature, the following qualifying remarks are in order. First, an immense amount of research focused primarily on studying refusal strategies cross-culturally, with woefully scant attention paid to intra-lingual studies. Second, internal and external mitigation in refusals to request garnered little attention in the Arab region. Second, gender-related distinctions have not been given ample attention. A further drawback is the methodological approach in most studies utilising such data collection tools as the DCT which draw on limited communicative behaviour and neglect the interactional process. To fill the lacuna, the current study seeks to examine mitigation devices in refusals to requests in OSA taking into account social distance, rank of imposition, and gender using both the DCT and role play data collection instruments in conjunction with retrospective written reports.

2.6 Conclusion

The theoretical background and identified research gaps in the literature, as thoroughly articulated in the preceding chapters, proffer the impetus for the methodological approach delineated in the following chapter in which we will wade through the details of how the data were amassed, classified and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

1.3 Introduction

This chapter, which serves as the backbone of the research, perspicuously enunciates the methodological blueprint of the present study. It expounds the sample, the data collection tools, the analytic strategies, and the framework within which the results are discussed, providing a detailed overview of the experimental design.

3.2 Subjects

The selection of a pertinent sample is a prerequisite for any social scientific study that draws conclusions and makes generalisations about a large group based on observing selected members of that group to represent the whole population as it has been portrayed in Milroy and Gorden's (2003) study. Representativeness, however, cannot be attained without evading bias towards a certain group. In a bid to bypass this methodological issue, the present study opted for a randomly selected sample which comprised 200 students, evenly divided between 100 males and 100 females for the DCT and 32 (16 males and 16 females) for role plays without excluding any participant except for those who did not answer all situations. Importantly, following Fukushima (2000) who emphasised the equivalence of the two subject groups selected for study, we opted for a gender-balanced sample in order to obtain analogous responses.

The informants who took part in this study were all born in Oran and whose parents were also born or have been living since a long-run period in Oran. It should also be noted that all participants were English-major undergraduate students at Oran 2 University. This population was selected due to the researcher's convenient access to their institution. The age distribution of participants ranged from 17 to 37 years old. However, the age variable has not been taken as mandatory.

Participants were required to complete a demographic information questionnaire to obtain information on their age, gender, educational level, the length of residence in Oran, and the dialects they speak at home.

3.3 Data Elicitation

Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) stance that qualitative evaluations of facework in natural language data do not only precede quantitative ones but also bolster them, and in consideration of Kasper and Rose's (2002) and Cohen's (2004) recommendations for utilising a multi-method approach in speech act data gathering, the present study employs three data elicitation instruments, namely a DCT, an open-ended role-play supplemented by a retrospective written report.

Ultimately, taking into account the fact that applying multi-instruments of data collection will optimise the data integrity and fortify the validity of the results (Nurani 2009), the three elicitation instruments were selected for the study at hand in order to control such variables as the situation, gender, and social distance besides such pragmatic features as politeness, directness and indirectness, openings and closings of conversations (Scarcella, 1979), in addition to discourse features like repetitions, hesitations, and vagueness..

3.3.1 The DCT

Collecting data appropriately is of paramount importance in pragmatic research as the elicitation tool may shape research findings (Alcón & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Nurani, 2009). The DCT, which is the most prevalent method of pragmatic data collection, is a prompt-based language production task (Leech, 2014). The stimulus is presented in a written description of a particular situation, typically accompanied by an utterance, prompting the respondent to write a one-turn response reflecting what they would genuinely say in a comparable setting. In other words, DCTs generally comprise a concise written depiction of various scenarios

designed with respect to such social dimensions as social power, social distance, age, gender, and the rank of imposition in each situation.

The DCT was originally devised by the influential Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project research program in the 1980s. It was used to compare how individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds produced speech acts, more precisely requests and apologies.

Although DCTs have been popularised and widely applied in pragmatic research owing to its utility in collating abundant data within a short time, its reliability has been questioned by many scholars on account of several weaknesses. This data collection tool is criticised for being too artificial and as a pen-and-paper tool akin to a test-based methodology (Sasaki, 1998). Cohen (1996) pointed out that DCTs might not reflect the participants' spontaneous spoken responses in authentic discourse as participants are given ample time to reflect on and respond to the prompts. Besides, the non-verbal features that may appear in natural communicative interactions cannot be captured through DCTs. Beebe and Cummings (1996) have also criticised DCTs for its failure to capture the whole sequences of negotiation which commonly occur in real conversation by virtue of the absence of interactions between collocutors. In other words, as the DCTs provide a single turn response, the patterns of refusals, politeness, and mitigation that occur in longer spontaneous encounters may not be wholly conveyed.

Moreover, DCTs have been criticised on the grounds that the situations lack full authenticity and people's responses in the hypothetical situations may differ from their responses in real ones on account of the fact that the hypothetical situations in DCTs are simplified versions of the complex interactions in authentic discourse (Nurani, 2009).

Despite its drawbacks, the DCTs enable the researcher to amass a large amount of data within a relatively short timeframe (Beebe and Cumming, 1996; Gass & Houck, 1999),

control the influence of various sociolinguistic variables on speakers' selection of the pragmatic forms (Houck & Gass, 1999; Kwon, 2004), and bring out model responses which are likely to emerge in impromptu exchanges (Nurani, 2009).

3.3.2 Role play

A role play is a piece of play acting that simulates natural real-life spoken interaction. As such, it represents a compromise between a pre-planned structured data collection method and natural data. Role-plays have been subdivided by Kasper and Dahl (1991) and others into closed role-play and open ended role-play. A closed role-play is seen by Félix-Brasdefer (2006) as a verbal counterpart of a DCT. In a closed role-play, participants receive a situational prompt and articulate a single-turn oral response. It does not allow a free complete interaction. Conversely, in an open-role play, subjects are instructed to read a scenario provided by the researcher and to spontaneously role play a response. It facilitates the control of multiple variables and the gathering of complete conversational interactions, including its openings and closings as Félix-Brasdefer (2006) noted. Besides, both the contextual framework of the interaction and the variables intervening in it are amenable to control (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011).

Overall, role play serves as a means of data elicitation that allows the researcher to account for the influence of various sociolinguistic variables on speakers' selection of the pragmatic forms, represent an approximation of complete conversational interactions and discourse phases.

Notwithstanding, many drawbacks have been set forth against this technique of response elicitation. That is, the reliance on role-plays rather than authentic material entails certain limitations. The fact that respondents may perform situations that never happened to them may force unnatural behaviour and the findings might be problematic (Cohen, 1996) besides the constrained sample size involved in the oral task. Moreover, the transcription of

voluminous conversational exchanges may be very time-consuming (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011).

In an attempt to assess the reliability of the instruments used for data collection and to ascertain representiveness to the construct, pertinence, and commonness to the subject, the scenarios were carefully designed to require students to enact a role that essentially mirrors the routines of their day-to-day encounters. The initial draft of the situations was assessed by a pilot study which took place in 2021. Ten students took part in this pilot work to specify the extent to which they deemed the scenarios plausible and to weigh up the severity of imposition in each situation. By a

nalysing informants' responses which revealed that certain situations were not concurrent and others induce agreement rather than refusal, we made some adjustments so as to ensure the probability and recurrence of these scenarios in their daily life and thus meet the study's aim.

The DCT consists of four request situations, in which the distance between interactants and the rank of imposition are varied. Social power, however, is set as equal, and thus not treated as a situation determinant in the present study. The subjects were tasked with immersing themselves in the given scenarios and record their responses in the designated space on the test. Correspondingly, subjects were also instructed to read the four situations thoroughly and play roles they exhibit in real life settings in order to implement their refusal speech acts as natural as possible. One participant functioned as the requester and the other played the role of the requestee who made a dis-preferred response to a request lodged by someone of the same gender. Each situation is depicted based on two variables, including social distance (+D or -D) and rank of imposition (+R or -R), and classified according to Scollon and Scollon (2001) politeness systems.

Situation 2 was adapted from Esther Usó-Juan (2009, pp. 65-99), St1 and St3 from Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011, pp. 47-87), St5 from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), and St4 was designed by the researcher.

Table 3.1

A Detailed Description of the Four Scenarios of the Role-play and DCT Data

	Social Distance	Rank of Imposition	The Situational Description
Deference Politeness System	+D (acquaintances)	-R	A student refuses lending class notes to another student.
	+D (strangers)	+R	A student refuses watching the books of another student in the canteen.
Solidarity Politeness System	-D (friends)	-R	A student refuses going to the library with their friend
	-D (close friends)	+R	A student refuses going downtown with their close friend.

Note. The symbol + signifies a high rank of imposition and distance between participants whereas the symbol - indicates a low rank of imposition and distance between participants.

Of note, again, the hierarchical politeness system which is predicated on power differences does not fall within the scope of the current study. A further noteworthy point affined to the data-gathering tools is that all scenarios were composed in Oran dialect and written in Latin script. (See appendix A for a thorough description of situations).

3.3.3 Retrospective Written Reports

Echoing Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) stance which emphasises that the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods will not yield effective politeness analysis unless the

interactants' judgements are also taken into account; we fell back on a retrospective written report to cement our role-play data.

As contended by Mackey and Gass (2005), verbal reporting is a post-hoc interview that is based on gathering reports, by asking individuals to recall and articulate their thoughts, actions, or decisions right upon completing the task. Accordingly, immediately following the conclusion of the role-plays, retrospective written reports in the form of a follow-up interview were disseminated in a bid to probe into the social perceptions of politeness.

Drawing upon a modified version of Félix-Brasdefer's (2008a) retrospective verbal report, we asked our participants questions regarding the severity of the request, the use of directness, indirectness, and persistence in request-refusal interactions as clearly shown in Appendix A.

3.4 Procedures

The data were elicited in dyadic conversations in four situations, each with a different degree of imposition and social distance. For the DCT, participants were requested to read carefully a situational description of all scenarios and, by jotting down their answers, complete a short dialogue scenario as if they were engaged in a real conversation. The role plays, on the other hand, were audio-recorded. All role-play interviews were held at a classroom at the department of English. Notably, all excerpts selected for illustration in the present study were transcribed verbatim in accordance with Jefferson's transcription conventions (2004) as demonstrated in Appendix B.

The DCT and role-play data underwent both qualitative and quantitative analysis. For the qualitative analysis, each DCT and role-play response was unpacked through the lens of Edmondson's (1981) discourse-level analytic framework in order to have a grip on refusals over stretches of discourse, especially for role-play data.

1. Pre-posed supportive moves: are openers that alert the addressee's attention to the upcoming act.

2. Head Act: expresses the main act.
3. Post-posed supportive moves: justify, attenuate, and conclude the interaction.

Taking into consideration their pragmatic function, all strategies adopted in the execution of refusal speech act were further categorised into direct refusals, indirect refusals, and pre and post external supportive moves adopting tailored versions of prior classification schemes. An in-depth breakdown of all amendments is detailed in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 below. All responses were systematically coded by the researcher with the help of three speakers of Oran dialect in pursuit of consistency in coding.

As for the quantitative analysis, frequency counts of refusal strategies and the mitigating devices utilised by each participant in response to each request situation were calculated and compared in accordance with the social variables of gender; social distance, and rank of imposition. Both the DCT and role-play data were subsequently analysed quantitatively by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), version 20. Two statistical procedures, namely Pearson Chi-square (X^2) and Fisher Exact Tests were used to detect any statistical significance of the association between the socio-pragmatic factors and refusal patterns as well as mitigation strategies; differences were interpreted as significant at a threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

However, it warrants clarification that Fisher Exact Test was employed when the Pearson Chi-square test's assumption which stipulates that the expected frequency of each cell should be at least 5 is violated. Consequently, Fisher Exact Test calculator was applied to obtain the p-value when the cell counts are too small for the Chi-square analysis, i.e., more than 20% of the cells have expected frequencies less than 5. In a bid to ensure reliability and validity, in either test, Cramer's V was taken into consideration in case of statistical significance in order

to determine the effect size which refers to the degree of association between the categorical variables. The thresholds¹ used are as follows:

Effect size	Interpretation
$V = 0$:	No association between variables.
$0 < V \leq 0.1$:	Weak association.
$0.1 < V \leq 0.3$:	Moderate association.
$0.3 < V \leq 0.5$:	Strong association.
$V > 0.5$:	Very strong association.

3.5 Segmentation of Refusals in the Present Study

The focal point of refusals' categorisation in the present study is the concept of 'move', which refers to the meaning conveyed by an utterance. From a discourse analytic perspective, a move corresponds to a segment of an utterance, a minimal utterance unit, which may function as an opening move, follow-up move or closing move (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Conceptually speaking, this term is equivalent to Beebe et al.'s 'semantic formula' as both are centred on the pragmatic function of utterances. This notion is espoused in the current study to refer to any utterance unit that serves a pragmatic function. In this regard, a refusal move, with its boundary delimited by its semantic content, bears the speaker's refusal intent.

For practical purposes, each request-refusal episode will be dissected into one move that fulfils the pragmatic function of a central declination and other miscellaneous strategies like apology, explanation, and joking that, oftentimes, counteract the potential face-threat. Let us consider the example below, which exemplifies a request-refusal episode comprising long turns of refusal which is, in turn, divided into moves. Each move's boundary is demarcated by

<https://youtu.be/wZeCM8ordWk?si=LpPLAqlObqYxntJ1>

[] and the coding associated with each refusal move is clearly highlighted in boldface. The English translation of moves is italicised.

Requester: “xti maʃli:f tʃedi ʃli:jjə ktobæti bi:læma dert lla: ʃæn fə lla: kɒnti:n?”

Sister, can you watch my books until I do my queue for buying food?

Refuser: “ʔæ: [semhi:li] **apology** xti [mənəʒʒemʃ] **neg ability** [pa:sku: ʃandi examen darwək] (.)

Ahh sorry, sister, *I cannot because I have an exam, so I am really sorry*

explanation, [so (.) desolé bæzz æ f]”**apology**

As can be seen, refusal utterances enacted by the refuser in Lines 2 and 3 were coded as a declination executed by means of various moves. As mentioned earlier, taking into account its semantic content and function, utterances were segmented into moves. In the excerpt at hand, the first move is an apology which functions as a preface to the direct refusal ‘negative ability’. The other two strategies, explanation and apology, are supportive moves which demonstrate the speaker’s endeavour to be cooperative while refusing the request.

Seemingly, we did not assign the status of move to the delaying marker ‘ahh’ neither to the address term ‘xti (sister)’ because of their lack of semantic transparency, i.e., they do not align with the established conception of a move which pertains to the semantic content of an utterance. As such, they are conceived as interactional features ancillary to refusals head acts or other supportive moves, specifically ‘openers’, which help the recipient to figure out the speaker’s intent.

Given that refusals’ structure in our dataset align with Beebe et al.’s scheme, we have adopted most of their category labels, including ‘negative ability/willingness for direct refusals, and reason, excuse, explanation, and statement of principle for indirect refusals, pause fillers and statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement for adjuncts to refusals.

The labels of some categories were altered in a tangential manner to fit in refusal moves that emanated from our data. The direct refusal strategy ‘explicit refusal’ has been adopted from Shishavan and Sharifian (2013) and ‘double negation’ from Félix-Brasdefer (2008b) to replace Beebe et al.’s direct strategies.

We adopted Félix-Brasdefer’s (2008b) ‘partial repeats’ to replace ‘Repetition of part of the request’ which is a sub-category of Beebe et al.’s ‘avoidance’. Both ‘joking’ which is a sub-category of ‘avoidance’ and ‘criticise the request/requester’, which is a sub-category of ‘attempt to dissuade the interlocutor’, were coded as separate categories of refusal moves. ‘Apology’ and ‘alternative’ substituted Beebe et al.’s ‘statement of regret’ and ‘statement of alternative’, respectively. Al-Issa’s (2003) ‘future acceptance’ and ‘conditional acceptance’ were used as substitutes for Beebe et al.’s ‘Promise of future acceptance’ and ‘set condition for future or past acceptance’, respectively. The ultimate version of the categorisation scheme is conspicuously depicted in Appendix C.

3.6 Taxonomy of Mitigation Devices in the DCT and Role-Play Data

Concerning mitigation, we drew on the classification schemes brought about by Edmondson (1981), House and Kasper (1981), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Barron (2003), and Economidou-Kogetsidis’ (2008) with some amendments to accommodate mitigation to refusal moves that emerged from our DCT and role-play data.

For internal syntactic downgraders, we adopted ‘interrogative’ from House and Kasper (1981), but substituted Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) ‘embedded if clause’ by Economidou-Kogetsidis and Woodfield’s (2012) ‘conditional structures’. With regard to lexical downgraders, we have taken ‘cajoler’ and ‘downtoner’ from House and Kasper’s (1981) research. Address terms, coded as supportive moves in some studies such as Shishavan and Sharifian (2013), were treated in our study as internal softeners when immediately accompanying head acts.

With respect to supportive moves, in addition to the refusal moves that were used as head acts as explained earlier, we adopted ‘Preparators’, and ‘Grounders’ from House and Kasper (1981). ‘Request for information’ which has appeared exclusively in the role play data, has been adopted from Al-Issa (2003). Following Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010), we added ‘closing’ as a post-external mitigator and included greetings, vocatives, pause fillers and hesitators under the umbrella term ‘Openers’ which substituted ‘Alerter’. We also included ‘counter-factual conditional’ from Bella (2014).

In addition to the aforementioned alterations, we added ‘religious markers’ as a culture-specific supportive move which encompassed a miscellaneous collection of such sub-categories as swearing and God wishes, and ‘repetition of a mitigator’ which refers to any strategy that has been used more than once. The final version of the categorisation scheme of mitigators adopted for the current study is portrayed in Appendix C.

In nutshell, after the classification of the refusal strategies and mitigation devices adopting the taxonomies elucidated above, data were further analysed in accordance with Scollon and Scollon (2001) politeness system, bearing in mind the social factors of gender, social distance, and degree of imposition.

3.7 Conclusion

Upon the establishment of the methodological framework, the ensuing chapter provides a thorough portrayal of the findings amassed from the DCT data. A meticulous discussion of the primary findings in light of the extant literature is presented thereafter.

CHAPTER FOUR:
QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS
FROM THE DCT DATA

Chapter Four: Qualitative and Quantitative Findings from the DCT data

4.1 Introduction

Throughout earlier chapters, we have extensively addressed speech act theory, politeness, and mitigation, topics we deem directly pertinent to the study of refusal speech act and, therefore, integral to the overarching preview. A critical component of this thesis, this chapter captures the main findings of a rigorous examination of the DCT data, identifying refusal patterns, types of mitigation devices as well as the significance of gender differences across situations.

4.2 Categorisation of refusals in the DCT and Role-play Data

The transcribed data were coded building upon a tailored version of Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy which classified refusals into three categories, specifically direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals (see Appendix C). Both direct and indirect refusals were categorised as head acts whereby the act of declination was enacted; whereas adjuncts were described as modifiers that flank refusal head acts but cannot function as a refusal as they do not carry the full illocutionary force of the speech act in question like refusal.

However, in the present study, in instances where a direct refusal strategy occurred, it was designated as the head act and any accompanying strategies, including both indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals, were classified as external mitigators since they are employed to mitigate direct refusals. Otherwise, the first indirect strategy in the sequence, an apology, for instance, was coded as the refusal head act. The elements preceding or following the refusal head acts were coded as pre- and post- external mitigators, respectively. Accordingly, refusals are treated as combinations of head acts and pre and post external mitigators (supportive moves).

Overall, each refusal utterance was analysed as encompassing units in terms of semantic formulas that might be utilised to realise the act in question (Cohen, 1996). Any accompanying strategies were analysed as supportive moves.

If someone, for example, said, in response to a request made by a classmate borrowing class notes, “I would love to help, but I can’t lend my notes right now. I need them for revision. I am awfully sorry”, this refusal was analysed as comprising four moves and coded as below.

Table 4.1

An Example of Data Coding

Move	<i>I would love to help</i>	<i>But I can't lend my notes right now</i>	<i>I need them for revision.</i>	<i>I am awfully sorry.</i>
Coding	Statement of positive feeling (supportive move)	Negative ability (refusal head act)	Explanation (supportive move)	Apology (supportive move)

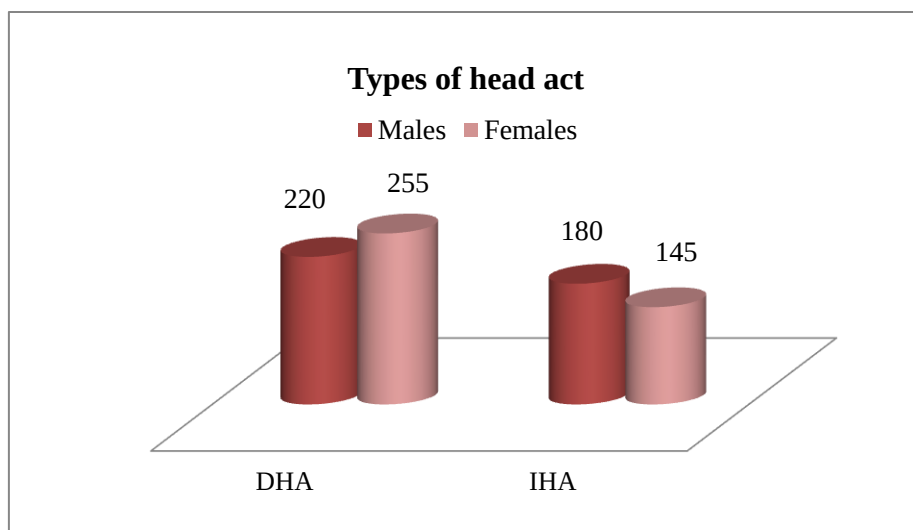
4.3 Overall Distribution of Refusal Strategies in the DCT Data

4.3.1 Head act Strategies in the DCT Data

As Figure 4.1 below exhibits, a total of 475 direct head acts (220 by males, 255 by females) and 325 indirect head acts (180 by males, 145 by females) were used participants in response to four different requests situations, each with a certain degree of rank of imposition and social distance.

Figure 4.1

A General Breakdown of Refusal Head Act



In detail, as shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below, participants tended to use higher frequency of DHAs in the deference politeness system (247 DHAs) than in solidarity system (228 DHAs). Considering gender, males used 113 DHAs whereas females used 134 DHAs in the deference politeness system. However, in the solidarity politeness system, males employed 107 DHAs whilst females utilised 121 DHAs. That is, females are more direct than males in the two politeness systems.

Figure 4.2

Males' Use of DHAs and IHAs across the Four Situation

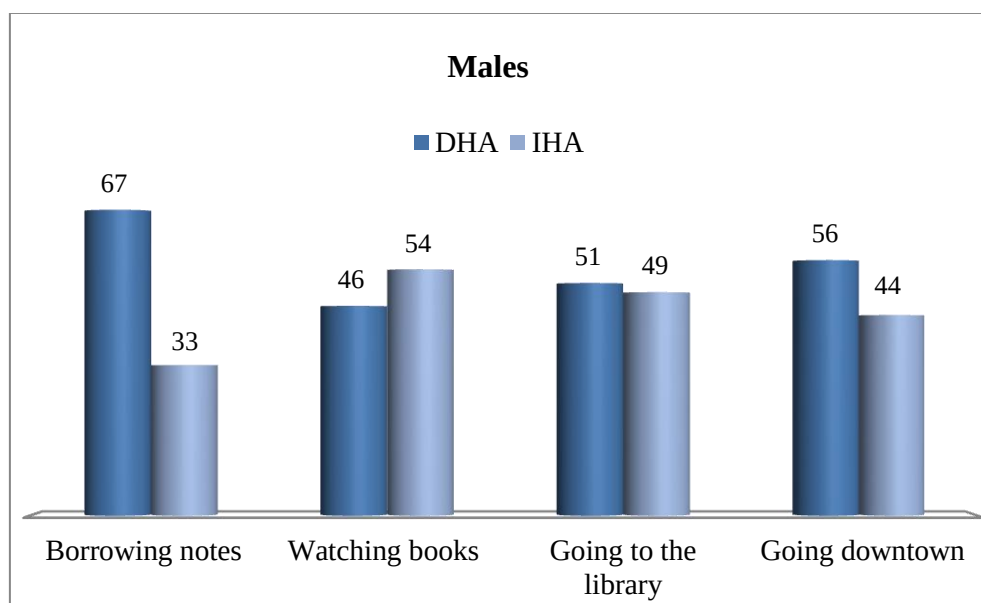
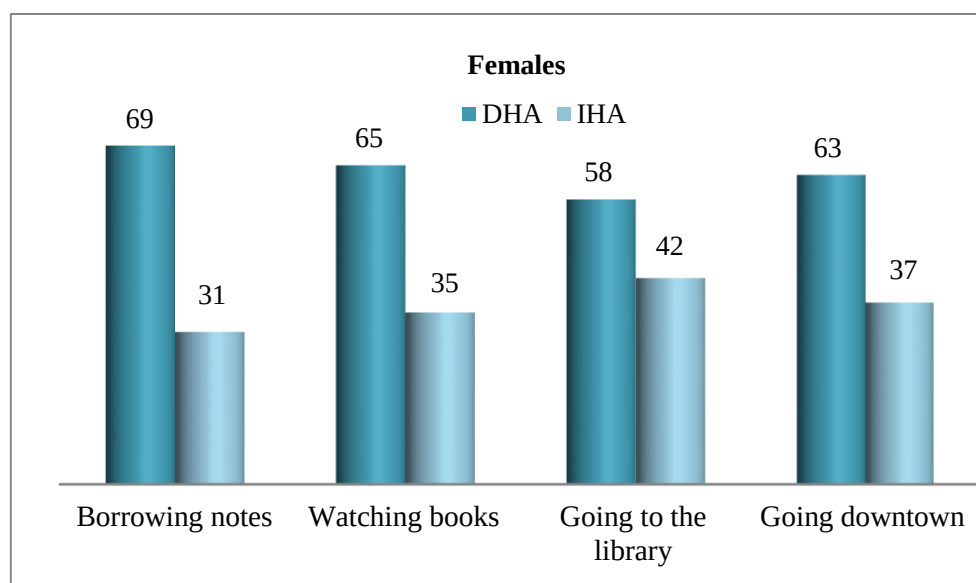


Figure 4.3

Females' Use of DHAs and IHAs across the Four Situations



Clearly, a close look at the type of head act selected for each situation discloses that males and females employed both direct and indirect refusals with almost the same frequencies in St1, St3 and St4. In St2, however, males and females exhibited interesting variability regarding the selection of refusal head act and, even more so, the difference is statistically significant. Phi and Cramer's V effect size measurement (see Section 3.4 above) revealed that the association between gender and the type of head act is *moderate* ($0.1 < V \leq 0.3$) as Table 4.2 below shows.

Table 4.2

Significance of Gender in Relation to the Type of Refusal Head Act across the Four Situations

	Type of refusal head act			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.762	.007*	.320	.313
Cramer's V effect size	.191			

Note. *Indicates that the type of refusal head act used by males and females in St2 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

A thorough analysis of the data did not only exhibit differences between the two genders in terms of the type of refusal head act across the four situations, but also differences with regard to strategy selection in the utilisation of direct and indirect refusals. A meticulous description of these strategies is depicted below.

4.3.1.1 Direct Head Acts

Explicit refusals, which are classified under the category of non-performative statements in Beebe et al. 's classification system, consisted of expressions like 'lla' (No), 'makænf kɪfæh' (No way), 'mohæl' (It is impossible) and 'Jamais' (never) by which a request was directly turned down. It appeared 161 times in the dataset.

Statements of negative ability/willingness such as 'mənəʒʒemʃ, mənqadʃ' (I cannot) which denote speaker's inability to comply with the request was the most frequent refusal strategy (226 instances).

A combination of such direct strategies as 'Non, mənəʒʒemʃ' (No, I cannot) has also been noted as a direct refusal in the responses of participants. Out of 475 of direct refusals, 88 instances of double negation were observed. Consider the following examples.

- (1) [lla xti] **DHA : Explicit refusal** nesħaqqah, ʔæna tæni xasʃsʃni nrivi:zi

No sister, I need it; I have to revise too.

- (2) [mɔʔa:di:ʃ nəʒʒəm nʒi mʃæk sʃa:ħbi] **DHA: Neg ability** ʔi smehli ʃandi examen final yadwa.

I will not be able to come with you dude; just forgive me. I have a final exam tomorrow.

- (3) [lla sʃa:ħbi mənqadʃ] **DHA: Double Negation** parce que j'ai un examen dans quelques minutes

No, dude, I can't because I have an exam in a few minutes.

As it appears in Examples (1), (2) and (3) above, the illocutionary force of the refusal head act is straightforwardly articulated through explicit refusals, negative ability/willingness, and double negation, respectively. It is worthwhile that many instances of recycled refusals were identified in the data. However, they were dispensed with as they were used to confirm refusals and upgrade their illocutionary force.

Regarding the type of direct head act strategies in relation to the four situations, participants used the highest frequency of direct head acts (136 times) in St1 followed by 119 instances in St4. DHAs were used in approximant frequencies in St2 (111) and St3 (109).

Negative ability/willingness was the most frequent direct strategy in St1 (84 instances). However, in St4, explicit refusals were the most frequent (53 instances). That is, direct refusals are more likely to be utilised among friends even if the rank of imposition is high. Double negation was used in approximant frequencies in the four situations. Table 4.3 below displays the frequency of direct head acts in the four situations.

Table 4.3

Overall Distribution of DHAs by Gender and Situation

DHA strategy	Situation								Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D -R)		Watching Books: (+D + R)		Going to the Library: (-D -R)		Going Downtown: (-D +R)		
Explicit Refusals Negative Ability/willingness Double Negation Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
	15	12	18	24	22	17	23	30	161
	41	43	21	28	20	32	19	22	226
	11	14	7	13	9	9	14	11	88
	67	69	46	65	51	58	56	63	475

Considering gender, direct strategies accounted for the majority in all four refusal situations, especially among females. Even so, results yielded no statistically significant difference in the

frequency use of direct refusal strategies with regard to gender, social distance, and rank of imposition as Table 4.5 below indicates.

4.3.1.2 Indirect Head Acts

Seven indirect strategies employed as head acts were recognised in our data, including ‘apology’, ‘excuse, reason, explanation’, ‘alternative’, ‘criticise the request/requester’, ‘joking’, ‘conditional acceptance’ and ‘future acceptance’. All strategies are illustrated below.

1. Apology: which is categorised as an independent strategy (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b), is the indirect strategy most frequently attested in the data. It comprises 122 instances out of 325 indirect head acts. Speakers of Oran dialect used such apologetic expressions as ‘smehli’ ‘je m’excuse’ and ‘desolé’ (Sorry). The first expression is illustrated in Example (4) below

(4) [smehli] **IHA: Apology**, xas^ss^sni nrɔ:h.

Sorry, I have to leave.

2. Excuse, reason, excuse: is the strategy by which participants provided reasons to realise their refusals indirectly as Example (5) illustrates. It represents 116 instances out of 325 total indirect refusals.

(5) [l-bi:s ya:di jqalleʃ] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation** xalli yadwa nrɔ:hɔ ləl-bibliothèque

The bus is about to leave; let us postpone going to the library until tomorrow.

3. Alternative, which is classified as an independence strategy (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b), signifies the requestee’s non-compliance with the request, but proposes an alternative. It is usually construed as an avoidance strategy. It constituted 38 instances of the refusal to requests strategies adopted by the participants. Below is an illustration of the employment of the alternative strategy by a male participant when refusing a stranger’s request for watching books.

(6) [xu:ja yi gu:l l-wahda::xor] **IHA: Alternative**

Brother, *ask someone else*.

4. Criticise the request/ requester: in this indirect category the refuser criticises the requester or insinuates that the request is inappropriate. Since this strategy is powerfully impolite as stated by Bousfield (2008), its existence as a supportive move is regarded as an FTA that intensifies refusals. Therefore, it is accounted only when occurring as an IHA and any other occurrence is dispensed with. In Example (7) below, this strategy was used in response to a request made by a friend.

(7) [ra:k tʃu:f bʃajni:k belli l-bi:s ya:di jqalleʃ wənta tgu:lli tʒi mʃæja?] **IHA:**

Criticise the request/requester

You see with your own eyes that *the bus is about to leave, and yet you ask me to accompany you* (to the library)?

5. Joking: is an avoidance strategy that was used particularly among friends to avoid a direct reply. This strategy amounted for only a minority of the total instances, with 12 occurrences.

(8) (laughter) [tʃabgi tʃabgi] **IHA: Joking**; ra:ni vraɪ ʃajæna

(laughter) *off you go!* I am really tired.

6. Conditional acceptance: in this strategy the speaker sets conditions for complying with the request. Consider Example (9) below.

(9) [sʰahha, maʃli:ʃ besʰsʰah si'il te plait metʰtʰawli :ʃ] **IHA: Conditional**

acceptance parce que ʃandi examen darwək, 5 min xti ,OK ?

Ok, that is fine, but please do not stay long because I have an exam now_5 minutes, okay?

It is noteworthy that this strategy also includes a sub-strategy referred to as counter-factual conditionals. The latter is utilised as a substitute to Beebe et al.'s set condition for future or

past acceptance strategy to put off a request by providing a hypothetical condition under which compliance would occur or would have occurred as shown in Example (10) below:

(10) [ku:n ʒa ʕandi l-weqt nxelli:hom ʕandi] **IHA: Counter-factual conditional** mais

darwək læzəm nfawwət exam mabqa:ʃ bəzzæf. Semhi:li xti

‘If I had time, I would have kept it with me, but now I have an exam and not much time left. Sorry, sister.’

7. Future acceptance: this strategy, as defined in the prior section, is employed as a substitute to Beebe et al.’s (1990) promise of future acceptance whereby the refuser makes a promise to comply with the request at later time to moderate the illocutionary force of refusal as illustrated in Example (11) below.

(11) [xatʕra ʒæjjə] nʃa:llah **IHA: Future acceptance**

Next time, God willing.

The future acceptance strategy occurred seven times only displaying the lowest frequency of all indirect refusal strategies. It, even more intriguingly, appeared only among friends in the solidarity politeness system. This is attributable to the influence of social distance on performing refusals as well as the nature of the request acts representing deference politeness system which do not entail any future possibility for compliance.

With regard to the effect of gender on using indirect refusals, male participants employed more indirect refusals (180 instances) than their female counterparts (145 instances). Men used higher frequencies of apology (71 instances), reason, excuse/explanation (66 instances), and future acceptance (six instances) than women and similar frequencies of alternative (19 instances), and joking (six instances). The presence of the other strategies, namely conditional acceptance and criticise the request/requester is quite limited, and no significant difference was observed between the two genders in this respect. Notably, males were more likely to refuse requests indirectly than females.

Concerning the employment of indirect refusal head acts in relation to social distance and rank of imposition, participants used the highest frequency of indirect head acts (91 instances) in St3 (-D -R). High frequencies of apology (90 instances) were used in the two situations in which the social distance between interlocutors was high. However, it was less frequent among close people (32 instances). On the contrary, excuse, reason, explanation was mostly used among friends (74 instances) compared to distant people (42 instances).

Conditional acceptance was most frequent in St2, especially among females (8 out of 11 instances) and rarely appeared in the other situations. Interestingly, both joking and future acceptance were used among friends only and were not employed in the two first situations. Likewise, criticise the request was mainly used among friends in St3 and St4. All details are displayed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

Overall Distribution of IHAs by Gender and Situation

IHA strategies	Situations								Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D –R)		Watching Books: (+D + R)		Going to the Library: (-D -R)		Going Downtow: (-D +R)		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Excuse, reason, explanation	8	6	19	9	19	19	20	16	116
Apology	19	19	32	20	11	10	9	2	122
Alternative	6	5	2	1	6	5	5	8	38
Conditional acceptance	0	1	1	5	2	1	0	1	11
Criticise the request / requester	0	0	0	0	4	3	5	7	19
Joking	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	2	12
Future acceptance	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	1	7
Total	33	31	54	35	49	42	44	37	325

From a statistical point of view, however, none of the aforementioned indirect strategies exhibited statistically significant differences. The table presented below epitomises the results

of Chi-square and Fisher's Exact Tests for both direct and indirect refusal strategies, respectively.

Table 4.5

Chi-square Test for the use of DHA and IHA Strategies

		DHA and IHA strategies			
		Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
DHA	Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.701	.812	.226	.587
IHA	Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)	.909	.134	.855	.272

After figuring out the different types of direct and indirect strategies employed as refusal head acts, we will probe into the way they are structured. In what follows, a perspicuous categorisation of refusal head act based on the elements that can appear internally within the head act itself and the peripheral strategies that support it is adduced.

4.4 Structure of Refusal Head Acts

The internal structure of refusal head acts falls into four patterns. The distinction is based on whether the refusal is realised directly or indirectly without using any internal and/or external mitigation device (unmitigated head act), an internally mitigated head act accompanied by internal mitigators, an externally mitigated head act accompanied by supportive moves. The latter can be subcategorised into: pre-externally mitigated head act (supportive moves + head act), post-externally mitigated head act (head act + supportive moves), and pre-and post-externally mitigated head act (supportive moves + head act + supportive moves). The fourth pattern is internally-and-externally mitigated head acts. All patterns are lucidly illustrated below.

4.4.1 Unmitigated

- (12) [mara:kf tʃu:f fɪjja ra:ni mɔaleq ləl-bus? bæyi jɾə:h ʃlɪjja?] **IHA: criticise the request/requester**

Don't you see that I am in a hurry to catch the bus? Do you want me to miss it?

In this example, the speaker bluntly refused his friend's request to accompany him to the library using 'criticise the request/requester' strategy without using any internal or external redressive strategy. It goes without saying that giving such a clumsy refusal to an acquaintance or a stranger may threaten their positive face.

4.4.2 Internally-Mitigated

- (13) [ra:ni ʔajæn] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation** [sʰa:hbi] **term of address**

I am tired, *dude*.

Plainly, the speaker refused his friend's request to go downtown with him using an indirect refusal head act 'excuse, reason, explanation' accompanied by a mere attempt to mitigate it internally by means of a term of address.

4.4.3 Externally-Mitigated

4.4.3.1 Pre-Externally-mitigated

In Example (14) below, the speaker selected three pre-external mitigators, including an apology, a religious marker, and a grounder to preface the forthcoming refusal head act of a request made by stranger (watching books).

- (14) [semhi:li xti] **apology** mais [wəllah] **religious marker** [ʃandi examen] **grounder**
[mənqɑdʃ nʃedhəmlək] **DHA: neg ability/willingness**

Sorry, sister, but I swear to God that I have an exam, I cannot keep an eye on your books.

4.4.3.2 Post-Externally-Mitigated

In Example (15), in reply to a request made by a friend to bring a book from the library, the requestee initiated his turn with a direct refusal strategy ‘double negation’ followed by two supportive moves, involving ‘grounder’ and ‘joking’ to cushion any possible offence on the requester. The use of name-calling by addressing the requester with unreal name ‘Mazouni’ dissipates the offense even further.

- (15) [lla, manzemʃ] **DHA: double negation** [xasʰsʰni nerkeb fəl-bus] **grounder**, [ha ʒbedha matʃajjini:ʃ Mazu:ni] **joking**

No, I cannot. *I have to take the bus. Off you go, don't drive me crazy, Mazouni.*

4.4.3.3 Pre-and-Post-Externally Mitigated

Four supportive moves were employed in different external positions in Example (16) below. The direct head act is prefaced by a religious marker in the pre-external position followed by ‘apology’, ‘grounders’ and ‘alternative’ in the post-external position.

- (16) [wəllah] **religious marker** [manqad] **DHA: neg ability** [smehli] **apology** [ʃandi examen ra:ni mqaleq bezzæf] **grounder** [ʃu:f li ɡudæmi] **alternative**

I swear to God, I cannot, sorry. I have an exam; I am really in a hurry. Ask those sitting in front of me.

4.4.4 Internally-and-Externally Mitigated

This pattern of refusal head act structure combines both internal and external mitigators. In Example (17) below, the requestee declined a request made by a classmate implicitly using an indirect refusal head act ‘apology’, internally mitigated by means a ‘term of address’ and supported by two external mitigators, including ‘statement of principle’ and an ‘alternative’.

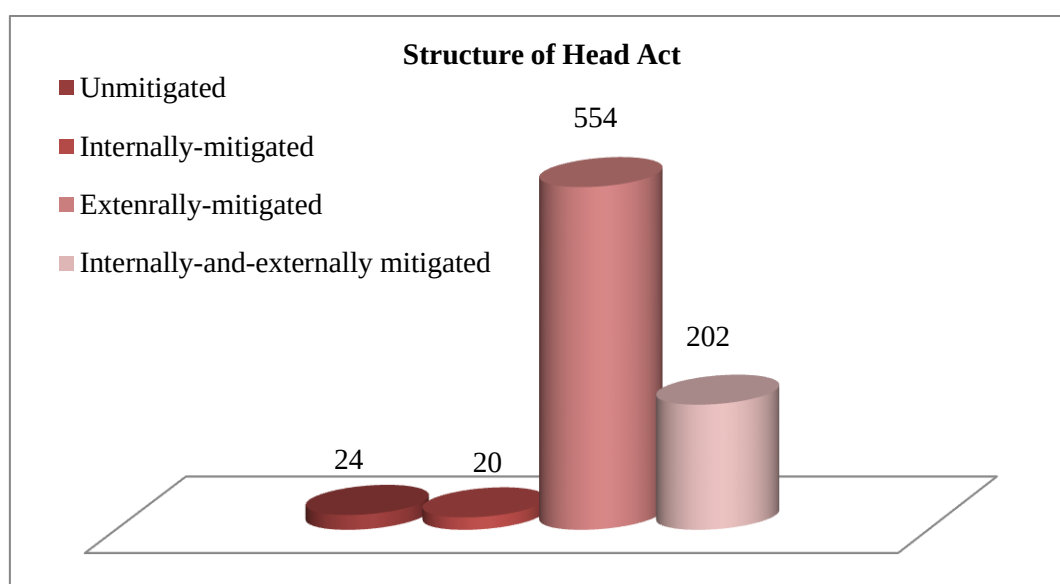
- (17) [xti] **term of address** [semhi:li] **IHA: apology** [ʔæna manebyi:ʃ nsallef sʰwa:laħ taʃ qra:jti] **statement of principle** [jla byi:ti nsʰawerlək les leçons wnarsellək] **alternative.**

Sorry, sister, I do not lend out my study stuff. If you want, I can take pictures of the lessons and send them to you.

From a statistical standpoint, as Figure 4.4 below shows, externally mitigated head acts were the most prevalently used by participants (554 instances) followed by internally-and-externally mitigated head acts (202 instances) and then unmitigated (24 instances) whereas internally mitigated head acts were the least frequent of all (20 instances). These results show that participants are more likely to use mitigated than unmitigated head acts, specifically externally-mitigated acts.

Figure 4.4

Structure of Refusal Head Act in Relation to Mitigation



We now shift our focus to the way males and females structure their refusals across the two politeness systems. Arguably, the internal structure of head act discernibly differs in relation to social distance between interlocutors and rank of imposition.

As displayed in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 below, externally-mitigated head act were predominantly used in the four situations by all participants. More specifically, women tend to use this type of head act very noticeably in St3 (88 instances) and St4 (83 instances) in which social distance is low, compared to men who used 66 externally-mitigated head acts in

St3 and 68 in St4. Besides, participants, especially males, unequivocally resorted to internally-and-externally mitigated head acts, in St1 (30 instances), and St2 (47 instances) reflecting the salience of both social distance and the rank of imposition on placing mitigators within or outside a head act. Unmitigated head acts, on the other hand, were used only 24 times. 22 of them were employed in the solidarity politeness system and only two instances in the deference politeness system. Internally mitigated head act was the least frequent structure. The lowest frequency of this type of head act structure was attested in solidarity politeness system. That is, unlike unmitigated head acts, internally-mitigated head acts were very seldom found among friends.

Figure 4.5

Males' Choice of the Internal Structure of Refusal Head Acts across Situations

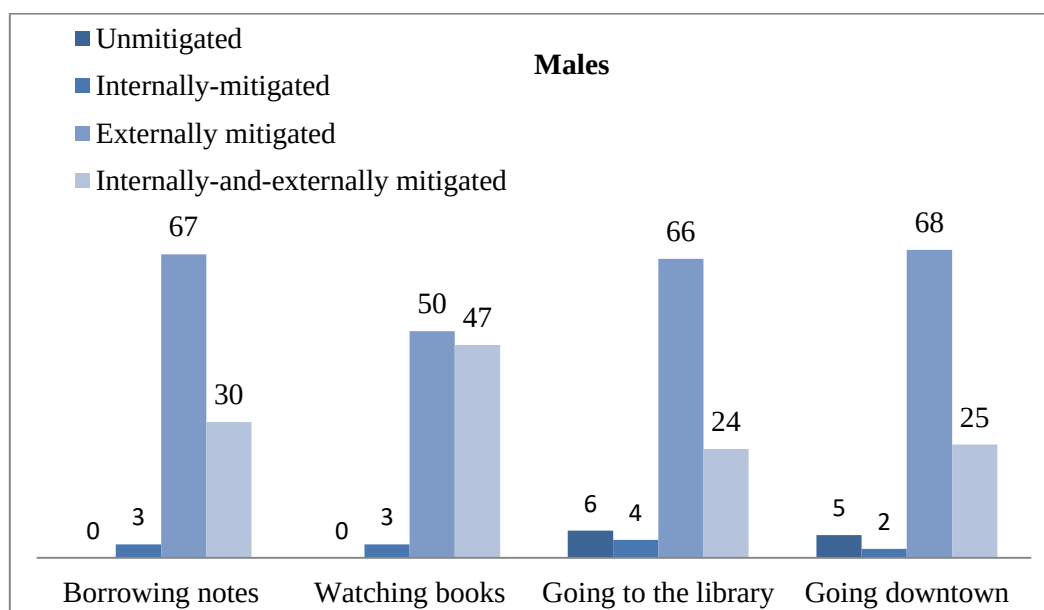
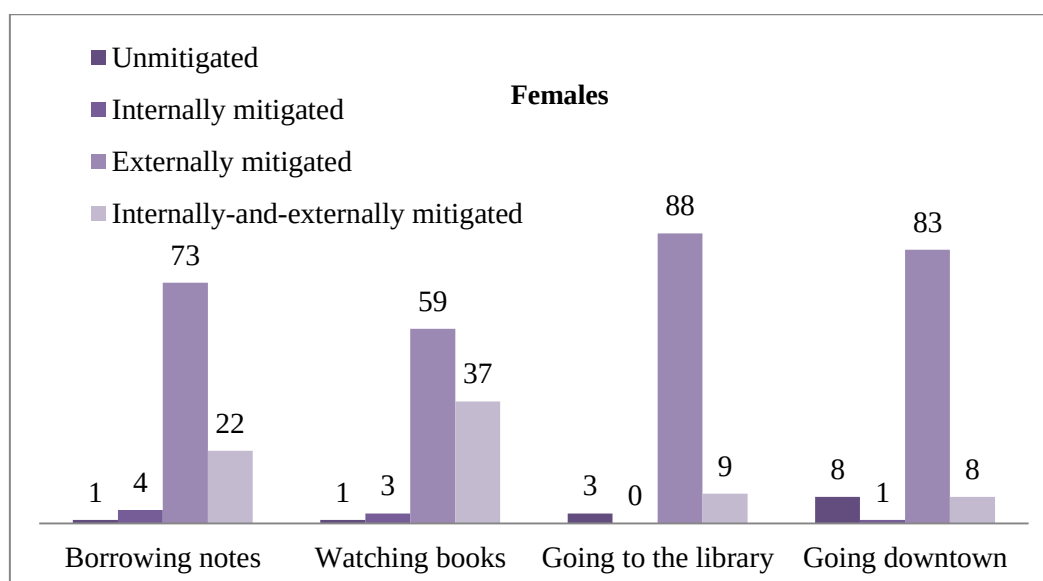


Figure 4.6

Females' Choice of the Internal Structure of Refusal Head Acts across Situations



On the whole, the difference between male and female participants in deciding the internal structure of refusal head acts in relation to both social distance and rank of imposition proved to be statistically significant $\text{sig} < 0.05$ in St3 and St4 according to the results of Fisher's Exact Tests displayed in Table 4.6 below. Plainly, the association between gender and the structure of head act is *moderate* ($0.1 < V \leq 0.3$).

Table 4.5

Significance of Gender in Relation to the Structure of Refusals across the Four Situations

	Structure of Refusal Head Act			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)	.429	.389	.001*	.005*
Cramer's V effect size			.274	.237

Note. *Indicates that the structure of refusal head act used by males and females in St2 and St3 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

In the next section, all mitigation devices including internal and external mitigators employed by males and females in each politeness system will be illustrated.

4.5 Mitigation Devices in the DCT Data

This section looks into the devices employed by male and female participants within and outside the head act to assuage the severity of their refusals across both deference and solidarity politeness systems. All mitigation devices will be first elucidated and then statistically analysed.

As stated before, a refusal head act can be internally mitigated using syntactic and/or lexical downgraders, or externally mitigated through pre and/or post external mitigators or supportive moves. All these strategies are copiously explicated and illustrated in the following section.

4.5.1 Internal Mitigation Devices

Mitigating the speech act of refusal internally might be achieved by both syntactic and lexical means. Two syntactic downgraders (15 instances) and 3 lexical downgraders (206 instances) were identified in the data. That is, the first observation to be made is that few instances of syntactic downgraders were used by participants compared to lexical downgraders. The latter type of internal mitigation has prevalently been used in St1 (54) and St2 (87) compared to St3 (32 instances) and St4 (33 instances) which implies the significance of social distance on using lexical mitigators. Furthermore, 579 head acts across the four situations were not mitigated by either type of internal downgraders. More specifically, the absence of internal mitigation primarily characterised St3 (163) and St4 (164), especially among females who used 316 internally-unmitigated head acts compared to 263 head acts by males. This indicates that internal mitigation is greatly used among distant interlocutors as Figures 4.7 and 4.8 below show.

Figure 4.7

Males' Use of Internal Mitigators

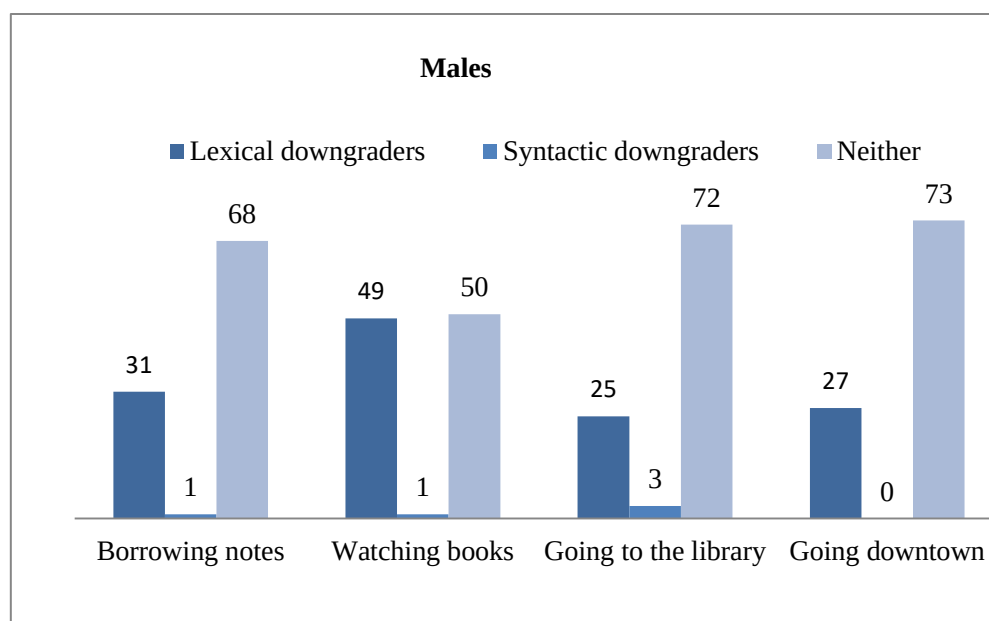
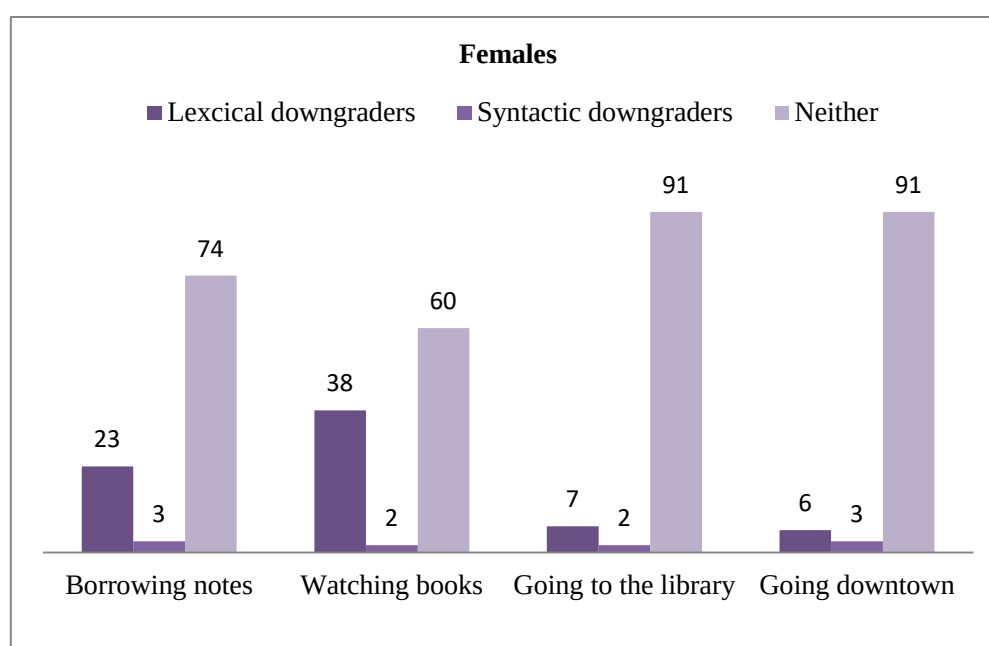


Figure 4.8

Females' Use of Internal Mitigators



In what follows we thoroughly investigate the way participants soften their refusals to requests internally by means of syntactic and lexical softeners and the extent to which the contextual factors influence their choice.

4.5.1.1 Lexical Downgraders

Three categories of lexical downgraders were employed by participants to mitigate refusal head acts internally, including Cajolers (seven instances), downtoners (26 instances) and terms of address (195 instances). Relevant examples of lexical mitigation are provided below.

- **Cajolers:** are defined as gambits operating at the interpersonal level of discourse with the aim of restoring a harmonious relationship between individuals (Trosborg, 1995). Participants used such expressions as ‘ra:k tʃu:f’ (you see), ‘ra:k ʃærəf’ (you know) to mitigate refusals internally. In Example (18) below, the requester declined a request made by a classmate by means of a reason supplemented by ‘teʃarfi’ (you know) as an internal downgrader.

(18) [teʃarfi] **Cajoler** [ʔæna tæni mərə:ni:ʃ hækma h̩aba wə mərə:ni:ʃ gæʃ kætba ra:ni nqa:reʃ fi sʰahbeti taʃtʰi:ni] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation.** Sorry!

You know, I didn’t understand anything either, and I didn’t take any notes. I’m waiting for my friend to share hers. Sorry.

- **Downtoners:** include the adverbial sentence modifiers used to mitigate FTAs. Only one category of this mitigation strategy was attested in the data ‘just’ which accompanied apology head act and occurred 26 times. It is illustrated in Example (19) below.

(19) [ʃi] **downtoner** [smehli] **IHA: apology** sʰa:hbi [term of address] wəllah lə-ra:ni mqa:leq xali:ha h̩ta l-yadwa nrə:h̩o fi rah̩ba

Just forgive me, my friend, I swear, I am in a hurry. Let’s hold off until tomorrow so we can go together.

- **Address terms:** a gamut of terms of address were employed by participants to modulate the effect of a refusal, including endearment terms of address such as ‘h̩bi:ba’ (sweetheart) , ‘ma Cherie’ (my dear), kinship terms such as ‘xti’ (my sister) , ‘xu:ja’ (my brother), and ‘sʰa:hbi’ (my friend), evaluative terms like ‘ra:ʒel zzi:n’ (good man), and religious titles like

‘lhæʒ’ (pilgrim). Example (20) below illustrates the use of the address term ‘ma Cherie’ which internally mitigated a direct refusal.

(20) [Non [ma Cherie], je ne peux pas] **DHA : double negation.**

No, *my dear*, I can’t.

Importantly, the general outcomes with respect to the use of internal mitigation disclosed statistically significant differences in the amount of lexical downgraders employed (228 instances). Particularly, forms of address, which occurred 195 times in the four situations, displayed the highest frequency of all lexical downgraders.

With regard to the effect of gender on using lexical downgraders, males used more lexical downgraders (132 instances) than their female counterparts (74 instances). Notably, high frequencies of the three mitigators were used by males as indicated Table 4.7 below.

Insofar as the impact of social distance and rank of imposition on using lexical mitigators is concerned, the highest frequencies of forms of address and downtoners were used by participants in St1 and St2 in which social distance is high regardless of the rank of imposition whereas cajolers were mainly used, albeit scarcely, among friends regardless of the degree of imposition.

Table 4.6

Use of Lexical of Downgraders by Males and Females across Situations

Lexical downgraders	Situations								Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D –R)		Watching Books: (+D +R)		Going to the Library: (-D -R)		Going Downtow: (-D +R)		
Cajolers Downtoners Terms of address Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	7
	7	1	12	1	3	0	2	0	26
	31	22	47	38	22	6	24	5	195
	38	24	60	39	27	7	27	6	228

4.5.1.2 Syntactic Downgraders

As mentioned before, incorporating syntactic downgraders into a refusal head act serves to tone down the likely perlocutionary impact of an utterance on interlocutors (House & Kasper, 1981). Conditional structure was the most frequent strategy (13 instances) followed by interrogatives (only two instances). The two subtypes of syntactic downgraders attested in the data are elucidated below.

- Conditional Structures: the requestee, by means of a conditional clause, is able to distance the requester from the reality of the situation and shift focus to a hypothetical scenario and, thus, mollify the force of refusal by exhibiting a can-do attitude under different circumstances as Example (21) below illustrates.

(21) [ku:n maʃandi:f sʷa:laḥ darwæk nʒi mʃæk] **IHA: counter-factual conditional**,
dommage.

If I were not busy now, I would come with you, alas.

- Interrogatives: refusers tend to avoid outright rejection by means of interrogative forms as they sound less confrontational than statements, thereby, minimise the risk of offending and disappointing the requester. In the following example, alongside the use of indirect refusal to avoid causing offence, the refuser opted for using a syntactic mitigator, namely the interrogative ‘ʃlæʃ’ (why) to internally mitigate the head act.

(22) [ʃlæʃ] **interrogative** [metxali:f ḥta nkemlo les examens gæʃ wndi:ro sortie kbi:ra
bɪnætna ḥna les filles gæʃ ensemble, ra:sʷna xa:wi ?] **IHA: alternative**

Why don't you postpone it until the end of exams so that we can all go out together?

With regard to the effect of gender on using syntactic mitigators, conditional structures were used by both males and females whilst interrogatives were used by females only.

As for the effect of social distance and rank of imposition, conditional structures were used in approximately the same frequency in the four situations whereas interrogatives were used only among friends in St3 and St4 regardless of the rank of imposition. However, the three factors did not display statistically significant difference owing to the underuse of syntactic mitigators. Consider Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.7

Use of Syntactic Downgraders by Males and Females across Situations

Syntactic downgrader	Situation								Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D -R)		Watching Books: (+D +R)		Going to the Library: (-D -R)		Going Downtown: (-D +R)		
Conditional structure Interrogatives Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
	1	3	1	2	3	1	0	2	13
	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	1	3	1	2	3	2	0	3	15

On the whole, a dramatic disparity between males and females has been attested in relation to the utilisation of internal softeners, with males displaying a significantly higher proportion of lexical downgraders than females

By and large, the relation between gender and the selection of internal mitigators appears to be statistically significant in St2 and St3 with a *moderate* and *strong* effect size, respectively as seen in the following table.

Table 4.9*Significance of Gender in Using Internal Downgraders across Situations*

	Type of internal downgraders			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)	.310	.333	.001*	.001*
Cramer's V Effect size			.250	.303

Note. *Indicates that the use of internal downgraders by male and female respondents in St2 and St2 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

After looking at the different types of syntactic and lexical softeners which mitigate refusal head acts internally, we will shift our focus in the subsequent section to the three types of external mitigation devices as well as the various patterns of each type. The frequency of each mitigation device and pattern will also be reported and analysed at length.

4.5.2 External Mitigation Devices

In tandem with, or instead of, internal mitigation, the refuser might also soften the refusal speech act by means of external softeners. External mitigation devices, which include supportive moves introductory or subsequent to the refusal head act, go under the name of pre-and post-external mitigators. The following categories of external mitigation are set up: pre-external mitigation, post-external mitigation, and pre-and-post-external mitigation. These three major categories, encompassing a number of sub-categories, are displayed below.

Facework primarily involved the deployment of external mitigators. The vast majority of participants used external mitigation in their refusals to requests across the four situations. As Figure 4.9 below brings out, a significant portion of refusals (538 out of 800) fell into the category of post-externally mitigated head acts. Pre-and-posted external mitigation amounted

to 161 occurrences. Among all responses, refusals involving pre-externals amounted to 55 occurrences, whereas refusals without external mitigation were limited to 46 instances.

Figure 4. 9

Participants' Overall Use of External Mitigation

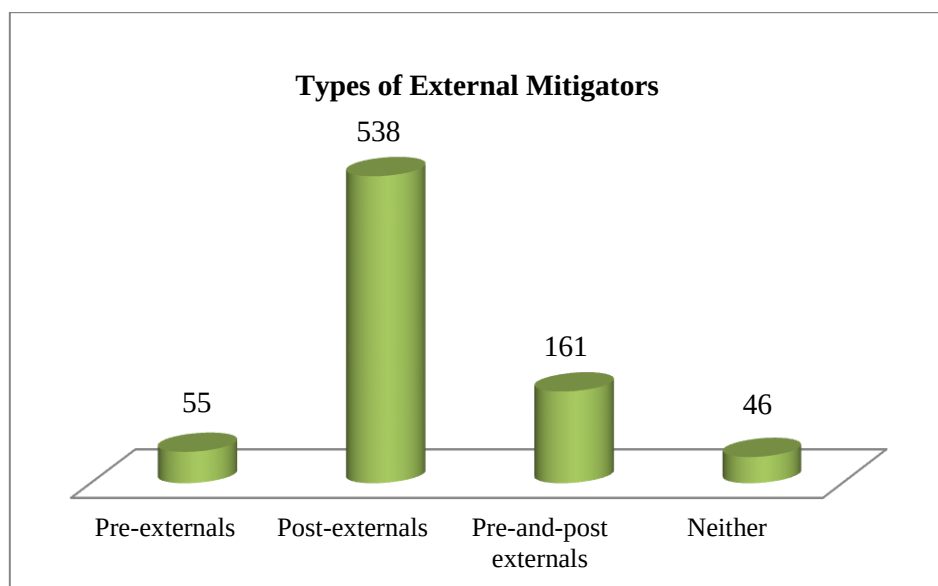


Figure 4.10

Males' Use of External Mitigators

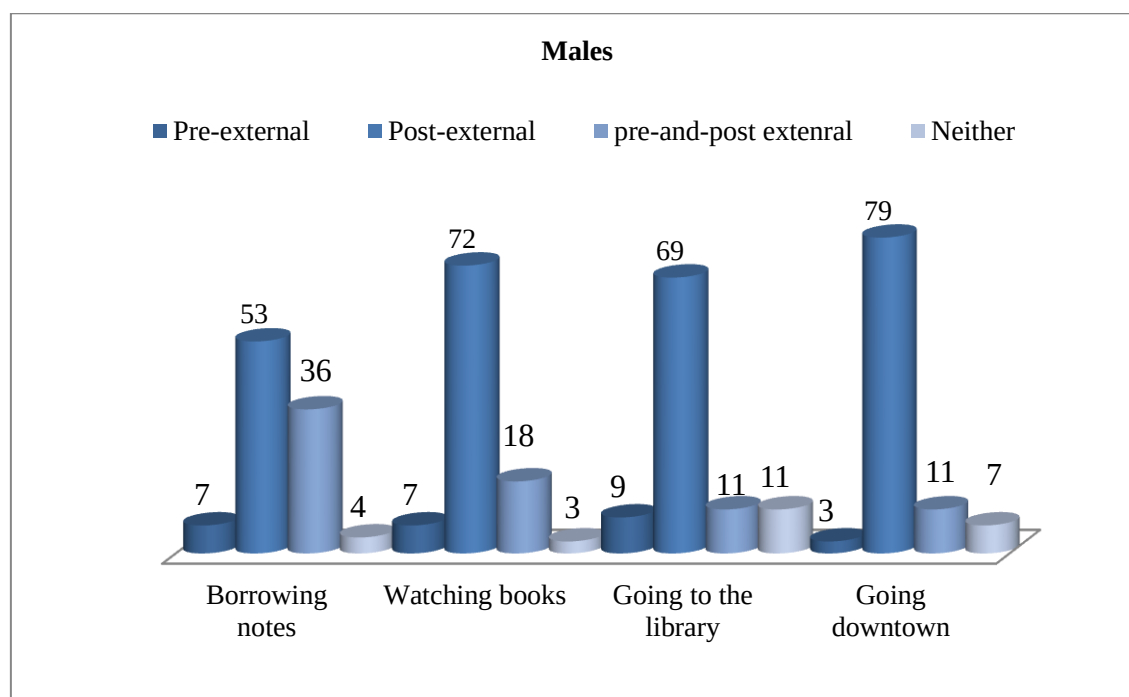
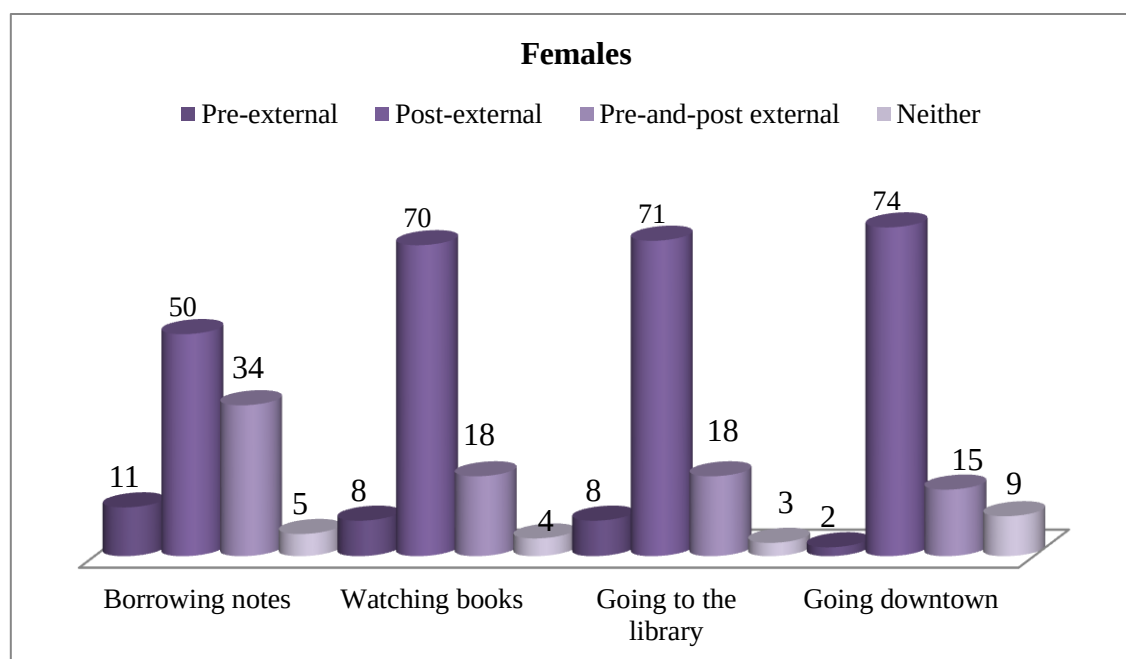


Figure 4.11*Females' Use of External Mitigators*

With respect to the possible effect of gender on selecting the type of external mitigation, no substantial difference was found in any situation as displayed in Figures 4.10 and 4.11 above. Besides, there seem to be almost no statistically significant association between the gender of refusers and the kind of external mitigation in the four situations as displayed in the Chi-square tests in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.8*Significance of Gender in Using External Mitigators*

	Type of external mitigators			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.786	.983	.096	.772
Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)				

4.5.2.1 Pre-External Mitigators

Eight pre-external mitigation strategies were employed by participants, namely openers, preparators, grounders, apology, alternative, statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, religious markers, and joking. These mitigation strategies are demystified below.

1. Openers: participants prefaced their refusals with such mitigation devices as terms of address, vocatives, pause fillers, hesitators, attention getters, and greetings. Since none of these strategies was used in isolation as a mitigator, we considered them ancillary to one main strategy ‘openers’. Hesitators, for instance, were either adjacent to the refusal head act or accompanying to other pre-external supportive moves.

2. Preparators: are the utterances used by a refuser to indicate that a refusal will follow their statement as described by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

3. Apology: the expressions ‘smehli’, ‘desolé’, ‘je m’excuse’ (I am sorry) were the main apology strategies used to preface refusals. Participants used this strategy to express their bad feeling for rejecting the request.

4. Grounders: providing the reason behind the rejection was one of the main pre-external strategies utilised by participants. Elaborate reasons and different categories of excuses were utilised to mitigate refusals such as excuses related to family and health.

5. Religious markers: such religious markers as ‘ḥa:llah’ (God willing), ‘wəllah’ (I swear), and ‘lla:h ya:leb’ (such is life) were used by participants seemingly in order to dissipate any threat on the hearer prior to the performance of rejections.

6. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement: was employed pre-externally to express positive opinion and feeling towards the request and denote one’s inability to comply with. This strategy included such expressions as ‘normal’ and ‘pas de problème’ which translate to ‘no problem’; ‘medabija’ and ‘j’aurais aimé’ which translate to ‘I would love to’.

7. Alternative: this strategy also very seldom occurred as a pre-external mitigator. It appeared exclusively in the situations which represent the deference politeness system (St1 and St2).

8. Joking: participants resorted to humour and light-hearted comments before declining requests in order to make declination less likely to offend requesters.

The following are excerpts from the dataset that exemplify the aforementioned pre-external mitigation devices. The refusal head act is denoted as HA, the boundary of each supportive move is demarcated by square brackets [], and the coding of both HA and supportive moves is highlighted in boldface. The English translation of moves is italicised.

(23) [jæ meʃandekʃ gæʃ zhar] **Preparator** [ʃandi ɣadwa examen] **HA: excuse, reason, explanation**

Oh you are out of luck. I have an exam tomorrow.

(24) [jæ xu:ja **Opener**] [wəlleh] **Religious marker** [medabɪja] **Statement of positive opinion/ feeling or agreement** [bsʰa:h ra:ni vraɪ mɔaleq ra:ni rɔ:tʰa:r bæʃ nrɔ:h nexdəm] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation**

oh, brother, I swear, I would love to, but I am really in a hurry. I am late for work.

(25) [Desolé] **Apology** [l-bi:s ɣa:di jɔalleʃ] **Grounder** [mənəʒʒemʃ nrɔ:h mʃæk] **DHA: Neg ability**

Sorry, the bus is about to leave. I cannot go with you.

(26) [nɔad narsellək tsʰa:wi:r jla ra:k bæyi] **Alternative** [bsʰa:h mənɔadʃ nsalleflək l-ka:ʒji kɔ:mpli] **DHA: Neg ability**

I can send you pictures of lessons if you want, but I cannot lend you the whole notebook.

(27) [ʔæwdi hæ rɔ:h] **Joking** [ɣa:di jɔalleʃ l-bi:s] **Grounder** [makænʃ kifæʃ] **DHA: Explicit refusal**

Oh off you go. The bus is about to leave. No way.

The frequency of each pre-external strategy found in the data are presented in numbers, including strategies that stood alone as pre-externals as well as those that were combined to form combination patterns. Consider Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.9

Overall Distribution of Pre-externals by Gender and Situation

Pre-external mitigator	Situation								Total
	Borrowing Notes : (+D –R)		Watching Books: (+D +R)		Going to the Library: (-D –R)		Going Downtown: (-D +R)		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	9	7	3	3	1	3	1	6	33
Preparators	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	6
Grounders	2	5	9	8	10	11	6	6	57
Apology	29	31	8	17	8	7	2	5	107
Alternative	2	3	0	0	1	1	1	1	9
Statement of positive opinion	4	3	3	6	2	3	1	1	23
Religious markers	9	5	9	7	7	6	2	2	47
Joking	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
Total	56	56	32	42	30	33	14	22	285

The sole noticeable difference in relation to gender is the prevalent use of apology by females (60 instances) compared to males (47 instances) across the four situations. The other pre-externals, however, recorded approximant frequency. As for social distance and rank of imposition, the highest frequency of pre-externals was in St1 (112 occurrences), followed by St2 (74 occurrences), St3 (63 occurrences), and St4 (36 occurrences). Seemingly, participants employed a large number of pre-externals when communicating with distant people. Presumably, the level of familiarity between interactants overrides the degree of imposition.

In a detailed manner, the most frequent strategy is apology (107 occurrences) which recorded high frequency in St1 (60 instances), followed by grounders (57 instances) with its highest frequency in St3 (21 instances), religious markers (47 instances) with approximant

frequency in St1, St2, and St3, and a very low frequency in St4, and openers (33 occurrences) were mainly used in St1 (16 instances). The highest frequency of statement of positive opinion was in St2 (nine occurrences) and that of alternative was in St1 (five occurrences). Correspondingly, preparators mainly appeared, albeit rarely occurred, in St1 (three instances). Joking, which occurred only three times, was utilised specifically among friends when the rank of imposition is low. However, Chi-square tests for the pre-externals that witnessed gender disparity, namely openers ($p=.118$) and apology ($P=.054$) exhibited nothing of note.

By and large, the highest frequency of most of pre-externals was attested in situations where social distance is high. Conversely, the lowest frequency of most of pre-externals was attested in situations where social distance is low regardless of rank of imposition. Therefore, social distance heavily affects the use of pre-externals.

Concerning patterns of pre-externals, the mitigation devices elucidated above were combined by participants resulting in 12 combination patterns employed pre-externally. Only three of them were used more than once. An illustration of the latter patterns is as follows.

1. **Grounder + Apology**

- (28) [ra:ni ra:jeħ nfawwæt] **grounder** [yi smahli ħbi:bi] **apology** ħandi examen darwæk
[mənazʒem] **DHA: neg ability**

I have an exam, sorry sweetheart. I have an exam now, I can't

2. **Statement of positive opinion + Religious marker**

- (29) [J'aurais aimé nʒi mʕæk nra:fgek] **statement of positive opinion** [wəllah]
religious marker [mais ra:ni mʕalqa wjli:qli nrɔ:ħ] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation.**

I would love to accompany you, I swear, but I am in a hurry, I have to go.

3. **Grounder + Joking**

(30) [nti mahbu:la ra:ki beyjetni nbæt berra?] **joking** [l-bi:s ya:di jqalleʕ] **grounder** [w

ʔæna je ne peux pas] **DHA : neg ability**

You are crazy! You want me to spend the night outside? The bus is about to leave.

I can't

It is abundantly clear, in Table 4.12 below, that participants relied prominently on individual strategies to assuage refusals pre-externally rather than combination patterns. The sole observable difference is the use of *Grounder + Apology*, and *Grounder + joking* patterns among friend in St3 (D- R-). Besides, no gender disparity was detected in this regard.

Table 4.10

Frequency of Pre-external Combination Patterns

Pattern of pre-external combination strategy	Frequency								Total
	Situation								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Grounders + Apology	0	0	1	3	4	3	0	0	11
Statement of positive opinion + Religious markers	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Grounders + Joking	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total	1	0	1	3	5	5	0	0	15

4.5.2.2 Post-External Mitigators

Ten post-external mitigation strategies were used by our participants when refusing requests. Six of them were used as pre-refusals too, including apology, grounder, religious makers, statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, alternative, and joking. The rest of strategies occurred as post-refusals only, involving statement of principle, conditional acceptance, future acceptance, and closing. An illustration of all post-external strategies is as follows.

- Statement of principle includes resorting to moral beliefs to soften the refusal.
- Conditional acceptance includes setting conditions for complying with the request and even counter-factual conditionals whereby a hypothetical condition under which compliance would occur or would have occurred is accentuated in a bid to assuage the potential negative impact of refusals.
- Future acceptance signals that the requestee is unable to accept the request immediately but leaves open the possibility of fulfilling it at a later time.
- Closing includes the use of thanking formulas like ‘sʰahi:ti’ (thank you) and appreciation and religious markers manifested as supplications for Allah to reward the requester such as ‘lla:h jəstər ʕli:k’ (May Allah protect you) to terminate the refusal sequence. An illustration of all post-externals is as follows.

(31) [Mənəzzemf nqɑ:raʕlək] **DHA: neg ability** ... [semhi:li] **Apology**

I can’t wait for you. *Sorry.*

(32) [yti semhi:li] **IHA: apology** [ʔəna manebyi:f nsallef sʰwa:lah tæʕ qra:jtɪ]

statement of principle

Sister, forgive me. *I do not lend out my study stuff.*

- (33) [ʕandi examen darwək] **IHA: Reason/ excuse/explanation** [besʕsʕah tqad txa:li:h
ʕandi, xa:li:li nɪmi:rɔ tæʕək ki nkamel examen nzi:blək l-ktu:ba tæwʕək]

Conditional acceptance

I am heading into an exam now. *Let me get your phone number, and I will call you afterward to return your books.*

- (34) [semhi:li] xti **IHA: Apology** ...[lu:kæn zi:t fa:dʕja makænf moʃkil] **Counter-factual conditional**

Sorry, sister. *If I were free, it would not be a problem*

- (35) [mənazʒemʃ] hbi:ba **DHA: Neg ability** [ki nkamel l'exam i:da byi:ti nrɔ:h mʕæk]
Alternative [makænf moʃkil] **Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement**].

I can't, sweetheart. *Once I am done with my exam, I will go with you, if you want no problem.*

- (36) [wəllah la ra:ni ʕajæna xti, mənqadʃ nrɔ:h mʕæk] **DHA: Neg ability** [mənnajtək
ni məsʕba:h neʒbed wnaqra wəʃʃems tæʕ Belgaid jro:h ʕlija l-bi:s, hbalti wella]
Joking

I swear that I am exhausted. I cannot go with you. *Are you serious? I have been studying since morning in this hot weather at Belgaid University. I will miss the buss, are you crazy?*

- (37) [mənazʒemʃ] **DHA: Neg ability** ... [la prochaine fois] **future acceptance**
[nʃa:llah] **Religious marker**

I can't. *Next time, if God wills.*

- (38) ʔi [smehli] mon frère **IHA: apology** [ra:ni retʕa:r] **grounder** [baraka lla:hɔ fi:k]
closing

Just forgive me, brother. *I am running late. May Allah bless you!*

With regard to the effect of gender on selecting post-external mitigators, as shown in Table 4.13 below, females used 593 out of 1115 instances of post-external mitigators compared to males who used 522 instances of post-external mitigators.

Grounders appeared to be the post-external mitigator most prevalently used by both females (258 instances) and males (252 instances). It amounted to 510 instances of all post-external mitigators. Alternative amounted to 256 instances of all post-refusals. It was extensively used by females (142 times) compared to males (114 times), followed by the apology post-external strategy (155 instances) used prominently by females (89 instances) compared to males (66 instances). Future acceptance was mainly used by females (35 instances) compared to males (23 instances). No significant gender disparity was attested with regard to the utilisation of statement of principle, religious markers, conditional acceptance, joking, and closing.

Concerning the potential effect of social distance and degree of imposition on using post-external mitigators, the highest frequency was 298 instances attested in St4 (-D +R) followed by 289 instances in St1 (+D-R), 249 (-D -R) in St3, and 279 in St2 (+D +R).

Notwithstanding, a significant difference is unequivocally apparent in relation to semantic formulas across the four situations. The highest frequency of grounders, alternative, apology, statement of principle, statement of positive opinion and conditional acceptance was noted in request-refusal situations in which social distance is high regardless of the degree of imposition (deference politeness system). The highest frequency of religious markers and closing, on the other hand, was displayed in low-distance situations irrespective of the degree of imposition too. Unsurprisingly, joking and future acceptance were exclusively used among friends in low-distance situations and hardly used among distant people.

Table 4.11*Frequency of Post-externals in Relation to Gender and Situations*

Post-external mitigator	Situation								Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D –R)		Watching Books: (+D +R)		Going to the Library: (-D –R)		Going Downtown (-D +R)		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Grounders	60	56	70	79	57	63	65	60	510
Alternative	45	57	18	27	22	23	29	35	256
Apology	16	21	25	36	14	18	11	14	155
Statement of principle	1	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	7
Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement	10	8	1	1	0	0	4	4	28
Religious markers	4	2	5	3	7	13	9	12	55
Conditional acceptance	3	1	4	3	0.	2	2	0	15
Future acceptance	0	0	0	0	4	12	19	23	58
Joking	0	0	0	0	4	5	3	5	17
Closing	2	0	4	1	1	3	1	2	14
Total	141	148	128	151	110	139	143	155	1115

After running Chi-square tests, no noteworthy difference between males and females in relation to the use of the most prevalent post-external mitigators seem to have a significant impact except for future acceptance which demonstrated a statistically significant difference between men and women in St3 ($P=.037$) with a *moderate* relation ($0.1 < V \leq 0.3$) as designated in Table 4.14 below.

Table 4.12*Significance of Gender in Relation to the Type of Post-externals*

	Pearson Chi-Square tests for type of Post-external mitigators			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Grounders	.567	.144	.386	.465
Alternative	.090	.128	.866	.363
Apology	.363	.091	.440	.521
Religious markers	.683	.721	.157	.489
Future acceptance	a.	a.	.037*	.487
Cramer's V			.174	

Note. a. stands for 'absent' and implies that no statistics are computed because 'future acceptance' is a constant and was not used in St1 and St2.

Recognisably, participants accompanied their refusal head acts with external mitigators in different positions. Besides, face redress is likely to involve the employment of individual strategies and/or combinations patterns depending on the situation in which the request-refusal encounter took place as well as the gender of speakers

Concerning wordiness, direct and indirect refusal head acts can be post-externally mitigated by only one of the strategies explained in the preceding section, as illustrated by Example (39) or by a combination of sets of strategies. Accordingly, five combination patterns have been identified in the DCT data as illustrated below.

- (39) [smehli] **IHA: apology** [ra:ni majet bəl-ʕja ya:di nrɔ:h lə-da:r nergɔd , bæʃ jqadni l-waqt bæʃ nra:ʒaʃ l- l'examen tæʃ yadwa] **grounder**

Sorry, I am dead tired. I will go home to get some sleep and make time to review for tomorrow's exam.

In this example, the refuser assuaged his refusal by dint of one post-external mitigator ‘grounder’ in order to explain his inability to fulfil the request. The following examples illustrate the combinations of the ‘grounder’ strategy with other strategies, including apology, alternative, and future acceptance in addition to another pattern which combines alternative with apology.

1. Grounder + Apology

- (40) [Non] **DHA: explicit refusal** [ʃandi examen hæd l-xatʁa wlæzəm neqra bi:h]
grounder [mənazʒemʃ nsalɛf l-awcunə pɛʁsɔn] **recycled refusal**² [semɛ̃li:
 xti] **apology**

No, I have an exam coming up and need to study. I cannot lend it (classnotes) to anyone. Sorry, sister.

2. Grounder + Alternative

- (41) [lla manʒi:ʃ] **DHA: double negation** [ʁadwa ʃandna examen] **grounder** [ki
 nkɛmlu:h nəʒmɔ nʁɔ: ɛ̃v ə l'ɛ̃s] **alternative**

No, I will not come with you. I have an exam tomorrow. Once it is done, we can go at our own pace.

3. Grounder + Alternative + Apology

- (42) [mənazʒemʃ] nqɑ:raʃlæk **DHA: neg ability** [pa:sku: ʃandi examen and xɔʁni
 nʁɔ:h darwæk] **grounder** [ʃu:fi unə autʁ] **alternative** [semɛ̃li:
 xti] **apology**

I cannot wait for you because I have an exam and need to go now. Ask someone else, sorry.

Of note, some patterns were sometimes combined in a different order from the most common one like in the following example where the participant, after performing the refusal,

² Recycled refusals are confirmation strategies that reinforce the force of the FTA (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b), and thus dispensed with in the present study.

apologised first then adduced a lucid explanation for their refusal to go downtown with a friend, and eventually provided an alternative.

- (43) [non] s^a:hbi **DHA : explicit refusal** [ɣi smehli] **apology** [pa:sku: meʃi gæʃ
le temps tæʃ centre ville ra:h ʃandi examen final wlæzəm nwazəd rɔ:hi bien
wnrivi:zi] **grounder** [si non xalli:ha hta mɔ:r l'examen] **alternative**.

No, friend, *just forgive me because it's not the time for going downtown. I have a final exam coming up and need to revise properly. Let us do it after the exam.*

4. Grounder + Future acceptance

- (44) jalla:h nrɔ:ɦɒ **IHA: Alternative** [l-bi:s ɣa:di jqalleʃ] **grounder** [xat^rra zæjjə
nrɔ:ɦɒ lel-bibliothèque] **future acceptance**

Let's go. *The bus is about to leave. Next time we go to the library.*

5. Alternative + Apology

- (45) [non] **DHA: explicit refusal** [semhi:li xti] **apology** [mənsalleflekʃ] **recycled refusal** [seqsi fə-groupe facebook js^aawrɔ:lək] **alternative**

No, sorry, sister. I can't lend you my notebook. *Perhaps you could request lesson pictures from others in facebook groups.*

Some combination strategies were neither illustrated nor analysed statistically as they scarcely appeared in the data and did not mark any conspicuous disparity between males and females or across situations. Accordingly, only five patterns are included in Table 4.15 below.

Grounders + apology was mainly used in the deference politeness system (49 instances) compared to 23 instances in the solidarity politeness system, especially among females (30 occurrences). Likewise, the 3rd and 5th patterns were most frequent in the deference politeness system. The 2nd pattern, grounders + alternative displayed no remarkable differences across politeness systems. In fact, the difference is gender-based. Females used higher frequency of this pattern in the two systems than males. The 4th combination pattern, grounder + future

acceptance was mainly employed among friends in the solidarity politeness system and absent in the deference politeness system.

Table 4.13

Frequency of Post-external Combination Patterns in Relation to Gender and Situations

Post-external combination strategy	Frequency								Total
	Situation								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Grounders + Apology	6	8	13	22	4	7	5	7	72
Grounders + Alternative	8	12	4	9	4	5	9	14	65
Grounders + Alternative + Apology	2	3	1	7	0	1	1	2	17
Grounders + Future acceptance	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	15
Alternative + Apology	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	8
Total	18	26	20	38	8	18	20	29	177

4.5.2.3 Pre-and-Post External Mitigators

Pre-and-post external mitigation is an umbrella term that covers both pre-externals and post-externals in the same refusal sequence. In other words, by means of pre-and-post externals, the refusal head act is sandwiched in between to dissipate any potential threat on the requester.

A total of 417 instances of pre-and-post external mitigation were attested in the data. Females harnessed 218 instances of mitigation devices as opposed to 199 instances by males.

Upon examining Table 4.16 overleaf, we can readily observe that the frequency of using pre-and-post-external mitigation in St1 (194 instances) was remarkably much more than that employed in the other situations. This evinces the great effect of social distance on the use of pre-and-post external mitigation. However, no substantial difference in relation to gender was attested.

Particularly noteworthy is the overuse of Grounder (120) and apology (113), especially in St1 and St2. However, grounder appeared most frequently after the head act (post-externally), whilst apology appeared most frequently before the head act (pre-externally). Likewise, openers, which obviously appear only pre-externally, were most frequently used in St1 and St2. The scanty use of preparators, however, did not reveal any observable gender or context-dependent variation.

Participants extensively provided both alternative and future acceptance strategies after performing the refusal; nevertheless, unlike alternatives which have been most frequently selected in the deference politeness system, especially in St1, future acceptance was used exclusively among close people. Additionally, the highest frequency of religious markers was attested in the deference politeness system, yet in the pre-external position. Few instances of statement of principle, counter-factual conditional, and closing have been attested in the DCT data. They were employed to mitigate the refusal post-externally, specifically in the deference politeness system.

The frequency of using the statement of positive opinion strategy before and after performing refusals is the same. It was mainly used in the deference politeness system, yet the difference in relation to context is relatively small. It is patently clear that most pre-and-post external mitigation strategies were primarily utilised in the deference politeness system. It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that participants prevalently used apology and swearing before performing the refusal and provided reasons afterwards.

Table 4.14*Frequency of Pre-and-post Externals across the Four Situations*

Mitigation strategy	Situation																Total
	Pre-external								Post-external								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	7	7	2	2	0	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Preparators	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Apology	27	29	7	11	3	4	2	4	4	5	7	2	3	2	2	1	113
Grounders	1	2	5	2	3	5	3	3	22	22	11	12	6	11	6	6	120
Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	22	21	7	6	2	5	3	4	72
Religious markers	7	4	7	5	5	5	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	2	43
Future acceptance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	8	14
Statement of positive opinion	3	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	16
Statement of principle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Counterfactual conditional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Closing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	45	43	21	23	12	18	10	15	55	51	28	22	11	24	17	22	417

Moreover, four refusal strategies have been combined to mitigate refusals pre and post externally. To streamline the discussion, and given the infrequent use of some patterns across the four situations, we will focus solely on combinations that occurred most frequently, namely Apology/Grounder, Apology/Alternative, Apology/Grounder+ Alternative, Grounder/Alternative, Apology+Religious markers/Grounders, and Religious marker/ Grounder. Consider Table 4.17 below.

Table 4.17

Frequency of Pre-and-post External Combination Patterns

Pre-and-post external Combination strategies		Frequency								Total
Pre-externals	Post-externals	Situation								
		St1		St2		St3		St4		
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Apology	Grounder	5	5	3	5	1	3	2	0	24
Apology	Alternative	6	7	0	1	1	0	0	3	18
Apology	Grounder + Alternative	3	6	1	2	0	0	0	0	12
Apology + Religious marker	Grounders	5	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	10
Grounder	Alternative	0	0	2	0	1	2	3	2	10
Religious marker	Grounder	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	6
Total		19	20	7	10	7	7	5	5	80

The apology/grounder pattern is the most prevalently used, especially in the deference politeness system, despite not being statistically significant. Likewise, apology/alternative was most frequent among distant people. The third pattern, apology/ grounder + alternative was totally absent in the solidarity system. Besides, only one instance of the fourth pattern appeared in the solidarity system. Admittedly, most of pre-and-post-external mitigation patterns were employed in the deference politeness system.

The two remaining patterns, namely grounders/alternative and religious markers/grounders were primarily used among friends. This proves that participants tend to pay much attention to facework when communicating with distant people than when they interact with acquaintances and intimates. Gender, however, did not display any noticeable effect.

4.6 Conclusion

To summarise the key takeaways, the type of rejection strategies, the internal structure of refusal head act, the type and frequency of lexical and syntactic internal downgraders as well as the external supportive moves are variably affected by gender across four situations which represent different levels of social distance and imposition. We will delve into these takeaways more thoroughly in the following section.

4.7 Discussion

The present study was carried out with the aim of analysing mitigation in refusals to requests as used in OSA. In the previous section, we have addressed several areas of refusals, focusing largely on the structure of refusal head acts and the type of mitigation devices. This section is devoted to discussing the findings of the DCT data. First, the results for the refusal head acts will be discussed, then, the results for the internal modifiers and external supportive moves will be presented.

Inasmuch as refusals are FTAs in nature (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), different structures of head act and various types of internal and external softeners are used to lessen the imposition on the hearer's face.

As regards the utilisation of direct and indirect refusals, a striking result appeared in the data. Participants exhibited surpassingly a clear leaning towards direct refusals in the politeness systems representing involvement or closeness with their interlocutors; that is a definite refusal does not seem to impose the interlocutor's negative face. Their tendency to use explicit rather than implicit refusals even in deference politeness system could perhaps be attributed to the fact that they deem sincerity more important than harmony. The use of direct refusals in low-distance situations which represent solidarity politeness system is in line with the study of Benbouya and Rabab'ah (2022) which showed that speakers of Algerian Arabic chose direct strategies in their refusals to offers from all status interlocutors, more specifically negative ability/ willingness. Lounis (2019) reported a similar finding in that Algerians were proved to use more direct requests and refusals compared to their British counterparts.

The reliance on direct strategies to deliver refusals is also reported in other studies in different cultures like Mulken (1996) which portrayed directness as an indicator of the transparency of an utterance; Chen (2007), Pavlidou (2000), and Félix-Brasdefer (2006) which reached the conclusion that directness does not indicate impolite behaviour, as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) said, but rather, a direct act may express closeness or affiliation with an interlocutor.

Shishavan and Sharifian's (2013) participants acknowledged that they feel more at ease using direct refusals with status equals though they perceive indirect strategies to be more diplomatic and face-saving than direct strategies. This finding, however, runs counter to Jasim (2017) whose findings revealed that Iraqis favoured indirect refusals and avoided the direct ones.

It is worth highlighting, however, that since direct refusals belong to the bald-on-record category, as set out by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), they are rarely used alone to convey refusals. This fully accords with Al kayed et al. (2020) who suggested that if Jordanians have to refuse a request directly, they leverage a variety of pragmatic modifiers, especially external supportive moves to mollify the undesirable effect of refusals.

Insofar as gender is concerned, the two genders used similar types of direct head act strategies across the two politeness systems. The difference, in fact, lies in females' selection of the kind of refusal head act in the two politeness systems. This finding is congruent with Shishavan and Sharifian (2013) who concluded that gender is a decisive factor in shaping the choice of refusal tactics by Persians.

With regard to the use of indirect refusals, the strong inclination for apology by distant people in the deference politeness system (+D) can be considered an instance of 'play it safe' tactic as termed by Farech and Kasper (1989). Nonetheless, this strategy is unseemly among close people. This finding is backed up by Bella's (2011) premise which considers the use of such formulaic strategies or pragmatic routines which guarantee a politeness effect inappropriate among intimates in certain situations as it sounds formal and distant, and reflects their inability to adjust these strategies to the particular sociocultural setting.

Upon analysing the aggregate number of occurrences of each semantic formula, participants elaborated their reasons and explanations essentially more frequently in situations where the social distance was low regardless of the degree of imposition. A closer look at the collected data shows that participants commonly have recourse to family-oriented excuses to turn down requests. They referred to plans with family members and mentioned the sickness of parents to

justify their refusal. This is consistent with Al kayed et al.'s (2020) study which uncovered an overwhelming dominance of the excuse, reason, explanation indirect rejection strategy among Jordanians. Bella (2011) also reported a considerable use of this strategy in Greek invitation refusals. A similar finding was also reported by Kwon (2004), Morkus (2014), and Jasim (2017).

As reported in the results section, joking, as an off-record politeness strategy (solidarity strategy) , was employed both as an indirect head act and as a mitigating device, only among friends, as it simply shows that the refuser does not intend their words literally, and the requester may also interpret it as such. This meshes with Jasim's (2017) findings which revealed that a direct declination of a request might be outmanoeuvred by dint of a humorous retort though it may in certain contexts be deemed face-threatening and offensive unless articulated by an intimate or a close friend and in a soft tone. Thus construed, joking, as a positive politeness technique, puts the addressee 'at ease' and minimises the FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), serves solidarity enhancement (Trosborg, 1995), and assuages the threat solely between friends (Jasim, 2017). Interestingly, in the present study, social distance or degree of intimacy appears to heavily affect the use of joking as it was mainly employed in situations which represented the solidarity politeness system (D-). That is, the more intimate people are the more they are likely to refuse in a jocular manner. On the contrary, the more distant people are the more they are cautious, especially on a first encounter. This finding upholds Agyekum's (2004) findings on the influence of social distance on face and politeness in Akan community. Likewise, criticise the request, which is a bald on record strategy in accordance with Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), was also rated by Chen's (1996, p. 87) participants as an inappropriate statement that instigates an overtone of judging the collocutor and thereof "go overbroad pragmatically". It was, nonetheless, primarily used in the solidarity politeness system in our study indicating that clarity overrides politeness when communicating with close people. This finding advocates Mills' (2003) postulate that politeness does not necessarily entail good things. That is to say,

inherently impolite behaviour or FTAs such as insults may signal camaraderie among interlocutors rather than impoliteness.

As for the structure of refusal head acts, participants' preference for externally-mitigated head acts, on the one hand, and their sparse use of unmitigated head acts, on the other hand, offers compelling evidence of the salience of the facework participants put on in request-refusal encounters. The use of long-winded structures in order to avoid rudeness when performing FTAs has also been reported by Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) and Zhang (1995).

Drawing on D'Anna (2014), in order for the sharp impact of the propositional content of FTAs to be avoided, a sufficient amount of face redress should be provided. Therefore, participants used different categories of internal and external softeners.

Crucially, a heavy reliance on internal downgraders characterised the deference politeness system compared to the solidarity politeness system evincing the decisive role of social distance or the emotional relationship between the conversants on the cooperative climate of the on-going interaction as propounded by Abd El Samie (2016).

Concerning the type of internal mitigators, participants recorded an overuse of lexical downgrading devices and few instances of syntactic ones. These findings corroborate Al-Ali and Sahawneh's (2008) conclusions which reported an underuse of syntactic downgraders by Jordanian Learners of English. A plausible explanation of the participants' underuse of syntactic mitigators can be the fact that this facet of mitigation is mainly associated with formal context as Bella (2011) noted, and the fact that the mitigating function of these devices is not intrinsic to their grammatical meaning. It is, rather, a pragmatic acquired meaning that necessitates pragma-linguistic competence from the speakers' side as posited by Faerch and Kasper (1989).

The rationale behind the participants' noticeable reliance on lexical internal mitigators, on the other hand, can be a psycholinguistic one as lexical downgraders are considered transparent and easier to employ than the syntactic ones, as explained by Faerch and Kasper (1989). Specifically,

the most commonly employed means of lexical mitigation is terms of address, while downtoners came second. In all four situations, a shortage of cajolers was reported.

The extensive use of endearment address terms convey in-group membership and reinforce closeness between the interlocutors. In this regard, our finding upholds other studies like, among others, Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) and Félix-Brasdefer (2006) which demonstrated that utilising solidarity markers, which index in-group membership and indicate a sense of camaraderie between interlocutors, minimise the negative effects of a refusal

A tentative explanation of the participants' limited utilisation of downtoners can be due to the lack of pragmatic competence as posited by Trosborg (1995). This is consistent with Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) who found out that Jordanians predominantly opt for explicit and unequivocal politeness markers rather than downtoners, as the latter requires higher pragmatic competence than that needed for the former. Besides, cajolers were occasionally used perhaps due to the fact that this type of mitigator is primarily associated with intimacy rather than formality as it appeared mainly in the two situations which represent request-refusal interactions among friends. Overall, the difference in using lexical downgraders in relation to gender and situations appeared to be evident

Insofar as external mitigation is concerned, the overuse of external modifiers was also attested in Jordanian Arabic as demonstrated by Al Kayed et al.'s finding (2020). Interestingly, the overall outcomes of data analysis have shown participants' tendency to employ elaborate refusals by means of pre-refusals, post-refusals, and pre-and-post refusals. Few of them opted for spelling out their refusals straightforwardly independent of peripheral elements.

The relative tendency towards verbosity in realising rejections sustains Feghali's (1997) conclusion that elaborateness is a defining feature of the Arabic communicative style. It is considered by Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2011) a distinguishing feature of the interactional patterns in Jordanian collectivistic society where the importance of establishing and preserving common grounds and social bonds between interlocutors is highlighted, and ,thus, serves as a

face-saving tactic whereby the speaker avoid being blunt. Verbosity was also reported in Boucif and Benhattab's (2022) study and in other Arabic studies, among others, (Al kayed et al., 2020; Morkus, 2009; Jasim, 2017).

First things first, pre-externals appeared to be an apt choice in high-distance situations compared to low-distance situations. A striking result is that the highest frequency of pre-externals and its lowest frequency were attested in St1 and St4, respectively, where the rank of imposition is low. Presumably, the degree of familiarity between interlocutors outweighs the degree of imposition when selecting pre-externals.

The downgrading strategies most prevalently attested in the data included grounders, alternative, and apology/regret. This result is concordant with D'Anna (2014) who stated that the common redress strategies used in the Meghrebi dialects include, amongst other politeness tactics, apologies, explanations and expressions of deference.

The first strategy we deal with is 'grounders'. As we alluded to earlier, proffering an explanation for refusing a request is requisite in certain situations. This is consistent with Beebe et al (1990) who contended that explaining the reason behind a refusal is typical in American English in many situations. This mitigation strategy is expected whenever a refusal is performed, if not required, in order to ensure smooth interactions and avert rifts which may break social ties as evinced by Labov and Fanshel (1977).

A further significant observation from the study concerned the selection of 'openers' as an external mitigating device preceding a refusal. Pause fillers and hesitators, which included also discourse markers, were used to introduce and delay the refusal and to assuage the negative effect of the upcoming refusal act. Additionally, an in-depth analysis of openers, as a pre-rejection attenuation device, demonstrated that its semantic content denotes various interpersonal meaning such as formality (deference), intimacy, and solidarity between interactants. A similar result was attested in Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010).

With further examination of external mitigators, religious markers such as swearing and invoking God's name were found to be extensively employed in request-refusal interactions as a means of showing religiosity, convincing requesters of the truthfulness of what has been said, and to make others believe them. The employment of this external mitigation strategy has been recorded in several other studies in the Arab world like Morkus (2009), Al Issa (2003), Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2011), Jasim (2017), Lounis (2019), kayed, et al. (2020), and Bennacer (2021) which emphasised the importance of swearing as a positive face enhancing device that fosters rapport between interlocutors. It is also consistent with D'Anna (2014) who drew the conclusion that religious markers in the form of blessings can be used to redress the collocutor's positive face in any situation and regardless of the collocutor's gender, age or perceived condition. Accordingly, the frequent reference to God reflects the profound influence of Islam on Algerian culture and underscores its deep-seated role, permeating various aspects such as shaping daily interactions.

Apology, with notably very high instances in the dataset, is classified by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as negative politeness strategies whereby the speaker can redress impingement on the hearer's negative face, and as an independence face strategy pursuant to Scollon and Scollon (2001) categorisation. Participants opted for apology as the main pre-refusal strategy because they, perhaps, considered it an act of flippancy or discourtesy, particularly in situations which include high social distance between interlocutors. This behaviour is akin to that of Chinese whose requests are realised primarily by means of proposed supportive moves (Zhang, 1995). This strategy has also been considered by Bella (2011) as an indicator of solidarity that also enhances the speaker's positive face. In the present study, this supportive move concurred with various endearment terms of address aiming at preserving the requester's positive aspect of face from any potential damage. In this respect, our findings lend support to D'Anna (2014), whose findings also evidences that speakers of Maghrebi dialects prevalently resort to positive redress situations that may call for negative politeness tactics in most western countries.

Regarding post-external mitigation and in line with the finding of previous research as Al Issa (2003); Nelson et al. (2002); Kwon (2004); Shishavan and Sharifian (2013); and Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) which reported the employment of reason and explanations either as a head act or a supportive move, grounders appeared to be the post-external mitigators most prevalently used.

Further examination of how the position of the ‘grounder’ relates to refusal content uncovered that participants often begin by spelling out a refusal, then offer reasons and justifications. This pattern of providing grounders immediately after issuing refusals can be interpreted through the dimensions of directness and urgency so as to ensure clear communication and optimal understanding.

The interactional social patterns are typically determined by cultural and contextual factors (considerations). This accounts for the frequent use of grounders in different position in request-refusal encounters by participants. Accordingly, speakers of Oran dialect tend to avoid bare or unmitigated refusals and opt for delayed ones by means of post-refusal mitigators. In a similar vein, using detailed and elaborate explanations when declining requests, offers or invitations was also reported in other studies like Kwon (2004), Bella (2011), Morkus (2014), and Jasim (2017).

By using future acceptance, the refuser opts out of committing to accept the request, although they may attempt to comply in future. Notably, some instances of this strategy have been accompanied by ‘invoking God’s name’*‘nʃ elleh, God willing’* In particular, this face-saving strategy was utilised by participants in a bid “to strategically end the conversation politely, freeing the speaker from a direct response and leaving the possibility of an acceptance open to the interlocutor”(Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 2171) . Correspondingly, adjuncts to refusals like statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement were employed as pre- and post-refusals to avoid disagreement as highlighted by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and functioned as markers of speakers’ involvement with their interlocutors. Similar results were obtained by Hayati (2024) in her study of adjuncts to refusal which disclosed that adjuncts play the role of a

buffer for the rejection in order to assuage the potential negative impact which may exert on the refusee. This is inconsistent with Tobbi (2024) whose participants avoided using statement of positive opinion in order to diminish misunderstandings of later compliance.

Closing, which is a post external mitigating device used to end a refusal interaction politely, was also realised by different forms of religious expressions. Parallel conclusions were drawn by Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2011). Besides, the abundant use of thanking and gratitude expressions to end request-refusal conversations underscores the cultural significance of expressing gratefulness and thankfulness in Algerian culture. This is consistent with Tobbi (2024) whose findings highlighted the importance of this cultural aspect when performing refusals to offers and requests. On the whole, the purpose of using post-refusals is to facilitate the process of negotiating refusals and to promote seamless conversational flow.

Insofar as pre-and-post mitigation is concerned, the preference for using this strategy within the same refusal response emanates from the fact that refusals are intrinsically FTAs that signals disapproval and impoliteness. Besides, using direct refusals, as reported in the data, requires considerable effort from the refuser to soften the negative impact on the requester.

In essence, most of pre-and-post external mitigation strategies were employed in the deference politeness system. Interestingly, participants prevalently used apology and swearing before performing the refusal and provided reasons afterwards. We can speculate that this is due speakers' tendency to diminish any possible undesirable feelings before and after performing the refusal.

In a nutshell, drawing on Farech and Kasper (1989), external softeners are harnessed to alleviate the psychological discomfort inherent in FTAs by shifting emphasis from the main illocution of the speech event (e.g. refusal). From a socio-pragmatic angle, the frequent use of pre-and-post externals in the deference politeness system emphasises the pivotal role that the social distance between collocutors plays in the selection of supportive moves. This finding

aligns with the conclusions reported by Lounis (2019) which posit that social distance plays a more prominent role in Algerian Arabic than in British English

It seems to be the case that the choice of refusal head acts and mitigation devices hinges on the degree of intimacy between interactants alongside their estimation of risk of face loss. That is, speakers make assessments of the level of politeness required based on factors such as social distance and rank of imposition, and hence, context is a critical determinant of proper language choices in Oran dialect.

Concerning gender, males' propensity for indirectness and internal mitigation refutes Holmes' (1995) postulate that women typically demonstrate greater linguistic politeness compared to men.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter meticulously reported the qualitative and quantitative results of the DCT and thoroughly discussed them in light of previous research. In much the same way, the following chapter presents the qualitative and quantitative findings of the role-play data with an in-depth discussion at the end.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

FROM THE ROLE-PLAY DATA AND RETROSPECTIVE

WRITTEN REPORTS

Chapter Five: Qualitative and Quantitative Findings from the Role-Play Data and the Retrospective Written Reports

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to a detailed presentation of the empirical findings garnered from the role-play data analysis, employing both qualitative and statistical techniques. All patterns and even anomalies apropos request-refusal realisation and mitigation were articulated in detail.

5.2 Overall Distribution of Refusal Strategies in the Role Play-Data

Most refusal sequences reported in the data begin with person A communicating a request, and person B, when recognising A's intention, replying with one or more direct or indirect refusal strategies such as 'negative ability', 'excuse, reason, explanation', or 'apology', accompanied by internal and/or external mitigation devices over one, two, and even three stages.

5.2.1 Negotiation

As previously mentioned, refusal is generally associated with saying 'no'. However, it can be cogently argued that the refuser's intent can be conveyed in various forms. It can be expressed directly or indirectly through an implicit response in one turn as amplified in Example (1) or can even be elaborated in stretches of turns, particularly in the case of persist requests in an extended conversation as Examples (2) and (3) indicate.

- (1) **Refuser:**[↑yi smehli xu:ja] **apology** [wəllah] **religious marker** [ma::naʒʒəm] **DHA:**
neg ability [pa:sku: ʕandi ka:jji wæħed kætəb fi:h gæʕ sʕwa:lhi] **grounder** ,
[yi smehli°] **apology** [mənaʒʒemʃ°↓] **recycled refusal** **1st stage**

Just forgive me, brother, I swear, I cannot (lend it) because I have only one notbook with all my notes. Just forgive me. I can't.

As shown in the interaction in (1), the refusal for this situation is realised directly in one turn by means of 'negative ability' strategy, pre-externally mitigated by 'apology' and swearing as a 'religious marker', and post-externally mitigated by 'grounder' and 'apology'.

- (2) **Refuser:** [ʏi smehli xu:ja] **apology** [ma::yadi:f naʒʒəm ɲfedhəmlək] **DHA: neg ability** [pa:sku: darwək ra:h ʕandi examen lla: ʃæn ra:hi tʰwi:la bæzzæf] **grounder** [ʏi smehli] **apology** **1st stage**

Just forgive me, brother. I will not be able to watch your books because I have an exam now. The queue is too long. Just forgive me.

Requester: besʰsʰah ʏi tqi:qa, ʔmaʕli:f ʔ? **Insistence**
but just a minute, is that possible?

Refuser: [wəllah] **religious marker** [manaʒʒəm] **DHA: neg ability** [smehli xu:ja] **apology**

I swear, I can't. I'm sorry, brother. **2nd stage**

In Extract 2, which illustrates St2, the requester insisted on the requestee once, resulting in two request-refusal stages. His attempts to make the requestee acquiesce to the request have been thwarted.

- (3) **Requestee:** [ʔa::h] **opener** [wəllah] **religious marker** [manaʒʒəm] **DHA: neg ability** [sʰa:hbi] **term of address** [ra:h ʕandi:: darwək bi:s ra:h jqa:raʕ fɨjʃ::a wɣa:di jqalleʕ] **grounder** [ʔʏi smehliʔ] **apology**. **1st stage**

Ahh, I swear, I cannot come with you, friend. The bus is about to leave and I have to catch it. Just forgive me.

Requester: ↑besʰsʰah hna belxuf, maya:tʃ ntʰawlo belxuf w nʒu **Insistence 1**
but it is just nearby and we will be quick We won't stay for long and will come back right away.

Requestee: [ʏa:di tʃedni] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation** [sʰa:hbi] **term of address** [[wəl-bi:s ʏa:di jro:h]] **grounder** **2nd stage**

You are going to waste my time, friend, and the bus will leave soon.

Requester: [ʔawədi tqi:qa, (mælek)]= **Insistence 2**
Just a minute, please

Requestee: [= yi smehli hambu:k] **apology** [mənaʒʒəmʃ↓] **DHA: neg ability**

Just forgive me please, I can't.

3rd stage

As can be seen in the conversational exchange in (3) which comprised three episodes in a lengthy discussion, the interactants negotiated their way through to a final resolution. The two expressions in the first line soothe the unwelcome effect of the upcoming explicit rejection: (1) an opener in the form of prolonged hesitator ʔa::h (ahh) which introduces and holds on the refusal and (2) the religious marker 'wəllah' (I swear), which further attenuates the direct refusal head act "manaʒʒəm" (I can't) and strengthens the closeness between interlocutors. Additionally, the employment of such in-group identity markers as 's'a:hbi'(my friend) in the second line expressed involvement or camaraderie between the interactants. Hence, the utilisation of solidarity markers, which showcase collocutors' close bond, weakens the negative effects of an explicit rejection.

After the request was straightforwardly refused through the negative ability strategy prefaced by a religious marker and post-externally mitigated by 'grounder' and 'apology', the request-refusal interaction continues with the requester persisting in urging his friend to accompany him to the library. The latter resumed his refusal with an indirect strategy, a reason, internally mitigated by a term of address "s'a:hbi" (my friend). Eventually, after a second insistence from the requester that his friend accepts his request, the friend seeks to end the request-refusal interaction courteously by a pre-externally-mitigated direct refusal prefaced by apology.

Intriguingly, insistence turned out to be a significant aspect of request-refusal encounters, achieved by stressing the importance of the action by means of an impressive arsenal of linguistic markers which underscore the salience of the request as rephrasing the request, additional justifications, use of such intensifiers as 'bəlxoʃ' (quickly), and 'vrai' (really), change in tone and shift to a more direct phrasing by criticising the requestee, and humour. Hence, Tenacity helps boost the likelihood of persuading the requestee to comply with the request, but if overused, it can be regarded as intrusive or disrespectful act that threatens the recipient's

negative face especially if the speaker is a distant person who has already turned down the request.

Figure 5.1

Negotiation of Refusals among Males and Females

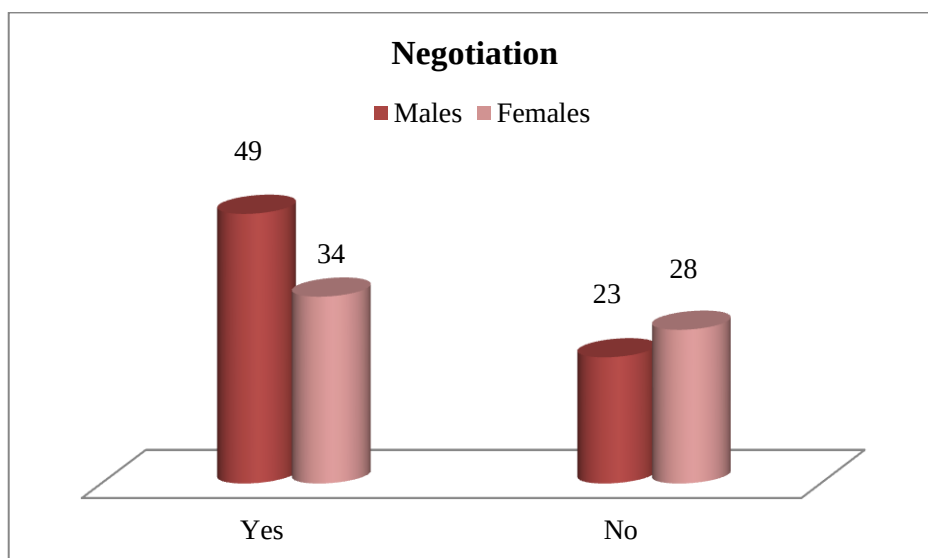
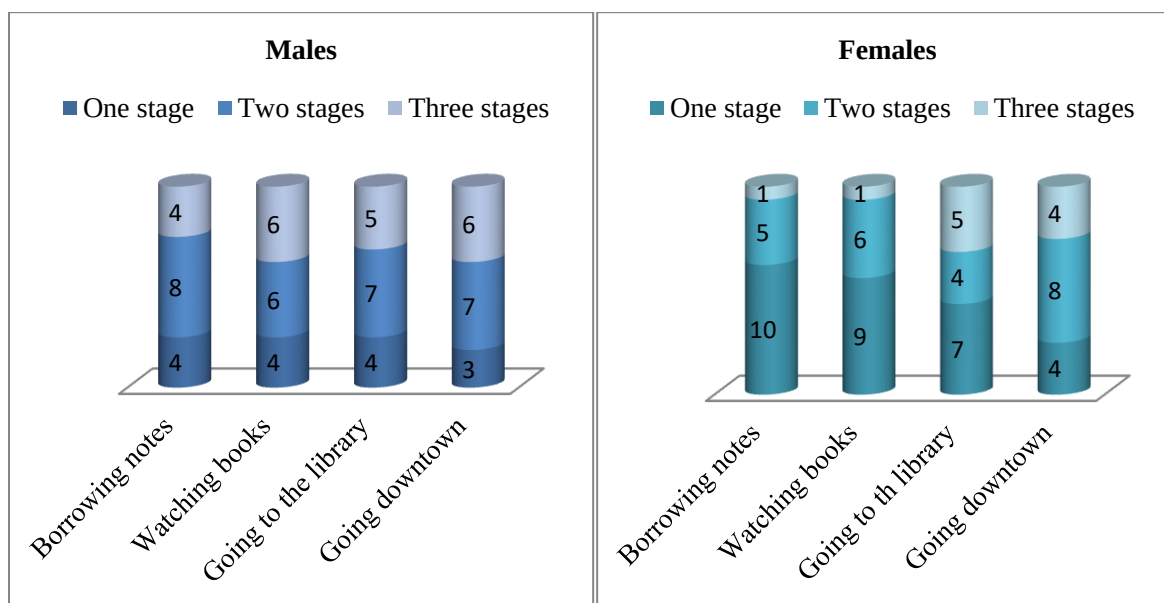


Figure 5.2

Overall Distribution of Refusal Stages by Gender and Situation



5.2.1.1 Deference Politeness System

In the St1, 14 participants decided not to insist on the request and ended the request-refusal interaction in its 1st stage. Eighteen participants insisted on their request for the first time, only

five of them insisted on their requests for the second time. Most of participants who negotiated the request speech act were males (12 in the 2nd stage, and 4 in the 3rd stage).

In St2, 13 participants opted for ending the request-refusal interaction in the 1st stage. Nineteen participants attempted to negotiate the refuser for the first time, only seven of them tried to convince the requestee for the second time. Similarly, most of respondents who negotiated in the insistence sequence were also males (six in the 2nd stage, and six in the 3rd stage).

5.2.1.2 Solidarity Politeness System

In St3, 11 participants ended the refusal interaction in the first stage. Twenty-one of them carried on the request-refusal sequence to 2nd stage, 11 of them ended the sequence in this stage, 10 of them continued for a 3rd stage. Most of the negotiators in this situation were females (7 in the 2nd stage and 5 in the 3rd stage).

In St4, seven participants ended the request-refusal interaction in the 1st stage, 25 of them carried on the refusal sequence, 15 of them ended the sequence in its 2nd stage, and 10 participants closed it after the second insistence. Slight gender differences were noted regarding the number of negotiators in this situation.

A crucial point worth highlighting regarding the number of stages in the request-refusal sequence is that insistence and refusal were mainly performed among male friends, in St3 and St4 regardless of the rank of imposition. Nonetheless, the sole statistically significant difference in relation to gender was attested in St1. In other words, association between gender and negotiation appears to be *strong* ($V = .378$) as exhibited in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1

Significance of Gender in Relation to Refusal Negotiation

	Negotiation			
	Borrowing notes	Watching books	Going to the library	Going downtown
Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.033*	.072	.264	
Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)				1.000
Cramer's V Effect size	.378			

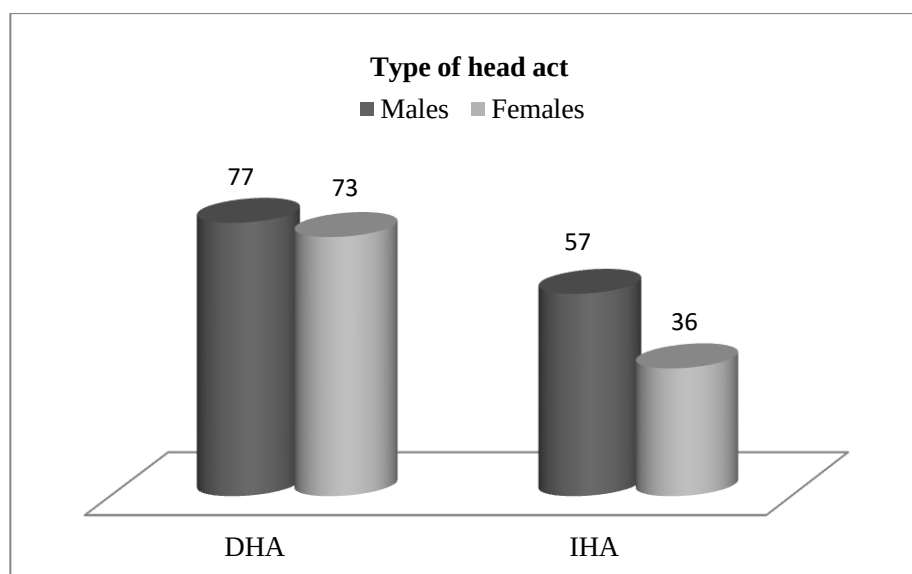
Note. *Indicates that negotiation among males and females in St1 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

5.2.2 Direct Versus Indirect Head Act Strategies in Role-Play Data

A total of 150 direct refusals have been used, 79 in the 1st stage, 55 in the 2nd, and 16 in the 3rd. On the other hand, a total of 93 occurrences of indirect refusals were recorded in the data; 49 in the 1st stage, 28 in the 2nd, and 16 in the 3rd as the following table reveals.

Figure 5.3

Use of DHAs and DHAs by Males and Females



With respect to politeness systems, 76 instances of DHAs were used in the deference politeness system compared to 74 instances in the solidarity system. IHAs were more frequent in the solidarity system (56 instances) than in deference system (37 instances). Admittedly, a surpassingly clear preference for DHAs characterised the two politeness systems. Consider Table 5.2 below

Table 5.2

Frequency of DHAs and IHAs in Relation to Gender and Situations

Type of refusal head act	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D+ R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D -R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D -R)			
	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
DHA (M)	14	8	2	7	8	3	6	6	2	12	6	3	77
DHA (F)	10	6	0	12	5	1	8	6	3	10	10	2	73
IHA (M)	2	4	2	9	4	3	10	6	3	4	7	3	57
IHA (F)	6	0	1	4	2	0	8	3	2	6	2	2	36
Total	32	18	5	32	19	7	32	21	10	32	25	10	243

As far as gender is concerned, a marginal difference is noted with respect to the use of DHAs. A notable difference, however, has been detected with regard to the selection of IHAs in all situations as females produced fewer frequencies of IHAs compared to males. Nevertheless, no statistically significant differences have been recorded in either situation as the following table reveals.

Table 5.3*Chi-square Test for the Type of Refusal Head Act*

		Type of refusal head act
		Pearson Ch-square Exact Test Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Borrowing notes	S1	.220
	S2	.245
	S3	1.000
Watching books	S1	.072
	S2	1.000
	S3	1.000
Going to the library	S1	.722
	S2	.660
	S3	1.000
Going downtown	S1	.446
	S2	.097
	S3	1.000

The choice of direct and indirect declination strategies did not exhibit interesting variability among participants. Negative ability/willingness is the strategy most widely used by both males and females in the three stages (75 instances), followed by explicit refusals (51 instances) and then double negation (24 instances). Consider Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4

Participants' Use of DHA Strategies across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Direct head act strategies	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D –R)			Watching Books: (+D +R^)			Going to the Library: (-D -R)			Going Downtown: (-D +R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Explicit refusals	3	2	0	1	1	2	1	4	0	6	3	2	25
Negative ability/willingness	9	5	2	5	6	1	3	2	2	4	2	1	42
Double negation	2	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	10
Females													
Explicit refusals	1	2	0	3	2	0	4	3	1	5	3	2	26
Negative ability/ willingness	8	4	0	7	3	0	3	0	2	3	3	0	33
Double negation	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	0	2	4	0	14
Total	24	14	2	19	13	4	14	12	5	22	16	5	150

With respect to IHAs, excuse, reason, explanation is the strategy most frequently adopted to decline requests indirectly by both males and females along the three stages of request-refusal interactions (48 instances), followed by apology (18 instances), criticise the request/ requester (17 instances), alternative (seven instances), and joking (three instances). The latter has been exclusively used by females when refusing a request performed by a friend. Overall, males were more apt to use IHA strategies than females as detailed in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5

Participants' Use of IHA Strategies across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Indirect head act strategies	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: (+D -R)			Watching Books: (+D +R)			Going to the Library: (-D -R)			Going Downtown: (-D +R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Excuse, reason, explanation	1	3	1	3	1	2	6	6	0	2	4	1	30
Apology	1	0	0	3	2	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	14
Criticise the request/requester	0	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	10
Alternative	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Joking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Females													
Excuse, reason, explanation	5	0	0	3	2	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	18
Apology	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Criticise the request/requester	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	1	7
Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	4
Joking	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Total	8	4	3	13	6	3	18	9	5	10	9	5	93

Apparently, no remarkable disparity between men and women was noted regarding the use of direct and indirect strategies in any situation. It is worth noting that owing to the infrequent employment of some strategies (less than 5) and the complete absence of others in the different situations, we were unable to conduct the Chi-square test or Fisher's Exact Test; therefore no statistical differences could be determined.

5.2.3 Structure of Head Act

As previously characterised in the DCT data, refusal speech act is realised in four different structures, namely, unmitigated, internally mitigated, externally-mitigated, and internally-and-externally mitigated head acts.

As Table 5.6 below shows, the four different structures characterised refusal head acts in the three stages. Most of refusal head acts were externally mitigated with 151 occurrences distributed along the three stages, followed by internally-and-externally mitigated head acts (65 instances), and then internally-mitigated head acts (15 instances). Plainly, only 12 out of 243 head acts were unmitigated by either type of mitigation as exhibited in the following table.

Table 5.6

Structure of Head Act in Relation to Gender, Situations, and Stages of Negotiation

Structure of Head Act	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D +R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D -R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Unmitigated	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Internally Mitigated	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	12
Externally Mitigated	13	9	2	7	7	1	4	7	3	8	6	3	70
Internally –and-externally Mitigated	2	1	1	8	4	5	11	2	2	6	5	3	50
Females													
Unmitigated	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	3	0	10
Internally-mitigated	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
Externally-mitigated	13	4	0	9	6	1	12	7	4	13	9	3	81
Internally-and-externally mitigated	3	1	1	6	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	15
Total	32	18	5	32	19	7	32	21	10	32	25	10	243

With respect to gender, both males and females opted for using externally-mitigated head acts. As for internally mitigated and internally-and-externally mitigated head acts, male participants produced high frequency compared to their female counterparts who demonstrated a greater tendency for outright and unmitigated refusals compared to males. Hence, males

demonstrated a greater variability in the structure of head acts in their refusals compared to females.

With regard to context, there seems to be a *very strong* association between gender and the structure of refusal head act in the 1st stage of St3 and 1st and 2nd stages of St4 ($V > 0.5$), where the social distance between interlocutors is low as delineated in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7

Significance of Gender in Relation to the Structure of Head Act across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

		Structure of head act	
		Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Cramer's V
Borrowing notes	S1	1.000	
	S2	1.000	
	S3	1.000	
Watching books	S1	.594	
	S2	.745	
	S3	.286	
Going to the library	S1	.006*	.575
	S2	.073	
	S3	.444	
Going downtown	S1	.009*	.546
	S2	.037*	.550
	S3	.286	

Note. *Indicates that the structure of refusal head act used by males and females in St2 and St3 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

5.2.4 Internal Mitigation

Similar to the DCT data, three types of lexical downgraders, namely downtoners, cajolers and terms of address alongside two syntactic downgraders, namely conditional structures and interrogatives were identified in the role-play data. Examples (4) and (5) illustrate lexical and syntactic mitigation, respectively.

- (4) [ʔʔlabelkiʔ (.)] **cajoler** [ʔæna:: jamais nsallef les cours, les notes li nəktabhəm wəlla pa:sku: c'est des notes personnels (.)] zaʕma:: kəl wahed wəfhəmtah (.)]
statement of principle [mənəʒʒəmʃ sallefɫək] **DHA: neg ability**

You know, I do never lend my lessons or class notes because they are personal, I mean, everyone has their own way of recording notes and making sense of them I cannot lend them to you.

In this example, the speaker refused lending her notes directly by means of a 'negative ability' strategy, internally downgraded by a cajoler 'ʔlabelki' (you know) with a placid, smiley tone, and prefaced by a 'statement of principle' as an external supportive move.

In Example (5) below, the requestee avoided refusing the request bluntly by repeating part of it in the form of 'a question', and thus, mitigating the refusal syntactically.

- (5) **Requester:** ʃa byi:t ngu:lək s'a:hbi (.)] trə:h mʕæja ləl- bibliothèque?

I want to tell something, my friend. Can you accompany me to the library?

Requestee: [bibliothèque?] **partial repeat (an interrogative)**

The library?

Statistically speaking, a total of 80 internal mitigators³ were used, 74 instances of lexical softeners appeared in the dataset along the three stages, 40 in the 1st, 18 in the 2nd, and 16 in

³ One head act can be mitigated by several internal or external mitigators. Therefore, the number of mitigators will unquestionably be different from the number of head acts (cases).

the 3rd. By contrast, only six instances of syntactic mitigators appeared in the data, specifically in the 1st and 3rd stages of refusal interaction. In the 2nd stage, however, no syntactic mitigators were used. Surprisingly, 163 head acts were not mitigated by any type of internal mitigators. The following table exhibits the main differences between males and females with regard to the choice of internal softeners.

Table 5.8

Use of Internal Downgraders in Relation to Gender and Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Internal Mitigation	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D +R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D –R)			
	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Males													
Lexical downgraders	3	2	2	7	5	4	11	2	5	8	6	3	58
Syntactic downgraders	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Neither	13	10	2	7	7	1	4	3	7	8	7	3	72
Females													
Lexical downgraders	3	2	1	5	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	16
Syntactic downgraders	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Neither	13	4	0	10	6	1	13	5	9	15	12	3	91
Total	32	18	5	32	19	7	32	10	21	32	25	10	243

In detail, males used high frequency of internal mitigators (62 instances) compared to their female counterparts (18 instances). Among the three categories of lexical downgraders, address terms, including first names and endearment terms of address, were the most utilised to internally mitigate head acts. Males used 51 instances of terms of address compared to their female counterparts (15 instances), whereas cajolers and downtoners were sparingly used.

Insofar as the four situations are concerned, a conspicuous disparity between male and female participants in the use of lexical downgraders has been witnessed, specifically the use terms of address in St3 and St4 as shown in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9

Participants' Use of Lexcial Downgraders across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Structure of Head Act	Situations												Total
	Borrowing			Watching			Going to the			Going			
	Notes:			Books :			Library:			Downtown:			
	Deference (+D +R)			Deference (+D -R)			Solidarity (-D +R)			Solidarity (-D -R)			
Lexical downgraders	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Males													
Cajolers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Downtoners	1	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	10
Terms of address	3	2	2	5	5	4	10	3	1	8	5	3	51
Females													
Cajolers	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Downtoners	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Terms of address	3	2	1	4	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	15
Total	7	4	3	13	6	5	15	5	4	9	6	5	82

With regard to syntactic mitigators, conditional structures and interrogatives were infrequently used; ergo no significant difference has been detected as table 5.10 shows.

Table 5.10

Participants' Use of Syntactic Downgraders across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Structure of Head Act	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D- +R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D –R)			
Syntactic downgraders	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Males													
Conditional structures	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Interrogatives	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Females													
Conditional structures	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Interrogatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	3	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	11

In order to capture the difference more precisely, the discrepancy between males and females has been statistically analysed. Evidently, pursuant to Fisher's Exact Test for the type of internal downgraders, a significant difference between males and females has been attested in the 1st and 2nd stages of both St3 and St4. Moreover, the two variables, gender and internal mitigation, appeared to be *strongly* associated in the 2nd stage of St3 ($0.3 < V \leq 0.5$), and *very strongly* associated in the 1st stage of St3, and the 1st and 2nd stages of St4 ($V > 0.5$), reflecting a statistically significant influence of gender and context on the use of internal mitigation. Consider Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11

Significance of Gender in Using Internal Downgraders in the Three Stages of Each Situation

		Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Cramer's V
Borrowing notes	S1	1.000	
	S2	.569	
	S3	1.000	
Watching books	S1	.584	
	S2	.333	
	S3	.429	
Going to the library	S1	.004*	. 568
	S2	.045*	.484
	S3	.444	
Going downtown	S1	.002*	.590
	S2	.015*	.540
	S3	.571	

Note. *Indicates that the utilisation of internal downgraders by males and females in St2 and St3 differs significantly ($p < 0.05$)

In addition to internal mitigators, head acts were also supported by pre-external, post-external, and pre-and-post external supportive moves as thoroughly expounded in the subsequent section in order to capture the socio-pragmatic richness of the discourse produced during role-play exchanges.

5.2.5 External Mitigation

As Table 5.12 depicts, head acts were mainly assuaged by a combination of pre-and-post external softeners in the 1st stage. However, participants merely resorted to post-external mitigation in the 2nd and 3rd stages. Another difference worthwhile to mention is the few number of head acts (26 out of 243) which were not mitigated by any type of external mitigation.

Table 5.12

Participants' Use of External Mitigation across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Types of External Mitigation	Situations												Total
	Borrowing			Watching			Going to the			Going			
	Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Books : Deference (+D -R)			Library: Solidarity (-D +R)			Downtown: Solidarity (-D -R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Pre-external mitigation	2	4	1	3	3	1	2	2	0	1	2	1	22
Post-external mitigation	0	3	2	4	2	2	4	2	1	6	6	1	33
Pre-and-post xternal mitigation	13	3	0	8	6	3	9	5	4	8	3	4	66
Neither	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	3	0	1	2	0	13
Females													
Pre-external mitigation	3	0	0	2	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	11
Post –external mitigation	5	4	1	5	5	1	6	5	3	9	8	3	55
Pre-and-post external mitigation	8	1	0	8	2	0	5	1	1	3	1	0	30
Neither	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	3	3	1	13
Total	32	18	5	32	19	7	32	21	10	32	25	10	243

Regarding the social factor of gender, men tended to produce more pre-externally, and pre-and-post-externally mitigated head acts than women who used higher frequency of post-externally mitigated refusals.

Concerning the contextual factors, the frequency of external mitigation was approximate across the four situations. In fact, differences pertain to the location of mitigators in a head act. That is, few instances of pre-externally mitigated head acts were produced in the St4 compared to the other situations which reflects the salient effect of rank of imposition.

Seemingly, participants do not opt for delaying refusals when interacting with friends. They mitigate the threat after performing the refusal head act instead. Likewise, less pre-and-post externally mitigated head acts were used in St4 than the other situations.

As a corollary, the infrequent use of pre-external mitigation besides the high number of externally-unmitigated head acts in the solidarity politeness system, especially in St4 where the rank of imposition is low, reflect the effect of rank of imposition on using mitigation devices; nevertheless, no statistically significant differences were detected in this regard as Fisher's Exact Tests reveal in Table 5.13 below.

Table 5.13

Fisher's Exact Test for the Type of External Mitigation across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

		Fisher's Exact Test Exact Sig. (2- sided)
Borrowing notes	S1	.065
	S2	.368
	S3	1.000
Watching books	S1	1.000
	S2	.092
	S3	1.000
Going to the library	S1	.570
	S2	.283
	S3	.206
Going downtown	S1	.306
	S2	.453
	S3	.086

A thoroughgoing description of the supportive moves that have been exclusively attested in the role-play data alongside the frequency use of all types of external mitigation will be depicted below.

5.2.5.1 Pre-External Mitigation

- **Request for Information/Clarification**

Information request is categorised by Félix-Brasdefer (2008b) as an involvement strategy whereby the requestee delays the refusal. This pre-external strategy is eminently significant since it is attested only in rejection studies that utilise role-playing techniques to gather data (Gass & Houck, 1999; Morkus, 2009) and not in research that solely relied on DCTs, since in the DCT there is no natural conversation and the conversation partners cannot seek additional information or clarification before providing their final response. This pre-external attenuation technique did not appear in Beebe, et al.'s (1990) classification scheme as it drew upon a DCT for data elicitation, neither did it appear in the DCT data of the present study. Given that this strategy delays rejection in the interaction, it thereby provides ample time to plan for a suitable refusal strategy. In the following excerpt, the requestee avoided an outright rejection by asking the requester questions about time, suggesting limitations due to timing, and thus, leaves the door open for negotiation.

(6) Requester: ↑*thewdi mʃæja lə-centre-ville?* ↓*l-hæl ra:h ɛʃbæbɛ.*

Would you like to go downtown? The weather is nice.

Requestee: [*qajʃæʃ?* ((Serious tone of voice))] **request for information**

What time?

Requester: *ɛdarwək ɛ*

Now

Requestee: [*wqajæʃ nət'alʃʊ?* ((Serious tone))] **request for information**

And around what time will we return?

- **Partial repeats**

This introductory tactic involves echoing or restating part of the request in order to delay the decision, avert confrontation and thus pre-externally mitigate the upcoming refusal. It appeared most frequently in the form of an interrogative sentence. Consider Example (7) below in which the requestee prefaced his direct refusal with a repetition of a portion of the request.

- (7) [centre-ville? ((serious tone))] **partial repeat** (.) [lla :: ...] DHA : **explicit refusal**
Downtown? No.

- **Repetition of a mitigator**

Another strategy that was reported only in role-play data is ‘repetition of a mitigator’ whereby interlocutors tried to strongly mitigate the effect of their refusal pre and even post externally. In Example (8) below, the refuser used the same supportive move ‘grounders’ after declining the request

- (8) [↑mənəʒzɛmʃ] **DHA: neg ability** [jli:qli nexdəm l'examen tæʃ ʏadwa (.) pa:sku:
 déja mani:ʃ mbalʃa::] **grounder1** ↓ça fait [mənqadʃ] **recycled refusal** nrɔ:h
 mʃæk, [jli:qli nbəleʃ S1] **grounder2**
I can't. I have to study for tomorrow's exam because I did not get the average, so
I can't come with you. I have to pass the first semester.

Another remarkable feature that appeared in the role-play data is elaborateness. In Example (9) below, which illustrates the ‘borrowing notes’ situation, the refuser used an elaborated reason in order to reduce the negative force of the direct refusal, making it less blunt and more polite.

- (9) [semhi:li xti] **apology** [wəllah] **religious marker** [menqad] **DHA: neg ability**
 [les pɔli:kɔ:p mani:ʃ ræfda darwæk wfə-da:r normalement ra:hɔm mwadri:n
 lexa:tʃarʃ hædi ʃʃæl meʃethɔmʃ jɔɔ:ro ʔgɔdəmiʃ (.) wli:: (.) notes balæk nku:n

ya:lt'a: balæk manku:nʃ kætba ni:ʃæn] **elaborated reason (grounder)** [menqadʃ nmedhómlek xti] **recycled refusal** [semh:li] **apology**

Sorry sister, I swear, but I can't. *I do not have the handout right now neither do I have them at home; I think may have lost it, I didn't see them since a long time; and my notes might be inaccurate as I may not have written them correctly. I can't lend them to you sister, sorry.*

Regarding the content of reason/explanations, it was blatantly obvious that the classmate refusing to lend the notes provided an elaborated reason in the form of 'a white lie' (Leech, 1983) and said that she does not know where her notes are so as not to create negative emotions or damage the relationship between interlocutors.

With regard to the pre-external mitigation patterns, the pre-externals previously expounded have been amalgamated resulting in a multiple of combination patterns. Twelve combination strategies used as pre-externals were identified in the role-play data across the four situations. However, 11 combinations appeared only once except for Openers+ religious marker which appeared twice in the watching-books situation. An illustration of this pattern is as follows.

▪ **Opener + Religious marker**

(10) [xti] **opener** [wəllah] **religious marker** [hæda wi:n kmalt s'wa:lhli wʃandi examen jli:qli darwək nedxul] **IHA: excuse, reason, explanation**

Sister, I swear, I have just wrapped up my stuff. I have an exam now and need to catch it.

In statistical terms, as shown in Table 5.14 overleaf, a total of 220 instances of pre-external mitigators were used to diminish the threat of head acts. Participants tended to hold on the refusal by using openers (80 instances) such as attention getters (vocatives, first names, and greetings), besides fillers and hesitators. The second most frequent pre-external mitigation strategy was religious markers (46 instances) which appeared in the three stages mainly in the

form of swearing. Participants used other pre-externals, namely, grounders (28 instances), apology (23 instances), preparators (15 instances), request for information and clarification (11 instances), repetition of a mitigator (10 instances), and partial repeats (seven instances). Straightforwardly, all external downgraders were prevalently used in the 1st stage of refusal interaction and gradually decreased in the subsequent stages.

With regard to gender, males used high frequency of pre-externals (146 occurrences) compared to their female counterparts (74 occurrences). As concerns situations, pre-externals were mainly employed in St1 (99 occurrences) and St2 (59 occurrences) in which the social distance between interactants is high regardless of rank of imposition. Clearly, no substantial differences between males and females regarding the semantic formulas of pre-externals in any situation were attested. Further, due to the limited presence and the total absence of some pre-externals, we could not run Chi-square tests.

Table 5.14

Participants' Use of Pre-externals across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situations

Pre-external mitigators	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D+R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D -R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Openers	7	1	7	8	5	1	9	3	3	4	4	3	55
Preparators	4	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Request for information/ Clarification	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
Grounders	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	14
Apology	4	3	0	3	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	16
Partial repeats	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	5
Religious Markers	6	4	6	4	4	3	2	0	0	2	1	2	34
Repetition of a Mitigator	4	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Females													
Openers	6	0	6	7	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	25
Preparators	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Request for information/clarification	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	8
Grounders	3	1	3	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	14
Apology	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Partial repeats	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Religious markers	4	0	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Repetition of a mitigator	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Total	48	13	38	40	15	4	24	6	5	15	6	6	220

5.2.5.2 Post-External Mitigation

Post-refusals, as previously defined, are harnessed to highlight, repeat, rationalise, mitigate, or terminate the refusal sequence. The six patterns of post-external strategies which were identified in the data ensued from a combination of four strategies, namely grounder, apology, alternative and closing as illustrated below.

1. Grounder + Apology

- (11) [lla:: manqadʃ] **DHA: double negation** [les examens ʔadwa:: w mæni:ʃ wæʒed]
grounder (.) [ʔi smehli] **apology**

No, I can't. *I have exams tomorrow and I haven't studied enough. Just forgive me.*

2. Alternative + Closing

- (12) [lla:: lla mənazzemʃ] **DHA: double negation** [xalli hta xatʳa ʒæjjə sʳa:hbi]
alternative

No, no, I can't. *Let's put it off until next time, friend.*

ʔajja sʳahha ʃa bæyi: ngu:lək

So, okay, what can I say?

[ʔajja sʳahha llajahafdək (.) llajahafdək xu:ja] **closing**

So, okay, may Allah Protect you, may Allah Protect you, brother

3. Grounder + Alternative

- (13) [lla::] **DHA: explicit refusal** [↑txa:fi majqadnæʃ l-waqt ʔæna menqadʃ neqra f-li:l
nʃæs ʃjzi:niʃ] **grounder** [↓xalli:na hta nkamlu: (.) ʔa:ja wəfiʔardʳna nro:hə lə-
centre ville] **alternative**

No, *I am afraid we won't make it back on time. I cannot study well at night because I get too sleepy. Let's wait until exams are over to go downtown.*

4. Alternative + Apology

- (14) [lla::] **DHA: explicit refusal** [desolé xti] **apology** [ra:hom ʕand sʕa:hbtɪ di:ʒa
sallefthoməɫha] **grounder**

No, sorry, sister. *I have already lent them to a friend.*

5. Grounder + Alternative + Apology

- (15) [mənaʒʒemʃ] **DHA: neg ability** [pa:sku: ʔæna di:ʒa tæni mahdɔrtʃ wra:ni fi
ʃʕ:::æɫ myajba] **grounder** [jla tlæqi:t haka wella (.) nʃu:f] **alternative** (.)
[besʕsʕaħ darwək mənaʒʒemʃ narsellək] **recycled refusal** [ʔsemħi:liʔ] **apology**
*I can't, as I also missed many classes and was absent for a while. I will look
around for something useful, though, I cannot send you the lessons now. Sorry.*

6. Grounders + Closing

- (16) [wæ:lu: xti] **DHA: explicit refusal** [di:ʒa ʔæna gɔtlək ra:ni msʕawra (.) ku:n nqad
ndabber, ku:n dəba:rteħ ʕlijjɔf] **grounder**
*No way, sister. I already told you I have pictures of the lessons. If I could find the
lessons, I would look them up for myself first.*
ʔajja sʕaħħa məʕli:ʃ , sʕaħħi:ti xti
So, okay, never mind. Thank you, sister.
[jaʕtʕi:k sʕsʕaħħa] **closing**
May Allah bless with good health.

Five patterns were repeated only twice, namely Grounder+ Apology + closing, Grounders + Repetition of a mitigator, Grounder +Religious marker, Grounder +Alternative + Religious marker, and Grounder +Apology +Religious marker + Repetition of a mitigator.

It is worth highlighting that since few instances of post-external combination strategies were used across the two politeness systems, only gender differences will be factored in. However, the sole interesting finding that we observed in this regard is the overall frequency

of patterns which discerns a relatively higher frequency of post-external patterns on the part of females (16 instances) compared to their male counterparts (eight instances).

Table 5.15

Frequency of Pre-external Combination Strategy

Post-external combination strategy	Frequency								Total
	Situation								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Grounders + Apology	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	1	7
Grounders + Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Grounders + Alternative + Apology	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Alternative + Apology	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Grounders + Closing	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
Alternative + Closing	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
Total	1	5	1	3	1	2	5	6	24

Concerning the frequency of post-externals, a total of 310 instances appeared in the data, including grounders (133), apology (63), alternatives (43), closing (31), religious markers (20), repetition of a mitigator (16), and joking (four instances). Consider Table 5.16 overleaf.

Table 5.16

Participants' Use of Post-externals across the Three Stages of Negotiation in Each Situation

Post-external mitigators	Situations												Total
	Borrowing Notes: Deference (+D +R)			Watching Books : Deference (+D -R)			Going to the Library: Solidarity (-D +R)			Going Downtown: Solidarity (-D -R)			
Males	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	S1	S2	S3	
Grounders	10	4	0	11	4	3	12	4	2	14	7	4	75
Alternative	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	4	1	15
Apology	3	3	2	5	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	40
Religious markers	3	2	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	14
Repetition of a mitigator	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	10
Joking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Closing	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	2	1	0	3	2	16
Females													
Grounders	5	3	1	12	3	1	10	4	2	10	6	1	58
Alternative	9	1	0	3	2	0	4	0	1	4	2	2	28
Apology	5	3	0	8	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	23
Religious markers	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
Repetition of a mitigator	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	6
Joking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	4
Closing	4	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	3	1	15
Total	45	21	3	50	20	12	41	20	12	40	31	15	310

Concerning the use of post-externals in relation to gender, men used high frequency of all strategies except for alternatives and joking which were mainly used by females. As for situations, participants opted for post-external supportive moves in St2 and St4 in which the imposition is low. Noticeably, the use of supportive moves decreases with each stage. The more the requester insists on the request, the more the refuser reduces the use of mitigators

According to the Chi-square and Fisher's Exact Tests that were run to scrutinise any statistically significant difference between the two genders in the selection of the most prevalent post-externals, differences appeared to be significant only for using alternative in the 1st stage of St1 ($p = .009$) and apology in the 1st stage of St3 ($p = .043$). The Cramer's V measurements for the apology and alternative strategies are $V = .461$ and $V = .430$, respectively, reflecting a *strong* association between gender and these strategies.

5.2.5.3 Pre-and-Post External Mitigation

Instead of merely using pre-external or post-external mitigation, some participants opted for a combination of the two to mitigate refusal head acts. The frequency of the strategies of the pre-and-post external mitigation patterns that appeared across the four situations and the three stages of refusal sequences are detailed in this section.

Concerning pre-and-post external combination patterns, six combination strategies were employed in the role-play data in an attempt by refusers to palliate the bind, including opener/grounder, opener/alternative, opener/grounder+apology, request for information/grounder, religious marker/grounder, and religious marker/apology. Clearly, a slash (/) is used to separate pre-external and post-external strategies in each combination pattern. An illustration of these patterns is as follows.

1. Opener / Grounder

- (17) [ʔæwɗi] **opener** [ʔi smehli sʰa:ħbi] **IHA: apology** (.) [ʔa:di teybeni wəllah la ʔa:di taybeni] **criticise the requester**⁴ [ra:ni ra:jeħ w l-waqt ʕlija(.) ʕandi examen darwək] **grounder**

Well, I am really sorry, friend. You will bother me, I swear, you will bother me. I am heading out now; It's time for my exam.

2. Opener / Alternative

- (18) [ʃu:fi] **opener** [l-bi:s ʔa:di jro:ħ ʕli:na] **IHA: reason/ excuse/ explanation** (.) [tsemma:: ro:ħi weħdək ʔibi:h]

Look, the bus is almost leaving, so go alone and grab the book.

3. Opener / Grounder + Apology

- (19) [ʔæwɗi] **opener** [ʔi:: smehli sʰa:ħbi] **IHA: apology** [meni:ʃ fi periode tæʃ teħwæ::s wɔæʃ (.) jli:qli nətʰlaʃ lə-da:r rivi:zi] **grounder** [ʔi smehli] **apology**

Well, I am really sorry, friend. I am going through a tough time and need to get home to study. Just forgive me.

4. Request for information / Grounder

- (20) **Requestee:** [lju:m?] **request for information**

Today?

Requester: Oui

Yes

Requestee: [lla:] **DHA: explicit refusal** ↑ [lju:m hæda wi:n kmelna examen wya:dwa ʕanna wahda:xor] **grounder**

No, I have just finished today's exam and will have another tomorrow.

⁴ Since this strategy is employed in refusal to a request made by a stranger, it is coded as an upgrader, and thus, dispensed with in the present study.

5. Religious marker / Grounder

(21) [wəllah] **religious marker** [makænf kifæf] **DHA: explicit refusal** (.) [ra:k ʃærəf

les examens makæf l-waqt ya:di mænʒʒi nawsʕel lə-da:r ya:di jku:n l-waqt ra:h]

grounder

I swear, no way. Well, you know, it's exam season, and I don't have enough time. It takes me quite a while to reach home

6. Religious marker / Apology

(22) [wəllah] **religious marker** [la ra:ni rɔ:tʕa:r sʕa:hbi] **IHA: excuse, reason,**

explanation [yi smehli] **apology**

I swear, I am late, friend. Just forgive me.

Clearly, six strategies were used to form the pre-and-post external mitigation patterns, namely openers, request for information, grounder, apology, alternative, and religious marker. The last pattern, for instance, which is illustrated by Example (22) is a response to a second attempt to convince the requestee “ʔæni xajəf jla jedu:həmli wella” (I am afraid they could be stolen) . The latter opted for refusing the request indirectly by means of excuse, reason, explanation prefaced by a religious marker and followed by an apology in order to diminish any potential threat.

In the interest of brevity, and due to the sparse use of all patterns across the four situations, only gender differences will be considered as Table 5.17 below reveals. Clearly, males used higher frequency of the strategies that made the pre-and-post external mitigation patterns (27 instances) than females (10 instances).

In detail, males were more likely to use the openers / Grounders pattern (11 instances) than females (One instance). In other words, males tend to open the refusal sequence by such openers as greetings, fillers, and hesitators in order to make the refusal less offensive. They, provide reasons for refusing the request afterwards. The same holds true for the Religious markers / Grounders, and the Openers /Grounders + Apology patterns. The latter was used by

males only. However, similar frequency of the opener / Alternative pattern was used by both males and females. Besides, no significant statistical difference is noted in relation to use of the Religious markers/ Apology

Exceptionally, three out of four instances of the Request for information/Grounders pattern were used by females. Put differently, female participants tended to preface the refusal by questioning the requester about time and place, for instance, and then provide an explanation for refusing the request. In fact, despite the gender differences previously highlighted, no significant difference is noted in this regard.

Table 5.17

Frequency of Pre-and-post External Combination Strategies in Relation to Gender and Situations

Pre-and-post external Combination strategies		Frequency								Total
Pre-externals	Post-externals	Situations								
		St1		St2		St3		St4		
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	Grounders	1	0	3	0	2	1	5	0	12
Openers	Alternative	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	6
Openers	Grounders + Apology	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	4
Request for information	Grounders	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	4
Religious marker	Grounder	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	6
Religious marker	Apology	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total		3	2	8	2	8	5	8	1	37

As regards the frequency of each refusal strategy employed to form the pre-and-post external mitigation patterns, a total of 198 strategies were used in the 1st stage of negotiation across the four situations as demonstrated in Table 5.18 overleaf. Ninety-seven of them were used in the pre-external position and 101 in post-external position. In the two positions, participants were more likely to use mitigators in the deference politeness system (131 instances) than solidarity politeness system (67 instances). With regard to gender, males used high frequency of mitigators (116) compared to females (82 instances).

Ten types of strategies were used, including openers, preparators, partial repeats, request for information, apology, grounders, alternative, religious markers, repetition of a mitigator, and closing.

Starting with openers, they were mainly used to preface refusals in the deference politeness system (21 instances) compared to the solidarity politeness system (14 instances). No discernible gender differences were detected, nonetheless. Few instances of preparators, partial repeats, request for information, and repetition of a mitigator were attested in the data. However, whereas preparators were adopted mainly in the deference politeness system, the other strategies did not exhibit any important difference in relation to situations or gender as they were sparsely used.

Both apology and grounders appeared in the two positions. However, in the pre-external position, they were mainly used to preface refusals to requests made by distant people. In the post-external position, on the other hand, they were used in the two systems, especially in the deference politeness system. Eventually, closing was used, though infrequently, in the deference politeness system.

Evidently, males seem to use high frequency of the mitigators that form pre-and-post external mitigation in the 1st stage of refusal sequence than females, especially when dealing with distant people.

Table 5.18

Participants' Use of Pre-and-post External in the 1st Stage of Negotiation in Each Situation

1 st stage	Situations																Total
Mitigation strategies	Pre-external								Post-external								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	5	5	6	5	8	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Preparators	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Partial repeats	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Request for information	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Apology	3	2	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	5	4	0	2	0	31
Grounders	2	2	3	2	0	1	0	1	10	3	4	8	8	4	8	1	57
Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	2	2	2	0	2	16
Religious markers	5	4	4	1	2	0	2	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	26
Repetition of a mitigator	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	8
Closing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	8
Total	22	15	17	15	11	5	8	4	20	14	10	18	17	6	11	5	198

For the 2nd stage, as shown in Table 5.19 overleaf, a total of 60 mitigators were used in the pre-external and post-external position across the four situations. Seemingly, approximant frequency of strategies is recorded in the two positions. Likewise, no observable differences were attested in relation to the two politeness systems (31 instances appeared in the deference politeness system and 29 instances in the solidarity politeness system).

Insofar as gender is concerned, however, males used the highest frequency of mitigators (48 males) compared to females (12). With respect to the type of strategies employed in this stage, nine types of strategies were attested in the data, namely, openers, preparators, apology, grounders, alternative, religious markers, repetition of a mitigator, joking, and closing.

In a detailed manner, openers were mainly used in the solidarity politeness system, especially by males (10 out of 12 strategies). Both apology and grounders were primarily provided after finishing the refusal. However, whereas apology was prevalent among males in the deference politeness system, grounders did not indicate such differences across politeness systems.

Preparators, alternative, joking, repetition of a mitigator, and closing did not designate any evident difference across politeness systems or in relation to gender. Religious markers, which occurred exclusively post-externally, were mainly used by males in the deference politeness system, though infrequently.

All in all, males and females differ in relation to the frequency of mitigation strategies used in the pre-and-post external mitigations. Notwithstanding, both of them seem not to pay attention to the rank of imposition and the degree of familiarity with their interlocutors when negotiating refusals for the first time.

Table 5.19

Participants' Use of Pre-and-post Externals in the 2nd Stage of Negotiation in Each Situation

2 nd stage	Situations																Total
Mitigation strategies	Pre-external								Post-external								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	0	0	3	0	4	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Preparators	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Apology	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	0	3	0	15
Grounders	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	3	1	2	0	12
Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	4
Religious markers	2	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Repetition of a mitigator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Joking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Closing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	6
Total	3	1	9	2	7	1	3	1	5	2	7	2	7	2	7	1	60

As Table 5.20 shows, a total of 34 strategies were used in the 3rd stage of all situations. Interestingly, contrary to the 1st stage in which a high frequency of strategies was attested in the deference politeness system, the highest frequency of mitigators in this stage was recorded in the solidarity system (25 instances) compared to nine instances in the deference politeness system. As for gender, the highest frequency of mitigators was used by males (32) compared to females (two instances).

Concerning the type of strategies employed pre-and-post externally; only 6 types were detected in the role-play data, namely, openers, grounders, apology, religious markers, alternative, and closing. In detail, no pre-and-post external mitigation strategy was used in St1. Openers were obviously used before refusing the request among friends. However, it did not discern any noticeable difference in relation to gender.

Both apology and Grounders were mainly used by males to preface refusals in pre-and-post external mitigation. However, they did not indicate any observable difference across politeness systems. The same holds true for religious markers which were also used by males only without any remarkable effect in relation to situations. Contrarily, alternatives, which were also primarily used post-externally by males, indicated a remarkable difference across situations as it appeared exclusively in the solidarity politeness system.

Hence, in the 3rd stage of request-refusal interaction, participants were more inclined to use high frequency of strategies that form the pre-and-post external mitigation devices while refusing a request made by a friend regardless of the rank of imposition.

To synthesise the key points, the type as well as the number of strategies utilised to form pre-and-post-external mitigation in the role-play data differ conspicuously in relation to gender, politeness system as well as the stage of refusal sequence. That is, perspicuous differences were detected in relation to both gender and politeness systems in the 1st stage, only gender differences in the 2nd stage, differences in relation to both gender and situations in the 3rd situation.

Table 5.20

Participants' Use of Pre-and-post Externals in the 3rd Stage of Negotiation in Each Situation

3 rd stage	Situations																Total
Mitigation strategies	Pre-external								Post-external								
	St1		St2		St3		St4		St1		St2		St3		St4		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Openers	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Apology	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	8
Grounders	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	7
Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Religious markers	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
Closing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	4
Total	0	0	3	0	4	1	4	0	0	0	6	0	7	1	8	0	34

In a nutshell, despite the notable frequency of mitigation devices in the three stages of request-refusal sequences and across the two politeness systems, neither the occurrence nor the nature of these strategies necessarily remains constant throughout all phases of an interaction. Noticeably, the occurrence of softeners in the role-play data dropped dramatically in the second and third stages. In the following section, we will sketch out participants' responses to the questions of the retrospective written report.

5.3 Results of Retrospective Written Reports

Immediately after the role play session, participants provided a retrospective written report in which they answered questions about negotiation, politeness, and formality.

When asked whether they noted particular differences in the formulation of scenarios, all participants reckoned that the difference is indeed clear. Some of them referred to differences in relation to degree of familiarity. However, none of them referred to rank of imposition differences. Consider the following excerpt in which a participant depicted the difference he noticed.

“zu:3 lwæla jla”majjaʃarfu:kʃ jezzaʃfu: , w zu:3 derniers jeʃarfu:k maya:di:ʃ jezzaʃfu:”.

In the first two situations, the interlocutors are unfamiliar; they might get upset. In the second two situations, as the interlocutors are familiar, they will not be as likely to get upset”.

With respect to negotiation, some participants commented that an insistence did not bother them, especially if it is performed by close people. Rather, they consider it a polite way to perform requests as the following utterance shows:

“Yes, I can accept it as a polite way to demand something from others”

However, they vehemently deem a series of insistences to the request embarrassing and an act that undermine the requester, especially if it exceeded three times as the following excerpts reveal:

“In my culture, I think it’s rude because ki wæhəd labya close or not matbyi:ʃ jdi:r hæza jaʃni sʰa:ʃji mabya:ʃ ku:n tzi:d ʃli:ha tʰajjah mən qi:mtək w tweli fi emabrassing situation.”

(I think insistence is rude in my culture because when someone, regardless of whether they are close or distant, say that they do not want to do something, this means that they do not want to do it. If you keep insisting, you might end up diminishing yourself and creating an embarrassing situation.”

“It can be rude when repeated more than two or three times.”

This explains the reason why all negotiators concluded the insistence sequence, at most, by the third stage (two insistence attempts).

When asked whether they paid attention to the degree of formality when performing role-plays, all participants said that they bore in mind this politeness feature when refusing request indicating that the way we address someone unfamiliar differs from the way we address a friend, as the following excerpts exemplify:

“Yes, I did pay attention because the way we speak to someone you do not know and a friend is not the same.”

“wa:h sʰa:ħbi rɪfɪzi:təh di:rækt besʰsʰaħ lli menaʃarfehʃ indirectement meʃi kɪfki:f.”

One of the elements that appeared to influence the degree of formality is the way the request is performed according to some participants, especially females, as the following response indicates:

“ça dépend de la façon de parler” (It depends on the way of speaking)

When asked in which situation they used a soft language, most of participants pointed to St1 and St2. For instance, one of the participants said “I do not know this person; I do not want to hurt him.” Direct language; however, seems to characterise St3 and St4 in accordance with most of participants’ responses. Consider one of the responses we had:

“because sʰa:ħbi I know majezʃafʃ meni wəmwælefni” (My friend does not get upset because we are familiar)

Surprisingly, some female participants asserted that they used a direct language irrespective of the situation. They did not provide a fathomable reason for such behaviour, admittedly.

Rank of imposition has also been referred to as a reason for using a direct language in deference politeness system, specifically in St4 in which the rank of imposition is high as the following excerpt implies:

“Impossible tru:h lə-centre-ville wmatʼawelf.” (It is impossible to go downtown without spending a lot of time there).

The upcoming features that were analysed are the refusing requests made by someone of an opposite gender in a male versus female refusal interaction and the potential effect of status on using politeness which discerned conspicuous discrepancy between participants.

Starting with gender, some male participants, perhaps even most, said that they use the same kind of words when interacting with girls, whereas others said that they use a soft language in an attempt to avert hurting women. The two standpoints are illustrated below:

“No, I will refuse a girl too in the same way I refused a boy because ki tku:n ʃandi hæʒa wella mɔaleq mejhamʃ i:da boy wella girl.” (No, I will refuse a girl too in the same way I refused a boy because when I have something to do or I am in a hurry, it does not matter whether they are a boy or a girl.”

“ʃwi:ja ki tahder mʃa female bæjən txajjer kelmæt mlæh soft trifi:zi b-méthode ʃæba pa:sku: nəsa ʃasæsi:n.”

“A little bit, when you talk to a female, it is obvious that you choose nice and soft words. You refuse nicely because women are sensitive.”

Conversely, female participants adopted one standpoint which is being as brief as possible when talking to a man as illustrated below.

“i:da kæn ʃi:r mənqadʃ nkatər l-hadra mʃæh wi:da ʃi:ra qa:dra nʃæwnha wnedi wnʒ:bi mʃæha fə l-hadra” (If it is a boy, I will not say much, but if it is a girl, I might offer help and even be open to negotiating”).

Concerning social status, two viewpoints were demonstrated. Some participants agreed that they use a polite language when interacting with someone of higher status than them. Others reckoned that they refuse requests irrespective of the requester’s social position. The two standpoints are illustrated below, respectively.

“wæhəd jku:n niveau ʕlija bæjna nəhta:rmeh wənqa:dreh w balæk nmedleh jla tʕləb meni hæza besʕsʕh wæhəd nɔ:rma:l lla.” (I would certainly show respect and deference to someone with a higher status than mine and may even go along with their requests. But if they are on the same level as me, then no)

“No is no, no matter who you are”.

On closer interrogation, one conclusion emerging from the previously reported results is that participants paid attention and were aware of the contextual differences between situations, the degree of formality, the level of directness as well as gender and social status differences. The last two features were included in the verbal report in order to feel out participants’ opinions regarding social status and gender and gauge their importance when performing refusals, which can be fruitful suggestions for future inquiry.

5.4 Conclusion

In essence, the way in which strategies are selected, the length and content of refusal formulas as well as the combination of different strategies impart speakers’ tendency to achieve successful communication. Besides, a noteworthy means of affecting the refusal was through non-verbal behaviour and prosodic features which can have a profound effect on speakers’ success both at conveying their refusal and at alleviating its harmful impact. However, such paralinguistic features were occasionally reported in the data owing to the small sample size. Therefore, without further data, it is troublesome to determine the accurate function of these strategies which may qualify as communication strategies.

5.5 Discussion

In the penultimate section we expounded the major results of the role-play data and retrospective written reports. In this section, we will discuss negotiation, the type of refusal head act, internal structure of refusal head act, directness and indirectness, internal and external mitigation, and elaboration in accordance with Scollon and Scollon's (2001) work to scrutinise participants' orientation towards independence or involvement face strategies. Concurrently, we will attempt to profoundly analyse the main findings juxtaposing them against the theoretical propositions garnered from the literature review.

First and foremost, verbal reports bear out the findings of the role plays which demonstrate that in Algerian culture, specifically Oran society, an insistence, irrespective of being direct or indirect, to a request between distant and even close people is indubitably an expected cultural demeanour and an aspect of courtesy. This finding is parallel to that of García's (1992) which showcases insistence as an anticipated cultural behaviour in Peruvian context.

Simply put, in Oran society, an insistence is deemed an involvement politeness strategy that gives the interactant a chance to negotiate their face needs throughout the request-refusal conversational sequence. Indeed, insistence, as an expected insertion sequence accompanying refusals, promotes the level of linguistic politeness and paves the way for the collocutor to take part in the interaction. This finding goes in line with Félix-Brasdefer (2006).

It should be remarked, moreover, that in accordance with the findings of the retrospective reports, a series of insistences may constitute an impolite behaviour and a face-threatening act that may incite interlocutors to feel embarrassed, as cogently claimed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

With respect to the type of head act, informants' propensity for direct refusals, especially in the deference politeness system is attributable to their tendency to be straightforward and polite at the same time. Similar results were obtained by Tobbi (2024) who concludes that the

use of directness when refusing offers and requests by her Algerian participants guarantees clarity. It is a transparent politeness procedure that conforms to Grice's conversational maxim of manner (clarity) as claimed by Faerch and Kasper (1989). This finding also accords with Bella (2011) who concluded that using language appropriately is embodied in the priority attributed to clarity over politeness. Chen's (1996) study also accentuated the great importance of truthfulness, directness, effectiveness, and clarity for native English speakers in their social interactions. In the meanwhile, these outcomes are inconsistent with that of Bulut (2003) whose study suggested preference for indirectness, and with that of Siebold and Busch (2014) whose participants found it awkward to openly reject something as it contradicts their intention to save their positive face by giving a good impression to their interlocutors. Participants' use of direct refusal head acts irrespective of social distance is also discordant with Mexicans' use of direct refusals which is heavily conditioned by social distance as suggested by Félix-Brasdefer (2008). It is also inconsonant with Al-Ghamdi and Alqarni (2019) results which attributed the avoidance of direct 'no' by Saudis to their collectivistic culture regarding harmony as a crucial element for maintaining pleasant interpersonal relationships. By the same token, direct refusals were most prevalently performed by means of negative ability/willingness rather than explicit refusal or double negation strategy indicating informants' apparent predisposition to be selective when realising refusals to requests. This finding upholds Lakoff's (1975) claim that excessive clarity may curtail the degree of politeness.

Drawing upon the responses of some of our informants in the retrospective report, we can extrapolate that the way the refusal is said directly affects the way it is responded to. Evidently, People may take offence at how someone emits something rather than at what was emitted. Researchers in communication, Culpeper (2011), among others, have repeatedly underscored the importance of prosodic characteristics in disambiguating messages.

The widespread use of white lies, untrue but seemingly reasonable explanations, and detailed 'excuse, reason, explanation' to refuse requests indirectly, on the other hand, is adhered to participants attempt to avoid confrontation and save face as confirmed by Félix-Brasdefer (2006). This is to say that giving elaborated explanation when refusing initial acts as requesting seems to be rooted in the Algerian culture as pointed out by Tobbi (2024). Similar results found out by Al kayed et al. (2020) revealed Jordanians' strong preference for providing explanations and reasons for refusing requests more than any other strategy. The same holds true for Saudis who seem to use it as a way of showing respect and consideration as found out by Al-Ghamdi and Alqarni (2019). Furthermore, an inexplicit reason for the refusal would not be a well-rounded response to the goodwill extended by the speech act initiator (Chen, 1996).

In a similar fashion, alternative is used as a positive face-saving strategy whereby speakers indicated their readiness to help out in other ways. It also displays friendliness and conveys the refuser's intent to cushion the negative effect brought about by the refusal as suggested by Chen (1996).

Moreover, the findings highlighted the salience of facework in the performance of refusals which involved the deployment of a plethora of internal and external mitigators. Noticeably, the employment of supportive moves decreases by stage. The more the requester insists on the request, the more the refuser decreases the use of mitigators, thus appearing ineffective in coping with the interactant's tenacity, impeding a sooth ending of the request-refusal encounter. This finding is concordant with Bella (2011) whose participants tended to exhaust their means for face redress in the first episode and turn blunt in the second episode of the interaction. Our observation that successive stages of insistence may lead to face threat on the part of the two collocutors is largely endorsed, thus.

As for the internal structure of refusal head act, the few instances of pre-externally mitigated head acts produced in St4 reflect the salient effect of rank of imposition. It means that the participants did not use pre-externals to prepare the requester for refusal.

Insofar as internal mitigation is concerned, a very feeble use of syntactic mitigators was observed used as the latter characterises more formal interaction whereas the situations for the present study represent interaction between people of equal status. The frequent occurrence of lexical downgraders appeared to be a typical indicator of positive politeness as they stress in-group affiliation and index involvement as asserted by Blum-Kulka (2005), and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008). This finding accords with Bella's (2011) finding which highlights lexical downgraders as a vital conversational aspect of verbal communication between in-group members in Greek society.

Concerning external mitigation, participants' strong reliance on pre-externals in St1 and St2 reflects the importance of social distance on the choice of these strategies. Post-externals, on the other hand, were widely used in St2 and St4 where the rank of imposition is low. In other words, pre-externals are selected when interacting with distant people regardless of rank of imposition, whereas post-externals are favoured when the rank of imposition is low regardless of social distance. That is, social distance outweighs rank of imposition when communicating with distant people, whereas rank of imposition overrides social distance when interacting with close people. This finding advocates Wolfson's (1988) postulate that speakers' attempts to maintain face and avert jeopardising interpersonal relationships are solidly affected by the different scales of social distance. It also accords with Agyekum's (2004) study in which social distance appeared to be a determinant factor in the realisation of rejection. Besides, the decisive role that the perceived weightiness of the FTA plays when selecting the most suitable politeness strategy by speakers of Maghrebi Arabic dialects has also been underscored by D'Anna (2014).

Overall, by virtue of the fact that external mitigators derive their politeness value from their propositional content and illocutionary force (justify, minimise) as contended by Faerch and Kasper (1989), the over-use of external mitigation, including individual and complex strategies, is indicative of their aim to do their utmost to attain the optimal degree of politeness. A similar conclusion has been drawn by Bella (2011) highlighting the importance of external mitigation devices in maintaining and bolstering the speaker's positive aspect of face, which might have been imperilled by the rejection act.

The type as well as the number of strategies utilised to form the different types of external mitigation in the role-play data differ conspicuously in relation with gender, politeness system as well as the stage of refusal sequence. That is, remarkable differences were detected in relation to both gender and politeness systems in the 1st stage, only gender differences in the 2nd stage, differences in relation to both gender and situations in the 3rd stage. Therefore, negotiation is instrumental for the proper implementation of face redress. Arguably, an assumption can be made at this juncture that persistence sequences inserted between the initiating act and refusal in extended request-refusal interactions exhibit both structural and pragmatic intricacy. A similar conclusion has been reached by Gass and Houck (1999) and Kasemsin (2006).

Pre-externals can be analysed with reference to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theoretical framework. Such adjuncts to refusal as openers, including dispreferred discourse markers "well", "oh" or elongated fillers denote speakers' reluctance to perform the FTA. Therefore, even utterances devoid of linguistic content can contribute to how refusals are negotiated in interaction. Moreover, request for information, albeit rarely used, prefaced the refusal in order to give a cue that the requestee cannot acquiesce to the request, express consideration, lessen the refusal's unpleasant effect, and maintain social harmony as demonstrated by Hayati (2024). The use of the aforementioned repair initiators and turn

prefaces to realise refusals was also reported in Pomerantz (1984). Adjuncts, thus, act as consideration strategies in refusal discourse as concluded by Morkus (2014), and Hayati (2024). Analogously, such pre-external semantic formulae as apologies served as independent strategies to communicate speakers' intention not to impinge on the addressee. Seemingly, apology is also a critical feature of the Greek society, yet it is employed as an involvement strategy that preserves a friendly disposition towards the refusee (Bella, 2011). Likewise, refusing a request without feeling sorry is viewed as impolite in Saudi culture (Al-Ghamdi & Alqarni, 2019).

The supportive moves that appeared in our data are akin to the strategies employed in Persian and American responses by Iranian English language learners when making refusals as reported in Shishavan and Sharifian (2013). Besides, in line with the findings of prior research such as (Nelson et al., 2002; Al-Issa, 2003; Kwon, 2044; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Shishavan & Sharifian, 2013), the informants utilised excuse, reason, explanation more often than any other semantic formula to perform refusals indirectly and grounders (explanation) as a supportive move to mitigate the refusal head act externally.

In line with Nahar Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010), the employment of delayed refusal, extended supportive moves, complex strategies, and religious expressions serves as positive politeness strategy whereby the requestee expresses positive feeling towards the requester, and fosters solidarity with. The use of religious markers such as swearing for the sake of saving face and maintaining interpersonal relationships has also been ascertained by Bennacer (2021).

Analysis of the role-play statistically significant discrepancies revealed that gender is correlated with negotiation, the internal structure of refusal head act as well as the use of internal mitigators across politeness systems. Gender also proved to be a pivotal element in the choice of declination strategies among the participants of Shishavan and Sharifian (2013).

Some internal attenuation tools such as kinship terms of address were utilised by informants both as a positive politeness strategy to appear friendly and as a negative politeness strategy to assuage the imposition depending on the refusal posed. Concerning supportive moves, involvement strategies (positive politeness strategies) included request for information, joking, and future acceptance in low-distance situations (solidarity politeness system) whereas deference politeness strategies included partial repeats, openers, preparators, statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, apology, statement of principle, and conditional acceptance. Grounders, alternative, repetition of a mitigator, religious markers, and closing were used in two politeness systems. So, from the data collected in the present study, one may infer that the selection of mitigation devices is heavily contingent on the specific social situation. Therefore, drawing on Abdolrezapour and Dastjerdi's (2012) conclusions, neither Blum-Kulka's (2005) postulate, which places internal mitigation within the category of positive politeness tactics and external mitigation within other-oriented negative politeness tactics, nor Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2008) claim, which identifies internal mitigation as falling under negative politeness strategies and external mitigation under positive politeness strategies, hold true for the dialect under study, as the two types of mitigation could fulfil either positive and/or negative politeness based on social, contextual as well as cultural aspects. The two facets of politeness can, to some extent, be blended in certain cases in the Maghrebi Arabic dialects (D'Anna, 2014). Therefore, as pointed out by Gumperz and Hymes (1972), Hymes (1972), and Economidou- Kogetsidis (2008), speech behaviour is constrained by culturally specific parameters which govern what speakers say, to whom, and under what conditions. Marked differences in relation to speech act performance can be detected even among groups of the same cultural orientation (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). Thus, refusals portray elementary cultural values and delicate interpersonal negotiation for a

successful conversation as emphasised by Beebe et al. (1990), and El-Dakhs (2018), among others.

As a corollary to the discussion, the gender disparity reported in our study across the two politeness systems rebut the stereotypical generalisation about females' linguistic behaviour elucidated in Brown (1983) and Holmes (1995) which unanimously assert that women are linguistically more courteous than men, and underpin Mills' (2003) claim that politeness should be looked at as an assessment of the interlocutors that widely varies according to contextual factors, communicative circumstances as well as individuals' relation with a certain community of practice.

Although the sample size in role plays is relatively small to draw definitive conclusions, one could evidently propound that since such involvement strategies as direct refusals were also prevalent in the deference politeness system, and such independence strategies as apology and alternative were also frequent in the solidarity politeness system, social distance is susceptible to intra-lingual variation even among speakers of the same linguistic background, as observed by Spencer-Oatey (1996). The results of Félix-Brasdefer's (2008b) research, in which the Dominicans widely utilised direct refusals regardless of how close (-D) or distant (+ D) they are, further underpinned this observation.

Wrapping up this section, Scollon and Scollon's (2001) description of "culture as a verb" (p.5), aptly conveys the idea that culture is something we do rather than something we possess. We do not want to belabour the point, but it is important to say that understanding people's communicative behaviour requires more than a mere focus on cultural justifications. Rather, it requires a comprehension of what they are doing and the tools available to them.

5.6 Conclusion

Having discussed the key findings of role plays in connection with previous research and drawn out its relevance to the field, the subsequent treatise distils the essence of the dissertation, encapsulating the major findings of both the DCTs and role plays.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

The kernel of the present study is the realisation of refusal speech act which, as an FTA, calls for redressive work that preserves both the positive and the negative face of the hearer. To this end, we attempted to suggest a typology of peripheral mitigation devices used in request-refusal encounters from a socio-pragmatic perspective. Such taxonomy has both internal and external mitigators, and it has been drawn on the basis of previous research conducted from different angles. The importance of using these mitigation devices and supportive moves when softening the negative nature of the speech act of refusal has been foregrounded throughout the dissertation.

Drawing upon the comprehensive analysis of the results, this section offers a summation of the principal conclusions and provides answers to the research questions raised in the general introduction, underscoring the study's contributions and implications.

The first research question dealt specifically with the type of refusal head act strategy used in a request-refusal encounter. Participants, both in the DCT and role-play data, tended to be upfront when performing refusals both in the deference politeness system and in the solidarity politeness system. Put simply, our participants sought clarity by being uncompromisingly forthright when performing refusals. Be that as it may, they lean toward using mitigated rather than unmitigated head acts irrespective of the type of head act, direct or indirect to dissipate any possible undesirable feelings.

Since making refusals directly without supportive moves is perceived rude and not thoughtful, refusals are embellished with elaboration by means of both internal mitigators and a miscellaneous collection of supportive moves in order to palliate the possible undesirable connotations in the refusal and thus preserve their face. Uncovering mitigation devices used by speakers in four request-refusal situations sorted into two politeness systems was the crux of the second research question.

Strictly speaking, in order to avoid causing imposition, a refuser may have recourse to different categories of internal and external mitigators. Speakers of Oran dialect appeared to underuse syntactic mitigators for internally attenuating their refusals to requests while at the same time overusing lexical downgraders. Additionally, they were found to overuse external mitigators, and more specifically to make more use of apology as a pre-refusal and grounders as a post refusal. It is worth speculating that speakers of Oran dialect performing refusals to requests in this study drew on an array of internal and external mitigation devices to cushion the damage that may be precipitated by the refusal.

The ultimate purpose of the third research question is to probe into the contextual factors that are liable to exert an affect on the selection of refusal and mitigation devices from a socio-pragmatic perspective. Data analysis suggests that social distance turns out to be a much more decisive factor than rank of imposition when communicating with distant people whereas rank of imposition is more effective when communicating with close people. Besides, gender variably affects insistence stages, type of head act, the internal structure of head acts, as well as the selection of internal and external mitigating devices. This contradicts our hypothesis that gender might be of marginal effect. As a consequence, the appropriate choice of face expressions is sweepingly influenced by gender, social distance, and rank of imposition. In other words, the more socially distant interlocutors are, the more face redress might be requisitioned; the higher the degree of face risk, the more constrained the choices for mitigation devices are. Our statistical results coupled with the retrospective written reports overwhelmingly undergird the latter speculation.

Notwithstanding their penchant for directness, speakers of Oran dialect can be considered very polite in their articulation of refusals. What makes them very polite comes from the fact that they rarely used unmitigated refusals. This is evidenced in the high occurrence of mitigation and delayed rejection acts by the participants. They accord great importance to

mitigation and use mitigation whenever they deem it appropriate. More specifically, they place more emphasis on interpersonal communication features by apologising and justifying their refusals.

To wrap things up, examination of both the DCT and role-play data demonstrated an orientation towards directness over indirectness when structuring refusal head acts regardless of whether the requester and requestee share a close (-D) or distant (+D) relationship. Concerning facework, involvement strategies encompassed request for information, joking, and future acceptance in low-distance situations (solidarity politeness system). In a deference politeness system, the presence of +D increased instances of independent strategies, namely partial repeats, openers, preparators, statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, apology, statement of principle, and conditional acceptance. Other strategies, including Grounders, alternative, repetition of a mitigator, religious markers, and closing characterised the two politeness systems. That is, it seems that the degree of perceived social distance (+D or -D) between status equals is a decisive factor in determining appropriate degrees of politeness in the target community. Since the two facets of politeness can be blended in some cases, we can conclude that the selection of mitigation devices is heavily anchored in the specific social setting alongside the cultural norms of the community under scrutiny.

The current study, thus, backs up the variationist pragmatic postulate that the different cultures and even subcultures may represent varied instantiations to speech acts and mirror distinct politeness principles and socio-cultural norms which are profoundly ingrained in every individual speaker and can indelibly impact their pragma-linguistic choices. This is reflected in our participants' employment of religious and culture-specific mitigation devices. Ultimately, it is unanimously agreed that people's endeavour to protect each other's positive and negative face serves their purpose of integrating into society. However, the way the positive and negative dimensions of face are balanced and preserved is a cultural matter.

Limitations of the study and Future research

Needless to say, any research endeavour might be susceptible to a number of limitations. In light of the findings of the present study, there are some caveats in the design of this study warrant acknowledgment. In particular, the findings may not be widely generalisable, as the sample consisted solely of students. Accordingly, the findings of the present study may still be rather tentative and cannot be generalised to hold for all Oran Arabic speakers and for all request-refusal situations. Including respondents from different walks of life and different age groups may also influence the results obtained. Further suggestions are made to expand the sample size in order to verify the generalisability of the findings and to substantiate their validity.

Although the DCT and role-play data have demonstrated reliability and validity, it is advisable to reinforce the findings through further ethnographic data, including collective interactions rather than two-person interactions.

Moreover, given that the present study focused on linguistic strategies associated with politeness, future research should expand the scope to involve such sociolinguistic phenomena as impoliteness, the choice of upgraders/intensifiers, and other FTAs such as threatening, criticising, and disagreement.

Comparative and contrastive studies investigating the refusal strategies and linguistic mitigating devices as well as intensifiers in Algerian Arabic and other regional dialects are recommended to deepen our understanding of socio-pragmatic variation in Arabic. Cross-cultural comparison of refusal strategies is also recommended; a comparison of refusal strategies in AA and Berber, for instance. The present research endeavour was limited to the analysis of refusals to requests, investigating refusals as a dispreferred response to other first-pair parts as offer, invitation and suggestion is also recommended

Besides, since gender disparity has been observed with respect to refusal realisation and the use of mitigation devices, future studies should probe into a larger set of male-female interaction. Our conclusions raise further questions for discussion like the relation between social status and the repair strategies scrutinised in the current study. Hence, further research in this arena is requisitioned

Given that even utterances devoid of linguistic content can contribute to the negotiation of refusals, nonverbal language can also play a powerful role in face threatening speech acts. Expressing refusals by laughter or facial expressions may modulate the impact of refusal utterances on interlocutors. Due the lack of ample data, it was tricky to pinpoint the various types of nonverbal behaviours that speakers employed when performing role plays to assuage the disruptive effect of refusals. Sweeping generalisations about the effect of nonverbal cues are inadequate. As such, studies about the list as well as the pragmatic function of nonverbal behaviour should be carried out in future research.

Ultimately, building upon our written reports and Culpeper's (2011, p. 57) conjecture which stipulates that 'it's not what you said, it's how you said it', we can suggest that a thoroughgoing scrutiny of the effect of prosodic aspects, including intonation, loudness, and speed of utterances on refusal realisation is also a topic worthy of exploration in future studies.

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APPENDICIES

Appendices

Appendix A

Data collection tools

A/ DCT

Arabic version

تعليمات: يحتوي الإستبيان على 4 سيناريوهات باللهجة العامية بهدف دراسة استراتيجيات الرفض في اللهجة الوهرانية. يرجى من المشاركين تصور السيناريوهات وكأنها تحدث حقاً لكي تكون الإجابات تلقائية وعفوية قدر المستطاع. شكراً

مسبقاً

الجنس: ذكر / أنثى العمر: () المستوى التعليمي:

مدة الإقامة في وهران: اللهجة التي تتكلم بها في البيت:

St1: (+D -R) طالب يرفض اعارة ملاحظات الدروس لزميل له

Nta étudiant taqra ghaya w tassisté f ga3 les cours. Bqat 3 jours w tebdo les examens finaux.

Yji wahed yqra m3ak bsah machi proche lik,ygolek : “khouya, rani mrati bzzaf les cours ma3lich tselefli cahier li kateb fih les notes ?

Nta matqadch tseleflah, tgoulah:

St2: (+D +R) طالب يرفض مراقبة كتب طالب لايعرفه في مطعم الجامعة

Rak f la cantine wela f le restaurant ta3 l’université. Ghi dork kamelt ftorek w rayeh tfawet examen. Yjik étudiant li mata3rfahch w jamais tlaqitah, yhot ktoba taw3ah foug tabla w yrouh ydir la chaine bach yjib ftorah, ygolek : “Khouya ma3lich nkhal had les livres 3andek bilama nrouh nefter w nji?”

la chaine raha twila bzzaf matqadch tqara3lah, tgoulah :.....

St3: (-D -R) طالب يرفض مرافقة صديقه للمكتبة

Imagine beli rak rayeh terkeb f le bus ghadi yqala3, yji sahbek ygolek “ Hambouk aya trouh m3aya l la bibliothéque njib ktab.”

Nta matqadch trouh m3ah, tgoulah :.....

St4: (-D +R) طالب يرفض مرافقة صديقه المقرب الى مركز المدينة

Imagine bli hada win kemelt examen ta3ek w demain 3nadek examen final f module fondamental. Ki tji kharej m l'amphi ygolek sahbek aya trouh m3aya l centre-ville.Nta matqadch. Tgoulah:

English Version of the DCT

Read the following four situations in which you interact with someone. Pretend you are the person in the situation and reject all requests. Write what you would say in an actual situation.

St1: A student refuses to lend out his class notes to another student (+ D - R)

You are a University student, only three days before taking the final exams, a classmate, who frequently misses classes, asks to borrow your course notes but you do not want to give them to him.

Your classmate: "You know I missed many classes. Could I please borrow your classnotes?"

You refuse by say.....

St2: A student refuses watching the books of another student in the canteen (+D +R).

You are sitting at the university cafeteria. You have just finished your lunch and about to leave to take your exam. A student, whom you never met before, puts their books on the table and asks you to watch them until he/she goes through the queue to bring their food but you cannot.

Student: Excuse me. Could you please watch my books while I go through the queue and get my food?

You refuse by saying:.....

St3: Astudent refuses going to the library with a friend (-D -R)

You are about to go home. You are in a hurry to catch the bus. A close friend of yours asks you to go with them to the library to borrow a book, but you cannot.

Your friend: Let's go to the library. I want to borrow a book.

You refuse by saying:.....

St4: A student refuses going downtown with a close friend (-D +R)

You have just finished your exam and will have another fundamental one tomorrow. While leaving the aphmi, a close friend of yours asks you to go downtown with them.

Your friend: Let's hang out downtown. Will you join me?

You refuse by saying:.....

B/ Role plays

Arabic version of the Role plays

تعليمات : يرجى من المشاركين تصور السيناريوهات التالية وتمثيلها وكأنها تحدث حقاً لكي تكون الإجابات تلقائية و عفوية قدر المستطاع بهدف دراسة استراتيجيات ' رفض الطلب ' في اللهجة الوهرانية بحيث يمثل الشخص الأول دور الطالب والشخص الثاني دور الرفض للأمر ثم يتبادل كل منهما الدور . جزيل الشكر مسبقاً.

العمر: () المستوى التعليمي: مدة الإقامة في وهران: اللهجة التي تتكلم بها في البيت

St1: (+ D - R) طالب يرفض اعارة ملاحظات الدروس لزميل له

Requester : Nta matassitich bzaf f les cours. Bqat 3 jours w tebdo les examens finaux. Ghadi tgoul l wahd l'étudiant yqra ghaya yedi des bonnes notes w mayratich les cours bach yslflek les notes li katbhom. Trouht 3andah. Tgoulah :

Refuser : Nta étudiant taqra ghaya w tassisté f ga3 les cours. Bqat 3 jours w tebdo les examens finaux. Yji wahed yqra m3ak bsah mchi proche lik ,ygolek rani mrati bzaf les cours sefleli cahier li kateb fih les notes. Nta matqadch tsflah, tgoulah:

St2: (+D +R) طالب يرفض مراقبة كتب طالب لايعرفه في مطعم الجامعة

Requester :Imagine bli rak f la cantine wela f le restaurant ta3 l'université w raved des livres f yedik. Ghadi thoti les livres foug tabla w tgoul l wahd l'étudiant li mata3arfahch w jamais chaftah mn qbel bach ykhalihom 3andah bilama trouh tdir la chaine bach techri, tgolah :

Refuser : Rak f la cantine wela f le restaurant ta3 l'université. Ghi dork kamelt fforek w rayeh tfawet examen. Yjik un étudiant li mata3rfahch w jamais tlaqitah yhot ktoba taw3ah foug

tabla w ygolek khalihom 3andek bilama nrouh ndir la chaine bach nechri w nji. La chaine raha twila bzzaf matqadch tqara3lah, tgoulah :

St3: (-D -R) طالب يرفض مرافقة صديقه للمكتبة

Requester : Rak rayeh l la bibliothèque tjib ktab, chaft sahbek kharej t3aytla bach yrouh m3ak, tgoulah :

Refuser : Imagine bli raki rayeh terkeb f bus ghadi yqala3, yji sahbek ygolek hambouk aya trouh m3aya la bibliothèque njib ktab. Nta matqadch trouh m3ah, tgoulah

St4: (-D +R) طالب يرفض مرافقة صديقه المقرب الى مركز المدينة

Requester : Rak tfawet f les examens, hada win rak kharej m l'amphi. Ghadi tgoul l sahbek aya trouh m3aya l centre-ville. Tgoulah :

Refuser: Imagine bli hada win kemelt examen ta3ek w demain 3nadek examen final f module fondamental. Ki tji kharej m l'amphi ygolek sahbek aya trouh m3aya l centre-ville. Nta matqadch trouh m3ah. Tgoulah

English version of the Role Plays

Read the following six communicative situations in which you interact with someone. Pretend you are the person in the situation and express your requesting and refusing intentions spontaneously. Student A will make a request and student B will make a rejection to it

Role play 1: A student refuses to lend out his class notes to another student (+ D - R)

A. You are a university student. You rarely attend classes. The professor of linguistics has just announced that the first exam of the semester is next week. Among your classmates, there is a diligent student who has a reputation for taking very good notes. When the class ends, you approach classmate for their notes saying

B. You are a diligent university student. You attended all classes this semester. The professor of linguistics has just announced that the first exam of the semester is next week. One of

you classmates, who has frequently missed the class, wants to borrow your class notes.

You do not want to lend your notes. *You refuse by saying:*

Role play 2: A student refuses watching the books of another student in the canteen (+D +R).

A. You are a student carrying a lot of books in the university canteen. You want to buy some food so you put all the books on a table and you ask another student, whom you have never met before, to watch them until you bring the food. *You ask the student:*

B. You are a student in the university canteen finishing your lunch. Another student, whom you have never met before, puts their books on the table and asks you to watch them until he/she brings the food. You see there is a long queue to buy the food and you do not want to miss class, you cannot wait. *You refuse by saying:*

Role play 3: A student refuses going to the library with a friend (-D -R).

A. You want to go to the library to borrow a book. You see your close friend getting out of university; you approach and ask them to go with you.

B. You are about to go home. You are in a hurry to catch the bus. A close friend of yours asks you to go with her to the library to borrow a book. You cannot. You refuse by saying:

Role Play 4: A student refuses going downtown with a close friend (-D +R).

A. You want to hang out downtown with your close friend who has just finished their exam.

B. You have just finished your exam and will have another fundamental one tomorrow. While leaving the amphi, a close friend of yours asks you to go downtown with them. You cannot make it. *You refuse by saying:*

C/ Retrospective written Report

Participant's age : **/ Gender :** **Male** **Female** **Regional background :**

1. What were you paying attention to when you refused in each situation ? (Was there anything that you particularly paid attention to regarding differences of situations ?).....
2. Do you consider an insistence rude or acceptable in your culture ?.....
Why ?.....
3. Did you pay attention to the degree of formality when you refused requests ?
4. In which situation did you try to use a soft and a direct language ?.....
Why ?.....
A soft language : Why ?.....
A direct language : Why ?
5. Does the gender of the addressee affect your selection of words when refusing requests ?
Why ?.....
6. Do you think that the way you refuse requests would defer if the addressee is of higher / lower social status than you ?
Why ?.....
7. Do you have any comments on these role plays ?

Appendix B

Jefferson' (2004) Transcription System Symbols

(word)	Parentheses indicate uncertain word
(())	Double parentheses mark transcriber's comments or descriptions
↑ ↓	Marked shift in pitch, up (↑) or (↓).
Wo:rd	Colon indicates an extension of the sound, vowels or consonants
:::	More colons prolong the sound or syllable
[word]	Overlapping speech
°word°	Degree signs bracketing an utterance or utterance-part denote syllables or words distinctly softer than the surrounding speech by the same speaker
£word£	Pound sign denotes smiley voice
(.)	A micropause
<u>word</u>	Underlying marks emphasis
=	Equal signs indicate latching, i.e., no break up or gap between adjacent utterances.
...	ellipsis

Appendix C

Refusal and Mitigation Strategies

A/ Modified version of Beebe *et al.*'s (1990) categorisation of semantic formulas used in the realisation of refusals

Direct refusal strategies

1. Explicit refusal (No; No way).
2. Negative willingness/ability (I can't; I won't be able to.)
3. Double negation: (No, I can't.)

Indirect refusal strategies

4. Apology (I am sorry.)
5. Excuse, reason, explanation: (I am dead tired.)
6. Alternative (Ask someone else.)
7. Future acceptance (I'll go with you next time.)
8. Conditional acceptance (Ok, no problem but please do not stay long because I have an exam now.)
9. Statement of principle (I do never lend out my classnotes.)
10. Criticize the request/requester (You see that the bus is about to leave and you ask me to accompany you to the library?)
11. Joking (You are dying for hanging out.)

Adjuncts to refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (I would love to...but).
2. Pause fillers (well, uhh, uhhm).

B/ Taxonomy of Mitigation Devices

A. Internal mitigation devices

1. Syntactic downgraders

1. *Conditional structures*: (If I were not busy now, I would come with you, alas.)
2. *Interrogative*: (Why don't you postpone it until the end of exams so that we can all go out together?)

2. Lexical downgraders

1. *Cajolers*: (*You know*, I didn't understand anything either and I didn't take any notes. I'm waiting for my friend to share hers. Sorry.)
2. *Downtoners*: (*Just* forgive, me friend, I swear, I am in hurry. Let's hold off until tomorrow so we can go together.)
3. *Address terms*: (No, *my dear*, I can't.)

B. External mitigating devices

1. Openers: (*Oh, brother*, I swear I would love to, but I am really in a hurry. I am late for work.)
2. Preparators: (*Oh you are out of luck!* I have an exam tomorrow.)
3. Partial repeats: (Downtown?)
4. Request for information (*at what time?*)
5. Grounders: (Sorry, sister, I swear, I *have an exam*. I cannot watch them.)
6. Repetition of a mitigator: (I can't. *I have to study for tomorrow's exam because I did not get the average*, so I can't come with you. *I have to pass the first semester.*)
7. Closing: (Just forgive me, brother. I am late. *May Allah protect you.*)

الملخص

تحاول هذه الدراسة إلقاء نظرة اجتماعية-براغماتية عميقة على مواقف رفض الطلب في لهجة وهران متبينة هدفا ثلاثي الأبعاد: (1) تحليل استراتيجيات الرفض التي يستخدمها متحدثو لهجة وهران استجابة للطلبات، (2) تحديد آليات تلطيف الكلام، و(3) في المقام الأول كشف تأثير كل من الجنس والمسافة الاجتماعية ودرجة العبء على اختيار استراتيجيات الرفض وآليات تخفيف حدة الكلام. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، تم استنباط البيانات عن طريق كل من مهمة إكمال الحوار التي شارك فيها مائتا طالب و تمثيل الأدوار بمشاركة اثنين وثلاثين طالبا، والتي تم دعمها بتقرير كتابي رجعي. كشف تحليل البيانات النوعية والكمية عن وجود ميول واضح نحو المباشرة في الرفض، لا سيما بين النساء. الحجة المقنعة لهذا السلوك اللغوي هي حرص المشاركين على أن يكونوا واضحين وصريحين، الأمر الذي قد يقلل من درجة التأدب. وكنتيجة طبيعية، لجأ المشاركون إلى الإسهاب في الكلام، مستندين في ذلك إلى مجموعة من المخففات الداخلية وعدة استراتيجيات خارجية داعمة قبل وبعد الرفض، في محاولة للتقليل من الأثر السلبي المحتمل على الوجه الاجتماعي. في هذا الصدد، بدا أن أثر المسافة الاجتماعية يتجاوز أثر درجة العبء في تحديد اختيار استراتيجيات الرفض وأدوات التخفيف. في النهاية، فإن الفروق بين الجنسين التي ظهرت في دراستنا، ردا على التعميمات النمطية حول سلوك النساء اللفظي التي تقترح أن النساء أكثر أدبا من الرجال، تدعم الرأي القائل بأن الأدب هو تقييم يقوم به المتحاورون، وهو يعتمد إلى حد كبير على السياق والثقافة، وليس مجرد سمة جندرية موروثية .

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم التداول الاجتماعي، الرفض، لهجة وهران، الجنس، المباشرة، التخفيف، المخففات الداخلية، استراتيجيات خارجية

Résumé

La présente étude s'efforce d'explorer de manière socio-pragmatique les rencontres demande-refus dans le dialecte d'Oran. Elle poursuit un triple objectif: (1) disséquer les stratégies de refus que les locuteurs du dialecte d'Oran mettent en œuvre en réponse aux demandes ; (2) décortiquer les dispositifs d'atténuation dans le discours, et (3) principalement démêler l'effet du genre, de la distance sociale et du degré d'imposition sur la sélection des stratégies de refus et des dispositifs d'atténuation. À cette fin, des données ont été obtenues dans des conversations dyadiques à l'aide d'une Tâche de Complétion de Discours (DCT) avec 200 participants, et par le biais de jeux de rôles impliquant 32 participants, qui ont été complétés par un rapport rétrospectif écrit a posteriori. L'analyse des données qualitatives et quantitatives a mis en évidence un net penchant pour la directivité dans les refus, en particulier chez les femmes. Un argument convaincant pour ce comportement linguistique réside dans l'engagement des participants à être clairs et francs, ce qui peut réduire le degré de politesse. En corollaire, les participants ont eu recours à la verbosité, utilisant une multitude d'atténuateurs internes ainsi que des mouvements externes de soutien avant et après les refus, dans le but d'atténuer les dommages potentiels à la face. À cet égard, la distance sociale semble l'emporter sur le degré d'imposition dans le choix des stratégies de refus et des dispositifs d'atténuation. En fin de compte, les différences de genre mises en évidence dans notre étude, en réfutation des généralisations stéréotypées sur le comportement verbal des femmes suggérant que les femmes sont plus polies que les hommes, étayent le point de vue selon lequel la politesse est une évaluation faite par les interlocuteurs et qu'elle dépend largement du contexte et de la culture, plutôt que d'un trait de genre hérité.

Mots clés: socio-pragmatique, refus, dialecte d'Oran, genre, directivité, atténuation, atténuateurs internes, mouvements externes de soutien