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The Effect of Social Status and Gender on Realization of Refusal of Suggestion among Iranian EFL Intermediate Learners

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Abstract—The current study aimed at exploring the dependence of realized and applied strategies in refusal of suggestion on the people of different levels of social status (i.e., equal, low and high) and the gender differences. Teaching communicative rules, social conventions and values of the target nation can help EFL learners to avoid pragmatic failures. One of the important factors in realization of refusal strategies is the speaker's knowledge of the refusals usage to save the interlocutor's face and to be polite. The participants of this study consisted of 60 (30 females and 30 males) intermediate English Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Tehran, Iran. Discourse-completion test (DCT) with 18 situations was used. Chi-square indicated that learners employed more indirect strategies to people of equal social status. They used more direct strategies to people of low social status, and we can claim that they applied the same types of direct and indirect strategies to people of high social status. Learners utilized more adjunct strategies to people of equal social status and the frequency of realized and applied strategies in refusal of suggestion was not statistically different between the female and male participants in each of three levels of social status.

Index Terms—refusals, suggestion, semantic formula, social status, refusal strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the communication in the community, it should be considered not only the linguistic competence, but also the pragmatic competence. One of the crucial factors in the speech acts field is the refusal of speech acts, which is considered in this study. According to Thomas (1983, p. 94), "Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language efficiently in order to gain a special aim and to comprehend language in context".

According to Cheng et al. (1995), refusal is a speech act that a speaker denies to employ in an action that is suggested by the converser.

Refusal is the negative reply to someone's invitation, offer, request, and suggestion. It is a hard task to refuse native or non-native speakers, especially refusing in a foreign language that the speakers have a lack of sufficient knowledge about the refusals. There are some factors that impact the speaker's action in choose and produce like inter-lingual transfer of pragmatic knowledge. So, to overcome these, comprehending and identifying the cross linguistics in production is important.

Although there are so many studies in realization of speech acts of refusals in different dialects and languages, such as Azizi Abarghoui (2012) who studied on the Iranian EFL learners and native speakers of Australia who considered the strategies of refusal of request; Sahragard and Javanmardi (2011) who investigated refusals of request, order, suggestion, and invitation in an academic EFL context; Liao and Bresnahan (1996) who studied on refusal strategies of requests; Qadoury Abed (2011) who worked on pragmatic transfer of Iraqi EFL learners' refusal strategies of invitations, offers, requests, and suggestions; Widjaja (1997) who worked on refusal of dating, there have been few studies of refusal of speech acts such as suggestion in an Iranian context, especially in an intermediate level; in contrast, most of them have been done in academic levels. Hence, as the researchers believe, not only applying speech acts refusal are not limited to the academic participants, but also to different people that the researcher has chosen a sample from intermediate level of English language participants among people (population) that may integrate with native speakers in different situations in inside and outside of the country.

The role of gender differences and their plausible impacts on the speech acts of refusal have not been dealt with in an Iranian context with the specific conclusion about the gender so far. However, this research intended to include 'gender' as a variable in the study so that the strategies used by both genders could be accounted for.

The purpose of this study was to explore the type of strategies in realization in order to use refusal of suggestion among Iranian males and females in an intermediate level of language proficiency within the formal and informal situations thorough considering social status; and the responses to the situations would be checked whether the responses are related to learners' sex differences whom the learners integrated to people in daily interaction in order to the people's face-saving and politeness. Speech acts of refusals of suggestions are so important because they have a crucial role in daily communication. EFL learners should know how to use the appropriate refusals of suggestion in order to save the interlocutor's face and to be polite when they meet people in formal and informal situations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pragmatics

Pragmatics plays a remarkable role in the perception and production of the language. According to Thomas (1983), non-native speakers have to use linguistic and pragmatic capability. According to Crystal (1997), the knowledge of pragmatics is essential and suitable in second language learning. He also added that pragmatics is the study of language form and the users' point of view. Social interaction has effects in their language use with other participants in the communication. Takahashi (2001) showed several situations in which students can use to express the proper speech acts. So, to use social language properly, people should know and recognize how to use language in order to be polite and save the interlocutors' face during their communications. Eslami-Rasekh and Fatahi (2004) emphasized on the awareness of EFL learners' interaction with native speakers, whom may bring pragmatic failure because of the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the socio-cultural norms of the target society. According to Eslami-rasekh and Mardani (2010) Iranian EFL learners have pragmatic problems that are caused by the lack of the speech acts knowledge. They often fail to identify the proper use of speech acts in EFL educational settings. Besides, Fioramonte and Vázquezand (2011) focused on EFL context, and explained the pragmatics conceptualize as pertinent to speech acts, language uses, and politeness linguistic.

B. Speech Acts

According to Austin (1962), speech acts have been defined as the utterances and the total situations in which the utterances are issued. Also, he added that there is a close relationship between language use and speech acts. According to Sanders (2005), Speech acts theory concentrates on the usefulness of formal sayings regarding what differences they make to the social status of hearers and/or speakers.

C. Conversation

One important principle in conversation is the adjacency pair, that is, a sequence of two relevant formal sayings by two various speakers. The second formal saying is a response to the first. Utterances like co-occur such as greeting/greeting, question/answer, request/acceptance/reject, complaints/apology/rejection, Complement/acceptance/refuse, and farewell/farewell.

According to Schegloff and Sacks (1973), adjacency pairs are the certain sequential speech turns which are closely related to each other, and he also added that managing the adjacency pairs successfully is a main component of conversational competence. Tannen (1987) identified New Yorker's style as conversational overlap which was a lot of talking, while others are talking in casual conversation. Later, she (1994) called this kind of simultaneous speech as the cooperative overlapping that is supportive. According to Schegloff (2000), there may be just one person who speaks at a time and that person is realized to be the one whose turn it to speech as an exception.

D. Cooperation Principles

Grice (1975) stated that cooperative principle is to make your conversation in the occurred speech by accepted purpose or talk exchange direction in which you are employed. Grice lists four maxims in cooperative principle:

- Quantity: be informative
- Quality: be truthfully
- Relation: be relevant
- Manner be brief and orderly and avoid ambiguity

In Gricean sense, conversation is a cooperative activity, with dependence of sharing of what happens among listeners and speakers. If nothing went in conversation, nothing would happen.

E. Speech Acts of Refusal

Wierzbicka (1987) stated that refusal is the speech act of saying "no", addressee's opposition, and non-acceptance, in an invitation, offer, request, or suggestion. The speech act of refusal is recognized as a reply to four specific speech acts of invitation, offer, request, and suggestion (Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). Refusals are complicate speech acts that

need long progression of negotiation, cooperative attainments, and face-saving change in the direction to provide lodging disobedient nature of the act (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Gass & Houck, 1999).

F. Directness and Indirectness

There are two variations of refusal speech acts, directly and indirectly. Searle (1975) stated that a speaker using a direct speech act to transmit the literal meaning and there is a straight association between the form and function. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the speaker can use special strategies such as directness, indirectness, and polite states to avoid a quarrel.

Cutting (2002) believed that both direct and indirect speech acts are not what we mean in the words themselves mostly, but in the meaning inferred. Félix-Brasdefer (2008) believed that an indirect refusal may increase the degree of intricacy; the speaker has to select the appropriate form (s) to alleviate the negative influence of a direct refusal.

G. Politeness Theory

According to Lakoff (1973), one's success in communication is depend on the message which is conveyed in a clearly manner. Brown and Levinson (1987), define politeness as a form of manner that permits communication to occur between possibilities of developing bold partners. They develop politeness model that will have validity across cultures. The common aspects in the idea's of Brown and Levinson (1987), Lakoff (1975), and Leech (1983) are the universality of their principles for linguistic politeness. According to Locher (2004), politeness is norm dependent, and impoliteness will be arranged by the conversers in the interaction. Kasper (2006) defines politeness as a linguistic behavior which is imagined as a dependent variable settled by the context value.

H. Concept of Face

Brown and Levinson (1978) believe that "Face" is something that is emotionally expended for future benefit, and can be misplaced, well kept, or increased and must be continuously served in mutual action.

Goffman (1967) asserts that there may be some reasons that why people want to save their face. They may have been because of the value on the face which has been built, enjoying the results and the powers that their face has been created, and need of the face by nursing higher social strong desires. Also he defines "face work", as the way people continue their face.

I. Face Threatening Acts (FTA)

According to this concept, in every day communication, one may threat the others' self image. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), refusals are face-threatening acts and refusals are belonging to the commissive category, because they commit someone who refuses to not to do an action. Tanck (2002) stated the refusal as a face-threatening act, when listeners', requesters', and inviters' expectations and declaration were wrong; and recognized among indirect strategies.

J. Empirical Studies of Gender and Realization of Refusal Speech Acts

According to Boxer (1993), Holmes (1995), Lakoff (1975), and Tannen (1990), gender and speech behavior are interrelated to each other. Chen (1996) examined speech acts of refusal (refusing request, invitations, offers, and suggestions) by American and Chinese speakers of English. Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002) investigated differences and similarities between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals which applied the modified discourse-completion test (DCT) according to Beebe's et al. (1990) model. Participants consisted of 30 American interviewers and 25 Egyptian interviewers. Each refusal was divided to its component strategies. Data analysis was according to average frequencies of direct and indirect strategies, and the effect of interlocutor social status on strategy use. Results showed that both groups use similar strategies and frequencies in their refusals. The findings revealed that they fail to show the socio-pragmatic complexity of face - threatening act in refusals.

Additionally, Nguyen (2006) worked on similarities and differences in refusal of requests between Australian native speakers of English (AEs) and Vietnamese learners of English (VEs) by applying DCT. The analysis was done by Simple Concordance Program (SCP), and Excel functions among participants who were AEs with 20 males and 20 females, and VEs with 20 males and 20 females. Findings revealed that frequency of use of SARs by AEs is different from that by VEs, though they do share some similarities. While AEs share the same number of SARs when they communicate, VEs are more sensitive to the social status and the social distance of the requesters. For differences in culture, AEs and VEs also differed in the ways they say "NO". VEs are apt to express refusals more elaborately. They used more statements of regret, sympathy, addressing terms, reasons, excuse and explanations in their refusals than AEs. The excuse, reason, and explanations which were given by VEs revealed their reluctance to express their disinclination to comply. Both AEs and VEs used more statements of regret when they refused people of the opposite gender. This suggests that both Australian and Vietnamese people are more likely to be sensitive to the opposite gender, and so show more statements of regret to their conversational partners. AEs utilized more "NO" phrases, and more statements of alternative in their refusals than VEs. While AEs employed more SARs when they refused people of same gender than to people of opposite gender, the reverse situation is true for VEs, which means they refused people of the opposite gender with many more "NO" phrases and more statements of alternative than to people of the same gender.

CheLah and Qusay Abdul Sattar, and Raja Suleimanr (2011) worked on the refusal of request. The aims were to discover the preferred semantic formulas used by Malay academic students in Malaysia to refuse a request in an academic context. The participants consisted of 40 undergraduate and postgraduate students who were asked to respond to different situations in refusing a request. The data gathered by a DCT and were analyzed in terms of semantic formulas and categorized according to the refusal taxonomy of Beeb et al. (1990). The findings revealed that participants were different in their refusals ways. Regret or saying 'sorry', and giving excuses or explanations were the preferred formulas. The choice of these semantic formulas suggests the effect of Malay culture in respondents' realizations of refusals in English.

Sahragard and Javanmardi (2011) also studied refusal situations like refusal of request, order, suggestion, and invitation in EFL context among 20 MA and 28 BA students in both males and females who were randomly selected. They used DCT questionnaire. The results indicated that Iranian learners made use of both direct and indirect strategies to refuse a situation, and also they usually followed indirect strategies to talk to their interlocutors and express their intended meaning in a way that they would not cause any offence or threaten their listener's and own face. The mostly common strategy used by Iranian learners was the use of the expression of regret followed by an excuse or reason. Regarding offers, many used gratitude to refuse an offer along with an excuse or a reason. Concerning requests, learners used an excuse or an explanation in order to refuse a request which were usually followed by a sense of regret. This is also true about refusing an invitation or a suggestion. The number of participants was not large and accidentally most of the participants were females in comparison to males. So, the researcher could not draw any definite conclusions regarding gender differences among Iranian EFL learners about using the strategies. According to their level, all the participants in both levels of English responded to each situation more or less in the same way, so the researcher could not find a clear cut boundary between the two groups regarding the strategies they used.

Besides, Qadoury Abed (2011) investigated pragmatic transfer of Iraqi EFL learners' refusal strategies as reflected by their responses to a modified version of L2-items written discourse-completion task which compared two groups who were Iraqi native speakers of Arabic and American native speakers of English. The questionnaire consisted of three invitations, three offers, three requests, and three suggestions. Each one of these situations included one refusal to a person of higher status, equal status, and lower status. Data were analyzed according to the frequency types of refusal strategies and interlocutor's social status. Findings revealed that the frequency of use of refusals by Iraqi EFL learners is different from Americans, but they do share some similarities. Iraqi EFL learners express refusals with care and/or caution represented by using more statements of reason/explanation, statements of regret, wish and refusal adjuncts in their refusals than Americans. Americans are more sensitive to their interlocutor's equal and higher status whereas Iraqi learners to lower status. IEFL males and females behaved differently. IEFL males used more refusal strategies at refusal strategies than females. Females were more sensitive to higher status than males, and it is totally related to the values of Iraqi culture and communication. This sensitivity was on using more refusal adjuncts than males; therefore, evidences proved a slight difference between IEFL males and females.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Questions*

1. Does the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depend on the social status?
2. Does the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion depend on learner's gender?

B. *Participants*

In this study, the participants were 60 students of both male and female in intermediate level of language proficiency in Zaban Negar institute in Tehran, Iran. These 60 individuals were asked to represent the accessible population in order to check whether there was any significant difference between both male and female in their type of strategies they would use in different social status situations.

C. *Instruments*

The instrument which was used in this study was Discourse-Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire based on a uniform and standard way of eliciting data. Also, according to Ary (2006), one of the standards of rigor for research in a qualitative study is dependability or trustworthiness. Dependability is the extent to which change can be followed or explained. This is the most popular instrument which is used in collecting data to investigate different types of speech acts. Wolfson et al. (1989) described the use of DCT, eliciting instrument, is an efficient way to collect a lot of information in a short period of time.

The questionnaire consisted of eighteen target situations in written form of discourse completion test. The questions had open-ended forms. This instrument was administered to the learners.

D. *Procedure*

The participants received eighteen written situations in English and were asked to write their responses to every one of those situations. The situations were in the form of conversation and learners were asked to put themselves in those specific situations and respond to the questions given.

The questionnaire was coded based on the variables like the kinds of strategies of refusal: direct (D), indirect (IND), adjunct refusal (A); formal and informal situations regarding social status with three levels: low (L), high (H), and equal (E). The English data was coded by the researcher. The data in this study have been coded all of the strategies which are used in each situation in refusals by the researcher. Then the number of refusal strategies which had been made among the three levels of social status was compared with each other. The researcher deliberately distributed the different situations with different orders of social status, because learners may making prediction and presupposition about the situations, and challenge the learners to put themselves in various situations and motivate them to think more actively than answering some related situations which are arranged sequentially.

E. Coding the Semantic Formula

There are more studies which have been done by considering the semantic formula according to Beebe and Takahashi (1990) model of speech acts of refusal that I mentioned in appendix. But the current study just considers the kinds of semantic formulas according to Beebe and Takahashi (1990) without considering the sub categories as the followings:

I. Direct: in this strategy, the refuser frankly turns down the suggestion. Direct strategy cause negative effects and are highly face threatening acts. The direct instance is "NO" and the direct statement instances are: "I don't do that, I can't"

II. Indirect: the indirect verbal style "refers to verbal messages that camouflage and conceal speakers' true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation" (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p. 100). The instances would be "I have some plans to do, I will do that next time, I will join you if you change your party date.

III. Adjuncts: These strategies include the function as extra changes to defend or save the speaker's positive face. They are part of refusing, but don't set up a refusal by themselves, and plays soften, taking care, and soliciting role in refusals.

The example with considering all variables of refusal strategies would be:

No, I don't think so Mary; I will solve it by myself. That would be coded as [IND], [EO].

F. Data Analysis

This research made use of the qualitative mode for the analysis. The questions were open-ended. The reliability of the items of the questionnaire for all participants was calculated by Cronbach Alpha, and the inter-item correlation matrix was computed as .82 for both males' and females' questionnaires, and according to Pearson correlations for both questionnaires ($r = .86$) and Correlation was significant at the .05 level (2-tailed) according to overall alpha level which was set at $p < .05$, and thus the questionnaire was reliable. To observe the reliability of this study coding, three raters were considered for this study. The validity of DCT was approved by three knowledgeable experts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

The qualitative analysis mode of this research was computing the average of frequency of the refusal ways in social status by considering the frequency and Std. Residual, which were analyzed by SPSS, Version 21, within descriptive analysis according to the applied questionnaire responses. To represent the relation between variables, Chi-square Test was performed.

IV. RESULTS

A. Investigating Research Question Number One

The first research question of this study asked whether the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion depend on the social status. In order to answer this question the analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square) was used to explore any significant differences in the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion on the different social statuses. Table 1 depicts the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the refusal of suggestion (direct, indirect and adjunct) on social status (equal, low and high). The former two indices are descriptive and should be interpreted horizontally, i.e. within each group; while the latter – Std. Residual – is an inferential index based on which conclusions as to the significance of the differences between the three situations of using of strategies can be made. This index should be interpreted vertically for using each of the strategies by the three social statuses. Std. Residuals beyond ± 1.96 (Field, 2009) show that the utilization of the strategies is not random; hence significantly beyond expectation.

Based on the results set forth in Table 1, it can be concluded that 41.4 percent of the participants expressed refusals by using direct strategies on equal status, but 49.5 percent applied direct strategies on low, and 46.7 percent utilized direct strategies on high social status. Thus the participants expressed refusals by applying more direct strategies to their interlocutors' low status.

Furthermore, 46.7 percent of the participants used indirect strategies on equal status, and 45.4 percent applied indirect strategies on low, and 47.5 percent utilized indirect strategies on high social status. Accordingly the participants revealed refusals by using more indirect strategies to their interlocutors' high status.

In addition, 11.9 percent of the participants used adjunct strategies on equal social status, however 5.2 percent applied adjunct strategies on low, and 5.8 percent utilized adjunct strategies on high social status. As a result, the participants stated refusals by employing more adjunct strategies to their interlocutors' equal status.

TABLE 1.
FREQUENCIES, PERCENTAGES AND STD. RESIDUALS; PARTICIPANTS'
APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION ON LEVELS OF SOCIAL STATUS

Social status		Strategies			Total
		Direct	Indirect	Adjunct	
Equal	Count	149	168	43	360
	% within Social status	41.4%	46.7%	11.9%	100.0%
	Std. Residual	-1.3	.0	3.0	
Low	Count	181	166	19	366
	% within Social status	49.5%	45.4%	5.2%	100.0%
	Std. Residual	1.0	-.3	-1.7	
High	Count	168	171	21	360
	% within Social status	46.7%	47.5%	5.8%	100.0%
	Std. Residual	.2	.3	-1.2	
Total	Count	498	505	83	1086
	% within Social status	45.9%	46.5%	7.6%	100.0%

Examining Std. Residuals shows that only one of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond +/- 1.96. The application of adjunct strategies on equal (11.9%, Std. Residual = 3.0 > 1.96) is significantly above expectation.

The results of Chi-square ($\chi^2 (4) = 15.970, p = .003, p < .05$) in Table 2 indicate that the differences observed in Table 1 are statistically significant since p value, .003 is well less than .05 level of significance. Thus the first null-hypothesis as the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion does not depend on the social status **was rejected**, and it can be asserted that the realization of applied strategies of the refusal of suggestion differ on the social statuses. In fact, learners applied more indirect strategies to people of equal social status, they used more direct strategies to people of low social status, and we can say that they used the same level of direct and indirect strategies to people of high social status. And learners used more adjunct strategies to people of equal social status.

TABLE 2.
CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION ON LEVELS OF SOCIAL STATUS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.970 ^a	4	.003
N of Valid Cases	1086		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 27.51.

Figure 1 below illustrates the results as laid out in Table 1.

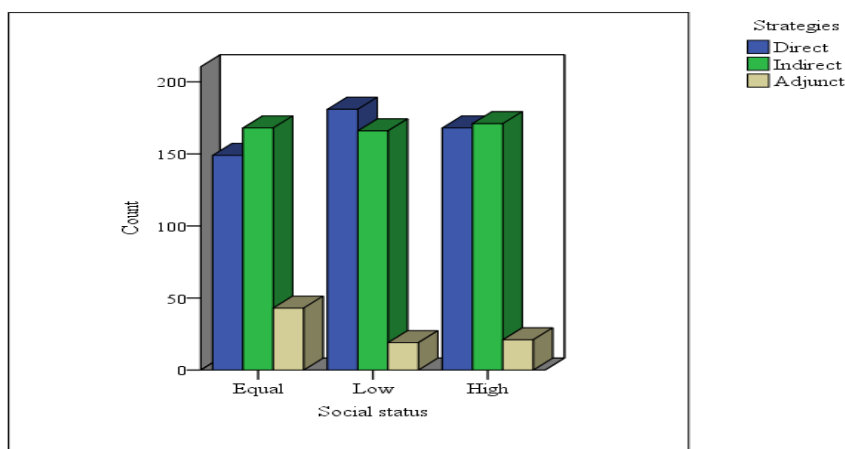


Figure 1. Occurrence of refusal of suggestion on three social statuses

B. Investigating Research Question Number Two

The second research question of this study inquired whether the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion depends on learner's gender. The analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square)

was employed to investigate any significant differences in the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion between the females and males. Before running Chi-square, the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the refusal of suggestion (i.e., direct, indirect and adjunct) by females and males on equal (see Table 3), low (see Table 4), and high (see Table 5) were computed.

TABLE 3.
FREQUENCIES, PERCENTAGES AND STD. RESIDUALS; APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION TO MALES AND FEMALES OF 'EQUAL' SOCIAL STATUS

		Strategies			Total	
		Direct	Indirect	Adjunct		
Gender	Female	Count	67	90	23	180
		% within Gender	37.2%	50.0%	12.8%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.9	.7	.3	
	Male	Count	82	78	20	180
		% within Gender	45.6%	43.3%	11.1%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	.9	-.7	-.3	
Total	Count	149	168	43	360	
	% within Gender	41.4%	46.7%	11.9%	100.0%	

TABLE 4.
FREQUENCIES, PERCENTAGES AND STD. RESIDUALS; APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION TO MALES AND FEMALES OF 'LOW' SOCIAL STATUS

		Strategies			Total	
		Direct	Indirect	Adjunct		
Gender	Female	Count	98	80	8	186
		% within Gender	52.7%	43.0%	4.3%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	.6	-.5	-.5	
	Male	Count	83	86	11	180
		% within Gender	46.1%	47.8%	6.1%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.6	.5	.5	
Total	Count	181	166	19	366	
	% within Gender	49.5%	45.4%	5.2%	100.0%	

TABLE 5.
FREQUENCIES, PERCENTAGES AND STD. RESIDUALS; APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION TO MALES AND FEMALES OF 'HIGH' SOCIAL STATUS

		Strategies			Total	
		Direct	Indirect	Adjunct		
Gender	Female	Count	83	87	10	180
		% within Gender	46.1%	48.3%	5.6%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.1	.2	-.2	
	Male	Count	85	84	11	180
		% within Gender	47.2%	46.7%	6.1%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	.1	-.2	.2	
Total	Count	168	171	21	360	
	% within Gender	46.7%	47.5%	5.8%	100.0%	

Examining Std. Residuals showed that none of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are not beyond +/- 1.96 for the three equal, low and high levels of social status between females and males.

Chi-square Test (see Table 6) failed to find any significant difference in the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion between females and males on all three levels of social status, i.e. 'Equal' with $(\chi^2 (2) = 2.577, p = .27, p > .05)$, 'Low' with $(\chi^2 (2) = 1.836, p = .39, p > .05)$, and 'High' with $(\chi^2 (2) = .124, p = .94, p > .05)$ in which p value for all three levels of social status was well above .05 level of significance. Accordingly, the second null-hypothesis as the frequency of realized and applied strategies to people of social status in refusal of suggestion does not depends on learner's gender **was retained**. In other words, female and male respondent answered the DCT questions almost similarly.

TABLE 6.
CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR APPLICATION OF REFUSAL OF SUGGESTION BY MALES AND FEMALES OF EQUAL, LOW AND HIGH SOCIAL STATUS

Social status	N of Valid Cases	Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Equal	360	2.577	2	.276
Low	366	1.836	2	.399
High	360	.124	2	.940

The frequency of realized and applied strategies in formal and informal situation in refusal of suggestion is not statistically different between the female and male participants. So they applied strategies in the same way. Females are

a little more sensitive to the opposite gender (male), by using less direct strategies than males. Females used a little more strategies when they refused people of opposite gender. They used more strategies when encountering people of opposite gender. Males refused people of the opposite gender with many more ‘NO’ phrases. The following figures (i.e., Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4) graphically illustrate the results as appeared in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5.

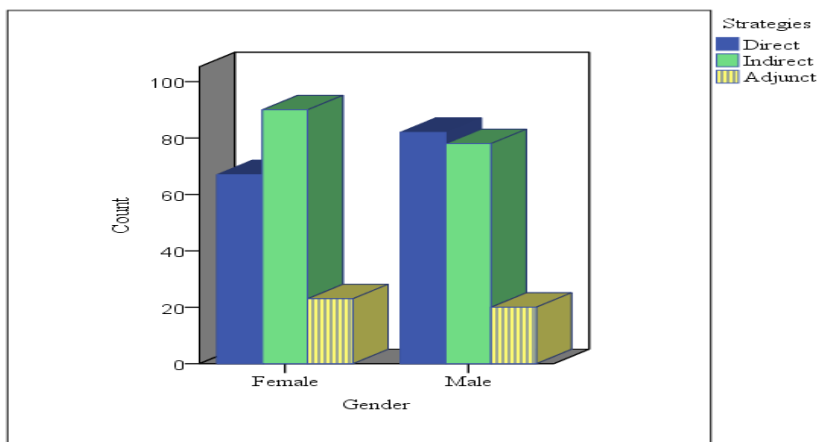


Figure 2. Occurrence of refusal of suggestion by female and male participants of equal social status

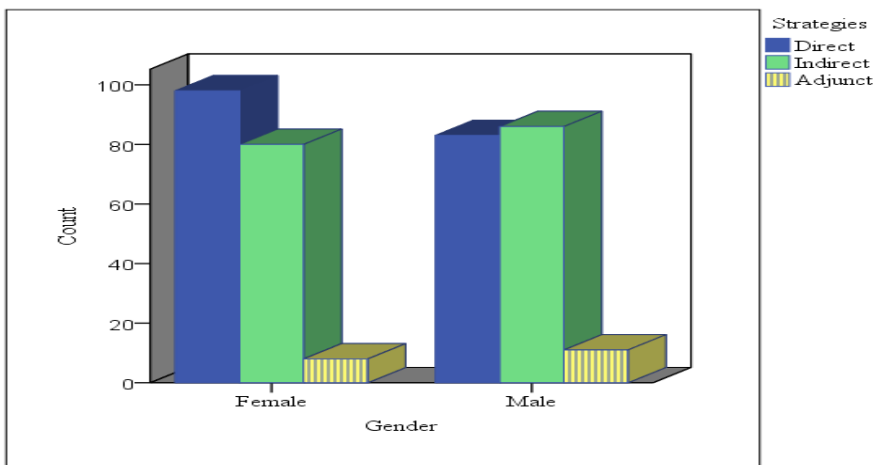


Figure 3. Occurrence of refusal of suggestion by female and male participants of low social status

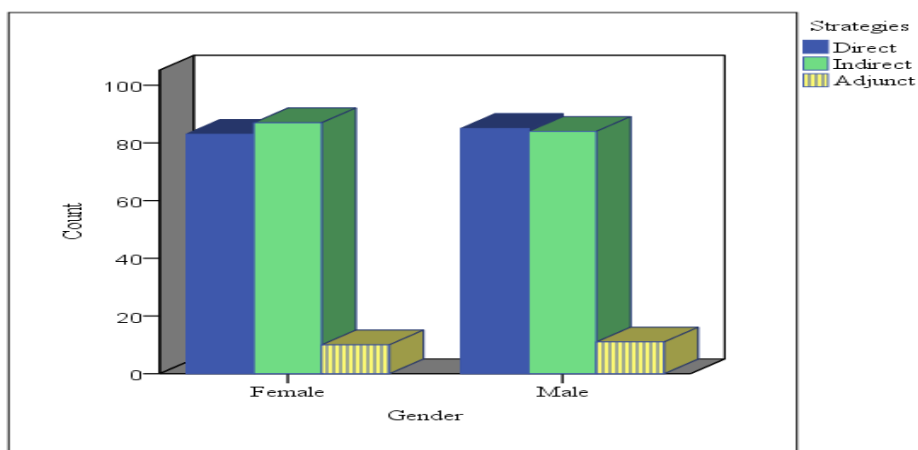


Figure 4. Occurrence of refusal of suggestion by female and male participants of high social status

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are in line with Hassani, Mardani and Vahid Dastjerdi’s (2011) research which found that participants used more indirect strategies. No evidence of difference was observed in refusals of male and female participants. The learners applied more indirect strategies to people of higher social status. Implicitness or indirectness has frequently been related with a high degree of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1990).

Furthermore, Qadoury Abed's (2011) research revealed that EFL learners applied more indirect strategies than the two others strategies. Males used a little more direct strategies to refuse the interlocutor's suggestion; EFL learners used more strategies to people of lower status.

Our study also lends support to Allami and Naeimi's (2011) finding that Iranian English language learners utilized less direct strategies in response to addressees of either higher or equal social status.

Besides, the results of the current study coincide with Abu Humeid and Altai's (2013) study which indicated that EFL learners utilized more indirect strategies than direct strategies to refuse their interlocutors' suggestion. They applied more indirect strategies to people of high social status and used the same level of indirect strategies to people of equal and low social status.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate into the preferred strategies of refusals of suggestion applied by Iranian female and male intermediate learners to people of social status. This study probed into the refusals of suggestion to high, equal, and low status.

The results revealed that, the learners' realization and application of refusal strategies was depended on the interlocutor's social status. Learners utilized more indirect strategies to people of equal social status, they applied more direct strategies to people of low social status, and we could say that they applied the same level of direct and indirect strategies to people of high social status. And they utilized more adjunct strategies to people of equal social status.

Both females and males were not different from each other due to their application of refusal strategies to people with different socialstatus. Females and males showed the same number of strategies of refusals when they interacted with people of the social status. Both genders used more direct strategies in their refusal of the people of the cross sex society gender.

A teacher should pay more attention to helping learners avoid pragmatic failures by teaching them the pragmatic knowledge. According to Zheng and Huang (2010) teachers should provide learners with the communicative rules, social conventions, and values of the target nation. This study supported the importance of comprehending refusals of speech acts in intermediate level, so EFL teachers should design the tasks which expose the learners to different pragmatic information that help them to carry out the speech acts and refusals of speech acts properly according to the people's social status. Language instructors should develop pragmatic ability by designing contextualized, task based activities that expose the learners to different kinds of pragmatic input and producing the proper output. Language instructors should instruct language forms and functions in the context of communicative oral activities in formal and informal situation in order to carry out speech acts successfully. The sociolinguistics information should be placed into the L2 curriculum and the text books from the beginning levels of language learning. Language instructors should teach how to do speech acts in FL in different situations of social status.

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