

# The Pragmatics of Refusals: Strategy Use in Czech and English Refusals

## Pragmatika odmítání: Strategie odmítnutí v českém a anglickém jazyce

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(diplomová práce)

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá mluvní akt odmítnutí mezi rodilými mluvčími českého a anglického jazyka s cílem identifikovat rozdíly a podobnosti v užitých strategiích odmítnutí. K tomu byla provedena menší studie. Pro sběr dat byl použit test kompletnosti diskursu (DCT) v písemné podobě. Výsledky poukazují na značné podobnosti při volbě strategií odmítnutí mezi oběma jazyky. Při zvážení možného dopadu na volbu strategií odmítnutí na základě pohlaví respondenta, ze studie vyplývá, že muži využívají více přímých strategií odmítnutí, zatímco ženy preferují spíše nepřímé strategie. Mezi anglickými mluvčími podobná odchylka nebyla zaznamenána. Výsledky studie poukazují na fakt, že nedorozumění mezi těmito jazyky není pravděpodobné, protože vysoké množství sdílených strategií při používání mluvních aktů často vede k úspěšnému dorozumění.

Klíčová slova: druhý jazyk, mluvní akt, nabídka, návrh, odmítnutí, pozvání, pragmatika, strategie odmítnutí, zdvořilost, žádost

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates the speech act of refusal in Czech and English, aiming to identify similarities and differences in refusal strategies among native speakers. To do so, a small-scale research study was employed using a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire. Results suggest a great deal of similarities in the employment of refusal strategies between both languages. Considering the potential impact of gender on the choice of refusal strategies, Czech men appear to employ more direct strategies, while Czech women employ more indirect strategies. No such difference was observed among English-speaking respondents. Overall, findings suggest that misunderstanding between both languages is unlikely, as shared speech act strategies often lead to successful communication.

Keywords: invitation, offer, politeness, pragmatics, refusal, refusal strategy, request, second language, speech act, suggestion

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work. All sources of information have been duly acknowledged and referenced. I affirm that I have not plagiarised any materials and have not used any unauthorised assistance in its preparation.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been a notable increase in cross-cultural studies in recent years, particularly those concerned with speech act analysis. However, refusals have received relatively little attention in comparison to some of the more researched speech acts (such as complaints, apologies, or requests). Given the limited research on refusals, particularly in Slavic languages, I believe this study will offer valuable insights.

This thesis aims to examine how native Czech and English speakers carry out the speech act of refusals. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, the beginning chapters of this thesis cover the necessary theories of speech acts, politeness, and refusals. These theories serve as the foundational knowledge for the rest of the study.

In order to examine the employment of the speech act of refusal between both language groups, a small-scale research study has been conducted. For this research, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire was used, involving 40 participants to gather a sufficient amount of refusal responses for subsequent analysis. The analysis aims to uncover disparities and similarities in refusal patterns between the two language groups while also considering the potential influence of gender on refusal behaviour.

The concluding chapters of this thesis cover the findings of the small-scale research study. By investigating the distribution of direct and indirect refusal strategies, and exploring variations in strategy usage between language groups, while considering the impact of gender on refusal behaviour, this study aims to advance the understanding of the topic of refusals.



## **I. THEORY**

# 1 SPEECH ACTS

Communication takes place all over the globe. One of the main tools of communication is speech. Individuals communicate a plethora of information spanning from very general information, such as what happened to them on their way home, to rather complicated notions of various complex scientific fields.

The understanding of speech as a simple transfer of information from one interlocutor to another is faulty. According to Birner, the production of an utterance is inevitably an act (2013). Speakers combine various sets of expressions in an utterance to achieve a certain communicative goal. For communication to be successful, the hearer is required to arrive at the speaker's communicative goal. To achieve that, the hearer needs to consider the wider context of the utterance, as the speaker's intention is often not directly evident from the semantics of the utterance (Birner 2013). Because the theory of speech acts involves intention and inference, it is inherently a pragmatic theory (Birner 2013).

## 1.1 Speech Act Theory

Utterances can perform a wide array of speech acts. Requests, apologies, and even refusals (the main topic of this thesis) are all examples of speech acts. It is important to cover how speakers perform acts and how hearers arrive at the intended act of the speaker. However, distinguishing the speaker's intended speech act is not straightforward.

## 1.2 Austin's Theory of Speech Acts

One of the pragmatists who significantly developed the theory of speech acts was John Austin. John Austin established that speech acts consist of three types of acts (1962, 94-107). Those are *locutionary*, *illocutionary*, and *perlocutionary acts*.

According to Austin, a locutionary act can simply be described as the act of "saying something" (Austin 1962, 94). It is the performance of an utterance. The illocutionary act, on the other hand, is more concerned with the speaker's intended meaning and carries illocutionary force (Austin 1962, 99). The perlocutionary act is understood as the effect of the speaker's speech act (Austin 1962, 101) on the surroundings. To provide an example, when a speaker utters the sentence "It is cold here," the locutionary act is simply uttering the sentence. Illocutionary acts are context-dependent. In this example, the illocutionary force of the utterance may be one of a request, possibly a request to close the window or turn on

the hearing. Finally, the performance of the speech act leads to a certain reaction (e.g., the interlocutor stands up and closes the window), which is called the perlocutionary act. However, the effect on the hearer can be out of the scope of the speaker's intentions. It influences not only the hearer's actions but also their feelings and thoughts (Austin 1962, 101).

In addition, Austin was the author of a preliminary distinction that distinguished between two kinds of utterances. Those were constative utterances (*constatives*) and performative utterances (*performatives*) (Austin 1962, 147-149). Constatives are utterances that typically describe facts or states of affairs. Oftentimes, they are referred to as "propositions" or "statements" and are either true or false (Austin 1962, 149-151). Performatives are linguistic expressions usually employed to perform a certain action. By uttering the performative expression, one automatically performs the action that the expression conveys (Austin 1962, 147-151). For instance, when one utters the sentence "I promise to do it," they automatically perform the act promising.

In his work, Austin established five types of performatives (1962, 150-151):

- a) Verdictives (giving a verdict, such as appraisal, or reckoning)
- b) Exercitives (exercising of power, such as voting, appointing, ordering),
- c) Commissive (promising or otherwise undertaking; they commit the speaker to do something),
- d) Behabitives (concerned with attitudes and social behaviour, such as apologising, congratulating, condoling)
- e) Expositives (expressions explaining how our utterances fit into the conversation, such as "I reply," "I postulate," etc.)

Austin further elaborates on his classification of performatives, stating that he himself feels "far from equally happy about all of them" (1962, 150). According to him, the types seem difficult to classify clearly, prove difficult to define, and often overlap (1962, 150-151).

Austin's theory of speech acts had a significant impact on the theory of pragmatics and is still relevant nowadays. However, criticism of Austin's theory arose over time. Culpeper and Haugh brought up concerns about the limitations of the theory (2014, 175). They argue that Austin's theory inadequately addresses the role of social context and that

more social information related to a speaker or a hearer should be incorporated, particularly factors like status, age, or cultural background (Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 176).

### 1.3 Searle's Theory of Speech Acts

Austinian claims were refined by John Searle, Austin's student in the 1950s (Ambrose 2010, 4). According to Ambrose, Searle transforms the concept of ordinary language analysis into a more complex, logical analysis of speech acts perceived as semantic phenomena (ibid.). Searle and Vanderveken claim that speech acts consist of *propositional content* and an *illocutionary force* (1985, 1-20). According to them, each act has certain conditions of satisfaction and use.

Two different speech acts may carry the same propositional content but different illocutionary forces (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 1-20). For instance, the utterance "I will win the tournament" can carry the illocutionary forces of either a statement or a promise. To distinguish whether the utterance is to be perceived as a speech act of a statement or a promise, one needs to consider the utterance's conditions of satisfaction, which are dependent on its illocutionary force and propositional content (Searle 1969, 51-71). A promise becomes satisfied by being kept, while a statement becomes satisfied if it is true (Searle 1969, 72-96).

According to Searle, a speech act is an instance of linguistic communication performed with a certain kind of intention (1969, 16). A speech act does not necessarily need to be verbal. They can also be performed, for instance, through written language, noises, or symbols on paper. The key aspect of a speech act is the intention of the communicator to perform a particular action through their expression, regardless of the mode of communication (Searle 1969, 16-17). Searle's theory diverges from the theory of his predecessor by his rigid distinction between the content and the force of an utterance (Searle 1969, 54-71).

Furthermore, based on his theory, Searle presented his own classification of speech acts, classifying them into five basic types (Searle 1976, 10-23):

- a) Assertives (statements, classifications, descriptions, explanations)
- b) Directives (commands, orders, requests, invitations, offers)
- c) Commissives (vows, contracts, guarantees, promises)

- d) Expressives (thanks, apologies, condolences, welcomes, congratulations)
- e) Declarations (expressions such as “I pronounce,” “you are fired,” “war is hereby declared”)

For the purposes of the current study, some speech acts are especially relevant. These are requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. All of these speech acts fall under the classification of directives (Searle 1976, 10-23). According to Searle, the propositional content of directives always entails some future action from the hearer, and they aim to influence the actions or decisions of others (1976, 11). Different types of directives carry varying degree of influence over others. Searle illustrates this by noting that invitations or suggestions generally carry weaker illocutionary force compared to instances where, for example, we insist on something from others (1976, 11). To provide a more tangible example, consider the strength of the illocutionary force of the following sentences: “I suggest we go to the movies” and “I insist that we go to the movies” (Searle 1976, 5).

Other than the directives mentioned in this chapter, the speech act of refusal is crucial for this thesis. As the speech act of refusal is closely related to the main topic of the current study, it is further elaborated upon in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Searle’s theory introduced innovations and addressed certain deficiencies of Austin’s work. Searle’s theory of speech acts laid down the necessary foundation for future research on the topic of speech acts (Mabaquiao 2010, 44).

#### **1.4 Indirect Speech Acts**

Correctly determining what kind of speech act the speaker is trying to perform is not always a simple task. To help one determine the intended illocutionary act, the speaker employs various hints and indicators. Such indicators are called Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) (Yule 1996). IFIDs range from rather obvious devices (such as performatives) to some less apparent ones. Some examples of the less apparent devices are, for instance, paralinguistic features (such as intonation or stress) or word order (Yule 1996, 49-50).

Furthermore, depending on the context of the utterance, employed IFIDs, and other factors, a single utterance is not limited to carrying a single illocutionary force (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 1). To provide an example, consider the sentence “It is cold in here.” At first glance, it appears to be a seemingly simple declarative sentence with a simple

illocutionary force of a statement. However, depending on the context in which such a sentence is uttered, the intended illocutionary force may be a different one (Searle 1975, 59). Perhaps the person uttering the sentence forgot to bring their jacket and is indirectly asking their interlocutor to stand up and close the window. The sentence thus illustrates how a single utterance can carry two different illocutionary forces while sharing common propositional content (Searle 1975, 59-60). If the sentence were to be interpreted as a simple statement, then such a speech act would be considered a *direct speech act*, as its illocutionary force is in alignment with its propositional content. In the case of the utterance being interpreted as a request, it is considered an *indirect speech act* (ibid.).

Indirectness is a common strategy used in conversation. According to Leech, indirectness is often employed in connection with politeness (1983, 108). Indirect strategies are commonly used to soften the impact of potentially unpleasant and face-threatening messages.

However, politeness is not the only reason for employing indirect strategies. Indirect strategies can make an individual's statements and utterances more interesting and engaging, or perhaps the individual chooses to perform an indirect strategy to increase the force of the intended message (Thomas 1995, 143).

## **2 POLITENESS**

Politeness is a social phenomenon that is a subject of research in a broad spectrum of fields. Politeness became an issue of great relevance in the fields of sociolinguistics, social psychology, pragmatics, anthropology, and applied linguistics, among others (Brown and Levinson 1987, 2).

Over time, a number of approaches and theories covering the question of politeness from the standpoint of linguistics emerged. Among some of the most relevant theories for this thesis are the theories of Geoffrey Leech, and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson.

### **2.1 Leech's Approach**

In order to cover Leech's theory of politeness, it is crucial to provide a brief overview of the theory established by Paul Grice. However, it is important to note that Paul Grice's theory is typically not classified as a politeness theory, as it is primarily concerned with the principles of effective communication and the cooperative nature of conversation. In his paper, Grice provides the readers with his theory of communication (Grice 1975). He argues that interlocutors are rational individuals generally striving to convey their messages efficiently (Grice 1975, 41-43).

Grice proposed that for communication to be successful, the interlocutors are expected to cooperate. This notion is developed generally in his theory of the Cooperative Principle (CP) (Grice 1975, 45). Grice describes the CP as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or directions of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (ibid.).

According to Grice, rational speakers follow certain rules called conversational maxims. These rules represent a set of over-arching assumptions that help guide the conduct of conversation, which arise from basic rational consideration (Grice 1975, 45; Levinson 1983, 101). Failing to follow the conversational maxims does not necessarily signal uncooperativeness. According to Grice, failing to follow conversational maxims (simply put, speaking in an inefficient and unexpected way) may signal certain intentions of the speaker called conversational implicatures (Grice 1975, 49-58). In order to arrive at the intended meaning of conversational implicatures, the hearer needs to apply the general power of rationality and inference (Searle 1979, 31).

Geoffrey Leech elaborates on Grice's CP theory and the theory of maxims. In his work *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983), Leech proposes a distinction between a speaker's social goals (the social effect on his surroundings) and illocutionary goals (the intended meaning of an utterance). Based on this differentiation, he introduces two sets of conversational (rhetorical) principles known as *Textual Rhetoric* and *Interpersonal Rhetoric* (Leech, 1983). These principles are constituted by a set of maxims that impose specific social constraints on rational conversation (Leech 1983).

Leech never provides an exact definition of the concept of politeness; however, he develops his Principle of Politeness (PP), which he ascribes to the scope of Interpersonal Rhetoric, along with Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and the Irony Principle (IP) (Leech 1983, 79-84). According to PP, to appear more polite is to minimize the expression of unfavourable beliefs towards the hearer while trying to maximize the expression of favourable beliefs towards the hearer (Leech 1983, 81). According to Leech, a degree of tension takes place between the CP and PP which leads the speaker to a decision on how and what message to convey (Leech 1983, 82).

Moreover, Leech elaborates on the relationship between CP and PP. He proposes that to achieve communicational goals, it is of paramount importance to maintain friendly relations and social equilibrium among the speakers, as a sense of camaraderie allows us to assume that our interlocutor is cooperative in the first place (Leech 1983, 92).

Furthermore, Leech's theory of politeness goes into greater detail. Leech provides a wider variety of maxims of politeness, namely maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy, each with a set of scales in each of them (Leech 1983). Individual maxims will be covered in greater detail in the following chapter.

### **2.1.1 Leech's Maxims of Politeness**

Leech mentions that, generally, politeness is concerned with the relationship of two parties, the *self* and the *other* (1983, 131). However, Leech proposes that the label *other* does not include only the addressee but also third parties, who may or may not be a part of the current speech situation (*ibid.*). Speakers show politeness not only to the addressee but also to the third parties that are part of the current speech situation (*ibid.*). Based on various factors, the importance of demonstrating politeness towards third parties can differ. For instance, one of the factors is whether the third party is present in the current speech situation, while another factor is whether they are perceived as part of *self's* circle or *other's* circle



(Leech 1983, 131-132). Leech provides his readers with an example. He states that a speaker has to be more polite when referring to a hearer's spouse than when referring to their own spouse (ibid.). Furthermore, Leech proposes that cross-cultural variations take place even in this area. For instance, in certain societies, an individual may consider their spouse as a part of *self*, thus feeling less restricted when referring to her (ibid.). On the other hand, in other cultures, it may be common to consider spouses as part of *other*, resulting in less open discussion about them (ibid.).

Leech provides a simplified overview of his maxims of politeness (1983, 132):

A) Tact Maxim

- a) Minimise cost to *other* / b) Maximise benefit to *other*

B) Generosity Maxim

- a) Minimise benefit to *self* / b) Maximise cost to *self*

C) Approbation Maxim

- a) Minimise dispraise to *other* / b) Maximise praise of *other*

D) Modesty Maxim

- a) Minimise praise of *self* / b) Maximise dispraise of *self*

E) Agreement Maxim

- a) Minimise disagreement between *self* and *other* / b) Maximise agreement between *self* and *other*

F) Sympathy Maxim

- a) Minimise antipathy between *self* and *other* / b) Maximise sympathy between *self* and *other*

Additionally, in his more recent work (2014, 91), Leech provides another maxim called the Obligation Maxim. This maxim accounts for actions stemming from obligation, such as thanking or apologising (Leech 2014, 197). Leech elaborates on the act of thanking and connects it with his PP (2014, 197). According to him, thanking serves as a gesture aiming to restore the balance of mutual respect and cooperation between individuals, where one person is indebted to the other (Leech 2014, 197).

Leech elaborates that all the presented maxims fall under the PP as they recommend the expression of polite beliefs rather than the expression of impolite beliefs (1983, 132). Furthermore, Leech proposes that the maxims of politeness differ in their importance (1983, 133). He suggests that out of the maxims A-D, the maxim A seems to be the most important, influencing conversational behaviour more than the other maxims (ibid.).

According to Leech, there is an evident clash between the different maxims of PP (1983, 137). As a result, the speaker is inevitably compelled to prioritise one maxim over the others (Leech 1983, 137).

I believe that for the purposes of the current thesis (considering the main topic being the speech act of refusals), the most relevant maxims will be the maxims of Agreement and Obligation.

## **2.2 Brown and Levinson's Approach**

The second approach to the theory of politeness covered in this chapter is that of Brown and Levinson. Brown and Levinson's theory departs from the theory of Grice, albeit they take a looser approach to it. In their work *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987), they describe to what degree they assume the general correctness of Grice's theory of conversational interaction. They state as follows: "...the only essential presumption is what is at the heart of Grice's proposals, namely that there is a working assumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk. It is against that assumption that polite ways of talking show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker's apparent irrationality or inefficiency." (Brown and Levinson 1987, 4). Therefore, according to Brown and Levinson, a significant reason for deviation from conversational maxims is to ensure politeness (ibid.).

In the theory of Brown and Levinson, the CP assumes a different position than in the theories of their predecessors. The CP establishes a framework that is socially neutral where regular communication takes place. The main idea behind the framework is that without reason, there should be no deviation from rational efficiency. Oftentimes it is the consideration of politeness that leads to deviations from the assumption maintained by the CP (Brown and Levinson 1987, 5).

In addition, Brown and Levinson assert that linguistic politeness is a conversational implicature, a part of a message, which requires to be communicated. If a hearer fails to perceive the intention of the speaker to be polite, the speaker's message will not be considered as such. In addition, they mention that what is considered polite in a certain situation depends on the context of the situation in which it is uttered (ibid.).

### **2.2.1 The Theory of Face**

Brown and Levinson's view of politeness revolves around the crucial term of *face* which they adapted from the work of Goffman (1967). Face can be understood as an individual's self-esteem, a form of public self-image of an individual (Goffman 1967, 5).

Brown and Levinson elaborated on this concept and characterised two types of face. Both types of face revolve more around the individual's wants and needs rather than on social norms (Brown and Levinson 1987, 62).

The first type of face, termed "negative face," is defined by Brown and Levinson as "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (ibid.). Explained more simply, it refers to an individual's wants to maintain possessions, having the freedom to act or speak as desired, etc. (ibid.).

The second type of face is called the "positive face." Brown and Levinson provide their readers with a definition: "the want of every member that his wants to be desirable to at least some others" (ibid.). In other words, it is an individual's desire to be approved of, be seen as competent, etc.

Face can be described as a delicate aspect of each individual. Face can be enhanced, maintained, or lost, and interlocutors constantly monitor potential threats to their own as well as other's face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61-65). Given the susceptibility of face to threats and given the desire of interlocutors to defend their face, a general assumption is held. According to the assumption, it is in everyone's best interest to preserve each other's face and to behave in a manner that clearly communicates this intention to others (ibid.).

### **2.2.2 Face-Threatening Acts**

One of the principles of great importance in Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is the idea that some acts are inherently threatening to face and, as such, require to be softened. They term these acts as "Face-Threatening Acts" (FTAs) (Brown and Levinson 1987, 24).

Language users of various demographic and cultural backgrounds develop principles of politeness which reflect on their language through certain linguistic strategies. These linguistic strategies are adapted by the language users to ensure that both the primary message as well as the intention to appear polite, are communicated. In addition, by employing these linguistic strategies, the users mitigate the face loss arising from the interaction (Brown and Levinson 1987, 65-74).

Leech suggested that certain types of acts are intrinsically polite or impolite (1983), while Brown and Levinson propose a different distinction. According to them, certain acts intrinsically threaten face. Especially the ones that oppose the wants and needs of either the hearer or the speaker (Brown and Levinson 1987, 65).

According to Brown and Levinson, FTAs operate on two paradigms. The first one is the type of face threatened (negative or positive), and the second paradigm is concerned with whose face is being threatened (hearer's or speaker's) (Brown and Levinson 1987, 65-68). Based on their distinction, we can separate FTAs into four distinct groups (Brown and Levinson 1987, 65-68):

1. Acts that threaten the hearer's negative Face (warnings, orders, threats, etc.).
2. Acts that threaten the hearer's positive Face (criticising, complaining, disagreeing, etc.).
3. Acts threatening the speaker's negative Face (expression of thanks, unwilling promises, and offers, acceptance of offers, etc.).
4. Acts threatening the speaker's positive Face (apologies, confessions, acceptance of compliments, etc.).

In relation to the fragility of face mentioned in the previous chapter, Brown and Levinson propose that it is in any rational individual's interest to employ strategies to mitigate potential threat resulting from FTAs (1987, 68). Such strategies will be the topic of the following chapter.

### **2.2.3 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies**

When performing an FTA, Brown and Levinson propose that the speaker will take into consideration the importance of at least three wants (1987, 68):

- a) The want to convey the content of the FTA.

- b) They want to be urgent and efficient.
- c) They want to preserve the hearer's face.

Unless the importance of b) is greater than the importance of c), the speaker will want to mitigate the threat resulting from FTA (ibid.).

Brown and Levinson provide the reader with a schema of possible strategies employed to mitigate threat resulting from FTAs:

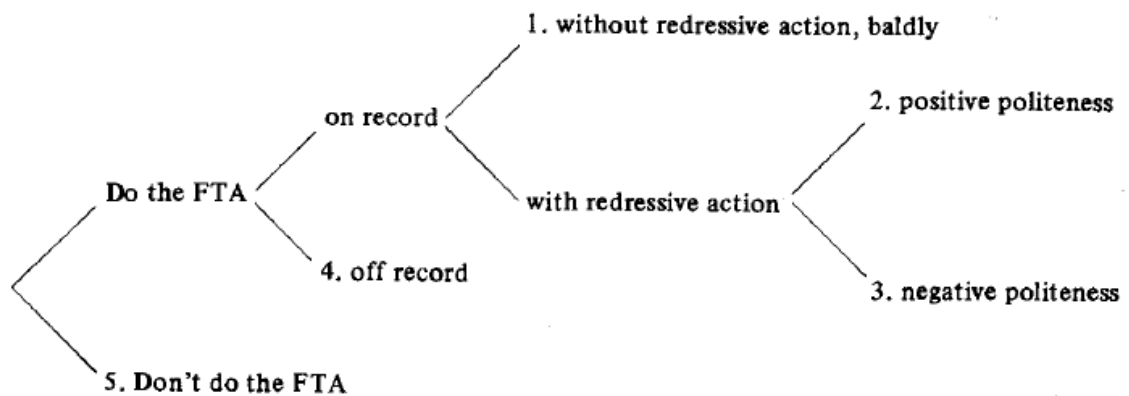


Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's possible strategies for doing FTAs (1987, 69).

Individual elements of the schema are defined by Brown and Levinson (1987, 68-71). When a speaker opts for an *on-record* strategy, he clearly and unambiguously communicates his intentions. For instance, by uttering the sentence “I promise to leave early,” the speaker unambiguously conveys his intention of commitment to future action and thus went “on record” (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69).

Alternatively, the speaker can opt for an *off-record* strategy. In such cases, the intention of the speakers is not evidently unambiguous, and as such, the speaker cannot be held to have committed to a particular intent. To provide an example, by uttering the sentence “My bag is in the hallway,” the speaker’s intention may be to get the hearer to bring him his bag. However, without explicitly stating this intent, the speaker cannot be held to have been committed to it (ibid.). Off-record FTA strategies can be linguistically realised by irony and metaphors, understatement, rhetorical questions, hints, etc. (ibid.).

Performing an FTA *baldly, without redress*, entails carrying it out in the most straightforward, unambiguous, and concise manner possible. If we recall the “bag example” from the previous paragraph, carrying it out baldly, without redress could sound as follows:

“Bring me my bag from the hallway.” (ibid.). Such strategies are typically employed when the speaker does not fear backlash from the hearer. We may observe these strategies in situations where, for instance, both interlocutors agreed that the urgency or efficiency of the situation is more relevant than face demands (such as emergencies) or where the potential danger to the hearer’s face is insignificant, for instance, offers, or requests that do not require great sacrifices (such as “sit down” or “come in”) (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69; Culpeper and Haugh, 2014, 210). Another possible scenario, where an FTA might be performed baldly, without redress can be observed when the speaker has a power advantage compared to the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69).

*Redressive actions* refer to measures concerned with maintaining the face of the hearer. They aim to mitigate the potential face damage resulting from the FTA. To achieve this, the speaker modifies or adds information in such a manner that clearly indicates the recognition of the hearer’s face. The speaker attempts to convey that no face threat is desired or intended (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69-70). Brown and Levinson distinguished between two forms of redressive actions based on whether the action aims to address the positive or negative aspect of the face (1987, 70).

*Positive politeness* strategies are concerned with maintaining the positive face of the hearer. By performing such strategies, the speaker acknowledges the hearer’s identity and desires. To some degree, the speaker attempts to be perceived as sharing the hearer’s wants and desires (ibid.). Examples of such strategies may be expressing interest; expressing sympathy, or approval (“You did a great job.”), seeking agreement (“This lecture is great.”); employing in-group identity markers (such as: “sweetie” or “darling”); etc. (Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 210)

*Negative politeness* strategies are concerned with maintaining the negative face of the hearer. The speaker indicates that he does not intend to interfere with the hearer’s freedom or actions. According to Brown and Levinson, negative politeness is characterised by restraint and formality (1987, 70). Such strategies can be achieved by apologies for transgressing and interfering (“I am sorry to bother you.”), by linguistic and non-linguistic deference (“I am really bad at this, could you help me?”), by hedging of the illocutionary force (“I wonder if you could help.”), impersonalising the hearer and the speaker (“It would be nice if you could help.”) (Brown and Levinson 1987, 70; Culpeper and Haugh 2014, 211).

Alternatively, in order to not threaten an interlocutor's face, the speaker may simply decide to *not do the FTA* at all (Brown and Levinson 1987, 72). In this case, the speaker completely avoids threatening the hearer's face but at the same time fails to fulfil his desired communicative goals (ibid.).

#### **2.2.4 Sociological Variables of FTAs**

Brown and Levinson propose that speakers determine the seriousness of FTAs based on three culturally sensitive and independent variables (1987, 74-84). These social variables are relevant as they influence the choice of FTA strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 83-84).

According to Brown and Levinson, it is important to clarify that these variables are not factual sociological ratings of actual values. Rather, they represent interlocutor's assumptions of such ratings in terms of their relationship with others (Brown and Levinson 1987, 74-76).

The first variable is the *social distance (D)* between the speaker and the hearer. Brown and Levinson define social distance as follows: "D is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which speaker and hearer stand for the purposes of this act. In many cases (but not all), it is based on an assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of material or non-material goods (including face) exchanged between speaker and hearer (or parties representing speaker or hearer, or for whom speaker and hearer are representatives)." (Brown and Levinson 1987, 76-77). Simply put, social distance stands for the shared degree of solidarity and familiarity among the interlocutors.

The second variable is the *relative power (P)* of the speaker compared to the hearer. Brown and Levinson define P as "the degree to which hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of speaker's plans and self-evaluation" (1987, 77). Brown and Levinson propose the existence of two sources of P. These sources are of material and metaphysical nature. Material control represents control over the interlocutor's material aspects (such as economic resources and physical force), and metaphysical control represents control over intangible aspects (such as control over actions) (ibid.). According to Brown and Levinson, an individual's power is usually drawn from both sources (ibid.).

The third social variable of FTAs proposed by Brown and Levinson is the *absolute ranking of imposition (R)*. According to them, R represents "a culturally and situationally

defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or approval (his negative- and positive-face wants)" (1987, 77). Brown and Levinson distinguish two types of R. Those regarding *services* (including expenditures of time) and *goods* (including intangible goods such as information, expression of regard, etc) (ibid.).

### **2.3 Criticism of Classic Approaches to Politeness**

The theories and approaches to politeness presented in this thesis are highly regarded classics still relevant for contemporary research. However, as decades pass, the limitations and shortcomings of the past theories become apparent. This gives rise to new research and leads to valuable criticism.

Such criticism can be seen in the works of Culpeper and Haugh (2014, 204), Watts (2003, 81-84), and Terkourafi (2001, 120-127). They bring to attention that the issue of classic approaches to politeness, be it Leech's or Brown and Levinson's, is that they put too much emphasis on politeness emerging from deviations from the CP while not paying enough attention to politeness that does not emerge from such deviations. Pragmatists propose that in certain situations, politeness is expected and does not deviate from the CP (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014, 204; Terkourafi 2001, 120-127). Such politeness is labelled as *anticipated politeness* (Terkourafi 2001, 121-122). An example of such politeness may be, for instance, wishing a good morning to one's colleague.

Watts (2003, 81-84) proposes that Brown and Levinson's model of politeness is too individualistic and, on the matter, refers to the work of Japanese scholar Yoshiko Matsumoto (1988). Matsumoto proposes that Brown and Levinson's model of politeness is rather Eurocentric and not appropriate for Eastern cultures (1988, 404-405). Moreover, Watts suggests, based on Matsumoto's work, that in Japanese culture, an individual's status is derived from belonging to a social group. Consequently, a person's first allegiance is to the maintenance and well-being of that group (Watts 2003, 82). Watts mentions that such an outlook on the topic is not isolated to Japanese culture and can be observed across a wider number of Eastern nations, particularly those situated in Asia (ibid.).

Further on, Watts suggests that Brown and Levinson's model of FTAs is too rigid and less universal than they pose it to be (2003, 88-92). He mentions that the strategies proposed as universally polite are oftentimes regarded as such only in the contextual



environment of the FTA (*ibid.*). According to Watts, whether a strategy is deemed polite is often reliant on the individual opinion of the hearer (Watts 2003, 91-92). To support his claims, Watts provides several examples illustrating how context-dependent the perception of politeness truly is (2003, 88-92). For instance, Watts provides an example illustrating Brown and Levinson's negative politeness in practice (2003, 92). He claims that the sentence "If you had a little time to spare for me this afternoon, I'd like to talk about my paper." is appropriate when uttered by a student addressing a lecturer (*ibid.*). However, if the roles were swapped and the lecturer were to say the same sentence about the student's paper instead, Watts suggests, the utterance would most likely not be perceived as an instance of politeness (2003, 92).

### 3 REFUSALS

Refusals are a daily part of our social lives. We often find ourselves in situations where we need to refuse requests, offers, invitations, or suggestions. This seemingly simple act of refusal plays a crucial role in human interaction in every culture and language. This chapter will cover relevant literature concerning the theory of refusals from the standpoint of pragmatics.

Refusals are a peculiar research topic due to their substantial illocutionary force and the demand for thorough inference to be comprehended accurately. Refusals are speech acts that occur within a set of social rules, cultural expectations, and personal wishes (Caponetto 2023, 1-2). Refusals are often long negotiated sequences and their content and form depend on the eliciting speech act that evoked the refusal (Eslami 2010, 217). Understanding how to refuse appropriately or knowing when someone is indirectly declining an offer represents a crucial skill that significantly varies across cultures.

#### 3.1 Approaches to the Study of Refusals

Verzella and Tommaso provide a brief summary of comparative studies focused on the topic of refusals (2020, 95-98). According to them, such studies usually fall into two categories.

The first category of refusal studies is concerned with *interlanguage studies*. Researchers explore the diverse approaches that native speakers of global language (most often English) use in comparison to learners of this global language (Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95; Beebe et al. 1990). According to Safont et al., the subject of refusals as a speech act has received relatively little attention in interlanguage pragmatic research. Complaints, apologies, and requests have, over the years, received greater attention, especially in the settings of ESL and, to a lesser degree, in EFL settings (Safont et al. 2009, 139).

The second category of refusal studies is concerned with how groups of native speakers of different languages construct and realise refusals while communicating with other speakers of the same native language. This approach is called the *cross-cultural approach* (Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95-96). Verzella and Tommaso mention, that in terms of cross-cultural studies, the most featured population is American English, whose strategies of refusals are then compared to strategies employed by speakers of other languages (2020, 96). They provide a number of studies conducted on the topic of refusals that employed the cross-cultural approach mentioned in this chapter (*ibid.*). Verzella and

Tommaso mention that among some of the most common ways of collecting data in the field of refusals are, for instance, role-play situations, or data-completion tests, such as Discourse Completion Task (DCT) (Verzella and Tommaso, 96-98).

### **3.2 Refusals as Speech Acts**

In verbal exchange, refusals are often realised in reaction to an elicitation act (e.g., requests, invitations, offers). Eslami provides a definition of refusals (2010, 218). According to her, refusals contradict the expectations of the person performing the elicitation act. As such, refusals are considered face-threatening acts (*ibid.*). Refusals are understood as responses to an initial act and are considered a speech act wherein the performer of the act of refusal fails to engage in an action put forward by the interlocutor (Chen et al. 1995, 121; Eslami 2010, 218). According to Eslami, by performing a refusal, the performer may attempt to seem more straightforward or, conversely, more indirect. Moreover, the performer of a refusal may adjust the level of politeness of his response (2010, 218). Furthermore, what is considered appropriate behaviour when refusing may differ between cultures, and pragmatic transfer often takes place, as learners of languages are, to a degree, influenced by their deeply ingrained native values (Eslami 2010, 218; Beebe et al. 1990, 68). Finally, Eslami states that to be successful at perceiving and producing acts of refusal, it is required to hold a certain level of culture-specific knowledge (2010, 218).

Once an individual decides to reject a request or decline an offer made by the speaker, they are faced with the challenge of performing a speech act that is potentially perceived as face-threatening, as it expresses a form of disapproval (Nelson et al. 2002, 94). Oftentimes, the illocutionary goal of refusal is at odds with the social goal of preserving a positive relationship with other individuals (Nelson et al. 2002, 94).

Eslami proposes that acceptance is typically the preferred response to elicitation acts, while refusals are *dispreferred* (2010, 217). Such speech acts are complex response actions that require a quick choice of repair strategies to mitigate their face-threatening value (Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95).

Speech acts in adjacent pairs, such as invitation/refusal or request/refusal, threaten the faces of both interlocutors; hearer and speaker. However, scholars seem to agree that out of both interlocutors mentioned, the individual that carries out the act of refusal is the one under greater potential threat (Eslami 2010, 218; Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95). Refusals

require redressive action that maintains the negative as well as positive face of the individual uttering the refusal (Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95). Moreover, the individual carrying out the act of refusal is required to perform a face-threatening act in a very short time (*ibid.*). Siebold and Busch propose that individuals carrying out refusals are often keen on maintaining their own positive face (2015, 54). In their research with Spanish students they mention that their participants were reluctant to refuse openly as they aimed to leave a positive impression on their interlocutors (*ibid.*).

Similarly to other face-threatening acts, the amount of repair work and negotiation necessary to minimise the potential face threat of the refusal depends on a plethora of situational and social variables (Brown and Levinson 1987, 74-81; Beebe et al. 1990, 55-56). Verzella and Tommaso propose that as a result of such dependencies, the producers of refusals need to take into account the cultural and social norms affecting politeness strategies in a given context, as well as choose appropriate linguistic expressions from the pragmatic repertoire of a language in which the conversation takes place (2020, 95). Some norms affecting politeness strategies may be, for instance, the degree of familiarity of both interlocutors or power differences stemming from the different social roles of both interlocutors (Verzella and Tommaso 2020, 95). Verzella and Tommaso mention that among some of the linguistic expressions frequently connected with the topic of refusal belong, for instance: hedges, modal verbs, intensifiers, honorifics, etc. Furthermore, refusals are often accompanied by hesitations, prefaces, expressions of doubt, and, among others, apologies (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, scholars agree that to correctly perceive and employ refusals one is required to possess a high level of pragmatic competence. (Eslami 2010, 218; Thomas 1983, 94; Nelson 2002, 163; Safont et al. 2009, 139-140). Simply put, pragmatic competence can be understood as the skill to use language appropriately in various social settings (Thomas 1983, 94).

Nelson et al. mention that pragmatic competence can be observed and studied by looking at instances of pragmatic failure (2002, 164). According to them, pragmatic failure often takes place when an L1 speaker perceives the purpose of an L2 utterance differently than the L2 speaker intended. Thus, a common cause of pragmatic failure is pragmatic transfer, where L1 speakers attempt to apply L1 speech act strategies inappropriately in an L2 setting (Nelson et al. 2002, 164).

### 3.3 Complex Nature of Refusing

The word “refuse” is versatile in application and can stand for a wide range of possible meanings. According to Caponetto, in some instances, the word “refuse” does not capture any illocutionary act (2023, 2). She offers an example of such a scenario. When we mention that “Someone refused to get intimidated,” the implied meaning of such a sentence is that the person in question did not let the threatening behaviour frighten them. The individual did not actively refuse anything; rather, the speaker uttering the sentence was pointing to the resilient characteristic of the individual (Caponetto 2023, 3).

According to Caponetto, when the word “refuse,” in fact captures an illocutionary act, it is not always an act of refusal (2023, 2-3). To back her claim, she proposes two examples:

- a) Larry has refused to take my money.
- b) A number of US citizens has refused to accept that Joe Biden won the 2020 election.

In example (a), the word “refuse” acts as an illocutionary act of putting a halt to something. In example (b), it acts as an illocutionary act by which someone rebuts a statement (Caponetto 2023, 3).

Caponetto argues that “refusals have the normative (definitional) function of preventing a certain conditional obligation from turning into an unconditional one” (ibid.). To exemplify, consider the act of offering money to someone, such as in (a). Such an act creates a conditional obligation of giving someone money, but only under the condition that they accept it. If they agree to accept the money, the obligation becomes an unconditional one. The act simply must be followed through, and the money must be handed over. However, if they happen to refuse the offer, no such obligation arises (ibid.).

Caponetto proposes that the case in (b) is notably different and involves a *rebuttal* rather than a refusal (ibid.). According to her, rebuttals are statements that directly contradict or are incompatible with a previously stated proposition. In this example, to “refuse to accept” the fact that Joe Biden won the 2020 election is synonymous with asserting that the proposition of Joe Biden winning is not true despite it has been assumed otherwise (ibid.). Caponetto describes refusals as “practical halts” and rebuttals as “counter-assertions” (2023, 187).

### 3.3.1 Refusals as Commissives and Directives

Searle and Vanderveken suggest that a refusal acts as the “illocutionary denegation,” essentially the negative counterpart of an acceptance (1985, 3). They state that, similarly to acceptances, refusals can be categorised as either directives or commissives. When an individual accepts someone else’s offer, they are essentially influencing the person’s behaviour, thus making it a directive (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 194-195). By contrast, if one accepts to fulfil someone else’s request, they commit themselves to doing something, thus performing a commissive (ibid.). According to Caponetto, the general rule seems as follows: interrogative commissives (for instance offers) are generally responded to with directives, while interrogative directives (for instance requests) are responded to with commissives (2023, 3). Caponetto illustrates this general rule with the following examples (2023, 4):

- c) A: Can I buy you a drink? (commissive)  
B: Yes, thanks. (directive)
- d) A: Would you buy me a drink? (directive)  
B: Yes, sure. (commissive)

Moreover, Caponetto proposes that the general rule proposed above is more of a general guideline than a strict rule (ibid.). She states that the nature of interrogative speech acts is typically more complex. To support her claim, Caponetto mentions the act of inviting (ibid.). If person A invites person B to a dinner in A’s house, according to the rule above, person A is trying to direct B’s conduct. However, the matter at hand is more complex. When the day of dinner eventually comes, and suddenly, A refuses to let B into their house, B will have reasons to object. The reason for that is that an invitation carries a commissive aspect. When A invites B for dinner, A commits themselves to a particular future behaviour (ibid.).

According to Hancher, hybrid speech acts that combine commissive and directive illocutionary forces are called *commissive directives* (1979, 6). Such acts are, for instance, offers and invitations. According to Hancher, they are equally commissive and directive, and neither of the forces dominates the other. As a result of their hybrid nature, they are often followed by hybrid responses that aim to address both the directive and commissive illocutionary forces of the primary speech act (Hancher 1979, 7). Caponetto provides an illustration of such a hybrid response (2023, 4). If B accepts A’s invitation to a party, B commits themselves to come to the party but also implicitly directs A’s future behaviour. As

a result of B's acceptance of the invitation, A has to prepare one more place for B at the dinner table, prepare some gluten-free dinner options, etc. (ibid.). The same illocutionary forces would be covered even in the case of B's refusal. In case of refusal, B would commit not to attend the party, and as a result of that, A would prepare one less place at the dinner table or prepare different meals (ibid.).

### 3.3.2 Refusals as Second-turn Speech Acts

According to Searle and Vanderveken, it is possible to accept or refuse a speech act only if the possibility of acceptance or refusal exists. It is possible to refuse only in reply to other speech acts (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 195). Caponetto calls refusals *second-turn illocutions* as they reply to some preceding speech act (2023, 5). The existence of second-turn illocutions implies the existence of *first-turn illocutions*. On this matter, Caponetto refers to the work of Lance and Kukla published in the year 2013 (ibid.). In their work, Lance and Kukla mention such first-turn illocutions and refer to them as *calls*. They provide a definition: “[Calls can be understood as] speech acts that call upon ‘you’ to give uptake to specific normative statuses by acting in some range of ways” (Lance and Kukla 2013, 457). Simply put, calls are second-turn illocutionary acts that prompt the addressee to reply in a specific manner (Caponetto 2023, 5).

Caponetto distinguishes between *Imperative (closed)* calls and *Interrogative (open)* calls (ibid.). Imperative calls are, for instance, commands or orders. They oblige an addressee to do something. Interrogative calls, such as invitations or requests, leave the addressee a level of freedom to act a certain way without obliging them to do something (ibid.). According to the explanation provided by Lance and Kukla, open calls give rise to *petitionary reasons*, as they petition the addressee to act a certain way, but the decision of whether to accept or refuse is up to them (2013, 462). The difference between imperative and interrogative calls stems from the fact that imperative calls attribute obligations while interrogative calls do not. It could be argued that accepting an open call (such as accepting an invitation to a party) gives rise to obligation. However, according to Caponetto, such an argument is faulty, as the obligation arises not from the interrogative call proposed by the speaker but rather from the addressee granting the speaker's request (2023, 5).

According to Caponetto 2023, 6), closed calls, such as commands or orders, call for behaviour that fulfils the obligation presented by the closed call. On the other hand, open calls such as invitations or requests call for an illocutionary response, often realized by

acceptance or refusal. Therefore, refusals are considered second-turn illocutions carried out in response to open calls (ibid.).

### 3.3.3 Open Calls and Authority

Caponetto proposes that when an addressee is met with an open call, they are entitled to a choice of either accepting or refusing the call (2023, 6). She mentions that this claim stands even in asymmetrical contexts (for instance, when a boss requests something from their employee). However, she elaborates that in such contexts, it is important to distinguish between a genuine request (open call) and an indirect order (closed call) (ibid.). Caponetto argues that to rightfully refuse or accept an open call, the called individual needs to fulfil a single condition, the *addressee condition*. The addressee condition is fulfilled when the called individual is the one being directly addressed or when they have been authorised by the person being addressed to respond on their behalf (ibid.). Simply put, if an individual is directly called upon or is authorised to respond for someone else, they have the right to accept or refuse the call. However, mere fulfilment of the addressee condition is not sufficient in all cases of responding to an open call. Caponetto mentions that in certain cases, to respond to specific requests, one must have a certain level of authority. To illustrate this fact, she provides the following examples (2023, 6):

- e) Would you take out the trash, please?
- f) Can I borrow your laptop for a second?

In example (e), one can observe a *simple request*. The requester asks the requestee to carry out a certain task. Example (f), however, demonstrates a *request for permission*. By uttering (f), the requester seeks to get permission from the requestee to act a certain way. To distinguish whether an utterance is a simple request or a request for permission, Caponetto proposes to examine which individual will be the one performing the activity in question. In a simple request, the agent of the activity (once the request is granted) is the requestee. In contrast, in a request for permission, the agent of the activity (once the permission is granted) is the requester (ibid.). In relation to the topic of authority, Monica Cowart proposes that it is appropriate and even required to request permission when the activity in question is *in the requestee's jurisdiction* (Cowart 2004, 512). As the laptop in example (f) belongs to the requestee's jurisdiction, the requester cannot rightfully perform the action of borrowing it without the requestee's permission. It falls under the requestee's authority. In contrast, the



action mentioned in example (e) (taking out the trash) does not fall under any exclusive authority of the requestee (Caponetto 2023, 7).

Therefore, one is not entitled to refuse or grant a request for permission if the activity in question does not fall under their authority. For instance, if the laptop belonged to another individual who is neither the requester nor the requestee, the permission of that other individual would be needed for the laptop to be handed over. To refuse or accept a permission request, an *authority condition* must be satisfied (ibid.). Caponetto provides a definition of such a condition: “The speaker has authority over the activity represented in the proposition—or has been authorized to reply on their behalf by the one who has that authority” (ibid.).

To summarise, refusals are negative responses to open calls. Usually (except for permission requests), simply being the one called is enough to felicitously refuse an open call. (Caponetto 2023, 6) However, with permission requests, it is necessary that the requestee holds authority over the activity in question. Without the possession of authority, the refusal cannot count as felicitous. Thus, the criteria for a successful refusal change according to the first-turn illocutions. As such, if permission requests precede a refusal, the refusal counts as an authoritative illocutionary act (Caponetto 2023, 2-7).

### **3.3.4 Potential Issues**

This chapter will briefly cover a few potential objections to the theory of refusals proposed in Chapter 3.3.

One such potential objection may claim that refusals can be performed without any preceding calls. Thus, such objection argues against the claim that refusals are second-turn illocutions. Caponetto provides an example where an office worker has established a habitual request with their intern. The request is that every morning, the intern brings the worker a cup of coffee. However, one morning, once the intern sees the office worker in question, he expels a loud “No” (Caponetto 2023, 9). It could be argued that this example demonstrates a case of refusal performed in isolation. However, that is not the case. Caponetto proposes that even in this instance, the refusal is still performed as a second-turn illocution, stating that the office worker and the intern have established a habitual request (a request/granting pair) that has become “a default *score* component of their morning conversations” (Caponetto 2023, 10). The refusal does not occur in isolation but only as the second part of the established request/granting pair between the two interlocutors (ibid.). The notion of

*score* is covered in the work of Lewis (1979). Briefly put, the conversational score consists of sets of presuppositions, facts about salience, etc. Conversational score tracks what is considered appropriate in an ongoing conversation (Lewis 1979, 344-347). It tracks information concerning habitually performed speech acts. Once a speech act enters a conversational score and becomes habitual, its perlocutionary effect may take place even without any utterance being spoken out loud (ibid.). Caponetto argues that the intern's refusal is a response to a previous open call that lies in the score of the two participants. The intern responds to an implicit call (Caponetto 2023, 10).

Another possible objection may claim that it is possible for a refusal to take place in response to closed calls, such as orders or commands. A possible example may happen when an insubordinate soldier refuses to follow their superior general's commands. According to the theory covered in Chapter 3.3.2, the insubordinate soldier should not be able to refuse their general's orders. Caponetto argues that closed calls inherently impute an obligation to obey (2023, 12). According to her, in case of orders, the addressee acknowledges the obligation to obey, and acceptance is not required for the obligation to arise. When an individual decides to refuse an order, the illocutionary force that is taking place is one of *announcement of disobedience* rather than that of refusal (ibid.). In contrast, in the case of open calls, the obligation is not inherently present and rather stems from the requestee's *granting* of the request (ibid.).

Caponetto mentions and covers a few additional potential issues concerning the theory covered in Chapter 3.3. However, for the sake of brevity, those issues will not be covered in this thesis. For additional literature covering the topic mentioned in this chapter, I refer to the work of Caponetto (2023, 13-17).

### **3.4 Refusal Strategies**

The act of refusal is a fundamental part of daily communication and there is a plethora of possible ways by which such an act can be carried out. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of possible strategies that individuals employ as they navigate their way through the difficulties involved in executing acts of refusal.

As mentioned in Chapter 3.1, in terms of pragmatic research, the topic of refusals has been met with relatively little attention compared to other speech acts such as complaints,

apologies, or requests (Safont et al. 2009, 139). This statement holds true especially in ESL settings and, to a lesser degree, EFL settings (ibid.).

Among some of the earliest attempts of classifying the complex act of refusals belongs the work of Ueda (1972). In his work, Ueda provided a list of 16 different ways the Japanese avoid directly saying “no.” Some of those strategies are, for instance, delaying answers, resorting to being silent, or providing a counter-question (ibid.).

Joan Rubin provided further elaboration on the topic of refusals and established nine different ways of refusing that are prevalent across a wider array of cultures (1981, 6-9). The nine ways of refusing are as follows (ibid.):

1. Be silent, hesitate, show a lack of enthusiasm
2. Offer an alternative
3. Postponement (delaying answers)
4. Put the blame on a third party or something over which you have no control
5. Avoidance
6. General acceptance of an offer but giving no details
7. Divert and distract the addressee
8. General acceptance with excuses
9. Say What is offered is inappropriate

The earlier works mentioned set the ground for the work of Beebe et al. (1990). In their work, Beebe et al. provided a classification of the complex act of refusals. The work of Beebe et al. is concerned with refusals in the field of ESL pragmatics; however, according to Safont et al. (2009, 144), their classification of refusals is a valuable asset that can and has been applied to cross-cultural research of refusals as well. For instance, the studies of Nelson et al. (2002), the study of Verzella and Tommaso (2020), and many others (Safont et al. 2009, 142) utilise the classification developed by Beebe et al. (1990).

To provide a classification of refusals, Beebe et al. conducted a study on how Japanese learners of English refused invitations, requests, offers, and suggestions by means of a DCT questionnaire (see Chapter 4.1). The individual refusals were analysed and categorised into individual semantic formulas (expressions employed to perform a refusal) and adjuncts (expressions that supplement the refusals but are not sufficient to perform a

refusal by themselves). The classification provided by Beebe et al. is as follows (1990, 72-73):

### **Classification of Refusals**

- I. Direct
  - A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
  - B. Nonperformative statement
    - 1. "No"
    - 2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't". "I don't think so.")
- II. Indirect
  - A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry. . ."; "I feel terrible. . .")
  - B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you. . .")
  - C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")
  - D. Statement of alternative
    - 1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather. . ." "I'd prefer. . .")
    - 2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")
  - E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have. . .")
  - F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"; "I promise I'll. . ." or "Next time I'll. . ."—using "will" of promise or "promise")
  - G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
  - H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")
  - I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
    - 1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
    - 2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")
    - 3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")
    - 4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
    - 5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")
    - 6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can do." "I no do nutting wrong.")
  - J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
    - 1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
    - 2. Lack of enthusiasm
  - K. Avoidance
    - 1. Nonverbal
      - a. Silence
      - b. Hesitation
      - c. Do nothing
      - d. Physical departure
    - 2. Verbal
      - a. Topic switch
      - b. Joke
      - c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
      - d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
      - e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

### **Adjuncts to Refusals**

- 1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea. . ."; "I'd love to. . .")
- 2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
- 3. Pause fillers (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "oh"; "uhm")
- 4. Gratitude/appreciation

*Figure 2. Classification of Refusals by Beebe et al. (1990, 72-73).*

Despite its importance, the classification of refusals provided by Beebe et al. has met with a degree of criticism, particularly regarding its complexity (Nelson et al. 2002; Verzella and Tomasso 2020). As such, researchers that utilise the classification of refusals by Beebe et al. tend to modify it to better suit the purpose of their studies (Nelson et al. 2002; Verzella and Tomasso 2020). Similarly, this thesis also adopts a modified version of the classification proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). The final version of the classification used in this thesis can be found in Chapter 4.4.

### **3.5 Rationale for the Current Study**

According to numerous scholars, a possible way of decreasing the occurrence of pragmatic failure is to encourage students to learn the pragmalinguistic aspects of the learned language (Kasper 1997; Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Nelson et al. 2002). A number of second-language educators have pointed out that teaching pragmalinguistic information is a field that is often overlooked in the educational process (Morain 1983, Helt 1982). Second-language teachers often overlook the differences in the field of pragmalinguistic aspects and are not consciously aware of them. As a result, such aspects are not transferred to the students. This reality holds true with native and non-native teachers alike (Nelson et al. 2002, 164; Wolfson 1989).

According to Nelson, pragmatic competence is a field of great relevance that is often not met with enough attention (Nelson et al. 2002, 164). Nelson provides a list of literature (Thomas 1983; Wolfson 1981, 1989) to put forward the notion that native speakers show greater tolerance to syntactic, phonological, and lexical errors made by second-language speakers compared to their tolerance of pragmatic errors (*ibid.*).

Research in the field of speech acts has met with criticism for its perceived ethnocentricity, mainly since a predominant number of studies focuses mostly on varieties of English. For instance, such criticism can be observed in the work of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) or the work of Rose (1994).

The present study is relevant as it focuses on the topic of refusals in the Czech language as well as in the English language. As such, the results of the following study will lead to a better understanding of the similarities and differences of the complex act of refusal between both languages.

## **II. PRACTICAL PART**

## **4 STUDY INTRODUCTION**

Based on the theory and literature reviewed in the theoretical part, this part of the thesis aims to examine the differing approaches of Czech and English speakers towards the act of refusing. As such, the author of the thesis will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Does the frequency of direct and indirect strategies of refusals differ between English and Czech?
- 2) Do speakers of the mentioned language groups employ different indirect strategies of refusals?
- 3) Does the gender of the refusing individual influence the choice of their refusal strategies?

A small-scale research study has been carried out to answer these questions. All recorded data for the current thesis can be found in the attached documents of this thesis.

### **4.1 Methodology**

The following chapter provides information concerning the small-scale research study mentioned above, focusing on the methodologies employed, the participant selection criteria, as well as limitations and challenges encountered during the process of the research.

The stepping stones from which this study departed were the works of Beebe et al. (1990) and Nelson et al. (2002). The work of Beebe et al. has been touched upon previously in Chapter 3.4. While the focus of their research (ESL linguistics) was different than the focus of this thesis, their classification of refusals proved to be a valuable asset from which to draw.

The research carried out by Nelson et al. (2002) served as an inspiration for the current research in a few aspects. In their research, Nelson et al. examine the differences and similarities between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals. This thesis aims to examine the differences and similarities of refusals between Czech and English speakers in a similar manner.

Similarly to the work of Nelson et al. (2002), this research collected data using a DCT questionnaire. Kasper introduces DCTs as a data collection tool defined as: "...a situational description and a brief dialogue which has one turn as an open slot. The context

given in the scenario is designed to constrain the open turn so that it elicits the desired communicative act” (Kasper 2008, 292). Furthermore, Kasper states that in the classic DCT format, a rejoinder to terminate the exchange is utilised (Kasper 2008, 292). However, she elaborates that the format of DCT has been variously modified, particularly stating that in the case of open response formats, no rejoinder is utilised (Kasper 2008, 292). Such is the case of this thesis.

DCT as a data collection tool is widely used across a plethora of studies (Beebe et al. 1990, Nelson 2002, Verzella and Tommaso 2020, Eslami 2010). However, DCT questionnaires are accompanied by some notable drawbacks as well. Kasper mentions that DCTs and questionnaires, in general, do not elicit authentic language use and behaviour data but rather intuitional data based on self-reports (2008, 297). This notion is further supported by academics such as Rose and Kwai-fun (2001, 155) or Válková (2008, 141). According to them, questionnaires collect self-reported accounts of past actions recalled by respondents, as well as hypothetical or prospective responses (Rose and Kwai-fun 2001, 155; Válková 2008, 141). Nelson et al. add that “what people *claim* they would say in a hypothetical situation is not necessarily what they *actually would say* in a real situation.” (2002, 168).

Despite such drawbacks, Kasper proposes that “pragmatic intuition can be a legitimate object of research; for instance, in studies of pragmatic development or language testing. As long as there is a clear understanding of what DCT data can and cannot deliver, DCTs remain a valuable instrument in the researcher's toolkit.” (2008, 294). Moreover, according to Trosborg, DCT is a great tool that allows researchers to amass a greater amount of data in a shorter period of time (Trosborg 2010, 28).

In their work, Nelson et al. (2002) employed a modified version of DCT originally developed by Beebe et al. (1990). In their research, Nelson et al. gathered data by presenting situations to their respondents, eliciting spoken refusals. Instead of filling in a written questionnaire, the interviewer read the situation aloud to the respondents, whose responses were recorded on an audiotape (2002, 168). The respondents were prompted to envision themselves in said situations and were instructed to refuse a certain proposition. Spoken role-play more closely resembles real-life communication compared to written role-play (ibid.). To support this claim, Nelson et al. point to the research carried out by Beebe and Cummings (1995). They compared two different methods of response elicitation: spoken responses over the telephone to written questionnaire responses (Beebe and Cummings 1995). According



to the results of their research, the respondents talked four times as much over the telephone as they wrote in the written questionnaire (Beebe and Cummings 1995; Nelson et al. 2002, 168).

Nelson et al. amassed a total amount of 548 refusals from 55 participants (Nelson et al. 2002, 167). The amassed refusals were then coded and analysed according to their simplified classification of refusals, which was derived from a more complex classification provided by Beebe et al. (Nelson 2002, 170-171). The original classification by Beebe et al. (1990) can be found in this thesis in Chapter 3.4. The simplified classification employed by Nelson et al. is as follows:

- I. Direct refusal (e.g., 'I refuse,' 'No,' 'I can't')
- II. Indirect strategies
  - A. Reason (e.g. 'I have other plans.' 'I'm going to be studying until late tonight.')
  - B. Consideration of interlocutor's feelings (e.g. 'While I appreciate the offer, . . . 'Thank you')
  - C. Suggestion of willingness (e.g. 'I'll do it next time.' 'Make it another day.')
  - D. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g. 'Don't worry about it.')
  - E. Statement of regret (e.g. 'I'm so sorry.')
  - F. Hedging (e.g. 'Oh, I'm not sure.')
  - G. Statement of principle (e.g. 'I don't believe in fad dieting.')
  - H. Criticize the request/requester (e.g. 'Who do you think you are?')
  - I. Repetition of part of the request ('A dinner?')

*Figure 3. Classification of refusals by Nelson et al. (2002, 171)*

Just as in the work of Nelson et al. (2002), the respondents of the current study were put into situations instructed to refuse a certain proposition. The respondents were met with eight different situations, each characterised by variations in speech acts proposed to them by their hypothetical interlocutor and by the gender of the said interlocutor. The speech acts included requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions; with two instances of each speech act type. All the mentioned speech acts fall under Searle's classification of directives (see Chapter 1.3) and were performed as first-turn speech acts (see Chapter 3.3.2). One of the situations in each speech act pair featured a male interlocutor, while the other involved a female interlocutor. In the final questionnaire, the situations were ordered randomly to ensure the respondents would not observe any overreaching patterns that could influence their decision-making. Individual situations can be viewed in the APPENDICES section of the current study and are analysed in Chapter 5.

## 4.2 Participants

A total number of 46 respondents participated in this small-scale research study. However, out of the 46 respondents, only 40 were deemed acceptable and selected for the current study (the omission of particular participants is explained in the following Chapter 4.3). Out of the remaining 40 respondents, 20 claimed to be native speakers of Czech, and 20 respondents claimed to be native speakers of English. The Czech language group consisted of 10 men and 10 women, while the English language group consisted of 5 men and 15 women. The age of Czech respondents ranged from 22 to 27 years old, with an average of 25.25. The age of English respondents ranged from 17 to 34 years old, with an average of 23.65. All the respondents claimed to be college students or recent graduates (up to 2 years after graduation). The majority of English-speaking respondents (13) claimed to be residents of the United States of America, 4 respondents claimed to be from the United Kingdom, and 3 respondents claimed to be specifically from England. The respondents were not asked to provide further information regarding their nationality.

## 4.3 Limitations of the Current Study

The current study has been accompanied by a few limitations. Due to the limited resources and reach of the author of the current study, the DCT tool used for data collection was of written nature rather than spoken, despite the drawbacks mentioned earlier in Chapter 4.1.

This thesis did not aim to examine the differences in refusal strategies stemming from social variables such as the status of the interlocutor or the rank of imposition. As such, an effort was made to keep the said social variables as balanced as possible in order to maintain a degree of uniformity in the respondents' refusals. To achieve that, the social status of the hypothetical interlocutor was always set to be that of a friend, a colleague, or some sort of acquaintance in general. The degree of imposition in each situation was set to be rather ordinary as well. The situations depicted commonplace occurrences one might encounter in daily life without any exceptional circumstances. Such situations include, for instance, a friend asking for a ride to work or a colleague inviting the participant to a ball (for an overview of all situations, see the APPENDICES section of the current thesis).

To obtain native speakers of English, the DCT questionnaire had to be submitted on a few websites dedicated to survey exchange among scholars and students. The webpages were called *SurveyCircle* (<https://www.surveycircle.com/>) and *SurveySwap*

(<https://surveyswap.io/>). The survey exchange websites operate on the principle of mutual survey exchange among students and scholars based on a point system. By filling out questionnaires, the user gets awarded points. The more points the user amasses, the more likely his own questionnaire is to be recommended to other users on the platform. However, while the point-based system offers incentives, it is not without its flaws. I have come across instances of individuals who were attempting to exploit the point-based system. In order to amass a sufficient number of points, they would resort to responding to other users' questionnaires without giving them sufficient consideration. I have encountered a number of such responses as well. To provide a few examples, one of the users filling out my questionnaire simply answered each question with a simple full-stop symbol. One other individual answered all the questions in my questionnaire by copying the simple phrase "No, thanks." Fortunately, the respondents attempting to exploit the point-based system were easily discernible, often completing the questionnaire in less than a minute. Consequently, such responses were deemed unacceptable and excluded from the current study. As a result of this exploitation, a total of six respondents were excluded from the current study.

Apart from the aforementioned webpages, the questionnaire for the current study was also distributed across various Facebook groups<sup>1</sup> dedicated to survey and questionnaire exchange. As the exchange in these groups typically included personal communication with the respondents (through comment sections or direct messages), acquiring respondents through these channels proved to be unproblematic.

Furthermore, the lack of English-speaking respondents resulted in an imbalanced composition of participants. Ideally, an equal representation of both genders would be preferred. Additionally, it would be advantageous to focus on English-speaking participants originating from a single nation.

Finally, larger-scale research usually involves a greater number of researchers and academics throughout various stages of the research process (Nelson et al. 2002, Verzella and Tommaso, 2020, Beebe et al. 1990). In contrast, the DCT questionnaire for this thesis was constructed, responses recorded, and results coded by a single individual. This circumstance could potentially introduce the biases of the sole researcher into the current study, which may impact the final analysis outcomes. Additionally, it is important to note

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of these Facebook groups include *Dissertation Survey Exchange*, or *Global Survey Exchange - Survey Sharing & Survey Taking | Mutual Support*

that considering the limited number of participants in the current study, the individual preferences of the respondents may have influenced the final results. As such, conducting larger-scale research would be advantageous to support the claims of the current study.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

According to Cohen, one of the main concerns of research on speech acts is establishing a set of strategies “typically used by native speakers of the target language” (1996, 265). A refusal strategy can be understood as a verbal action, such as an expression of regret or providing a reason, which acts as a part of the whole act of refusal (Nelson et al. 2002, 170). To arrive at a set of strategies, individual refusing utterances of the respondents had to be divided into *idea units*. Idea units are the smallest independent units of discourse meaning (Chafe 1980, 14-16). Such units are often combined to form larger units of meaning, such as sentences or paragraphs (Chafe 1980, 14-16; Beebe et al. 1990, 57). Speakers often structure the discourse of their speech around these idea units, and understanding their organisation can offer valuable insight into how language is used to convey information and express thought (Chafe 1980). For the current study, the individual refusing utterance were divided into idea units based on the examples provided by previous research on the topic. (Beebe et al. 1990; Nelson et al. 2002). To exemplify, I provide an example of a division of a single instance of refusal utterance into individual idea units. The recorded utterance was as follows: “I wish I could help, but I’m really swamped today! Could you try someone else?” The utterance was divided into three idea units illustrated below:

1. a) I wish I could help,  
b) but I’m really swamped today!  
c) Could you try someone else?

Each idea unit was subsequently coded as a specific refusal strategy category. For instance, the idea units illustrated in the previous example were coded as follows:

2. a) I wish I could help, (statement of willingness)  
b) but I’m really swamped today! (reason)  
c) Could you try someone else? (statement of alternative)

To arrive at a definite set of refusal strategies, I departed from the aforementioned classifications of Nelson et al. (2002) and Beebe et al. (1990). Similarly to Nelson et al.

(2002), I deemed the classification of Beebe et al. (1990) too exhaustive. To arrive at a more effective and concise taxonomy, I decided to follow the example of Nelson et al. and merge similar categories (2002). If the full unmodified classification provided by Beebe et al. was used, it would result in insufficient data, with very few instances of each individual category recorded. This scarcity of recorded data would undermine the reliability of the analysis results. To utilise the unmodified classification provided by Beebe et al. (1990), a much larger study with a greater number of respondents would be necessary.

To provide an example of category merge, the classification of Beebe et al. (1990) would classify the utterances “I refuse,” “I can’t,” and “No” as three separate categories of direct refusals. However, for the sake of clarity and effectiveness, I decided to follow the example of Nelson et al. (2002) and coded all of the presented utterances simply as *direct refusals*, as they all indicate unwillingness. Moreover, some categories included in the classification of Beebe et al. (1990) did not occur in any of the collected responses (such as *setting condition for future or past acceptance*). As a result, these categories were not included in the final classification scheme. The resulting classification of categories stands as follows:

1. Direct strategies (e.g., “I refuse,” “No”)
2. Indirect strategies
  - a. Reason (e.g., “I have already got a date planned.”)
  - b. Consideration of interlocutor’s feelings (e.g., “Thank you.”)
  - c. Statement of willingness (e.g., “I would love to.”)
  - d. Let the interlocutor of the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it.”)
  - e. Statement of regret (e.g., “I’m so sorry.”)
  - f. Hedging (e.g., “I’m not sure.”)
  - g. Statement of principle (e.g., “It wasn’t really my thing.”)
  - h. Self-defence (e.g., “I would rather pay my half.”)
  - i. Repetition (e.g., “Yoga, eh?”)
  - j. Statement of alternative (e.g., “I’ll treat you instead.”)
  - k. Acceptance that acts as a refusal (e.g., “I’ve tried it already.”)
  - l. Criticism (e.g., “You should have taken it more seriously.”)

### 3. Adjuncts

Adjuncts are closely related to refusals and are often incorporated into refusing utterances. Adjuncts are phrases such as fillers or statements of opinions or feelings (Beebe et al. 1990, 57). Beebe et al. refer to adjuncts as remarks that could not stand alone and function as refusals (ibid.). Beebe et al. provide an example of adjuncts stating that the respondents of their study often expressed their positive feelings (such as “That’s a good idea...”) before providing their excuse (ibid.). If the statement of positive feelings would not be followed by an excuse (such as “...but I have to work late”), then the standalone expression of positive feelings could be considered as an acceptance (ibid.).

Given the frequent occurrence of adjuncts in the collected data and because of their close connection to the concept of refusals, they will be included in the analysis of the current study despite not being traditionally classified as refusal strategies (Beebe et al. 1990).

## 5 RESULTS

The following chapter will provide a complete breakdown of the findings of the current study. It will provide an overview of the refusal strategies utilised by both language-speaking groups, aiming to identify any discernible variations between the frequencies of utilised refusal strategies. Additionally, the overview will explore the potential impact of the gender of the respondents on their choice of refusal strategies.

### 5.1 Overall Frequency of Strategies Used

The following chapter will attempt to answer the question of whether the frequency of direct and indirect strategy use differs between both languages. To compare values concretely and concisely, a statistical mean was used. The mean is the average of a set of values, calculated by adding all the values together and then dividing by the total number of values. For instance, if a refusal strategy “A” occurred a total of 4 times across the refusals of 10 different respondents, the calculation would be  $4/10$ , resulting in a mean of  $x = 0.4$ . In the body of the text, the statistical mean will be signified by the letter “*x*.” For better brevity of the tables, means will be represented by a numeral in parentheses, omitting the letter “*x*.”

<b>Total strategy occurrence</b>	<b>Czech</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Full group</b>
<b>Direct strategies</b>	60 (3)	58 (2.9)	118 (2.95)
<b>Indirect strategies</b>	370 (18.5)	330 (16.5)	700 (17.5)
<b>Adjuncts</b>	55 (2.75)	69 (3.45)	124 (3.1)

*Table 1. Overview of total refusal strategies between both language groups*

The attached table (*Table 1.*) provides a comprehensive summary of the refusal strategies employed by respondents throughout the completion of the entire questionnaire (8 situations). On average, both language groups employed substantially more indirect refusal strategies than direct refusal strategies.

Direct strategies have always appeared in combination with indirect strategies, with just a single exception. In situation 1, one Czech male respondent refused by a combination of two direct strategies. This example is mentioned in the chapter 5.2.1. On the other hand, refusals consisting of only indirect strategies were common. In fact, the majority of the

recorded responses did not utilise a single direct strategy of refusal. Out of the total number of 320 recorded responses, only 115 utilised direct refusal strategies.

Overall, the Czech-speaking group employed a slightly higher proportion of indirect versus direct strategies compared to the English-speaking group. The Czech-speaking group utilised, on average, 6.16 times more indirect strategies than direct strategies. The English-speaking group, on the other hand, utilised 5.68 times more indirect strategies than direct strategies. The total amount of utilised direct strategies between the two language groups is nearly the same, and the difference was not deemed significant enough to be provided with any further commentary.

A noticeable difference worth mentioning, however, appears in the total amount of utilised adjuncts between the two language groups. The English-speaking group was observed to utilise approximately a quarter more adjuncts than the Czech-speaking group.

Total strategy occurrence	Czech		English	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Direct strategies	38 (3.8)	22 (2.2)	14 (2.8)	44 (2.93)
Indirect strategies	175 (17.5)	195 (19.5)	86 (17.2)	244 (16.26)
Adjuncts	17 (1.7)	38 (3.8)	17 (3.4)	52 (3.46)

*Table 2. Overview of total refusal strategy usage based on gender*

*Table 2.* offers a more detailed overview of how respondents' gender potentially influences their choice of refusal strategies. At first glance, there is a considerable difference in the strategy usage between men and women within the Czech-speaking group. Men utilised substantially more direct strategies than women. The same trend was not observed in the English-speaking group.

Moreover, a difference in the frequency of adjunct usage by Czech respondents can be observed. Czech-speaking women utilised, on average, over twice as many adjuncts than Czech-speaking men.

The English-speaking group of respondents showed no considerable difference in the usage of refusal strategies based on the gender of respondents. However, this lack of noticeable difference is relevant, as it highlights the inequality of strategy use between the genders of the Czech-speaking group.



## 5.2 Data Overview

The following chapter will provide a deeper examination of the individual situations the respondents encountered while filling out the DCT questionnaire for the current study. Each of the following subchapters will provide tables depicting the total amount of strategies employed by respondents in individual situations. Any notable observations will be pointed out and covered.

For the exact wording of each situation, visit the APPENDICES section of the current thesis.

### 5.2.1 Refusals of Requests

The first pair of analysed situations are situations numbered 1 and 6 in the DCT questionnaire for the current study. The first-turn speech act of the respondents' hypothetical interlocutor is the speech act of request.

In the first situation of the questionnaire, the respondents were tasked with refusing a request from their fellow classmate, Tom, to borrow their study materials. The recorded strategies were as follows:

<b>Situation 1</b>	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	7 (0.7)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	6 (0.4)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	9 (0.9)	13 (1.3)	1 (0.2)	11 (0.73)
b) Statement of willingness	1 (0.1)			1 (0.06)
c) Statement of regret	6 (0.6)	9 (0.9)	3 (0.6)	8 (0.53)
d) Hedging			1 (0.2)	2 (0.13)
e) Statement of principle			1 (0.2)	1 (0.06)
f) Statement of alternative	4 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	4 (0.4)	3 (0.2)
g) Criticism	1 (0.1)			2 (0.13)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	21 (2.1)	25 (2.5)	10 (2)	28 (1.86)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	0	3 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	9 (0.6)

*Table 3. Situation 1 analysis*

At first glance, differences regarding the usage of direct refusal strategies are apparent. Czech men utilised over three times the number of direct strategies than Czech women. In one instance, a Czech man refused by employing a combination of two direct strategies. His response was as follows:

A) Ne / No (direct refusal)

B) nemohl. / you can't. (direct refusal)

Interestingly, however, the English-speaking group exhibited the opposite behaviour (although not to such a high degree). English-speaking women utilised twice as many direct strategies as English-speaking men. However, the lack of direct refusal strategies utilised by English-speaking men could be coincidental due to the lower number of respondents.

The predominant indirect refusal strategies employed by all groups were the strategies of *reason* (respondents often argued that they could not part with their study materials as they needed them themselves) and *statement of regret* (such as “I am sorry”). Both mentioned predominant strategies often co-occurred in a single instance of refusal. To provide an example of both strategies co-occurring:

A) Sorry, Tom. (statement of regret)

B) I'm using them to study today. (reason)

C) Maybe you could ask (name of a friend). (statement of alternative)

The last noteworthy mention belongs to the variation in the number of adjuncts employed. Women in both groups utilised a considerably greater number of adjuncts than men (such as “Ah,” or “I just wrote down whatever!”). In fact, out of the 10 Czech male respondents, none utilised adjuncts in any of their responses.

In situation 6 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were asked to refuse a request from their friend, Sarah, who needed a ride to work because her car had broken down. The recorded strategies were as follows:

<b>Situation 6</b>	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	7 (0.46)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	13 (1.3)	12 (1.2)	6 (1.2)	15 (1)
b) Consideration of Feelings		1 (0.1)		
c) Statement of willingness	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)		4 (0.26)
d) Statement of regret	8 (0.8)	7 (0.7)	5 (1)	12 (0.8)
e) Statement of alternative	4 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	3 (0.6)	6 (0.4)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	26 (2.6)	24 (2.4)	14 (2.8)	37 (2.46)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	2 (0.2)	8 (0.8)	2 (0.4)	5 (0.33)

Table 4. Situation 6 analysis

In this situation, the respondents exhibited similar patterns to those observed in the previous situation. The predominant refusal strategies were indirect strategies of *reason* and *statement of regret*. The most notable difference to the previous situation can be observed in refusal strategies utilised by Czech men. They utilised a considerably lower amount of direct refusal strategies than in the previous situation ( $x = 0.2$  in this situation compared to  $x = 0.7$  in the previous situation). Moreover, some of the Czech male respondents utilised adjuncts.

### 5.2.2 Refusals of Invitations

The second pair of analysed situations are situations numbered 2 and 4 in the DCT questionnaire for the current study. The first-turn speech act of the respondents' hypothetical interlocutor is the speech act of invitation.

In situation 2 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were tasked with declining a wedding invitation from their friend, Lucas. The recorded strategies were as follows:

Situation 2	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	6 (0.4)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	11 (1.1)	8 (0.8)	8 (1.6)	11 (0.73)
b) Consideration of Feelings	4 (0.4)	8 (0.8)		4 (0.26)
c) Statement of willingness	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.4)	8 (0.53)
d) Statement of regret	7 (0.7)	6 (0.6)	6 (1.2)	8 (0.53)
e) Hedging				4 (0.26)
f) Statement of principle		1 (0.1)		
g) Statement of alternative				1 (0.06)
h) Criticism				1 (0.06)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	24 (2.4)	25 (2.5)	16 (3.2)	37 (2.46)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	7 (0.7)	8 (0.8)	4 (0.8)	7 (0.46)

Table 5. Situation 2 analysis

In this situation, a few noticeable differences stand out in the refusal strategies utilised by respondents of the two language groups. The most predominant indirect refusal strategies are *reason* and *statement of regret*. However, in the Czech-speaking group, a third predominant strategy is apparent: a *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* (such as "Thank you"). This strategy has barely been utilised by the respondents of the English-speaking group.

On the other hand, the English-speaking group utilised over twice as many *statements of willingness* (such as “I would love to come”). Additionally, a few instances of *hedging* were observed in the refusals of the English-speaking group. To provide an example of a response utilising *hedging* as a strategy:

- A) I would love to, (statement of willingness)
- B) but I can't promise anything. (hedging)
- C) I will be busy that month. (Reason)

In situation 4 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were asked to decline an invitation to a ball by their friend, Claire. The recorded strategies were as follows:

Situation 4	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	7 (0.7)	5 (0.5)	2 (0.4)	4 (0.26)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	7 (0.7)	7 (0.7)	5 (1)	13 (0.86)
b) Consideration of Feelings	3 (0.3)	7 (0.7)		6 (0.4)
c) Statement of willingness	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.4)	3 (0.2)
d) Statement of regret	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	5 (0.33)
e) Hedging	1 (0.1)			
f) Statement of principle	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)		1 (0.06)
g) Statement of alternative		1 (0.1)		
h) Acceptance that acts as a refusal		1 (0.1)		
Total amount of indirect strategies:	16 (1.6)	23 (2.3)	8 (1.6)	28 (1.86)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	2 (0.2)	4 (0.4)	3 (0.6)	6 (0.4)

Table 6. Situation 4 analysis

Recorded responses for this situation exhibit similar trends observed in the previous situation. Both language groups predominantly utilised the indirect strategies of *reason* and *statement of regret*. Additionally, the Czech-speaking group significantly employed the strategy of *consideration of interlocutor's feelings*. Similarly to the previous situation, this strategy has been utilised far less by English respondents.

Interestingly, in contrast to the previous situation, Czech-speaking male respondents used a higher number of direct strategies. Furthermore, Czech respondents utilised more *statements of principle* than the English respondents, frequently asserting that “*Plesy nejsou pro mě*” (“*Balls are not for me*”), or “*Já na tančení moc nejsem*” (“*I'm not into dancing*”).

### 5.2.3 Refusals of Offers

The next pair of analysed situations are situations numbered 3 and 7 in the DCT questionnaire for the current study. The first-turn speech act of the respondents' hypothetical interlocutor is the speech act of offer.

In situation 3 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were asked to decline their male friend's offer to pay for them at a pub. The recorded strategies were as follows:

Situation 3	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	9 (0.9)	5 (0.5)	3 (0.6)	7 (0.46)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	5 (0.5)	6 (0.6)		4 (0.26)
b) Consideration of Feelings	4 (0.4)	5 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.2)
c) Statement of willingness				
d) Let interlocutor off the hook	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.4)	4 (0.26)
e) Statement of regret		2 (0.2)		
f) Hedging	1 (0.1)		1 (0.2)	
g) Statement of principle	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)		
h) Self-defence	6 (0.6)	5 (0.5)	4 (0.8)	11 (0.73)
i) Statement of alternative	1 (0.1)	3 (0.3)	2 (0.4)	4 (0.26)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	22 (2.2)	24 (2.4)	10 (2)	26 (1.73)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	9 (0.6)

Table 7. Situation 3 analysis

Upon closer examination of the recorded responses for this situation, it was observed that Czech men used a noticeably higher number of direct strategies ( $x = 0.9$ ) compared to other respondent groups. The means of other groups ranged from  $x = 0.46$  to  $x = 0.6$ .

Czech respondents employed, on average, a greater number of indirect strategies, while English respondents utilised considerably more adjuncts. In particular, Czech respondents utilised considerably more indirect strategies of *reason* (2.75 times more than English respondents) and *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* (2.25 times more than English respondents). A similar trend of Czech speakers utilising more strategies of *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* was previously observed in the previously analysed pair of situations concerning refusals of invitations. The following example illustrates a Czech respondent's refusal utilising both discussed indirect strategies (*reason* and *consideration of interlocutor's feelings*):

- A) Nene, / Nono (direct refusal)
- B) díky, / thanks, (consideration of interlocutor's feelings)
- C) kdo ví, kdy se zase uvidíme. / who knows when we will meet next. (reason)

Furthermore, Czech respondents (especially men) utilised the indirect strategy of *statement of principle*. This strategy did not occur in a single English refusal. An example of a refusal utilising such a strategy is as follows:

- A) Ne, kámo, / Nah, bro, (direct refusal)
- B) pak na to zapomenu / I would forget(reason)
- C) a budu ti dlužít / and then I would owe you. (reason)
- D) To já nerad. / I don't like that. (principle)

In contrast to Czech language speakers, English respondents utilised considerably more *let the interlocutor of the hook* indirect strategies. An example illustrating the use of such a strategy is as follows:

- A) No, (direct refusal)
- B) it's okay. (let the interlocutor of the hook)
- C) I can pay my bill. (self-defence)

In situation 7 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were asked to turn down a ride home offered by their colleague, Theresa. The recorded strategies were as follows:

Situation 7	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	6 (0.6)	2 (0.2)	3 (0.6)	8 (0.53)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	9 (0.9)	12 (1.2)	1 (0.2)	11 (0.73)
b) Consideration of Feelings	10 (1)	11 (1.1)	5 (1)	12 (0.8)
c) Statement of willingness	2 (0.2)			
d) Let interlocutor off the hook		2 (0.2)	2 (0.4)	6 (0.4)
e) Statement of regret				1 (0.06)
f) Statement of alternative	2 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.2)	
Total amount of indirect strategies:	23 (2.3)	26 (2.6)	9 (1.8)	30 (2)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	3 (0.3)	5 (0.5)	5 (1)	8 (0.53)

Table 8. Situation 7 analysis

Regarding direct strategies, the usage among all groups was relatively proportionate, with the single exception of Czech women. Compared to other groups, they utilised not even half the number of direct strategies as other groups.

The English respondents utilised considerably more adjuncts in their responses, approximately two-thirds more than the Czech respondents.

Interestingly, Czech respondents utilised a greater number of indirect refusals, approximately one-third more than English respondents. The most predominant indirect strategies utilised by both groups were the strategies of *reason* and *consideration of interlocutor's feelings*. One noticeable difference is the lack of use of the strategy of *reason* by English-speaking men. However, such difference may be purely coincidental, resulting from a lower amount of English-speaking male respondents. In order to provide any claims on this particular observation, further research is required.

On the other hand, English respondents in this particular situation employed a greater number of indirect strategies of *let the interlocutor of the hook*, often accompanied by strategies of *reason* or *statement of alternative*. To provide an example of *let the interlocutor of the hook* strategy accompanied by the strategy of *statement of alternative* by an English respondent:

- A) No worries. (let the interlocutor of the hook)
- B) I have a friend who can pick me up. (statement of alternative)

#### **5.2.4 Refusals of Suggestions**

The next pair of analysed situations are situations numbered 5 and 8 in the DCT questionnaire for the current study. The first-turn speech act of the respondents' hypothetical interlocutor is the speech act of offer.

In situation 5 of the DCT questionnaire, the respondents were asked to decline their male friend's suggestion of switching from coffee to tea for health reasons. The recorded strategies were as follows:

Situation 5	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	2 (0.4)	5 (0.33)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	7 (0.7)	8 (0.8)	3 (0.6)	6 (0.4)
b) Consideration of Feelings	6 (0.6)	7 (0.7)	1 (0.2)	7 (0.46)
c) Statement of willingness		1 (0.1)		1 (0.06)
d) Statement of regret		1 (0.1)		
e) Statement of principle				3 (0.2)
f) Self-defence	10 (1)	5 (0.5)	5 (1)	11 (0.73)
g) Statement of alternative				1 (0.06)
h) Acceptance that acts as a refusal				2 (0.13)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	24 (2.4)	22 (2.2)	9 (1.8)	31 (2.06)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	1 (0.1)	6 (0.6)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.06)

Table 9. Situation 5 analysis

The first situation of this situation pair shows English respondents utilising a significantly higher number of direct strategies (over three times as many). Czech respondents, on the other hand, utilised a slightly higher number of indirect strategies. Moreover, Czech women utilised considerably more adjuncts than any other group of respondents.

The trend of Czech respondents utilising more indirect strategies of *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* is observable even in this situation. This strategy was used more by Czech respondents (approximately two-thirds) than by English respondents.

The predominant indirect strategy (especially in the English-speaking group) was the strategy of *self-defence*. Moreover, the English respondents utilised a greater variety of indirect strategies in general. To provide an instance where the *self-defence* strategy was utilised in combination with other strategies:

- A) I'm alright. (self-defence)
- B) As long as I don't have too much at once, (reason)
- C) I'll be okay. (self-defence)

On a few occasions, the refusal strategy of *self-defence* was used in isolation, constituting the entirety of the refusal. For instance, one English female respondent refused the proposition by uttering the phrase "Mind your own business," while one Czech male respondent refused by stating: "No tak umřu dřív no." (Well, I'll die sooner then.).



The second situation of the suggestion situation pair, and also the final situation of the entire study, is situation number 8. The respondents were asked to decline their female friend's suggestion to try out yoga as a remedy for their back pain. The recorded strategies were as follows:

<b>Situation 8</b>	Czech men	Czech women	English men	English women
<b>1. Direct strategies</b>	4 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.06)
<b>2. Indirect strategies</b>				
a) Reason	1 (0.1)	10 (1)	1 (0.2)	4 (0.26)
b) Consideration of Feelings	5 (0.5)	3 (0.3)	4 (0.8)	6 (0.4)
c) Statement of willingness	2 (0.2)			1 (0.06)
d) Hedging	2 (0.2)	3 (0.3)	2 (0.4)	2 (0.13)
e) Statement of principle	7 (0.7)	3 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	9 (0.6)
f) Self-defence				1 (0.06)
g) Repetition		1 (0.1)		
h) Statement of alternative	1 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.13)
i) Acceptance that acts as a refusal	1 (0.1)	5 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.13)
Total amount of indirect strategies:	19 (1.9)	26 (2.6)	10 (2)	27 (1.8)
<b>3. Adjuncts</b>	1 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	0	7 (0.46)

Table 10. Situation 8 analysis

In this situation, the number of direct and indirect strategies used was approximately proportional across all groups. Only a few exceptions were observed. Czech male respondents utilised more direct strategies than other groups.

Women in general (especially English-speaking women) utilised a greater number of adjuncts than men.

Moreover, Czech respondents utilised a greater number of indirect strategies compared to English respondents, approximately by a margin slightly less than a third.

The most notable observation, however, is the predominant usage of the indirect strategy of *reason* by Czech women. They utilised the strategy of *reason* nearly four times as often as English women. English women were the second group that used the strategy of *reason* the most frequently ( $x = 1$  for Czech women compared to  $x = 0.26$  for English women). This trend was not observed in the previous situation concerning suggestions.

### 5.3 Data Analysis

The focus of the following chapters will be the interpretation of the data provided in Chapters 5.1 and 5.2, including its subchapters. Chapter 5.4 will start by interpreting general variations in total strategy use between both language groups. The impact of the gender of the respondents on their use of refusal strategies will be considered as well. Then, its subchapters will focus on the interpretation of differences between the situation pairs provided in the previous chapters (Chapter 5.2.1 to Chapter 5.2.4), aiming to provide more detailed insight into the topic. Finally, Chapter 5.5 will attempt to address the limitation of the respondents' inability to accept the proposed speech acts by their hypothetical interlocutors in individual situations.

### 5.4 Total Strategy Use Between the Groups

The findings of this study reveal more similarities than differences between Czech and English speakers. The current study suggests that the usage of direct and indirect strategies, as well as adjuncts, was very similar between the two languages. For readers' convenience, I present *Table 2.*, which was previously shown in Chapter 5.1.

Total strategy occurrence	Czech		English	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Direct strategies</b>	38 (x = 3.8)	22 (x = 2.2)	14 (x = 2.8)	44 (x = 2.93)
<b>Indirect strategies</b>	175 (x = 17.5)	195 (x = 19.5)	86 (x = 17.2)	244 (x = 16.26)
<b>Adjuncts</b>	17 (x = 1.7)	38 (x = 3.8)	17 (x = 3.4)	52 (x = 3.46)

*Table 11. Overview of total refusal strategy use based on genders*

As has been previously stated, the frequency of indirect strategies employed by all groups considerably outweighs the frequency of direct strategies. A higher frequency of indirect strategies could be connected to the theory of Leech (1983, 108). In his theory, Leech states that indirectness is usually employed in connection with politeness. He points out that indirect strategies are commonly utilised to soften the impact of potentially unpleasant and face-threatening messages (Leech, 1983, 108). Such a considerably high proportion of indirect strategies suggests that the act of refusal is considered rather face-threatening (Leech, 1983, 108).

One group of respondents stands out when considering differences observed between the included groups of respondents. As has been mentioned before, the Czech male respondents utilised considerably more direct strategies while, at the same time, using fewer adjuncts than the other groups. A greater proportion of direct strategies utilised by Czech men could suggest that they conform less to the concept of PP proposed by Leech (1983). In connection with the Theory of Face proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), more direct communication suggests lesser employment of FTA strategies, which, according to Brown and Levinson, results in a greater potential face threat (1987, 68-71). This ultimately results in their behaviour being considered less polite (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

In contrast to Czech men, who appear to be more direct than the other groups, Czech women appear to be the most indirect when refusing. Out of all the groups of respondents, Czech women, on average, employed the lowest number of direct strategies and, simultaneously, the highest number of indirect strategies and adjuncts. Applying these findings to the theories of Brown and Levinson (1987), and Leech (1983) suggests that Czech women, when refusing, are more inclined to accommodate the face needs of their interlocutor compared to Czech men. This claim is supported by the examination of adjunct usage between both genders. As already stated, adjuncts are expressions often accompanying refusals, however, they are not sufficient to carry out the act of refusal alone (Beebe et al. 1990). Such a finding could suggest that adjuncts are utilised to soften the face-threatening potential of the speech act of refusal.

Finally, as stated before, no such considerable differences were observed between the English-speaking groups. However, such a finding is relevant, as it highlights the observed differences between the Czech-speaking groups.

The following chapters will focus on analyzing and interpreting individual situations in their respective pairs.

#### **5.4.1 Analysis of Request Refusals**

Concerning request refusals (situations 1 and 6), the most frequent indirect strategies were *reason* and *statement of regret*. It is important to note that both strategies often accompany one another.

By reasoning with the hypothetical interlocutors, the respondents typically tried to preserve their negative face, as they refused to carry out the requested activity. In other

words, the respondents attempted to maintain their actions' autonomy. Furthermore, by providing a logical reason that does not concern their interlocutor, the respondents avoid potentially threatening their interlocutor's positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987). In terms of the theory of PP provided by Leech (1983), the strategy of *reason* is mostly related to the Sympathy Maxim. By applying the strategy of *reason*, the performer of the speech act of refusal aims to avoid refusing directly by providing a rational explanation for their refusal. This approach aims to soften the impact of the speech act of refusal by pointing out that some specific circumstances compel them to refuse. As such, by providing a logical explanation for their refusal, the performer of the speech act of refusal aims to minimise antipathy towards their interlocutor.

The other most frequent refusal strategy utilised in this situation pair is the strategy of *statement of regret*. By expressing regret, the individual performing the act of refusal attempts to mitigate the potential threat to the positive face of their interlocutor. Regarding Leech's theory of PP, the indirect refusal strategy of *statement of regret* is most prominently related to the Obligation Maxim (Leech 2014). By apologising, the performer of the act of refusal is attempting to balance the social equilibrium between him and his interlocutor (Leech 2014, 197).

An interesting difference can be observed when comparing the total use of refusal strategies between both situations. As stated in Chapter 5.2.1, in situation 1, Czech men utilised approximately three times as many direct strategies as Czech women. Moreover, in situation 1, Czech men utilised zero adjuncts in their responses. In situation 6, on the other hand, Czech men employed, on average, significantly fewer direct strategies, with few respondents even using adjuncts. I believe that the gender of their hypothetical interlocutor likely causes this behaviour. In situation 6, the respondents were approached by a woman rather than a man. These findings suggest that when refusing requests, the Czech male respondents are more likely to soften their responses than Czech women.

#### **5.4.2 Analysis of Invitation Refusals**

Concerning refusals of invitations (situations 2 and 4), the differences between the total number of strategies between both language groups were deemed insignificant. However, a considerable difference was observed between genders in the employment of direct strategies. In situation 2 (where the hypothetical interlocutor was male), the women from both language groups employed, on average, more direct strategies than men. In situation 4

(where the hypothetical interlocutor was female), it was the men, across both language groups, who utilised more direct strategies. This contradicts the findings from the previous situation pair, where Czech men were more indirect when responding to women.

Similarly to the previous situation pair, the predominant indirect strategies recorded by both language groups were indirect strategies of *reason* and *statement of regret*. As such, similar claims can be made. By reasoning, the respondents attempted to maintain their negative face while adhering to the Sympathy Maxim. By expressing regret, the respondents attempted to maintain the positive face of their interlocutor while adhering to the Obligation Maxim.

Moreover, in both situations of this situation pair (invitation refusals), the Czech respondents utilised the strategy of *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* significantly more frequently (nearly three times as often) than English respondents. Such a strategy was mostly realised by expressing gratitude. According to Leech (2014), by expressing gratitude, the respondents adhere to the Obligation Maxim (similar to expressing regret). As a result of such a trend, the study's findings suggest that speakers of the Czech language are more inclined to consider their interlocutor's positive face needs when refusing invitations (Brown and Levinson 1987, 62-68).

Other than that, Czech respondents utilised more strategies of *statement of principle*. Similar to providing reasoning, the respondents aim to maintain their own negative face by carrying out this refusal strategy. Moreover, by expressing that the refusal stems from their personal principles, the respondents avoid potentially posing a threat to their interlocutor's positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987).

### **5.4.3 Analysis of Offer Refusals**

When refusing offers (situations 3 and 7), Czech respondents utilised considerably more indirect strategies overall than English respondents (95 total indirect strategies utilised by Czech respondents, compared to 75 indirect strategies utilised by English respondents). Such a finding suggests that, when refusing offers, Czech respondents aim to soften their speech act of refusal more than English respondents. One potential explanation could be that Czech respondents may perceive refusing offers as more face-threatening to their interlocutor's face compared to English respondents.

In both situations of this situation pair, the Czech respondents utilised a proportionately great number of refusal strategies of *reason* (covered in the previous Chapters 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) and *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* (covered in the previous Chapter 5.4.2) compared to other indirect strategies.

In situation 3, all respondent groups frequently utilised the strategy of *self-defence*. Accepting this particular offer would lead to a specific future imposition (the respondent would be expected to pay the next time in the pub). As such, in an attempt to negate the potential threat to their negative face, the respondents resorted to the employment of the *self-defence* strategy.

Moreover, a considerable difference can be observed in the frequency of direct strategies utilised by Czech women in situation 7 (with a female as the hypothetical interlocutor). In this situation, the Czech women utilised the fewest direct strategies ( $x = 0.2$ ) in comparison to other respondent groups. The second group that utilised the fewest direct strategies is English women ( $x = 0.53$ ). This suggests that when Czech women refuse offers carried out by other women, they aim to be less direct in their response, attempting to avoid potential face-threat to a greater degree than other respondent groups.

In this particular situation pair, a notable trend can be observed. Czech respondents employed a higher overall number of strategies of *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* (31 times by Czech respondents compared to 21 times by English respondents), while English respondents employed a higher overall number of strategies of *let the interlocutor of the hook* (14 times by English respondents compared to 5 times by Czech respondents). This observation suggests that when refusing offers, the Czech respondents show greater inclination to preserve their interlocutor's positive face, while the English respondents aim to preserve their interlocutor's negative face.

#### **5.4.4 Analysis of Suggestion Refusals**

When refusing suggestions (situations 5 and 8), respondents from all language groups and genders employed considerably fewer direct refusal strategies compared to other situation pairs. Only 16 instances of direct refusals were recorded across all respondent responses in this situation pair. To put it into perspective, in the situation pair of request refusals (which observed the second lowest usage of direct refusal strategies), a total of 29 instances of direct refusals were recorded across all respondent responses. The usage of indirect refusal strategies in this situation pair is proportionate to the usage of indirect strategies observed in

other situation pairs. This finding could suggest that when refusing suggestions, the respondents generally avoid providing a direct response, aiming to avoid posing a potential face threat to their interlocutor.

In situation 5, English respondents employed a considerably higher number of direct refusal strategies (seven instances) compared to Czech respondents, who performed direct refusal strategies in only two instances. Moreover, based on the recorded responses, the respondents generally considered this situation rather face-threatening, as a high frequency of *self-defence* strategies was recorded across all respondent groups. I believe this is caused due to the rather restrictive nature of the situation. The suggestion in this particular situation poses a potential threat to the respondent's negative face. By accepting the suggestions, the respondent would commit themselves to limiting their future actions. This observation suggests that the respondents utilised the *self-defence* strategy to maintain their negative face. Furthermore, this situation observes the trend of Czech respondents utilising considerably more strategies of *consideration of the interlocutor's feelings*, further supporting the claim that Czech respondents adhere more to their interlocutor's positive face needs when performing refusals.

In situation 8 (where the hypothetical interlocutor was female), men in both language groups utilised more direct strategies than women, showing a lesser inclination to soften their refusals when responding to a female interlocutor. Moreover, Czech women were observed to perform a considerably greater number of strategies of reason. Nearly four times as many as English women, who were the second most frequent users of these strategies.

## **5.5 Acceptance as Preferred Strategy**

This study investigated the use of refusal strategies by having respondents respond to hypothetical situations in a written form. As such, it is important to mention that what people *believe* they would say may differ from what they would *actually* say (Nelson 2002, 182), especially in written form without direct contact with their interlocutor. Moreover, the current research focused only on the examination of refusal strategies. To amass a sufficient amount of data for analysis, the respondents were instructed to always refuse, restricting the respondents' option of accepting the situation as their preferred strategy. In an attempt to address this limitation, the DCT questionnaire for the current study included a closing question asking the respondents whether they would prefer to accept any of the situations included in the questionnaire.

During the analysis of this question, I will once again convert the recorded values into statistical means. This should allow for easier comparison between the recorded values. The results of this question (see *Attachment 3*) have shown that, on average, provided the option to accept each situation, the Czech respondents would rather choose to accept a total of 103 propositions, averaging 5.15 ( $x = 5.15$ ) propositions per respondent. On the other hand, the English respondents would choose to accept only a total of 88 propositions, averaging 4.4 ( $x = 4.4$ ) propositions per respondent. This finding suggests that, when possible, Czech speakers may be more inclined to evade the speech act of refusal altogether, adhering more to the Acceptance Maxim proposed by Leech (1983).

When examining differences between genders, the Czech male respondent group would overall accept a total number of 61 ( $x = 6.1$ ) propositions, while the Czech female respondent group would choose to accept only 41 ( $x = 4.1$ ) propositions.

In regard to the English-speaking group of respondents, the English men would overall accept a total number of 25 ( $x = 5$ ) propositions, while the English women would choose to accept 63 ( $x = 4.2$ ) propositions.

The results suggest that men were more likely to adhere to the Acceptance Maxim proposed by Leech (1983), and if given the option, they would likely avoid performing the act of refusal altogether.

In terms of individual situation pairs, the respondent groups were generally most inclined to agree with the propositions in the first situation pair (request refusals). In other words, if given the option, the respondents would prefer to accept the proposition of requests. The Czech respondents would choose to accept the proposition of request a total amount of 33 times, while the English respondents would choose to accept a total of 30 times. On the other hand, the least accepted propositions were the propositions of suggestion. If given the option, the Czech respondents would accept a total amount of 14 propositions of suggestion. Similarly, the English respondents would choose to accept a total of 14 propositions of suggestion as well.

One situation pair with noticeable differences between both language groups is the situation pair of offers. In this situation pair, the Czech respondents demonstrated a significantly greater inclination to accept the propositions compared to the English respondents. The Czech respondents would prefer to accept a total of 29 propositions, while the English respondents would accept a total of 16 propositions. Such finding suggests that



the Czech respondents are more likely to accept offers than their English counterparts. No similar difference to such a degree was observed in any other situation pair.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of cross-cultural studies, especially those concerning speech act analysis. However, refusals as a speech act have received relatively little attention in comparison to speech acts such as complaints, apologies, or requests. Given the scarcity of research focusing on the contrast of speech acts between English and Slavic languages, this thesis focuses on a contrastive analysis of the speech act of refusal in Czech and English. This thesis attempts to observe similarities and differences in the refusal strategies of native Czech and native English speakers. To achieve that, three research questions were formulated:

- 1) Does the frequency of direct and indirect strategies of refusals differ between English and Czech?
- 2) Do speakers of the mentioned language groups employ different indirect strategies of refusals?
- 3) Does the gender of the refusing individual influence the choice of their refusal strategies?

To answer the presented research questions, a small-scale study was conducted involving 40 participants. The data was gathered using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire designed to elicit refusal responses across eight different situations. These situations were organised into pairs according to the first-turn speech act proposed by a hypothetical interlocutor. Said speech acts included requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions.

In connection to the first research question, the results of the study indicate no considerable difference in the frequency of employed direct and indirect refusal strategies between the native speakers of the Czech and English languages. The study revealed, however, that across both languages, the use of indirect strategies was significantly more prevalent than the use of direct strategies.

In connection to the second research question, the results of the study indicate that speakers of both language groups tend to employ similar indirect strategies of refusal in the same situations. However, there have been a few notable exceptions. Specifically, the Czech respondents favoured the *consideration of interlocutor's feelings* more often, while the English respondents favoured the *let the interlocutor of the hook* strategy more often in a few instances. These findings suggest that, in some instances, Czech respondents may

prioritise accommodating their interlocutor's positive face needs, while English respondents may focus on accommodating their interlocutor's negative face needs instead.

In connection to the third and final research question, the results of the study point to a noticeable difference between Czech men and women regarding their choice of refusal strategies. Specifically, Czech men were observed to employ a proportionately greater number of direct strategies than other respondent groups. Additionally, they used fewer adjuncts compared to the other groups of respondents. In contrast, Czech women exhibited greater usage of indirect strategies, employing them more frequently than other respondent groups while also using more adjuncts. This finding suggests that Czech women generally tend to focus more on softening the potential face threat of their refusals compared to Czech men.

These findings suggest that communication failure between these languages is unlikely to occur for speakers who learned the other language as their second, third, etc. language. Czech and English speakers showed similar patterns in refusal strategies, often utilising the strategy of *reason* accompanied by other various indirect strategies. Kasper (1997) and Nelson (2002, 183-184) propose that the usage of similar speech act strategies between two languages often results in successful communication.

The current study has met with some limitations (especially connected to the acquisition of English-speaking respondents). However, despite all the limitations, I consider the final findings of this study intriguing and, most importantly, valuable. I acknowledge the importance of validating the findings of this thesis through larger-scale research involving more participants and more researchers (to avoid potential biases of an individual) and, finally, a more suitable research instrument. Ideally, one involving personal spoken interaction rather than relying on an online written process.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CP – Cooperative Principle

DCT – Discourse Completion Task

FTA – Face-Threatening Act

IFID – Illocutionary Force Indicating Device

IP – Irony Principle

PP – Politeness Principle

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix P I: Czech Questionnaire

Appendix P II: English Questionnaire

## APPENDIX P I: CZECH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Vymyslete si přezdívku.
2. Jste:
  - a. Muž
  - b. Žena
  - c. Jiné (prosím, doplňte)
3. Kolik je Vám let?
4. Jaký je/byl Váš studijní obor?
5. Jaký je/byl Váš typ studia?
  - a. Bakalářský
  - b. Magisterský
  - c. Doktorský
  - d. Jiný (prosím, doplňte)

**Druhá část – Situace:** Následující část obsahuje osm situací, ve kterých budete vždy odmítat.

**Instrukce:** Ve všech situacích musíte vždy odmítnout.

Otázku Vám vždy pokládá Váš kamarád/ka nebo známý/á. Jejich pohlaví vyplývá z kontextu otázky.

Do situací se pokuste vžít a odpovědět co nepravděpodobněji.

Situace 1: Jste studentem/studentkou na vysoké škole a poctivě si vedete materiály a zápisky. Přišel za Vámi spolužák Tom a poprosil vás: „Ahoj. Zítra máme zkoušku a já nemám materiály z minulého týdne. Myslíš, že bys mi je mohl/mohla půjčit?“ Jak byste odmítli jeho žádost?

Situace 2: Váš kamarád Lukáš vás pozval na svatbu se slovy: „Nazdar. Rádi bychom tě s Monikou pozvali na naši svatbu. Koná se za dva měsíce. Budeme moc rádi, když přijdeš.“ Jak byste odmítli jeho pozvání?

Situace 3: Jste v hospodě a jeden z Vašich kamarádů, Filip, Vám navrhne: „Dneska to vezmu za nás za oba. Příště zase můžeš pozvat ty mě.“ Jak byste odmítli jeho nabídku?

Situace 4: Na procházce jste narazili na kolegyni z práce, Kláru. Pozvala Vás na večírek se slovy: „Čau. V sobotu jdeme s Michalem a Kristiánem na ples. Půjdeš taky?“ Jak byste odmítli její pozvání?

Situace 5: Je odpoledne a jdete domů z města. Po cestě jste se rozhodli zastavit se pro kávu. Došli jste domů a Váš spolubydlící, Marek, Vás osloví: „Vždyť máš vysoký tlak, mám o tebe starost. Co takhle zkusit čaj?“ Jak byste zavrhlí jeho návrh?

Situace 6: Máte kamarádku Sáru, která bydlí ve stejném městě nedaleko od vás. Zavolala vám s následující prosbou: „Ahoj. Rozbilo se mi auto a nemůžu ho nastartovat. Mohl/mohla bys mě zavést do práce, prosím?“ (Celá cesta i s návratem domů by zabrala asi 30 minut.) Jak byste odmítli její žádost?

Situace 7: Jdete domů z brigády. Máte před sebou ještě asi 20 minut chůze, když v tom před Vámi zastaví auto. Vystoupí z něho Vaše kolegyně Tereza se slovy: „Ahoj, jedu okolo, nechceš svézt domů?“ Jak byste odmítli její nabídku?

Situace 8: Spolužačce Veronice jste se svěřili, že vás poslední dobou bolí záda. Poté, co si Vás vyslechla, Vám navrhla: „Se zády je problém pořád. Slyšela jsem, že lidem často pomáhá jóga. Možná bys ji mohl/a zkusit.“ Jak byste zavrhlí její návrh?

**Doplňková otázka:** Pokud byste nebyli nuceni odmítnout, přijali byste nějakou z předešlých situací?

- a) Situace 1: Spolužák Tom požádal o zápisky.
- b) Situace 2: Kamarád Lukáš Vás pozval na svatbu.
- c) Situace 3: Kamarád v hospodě Filip Vám navrhl, že za Vás zaplatí.
- d) Situace 4: Kolegyně Klára Vás pozvala na ples.
- e) Situace 5: Spolubydlící Marek Vám navrhl, ať vyzkoušíte čaj.
- f) Situace 6: Kamarádka Sára Vás poprosila o odvoz do práce.
- g) Situace 7: Kolegyně Tereza Vám navrhla, že Vás sveze domů.
- h) Situace 8: Spolužačka Veronika Vám navrhla zkusit jógu.

## APPENDIX P II: ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Choose a nickname.
2. What is your gender identity?
  - a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Other (please, fill in)
3. Where are you from (country)?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your field of study?
6. In what programme are you?
  - a. Bachelor's degree program (undergraduate)
  - b. Master's degree program (graduate)
  - c. Doctoral degree program (postgraduate)
  - d. Other (please, fill in)

**Part Two – Situations:** The following part consists of eight situations in which you will always be refusing.

**Instructions:** In all situations, you must always refuse.

The question is always asked by your friend or acquaintance. Their gender will be incorporated into the context of each situation.

Try to immerse yourself in the situations and respond as naturally as possible.

Situation 1: You are a college student and diligently keep your study materials and notes. Your classmate Tom came to you and asked: „Hey. We have an exam tomorrow, and I don't have study materials from the last week. Do you think I could borrow yours?“ How would you refuse his request?

Situation 2: Your friend Lucas invited you to his wedding saying: „Hey! Monica and I would like to invite you to our wedding. It takes place in about two months. We will be thrilled if you can come.“ How would you refuse his invitation?

Situation 3: You are in a pub and one of your friends, Filip, suggests to you: „I'll take care of the bill for both of us. Next time you can treat me.“ How would you refuse his offer?

Situation 4: While on a walk, you ran into a colleague from work, Claire. She invited you to a party saying: „Hi. Michael, Christian, and I are going to a ball on Saturday. Do you want to come with?“ How would you refuse her invitation?

Situation 5: It's afternoon, and you are walking home from the city. On the way, you decided to grab a coffee. When you got home, your roommate, Mark, approached you: „You have high blood pressure; I'm worried about you. How about trying some tea?“ How would you reject his suggestion?

Situation 6: Your friend, Sarah, lives nearby in the same city. She called you with the following request: „Hi. My car broke down and it won't start. Could you give me a ride to work, please?“ (The whole trip, including the way back home, would take about 30 minutes.) How would you refuse her request?

Situation 7: You are on your way home from a part-time job. You still have about a 20-minute walk ahead of you when a car stops right in front of you; it's your colleague, Theresa. She gets out and asks: „Hi. I am passing by, do you want a ride home?“ How would you refuse her offer?

Situation 8: You told your classmate Veronica that you have been suffering from back pain lately. In response, she suggested: „Back pain is terrible. People say that yoga can help with that. Maybe you could give it a try.“ How would you reject her suggestion?

**Closing question:** If you didn't have to refuse, would you accept any of the previous situations?

- a) Situation 1: Classmate Tom asked for study materials.
- b) Situation 2: Friend Lucas invited you to his wedding.
- c) Situation 3: Friend Filip suggested he would pay for you at the pub.
- d) Situation 4: Colleague Claire invited you to a ball.



- e) Situation 5: Roommate Mark suggested you should try drinking tea.
- f) Situation 6: Friend Sarah asked for a ride to work.
- g) Situation 7: Colleague Theresa offered you a ride home.
- h) Situation 8: Classmate Veronica suggested trying out yoga.