Refusal strategies of Turkish pre-service teachers of English:

A focus on gender and status of the interlocutor*

Hülya Tuncer[†][a] iD , Burcu Turhan [b] iD

aCukurova University, Sarıçam, Adana 01330, Turkey
b Mustafa Kemal University, Antakya, Hatay 31115, Turkey

Abstract

In today's world, the great demand for using English entails language users to be pragmatically competent so that they could adapt themselves to differing requirements of various contexts. Within those contexts, some factors such as the culture of the target language, the speech act used in the interaction, status and gender of the interlocutors are accepted as essential components. Refusals, one of the most difficult speech acts to perform based on their face threatening nature, were chosen as the main concern of the present study. In an attempt to find out what kind of refusal strategies are employed by Turkish pre-service teachers of English, 27 first year students (14 males and 13 females) at Çukurova University were randomly chosen. Data for the study were collected via a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) in which the participants were to respond nine scenarios (three lower, three equal and three higher interlocutors). Data analysis concentrated on two main variables: gender of the participants and the status of the interlocutors. In addition to those, refusal combinations utilized by the participants was another focal point of the study. The whole qualitative data were discussed through descriptive statistics and chi-square analyses, and "excuse, reason, explanation" was found to be the most frequent refusal strategy used by the participants. Another important finding is that males were found to prefer directly uttering "no" more frequently than females. It was also found that the number of the strategy combinations increases as the status of the interlocutor rises.

Keywords: Pragmatics; speech acts; refusal strategies; written discourse completion test (WDCT); Turkish pre-service teachers of English

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of English all over the world has changed the role of English. It is now a truly global language and everyone feels obliged to speak English somehow. This leads to the fact that English

---

should not only be investigated from linguistic points of view. In other words, it is not sufficient to examine its grammatical, morphological or phonetic features because it is the lingua franca of today's world. The term "English as lingua franca" refers to interaction in English between individuals speaking different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2005). That means people from different nationalities speak in English when they come together. This entails the study of English from the perspective of how it should be used in different contexts which require different grammatical forms or lexical items. Herein, the term "pragmatics" should be referred to.

Pragmatics can be defined as a sub-branch of linguistics and there are a lot of definitions for it in the literature. The most common point in definitions made from different perspectives is that pragmatics is the study of language in its social context and it has four key elements according to Yuan (2012):

1. Language users: means that pragmatics is based on the language using individuals. These language using individuals perform some acts in interactions they are involved in an authentic way.
2. Context: is the social setting where language using individuals use language and contextual information helps users to interpret the meanings conveyed through words.
3. Meaning: refers to something to do with interpretations which are made after understanding the utterances within a certain context.
4. Social interaction: means any kind of communication either spoken or written. Because of the fact that language is social in nature, it is accepted as a tool for social interactions.

Identically, Yule (1996) states that pragmatics is the way of speakers' modification of their language use according to who they are talking to, when, where and under which conditions. From Crystal's (1997) point of view, pragmatics is the study of language by taking into consideration its users' choices and the effects of language usage on the participants in the act of communication. Similarly, pragmatics is defined as the study of communicative action in its related social context (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

When language competencies are considered, two main categories are generally encountered: *Grammatical Competence* and *Communicative Competence*. These two competencies should not be considered as independent of each other because Hymes (1972) states that communicative competence includes grammatical competence, and it also entails the ability to resort to grammatical competence in various communicative situations, thus this brings us to the vitality of the sociolinguistic perspective. Grammatical competence includes the knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology, and communicative competence consists of sociolinguistics, discourse, strategic competence together with grammatical competence. Among all these, pragmatic competence is classified under sociolinguistic competence (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001) because as Taguchi (2003) describes, pragmatic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in relation to the users and the settings, which means pragmatics creates a bridge between the society and the language itself and this is also something that should be linked to sociolinguistics.

Within this framework, this study aims at delving into the pragmatic competence, namely refusal strategies, of Turkish pre-service teachers of English. By scrutinizing into refusal strategy combinations and the possible differences caused by the status of the interlocutors, the study attempts to make refusal studies move one step further.

1.1. Literature review

Traditional linguistics may be said to focus only on literal meanings and this can lead to the lack of underlying meanings which should be known in order to take part in and to be able to understand daily conversations. At this point, pragmatic abilities are needed because it is mostly appertaining to the meaning conveyed through words whilst traditional linguistics is in connection with the meanings of

individual words (Yuan, 2012). That is to say, in understanding pragmatics, users of a language should share some common rules linked to the underlying meaning or intent of messages (Pohl, 2004).

With regard to components of pragmatic knowledge, Ji (2007) presents a categorization including general pragmatic information, metalanguage information, metapragmatic information, speech acts, cultural knowledge, pragmatically oriented tasks and knowledge on how to learn pragmatic knowledge. According to this categorization, pragmatic knowledge can be said to have many requirements such as a general idea about pragmatics, the concept of speech acts, culture of the target language, and importance of teaching pragmatics and so on.

Another concept related with pragmatics is speech acts which contain some kind of situations such as compliment, apologies, refusing, requests and so forth. The foundation of the speech act theory is primarily based upon the speech act theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Austin's (1962) speech act theory depended on the idea that people do not use language only to say things. Rather, they use language to do things. Searle (1969) advanced the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and categorized five categories of illocutionary force. The illocutionary force describes the intention of a language user in producing an utterance. For instance, a person may intent to warn, advice, promise by uttering some sentences. The illocutionary forces described by Searle (1969) include the categories of *representatives, directives, commissives, expressives* and *declarations*. Among these, refusals belong to *commissives* which commit the language users to a future course of action.

Specifically, the speech act of refusals happen when a speaker wants to say "no" to an invitation, suggestion, and offer or to a request. This could be done either directly or indirectly but in the related literature, it is seen that speakers prefer to refuse by using some indirect strategies. In Chen's (1996) terms, refusals are the responses which are just the opposite of what the interlocutor expects to hear. And the importance of refusals comes from the fact that they are so sensitive to some contextual factors such as age, gender, power, social distance (Fraser, 1990; Smith, 1998). Another critical aspect of refusals is the necessity of using face-saving strategies which require the ability to gain and maintain a positive self-image while refusing. Needless to say, all these are enough to prove that refusals entail a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996).

In the field of refusals, the study of Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) can be accepted as the milestone as there are many studies using their DCT (Discourse Completion Test) and refusal strategy classification system. One such study was conducted by Nikmehr and Jahedi (2014). They searched for the effect of status upon the refusal strategies of both Americans and Iranian speakers of English for requests by administering a DCT to a group of 20 Iranian (10 male, 10 female) and 20 American (10 male, 10 female) participants. According to their results, in terms of refusal strategies, Iranian participants used direct strategies more often and the reason for that was because there may be interlingual transfer from the native language or because Iranian participants lack pragmatic competence in that sense. In terms of the status of the interlocutors, both Americans and Iranians were found to be more serious with a higher interlocutor in formal situations. However, Iranian speakers of English did not tend to make discrimination among their refusal strategies when they refused lower, higher or equal interlocutors. The most widely-used refusal strategy by Americans was "excuse, reason, explanation" though Iranians used non-performatives and adjuncts more often.

Similarly, in Abarghoui's (2012) study, 20 Iranian and 20 Australian participants were given a DCT including 18 refusal situations. According to the content and length of responses by the participants, it was found out that Iranian speakers of English used limited strategies when compared to native speakers of English, which indicated that they may have limited pragmatic capabilities. Additionally, not so many similarities were found between the refusal strategies of Iranian and Australian participants. The reason for these important findings, in Abarghoui's (2012) terms, was maybe because there were not so many

chances for Iranians to speak English outside the school and they were not explicitly taught refusal strategies in EFL classes.

In the Turkish context, Tuncer (2016) conducted a study on refusal strategies with 20 university instructors with a DCT including 12 situations. There were three requests, three offers, three suggestions and three invitations that should be refused in the DCT. The content analysis of the responses of the participants showed that there was no striking difference in refusal strategies regarding the status of the interlocutors. Moreover, Turkish university instructors were found to use more refusal strategies when they talked to a higher interlocutor. Overall, Tuncer's (2016) study demonstrated that Turkish university instructors of English tended to use "excuse, reason, explanation" strategy mostly.

Again in the Turkish context, Çapar (2014) investigated how EFL learners preferred to say "no". For this, she administered the English version of a DCT to 61 participants and the Turkish version of the same DCT to 20 participants. After that, she also conducted interviews with 10 participants. At the end of the study, she found out that Turkish EFL learners use more indirect strategies, especially the strategies of "excuse, reason, explanation" or "statement of regret". With regard to the status of the interlocutor, the findings showed that Turkish EFL learners tended to use more indirect strategies to a higher and lower interlocutor but they could use a direct "no" more easily to a friend. In addition, Çapar (2014) stressed that the group who completed the English DCT was inclined to use longer and various formulas while refusing; the most frequent strategy combination emerging as 2A+2C (statement of regret + excuse, reason, explanation).

Similar to Çapar's (2014) study, Wannaruk (2008) conducted both English and Thai versions of a DCT with American and Thai people. The findings indicated that participants had difficulty in saying "no" to a higher interlocutor and the most frequently used refusal strategy was "excuse, reason, explanation" which was one of the indirect strategies. Another striking finding was that especially people who had lower English proficiency made use of pragmatic transfer.

In the Malaysian context, Hei (2009) made a research on how Malaysian people differing in age, ethnic background, and profession preferred to refuse in various settings. The data was collected by writing down or recording the instances when participants said "no". According to the analysis, participants were found to use indirect refusal strategies more often. Moreover, Malaysian people were careful about not offending the interlocutor regardless of the setting, age, status, and so forth.

Sa'd and Mohammadi (2014) carried out a study with an aim to see how competent Iranian EFL learners were while they wanted to refuse. To achieve this aim, 30 Iranian EFL learners (15 male, 15 female) were administered a written DCT. Findings indicated that the most frequent strategy for refusing was "excuse, reason, explanation". Furthermore, participants' responses showed that the effect of politeness or impoliteness were important. In general terms, Sa'd and Mohammadi (2014) argued that Iranian learners of English needed improvement in order to be more pragmatically-competent users of English. According to the comparison made between the refusal strategies of male and female participants, no significant difference was found out.

In a study conducted in the Chinese context by Yang (2008), the aim was to reveal the refusal strategies of Chinese native speakers by using a DCT. In addition, five different TV series were investigated in terms of pragmatic issues and 160 clips of refusals were included in the study. In the pedagogical implication part of the study, Yang (2008) proposed that learners of Chinese had difficulty in improving their pragmatic skills; therefore, it was a necessity to teach pragmatics with a focus on contextual patterns because refusals could be confusing and hard to perform for learners of Chinese. Overall, the aforementioned studies point to the fact that the most frequent strategy for refusals across various cultures was found to be "excuse, reason, explanation", which shows the dominance of indirect refusal strategies over the other types.

1.2. Research questions

Finding out the most frequent strategy is as important as demonstrating how those strategies are combined with each other. For this reason, the present study aims at scrutinizing refusal strategy combinations of Turkish pre-service teachers of English along with an aim of focusing on possible differences between male and female participants in choice or frequency of refusal strategies. Keeping all those in mind, this study aims to find answers to the questions below:

1. What refusal strategies are employed by Turkish pre-service teachers of English depending on the status of the interlocutor?
2. Is there a significant difference between the refusal strategies employed by male and female Turkish pre-service teachers of English?
3. What are the most frequent combinations of refusal strategies by Turkish pre-service teachers of English?
4. Does the number of refusal combinations change according to the status of interlocutor?

2. Method

2.1. Research context

The study was conducted at the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey. The aim of the study was to explore and describe the refusal strategies of pre-service English teachers. To achieve this, a WDCT (Written Discourse Completion Test) was carried out with the participants. As for the context of the study, it can be said that students in Turkey have to pass a very competitive national examination to be enrolled in a department in any university and a very high level of English knowledge is needed for most of the ELT departments. Since the students are assessed mostly about their linguistic knowledge, the other fields go unnoticed. What they need apart from linguistic knowledge is certainly pragmatic knowledge which is a problematic area for English learners in Turkey (Karatepe, 1998; Otçu, 2000). For this reason, the study tried to shed some light into pragmatic knowledge of pre-service teachers of English especially focusing on their refusal strategies.

2.2. Participants

Participants were selected by using convenience sampling; one of the researchers was the instructor of the participants. There were 27 participants (14 males and 13 females) in the present study, all of whom were the first-year students studying at the department of ELT at Çukurova University. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 19. They did not receive any kind of formal training on pragmatics or specifically refusals before the study.

2.3. Data collection instrument

The data were gathered through a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) which was taken from Yuan (2012). In this WDCT, participants were asked to read a situation and then to write what they would say in that scenario in English. There were 7 different scenarios in relation to the speech act of refusal in the WDCT of Yuan (2012). However, to provide a balance between the numbers of scenarios related to the status of interlocutors, two more scenarios (with higher interlocutors) were added from Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). Below is the description of refusal scenarios in the WDCT:

Table 1. The description of refusal scenarios in the WDCT

Scenarios	Status of the Interlocutor
Teaching technique suggestion	Lower
Salary rising request	Lower
A dinner invitation	Lower
Invitation to a party	Equal
Coffee offer	Equal
A borrowing request	Equal
Overtime work request	Higher
Suggestion from the boss	Higher
An offer from the boss	Higher

2.4. Data collection procedure

The researchers submitted WDCTs to the participants in one of the courses that they were attending, and they informed the participants about the importance of giving appropriate responses in scenarios like those given in the example at the beginning of the test. They were all provided privacy and enough time to complete the WDCT. The completion of WDCTs took approximately 15 minutes for each participant. Data from all the participants were collected within two weeks.

2.5. Data analysis

Participants' responses to each scenario in WDCT were analyzed with the help of classification of refusals by Beebe et al. (1990). In the first phase, the content of the responses was taken into consideration with an aim to find out which strategies were used by participants while refusing to different interlocutors who had different social status. In the second phase, the frequency and percentages of the total refusal strategies employed by participants were calculated. This was done to see the most common refusal strategies used by participants regarding the gender and status of the interlocutors. Moreover, chi-square test was applied to see whether there was a difference between refusal strategies of males and females. In the third phase, refusal combinations were examined to see the sequence of strategies the participants tended to use together. In all phases, both researchers did their analyses on their own and then compared their results for ensuring inter-rater reliability. Except for three responses, there was a unanimous agreement on labeling the strategy type of the refusals, which demonstrates a tight match between the raters in assessing the type of refusal strategies. For those three responses, researchers checked them again and decided on a common strategy after a brief discussion.

3. Results

Participants' responses for nine refusal scenarios in the WDCT were analyzed and the number of each refusal strategy used by female and male participants was counted. In the analysis process, the status of the interlocutor for each refusal scenario was taken into consideration. Results were documented in frequency and percentage columns as in the below tables.

Scenarios 4, 6 and 7 in the WDCT required participants to refuse a lower interlocutor and Table 2 shows refusal strategies used in those scenarios.

Table 2. Refusal strategies for a lower interlocutor

	Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Direct	1B2	11	17	7	11
	1B1	-	-	8	13
Indirect	2C	16	25	14	22
	2I3	9	14	12	19
	2A	9	14	6	10
	2E	1	2	-	-
	2F	2	3	1	2
	2G	3	5	1	2
	2I1	2	3	3	5
	2I4	1	2	2	3
	2I6	4	6	-	-
	2K2b	-	-	1	2
	2K2d	-	-	1	2
Adjunct	Adj 1	5	8	2	3
	Adj 4	2	3	2	3
	Adj 2	-	-	3	5
Total		65	102	63	102

As presented in Table 2, participants were mostly inclined to refuse by using strategies of 2C, 1B2, and 2I3. It is seen that "excuse, reason, explanation" (2C) strategy was the most frequently used strategy with a lower interlocutor. Other mostly preferred strategies were "negative willingness/ability" (1B2) and "criticize the request/requester" (2I3). "Statement of regret" (2A) was used by female participants as much as 2I3. Among adjunct category, "statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement" (Adj1) was favored by the participants the most. It was also observed that participants were not inclined to use "set condition for future or past acceptance" (2E), "joke" (2K2b), and "postponement" (2K2d) strategies very often while refusing a lower interlocutor.

Table 3 describes the refusal strategies in the three scenarios (Scenarios 1, 3 and 5) in which the interlocutor was at an equal status with the respondents.

Table 3. Refusal strategies for an equal interlocutor

	Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Direct	1B1	9	10	22	29
	1B2	17	18	7	9
Indirect	2C	24	26	20	27
	2A	12	13	6	8
	2I3	5	5	5	7

	2D2	3	3	3	4
	2F	1	1	-	-
	2B	1	1	-	-
	2I1	1	1	-	-
	2I5	1	1	-	-
	2K2b	-	-	1	1
	2K2d	-	-	1	1
Adjunct	Adj 4	14	15	6	8
	Adj 1	4	4	3	4
	Adj 3	1	1	1	1
Total		93	99	75	99

When Table 3 was examined for both males and females, it is seen that the most common strategy for females is "excuse, reason, explanation" (2C), which means that females generally preferred to give reasons or make excuses/explanation when they wanted to refuse an individual who was at an equal status with them. Even though males also utilized 2C strategy, they preferred to use "non-performative statement (no)" (1B1) over the other strategies. "Negative willingness/ability" (1B2) was also utilized frequently by the participants. In the adjunct category, "statement of gratitude or appreciation" (Adj4) was most frequently used by the participants. The least preferred strategies were 2B, 2F, 2I1 and 2I5. That means majority of the participants did not prefer to use "wish", "promise for future acceptance", "threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester" or "let interlocutor off the hook" strategies.

Scenarios 2, 8, and 9 required participants to respond to a higher interlocutor in the WDCT. Table 4 summarizes the refusal strategies used in those scenarios with a higher interlocutor.

Table 4. Refusal strategies for a higher interlocutor

	Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Direct	1B2	14	13	17	15
	1B1	2	2	5	5
Indirect	2C	38	36	33	30
	2A	16	15	13	12
	2I6	5	5	7	6
	2F	4	4	2	2
	2G	4	4	7	6
	2I1	2	2	1	1
	2I3	0	-	2	2
Adjunct	Adj 4	10	9	13	12
	Adj 1	9	8	7	6
	Adj 3	3	3	4	4
Total		107	101	111	101

As understood from Table 4, participants mostly chose to use strategies of 2C, 1B2, and 2A. Among those, they used "excuse, reason, explanation" (2C) strategy the most for higher interlocutors. Following that, they mostly used "negative willingness/ability" (1B2) and "statement of regret" (2A) strategies. Table 4 also illustrates that "statement of gratitude or appreciation" (Adj4) and "statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement" (Adj1) stand out in adjuncts category. On the other hand, participants did not tend to use strategies of 2I1, 2I3 and Adj3 much. That is, "threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester", "criticize the request/requester" and "pause fillers" were the least common strategies in refusing.

Regardless of the status of interlocutors, Table 5 below shows refusal strategies for nine scenarios in WDCT.

Table 5. Refusal strategies for nine scenarios

	Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Direct	1B1	11	4	35	14
	1B2	42	16	31	12
Indirect	2C	78	29	67	27
	2A	37	14	25	10
	2I3	14	5	19	8
	2F	7	3	3	1
	2D2	3	1	3	1
	2G	7	3	8	3
	2I1	5	2	4	2
	2I4	1	0	2	1
	2I6	9	3	7	3
	2B	1	0	-	-
	2E	1	0	-	-
	2I5	1	0	-	-
	2K2b	-	-	2	1
	2K2d	-	-	2	1
Adjunct	Adj 4	26	10	21	8
	Adj 1	18	7	12	5
	Adj 3	4	2	5	3
	Adj 2	-	-	3	1
Total		265	99	249	101

According to Table 5, the total results demonstrate that both females and males used indirect 2C strategy (excuse, reason, explanation) the most while refusing. Among direct strategies, 1B1 (non-performative statement) was used mostly by male participants while the other commonly used direct strategy (1B2-negative willingness/ability) was used more often by female participants. Of the four adjuncts, Adj4 (statement of gratitude or appreciation) was preferred the most by the participants. When

the total number of refusal strategies was examined, it can be said that females used more strategies (265) than males (249).

Table 6 shows the distribution of number of refusal strategies according to the status of interlocutors. It can clearly be observed that the higher the status gets, the more strategies were used by the participants. Out of a total of 514 strategies, 128 strategies were used for lower interlocutors and 168 for equal interlocutors. The highest number of strategies (218) was used for higher interlocutors.

Table 6. Total number of refusal strategies in accordance with the status of interlocutors

Status of Interlocutor	f	%
Lower	128	25
Equal	168	33
Higher	218	42
Overall	514	100

To make it clear whether there is a significant difference between refusal strategies of males and females, refusal strategies for all scenarios employed by participants were exposed to Chi-Square test, and it was found that there is only one significant difference between males' and females' use of a refusal strategy for Scenario 1 and results are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Chi-square results of scenario 1

	Refusal Strategy	Value	Df	Sig.
Scenario 1 (Invitation-Equal Interlocutor)	2A	4.46	1	.035

(p≤0.05)

As understood, there is a significant difference in the use of "statement of regret (2A)" strategy regarding the role of gender. This difference occurred in Scenario 1 in which participants were expected to refuse an invitation and the interlocutor was in equal status with the participants. In essence, females were found to employ "statement of regret (2A)" strategy more than males in an invitation scenario with an equal interlocutor.

Another research question of the study is concerned with revealing how participants combine different strategies while refusing. To achieve this, all strategy combinations derived from the responses of participants to each scenario in the WDCT were analyzed and counted. A total of 176 strategy combinations were obtained, and the most common refusal combinations for each scenario are demonstrated in Table 8 regardless of gender.

Table 8. Most frequent combinations of refusal strategies

Scenarios	Status of the Interlocutor	Combinations	f
Teaching technique suggestion	Lower	2A+2C	2
		2I6+2I3	2
Salary rising request	Lower	1B2+2A	3
		1B2+2I1	2
A dinner invitation	Lower	2A+2C	5
		Adj1+2C	4
Invitation to a party	Equal	2A+2C	5
		2A+1B2+2C	4
Coffee offer	Equal	1B1+Adj4+2C	5
		Adj4+1B2+2C	5
A borrowing request	Equal	1B2+2I3	2
		2I3+1B1	2
		1B1+2D2	2
Overtime work request	Higher	2A+2C	4
		1B2+2C	3
Suggestion from the boss	Higher	No recurring combination	
An offer from the boss	Higher	2A+1B2+2C	2
		Adj1+2C	2

As seen in Table 8, the most frequent strategy combination was 2A+2C. Participants used this combination which is a mixture of "statement of regret" and "excuse, reason, explanation" strategies 16 times in total. 2A+1B2+2C (statement of regret + negative willingness/ability+ excuse, reason, explanation) is the second most frequent combination with six occurrences. When all 176 combinations were checked regardless of the scenario and the status of the interlocutor, it was observed that 2A+2C is the most frequent (f: 19) strategy combination followed by 1B2+2C (negative willingness/ability+ excuse, reason, explanation, f: 9), and 2A+1B2+2C (statement of regret + negative willingness/ability+ excuse, reason, explanation, f: 6). These top three combination strategies was found to be the same in Humeid and Altai's study (2013) conducted with Iraqi EFL university students though in reverse fashion in which 2A+1B2+2C leading the list. How those combinations of strategies vary according to status of the interlocutor is given through the following table.

Table 9. Number of combinations based on the status of interlocutor

Status of interlocutor	Single strategy	Combination of two strategies	Combination of three strategies	Combination of four strategies	Combination of five strategies	Combination of six strategies
Lower	32	38	8	-	-	-
Equal	15	34	24	2	1	-
Higher	12	35	25	6	1	2
Total	59	214	171	48	10	12

Table 9 clearly demonstrates that there is an increase in the number of combination strategies used by the participants in relation to the status of the interlocutor. The higher the status is, the more strategies are utilized together. While single-strategy use seems to be reserved more for lower interlocutors, it decreases towards equal and higher interlocutors. An opposite situation emerges when the number of combinations increases; for instance, for three-strategy use, the number of combination strategies for equal and higher interlocutor (f: 24 and f: 25 respectively) is at least three times more than the number of combinations used for lower interlocutors (f: 8). Furthermore, there is a combination of four strategies for equal and higher interlocutors although there is no use of that for lower interlocutors. A combination of five different strategies was used once for both equal and higher interlocutor. Even six-strategy combination was found to be used twice for higher interlocutors.

Overall, Table 9 is indicative of the fact that participants tended to use a combination of two strategies (n: 214) more than the others, which is followed by three-strategy combinations (n: 171). The combination analysis might be presented as evidence for the fact that the participants tend to be verbose, by trying to show their appreciation or explain the reasons/events behind the refusal and so forth much more when the status of the interlocutor increases. During combination analyses, it was also detected that adjuncts were used at the beginning of the responses two times more rather than in the middle or at the end, which may show the desire of the participants to mitigate the refusals from the beginning or to soften the face threatening nature of the refusal.

4. Discussions and Conclusions

Recently, pragmatics has been given special importance, most probably thanks to the realization of the vitality of using language appropriately according to the requirements of different contexts. This issue is strictly in the same line with what communicative competence consists of. As a well-known fact, communicative competence is mainly composed of firstly linguistic abilities and secondly pragmatic abilities which are the focus of the present study. Taking its departure point from pragmatic abilities of Turkish pre-service teachers of English, this study focuses on refusal strategies and combinations of those strategies and how those vary in accordance with the status of the interlocutor and the gender of the pre-service teachers. Answers for four research questions of the present study are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

The first research question concentrated on finding what refusal strategies Turkish pre-service teachers of English employ depending on the status of the interlocutor. Regardless of the status of interlocutors, participants mostly used the "excuse, reason, explanation" strategy and the other mostly used refusal strategies were "non-performative statement" and "negative willingness/ability". Within the related literature, Turkish participants were found to use more indirect refusal strategies (Asmalı, 2013; Güngörmezler, 2016; Moody, 2011; Tuncer, 2016) and they were prone to use "excuse, reason,

explanation" strategy mostly (Çapar, 2014; Wannaruk, 2008). These findings overlap with the present study's findings. When total refusal strategies are examined, it is seen that participants are inclined to use longer sentences including more refusal strategies depending on the status of the interlocutor. That is to say, it can be argued that the higher the status of the interlocutor becomes, the more refusal strategies are employed. To exemplify, participants used 128 refusal strategies with lower interlocutors and identically, they employed 168 strategies with equal interlocutors whereas they used 218 strategies with higher interlocutors. Such a result was also obtained in the study of Humeid and Altai (2013).

In answering the second research question "Is there a significant difference between the refusal strategies employed by male and female Turkish pre-service teachers of English?", chi-square analyses indicated that there is not a meaningful difference between refusal strategies of male and female participants except for only one invitation scenario situation with an equal interlocutor. For that scenario, females were found to use "statement of regret (2A)" strategy more than males do. Arriving at no significant difference between genders is in the same line with what Sa'd and Mohammadi (2014) concluded in their study as well. They stated that gender was not a factor creating a difference in the usage of refusal strategies. However, refusals can be sensitive to some contextual factors such as age, gender, power, and so forth (Fraser, 1990; Smith, 1998). In this study, gender seems to be only effective in situations as in below:

- Males were found to prefer directly saying "no" more often.
- Females tended to use "negative willingness" strategy more frequently. Instead of saying directly "no" like males, females preferred saying "I won't/can't".
- Females used more refusal strategies than males for lower and equal interlocutors; whereas, males used more refusal strategies than females for higher interlocutors.

Concerning the third research question on the combination of refusal strategies, it can be said that the mostly-used combination was 2A+2C, namely "statement of regret" + "excuse, reason, explanation" combination (see also Çapar (2014) for the same outcome by Turkish learners of English). "Excuse, reason, explanation" strategy was the most frequent strategy type in both males' and females' use of refusal strategies and this combination shows that it was generally combined with the "statement of regret" strategy. The fourth research question aimed at finding whether the number of refusal combinations changes according to the status of the interlocutor. Numbers of combined strategies in the present study provide the information that the participants have a tendency to use more strategies when the status of the interlocutor increases. Especially for three-strategy use, the number of combination strategies triples at equal and higher interlocutors compared to the lower ones. The presence of four, five and even six-strategy-combination might stem from the very nature of refusals as face-threatening acts; the participants might have saved their faces by using a variety of combinations particularly for equal and higher interlocutors.

All in all, the data demonstrate that there is a need to focus on pragmatic abilities and to make students aware of the fact that pragmatic skills are as essential as linguistic skills. Students should at least be taught about what pragmatics is and how it is learnt because the main reason behind the pragmatic failure of students is most probably the fact that they somehow are not informed about it. Pragmatic competence cannot be separated from the capabilities of a good language learner who possess grammatical, lexical, syntactic, phonological knowledge of a language. This is very alike in the case of four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) which cannot occur in isolation. Therefore, to help students attain a good level of pragmatic knowledge, the lessons should focus on communicative activities with the creative use of language. Also, teachers should be able to select materials that can support pragmatic or functional uses of language for real interactions. Furthermore,

teachers should create meaningful social purposes for communication because language does not exist for its own sake but it exists for people to talk and socialize.

5. Implications

Based on the previously discussed studies about pragmatics, the present study suggests some implications for the Turkish context. The first implication is about the foremost need to make students aware of the fact that they should know about pragmatics and they should also be able to use their pragmatic knowledge accordingly. This implication may be more important for the present study because the participants are prospective English teachers and they should be pragmatically competent users of English. Otherwise, they will not be able to teach pragmatics to their future students.

The second implication is related to language use in different contexts with different interlocutors. For this reason, teachers should take into consideration what situations or scenarios students need to perform in. In other words, the contexts of communicative activities occurring in the classroom should be as varied as possible. This implication may have some consequences for the previous educational background of the participants. That is, some adjustments in the teaching of pragmatics should be done in the English curricula of primary, secondary and high schools. Drama classes could be beneficial in that sense.

The third implication is about the teaching and learning environment of pragmatics. Because of the fact that participants cannot find any possible contexts in real life to practice their English knowledge, classroom instruction should be provided by teachers. While doing this, the first step should be using awareness-raising activities because students may not be informed about what pragmatics is, why and how they should learn it. Then, the second step requiring communicative tasks should be achieved. As a suggestion, both explicit and implicit teaching methods for pragmatics can be beneficial. At this point, some cultural knowledge and specific pragmatically-oriented tasks can be used as an aid to classroom instruction in pragmatics.

The fourth implication is linked to teaching pragmatics because all participants are prospective English teachers and pragmatics is an inseparable part of language teaching. Thus, it would be reasonable to add "Teaching Pragmatics" themed courses as an obligatory course to the curriculum of English Language Teaching Departments. This could be very fruitful for primary, secondary and high school students' pragmatic knowledge development in English as well.

6. Limitations

There are some limitations to the study that can affect the quality of the results. For the WDCT, the limitation lies on the fact that only written responses were analyzed but it would be better to collect data on how participants give answers to the scenarios in the WDCT when they are expected to answer orally. Besides, the WDCT was administered to only 27 participants. It could be administered to more participants among second, third or fourth year ELT students or it could be administered to participants who have different levels of English with the aim of focusing on the similarities and/or differences.

References

Abarghoui, M. A. (2012). A comparative study of refusal strategies used by Iranians and Australians. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2*(11), 2439-2445.

Asmalı, M. (2013). Cross-cultural comparison of non-native speakers' refusal strategies in English. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies, 1*(3), 111-135.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beebe, L., M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcelle, E. Anderson, & S. C. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing Communicative Competence in a Second Language*, (pp. 55-73). Newbury House, New York.

Chen, H. J. (1996). *Cross-cultural comparison of English and Chinese metapragmatics in refusal.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University, United States.

Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Çapar, M. (2014). How do Turkish EFL learners say 'no'?. *International Journal of Language Academy, 2*(3), 262-282.

Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *14*(2), 219-236.

Gungormezler, T. (2016). *An investigation of the refusal speech act of Turkish learners of English.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Kansas State University, USA.

Hei, K. C. (2009). Moves in refusal: How Malaysians say 'No'. *China Media Research*, *5*(3), 31-44.

Humeid, A. A., & Altai, A. A. (2013). Refusal strategies used by Iraqi EFL university students. *British Journal of Science*, 8 (1), 58-86.

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In Pride, J. B., & Holmes, J. (Eds.), Sociolinguistics, 269-293. Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.

Ji, P. Y. (2007). Exploring pragmatic knowledge in college English textbooks. Retrieved October, 2017 from http://kb.psu.ac.th/psukb/bitstream/2010/8726/1/363475.pdf

Karatepe, Ç. (1998). *Teaching pragmalinguistics in teacher training programmes*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Liverpool. Liverpool, UK.

Martinez-Flor, A., & Alcon-Soler, E.A. (2007).Developing pragmatic awareness of suggestions in the EFL classroom. A focus on instructional effects. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 47-76.

Moody, M. J. (2011). A study of Turkish and English refusal speech acts with a secondary examination for bi-directional language transferrals. Master's Thesis, Minnesota State University, Mankato, United States of America. Retrieved from http://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1280&context=etds

Niezgoda, K., & Röver, C. (2001). Pragmatic and grammatical awareness: A function of the learning environment. In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), Pragmatics in language teaching (pp. 63-79). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nikmehr, A., & Jahedi, F. (2014). The effect of status on refusal strategies used by American native speakers of English and Iranian EFL university students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, *3*(5), 91-99.

Otçu, B. (2000). Production of requests byTurkish EFL learners. Master's Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

Pohl, G. (2004). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure and implications for language teaching. *Studies in Languages and Language Teaching, 4.*

Rose, K. R., & Kasper, K. (2001).*Pragmatics in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sa'd, H., T. & Mohammadi, M. (2014). Iranian EFL learners' sociolinguistic competence: Refusal strategies in focus. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *10*(2), 48-66.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seidlhofer, B. (2005). English as a lingua franca. *ELT journal*, *59*(4), 339-341.

Smith, C. (1998). *Can adults "just say no?": How gender, status and social goals affect refusals.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of South Florida, USA.

Taguchi, N. (2003). Pragmatic performance in comprehension and production of English as a second language. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65*(01).

Tuncer, H. (2016). Refusal strategies used by Turkish university instructors of English. *Novitas-ROYAL Research on Youth and Language*, *10*(1), 71-90.

Wannaruk, A. (2008). Pragmatic transfer in Thai EFL refusals. *RELC journal*, *39*(3), 318-337.

Yang, J. (2008, April). How to say 'No' in Chinese: A pragmatic study of refusal strategies in five TV series. In *Proceedings of the 20th North American conference on Chinese linguistics* Vol. 2, pp. 1041-1058.

Yuan, Y. (2012). Pragmatics, perceptions and strategies in Chinese college English learning. Doctoral Dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A.

Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

Directions: *Please read the following 9 situations. After each situation you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "you". Please read each situation carefully. Respond as if you would talk to the person in English in real life conversation. Please respond as naturally as possible. Do not worry about your grammar. You have 30 minutes to finish the following tasks.*

1. You are walking on campus. A friend of you invites you to come to a party at his house this Saturday. You cannot go to the party because you will have three exams to take next Monday, and his house is very far from your place.
Friend: Hi, we are having a party this Saturday. Do you want to come?
You: _____

2. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave the office.
Boss: If it is fine with you, I'd like you to spare two extra hours tonight so that we can finish up with this task.
You: _____

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

3. You are taking a break in the student lounge. A friend comes by and gets himself a cup of coffee from the coffee machine. He offers you a coffee, too, but you cannot drink now because you have an upset stomach.

Friend: Hey, you want some coffee?

You: _____

4. You teach English at a university. It is just about the middle of the term. One of the students comes to speak to you.

Student: Excuse me, Professor. Some of the students discussed English lessons after class yesterday. We believe that we could achieve better learning outcomes if you gave us more practice in conversations and less on grammar.

You: _____

Student: Well, it was only a suggestion.

5. You are a university freshman. You attend classes on time and prepare complete lecture notes. One of your classmates often misses class and asks you to lend him the notes before the examination once again.

Classmate: Oh, my god! There is an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to disturb you, but could you please lend me your notes once again?

You: _____

Classmate: Well…then I guess I'll have to ask someone else.

6. You are the owner of a restaurant. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private for salary increase.

Worker: As you know, I've been working here for over one year, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I also enjoy working here, but, to be honest, I really need an increase in pay.

You: _____

Worker: Well, then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

7. You are the president of a large research center. A salesman from a computer company invites you to one of the most expensive local restaurants to have dinner.

Salesman: We have met for several times, and I'm hoping you will buy my company's computers. Would you like to have dinner with me at the restaurant to firm up the contract?

You: _____

Salesman: Well, maybe we can meet another time.

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

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

You: _____

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

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

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

You: _____

Boss: Well, it's an idea anyway.

Appendix B.
Classification of Refusals (from Beebe et al., 1990)

1. Direct
       A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
       B. Non-performative statement
           1.   "No"
           2.   Negative willingness/ability (e.g.,"I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

2. Indirect
    A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry ..."; "I feel terrible ...")
    B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you ...")
    C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; I have a headache.")
    D. Statement of alternative
        1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather ..."; "I'd prefer ...")
        2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have ...")
    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.")
    İ. 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 of 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 do." "I no do nutting wrong.")
    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. Doing 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
Adj1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (e.g. "That's a good idea..." "I'd love to...")
Adj2. Statement of empathy (e.g. "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
Adj3. Pause fillers (e.g. "uhh"; "well"; "oh"; "uhm")
Adj4. Statement of gratitude or appreciation (e.g. "thanks"; "I really appreciate it")

Türk İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının reddetme stratejileri:

Cinsiyet ve muhatabın/konuşulan kişinin statüsü değişkenleri

Öz

Günümüzde İngilizce kullanımına gösterilen büyük rağbet dil kullanıcılarının edimsel açıdan yeterli olmalarını gerektirmektedir ki bu onların çeşitli bağlamların farklılaşan gerekliliklerine kendilerini adapte etmelerini sağlayacaktır. Bu bağlamlar içerisinde hedef dilin kültürü, iletişimde kullanılan söz eylem, muhatabın/konuşulan kişinin statüsü ve cinsiyet gibi faktörler önemli kabul edilmektedir. Tehdit/mahcup (itibar gereksinimi) edici doğası gereği kullanması en zor söz eylemlerden olan reddetme bu çalışmanın odak noktası olarak belirlenmiştir. Türk İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının ne tür reddetme stratejilerini kullandıklarını ortaya çıkarmak adına Çukurova Üniversitesi'nden 27 birinci sınıf öğrencisi (14 erkek ve 13 kız öğrenci) rastgele seçilmiştir. Veriler katılımcıların dokuz farklı senaryoda (3 alt, 3 eşit, 3 yüksek statülü muhatap) diyalog tamamlamalarını içeren yazılı bir söylem tamamlama testi ile toplanmıştır. Veri analizi ise iki ana değişken olan katılımcıların cinsiyeti ile konuşulan kişinin/muhatabın statüsü üzerinden gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak, katılımcıların ne tür reddetme stratejilerini bir arada kullandıkları da bu çalışmanın bir diğer odak noktası olmuştur. Elde edilen bütün nitel veriler tanımlayıcı istatistik ve ki-kare analizleri ışığında tartışılmış ve "mazeret, sebep, açıklama" stratejisinin katılımcılar tarafından en sık kullanılan reddetme stratejisi olduğu bulunmuştur. Bir diğer önemli bulgu ise erkeklerin kız öğrencilere oranla daha sık direkt olarak "hayır" diyebildikleri gerçeğidir. Ayrıca muhatabın/konuşulan kişinin statüsü yükseldikçe reddetme stratejilerinin kombinasyon sayılarının da arttığı saptanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Edimbilim; söz eylem; reddetme stratejileri; yazılı söylem tamamlama testi; Türk İngilizce öğretmen adayları

AUTHOR BIODATA

Hülya Tuncer is an instructor in English Language Teaching Department at Çukurova University, Turkey. She holds her PhD from the same department. Her research interests include English language teacher education, pragmatics, reflective practice and speech and thought presentation.

Burcu Turhan is a research assistant at Mustafa Kemal University and holds an MA from the English Language Teaching Department of Çukurova University. She is also a PhD candidate in the same department. Her research interests include language teacher education, pragmatics, English as Medium of Instruction (EMI), metacognition and reflective practice.