

REFUSING INVITATIONS VIA EMAIL:  
STRATEGY USE IN TURKISH AND AMERICAN-ENGLISH REFUSALS

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## Thesis Abstract

Emine Merdin, “Refusing Invitations via Email: Strategy Use in Turkish and American-English Refusals”

The aim of this study is to analyze the similarities and differences between Turkish and American English in the speech acts of refusal via email. It aims to uncover Turkish and American English refusal strategies employed in emails sent to refuse invitations, and examine whether social distance between the interlocutors has an impact on strategy use by Turkish L1 speakers (TSs) and American English L1 speakers (AESs). It further investigates the content of refusals and the effect of data collection method on strategy use. To this end, the data have been collected through natural emails and discourse completion tasks (DCT) from TSs and AESs. Each refusal in the data has been coded and counted. The data have been analyzed to compare the frequencies of refusal strategies, the effect of social distance on strategy use across groups, the content of refusals, and the effect of the data collection method. PASW has been used to run descriptive statistics and repeated measures of ANOVA.

The results show more similarities than differences in strategy use in Turkish and American English refusal emails. Thus, pragmatic failure might be unlikely for American learners of Turkish and Turkish learners of American English. However, the findings also reveal that there are differences that are language-specific and culturally-shaped. The findings also suggest that natural emails tend to be more elaborated in that they have more strategies, thus DCTs may not thoroughly reflect the language in use and should be complemented with methods.

## Tez Özeti

Emine Merdin, “Elektronik Posta (E-posta) Yoluyla Davetleri Reddetme: Türkçe ve Amerikan İngilizcesinde Reddetme Stratejilerinin Kullanımı”

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkçe ve Amerikan İngilizcesinde e-posta yoluyla yapılan reddetme söyleminin benzerlik ve farklılıkları araştırmaktır. Her iki dilde daveti reddetmek için gönderilmiş e-postalarda kullanılan reddetme stratejilerini ortaya çıkarmayı ve katılımcılar arasındaki yakınlık derecesinin Türkçeyi anadil olarak konuşanların ve anadili İngilizce olan Amerikalıların reddetme stratejilerini kullanımları üzerinde bir etkisinin olup olmadığını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, ayrıca reddetme söyleminin içeriğini ve strateji kullanımında veri toplama metodunun etkisini araştırmaktadır. Bu amaçla, veriler doğal e-postalar ve Söylem Tamamlama Testi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Toplanan verilerdeki reddetme stratejileri kodlanıp sayılmıştır. Veriler; reddetme stratejilerinin frekanslarını, yakınlık derecesinin strateji kullanımına etkisini, stratejilerin içeriğini ve veri toplama metodunun etkisini belirlemek için PASW kullanılarak nicel analize (descriptive analysis) ve tekrarlanmış ölçümler için varyans analizine (ANOVA) tabi tutulmuştur.

Çalışmanın sonucu Türkçe ve Amerikan İngilizcesinde yazılmış e-postalardaki strateji kullanımında benzerlikler olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu yüzden, Türkçe öğrenen Amerikalıların ve Amerikan İngilizcesi öğrenen Türklerin “edimbilimsel hatalara” (pragmatic failure) düşme olasılıklarının düşük olabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır. Ancak, bulgular aynı zamanda kültür ve dile bağlı olarak değişen strateji kullanım farklılıklarının olduğunu göstermiştir. Bulgular, doğal e-postalarda daha çok strateji kullanıldığını, dolayısıyla söylem tamamlama testlerinin dilin gerçek kullanımını yeterince yansıtamayacağından başka yöntemlerle desteklenmesinin yararlı olabileceğini göstermiştir.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The competence of both sending and receiving a message of ‘no’ is necessary for appropriate communication between a native speaker of a language and a second language (L2) speaker. L2 learners must learn when and to whom it is appropriate to use a form which functions as a refusal (Rubin, 1983). In order to fully interpret the message of a particular form used, Rubin states:

One must also look for the underlying values inherent in the speech act<sup>1</sup>. ... This kind of knowledge comprises what is meant by the term “communicative competence”, i.e., the ability to interpret the full meaning of a message and the ability to formulate such messages properly. (Rubin, 1983, p. 11)

Hence, providing language learners with the information most needed such as the social rules, patterns, and meanings of language requires examining the native speaker’s internalized knowledge of the resources of his or her language (Hymes, 1974; Wolfson, 1983). For this reason, this study focuses on the speech act of refusals, for it is a challenge even in one’s native language (Bulut, 2000), and it requires different strategies for successful realization (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Invitations often occur in everyday conversations between people as a way of maintaining good relationships. Refusals to invitations are also frequently performed in our daily lives. In order to avoid offending the person who has made the invitation, refusals are realized by using various strategies. So it is important to know which

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<sup>1</sup> A speech act is an utterance which has a function such as a refusal, an offer, an invitation, a request, etc. A more detailed explanation will be given in the following chapter.

strategies are appropriate to use to be able to interact socially in a given speech community. For example, knowing that reasons and reasons (e.g., *I have an important meeting.*) coupled with an appreciation of invitation (e.g., *Thanks a lot for the invite.*) and a mitigated refusal (e.g., *I don't think I can make it.*) are highly characteristic of refusals of invitations in American English (Heritage, 1988) is important in successfully communicating the intended speech act. This aspect of communicative language is also necessary for those who would like to communicate in a Turkish speaking community. For that reason, "if learners are to avoid misunderstandings, they must have information about the patterns of language use in the speech communities whose language they are learning" (Wolfson et al., 1983, p. 116). During the learning period or afterwards, native speakers of a language are usually tolerant of grammatical errors learners make, but they might be offended with their pragmatic errors (Wolfson, 1989).

This study employs both authentic emails and a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as methods of data collection in order to investigate the actual use of refusals in asynchronous email communication and to compare the refusal strategies gathered through emails to strategies collected by means of DCTs.

Emails, the primary data source in this study, have started to be commonly used in both formal and informal settings (Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008; Al-Khatib, 2008; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Franch & Lorenza-Dus, 2008; Furcsa, 2009; Iimuro, 2006). As stated by Baron (2000), "Not only do we issue (and accept) invitations via email, but we use email to thank people for job interviews, solicit advice, and send condolences." (p. 235). It has also been observed by the researcher that emails are often used when inviting a group of people to social events or gatherings both in

Turkey and in the U.S.A. as the examples below show. The following examples come from real email messages the researcher received from friends and classmates to attend a breakfast and an end-of-semester party.

Example 1: Turkish invitation

*Slm arkadaşlar! Yarın sabah kilyos ta hep beraber kahvaltı yapıyoruz. Sabah güney kapıdan 10:00 da otobusumuz mevcut. İşi olup erken dönmek isteyen arkadaşlar 13:45 te dönebilirler. Herkes bana dönerse iyi olur. Ona göre alışveriş yapacağım ve sabah siz geldiğinizde kahvaltının hazır olması için kaç kişinin geleceğini bilmem gerekiyor ☺ Görüşmek üzere. hepinizi mutlaka bekliyorum...*

Hi friends! We are all having breakfast in Kilyos tomorrow morning. There is a bus leaving at 10:00 a.m. at the gate. If there is anyone who needs to leave early after breakfast, they can take the bus at 13:45. It would be great if everyone can write back to me. I will shop accordingly. I need to know how many of you are coming so that the breakfast can be ready when you show up in the morning ☺ See you. I'm looking forward to seeing you all.

Example 2: American English invitation

We made it! Now let's celebrate the end of a great semester, new friends, and lots of fun to come. Bring yourself, your loved ones, something to drink and/or some light food to share. If you're coming via Marta, take the train to the King Memorial Station and then take bus # 32 to the corner of Ormewood Terrace and E. Confederate. Walk right on E. Confederate and my house will be one block down on the right, #868.

Within the scope of this study, social distance between the interlocutors is considered to have an effect on the way refusals are realized. In this respect, Brown and Levinson's (1987) definition of social distance and Wolfson's (1990) *bulge theory* need to be mentioned. Social distance is "...based on the assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of material and non-material goods (including face) exchanged between S [speaker] and H [hearer]". (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 77).

Social distance comprises some components such as social similarity/difference, frequency of contact, length of acquaintance, familiarity, or how well people know each other, sense of like-mindedness, and positive/negative affect (Spencer-Oatey, 1996, p. 7).

For the purposes of this study, familiarity between people and their meeting each other outside of school or work was considered to have an effect on the way people refuse an invitation from their status-equal interlocutors. Data were collected from people who were in a university context. Friends in this context were classmates who would meet each other socially outside of school. Acquaintances, on the other hand, were colleagues who may meet each other in department-related gatherings such as new graduate student welcome party and end-of-the-semester potluck.

To date, there have been no attempts to analyze refusals to invitations in genuine email interactions although invitations, refusals, and acceptances are commonly found in emails nowadays. Hence, there is clearly a need to examine speech act of refusals in email context. The current study will identify Turkish and American English refusal strategies employed in email messages sent to refuse invitations from a friend or an acquaintance, and examine whether social distance between the interlocutors have an impact on strategy use by Turkish L1 speakers (TSs) and American English L1 speakers (AESs). In order to investigate whether strategy use differs across the method of data collection (i.e., email vs. DCT) strategies used in Turkish email refusals are compared to strategies utilized in DCT refusals. Strategies found in American English email refusals are also compared to those in DCT refusals.

The present study, as a cross-cultural speech act study, may help to predict where Turkish speakers learning American English and American English speakers learning Turkish are likely to experience pragmatic failure -either pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic (see section ‘Communicative Competence’ for detailed explanation)- when they interact with the native speakers of the target language. Providing insights into Turkish and American ways of refusing invitations, this study could be valuable to learners of Turkish who wish to live or work among Turkish speakers and learners of English who are planning to live, work, or study in the USA or among American English speakers. Once the patterns of refusals in each language are gained, it might make it easier for the non-native speakers of either language to communicate more effectively with the speakers of the target language. This way, they are more likely to overcome any chances of misunderstanding and less likely to fail pragmatically. The findings of the study would also be helpful for teachers of Turkish and English as a second/foreign language in teaching the patterns of refusals to invitations in friend-to-friend and acquaintance-to-acquaintance interactions and indicating the general patterns of pragmatic failure.

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: In Chapter 2, a review of literature on pragmatics, communicative competence, and speech act of refusals is presented. In Chapter 3, the methodological procedures and the data analysis of the present study are explained in detail. The findings and the discussion of the findings are reported in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter continues with the presentation of the theoretical framework for the current study, providing detailed information as to the concepts mentioned in Chapter 1. First, a brief definition of pragmatics is provided along with the review of speech act theory. Next, the concept of communicative competence and its components are presented. This is followed by a review of research on the speech act of refusals in various languages. Close attention is paid to studies that have examined the speech act of refusals in Turkish and English as well as in other languages. In the following section, studies on written speech acts in email communication are detailed. Finally, data collection methods employed in speech act studies are reviewed and both the advantages and disadvantages of these methods are discussed.

#### Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to the study of “how language is used in communication” (Leech, 1983, p. 1). Crystal (1985) defines it as follows:

the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social

interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (p. 240)

### Speech Act Theory

The concept of speech act was first introduced by Austin (1962). Austin states “to say something is to *do* something” (p. 12, italics in original) and asserts that when we communicate, we perform an act such as requesting something, inviting someone to somewhere, and apologizing to someone. Austin classified speech acts (i.e., utterances which involve both saying and doing elements) into three acts: perlocutionary, illocutionary, and locutionary. A locutionary act refers to “uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference” (p. 108). Illocutionary acts, on the other hand, are “utterances which have a certain (conventional) force” as in apologizing, refusing, inviting, and warning (p. 108). Finally, perlocutionary acts are “what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (p. 109).

According to Searle (1969),

all linguistic communication involve linguistic acts. The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act. To take the token as a message is to take it as a production or issued token. More precisely, the production or issuance of sentence token under certain conditions is a speech act, and speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication (p.16).

Building on Austin’s theory, Searle (1976) proposes the following categories of speech acts: representatives (e.g. statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, etc.),



directives (e.g. requests, invitations, suggestions, etc.), commissives (e.g. promises, threats, etc.), expressives (e.g. apologies, thanks, wishes, etc.), and declarations (e.g. baptizing, firing, etc.). In Searle's taxonomy, the speech act of refusal, which is under investigation in the present study, falls under the category of commissives although the strategies used when refusing also might go under other categories. For example, expressions of apology and statements of wish are classified as expressives.

Another major contribution to the study of speech acts has been Hymes' (1967) work. Hymes created a mnemonic device called *SPEAKING* to list the components which constitute speech acts. The components are as follows: *Setting or Scene* ("time and place of a speech event"), *Participants or Personnel* ("speaker and hearer, sender and receiver, addressor and addressee"), *Ends* ("goals, purposes or intentions and effects"), *Art Characteristics* ("the form and the content of what is said"), *Key* ("tone, manner or spirit in which an act is done"), *Instrumentalities* ("channel and code"), *Norms of interaction and of interpretation* ("specific behaviors and proprieties that may accompany acts of speech" and "the belief system of a community"), and *Genres* ("categories or types of speech act and speech event – conversation, curse, blessing, prayer, lecture, imprecation, sales pitch, etc.") (pp. 21-25). Hymes highlighted the fact that some components might have precedence over others depending on the rules of speaking in an individual society and concluded that "[w]ithout such rules, however, it is impossible to characterize the nature of the competence in speaking of members of the society" (Hymes, 1967, p. 23). The concept of communicative competence has been Hymes' major contribution to the investigation of speech acts. The next section deals with this concept by reviewing the work by Hymes and other scholars.

## Communicative Competence

Competence in a language was considered to be limited to grammatical knowledge in the early 1960s. Hymes (1972 [1966]) developed the notion of communicative competence (i.e., linguistic knowledge and social knowledge necessary for appropriate communication in a particular social group) in response to Chomsky's emphasis on linguistic competence which encompasses the knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of a language which are shared by the native speakers of that language. With Hymes' work, the notion of communicative competence started to be defined beyond the structural knowledge. Hymes asserted that speakers of a language acquire "competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner" (p. 277). He further suggested that the nature of competence depends upon social factors and hence varies cross-culturally. Thus, acquiring communicative competence in a language means being "able to accomplish a range of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others" in a given speech community (p. 277). Building on Hymes' ideas, Canale and Swain (1980) provided a definition for communicative competence which, as they put it, is "the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use" (p. 6). They asserted that not only grammatical competence but also sociolinguistic competence is essential to the study of communicative competence; thus, they put forward a framework which consists of grammatical, sociolinguistic

and strategic competence. “Discourse competence” was later added to the above model by Canale (1983).

Thomas (1983) proposed that the linguistic competence speakers have would consist of “[...] grammatical competence (‘abstract’ or decontextualized knowledge of intonation, phonology, syntax, semantics, etc.) and pragmatic competence (the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context)” (p. 92). Pragmatic competence is further classified into two components, namely pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistics is “the study of the more linguistic end of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 11) and the term pragmalinguistic competence refers to appropriate language use to accomplish a range of speech acts (Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, & El Bakary, 2002). On the other hand, sociopragmatics is “the logical interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 10) and the term sociopragmatic competence refers to the appropriateness of a speech act in a particular speech community (Nelson et al., 2002). Cohen (1996) suggests the terms “sociocultural ability” and “sociolinguistic ability” which determine the successful realization of speech acts. Sociocultural ability is required in choosing appropriate speech act strategies considering “(1) the culture involved, (2) the age and sex of the speakers, (3) their social class and occupations, and (4) their roles and status in the interaction” (Cohen, 1996: 388). Sociolinguistic ability/knowledge is called for in choosing appropriate linguistic forms to realize speech act strategies such as “expression of regret in an apology, registration of a grievance in a complaint, specification of the objective of a request, or refusal of an invitation” (Cohen, 1996, p. 388).

A considerable amount of research within the framework of communicative competence has been conducted on different speech acts in and across different languages in order to describe their patterns as employed in given languages and the issues related to the pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, as well as by examining instances of pragmatic transfer which is one cause of pragmatic failure. The term “pragmatic failure” has been introduced by Thomas (1983) and is defined as the “inability to understand what is meant by what is said” (p. 91). She further distinguishes between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Pragmalinguistic failure is observed “[...] when the pragmatic force mapped on to a linguistic token or structure is systematically different from that normally assigned to it by native speakers” (p. 101). Sociopragmatic failure, on the other hand, occurs when a foreign speaker differently judges “the size of imposition, cost/benefit, social distance, and relative rights and obligations” from a native speaker as the way these pragmatic choices are applied varies from culture to culture (p. 104).

The present study focuses on aspects of both pragmalinguistic competence as it aims to explore the linguistic patterns in Turkish and American English refusals, and sociopragmatic competence as social distance is one variable in the study whose assessment is culture-specific. Within the communicative competence paradigm, the current study presents the results of a cross-cultural study on refusals through the comparison of speech act behavior and strategy use in Turkish and American-English refusal emails. This study, as a cross-cultural speech act study, might help to predict the areas where pragmatic transfer is likely to occur and to mitigate pragmatic failure.

The rest of the chapter elaborates on the speech act of refusals and the literature on refusals in and across languages.

### Speech Act of Refusals

Refusals are “dispreferred seconds” which are “delayed and contain additional complex components” (Levinson, 1983, p. 308). The characteristics of dispreferred seconds in English are listed as follows:

- a) *delays*: (i) by pause before delivery, (ii) by the use of a preface, (iii) by displacement over a number of turns via use of *repair initiators* or insertion sequences
- b) *prefaces*: (i) the use of markers or announcers of dispreferreds like *Uh* and *Well*, (ii) the production of token agreements before disagreements, (iii) the use of appreciations if relevant (for offers, invitations, suggestions, advice), (iv) the use of apologies if relevant (for requests, invitations, etc), (v) the use of qualifiers (e.g. *I don't know for sure, but ...*), (vi) hesitation in various forms, including self-editing
- c) *accounts*: carefully formulated explanations for why the (dispreferred) act is being done
- d) *declination component*: of a form suited to the nature of the first part of the pair, but characteristically indirect or mitigated (Levinson, 1983, p. 334-335).

Refusals are particularly interesting for the purposes of this study because they are face-threatening acts, and hence they involve “face-saving maneuvers to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act” (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 2). The notion of “face” is defined as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Brown and Levinson assert that although some universals exist in people’s knowledge of face and of orienting oneself to it in the interaction, the content of face differs in different speech communities which often have different cross-cultural concerns. Thus, a certain

amount of culture-specific knowledge and ability are required for appropriate comprehension and production (Gass & Houck, 1999). According to Gass and Houck, this is the reason as to why the characteristics of culturally and linguistically appropriate refusals are of great interest both to researchers and to foreign and second language teachers.

Research on the speech act of refusals has been conducted in a variety of languages and contexts. Previous studies have examined a) the realization of refusals in a given language; b) the realization of refusals across languages by means of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparison; c) the issue of teaching pragmatics; and d) pragmatic transfer from one language to another by focusing on second or foreign language learners (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Gass & Houck, 1999). The aim of this study is to discuss the similarities and differences in strategies used in Turkish and English refusals in email interactions and the differences in strategy use between email data and DCT data. Therefore, research studies which have focused on cross-cultural/cross-linguistic refusals, those which have studied speech acts in email interactions and in DCTs, and the ones on data collection methods in speech act research are reviewed in the following section along with the studies on pragmatic transfer and teaching speech act of refusals.

### Studies on Pragmatic Transfer

These studies mainly focus on the aspect of pragmatic transfer from one's native language to the target language. One major comparative study on pragmatic transfer in speech act of refusals has been conducted by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz

(1990). They collected refusals from native speakers of Japanese, native speakers of English and Japanese learners of English using a DCT which consisted of twelve situations and four types of refusals: refusals to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. The results of the study revealed evidence of pragmatic transfer in refusals by Japanese learners of English in three aspects: the order of strategies, the frequency of the strategies, and the content of the reasons. In refusing invitations, Japanese speakers and learners tended to omit the expression of apology/regret while Americans used the expression of regret prior to their reasons. Moreover, Japanese speakers and learners of English varied their use of strategies according to the status of their interlocutors while Americans used the strategies in the same way with status-equals or unequals. Americans only changed their order of strategies when they refused their friends, which supports Wolfson's (1981, 1990) *bulge theory* that says Americans choose speech act strategies depending on the level of social distance with their interlocutors. Beebe et al. (1990) found that their acts were longer and more elaborated when they refused a friend or an acquaintance and shorter and less elaborated when they refused an intimate or a stranger. The number of strategies increased as the familiarity between the interlocutors increased. In terms of the pragmatic transfer in the content of reasons, Beebe et al.'s findings showed that Japanese speakers and learners sounded more formal in tone and made less specific reasons than native speakers of English.

A similar study carried out by Yamagashira (2001) investigated refusal strategies by Japanese speakers, Japanese speakers of English, and American English speakers to determine whether pragmatic transfer occurred in English refusals made by Japanese speakers of English and whether second language (L2) proficiency had

an impact on pragmatic transfer. Nine Japanese speakers completed a DCT in Japanese and in English, and eight Americans filled out the DCT in English. The results of the study revealed pragmatic transfer only in the request situation in which the refuser was in a higher status than the interlocutor, which confirmed the finding made by Beebe et al. (1990) who claimed that Japanese speakers use strategies in relation to the status of their interlocutor. In addition, the L2 proficiency was shown to have an effect on pragmatic transfer from the first language (L1) to the L2; that is, the lower the speakers' proficiency level was in the L2, the more transfer from the L1 was observed. Wannaruk (2008), who compared the frequencies of the refusal strategies used in DCTs by native speakers of English and Thai and Thai EFL learners with different proficiency levels, also concludes that pragmatic transfer increases as learners' proficiency level decreases. In other words, lower level learners' refusals are more influenced by their L1 strategies than higher level learners. Similarly, in Cramer's (1997) study, Japanese speakers' low proficiency in English appeared to be the reason for the differences found in the refusal strategies by Japanese and American speakers of English. The refusals by Japanese speakers of English were observed to be shorter in length and included fewer strategies while American refusals were longer and consisted of more strategies which helped to soften the possible negative effects of the refusal.

An opposite finding was reported in an earlier study by Takahashi and Beebe (1987) who compared refusal strategies from Japanese speakers, Japanese learners of English with varying proficiency levels, and English speakers. They hypothesized that pragmatic transfer is greater for learners with higher proficiency in English than learners with lower proficiency levels. Morkus's (2009) study yielded similar results



to that of Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) study. He examined the speech act of refusals by intermediate and advanced American learners of Egyptian Arabic as a foreign language and investigated whether the proficiency level of the learners had an effect on their pragmatic competence and whether pragmatic transfer from L1 occurred. Results showed that the learner groups differed from the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic in terms of the frequency of direct and indirect strategies and the frequency of strategies in general. The learners employed more direct strategies, statements of regret, and requests of clarification and fewer postponement and hedging strategies than did the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. Evidence for pragmatic transfer was found in both groups although higher degree of transfer was observed in the advanced group, which supports the Positive Correlation Hypothesis suggested by Takahashi and Beebe (1987).

Chang's (2009) findings did not support either the aforementioned claim that the higher the proficiency level is, the lower the pragmatic transfer level is or the hypothesis proposed by Takahashi and Beebe (1987) that says the higher the proficiency level is, the higher the pragmatic transfer level is. Chang used a DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) in order to elicit refusals. The study investigated if the level of L2 proficiency had an impact on Mandarin speakers' refusals in English, if pragmatic transfer was influenced by the proficiency level, and to what extent their refusals in English were influenced by their L1. Data were collected from 4 different groups: American native speakers of English, Chinese native speakers of Chinese, and two groups of English learners with lower and higher proficiency. The results did not indicate a statistically significant difference in the use of adjuncts between learner groups but significant difference was found in the use of indirect strategies.

Vague reasons were favored by Americans while more specific reasons were preferred by the Chinese group and the learner groups. Chang (2009) did not find any difference in the level of pragmatic transfer between the two groups of learners with different proficiency levels.

Studies conducted by Al-Issa (1998, 2003) examined the refusals of Jordanian L2 learners of English by employing a written DCT to see whether sociopragmatic transfer from Arabic to English occurs. The learners' refusals were compared to refusals of Jordanian native speakers of Arabic and American native speakers of English. It was found that deviation from American English norms occurred in the choice of refusal strategies, in the length of responses, and in the content of semantic formulas. Jordanian L2 learners of English employed strategies not found in the American data but found in the Arabic data. Refusals made by both Jordanian L2 learners and Jordanians were longer than those made by Americans. Sadler and Eröz (2002) also used a DCT to collect refusals in English from native speakers of English, Lao, and Turkish. Their study focused on the role of the participants' L1 on how they refused in English. The findings showed that pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 influences the frequency, order, and content of semantic formulas used in English refusals in some cases.

Bulut (2000) investigated the issue of pragmatic transfer from Turkish to English by Turkish advanced level English learners as a foreign language (EFL). He collected data by using both a role-play and a DCT. Pragmatic transfer from Turkish to English in Turkish EFL learner refusals was observed in the role-plays. In a similar vein, Felix-Brasdefer (2004) found an influence of the L1 on speech act perception in the L2. The researcher, using role plays and retrospective verbal

reports, investigated the politeness strategies of advanced-level foreign language learners of Spanish. The results of his study showed that learners' perception of refusals in Spanish is influenced by their L1, English.

### Studies on Teaching Speech Act of Refusals

The importance of speech act instruction has been well argued in the literature. As for the effectiveness of such instruction on the successful realization of the speech acts, however, few studies have been conducted. The study carried out by King and Silver (1993) examined the effects of instruction on the refusal strategy use by intermediate level L2 learners of English. Three learners received 70 minutes of instruction on refusal strategies with a focus on important sociolinguistic variables in refusing in American English. Pre-test and post-test DCTs were administered to elicit refusals. Two weeks after the instruction, the researchers telephoned the participants to elicit oral refusals to the researcher's request. Analysis of both the written and oral refusal strategies showed little effect of instruction on the learners' sociolinguistic ability to perform written refusals, and no effect was observed on oral refusals.

The findings of Silva's (2003) study, however, contradicted the findings of King and Silver (1993). Silva (2003) investigated the effects of instruction on pragmatic development of learners from different language backgrounds. The sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic components of English refusals to invitations were taught to 7 learners of English (i.e., the treatment group) by incorporating a metapragmatic awareness task into the task-based method of instruction. Data were collected by means of pre-test and post-test role-plays. Learners' pragmatic ability,

when compared to the control group, was found to have improved towards the American English native speaker norm which has the following order: <hesitation> <positive opinion> <regret> <reason>.

The findings of Silva (2003) study were supported by Akpınar's (2009). Her study was concerned with the teaching of apologizing and refusing in English to Turkish learners of English by using theatre extracts. She used role-play as a method to collect data and analyzed the recordings in terms of the frequencies of semantic formulas employed by Turkish learners and Americans in certain situations where social distance and social status between the interlocutors were different. The results showed that effective teaching of speech acts can raise learners' awareness and help them achieve native-like acts.

#### Studies on Cross-linguistic and Cross-cultural Refusals

Studies on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural refusals have analyzed refusal strategies and compared them across languages. Oral refusals to invitations and requests in English and Japanese were investigated by Kinjo (1987) in order to demonstrate the potential problems that American people might have in refusing in Japanese and that Japanese people might have in refusing in English. Native speakers of both languages responded to audio-taped invitations and requests between peers. The researcher found the following strategies as the major components of refusals in English and Japanese: reason, direct refusal, regret, wish, and alternative. Kinjo stated that 'I'm sorry' was used extensively by both groups. In terms of directness, Japanese were found to be more open and direct than Americans. This finding,

however, was not supported by Beebe et al.'s (1990) major comparative study on refusals although their study analyzed speech act of refusals by means of a DCT. The results of their study revealed that native speakers of Japanese sounded more formal in tone and made less specific reasons than native speakers of English.

Another major cross-cultural pragmatics study was conducted by Nelson et al. (2002) who investigated Cairene Arabic and American English refusal strategies using spoken elicitations. Interviewees were asked to respond orally to hypothetical situations read by the interviewer. Their analysis revealed that English and Arabic speakers used very similar strategies in their refusals and hence pragmatic failure would be unlikely to occur for English and Arabic speakers. The authors point out that due to the similar refusal strategies in two languages, transfer of L1 refusal strategies to the target language may result in pragmatic success rather than pragmatic failure for both groups. Their findings, however, did not support the previous research carried out by Al-Shalawi (1997) who found significant differences in the use of direct "no" in Saudi Arabic and American English. In Al-Shalawi's study, the two groups were also observed to differ in the number of strategies employed in each situation and in the content of the reasons. Americans used explanations more than did the Saudis and their explanations included more specific details than the explanations given by the Saudis. Reasons given by the Americans were their own inclinations (e.g. I have to study.) while reasons by the Saudis were mostly family related and thus included situations which were beyond their control (e.g. I have a problem in my family.). The researcher explained that these differences were rooted in the characteristics of Saudi and American cultures, the former being a high-context and collectivist culture and the latter being a low-

context and individualistic culture. This finding is also supported in Al-Khatib (2006) study which indicated that when refusing, Jordanians used a number of good wishes and a variety of apology expressions to soften the negative effects of the refusal on the inviter. He concludes that these strategies employed were culturally shaped.

American English and Mandarin Chinese refusal strategies were compared in Liao and Bresnahan's (1996) study with the use of a 6-item written DCT. Their analysis revealed that the status of the interlocutor was a determining factor in the participants' choice of refusal strategies and the content of their reasons for not complying with the request. According to the authors, Chinese tend to use expressions of regret more frequently with higher-status interlocutors. Although both groups expressed vague reasons when refusing a high-status interlocutor, Chinese reasons were more specific than American reasons. Moreover, Americans were found to use more strategies than did the Chinese. Another study on American English and Chinese refusals conducted by Jiang (2006) found that direct refusals and reasons were employed more often in the American data whereas avoidance and insufficient answers were used more in the Chinese data. Chinese and American English refusal strategies were also investigated in terms of the cultural differences (Li, 2007). In Li's study, both groups were found to use different strategies in their refusals. Social power differences between the interlocutors has an effect in Chinese speakers' ways of refusing while social distance between the interlocutors has an effect in American speakers' refusing patterns. It was concluded that cultural values determine the ways people realize speech acts; that is, individualism and equality are

valued in American culture while collectivism and social hierarchy are valued in Chinese culture.

Lyuh (1992) investigated refusal strategies employed by Koreans and Americans. Her findings showed that the two groups differed both in the use of strategies and in the content of the refusal. Koreans were found to employ more strategies than did Americans. Koreans gave less specific reasons that were inclinations other than their own, while Americans gave more specific reasons which were their own inclinations. The refusal patterns examined within the scope of this study showed that Korean refusals reflected the characteristics of collectivist high-context culture, whereas American refusals reflected the characteristics of an individualistic low-context culture. Similarly, Korean and American English refusals were studied by Kwon (2004) and cross-cultural variation was found in the frequency and content of the semantic formulas used by each language group. Detailed analysis of the refusal strategies yielded the following results: (1) gratitude and positive opinion were stated more frequently by Americans while hesitation and apology were more frequent in Korean refusals; and (2) more mitigation devices were used by Koreans who provided more elaborate reasons than American English speakers. These differences in Korean and English refusals, according to Kwon, suggest that pragmatic failure may occur when learners of each language rely on their native culture-specific refusal strategies while interacting with the native speakers of the target language.

Beckers (1999) investigated whether Americans and Germans differed in the speech act of refusal. The results of his study are as follows: (1) status difference was more influential in Americans' strategy use rather than social distance while social

distance was more effective in Germans' refusals rather than status difference; (2) Americans employed more strategies than did Germans; (3) more politeness strategies were used by Germans who were also more indirect than were Americans; and (4) German reasons were more vague and included inclinations other than their own while American reasons were more specific and consisted of their own inclinations as reasons. It is suggested by the researcher that raising awareness and sensitivity of such differences and the culture-specific rules of speech communities may help to minimize the occurrences of cross-cultural miscommunication due to inappropriate refusals.

By gathering data through role-plays and a DCT, Bulut (2000) examined the differences and the similarities in the performance of Turkish and American English refusals as well as the issue of pragmatic transfer. He found that Turkish refusals were mostly indirect and sensitive to preserving face while American English refusals tended to be more direct and included clear politeness strategies and semantic formulas. Strategies used by Turkish speakers were <positive feeling> and <reason> (e.g., "*Pazar gecesi eşimin bir arkadaşına davetliyiz.*" "We are invited by a friend of my wife."), and their reasons were explicit and related to family. On the other hand, American English speakers started with an <expression of regret> and continued with an <reason> (e.g., "*I have plans for Sunday night*") which was usually non-explicit.

Felix-Brasdefer (2003) investigated the preference of directness and indirectness by Spanish speakers, advanced American learners of Spanish, and American English speakers when declining an invitation. Open role plays were employed to collect data and Beebe's taxonomy was used to classify the refusals.



The findings of the study showed that although both groups favored similar pragmatic strategies in their refusals, American English speakers were more direct than Spanish speakers and learners of Spanish were less direct than English speakers. Retrospective verbal report interviews showed that Spanish speakers do not prefer to use a direct refusal when declining an invitation from someone, regardless of the social status of the interlocutor. Analysis of the verbal reports further revealed that some learners did not know how Spanish speakers would decline an invitation, which suggests that learners' advanced proficiency by itself does not guarantee success in the realization of a speech act, so sociocultural knowledge is crucial. The researcher also conducted an exploratory study to describe refusing strategies and linguistic politeness among Mexican male university students in formal and informal role-play interactions (Felix-Brasdefer, 2006). The results showed that indirect strategies, such as reasons or explanations, and indefinite replies were favored by the participants to soften the refusals, which supports the findings of his previous study in terms of Spanish speakers' preference for indirectness rather than directness. As Felix-Brasdefer argues, appropriate degrees of politeness achieved through formulaic and semi-formulaic expressions and various indirect linguistic strategies depend largely on social power and social distance between the interlocutors in Mexican community.

In a more recent study, Felix-Brasdefer (2008) explored the cognitive processes that were involved in the speech act of refusals and the perceptions of refusals to invitations by American male learners of Spanish. The data were collected using open role plays and retrospective verbal reports for the purpose of gathering both production and perception data. The open role play consisted of six scenarios,

two of which elicited refusals to an invitation, two to a request, and two to a suggestion. Following the role-play task, the participants watched themselves producing the speech acts and were asked what they were paying attention to when refusing the invitation, which language they preferred to think in when planning and producing a refusal, and how they perceived the insistence upon their refusal. Results showed that some learners focused on softening their refusals, some on finding a reason, some on feelings of their interlocutors and politeness. Few of them focused their attention on expressing positive opinions, offering alternatives, grammar or vocabulary. While finding reasons and focusing on grammar and vocabulary, the learners reported that they thought in English. Even though learners were aware of the invitation-refusal-insistence pattern among Spanish speaking people, the majority of the learners did not expect an insistence once they refused the invitation and they perceived the insistences as inappropriate since they are not always expected in the American context and are considered to be intruding on the speaker's privacy and independence.

Native speakers' judgments of appropriateness of non-native speakers' refusals were studied by Chen (1995). Native English-speaking university students were asked to rate the pragmatic appropriateness of refusals collected by means of a DCT from advanced Chinese EFL learners and native speakers of English in Chen (1995). Refusal statements made by native speakers of English were rated as appropriate whereas statements by non-native speakers of English were rated as inappropriate. Refusals which were regarded as highly appropriate by the native speakers of English contained "externalizing or impersonalizing the situation of refusals, elaborating the reasons of refusals, offering alternatives or suggestions, and

minimizing the undesirable outcome the listener caused” (Chen, 1995, pp. 17-18).

The inappropriate refusals made by non-native speakers of English, however, included “failure to preserve the listener’s negative face, making personal criticisms, and semantic ambiguity” (p. 18). As also supported in literature, knowledge of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of the target language and awareness of the similarities and differences between the native language and the target language help non-native speakers of that language produce socially and linguistically appropriate speech acts.

### Data Collection Methods in Speech Act Research

Various data collection methodologies, such as observation of naturally occurring data, role play, discourse completion tasks, and verbal report interviews have been employed to investigate the production of speech acts. A number of studies have also focused on the comparison of methodologies used to collect speech act data and stressed the weaknesses and strengths of the methodologies under investigation (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010; Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008; Golato, 2003; Jucker, 2009; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Turnbull, 2001; Yuan, 2001). Such research has compared DCT data to data gathered through other methods (e.g., role play, observation of naturally occurring data, or multiple choice) (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

The data collection methods employed in 39 speech act studies were reviewed by Kasper and Dahl (1991). Some of the studies mentioned in the paper focused on the perception and comprehension of speech acts by non-native speakers and some

on the production of speech acts. For the purposes of the present study, the focus is on research that has examined the production data by employing two or more methods. These methods are compared on the basis of how well the elicitation methods approximate the observation of naturally occurring data.

Beebe and Cummings (1996, originally presented in 1985) were the first to compare refusals collected through DCT and authentic telephone conversations. Native English-speaking teachers of English were asked if they would volunteer to help out at the TESOL convention in both the DCT and the telephone call. They found both similarities and differences between the realizations of refusals collected through two different mediums. While the DCT responses contained most of the refusal strategies expressed in natural speech, which led the researchers to argue that DCT is a good way to investigate the frequently used strategies, telephone responses were “longer, more repetitive, and more elaborated” and they contained a variety of different strategies (p. 75). The researchers, agreeing that DCT data are not a substitute for data on natural speech, conclude that

[DCT] data do not have the repetitions, the number of turns, the length of responses, the emotional depth, or other features of natural speech, but they do seem to give us a good idea of the stereotypical shape of the speech act - at least in this case of refusals (pp. 80-81).

They listed the strengths and weaknesses of using a DCT in speech act research and argued that DCTs are effective in:

1. Gathering a large amount of data quickly;
2. Creating an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that will occur in natural speech;
3. Studying the stereotypical perceived requirements for a socially appropriate (though not always polite) response;
4. Gaining insight into social and psychological factors that are likely to affect speech act performance; and
5. Ascertaining the canonical shape of refusals, apologies, partings, etc. in the minds of the speakers of that language. (p. 80)

However, DCTs do not reflect natural or elicited speech in terms of:

1. Actual wording used in real interpersonal interaction;
2. The range of formulas and strategies used (some, like avoidance, tend to get left out);
3. The length of response or the number of turns it takes to fulfill the function;
4. The depth of emotion that in turn qualitatively affects the tone, content, and form of linguistic performance;
5. The number of repetitions and elaborations that occur; or
6. The actual rate of occurrence of a speech act – e.g., whether or not someone would naturalistically refuse at all in a given situation. (Beebe & Cummings, 1996, p. 80).

Following Beebe and Cummings (1996) study, Rose (1992b) compared data from two types of DCTs: one form with a hearer response and the other form without a hearer response. The results indicated no significant effect of the DCT type on the requests although elicited responses on the “No Hearer Response” DCT were slightly longer and included more supportive moves and downgraders than the responses on the “Hearer Response” DCT.

Four data elicitation methods were compared to naturally occurring speech in Turnbull’s (2001) study. Naturally occurring refusals were gathered through telephone calls while refusals in the experimental technique were elicited over the phone using a scripted request. The scenario used in the experimental technique was also used in written and oral DCTs as well as role plays. The analysis of the data indicated that compared to the experimental condition, role plays, and naturally occurring speech, written and oral DCT responses were shorter and the range of strategies used was smaller. Refusals collected through the role plays and the experimental technique were similar to natural refusals. As one of the aims of the study was to examine which method was appropriate to generate “talk to be used in

analyses of talk and social structure,” experimental technique was found to be the preferred pragmatic elicitation technique (p. 31).

Yuan (2001) evaluated written DCTs, oral DCTs, field notes, and natural conversations which produced compliments and compliment responses in Chinese. The oral DCT, although it shared drawbacks similar to those of the written DCT, generated speech acts closer to the naturally occurring acts than the written DCT did. Regarding the field notes and the natural speech, the researcher asserted that “[f]ield note data can help the researcher identify when and where a speech act is likely to occur, by whom, and in what social contexts, whereas natural speech, if recorded properly, can provide the most accurate picture of everyday conversations” (p. 289). The researcher states that the research questions and the researcher’s objectives should be considered prior to choosing a data collection method for a speech act study.

Golato (2003) collected compliment responses with two data collection methods: naturally occurring data and DCT. Within the scope of her study, the naturally occurring data were first recorded and the DCT items were created based on the real situations in the recordings. She concludes that “DCTs are better suited to the study of ‘what people think they would say’ than to the study of ‘what people actually do say’ in a given speech setting” (p. 111). She argues that DCTs are not reliable tools if the aim is to see how talk-in-interaction is realized in natural settings, which is similar to the conclusion reported in Hinkel’s (1997) study that examined advising strategies of native speakers of English and Chinese learners of English collected by means of multiple choice questionnaires and DCTs. She found that DCTs elicited data which were not representative of “the spontaneous discourse

characteristics of an actual speech act,” and thus concluded that “written production instruments may not be effective in eliciting data representative of actual speech acts in cross-cultural L1 and L2 settings” (p. 19).

Franch and Lorenzo-Dus (2008) also address the issue of elicited versus natural data. They collected requests from Spanish and British undergraduates by means of DCTs (elicited data) and unsolicited emails (natural data). Sixty DCT responses and 60 emails sent by university students to their lecturers were analyzed. Data gathered through the two methods showed differences in the organization, density, and politeness orientation of requests for each language community. The researchers argue that “DCT data cannot be treated as language in use,” and thus conclude that analysis of natural data can be more efficient in realizing the goals of cross-cultural speech act research. They also indicate that “continuing to use DCTs as the *only* data elicitation method in this discipline risks neglecting the rich tapestry that natural language use across (and within) cultures displays” (p. 268, italics in original). However, having examined the validity and reliability of different methods (i.e., DCTs, role plays, and verbal reports), Felix-Brasdefer (2010) asserts that DCTs and role plays can be improved and their validity can be increased by adding more contextual information to the situations. In addition, he claims that verbal reports can be used to support the results collected by means of DCTs and role plays.

Natural and role play requests in Mexican Spanish were compared in Félix-Brasdefer’s (2007) study, which investigated to what extent role play data were closer to naturally occurring data in terms of the content and the frequency of requests. Results indicate that while natural data provide real interaction realized in dynamic and natural contexts, role plays can elicit interactional data by controlling

for sociolinguistic variables. The researcher asserts that the choice of a method to collect speech act data depends on the purpose of the research, the research site, the participants, and the theoretical framework, as also suggested by other studies (Golato, 2003; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Yuan, 2001). Similarly, Jucker (2009) examined intuited data, natural data, and elicited data. Disagreeing with Wolfson (1981), who suggest that recordings of natural data is the only reliable method to collect compliments or any other speech act in everyday interactions, he claims that it depends on the specific research question under investigation to decide which method best serves the purpose of a speech act study.

### Electronic Mail

Electronic communication has “given rise to new and unique forms and genres of communication” (McElhearn, 1996). According to McElhearn, communication via the Internet requires users to know how to communicate effectively and know the norms and the characteristics of this new form of communication (i.e., computer-mediated-communication). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is defined as “communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring, 1996, p. 1) and as a "hybrid register that resembles both speech and writing and yet is neither" (Veselinova & Dry, 1995; as cited in McElhearn, 1996). During the last few decades, there has been an ongoing discussion as to whether CMC is like speech or writing. As Collot and Belmore (1996) put it:

Messages delivered electronically are neither spoken nor written in the conventional sense of these words. There is an easy interaction of participants and alternation of topics typical of some varieties of spoken English.



However, they cannot be strictly labeled as spoken messages since the participants neither see nor hear each other. Nor can they be considered strictly written since many of them are composed directly on-line, thereby ruling out the use of planning and editing strategies which are at the disposal of even the most informal writer (p. 14).

Baron (1984) suggests that CMC is influenced by speech-like writing. “Technically, email is a form of writing. Yet, its usage conventions are often closer to those of the social telephone or face-to-face conversation” (Baron, 2000, p. 241). Yates (1996) and Al-Khatib (2008) support the claim that CMC is “neither simply speech-like nor simply written-like” (Yates, 1996, p. 46); therefore, it has its own structural and linguistic features. As Crystal (2006) similarly writes, electronic mail (email) “does not duplicate what other mediums can do,” but has its own language and unique features (p. 130). “Email is the generic term for an asynchronous tool that allows people to type extended messages at computer terminals and have those messages electronically transmitted to recipients who can answer, use, or file them.” (Murray, 1988, p. 6), and it is regarded as a widely preferred and used form of CMC (McElhearn, 1996). This allows users to “communicate at their temporal convenience, without the requirement that message recipients be logged on” (Herring, 2002, p. 115) and gives users the control to plan, compose, edit, review, and execute (Duthler, 2006). As stated by Baron (2000), “increasingly, email is replacing the telephone (not to mention the traditional letter) for two-person social discourse” (p. 227). Email has become an important part of everyday life and is no more restricted to people from the world of science, technology, or academia (Ducheneaut & Watts, 2005). In addition to its pricing and ease of access, its being used as a quick way to communicate with others using short, simple, and informally

addressed language without any time constraints; these features add more to its popularity (Al-Khatib, 2008; Baron, 2000).

The basic electronic message schema consists of opening epistolary conventions, which include salutation (Dear Madam, Hi Sally!); a body, which contains an exact message, and closing epistolary conventions (thanks, sincerely, love, signature) (Herring, 1996). However, some emails may not contain personalized greetings or farewells if they are sent to members of an institution. Introductory greetings may be inappropriate in situations in which the responder is writing the email in response to a previously sent email. In cases where there is a delay in responding, the responder is more likely to include a greeting (Crystal, 2006). As for the writing style, it is observed that email writing is less formal in general, and structure-wise, email language is simpler and contains shorter and less complex sentences as well as more typographical errors compared to traditional means of writing (Al-Khatib, 2008). However, Herring (2002) claims that emails sent to professional discussion lists are observed to contain linguistically more complex sentences and few errors, which suggest that social and contextual “factors such as level of user education and purpose for communication” are determinant in the complexity of email language (p. 139). Crystal (2006) states that email portrays a variety of stylistic features and its users are to display style-wise consistency as they do in other written tools.

### Studies on Speech Acts in Emails

Emails as a form of natural social communication are useful sources for research on cross-cultural pragmatics (Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008). Despite this importance, the number of studies on the realization of speech acts in emails is limited. One major study was conducted by Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) who analyzed email requests from native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English to faculty. They investigated the requests for the positive or negative affect they produced on the faculty, for linguistic forms used, degree of imposition, and content. The results of the study indicated that non-native speakers used fewer mitigating strategies and mentioned their personal needs and time frames more often than native speakers, which may be interpreted as pragmatic failure on the part of the non-native speakers, as they did fail to use appropriate request strategies in English.

In a similar vein, Chen (2001) identified and compared request strategies in emails sent by Taiwanese and American graduate students to professors. Students' requests were divided into high-imposition and low-imposition requests. The analysis of the openings, closings, and requests showed that students composed their requests according to their perception of the power relation with the professor, familiarity with the professor, and the imposition level of the request. The study indicated no differences in the use of syntactic structures by Taiwanese and American students. However, differences were found in the use of internal modification strategies (e.g., past-tense modal verbs such as 'might', 'could', 'would'; modal adverbs such as 'possibly'; past progressive forms such as 'I was wondering...') to mitigate the force of the request. American students employed

more internal modification strategies than did the Taiwanese students who preferred to use external modification strategies (e.g., other speech acts that serve as supportive moves). This variation was explained by differences in students' perception of indirectness and politeness between the two cultures and the influence of Chinese culture on Taiwanese students' request strategies and email styles, similar to the finding of Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996).

Yang (2001) examined and compared the request patterns of Korean speakers of English and native speakers of English. The two groups differed in the directness level of their requests. Korean speakers of English were more indirect than were the native speakers and wrote off-topic contents before the request in their email, which showed that there was transfer effect from their native language to English. The issue of directness in the request emails sent by native and non-native speakers of English was also examined by Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) who analyzed the requests using Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) framework which emerged from their cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). Contrary to Yang's (2001) finding, both native and non-native students were observed to prefer more direct strategies when the imposition of request was lower and more indirect strategies when the imposition was higher. This, according to Biesenbach-Lucas (2005), suggests that both groups attend to situational factors when communicating their request goals via email.

In another study on requests in email interactions, Iimuro (2006) examines the speech act of requests in emails sent and received by Japanese speakers of English within the university context. The analysis revealed that email writers utilized written pauses (i.e., '...') and boundary markers (i.e., a line of space before

or after requests) to delay the dispreferred action and used reasons to justify their position and pursue a positive response.

Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) investigated the structure of request emails in English by American English speakers and Jordanian Arabic speakers. The researchers created a hypothetical situation in which the participants missed the deadline to participate in a competition and needed to send an email to the competition committee requesting another chance to apply. The emails were analyzed for the component moves, such as opening, identifying self, requesting, and referring to documents. Variation in emails by native and non-native speakers of English was found in the order and type of the moves. Americans tended to employ the request prior to the other moves while Jordanians delayed the request move. Americans used the moves *referring to documents* and *specifying means of further communication*, which were not used by Jordanians at all. In terms of the linguistic choices of the non-native speakers of English, it was found that their choices were not pragmatically appropriate when compared to the linguistic choices of the native speakers. This study provides insights into the structure of request emails in English as realized by native and non-native speakers and shows that it is important to raise non-native speakers' awareness as to the appropriate request email conventions in English.

Furcsa (2009) conducted an email discussion project between Hungarian learners of English and native speakers of English and investigated the development of students' intercultural awareness through the discussion of topics on cultures, languages, and pedagogical issues. The analysis of the emails indicated that email

communication increased cultural awareness among the participants. Similarly, Liaw (1996) found that email interaction with native speakers of English proved to enhance Taiwanese learners' cultural awareness as well as communicative competence.

The present study builds on previous studies by investigating (1) the types and frequencies of refusal strategies in emails from Turkish and American English speakers; (2) the relationship between the degree of social distance and strategy use; (3) the content of refusals; and (4) the differences in the use of strategies in emails and DCTs.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The aim of this study is twofold. First, it seeks to investigate the speech act of refusing email invitations in Turkish and American English. Second, the research aims to compare two data collection methods, namely natural email data and DCTs. The following questions guided the research:

1. Does the frequency of strategy use (use of direct strategies, indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals) differ between Turkish speakers (henceforth TSs) and American English speakers (henceforth AESs)?
2. Does the degree of social distance between the interlocutors affect the strategy use by TSs and AESs?
3. Do TSs and AESs differ in the content of refusals?
4. Does the type of data collection method affect the strategy use in American English and Turkish refusals?

This chapter provides information on the participants who participated in the study, the instruments employed to collect data and the data analysis procedures.

## Participants

The data were collected from sixty participants: 30 Turkish L1 speakers and 30 American English L1 speakers.

The TSs, who participated in this study, were between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Nine of them were male and 21 were female. They lived in Istanbul at the time of data collection although some of them were in their hometowns on vacation when the invitation emails were sent. Eight of them were instructors at different universities in Istanbul and 22 were graduate students studying at a state university. They spoke Turkish as their first language.

The ages of the AESs ranged from 20 to over 50 years. Of the 30 participants, seven were male and 23 were female. All of the Americans, who were originally from different parts of the USA, lived in Atlanta, Georgia at the time of the study, although some of them were out of town on vacation or for family reasons. Twenty were graduate students at a university in the United States and ten were lecturers working at the same university. They all spoke American English as their first language.

## Instrumentation

The data for the present study were collected using researcher-initiated (solicited) emails and discourse completion tasks (DCTs). Both types of collection elicited written speech act data. As Wolfson (1981) points out, “[t]hese patterns of speech



behavior are a part of the communicative competence of the native speaker, and must be observed in naturalistic settings in order for any analysis to be valid” (p. 7). By collecting data in naturalistic settings, researchers are able to find patterns of actual speech act use and understand how speech acts are realized (Golato, 2003).

Naturalistic data, however, is not without flaws. Collecting naturalistic data is disadvantageous in that speech behavior to be studied may occur rarely and unpredictably, which hinders not only gathering data from large samples but also generalizing the results even if large samples are found (Wolfson, 1986). However, as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005), this limitation can be overcome by setting up situations in which certain language events will recur. Another disadvantage is that the researcher, while observing natural interactions without intervening, may not have the opportunity to control variables such as status, social distance, and context (Cohen, 1996; Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Wolfson (1986), however, suggests that this problem can be overcome when the researcher examines the data carefully in order to see the effects of possible variables on the speech production of the interlocutors in a particular context.

As one single data source may not provide all the insights on speech act usage, Rose and Ono (1995) argue that different sources of data should be employed. It has been suggested that speech act data collected in natural situations can provide the researcher with necessary insights into speech patterns and, at the same time, lead him or her to designing an elicitation instrument, such as a DCT, which can supplement the natural data (Al-Issa, 1998). Therefore, in this study, in addition to the emails, a DCT was designed to mirror the situations in the natural email data.

Gathering data through the DCT can be advantageous in that factors such as age, the setting, the social distance between the interlocutors, and their status relative to each other can be controlled and manipulated easily. It elicits the speech act under study in a short time and yield large amounts of data quickly. Researchers do not need to wait for an act to occur naturally without any manipulation or elicitation (Beebe & Cummings, 1996). However, DCTs are not without problems. As argued by Nelson et al. (2002), “what people claim they would say in a hypothetical situation is not necessarily what they actually would say in a real situation” (p. 168). Speakers’ intuitions may not be reliable enough to understand the patterns and principles that affect speech behavior as speakers’ perceptions of their own speech have been shown to differ from their actual speech (Wolfson, 1986). Another caveat, as suggested by Wolfson, is that the short, decontextualized written scenarios may not necessarily reflect the actual discourse of an interaction. Although they might not reveal the patterns of genuine interactions, it is argued that they can still be used for initial classifications of semantic formulas and strategies employed in natural speech. In the current study, the DCT was employed in order to compare the elicited data with the natural data gathered through emails.

In using both natural and elicited methods of data collection, the researcher is able to study authentic Turkish and American English refusals in emails and also provide information on the reliability of the DCT as a data collection method.

## Emails

For the present study, emails were used to collect the natural data for the following reasons. First, emails have started to be used extensively in various domains of interaction: between friends, at educational and governmental institutions, and even between strangers; they represent current communication practices (Franch and Lorenza-Dus, 2008). Second, emails have become an important part of written discourse, which provides a good source for communication studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005). As Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) suggest, email serves pragmatic and social functions such as thanking people, soliciting advice, and requesting information. Our participants indicated that they would use emails for invitations. Forty-three percent of the Turkish participants and 70 percent of the American participants preferred email over other means of communication. Emails also show how people use the language considering their relationship with their interlocutors, and the format and style they should follow depending on the social dynamics (Barron, 2000). Finally, as Herring (2002) states, through emails “data from authentic interactions of a wide variety of types are available for analysis without the presence of the researcher biasing the data collection process” (p. 145). In this study, refusals collected via emails represented unbiased natural data from authentic interactions that were controlled from the researcher’s perspective, and spontaneous and natural from the respondent’s perspective.

### Discourse Completion Task

The second data collection instrument employed in the study was a DCT. A DCT consists of a number of items, each of which starts with a description of a situation and a blank space or a blank space followed by a response to the response of the participant in order to force an appropriate speech act. Respondents are asked to write what they would say if they were in the actual situation. DCTs have been the most commonly used method of conducting pragmatics-based research (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Because of the frequency of DCT use, it is important to know more about its reliability. In this study The DCT was used in addition to the email invitations in order to provide reliability information on the DCT as a data collection method.

### Data Collection Procedures

The instruments employed in the data collection process consisted of solicited e-mails, a demographic survey, and a DCT.

### Invitation Emails

Invitations are defined as “types of requests (e.g. asking someone to come to dinner), [in which] the inviter is usually attempting to be thoughtful and kind” (Nelson et al., 2002, p. 169). Invitations via email were sent to 50 TSs and 55 AESs. Each group received emails in their native language. Participants were invited to an event by the researcher and asked if they would like to attend. Among 50 TSs, 33 refused the

invitation and the other 17 did not respond. Of 55 AESs, 32 replied with a refusal, 6 replied with an apology for not replying back on time, and the rest chose not to reply at all. Three Turkish refusals and 2 American English refusals were discarded because the analysis of the demographic survey showed that those participants were bilinguals. Two months after they responded to the invitation emails, 30 TSs and 30 AESs who refused the invitations were provided with a survey packet which consisted of a Demographic Survey (see Appendix A) and a DCT (see Appendix B). The participants who agreed to take part in the study completed the survey package and returned it to the researcher via email.

As shown in Figure 1, the AESs were invited to a Thanksgiving dinner at the researcher's house. The TSs were invited to a New Year Eve's dinner (since Thanksgiving is not celebrated in Turkey) at the researcher's house. The researcher and both the TSs and AESs were either friends or acquaintances. Fifteen participants in each group were friends and 15 were acquaintances. Friends were the researcher's classmates who met each other socially outside of school. Acquaintances, on the other hand, were colleagues who met each other in departmental social gatherings.

The invitation emails were sent to both groups a day or two days before the event dates in order to ensure that all the participants already had other plans and would refuse the invitation.

<p>Invitation sent to TSs</p>	<p><i>Selamlar herkese,</i></p> <p><i>Eğer bir planınız yoksa yılbaşı akşamı sizleri evimde misafir etmek istiyorum. Hem yılbaşını hem de bir dönemin bitişini hep birlikte kutlayalım. Hepinizi bekliyorum. Gelip gelemeyeceğinizi bana e-posta ile haber vererseniz çok sevinirim. Cevaplarınızı bekliyorum.</i></p> <p><i>Görüşmek üzere,</i> <i>Emine</i></p> <p>Hello everyone, If you don't have any plans for the New Year's, I would like to invite you to my apartment to celebrate both the New Year's and the end of the semester. I'm looking forward to seeing you all. I would love it if you let me know whether you are coming or not. I'm waiting for your replies.</p> <p>See you soon, Emine</p>
<p>Invitation sent to AESs</p>	<p>Hello everyone,</p> <p>I hope you are enjoying your break. I am having Thanksgiving dinner at my apartment tomorrow. If you do not have any plans for tomorrow, I would really love it if you can join us. If you cannot, have a wonderful Thanksgiving. Either way, I would really appreciate it if you would reply and let me know.</p> <p>Place: Emine's Apartment: 100 Midtown 10th Street N.W. Apt# 509 Time: Thanksgiving Day, 7:00 pm</p> <p>Happy Thanksgiving,</p> <p>Emine</p>

Figure 1. Invitation emails sent to TSs and AESs

### Demographic Survey

The Demographic Survey was designed to ensure that the participants came from similar education and language backgrounds. In the first part of the survey the participants provided basic information such as age, sex, level of education, profession, and first language (mentioned in detail in section: *Participants*). In the second part of the survey they indicated their preference for communication types

(telephone, email, and face-to-face) and when or in what types of situations they use them.

As for their preference for the means of communication, 43 percent of the TSs reported that they mostly preferred email over telephone and face-to-face communication. They stated that they use email to organize a get-together, invite friends to movies or for dinner, to contact a number of people at the same time, and to share news and events. Other situations included academic matters like contacting professors, colleagues, and students, and getting updates from email lists. The TSs who preferred other means of communication also gave similar reasons for using email in their daily and professional life.

Seventy percent of the AESs indicated that email was their preferred means of communication in most of their daily and professional life. This preference included situations like organizing formal or informal events, inviting friends to social activities, sharing information; and making requests; thus, they utilized emails for both social and professional reasons.

### Discourse Completion Task

The six situations in Turkish (TR) and American English (AE) versions of the DCT are listed in Table 1. In two of the situations, the participants were asked to reply to an invitation email from a friend or an acquaintance. Two situations included one refusal and one acceptance via telephone, and the other two situations included one refusal and one acceptance in face-to-face interaction. Situations that included

telephone conversations and face-to-face communication acted as distracters. The variable in these scenarios was social distance. The situations involved either the participant and a friend, or the participant and an acquaintance. In three situations, the interlocutors were friends, and in the other three, they were acquaintances. The situations written to elicit refusals to email invitations were created by the researcher based on the real email exchanges between the researcher and the participants (i.e., situations 1 and 3).

Table 1. The Situations in the DCT

Situations	TR version	AE version
1. Refusal of invitation sent by a friend via email	New Year's Eve dinner	Thanksgiving dinner
2. * Refusal of invitation given by a friend in person	Dinner party	Dinner party
3. Refusal of invitation sent by an acquaintance via email	New Year's Eve dinner	Thanksgiving dinner
4. * Acceptance of invitation given by a friend via telephone	Evening gathering	Evening gathering
5. * Refusal of invitation given by an acquaintance via telephone	Farewell party	Farewell party
6. * Acceptance of invitation given by an acquaintance in person	Birthday celebration	Birthday celebration

\*Distracter

Each prompt included a short description of the situation, the social distance (friend vs. acquaintance), and a blank space for participants to provide responses. A possible response to participants was not written in the DCT so as not limit their responses. The participants were asked to write down exactly what they would write as a response to the invitations made in the six different situations. They were not



instructed to refuse in order not to bias their choice of responses. The prompts were listed in random order.

Item 1 is given below as an example:

1. One of your friends sends an email to you and invites you to Thanksgiving dinner at his/her apartment. However, you are unable to attend.

You reply and say:

The respondents were informed that their emails and DCTs would be stored for the purposes of this study only and that no personal information would be shared with others and were asked for their consent. They gave the permission that the emails or parts of the emails and DCT replies could be quoted.

To ensure the linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness of the emails and the DCT that were sent to TSs, the email invitations and situations in the DCT were assessed by two native speakers of Turkish. The American English emails and the DCT were also assessed by two native speakers of American English for the linguistic and pragmatic appropriateness of the situations. The Turkish version of the DCT and the English version were equivalent to each other in terms of the number of the situations and the level of social distance between the interlocutors. The only difference was the situation of the invitation emails. For instance, one email invitation that was sent to AESs was an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner, which would not be appropriate in the Turkish context. Thus, TSs were invited to a New

Year's Eve dinner party instead of Thanksgiving dinner in the situations created for the Turkish DCT.

## Data Analysis

### Data Coding and Intercoder Reliability

The 60 refusals collected via emails and 120 refusals collected via the DCT from both TSs and AESs were analyzed as consisting of a set of strategies. A strategy is defined as “a verbal move [a written move in this study], such as a statement of regret or reason, that is used as a part of the total act of refusing” (Nelson et al., 2002, p. 170). In order to determine the strategies typically used in emails by TSs and AESs, the first step was to look into the internal organization of the emails. Herring's (1996) study on text-based CMC identifies three basic parts that are commonly found in emails: an opening, a body, and a closing. Based on her classification, the refusal emails were first divided into three parts: opening, body, and closing. The second step was to segment each part into moves that were named following the functions they performed. The opening part contained greetings, and the closing part contained statements of gratitude or signatures. It was the body part that consisted of a refusal or a refusal sequence and adjuncts to refusals. Thus, the last step was to divide the refusal sequences into moves and to code each move as a pragmatic strategy. For example, the American English refusal below to a Halloween party invitation (sent by the researcher prior to the study's actual invitation emails) was first divided into six moves:

- (1) (i) Oh [Inviter's name],
- (ii) thank you for inviting me...
- (iii) I have to work tonight
- (iv) and I'm not sure what time I'll get off!
- (v) If I could go I would love to.
- (vi) [Invitee's name]

Second, each move was coded following the refusal taxonomy developed by Beebe et al. (1990):

- (2) (i) hi [Inviter's name], (Opening-greeting)
- (ii) thank you for inviting me...(Body-gratitude/appreciation)
- (iii) I have to work tonight (reason)
- (iv) and I'm not sure what time I'll get off! (reason)
- (v) If I could go I would love to. (willingness)
- (vi) [Invitee's name] (Closing-signature)

The response above consists of three moves: a greeting (line i), a refusal to the invitation (lines ii-v), and a closing move (line vi). The refusal sequence starts with an expression of gratitude followed by reasons and concludes with a statement of willingness. As the focus of this study is refusal sequences, the opening and closing parts of the emails were not included in the analysis of the data. They were coded to see in what part of the emails the refusals were expressed.

While segmenting the refusals into moves and coding them, it was observed that some categories, such as *attempt to persuade the interlocutor* and *statement of principle*, which were listed in Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy, were not reflected in the data. Thus, those categories were dropped from the classification scheme. The

two sub-strategies under the direct refusal, namely, performative (e.g., I refuse.) and non-performative statement *no*, were also omitted from the scheme as they did not appear in the data. The non-performative statement *negative ability* was the only direct refusal strategy observed in the data; therefore, it was kept in the scheme. In addition, the strategies under the “nonverbal avoidance” category in the original taxonomy were also omitted from the scheme as the data for the present study were collected through written media. The final classification scheme that emerged from the Turkish and American English data is presented in Figure 2.

1. Opening
  - 1.1 Greeting
2. Refusal sequence
  - 2.1 Direct Refusal - Negative ability [DR]
  - 2.2 Indirect Refusals [IR]
    - Wish
    - Statement of regret/apology
    - Reason
    - Statement of alternative/promise of compensation
    - Set condition for past acceptance
  - 2.3 Adjuncts [A]
    - Statement of positive opinion/willingness
    - Gratitude/appreciation
    - Statement of well-wishing/hope
3. Closing
  - 3.1 Signature

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Figure 2: Email organization: Classification of refusal strategies<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A modified version of the refusal taxonomy developed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The emails were first divided into three main parts as suggested by Herring (1996) and then the moves in the body part were coded based on the adapted version of Beebe et al.'s classification scheme.

The Turkish data were coded by the researcher and a trained native-Turkish speaking graduate research assistant to ensure inter-coder reliability. The American English data were coded by the researcher and a native speaker of English, who holds a PhD with a specialization in textual analysis. The coders coded all the strategies independently. The intercoder reliability between the Turkish coder and the researcher was 99 per cent for the Turkish data and for the American English data, it was 97 per cent.

### Refusal Strategies

This section provides a description of the refusal strategies employed in the refusal emails by the TSs and AESs. The coders coded the refusals according to those strategies. Corresponding examples from the data are also given.

#### Direct refusal – Negative ability

Direct refusals are realized by employing “strategies that convey an explicit message of the refusal response” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008, p. 73). Beebe et al. (1990) categorize direct refusals into three different subcategories as *performatives* (e.g., I refuse...), *non-performatives* (e.g., No), and *negative willingness/ability* (e.g., I can’t). Nelson et al. (2002) and Felix-Brasdefer (2008) collapsed those three categories into one: direct refusal. In this study, as neither a *performative* nor a flat *no* was used in refusing the invitations, only the *negative ability* (hereafter referred to as *direct refusal*) strategy was included in the classification scheme.

- (3) *O yüzden maalesef gelemiyorum.*  
(‘So unfortunately I can’t come.’)  
(4) I’m sorry i won’t be able to make it out tonight

### Indirect refusals

Indirect verbal style is defined as “verbal messages that camouflage and conceal speakers’ true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation” (Gudykunst & TingToomey, 1988, p. 100). In the present study, indirectness was achieved by means of five different strategies.

### Statement of regret/apology

Statements of regret often precede the direct refusals and soften the negative effects of the refusal statement. In the present study, ‘kusura bakma’ (‘sorry about that’) was the most commonly used statement of apology/regret in the Turkish refusals, and ‘I’m sorry’ was the frequently observed statement in American English refusals. Examples of these are as follows in (5-6):

- (5) *Tekrar teşekkür ederim canım benim, kusura bakma.*  
(Thanks again my dear, sorry)  
(6) I’m sorry I won’t be able to make it out tonight

### Wish

The participant, by employing the wish strategy, conveys his wish to accept an invitation. As Felix-Brasdefer (2008) state, “it is often employed as a polite refusal

response to express supportive facework and to soften the negative effects of a direct refusal” (p. 78). Below are the examples of this strategy:

- (7) *Keşke gelebilseydim canım.*  
(I wish I could come, my dear)
- (8) *I wish I could join you on Thanksgiving, but...*

### Reason

Reason strategy is used to refuse an invitation indirectly. By providing reasons as to why the individuals cannot comply with an invitation, they intend to communicate the fact that they would accept it if they did not have those reasons. Reasons can be used alone without a direct refusal or followed or preceded by a direct refusal or a statement of willingness, as shown in the following examples:

- (9) *Canım çok gelmek isterdim ama misafirim gelecek*  
(Oh dear, I would love to come but I’m expecting some guests)
- (10) *Ben pazar günü taksimde bir panelde olacağımdan gelemiyorum*  
(Since I’m going to be in Taksim on Sunday I can’t come)
- (11) *I’m staying up north with my parents.*
- (12) *I would love to come, but I’ll be at my parents’ house so I won’t be able to.*

### Statement of alternative/promise of compensation

By using this strategy, the individual who has already refused the invitation makes promises for future acceptance so as not to offend the interlocutor.

- (13) *Başka zaman bi kahve içmeye gelirim*  
(I would come later for a coffee)
- (14) *Başka sefere ben de katılırım artık*  
(I would join you next time)

### Set condition for past acceptance

The individual sets a hypothetical condition under which he or she would have accepted the invitation and thus refuses the invitation indirectly.

- (15) Pazartesi sabah gelio olmasaydim hayatta kaçırmazdım  
(I wouldn't miss it if I were not coming back on Monday morning)  
(16) Daha evvel haberim olsaydı katılırdım gercekten  
(I would really join you if I had known it earlier)

### Adjuncts to refusals

Beebe et al. (1990) define adjuncts as “preliminary remarks that could not stand alone and function as refusals” (p. 57). They would sound like an acceptance if they were used without direct or indirect refusals. Thus, adjuncts precede or follow direct or indirect refusals and function “as external modifications to the refusal head act” (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008, p.79). They are used in refusals in order to express involvement with the interlocutor.

### Statement of positive opinion/willingness

Positive expressions are used before or after a direct or an indirect refusal so as to have harmony with the interlocutor (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008). Expressions of willingness and any positive comment observed in the data were put under this category. Examples are given below:

- (17) Çok güzel ve eğlenceli bir davet olacağı benziyor.  
(It looks like it is going to be a very fun gathering.)  
(18) Düşünmen yeter.



- (You are so thoughtful.)  
(19) Gelmeyi çok isterim fakat...  
(I would love to come but)  
(20) You are very kind.  
(21) It really means a lot!  
(22) I would love to join you, but...

#### Gratitude/appreciation

By using this strategy, the participant expresses his/her gratitude while refusing an invitation. It may precede or follow the direct or indirect refusals, as shown in the following examples:

- (23) Davetin için teşekkür ederim.  
(Thank you for your invitation.)  
(24) Çok teşekkür ederim düşünüp çağırdığın için  
(Thank you very much for thinking to invite me)  
(25) Thanks X, for including me in your gracious invitation.  
(26) Thanks for thinking to invite me.

#### Statement of well-wishing/hope

Expressions of well-wishing and hope occurred in most of the refusal emails. Thus, a new subcategory under adjuncts was included. These expressions were mostly employed after the refusal acts; thus, they functioned as a means of closing the refusal sequence with positive statements, as shown in examples from (27) to (30):

- (27) İyi bir akşam geçirmenizi dilerim  
(I hope you have a nice evening)  
(28) Size bol bol eğlenceler☺  
(Hope you have a lot of fun)  
(29) Enjoy the glorious American holiday of gluttony  
(30) I hope you eat a lot of pumpkin stuff for me

## Data Analysis

Following the coding of the data for strategies based on the adapted version of the classification scheme developed by Beebe et al. (1990), the data were further coded for the specificity of the reasons employed while refusing the invitations. The total number of strategies used in the data was obtained and a *t*-test was used to test for any significant differences between TSs and AESs in the total use of strategies. Descriptive statistics were run in order to determine the frequency of each strategy. In order to determine whether there were any significant differences in their frequencies between the two languages, the data were first cross-tabulated to see if its distribution would allow for the Chi-square difference test. The crosstabs analysis showed that five of the categories had less than five expected frequencies. In addition, the strategy 'set condition for past acceptance' was not used by AESs at all, and the strategy 'reason' and 'positive opinion' were employed more than once by both groups. Thus, as the Chi-square analysis was found not to be appropriate, the data were subjected to repeated measures ANOVA test. The alpha level was set at .05.

In order to determine whether the degree of social distance between the interlocutors affects strategy use, independent samples *t*-test was used. The types of reasons were analyzed to investigate whether the content of refusals differ in friends' refusals and acquaintances' refusals, and across languages. While coding the data, 'I already have plans' and 'I'll be at my parents' house' were both categorized as reasons; however, it is observed that they differ in the degree of specificity and persuasiveness as suggested by Beebe et al. (1990).

In order to examine whether the type of data collection method affects the strategy use, the number of strategies in the emails was compared with the number of strategies in the DCTs to see if the DCT refusals were similar to email refusals. Independent-samples *t*-test was run for any statistical differences.

In the following chapter, the results and the discussion of the findings of the study will be reported according to the frequency of strategy use, the effect of social distance, the content of refusals, and the effect of data collection method.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results were analyzed for significant differences in the frequency of strategy use, effect of social distance, content of refusals, and comparison of data collection methods.

#### Frequency of Refusal Strategies

In order to see the overall strategy use by Turkish speakers (TSs) and American-English speakers (AESs), the means of total strategies used in emails by TSs and AESs were compared.

On average, the TSs ( $M = 4.67$ ) used substantially more refusal strategies than did the AESs ( $M = 3.93$ ). This difference was found to be statistically significant on the basis of the  $t$ -test,  $t(58) = 2.32, p < .05$ . Further analysis was conducted in order to answer the first research question, i.e. does the frequency of strategy use (use of direct refusals, and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals) differ between TSs and AESs? The number of total direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals employed by the TSs and AESs were counted and compared using independent samples  $t$ -tests.

As can be seen in Table 2, the TS group and the AES group were observed to use direct refusals with similar frequencies. Thus, no statistically significant difference in the use of direct refusals between the two groups was detected. The TS group ( $M = 2.43$ ) utilized significantly more indirect refusals (e.g. reason, alternative) than did the AES group ( $M = 1.27$ ) on the basis of the t-test,  $t(58) = 5.11$ ,  $p < .05$ . When the mean scores for the use of adjuncts by the two groups were compared, it was found that the TS group ( $M = 1.73$ ) employed fewer adjuncts (i.e. positive opinion, well-wishing/hope) than did the AE group ( $M = 2.20$ ). However, the difference was not found to be statistically significant.

Table 2. Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviations of Total Direct Refusals, Indirect Refusals and Adjuncts Used in Emails

Strategy	Statistic	Subjects		
		TSs (N = 30)	AESs (N = 30)	t value
Direct refusals	Frequency	15	14	$p > .05$
	Mean	.50	.47	
	SD	0.51	0.51	
Indirect refusals	Frequency	73	38	$p < .05$
	Mean	2.43	1.27	
	SD	0.94	0.83	
Adjuncts to refusals	Frequency	50	66	$p > .05$
	Mean	1.73	2.20	
	SD	1.01	0.96	

Following are typical examples of Turkish (TR) and American English (AE) refusals, which consist of direct strategies, indirect strategies, and adjuncts.

- (1) *ben ankaradayım* ([IR] reason)  
(I am in Ankara.)  
*haftaya gelicem* ([IR] reason)  
(I will be back next week.)  
*geleminiyorum malesef* ([DR]direct refusal)  
(I can't come unfortunately.)  
*size iyi eğlenceler* ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
(You have fun.)  
*ama görüşürüz artık bi dahakine* ([IR] alternative/promise of compensation)  
(TS6)  
(See you next time.)
- (2) Hi [Inviter's name], (greeting)  
Thanks for the invite! ([A] gratitude)  
I'm afraid I can't make it ([DR] direct refusal)  
but I hope you all have a great time! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
Cheers, [Invitee's name] (closing) (AES16)

Table 3 shows the frequencies of each individual strategy employed in the emails by the two groups. As reflected in the table, while the TS group employed the *wish*, *reason*, *alternative/promise of compensation*, and *set condition for past acceptance* more than the AES group, the AES group utilized *gratitude* and *well-wishing/hope* strategies more in refusing invitations.

Table 3. Frequencies of Strategies Used in Emails

Coding Categories	TR		AE		Total	
	n	%	N	%	N	%
Direct refusal	15	10.9	14	11.9	29	11.13
Subtotal – Direct	15	10.9	14	11.9	29	11.13
Regret/apology	6	4.3	7	5.9	13	5.1
Wish	8	5.8	3	2.5	11	4.3
Reason	41	29.7	27	22.9	68	26.6
Alternative/promise of compensation	14	10.1	1	0.8	15	5.9
Set condition for past acceptance	4	2.9	0	0	4	1.6
Subtotal – Indirect	73	52.9	38	32.2	111	43.4
Positive opinion/willingness	14	10.1	13	11.0	27	10.5
Gratitude	13	9.4	22	18.6	35	13.7
Well-wishing/hope	23	16.7	31	26.3	54	21.1
Subtotal – Adjuncts	50	36.2	66	55.9	116	45.3
Total Results	138	100	118	100	256	100

A repeated-measures ANOVA test was performed on refusal strategies used by the two groups. The language groups were examined as a between-subjects factor.

Mauchly's test showed that the assumption of sphericity has been violated, which means that the variances of the differences between the strategies were significantly different. Since the assumption of sphericity was not met, Greenhouse-Geisser corrected degrees of freedom were used.

The results showed a significant main effect of the Strategy,  $F(5.35, 310.54) = 28.13$ ,  $p < .05$ . This significant effect means that when we ignore the effect of the

language group, the mean frequency of overall strategy use significantly differs.

Analysis of individual means for the strategies showed that the mean was highest for reason ( $M = 1.13$ ); that is, the participants used this strategy significantly more than the others.

There was also a significant main effect of language group,  $F(1, 58) = 5.40, p < .05$ ; and a significant Strategy x Language Group interaction,  $F(5.35, 310.54) = 3.64, p < .05$ . As the main effect and interaction show, language groups differed significantly in their frequencies of refusal strategies. The TS group ( $M = .519$ ) used more strategies than did the AES group ( $M = .437$ ).

An interaction graph plotted to interpret the interaction between the strategy use and the language group showed that *direct refusal*, *regret/apology*, and *positive opinion* were utilized in similar frequencies by both groups; however, other strategies seemed to be used with different frequencies. To determine the nature of differences in the frequencies of strategies between the two groups, independent samples *t* tests were used (alpha level set at .05). When they were compared across the two language groups, *reason* and *alternative/promise of compensation* were found to be significantly more frequently used by the TSs than the AESs. The *t*-test showed significant differences for two strategies: *reason* and *alternative/promise of compensation* which were employed significantly more by the TSs.

Overall, the analysis of the data showed that in refusal emails, one direct strategy, five indirect strategies, and three adjuncts to refusals were used. In the following sections, each strategy will be examined in more detail with relevant examples from the data.



### Frequency of Direct Refusal

Direct refusal occurred at similar frequencies in both Turkish and American English data. It was found in 15 of the Turkish emails and 14 of the American English emails. In Turkish it was realized with the addition of the suffix, -mA, negative modal marker, to the verb as in *gelemiyorum* (I'm not able to come) or *gelemeyeceğim* (I won't be able to come) and in English with the use of a negative modal verb as in "I can't make it" or "I won't be able to come". The analysis of the data showed that direct refusals were always used with either at least another indirect refusal strategy or adjuncts. The following italicized sentences are examples of this strategy from Turkish (3) and American English (4) data:

- (3) [Inviter's name + diminutive suffix -ciğim/-cim], (greeting)  
(Dear [Inviter's name],)  
*Ben bu akşam gelemiyorum.* ([DR] direct refusal)  
(I am not able to come tonight)  
Orada olmayı çok isterdim ([IR] wish)  
(I wish I could come)  
fakat benim ve Erhan'in yarına yetistirmemiz gereken işler var ([IR] reason)  
(but Erhan and I have things to do for tomorrow)  
Sizlere iyi eğlenceler. ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
(You have fun)  
[Invitee's name] (closing) (TS 18)
- (4) Hi [Inviter's name] (greeting)  
Thank you so much for the invitation! ([A] gratitude)  
My parents are coming down from Indianapolis today, though, ([IR] reason)  
*so I can't make it.* ([DR] direct refusal)  
I hope you have a great time! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
See you in the office (closing)  
[Invitee's name] (closing) (AES 24)

As can be seen in the examples, both participants used other strategies such as *wish*, *reason*, and *well-wishing/hope* with the *direct refusal*. However, in this particular

example, the order of their strategies was different. After his greeting, the TS uttered a *direct refusal* which was followed by *wish*, *reason*, and *well-wishing/hope* while the AES used *direct refusal* after expressing his *gratitude* and *reason*. The pattern used by the TS was not observed by the other TSs who expressed *direct refusal* after an expression of *positive opinion*, *gratitude*, or a *reason*, so the difference might be due to individual differences rather than cultural ones. Similarly, Bulut (2000) found that Turkish speakers generally use a *positive opinion* and a *reason* in refusing an invitation from an equal status person and do not use *direct refusal* in the first place in their refusals.

### Types and Frequencies of Indirect Strategies

In this section, indirect strategies employed by both groups are examined in more detail.

#### Statement of Regret/Apology

Statement of *regret/apology* was used by the TSs and AESs with almost equal frequency (TR: n = 6, AE: n = 7). It was the second most common indirect strategy used by the AESs and the fourth strategy used by the TSs. Regret was often realized in Turkish with the formulaic phrase *maalesef* to mean ‘unfortunately’ and apology with the phrase *kusura bakma* which means ‘excuse me’, ‘sorry’ or ‘I am sorry to say that’. Americans expressed *regret/apology* with the statement ‘I’m sorry’. Turkish (5) and American English (6) examples of *regret/apology* are as follows:

- (5) ben izmirdeyim ([IR] reason)  
 (I am in Izmir)  
 sali gelmeyi planliyorum istanbula...([IR] reason)  
 (I am planning to come to Istanbul on Tuesday)  
 o yuzden gelemiyorum ([DR] direct refusal)  
 (So I am not able to come)  
*maalesef* ([IR] regret/apology)  
 (unfortunately)  
 baska zaman bi kahve icmeye gelirim ([IR] alternative/promise of compensation)  
 (I will come for coffee another time)  
 dusunmen yeter Y'cim ([A] positive opinion)  
 (thanks for thinking of me)  
 size iyi eglenceler ([A] well-wishing/hope) (TS4)  
 (you have fun)
- (6) Hi [Inviter's name]! (greeting)  
*I'm sorry* ([IR] regret/apology)  
 i won't be able to make it out tonight, ([DR] direct refusal)  
 I am staying up north with my parents ([IR] reason)  
 because they are in the middle of moving. ([IR] reason)  
 Have fun! (well-wishing/hope) (AES1)

### Wish

Eight statements of *wish* were employed by the TS group while only 3 were utilized by the AES group. This difference was not found to be statistically significant on the basis of *t*-test. In the following examples, a TS (7) and an AES (8) refused the invitation by conveying their wish to accept it.

- (7) selam [Inviter's name], (greeting)  
 (Hi [Inviter's name],)  
*gelmeyi cok isterdim yaa..* ([IR] wish)  
 (I wish I could come.)  
 hala yurt dıřındayım.([IR] reason)  
 (I'm still abroad)  
 mart basindan da once donemeyecegim.. ([IR] reason)  
 (and I won't be able to come back before early March)  
 size iyi eglencelerrrr! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
 (You have fun!)
- [Invitee's name] (closing) (TS2)

- (8) My evil restaurant is going to be open and everyone is working..([IR] reason)  
    *I wish I could come.* ([IR] wish)  
    Enjoy the glorious American holiday of gluttony! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
    (AES3)

The strategy *wish* did not occur in Bulut's (2000) Turkish data and in Nelson et al.'s (2002) American English data. However, in the present study a considerable amount of wishes were found in Turkish refusals and fewer wishes in American English. This result is in line with Chang's (2009) study which showed that Chinese speakers employed the *wish* strategy significantly more than did the American English speakers. This suggests that in order to soften their refusals both Turkish and Chinese speakers prefer to use this strategy more than do American speakers.

### Reason

*Reason* was the most frequent indirect refusal strategy used by both groups. This strategy was employed in addition to a direct strategy in some emails in order to soften the act of refusing. Fifteen Turkish and 16 American English emails consisted primarily of reasons which were not preceded or followed by a *direct refusal*, but supported with other indirect strategies or adjuncts. The TSs (n = 41) used the strategy more than did the AESs (n = 27). The difference was statistically significant on the basis of *t*-test,  $t(58) = 3.10, p < .05$ . Cross-cultural differences were found in the use of this strategy. In their refusal emails, most TSs elaborated their *reasons* to show their concern for the interlocutor while the AESs often preferred not to give further explanations to their reasons, as illustrated by the examples below.

(9) ay tatlım çok çok teşekkürler teklif için. ([A] gratitude)  
 (thanks a lot for the invite, sweetie.)  
*burçin'e sözüüm var* ([IR] reason)  
 (I promised Burçin)  
*ona gidiyorum* ([IR] reason)  
 (I'm going to her place)  
 yoksam çalardım kapını. ([IR] set condition for past acceptance)  
 (otherwise I would knock on your door.)  
 iyi seneler canım! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
 (Happy New Year, my dear!)  
 çok çok öperim seniiiiii (closing)  
 (kisses)  
 [Invitee's name]. (closing) (TS9)

(10) I'd love to go ([A] positive opinion/willingness)  
*but I'm in NY* ([IR] reason)  
 thank you [Inviter's name]. ([A] gratitude)  
 Have a happy thanksgiving! ([A] well-wishing/hope) (AES4)

Bulut (2000) found that in oral role-plays only Turkish speakers elaborated their reasons by providing explanations as in the above example “*burçin'e sözüüm var*” (I promised Burçin) “*ona gidiyorum*” (I’m going to her place). He found this elaboration neither in the written DCT data nor in the American English data. In the present study, however, giving more than one reason was observed in most of the Turkish refusal emails. Turkish speakers might have thought that the more reasons they give, the less harm their refusal does to the inviter’s face.

#### Statement of Alternative/Promise of Compensation

This strategy was only found once in the American data while 14 instances were found in the Turkish data. The difference in the frequencies of *alternative/promise of compensation* proved to be statistically significant according to the results of a *t*-test, ( $t(58) = 4.40, p < .05$ ).

- (11) [Inviter's name + diminutive suffix –ciğim/-cim] (greeting)  
 (Dear Y)  
 ben pazar günü taksimde bir panelde olacağımdan ([IR] reason)  
 (Since I will be in a panel on Sunday in Taksim)  
 gelemiyorum, ([DR] direct refusal)  
 (I'm not able to come)  
*ama başka zaman gelirim muhakkak* ([IR] alternative/promise of compensation)  
 (but I will come another time for sure)  
 öpüyorum çok (closing) (TS3)  
 (kisses)
- (12) thanks so much for the invitation, Y ([A] gratitude)  
 we are in Connecticut with my brothers. ([IR] reason)  
*let's meet up when we get back!* ([IR] alternative/promise of compensation)  
 happy thanksgiving, ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
 [Invitee's name] (closing) (AES22)

This strategy was used to repair the possible damage which may be caused by the refusal itself. By offering an alternative to meet or promise to comply with the invitation for future, the speaker aims not to offend the inviter. The TSs used this strategy more frequently than did the AESs. However, this result does not support that of Bulut (2000), who found that Americans used this strategy when refusing an invitation from a lower-status person while Turkish speakers did not use it at all. Similarly, the finding does not support Felix-Brasdefer's (2008) claim that statement of alternative is often expressed in a typical American refusal. However, in this study only one instance of the strategy was found in the American English data. This might be due to the different data collection methods employed in these three studies. The two studies mentioned above collected data through role-plays while this study collected natural emails. Thus, we cannot be sure whether the differences in the findings are due to the actual differences in participants' behavior or the different data collection methods.

### Set Condition for Past Acceptance

The least frequently used strategy by the TS group ( $n = 4$ ) was setting condition for past acceptance which was not preferred by the AES group. Example of this strategy is shown in (13):

- (13) [Inviter's name + diminutive suffix –*ciğim/-cim*] canm, (greeting)  
(Dear [Inviter's name], my dear,)  
pazar yokum ben yaaa ([IR] reason)  
(I'm not in town on Sunday)  
*pazartesi sabah gelio olmasaydim hayatta kacirmazdim ama* ([IR] set condition)  
(I wouldn't miss it if I were not coming back on Monday morning)  
cok tesekkur ediorm ve ([A] gratitude)  
(thank you very much and)  
ii eglenceler diliorm size! ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
(I wish you have fun!)  
[Invitee's name] (closing) (TS1)

The TSs used this strategy along with other indirect refusal strategies and adjuncts. By setting condition for past acceptance, the speakers further justify their reason for not complying with the invitation.

### Types and Frequencies of Adjuncts

#### Statement of Positive Opinion/Willingness

Positive opinion strategy had similar frequencies of usage in each group's data. The TSs employed positive opinion with a slightly higher frequency than did the AESs and this small difference was not found statistically significant when the data were subjected to a *t*-test. Examples of this strategy are as follows:

- (14) selam [Inviter's name] (greeting)  
 (Hi [Inviter's name])  
*ya çok hoş fikir de* ([A] positive opinion)  
 (It is a good idea)  
 bu yılbaşı ailecenek babamın yanına trabzona gidecekmışız yılbaşında.  
 ([IR] reason)  
 (we will go to Trabzon to see my father this New Year's Eve)  
 şimdiden iyi seneler ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
 (Happy New Year) (TS15)
- (15) [Inviter's name], (greeting)  
*are so thoughtful to organize this.* ([A] positive opinion)  
 I wish I could come ([IR] wish)  
 but my husband and I have plans for Friday night. ([IR] reason)  
 Thank you so much for doing this! ([A] gratitude)  
 [Invitee's name] (closing) (AES20)

The result is also in line with that of Bulut (2000) who found that Turkish speakers, when refusing an invitation from an equal-status person, start with an adjunct - *positive opinion*- followed by an *indirect refusal* or *direct refusal*. As for the American English speakers, Felix-Brasdefer (2008) showed that they often prefer to use positive opinion prior to their reasons in both formal and informal situations.

### Gratitude/Appreciation

AESs (n = 22) employed this strategy more often than did TSs (n = 13), however, this difference proved not to be statistically significant on the basis of a *t*- test.

Examples are as follows:

- (16) Canım bu sene baya bi erken plan yapıp İzmirdeki arkadaşlarımla kutlama ayarladım.. ([IR] reason)  
 (My dear, I made plans to celebrate it with my friends in Izmir.)  
 İzmirde olucam yani.. ([IR] reason)  
 (I mean I will be in Izmir)  
*teşekkürler davetin için,* ([A] gratitude)  
 (thanks for your invitation)



seneye beraber kutlayalım ([IR] alternative/promise of compensation)  
(let's celebrate it together next year)  
iyi eğlenceler size... ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
(you have fun) (TS14)

(17) Dear [Inviter's name], (greeting)  
I'm so sorry, ([IR] regret/apology)  
but I have other plans for tomorrow afternoon and evening. ([IR] reason)  
*Thank you for thinking of me, though*, ([A] gratitude)  
and I hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving and dinner. ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
I'm thankful to have you as a friend! ([A] positive opinion)  
[Invitee's name] (closing) (AES28)

### Statement of Well-wishing/Hope

Of all the strategies, expression of *well-wishing/hope* was the second most commonly used strategy by both groups. However, AESs (n = 31) utilized this strategy more frequently than did TSs (n = 23). The results of the *t*-test showed that the difference was not a statistically significant one. Following are examples of the usage of this strategy.

(18) [Inviter's name + diminutive suffix -ciğim/-cim] (greeting)  
(Dear [Inviter's name])  
davetin için çok teşekkürler, ([A] gratitude)  
(Thanks for your invitation,)  
ama bu akşam bir aile toplantımız var, ([IR] reason)  
(but we have a family gathering tonight,)  
o yüzden ben gelemeyeceğim canım, ([DR] direct refusal)  
(so I won't be able to come, my dear)  
*size iyi eğlenceler* ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
(You have fun) (TS21)

(19) Thank you for the invite ([A] gratitude)  
but I'm not going to be able to make it. ([DR] direct refusal)  
*Have a good one!* ([A] well-wishing/hope)  
[Invitee's name] (closing) (AES5)

In general, it has been observed that while TSs and AESs are likely to employ direct refusals at similar frequencies while they tend to differ in their use of indirect refusals and adjuncts. The Turkish participants in this study utilized more indirect refusals than did the American participants and the American participants used more adjuncts than did the Turkish participants. TSs mostly prefer to negotiate a refusal by employing statements of *positive opinion*, *reason*, and *alternative/promise of compensation*; and end their refusal email using expressions of *well-wishing/hope*. In refusing an invitation, AES tend to use *regret/apology*, *reason*, *gratitude*, and *well-wishing* as well as *gratitude*. Overall, both groups employed these strategies along with a direct refusal or a reason in order to soften the negative effects of the act of refusing on the inviter. As will be shown in the following section, strategy use in refusal emails varied depending on the level of social distance between the inviter and the participants. The next section presents the frequencies of these strategies employed when responding to a friend's invitation and an acquaintance's invitation.

### Strategy Use Relative to Social Distance

In order to answer the second research question, "Does the degree of social distance between the interlocutors affect the strategy use by Turkish speakers and American English speakers?", descriptive statistics were calculated for each refusal context: refusal to a friend's invitation and refusal to an acquaintance's invitation. The number of strategies used by the TSs and AESs when refusing friends and acquaintances is shown in Table 4 below. As indicated in the table, the TSs and AESs varied their refusal strategies depending on their relationship to the inviter, but

the apparent differences were small. For example, the TSs employed the *direct refusal* more when refusing an invitation from an acquaintance while the AESs used it more when refusing an invitation from a friend. The TSs provided more reasons to their friend than to an acquaintance. They also used the statement of *alternative/promise of compensation* more when refusing an invitation from their friend. The AESs, on the other hand, did not use the strategy *alternative/promise of compensation* at all with their friends and only one subject expressed it when refusing an acquaintance's invitation. Three TSs *set condition for past acceptance* in their refusal to their friend while no AES used that strategy. As for the adjuncts, the participants seemed to differ in their use of *gratitude* with friends or acquaintances. Both groups expressed their gratitude more when refusing invitation from an acquaintance. The TSs and AESs utilized other strategies to friends and acquaintances with almost equal frequency.

It appears that both TSs and AESs used more strategies when refusing acquaintances and fewer strategies when refusing friends. This finding supports Beckers' (1999) claim that Americans use slightly more strategies when refusing acquaintances than when refusing friends.

Table 4. Frequencies of Refusal Strategies Relative to Social Distance

Coding Categories	TR		AE	
	Friend	Acq.	Friend	Acq.
	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)
Direct Refusal	5	10	9	5
Regret/apology	2	4	4	3
Wish	4	4	1	2
Reason	22	19	12	15
Alternative/promise of compensation	10	4	0	1
Set condition for past acceptance	3	1	0	0
Positive opinion/willingness	6	8	6	7
Gratitude	4	9	7	15
Well-wishing/hope	11	12	17	14
Total Results	67	71	56	62

### Content of Refusal Strategies

The strategy *reason* was the most common strategy used when refusing invitations. Considering the differences in the degree of specificity in the reasons provided by the participants, this strategy was further classified as specific reason, vague reason, and no reason; and coded accordingly. For example, “I already have plans for Thanksgiving” was coded as “vague reason” and “I’m going home to be with my family” was classified as “specific reason”. The participants varied their reasons from specific to vague or no-reason.

The reasons of both groups were compared based on their degree of specificity and it was observed that the TSs (n = 24) used more specific reasons than did the AESs (n = 14) as reflected in Table 5. For example, in refusing the invitation to New Year's dinner, one TS responded, "*ben pazar günü taksimde bir panelde olacağım*" (I will be attending a panel in Taksim on Sunday). Another said, "*ablamın yanına geldim yılbaşı için*" (I came to visit my sister for the New Year's).

Compared to Turkish reasons, American reasons were less specific. For example, most AESs replied and said "I'm out of town", "I already have plans", and "I already have an invitation". They used specific (n = 14) and vague (n = 10) reasons at similar frequencies. Six of them chose not to give any reason at all, but they used other strategies (e.g. well-wishing and hope expressions) to soften the negative effects of the refusal.

Table 5. Content of Reasons

Content	Subjects		
	T (N=30)	AE (N=30)	Total (N=60)
Specific reasons (visiting family, got tickets for a party, have guests over)	24	14	38
Vague reasons (other plans, out of town, another invite)	5	10	15
No reason	1	6	7

It can be concluded that when refusing an invitation, the TSs mostly used specific reasons and the TSs wanted to justify why they could not accept the invite with more specific reasons and by doing so they would save both their face and the interlocutor's face. The AESs, on the other hand, preferred vague reasons although

they also used a considerable number of specific reasons in their refusals. This result does not provide support for Beebe et al.'s (1990) claim that American English speakers favor specific reasons in their refusals. A further question was asked, "do Turkish speakers and American English speakers vary the specificity of their reasons depending on the level of social distance between their interlocutors?" To answer this question, the number of specific and vague reasons given to friends and acquaintances was counted. As Table 6 also reflects, 14 of the TSs provided specific reasons for not complying with their friend's invitation and one of them gave a vague reason. As for the reasons given to acquaintances, 10 of them were specific and 4 of them were vague reasons. One TS chose not to give any reason when refusing the acquaintance's invitation. It can be concluded that when refusing an invitation from a friend and an acquaintance, TSs mostly used specific reasons regardless of the degree of social distance between themselves and their interlocutors as it is already difficult to refuse an invitation.

Table 6. Content of Reasons Relative to Social Distance

Social distance	Reasons	Subjects		
		T (N=30)	AE (N=30)	Total (N=60)
Friend	Vague reasons (other plans, out of town, another invite)	1	3	4
	Specific reasons (visiting family, got tickets for a party, have guests over)	14	8	22
	No reason	0	4	4
Acquaintance	Vague reasons (other plans, out of town, another invite)	4	7	11
	Specific reasons (visiting family, got tickets for a party, have guests over)	10	6	16
	No reason	1	2	3

The AESs used specific and vague reasons at similar frequencies when refusing their friend's invitation ( $n = 8$ ,  $n = 6$ , respectively). When they refused their acquaintance's invitation, 7 AESs gave vague reasons and 6 AESs gave specific reasons. Only 2 of them did not give a reason to the acquaintance.

In this specific study, social distance did not seem to play a significant role in the degree of specificity of the two groups' reasons, which may be due to the small sample size or the unclear level of social distance between the researcher and the participants. Overall, the findings may reflect cultural similarities between TSs and AESs in that both groups value the inviter's feelings and refuse their invitation by providing specific reasons as to why they cannot accept the invitation. Reasons, specific or vague, still function to soften the refusal message itself. If a specific reason such as "I'm working on final projects and papers" is a lie, then it might yield damaging consequences to the relationship. So, as also suggested by Chang (2009), giving vague reasons like "I already have plans for the day" might prevent this from occurring.

#### Data Collection Method and Strategy Use

The last research question, "Does the type of data collection method affect the strategy use in American English and Turkish refusals?", deals with similarities and differences in email and DCT refusals in Turkish and American English. The email replies were compared with the DCT replies rather than other data collection methods because they are both written mediums of communication. Besides, they are both asynchronous modes of communication as both in emails and DCTs subjects had the chance to postpone the act of refusing instead of immediately responding to

the invitation (Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008). The refusals collected through the two methods were comparable in that DCT items were created based on the email data. The level of social distance between the researcher who sent the invitations and the subjects who responded to the emails was kept as constant as possible in the DCT situations (friend vs. acquaintance). For the purposes of this research question, this variable has not been included to the analysis of the data. The total number of direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts used in the emails and the DCTs has been compared to see if there exist any differences. The Turkish emails (TR-Email) have been compared to the Turkish DCTs (TR-DCT) and the American English emails (AE-Email) have been compared to the American English DCTs (AE-DCT). This last research question does not deal with the differences or similarities between the two languages, but with the differences and similarities between the refusals collected through the two data collection methods: the emails and the DCTs.

An analysis of the email and DCT data revealed some effects of data collection method with respect to the use of direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts, as can be seen in Tables 7 and 8. *T*-tests were run to decide whether these differences between the email and DCT strategies were statistically significant. The alpha level was set at .05.

It is apparent from Table 8 that direct refusals were used in similar frequencies in the emails and DCTs. For each language, the mean number of direct refusals per email and DCT refusal was similar (TR: Email .50, DCT .40; AE: Email .47, DCT .53). Statistical analysis did not show any significant effect of the data



collection method on the use of direct refusals in neither Turkish nor American English data.

Table 7. Direct and Indirect Refusals in Emails and DCTs

	Email		DCT	
	TR	AE	TR	AE
Direct refusal	15	14	12	16
Regret/apology	6	7	10	8
Wish	8	3	10	4
Reason	41	27	33	29
Alternative/promise of compensation	14	1	20	8
Set condition for past acceptance	4	0	4	0

With regard to the use of indirect refusals, *regret/apology* occurred more in the TR-DCT (n = 10) than did in the TR-Email (n = 6) while similar frequencies were observed in the AE-DCT (n = 8) and AE-Email (n = 7). The strategy *wish* was also observed to have occurred in similar frequencies in both TR-DCT and AE-DCT and email data. *Reasons* were employed more in the TR-Email (n = 41) than in the TR-DCT (n = 33) while they were used more in the AE-DCT (n = 29) than in the AE-Email (n = 27). *Alternative/promise of compensation* occurred more in the TR-DCT (n = 20) and AE-DCT (n = 8) than in the TR-Email (n = 14) and AE-Email (n = 1). The last indirect strategy *set condition for past acceptance* was found in neither AE-DCT nor AE-Email while it occurred four times both in the TR-DCT and the TR-Email. Although the means showed that more indirect strategies were found in the TR-DCT than in the TR-Email, paired samples *t*-test did not prove this difference as

significant. The mean number of indirect strategies in the AE-DCT was bigger than in the AE-Email although the  $t$ -test did not demonstrate a significant difference between the data sets.

Adjuncts were found in most of the email refusals; however they were considerably less common in the DCT refusals. A paired samples  $t$ -test showed a significant difference in the number of adjuncts used in TR-Emails and TR-DCTs ( $t(29) = 2.11$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The number of adjuncts used in the emails ( $M = 1.73$ ) was significantly larger than in the DCTs ( $M = 1.20$ ). When individual adjuncts are examined, it is seen that the TSs utilized more statements of *positive opinion/willingness*, *gratitude*, and *well-wishing/hope* in emails than they did in the DCTs. The analysis showed slightly different results for the American English data. More expressions of *positive opinion/willingness* and *gratitude* were found in AE-DCTs than in AE-Email while more expressions of *well-wishing/hope* were used in AE-Email. However, these differences in the means of adjuncts in AE-Emails and TR-DCTs were not found statistically significant.

The findings are not surprising when the nature of the emails is considered. The TSs and AESs used these adjuncts to show their involvement with the inviter in a natural email interaction. In the DCTs, on the other hand, they did not have a real person to respond to, which might have caused less use of adjuncts such as expressions of *positive opinion/willingness* and *well-wishing/hope*.

Table 8. Adjuncts in Emails and DCTs

	Email		DCT	
	TR	AE	TR	AE
Positive opinion/willingness	14	13	5	21
Gratitude	15	22	13	26
Well-wishing/hope	23	31	18	16

In sum, it might be argued that as differences between the data collection methods lie mainly in the use of adjuncts rather than the main strategies of refusals, natural email data does not seem to offer much new to the speech act studies in that they provide pragmalinguistic patterns of speech acts as do the DCTs. However, the findings also suggest that with the help of natural email data only we can really understand the natural organization of a speech act (refusal in this case) and the variation from culture to culture. Analysis of the use of adjuncts, even though they are not considered among the core components of a refusal in various classifications (e.g., Beebe et al., 1990; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Turnbury, 2001), may be more helpful to evaluate the effectiveness of a data collection method in understanding the socially appropriate ways of refusing (or any speech act) in a given culture.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This chapter will review and summarize the findings of the present study and discuss their implications for cross-cultural communication and foreign language teaching.

#### Summary of Findings

This study investigated the similarities and differences between Turkish and American English in the speech acts of refusal via email and compared email refusals and those elicited through the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Natural emails and DCT replies constituted the data for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were run to examine the refusal strategies in Turkish and American English emails, the content of their refusals, and the effect of social distance and data collection method on strategy use. The results revealed that speakers of Turkish and American English were somewhat different in their refusals to invitations. In terms of strategy use, the TS group used more refusal strategies than did the AES group. The common tendency that emerged from the refusal strategies of both groups was that *reason* was the most frequently used refusal strategy when refusing an invitation from a friend or an acquaintance. However, the TS group used this strategy significantly more than the AES group. The strategy *alternative/promise of compensation* was another strategy where significant differences were obtained. The TSs employed this strategy

more than did the AESs. This may imply that TSs use many *reasons* in order to inform the inviter that they have valid reasons to refuse their invitation and by offering *alternatives and promising for compliance*, they try to maintain a friendly disposition towards the inviter.

Another common feature of their refusals in emails was the use of well-*wishing and hope expressions* (e.g., “Hope you have fun!”, “Happy Thanksgiving!”). This strategy was not observed in previous refusal studies (e.g., Beebe et al., 1990; Bulut, 2000; Chang, 2009; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Nelson et al., 2002), which may be due to the fact that the refusals for the purposes of this study were collected through invitation emails that were natural on the part of the invitee. This might show that in natural email interactions, interlocutors tend to express their well-wishes and hopes following their refusals as they would do in a personal letter. Therefore, it can be said that email interactions resemble written modes of discourse, such as, a personal letter, rather than spoken ones. As this is beyond the scope of the study, it is not possible to draw conclusions and further investigation is needed.

The results offered support for the *bulge theory*, which claims that strategy use varies depending on the level of social distance between the interlocutors; that is, when the relationship between the interlocutors is uncertain (i.e. they are neither intimates nor strangers), they tend to use more elaborated refusals. For the purposes of this study, strategies employed when refusing an invitation from a friend and an acquaintance were compared. The results showed that both the TSs and AESs used more strategies when refusing acquaintances and fewer strategies when refusing

friends via email. A possible explanation may be that the relationships that existed over time do not require additional strategies.

With regard to the content of the refusals by the Turkish and American English participants, Turkish reasons were found to be more specific than American English reasons. The result did not support Bulut's (2000) claim that in general Turkish reasons were less specific than American reasons. The contradictions between the findings of this study and Bulut's study can be explained by the different data collection methods used or the individual differences of the participants.

The findings suggest that pragmatic failure might be unlikely for American learners of Turkish and Turkish learners of American English. Overall, they were similar in most of the strategies used. They both expressed *reason*, *regret*, and *well-wishes/gratitude* along with other strategies although they differed in their use of other strategies such as *alternative/promise of compliance* and *condition for past acceptance*. Learners of these languages may be successful if they transfer most of their refusal strategies to the language they are learning.

As for the strategy use relative to data collection method, the findings confirm that DCT data should not be considered as actual speech in use (Wolfson, 1983) and should be complemented with other data collection methods. As Wolfson argues, only natural data (email data in this study) can show the way speakers would realize speech acts in everyday interactions. In this study, the DCT data contained all the refusal strategies expressed in the natural email data. In this sense, DCT data may be a reliable measure for strategies. However, email responses were more elaborated in

terms of the use of adjuncts along with direct and indirect refusals. This suggests that DCTs may not thoroughly reflect the language in use.

In sum, email data has much to offer to speech act research and the speech acts of refusal in emails especially needs more attention because refusals are face-threatening acts and require competence in strategy use and emails provide a context in which natural refusals can be studied in different languages and across different cultures in cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, and interlanguage studies.

### The Limitations of the Study

This study was compromised by several limitations, and thus the results cannot be generalized to hold for all native speakers of Turkish and American English as the participants from both language groups in this study were either graduate students, teaching/research assistants, or instructors working at a university setting. The limited number of participants and the examination of only one situation (refusing a friend's and an acquaintance's invitation) with one variable (social distance) might pose limitations to the generalizability of the results. Thus, further research is necessary with more participants and more natural situations to collect refusals.

The profile of the researcher as a foreigner who invited people over Thanksgiving dinner in the U.S. might have affected the AESs' refusal strategies. Therefore, a native speaker of each language may act as an inviter in further studies to see if the results would have been different if the inviter in the AE context had been a native speaker of AE.

Email has been one of the most common forms of asynchronous CMC communication, so it is important to know how to form a refusal email as well as to produce a face-to-face refusal. The internal features of the refusal emails were not examined in detail for the purposes of this study. Further research can analyze natural emails in terms of organization and density and also add other variables such as social status, age, or gender.

Using interviews might have helped to understand the differences such as the Turkish speakers' reasons for using more strategies such as *alternative/promise of compensation* and *reason* and the American speakers' reasons for using fewer specific *reasons*. For further investigation, interview data might shed light on the strategy use relative to the social distance between the interlocutors and the participants' understanding of the level of distance between themselves and the inviter.

#### Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication and Language Teaching

The findings of this study indicate more similarities than differences in strategy use in Turkish and American English refusal emails. However, there are still differences that are language-specific and culturally-shaped; and need further understanding. Noticing and understanding of those differences in refusal patterns in Turkish and American English may help the language learners to produce appropriate refusals and be pragmatically successful while interacting with the speakers of those languages. Therefore, language teachers should raise students' awareness as to the



differences and similarities in the refusal patterns employed by different language groups and the characteristics of the cultures to help them develop their communicative competence. This explicit instruction is claimed to be necessary in order to prevent any cases of cross-cultural misunderstanding and pragmatic failure and facilitate tolerance towards differences (Al-Shalawi, 1997; Beckers, 1999; Felix-Brasdefer & Bardovi-Harlig, 2010).

It is hoped that the findings of this study inform the foreign language instruction and contribute to it in terms of raising awareness as to the importance of teaching appropriate language use as well as correct language use. More specifically, the findings of this study and the invitation and refusal emails may be used by teachers as authentic classroom materials to raise learners' awareness of Turkish and American English refusal patterns in email interactions.

## APPENDICES

### A. Demographic Survey in Turkish

1. Cinsiyetiniz: Kadın [ ] Erkek [ ]

2. Yaşınız: 20-29 [ ] 30-39 [ ] 40-49 [ ] 50 ve üstü [ ]

3. Anadiliniz:

4. Eğitim durumunuz (Son bitirdiğiniz okul)

Lise [ ]

Lisans [ ]

Yüksek Lisans [ ]

Doktora [ ]

5. Mesleğiniz:

6. Yabancı dil biliyor musunuz? Evet [ ] Hayır [ ]

7. Cevabınız “evet” ise,

Hangi dil veya dilleri biliyorsunuz? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Günlük ve mesleki yaşamınızda kullanmayı en çok tercih ettiğiniz iletişim yolunu belirtiniz. (Lütfen sadece bir tanesini seçiniz.)

Telefon [ ]

E-mail [ ]

Yüz yüze [ ]

Diğer [Lütfen belirtiniz]

a. Telefonu ne zaman ya da ne tür durumlarda ve hangi amaçla kullanırsınız?

b. E-maili ne zaman ya da ne tür durumlarda ve hangi amaçla kullanırsınız?

c. Yüz yüze iletişimi ne zaman ya da ne tür durumlarda ve hangi amaçla tercih edersiniz?

## B. Demographic Survey in English

1. Sex:    Female [   ]        Male [   ]

2. Age:    20-29 [   ]    30-39 [   ]    40-49 [   ]    50-more [   ]

3. Native language:

4. Educational background (Please mark the highest level attained.)

University – Undergraduate [   ]        Graduate – Masters [   ]        Graduate –  
Doctorate [   ]

5. Profession (If applicable):

6. What foreign language/s do you speak?

7. What means of communication do you prefer to use most in your daily and  
professional life? (Please select only one.)

Telephone [   ]        E-mail [   ]        Face-to-face [   ]

d. When or for what types of situations do you use the telephone?

e. When or for what types of situations do you use e-mail?

f. When or for what types of situations do you use face-to-face communication?

### C. Discourse Completion Task in Turkish

*Aşağıda 6 durum verilmiştir. Bu durumlarda siz olsaydınız ne söylerdiniz? O durumlarda olduğunuzu varsayıp lütfen uygun biçimde cevap veriniz.*

1. Yakın bir arkadaşınız sizi ve diğer arkadaşlarınızı e-posta ile cuma akşamı evinde yılbaşı yemeğine davet eder. Davete katılıp katılamayacağınızı kendisine e-posta ile bildirmenizi ister. Ancak bu davete katılmanız mümkün değildir.

Arkadaşınıza katılamayacağınızı bildiren bir e-posta yazınız:

2. Yolda yakın bir arkadaşınızla karşılaşırsınız. Sizi akşam yemeğine evine davet eder. Ancak katılmanız mümkün değildir.

Sizin cevabınız:

3. Bir tanıdığınız sizi ve diğer arkadaşlarınızı e-posta ile cuma akşamı evinde yılbaşı yemeğine davet eder. Davete katılıp katılamayacağınızı kendisine e-posta ile bildirmenizi ister. Ne yazık ki bu davete katılmanız mümkün değildir.

Davete katılamayacağınızı bildiren bir e-posta yazınız:

4. Yakın bir arkadaşınız size telefon eder ve akşama evine davet eder. O akşam uygunsunuzdur ve katılmak istersiniz.

Sizin cevabınız:

5. Bir tanıdığınız sizi telefonla ortak bir arkadaşınız için düzenlediği veda partisine davet eder. Ancak katılmanız mümkün değildir.

Sizin cevabınız:

6. Yolda bir tanıdığınızla karşılaşırsınız. Sizi, ortak bir arkadaşınız için düzenlediği doğum günü partisine davet eder. Siz o akşam için uygunsunuzdur ve gitmek istersiniz.

Sizin cevabınız:

#### D. Discourse Completion Task in English

*Imagine yourself in the following situations and respond appropriately. Please write down exactly what you would say if you were in the actual situation.*

1. One of your close friends sends an e-mail to you and other friends and invites you to Thanksgiving dinner at his/her apartment. However, you are unable to attend.

You reply and say:

2. You run into a friend of yours. S/he invites you to a dinner party at his/her house. Unfortunately you cannot make it.

You say:

3. An acquaintance sends an e-mail to you and invites you to Thanksgiving dinner at his/her apartment. However, you are unable to attend.

You reply and say:

4. A close friend of yours calls you to invite you to an evening gathering in his/her house. You are available to attend and you would like to go.

You say:

5. An acquaintance is organizing a farewell party for a mutual friend. S/he calls you and invites you to the party. Unfortunately you cannot make it.

You say:

6. You run into an acquaintance. S/he says she is organizing a birthday celebration for a mutual friend and invites you to the party. You are able to attend and would like to go.

You say:

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