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Cross-Cultural Differences and Pragmatic Transfer in English and Persian Refusals

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine cross-cultural differences in performing refusal of requests between Persian native speakers (PNSs) and English native speakers (ENSs) in terms of the frequency of the semantic formulas. Also examined in this study was whether Persian EFL learners would transfer their L1 refusal patterns into the L2, and if there would be a relation between their proficiency level and the transfer of refusal strategies. To do so, 66 PNSs (studying Archeology and Law) and 59 ENSs from both genders filled out the Persian and English versions of the same discourse completion test (DCT), respectively. Also, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used to form 2 groups consisting of 61 high proficient (HP) Persian L2 learners and 81 low proficient (LP) ones, who all filled out the English version of the DCT. The refusals strategies used by the participants were turned into semantic formulas, and then classified into 3 groups of Direct, Indirect, and Adjuncts to Refusals. Findings showed no significant differences in the use of Direct refusal strategies between the ENSs and the PNSs. Unlike the PNSs who outweighed the ENSs in the use of Indirect strategies, the ENSs employed substantially more Adjuncts to Refusals. Findings also indicated the occurrence of pragmatic transfer in the use of Indirect and Adjuncts to Refusals by both the HP and LP L2 learners. However, the LP group was found to transfer their L1 refusal patterns more than the HP group.

Keywords: semantic formula, pragmatic transfer, language proficiency, discourse completion test (DCT), refusal pattern

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1. Introduction

Early second language acquisition (SLA) has focused on the accuracy of second language (L2) use. It was not until Hymes (1971) when he coined the term *communicative competence*. Due to the fact that idealized notion of linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky was considered inadequate, Hymes introduced a broader concept of communicative competence consisting of both linguistic competence and sociolinguistic knowledge of the rules of language use in context. It goes without saying that mastery over formal properties, however, does not guarantee the appropriate use of the language. They must have sociocultural knowledge of the L2 as well. L2 learners' lack of sociocultural rules of the L2 makes them exploit their own sociocultural rules (pragmatic transfer) that may bring about intercultural misunderstanding and cause serious consequences. However, Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) report that many researchers claim that transfer like interference does play an important role in shaping Interlanguage (IL).

Thomas (1983, 1984) pointed out that pragmatic failure is more detrimental than linguistic errors, and the situation becomes worse when it comes to advanced L2 learners. Some researchers hypothesized that L2 proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982). The findings remain controversial; therefore, more studies on this area are needed.

One way of accounting for pragmatic failure is from the Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) perspective. ILP explores the speech acts that emerge as the result of individuals attempting to learn and use speech acts of an L2. Uttering a speech act, we do something with our words. We perform an activity that brings about a change in the existing state of affairs. Refusal is a speech act that requires the addressee to respond negatively to an offer, request, invitation, and so on. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), such two types of faces as positive and negative exist in interaction. The former refers to the desire of being liked and approved of, and the latter refers to the desire of not being imposed on.

There is some controversy over L2 proficiency and pragmatic transfer. Some researchers (e.g. Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989) hypothesized that L2 proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer, whereas, Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, and Ross (1996) found that higher proficiency L2 learners were less likely to transfer L1 apology strategies that did the lower proficiency L2 learners.

Keeping the vital role of pragmatics and its transfer in L2 in mind, it is necessary to make Iranian L2 learners cognizant of potential cross-cultural differences in performing such a sensitive face-threatening act (FTA) as refusals because they have already been reported to transfer strategies of thanking (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009) and disagreements (Farnia, Sohrabie, & Musurra, 2009). The major research questions for the present study are:

1. What are the refusal strategies used by the Persian native speakers (PNSs) and the English native speakers (ENSs)?
2. Does pragmatic transfer occur in the refusals of Persian L2 learners of English in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas?
3. Is L2 proficiency related to pragmatic transfer?

2. Background to the Study

2.1 Pragmatic competence

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in the context of L2 teaching. Their view of communicative competence is "a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse" (p. 20). Thus, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence are indispensible components of communicative language ability.

As Leech (1983, p. 11) suggests, the construct of linguistics can be broken down into two major components of "grammar" and

"pragmatics". The former refers to the decontextualized formal system of language, whereas the latter refers to the use of language in a goal-oriented speech situation in which the speaker uses language to produce a particular effect in the mind of the hearer.

2.2 Sociopragmatic failure and pragmalinguistic failure

Pragmalinguistic failure, according to Thomas (1983), occurs when the pragmatic force (e.g. the intention) of a linguistic structure is different from that normally assigned to it by a native speaker or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from the L1 to the L2. As Thomas explains, the other type of pragmatic failure, sociopragmatic failure, is related to the knowledge of what to say and whom to say it to, which differs by complicated factors such as the size of imposition, cross-culturally different assessments of relative power or social distance, and value judgments. Misunderstanding caused by sociopragmatic failure is more detrimental.

2.3 Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP)

As a domain within L2 studies, pragmatics is usually referred to as ILP. In this study, ILP knowledge is defined, according to Kasper (1998) and Rose (1997), as the NNSs' knowledge of a pragmatic system and knowledge of its appropriate use. Over the past two decades, a great deal of research (e.g., Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990) has been done in cross-cultural pragmatics and ILP.

2.4 Pragmatic transfer

Pragmatic transfer in ILP has received considerable attention. Olshtain and Cohen (1989) refer to pragmatic transfer as L2 learners' strategy of incorporating native-language-based elements in L2 production. Pragmatic transfer is an important source of cross-cultural communication breakdown (e.g. Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). A good example of pragmalinguistic transfer is provided by Takahashi and DuFon's (1989) study which examined nine Japanese

English ESL learners' use of indirectness in two request situations. They found that the L2 learners at beginning proficiency level were either too direct or too indirect in their choice of indirectness in one of the situations. In another case, Byon (2004) identified and described sociopragmatic features of Americans learning Korean as a foreign language in the Korean communicative act of requests. The semantic formulae usage patterns of the learners of Korean as a foreign language were consistent with those of the American ENSs, indicative of an L1 transfer effect.

Regarding pragmatic transferability, Takahashi (1993, 1996) maintains that if L1 strategy is perceived to be frequently used and assumed to be appropriate enough, this strategy would more likely be transferred to the L2 context. Her second transferability criteria, that is equivalence of strategies in L1 and L2, is perceived the equivalent of the L1 and L2 pair of a request strategy in terms of contextual appropriateness. Based on the two above criteria, she proposed a pragmatic transferability scale, which posits that strategies rated high for contextual appropriateness and viewed as contextual equivalents are more transferable, whereas those that are rated low for appropriateness and considered contextually different are less transferable.

2.4.1 Factors affecting pragmatic transfer

Occurrences of pragmatic transfer may be influenced by various factors including L2 learners' perception of language distance between their L1 and L2 (e.g. Takahashi, 1996), learning context (e.g. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), instructional effect (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 1982), L2 proficiency (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), and length of time in the L2 community (e.g., Félix-Bradsefer, 2004). The study by Robinson (1992) suggests that L2 learners may be more prone to transfer their pragmatic L1 knowledge when they hold a universalist view. More specifically, these studies demonstrated that L2 learners may not transfer L1 pragmatic features to the L2 if they perceive them as language specific.

The present study was intended to explicitly address the issue of pragmatic transferability by examining the transferability of Persian refusal strategies when Persian learners of English realize English refusals in corresponding L2 contexts.

2.4.2 Pragmatic Transfer and L2 Proficiency

Research findings on the relationship of pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency have not led to conclusive results. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) proposed the positive correlation hypothesis, predicting that L2 proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer. Some studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1982; Cohen, 1997; Hill, 1997; Keshavarz, Eslami, & Ghahreman, 2006; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989) have supported Takahashi and Beebe's notion that L2 learners' limited L2 knowledge prevents them from transferring L1 pragmatic knowledge.

However, evidence contrary to Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) positive correlation hypothesis exists in the literature. For instance, Maeshiba et al.'s (1996) study involved intermediate and advanced Japanese-speaking ESL learners in Hawaii. Their findings confirmed that the advanced L2 learners showed more positive transfer and less negative transfer that does not support the positive correlation hypothesis.

Since the study of Takahashi and Beebe (1987) was conducted, not only have there been few ILP studies with explicit focus on L2 proficiency interacting with transfer, but also the range of languages studied has been narrow (mostly Japanese learners of English). Therefore, the present study specifically investigated the effect of language proficiency on Persian L2 learners' pragmatic development as evident in their perception of pragmatic transferability.

2.5 Speech acts

A moment's reflection over our daily language use would attest that speech acts are an indispensable component of everyday communication in any language. In his seminal book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), Austin, through proposing his speech act theory, believes that there is a lot more to a language than the meaning of its words and

phrases. He maintained that when we exploit language to communicate, we do not just say things but do things, that is we perform actions whether explicitly or implicitly**.** Among various types of speech acts, FTAs such as refusals, requests, and disagreements are particularly problematic for an L2 learner if speech rules in their L1 are employed (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990).

2.5.1 Speech act of refusals

Based on Ramos (1991), a refusal is to respond negatively to an offer, request, invitation, and so on. How one says *No* is more important in many societies than the answer itself. Therefore, the interlocutor must know when to use the appropriate form and its function. Refusals are considered to be a FTA among the speech acts. The positive or negative face of the speaker or the listener is risked when a refusal is called for or carried out. Consequently, refusals, as sensitive and high-risk, can provide much insight into one's pragmatics. Therefore, based on Ramos, to perform refusals is highly indicative of one's nonnative pragmatic competence.

2.5.2 Studies on the speech act of refusals

Several researchers (Beckers, 1999; Chen, 1996; Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, & El Bakary, 2002) compared the speech act of refusals across cultural groups and found that refusal strategies are used and the content of the strategies are culture-specific. Chen and Zhang (1995) investigated the Mandarin Chinese refusals. They concluded that the most frequently used strategy in Chinese was reason, followed by an alternative. Intrigued with ILP, Yamagashira (2001) set out to conduct a research on pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL refusals. The results of his study demonstrated that pragmatic transfer in refusal situations occurs most frequently in a request situation when the refusers were in a higher status than the requester. Felix-Brasdefer (2004) found that L2 learners differed from the native groups in the frequency, content, and perceptions of refusal strategies.

Al-Kahtani (2005) analyzed the differences in realizing speech acts of refusals in different cultures. Based on such dimensions of semantic

formulas as order, frequency, and content, he compared Americans, Arabs, and Japanese performance of refusals. The research findings revealed that the participants differed in the ways they performed refusals, but not across all situations.

Felix-Brasdefer (2006) investigated the linguistic strategies employed by monolingual native speakers of Mexican Spanish. He focused on such aspects of politeness as the degree of formality, politeness systems and strategy use, and politeness and the notion of face in Mexico. Having analyzed the refusal interactions, he came to the conclusion that among these speakers, the negotiation of face is accomplished largely by various indirect attempts at renegotiating a successful resolution. Yang (2008) analyzed situations in which refusals will occur in the Chinese culture. The findings of his research indicated that refusal is initiated by four types of acts: request, offer, invitation, and suggestion.

Although the literature on refusals is abundant, most studies, as mentioned before, have been conducted between English and languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, and so on. As far as the present researcher's smattering knowledge is concerned, however, no systematic study has been done to compare the speech act of refusals between English and Persian. Therefore, the researcher intended to hopefully fill this gap in the literature.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The present researcher used accessible random sampling. To do so, 66 PNSs with equal numbers of males and females, studying at Shahrekord University, Iran were selected. Also participated in this study were 59 ENSs, with equal numbers of males and females aged 20-32, studying at the University of California, Los Angeles. Due to the fact that the present study examined the effect of L2 proficiency on pragmatic transfer, two groups of English L2 learners were also needed to represent the low proficient (LP) versus the high proficient (HP) groups. In order to choose

the aforementioned proficiency groups, 220 male and female B.A. English Translation students and 90 male and female M.A. students of TEFL, aged 20-31, from Shahrekord University and University of Isfahan were randomly chosen to take the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and finally 81 were included in the LP group and 61 participants represented the HP group.

3.2 Instruments

The elicitation instrument used for data collection was the DCT, developed by Beebe et al. Beebe's (1990) questionnaire comprised 12 different situations that were classified into four stimulus types eliciting a refusal: three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Because the study was intended to investigate refusals of requests, the situations that required the respondents to refuse offers, suggestions, and invitations were omitted. Instead, three other situations were added to the effect that the final DCT comprised six situations. Each situation presented the respondents with a detailed description of the context and the social status between the interlocutors. The refusers' social status relative to the interlocutor in each group of situations involved three levels: high, equal, and low. For each level, two situations were included to provide a source of data (see Appendix A). The participants were required to write down what they would say in real-life situations.

To investigate if pragmatic transfer occurred in the refusals of the PNSs in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas and the effect of proficiency level on transfer of L1 strategies, the same English DCT was translated into Persian and was administered to the PNSs. In addition, the OPT (r = 0.85) was administered to 142 EFL Translation undergraduates in order to divide them into two groups of HP and LP groups.

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Phase one

In the first phase, 66 PNSs were asked to fill out the Persian version of the DCT. Also, 59 ENSs were asked to fill out the English version. After the DCT questionnaires were collected, the refusal responses were categorized based on the Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification system with some minor changes to fit the corpus of this study (see Appendix B). The analysis of the corpus showed that whereas the employment of *Negative Ability/Willingness* was found in every situation, the Direct refusal *NO* never occurred in the refusal responses of all the groups for certain situations. Thus, *No* and *I can't* were coded as separate for this study.

3.3.2 Phase two

In order to examine the effect of proficiency level of the Persian L2 learners on the pragmatic transfer, 220 B.A. students majoring in English Translation and 90 M.A. students majoring in TEFL were given the OPT. Using the SPSS software, the means and standard deviations of the test-takers' scores were taken into account. Sixty-one Persian L2 learners were selected to take part in the HP group, and 81 Persian L2 learners were chosen to take part in the LP group. The researcher administered the English version of the DCT questionnaire to the two groups.

4. Results and Findings

In order to investigate the significance of the difference between the means of the two populations (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991), a *t*-test had to be used. Table 4.1 shows the result of the *t*-test performed between the means of the Direct refusal strategies of the PNSs and the ENSs:

Table 1. The result of t test between the means of direct refusals of the PNSs and the ENSs

	Test Value = 1.56					
	t	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Dir	-.611	123	**.097**	-.116	-.533	.279

The results from the comparison of the means of the Direct refusal patterns showed there was not a significant difference between the means of the two groups (t = .611, df = 123, α = 0.05, p = .097). Because p value was more than α, there was no significant difference between the means of the Direct refusal patterns of the PNSs and the ENSs.

As Table 4.2 shows, there was a significant difference between the means of the two groups (t = 2.24, df = 123, α = 0.009, p = 0.005). Because p value was less than α, there was a significant difference between the means of the Indirect refusal patterns in the PNSs and the ENSs:

Table 2. The result of t test between the means of indirect refusals of the PNSs and the ENSs

	Test Value = 12.6					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Indirect	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
	2.24	123	**.009**	1.26	.3391	2.09

As Table 4.3 shows, there was a significant difference between the means of the two groups (t = -12.09, df = 123 α = 0.05, p = 0.000). Here again, because p value was less than α, there was a significant difference between the means of the Adjuncts to Refusal patterns in the PNSs and the ENSs:

Table 3. The result of test between the means of adjuncts to refusals of the PNSs and the ENSs

	Test Value = 5.1					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Adjunct	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
	-12.09	123	**.000**	-3.95	-4.61	-3.40

Based on the results of Tables 4.2 and 4.3, whereby the difference between the means of the two groups was statistically significant, the following null hypothesis is rejected:

- H_{01}: There are differences between the refusal strategies used by the PNSs and the ENSs.

Having formed the two groups, the researcher administered the English version of the DCT questionnaire to the groups. The semantic formulas were grouped into Direct, Indirect, and Adjuncts to Refusals. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show, in detail, the frequency of the refusal patterns of the LP and the HP Persian L2 learners, respectively:

Table 4. The frequency of the refusal patterns of the HP persian L2 learners

Refusal	Semantic Formulas	Mean	*SD*	Sum
Direct	NO	1.48	1.04	44.00
	Negative Willingness/Ability	1.68	1.02	51.00
Indirect	Statement of Regret	4.102	1.94	124.00
	Wish	.628	.81	19.20
	Excuse, Reason, Explanation	8.47	1.44	271.00
	Statement of Alternative	.738	.73	23.00
	Set Condition for Acceptance	.834	.93	30.00
	Criticism	.360	.67	9.55
	Let Interlocutor off the Hook	.72	.69	23.00
	Apology	.60	.76	20.00
	Ask for Forgiveness	.48	.62	10.00
	Swear	.48	.62	10.00
Adjuncts	Statement of Positive Opinion	1.80	1.05	38.00
	Statement of Empathy	.50	.67	19.50
	Pause Filler	1.45	1.35	43.00

Table 5. The frequency of the refusal patterns of the LP persian L2 learners

Refusal	Semantic Formulas	Mean	*SD*	Sum
Direct	NO	3.40	1.89	105.00
	Negative Willingness/Ability	3.01	1.47	89.00
Indirect	Statement of Regret	2.600	1.96	85.00
	Wish	.070	.25	2.00
	Excuse, Reason, Explanation	12.16	1.89	365.00
	Statement of Alternative	.69	1.21	20.70
	Set Condition for Acceptance	.42	.95	12.50
	Criticism	3.25	.87	10.00
	Let Interlocutor off the Hook	.078	.46	2.60
	Postponement	.00	.00	.00
	Topic Switch	.00	.00	.00
	Apology	2.08	1.97	62.40
	Ask for Forgiveness	2.76	1.74	82.80
	Swear	2.23	1.86	66.70
Adjuncts	Statement of Positive Opinion	.63	1.47	19.90
	Statement of Empathy	.00	.00	.00
	Pause Filler	.88	1.70	26.40

As Tables 4 and 5 show, there were three strategies that were absolutely absent from the exploited refusal patterns of the ENSs. These

include such strategies as *Swear*, *Ask for Forgiveness*, and *Apology*. These refusal patterns were utilized by the PNSs, though. This way, the second research hypothesis, regarding the occurrence of transfer in the refusals of the Persian learners of English in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas, is also rejected, and the following directional hypothesis comes under spotlight:

- H_2: Pragmatic transfer occurs in the refusals of the Persian L2 learners of English in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas.

In order to answer the third research question concerning the relationship between L2 proficiency and pragmatic transfer, the frequency of the semantic formulas produced by both Persian L2 learner groups were compared with the patterns of English and Persian. Table 4.6 displays the comparison of the patterns dominant in each proficiency group. The similarity between the PNSs and ENSs' patterns and the L1 or the L2 patterns is indicated by L1 or L2 in Table 4.6, respectively:

Table 6. Semantic formulas used differently between the PNSs and the ENSs

	Wish	Regret	Excuse	Apology	Forgiveness	Swear	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Pause
Low	L1	L2	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1
High	L2	L2	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L1	L2

As displayed in Table 4.6, among the nine semantic formulas in which the ENS group significantly differed from the PNS group in the frequency of the use, the LP Persian L2 learners had more L1 refusal patterns. Resembling the L2 patterns only in the employment of *Statement of Regret* formula, this group utilized the L1 patterns in eight refusal semantic formulas. The HP Persian L2 learners, however, resembled the L2 patterns in three semantic formulas, namely *Wish*, *Statement of Regret*, and *Pause Filler*. They exploited native-like refusal

patterns in six refusal semantic formulas. Therefore, the third research null hypothesis was rejected to the effect that the Persian LP Persian L2 learners transferred their L1 refusal semantic formulas more than the HP Persian L2 learners did. So, the following directional hypothesis comes to notice

- H_3: There is a relationship between proficiency level and pragmatic transfer in the refusals of the Persian L2 learners of English in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that although the PNSs used more Indirect refusal strategies, the ENSs used more Adjuncts to Refusals. No significant difference was found between the two groups in using the Direct refusal strategies. The range of the Indirect refusal patterns used differed in the two cultures. The PNSs employed three semantic formulas that the ENSs did not: *Swear*, *Ask for Forgiveness*, and *Apology*. Also, both the LP and HP Persian L2 learners transferred some of their L1 refusal patterns into their L2. The results of the study also indicated that the LP Persian L2 learners transferred their L1 refusal patterns more than the HP Persian L2 learners.

The overall group comparisons show there were both similarities and differences between the use of English and Persian refusal strategies. In fact, the majority of the participants avoided such Direct refusals such as *No* or *I can't*. This finding is in contrast with that of Chang (2009) and those of Phuong (2006). Drawing on Sahragard's (2000) explanation, one could rationalize this effect and run an argument to the effect that the Persian culture, leaning specifically more towards the inherently built-in concept of Rudarbaayesti (being shy or ceremonious), cannot do without this vitally indispensible component. The PNSs tended to put the face of their interlocutors on the front burner, so that it would not be subject to any act of threat. *Statement of Regret* ranked the second in frequency of occurrence in both languages, but the ENSs were observed to use this

strategy more. The results also revealed that the PNS were found to utilize substantially more Indirect refusal strategies than the ENSs. The PNSs, to be more specific, used *Apology*, *Ask for Forgiveness*, and *Swear* as refusal strategies, but the ENSs did not use them at all. The PNSs also tended to apologize to their interlocutors and ask them to forgive them for refusing their request, if the requester's status was higher. Apropos of the Adjuncts, the ENSs made more use of Adjuncts than did the PNSs, namely *Statement of Positive Opinion*, *Statement of Empathy*, and *Pause Filler*. This vividly coincides with the findings of the study by Chang (2009) and Phuong (2006). Also, another intriguing finding popped out: The ENSs employed *Statement of Regret* and *Wish* more often than the PNSs did.

Regarding the occurrence of pragmatic transfer in the refusals of the Persian L2 learners in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas, the Persian L2 learners resembled their L1 performance. However, there was not a difference between the PNSs' and the Persian L2 learners' refusal pattern of *apology* on the one hand, and there was a statistically significant difference between the ENSs and the PNSs' apology strategy on the other. Based on Kasper's (1992) definition of pragmatic transfer, it can present enough evidence of this kind of transfer.

Although the native speakers of both languages utilized *Excuse, Reason,* and *Explanation,* the PNSs did so substantially more than the ENSs. The Persian L2 learners resembled the PNSs in the use of *Excuse, Reason,* and *Explanation* strategies. This means that they transferred their L1 refusal pattern into their L2. Neither the PNSs nor the Persian L2 learners utilized Adjuncts to refusals.

The LP Persian L2 learners had more L1-like refusal patterns. The HP Persian L2 learners, however, resembled L2-like patterns in three semantic formulas, namely *Wish, Statement of Regret,* and *Pause Filler*. Therefore, the hypothesis of Beebe and Takahashi (1987), which holds that transfer increases as L2 learner's proficiency increases (i.e., transfer is greater among higher proficiency L2 learners than among lower proficiency L2 learners) was not supported in this study.

Therefore, depending on L2 learners' needs and goals, it is incumbent upon L2 teachers to come up with a well-thought methodology and practically fully-fledged syllabus to teach the miscellaneous recurring speech acts as well as their realizations. After all, it is L2 Learners who ultimately will need these speech acts in their communicative acts. So, pragmatically speaking, it makes good sense to teach those which are most relevant to L2 learners' immediate communication context. As a preliminary step, L2 teachers need to make their L2 learners fully aware of such cross-culturally different patterns. Therefore, the potential sources of cross-cultural misunderstandings and possible breakdowns of communication will be minimized. It is worth mentioning that future research on cross-cultural pragmatics can make use of the same methodology and design for the investigation of refusals of offers, suggestions, or invitations.

Having agreed on the appropriate list of speech acts to be included in the course, the next step would be that of sequencing of the materials in terms of importance as well as linguistic complexity. In the cold light of day, certainly, what comes into the scene is L2 learners' communicative needs regarding the realization of speech acts. Linguistically speaking, all forms of communication are equally on a par, but, pragmatically speaking, some specific forms are much more liable to risk ones' face. In other words, there are some vital speech acts, refusal being one particular instance that requires more mastery.

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Appendixes

Appendix A
Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Name: …… Age: …….
Native Language: …… Term: ……

Directions: *Please read the following six situations. After each situation, you are asked to write a response in the blank after "you." Respond as you would in an actual conversation.*

Situation 1*: You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It's closing to the end of the day and you want to leave work.*

Boss: If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work.
You: .....……
Boss: That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

Situation 2*: You are an English teacher in a language school. One of your colleagues can't attend one of his classes. The manager asks you to handle the class instead of him but you've already planned to do something.*

Manager: Mr./Ms. Karimi has a very important exam tomorrow, and he is not well-prepared. Could you handle his class this afternoon please?
You: .....……..……
Manager: Well, I have to look for someone else then.

Situation 3*: You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your friend often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes.*

Classmate: Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I'm sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?
You: ..……..……..…...
Classmate: OK, then I guess I'll have to ask somebody else.

Situation 4*: Your friend asks to use your car to go to Tehran. Knowing that he is a careless and unskillful driver, you don't want to lend him or her your car.*

Your friend: Would you mind lending me your car to go to Tehran.
You: ……
Your friend: That's too bad. I guess I have to take the bus.

Situation 5*: You are the owner of a language institute. One of your teachers asks to speak to you in private.*

Teacher: As you know, I have been here just over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.
You: .....……
Teacher: Then, I guess I'll have to look for another institute.

Situation 6: *You are a university professor. You have administered a linguistics midterm test but students have not got good scores. One of the students who represents others asks for another test.*

Student: It seems that students have not performed well on the test. Could you administer another test please?
You: ……...

Appendix B

Edited Refusal Classification System

I. Direct Refusals

1. No
2. Negative willingness/ability (e.g., "I can't/I won't/I don't think so.")

II. Indirect Refusals

1. Statement of regret (e.g., *I'm sorry*. Or, *I feel terrible.*)
2. Wish (e.g., *I wish I could help you. . . .*)
3. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., *I have a headache.*)
4. Statement of alternative
5. Set condition for acceptance
6. Criticism
7. Let interlocutor off the hook
8. Self-defense
9. Postponement
10. Topic switch (avoidance)
11. Repetition
12. Ask for forgiveness
13. Swear
14. Apology

III. Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement
2. Statement of empathy