EXAMINING REFUSAL STRATEGIES OF TURKISH EFL STUDENTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS

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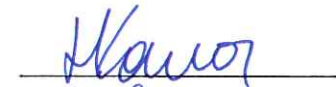
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ABSTRACT

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AND

THEIR PERCEPTIONS

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The purpose of this study is to examine the refusal strategies of Turkish EFL learners and explore their perceptions of social factors that are influential in their strategy use. The study was conducted at a private university in the west of Turkey, and eighty Turkish EFL students enrolled at an English language preparatory program participated in the study. The data were obtained through a written discourse completion task (DCT), retrospective verbal reports, and interviews. The results demonstrated the refusal strategies that Turkish EFL learners use in different social situations. The number of refusals to invitations and requests were compared, and strategy use was analyzed. Turkish EFL learners were found to use indirect strategies more than direct and adjuncts. Finally, the perception data revealed four general themes regarding the social factors that affect Turkish EFL learners' refusal responses.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Refusal Strategies, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

ÖZ

İNGİLİZCE'Yİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENEN

TÜRK ÖĞRENCİLERİN KULLANDIKLARI REDDETME STRATEJİLERİNİN

VE

"REDDETME" HAKKINDAKİ ALGILARININ İNCELENMESİ

Önal, Canan

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Bu çalışmanın amacı yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin reddetme stratejilerini incelemek, reddetme sözeylemi hakkında bildiklerine ışık tutmak ve reddetme eylemi esnasındaki sosyal faktörleri daha iyi anlamaktır. Katılımcılar, Türkiye'nin batısında özel bir üniversitede İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi alan 80 öğrencidir. Veriler, öğrencilerin doldurduğu söylem tamamlama testleri, kavrama ve edimbilim bilgilerini açığa çıkarma odaklı sözlü raporlar ve görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları bu öğrencilerin reddetme eyleminde kullandıkları stratejileri ortaya koymuştur. Davet ve rica durumlarında kullanılan reddetme stratejileri karşılaştırılmış ve strateji kullanımı incelenmiştir. İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin dolaylı reddetme stratejilerini kullandığı tespit edilmiştir. Sözlü rapor ve görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler dört ana başlık altında toplanarak öğrencilerin reddetme algısını etkileyen sosyal faktörler açığa çıkarılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edimbilim, Reddetme Stratejileri, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce

To My Family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

A number of definitions have been made for the concept of pragmatics. It was Morris (1938) who used this concept for the first time within the scope of language philosophy. Morris (1946) divides the field of semiotics into three as syntax, semantics and pragmatics, and defines pragmatics as the field that deals with the origins, usage and effect of signs within the total behavior of the interpreters of signs. Crystal (1987) on the other hand, makes a broader definition of pragmatics as the study of language from users' point of view, their choices, the constraints that they encounter in using language in social interaction and the impacts their use of language have on other participants while communicating. His definition emphasizes the viewpoint of users of the language and their choices while the former is rather a behaviorist definition. Kasper and Blum-Kulka's (1993) viewpoint takes social and cultural circumstances into consideration and he defines pragmatics as "the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context" (p. 3). Although there are different views to pragmatics, it can be said that it is concerned with the use of language in meaningful communication. In other words, it is about conveying more than what is literally said, mainly interested in the use of utterances in context, and builds on what is semantically encoded in the language.

Speakers of a foreign language need to ensure more than listening, speaking, reading and writing competencies in order to be able to *use* that language. Using a language doesn't solely refer to knowing phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. One should also know how to interact, respond to what is said thoroughly and convey the intended message in the way that native speakers do. Only then we can say that a person is competent in a language. Thomas (1983) claims that a speaker's 'linguistic competence' consists of grammatical competence ('abstract' or decontextualized knowledge of intonation, semantics, phonology, syntax etc.) and pragmatic competence (the ability to use language effectively in order to understand language in context and achieve a specific purpose). Pragmatic competence is of great

importance when it comes to using a language successfully and formal correctness is solely not enough to be a competent language user.

One of the keys to be fully competent in a second language is to develop pragmatic competency. According to Fraser, (2010) pragmatic competence is the ability to transmit one's intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message given as it was intended. Taguchi (2009), on the other hand, makes a broader definition when he regards it as the ability to use language in a social context appropriately. Both of the researchers highlight the fact that users should comprehend and convey the intended message within the social context. However, these skills are not often developed in the teaching of a second language; learners may be able to deliver grammatically correct utterances but still fail to achieve their communicative aims because they lack cultural and social knowledge of the target language. It is, therefore, important to develop pragmatic competence in L2 context to avoid communication breakdowns and misunderstandings.

Vocabulary, grammar, culture and pragmatics are some of the aspects that have currently been used in foreign language teaching together with the four skills. Out of these aspects, pragmatics teaching is relatively new and underestimated in L2 contexts. Although there has been an emphasis on teaching pragmatics in L2 contexts since Blum-Kulka (1987) highlighted the need to make second language learners aware of some certain specific features of particular speech acts in the target language, there are still not sufficient amount of data on how to do so. Pragmatics is underestimated, because traditional language learning instruction considers extensive training in grammar and four skills important. When it comes to interact with a native speaker though, the need for culture and particularly pragmatics steps in.

Teaching pragmatics in EFL context is necessary and important for many reasons. First of all, it helps learners to thoroughly interact with the native speakers, get and convey the intended messages in the way that they do. A language learner who is aware of pragmatics is likely to have a smoother social interaction with native speakers. Secondly, the observations done in this area showed that pragmatic practices in cultures may vary. For example, research on interlanguage pragmatics has shown that speech act categories and their realization strategies are found across languages. However, they do not apply to all languages in the same way (Guzman and Alcón,

2009). If they do not apply to all languages in the same way, then learner should be explicitly taught how to do pragmatic practices. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) further explain this by stating that learners differ from native speakers in the area of language use, in the comprehension and execution of some speech acts, in conversational functions like leave takings and greetings, and in back channeling and short responses. Last, many research done in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) showed that it is possible to learn pragmatics. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) suggests that observation of language learners showed the demonstrated need for teaching pragmatics and that instruction in pragmatics could be successful.

Pragmatics includes speech acts, conversational structure, conversational management, conversational implicatures, sociolinguistic aspects of language and discourse within second language studies. The areas mentioned above are generally not addressed in language teaching curricula as it was discussed earlier. The studies which have been conducted in this area suggest that raising pragmatic awareness in learners of English results in better use of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Kasper, 1997; Koike & Pearson, 2005).

Speech acts can be described as communicative acts that speakers do in order to reach their communicative goals. Specific units like refusals, requests, complaints etc. fall under the category of speech acts, and the focus of this study is the speech act of refusals. The speech act of refusals is particularly an interesting area of research to study because they are more complicated than the other speech acts in that respondents tend to use more indirect strategies in order to minimize the offence and negotiate rather than directly saying *no*. This is because the speech act of refusals requires a high level of pragmatic competence and it is usually regarded as face-threatening (Chen, 1996). In addition, refusing people is a deeply culture-specific issue that varies from culture to culture, so it is very likely that there could be miscommunication or pragmatic failure while, for example, an American is refusing a Turk's dinner invitation after a business meeting or vice versa. Analyzing the refusal strategies of Turkish EFL learners will shed a light on what specific strategies they use in their L2. Additionally, investigating their perceptions will contribute to our understanding of sociocultural aspects while Turkish EFL students are making refusals in various situations.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of this study will further be studied under three categories as the notion of pragmatics, Speech Act theory and taxonomy of Speech Acts.

1.2.1 The notion of pragmatics. Before discussing the notion of pragmatics, it is necessary to know where it stems from. Pragmatics stems from the study of signs, semiotics, which was founded by Charles S. Peirce. Signs are involved everywhere and have been studied from various different point of views as they are broad concepts not only solely related to linguistics; it can either analyze biological or social items etc. Morris (1938) divided semiotics into three; pragmatics, semantics and syntax. The notion of pragmatics was presented and contrasted together with semantics or syntax. According to Morris (1938), semantics is interested in the relation of signs to … objects which they may or do denote and pragmatics concerns the relation of signs to their interpreters. Similarly, Carnap (1942) gives a definition of pragmatics together with syntax and semantics; if in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, then it is about the field of pragmatics. If we analyze only the expressions and their designata, this time it is about semantics. If we abstract from the designata also and analyze the relations between expressions solely, it is about syntax. The definitions above have a broad concept and are not degraded to linguistic discipline.

In the 1970's, a more communicative point of view were introduced together with the trends in language teaching and the ever-growing need for good communication skills, which paved the way for the interest of pragmatics in linguistic field. According to Stalnaker (1970) pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are used. Similarly, Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as the discipline which focuses on the ability of language users to pair sentences within the appropriate context. In his broad definition Crystal (1987) regards pragmatics as the study of language from the users' perspective, especially of the choices they make, the problems they have in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants during communication. According to Lycan (1995), pragmatics deals with the use of language in context, and the context-dependence of varied aspects of linguistic interpretation. Bach (2004) explains

pragmatics as extralinguistic information which arises from an actual act of utterance, and adds that it is related with the hearer's determination of what the speaker is saying.

The definitions of pragmatics given above are chronologized so that readers can see how the perception of the notion of pragmatics has evolved and what has still remained over the years. When we consider the definitions given above, we can define pragmatics in linguistic terms as conveying more than what is literally said in context.

1.2.2. Speech Act Theory. Speech acts could be defined as simple communication units. The British philosopher J. L. Austin contributed to the pragmatics discipline with his well-known Speech Act Theory. This is one of the most influential theories which inspired many other theorists and researchers, and changed the way people perceive language. When we look at the background of the well-known Speech Act Theory, we see traces from famous philosophers like Frege, Wittgenstein, Austin Searle and Grice. Having been affected by Frege's and Wittgenstein's philosophies, The British philosopher J. L. Austin (1962) proposed a new type of utterance called performative utterances. These utterances take the form of declarative sentences and, when issued under convenient circumstances, they are not reports or descriptions anymore; they become the performances of an act (Austin 1962). The sentences somebody uses to suggest, apologize, argue or promise etc. can be used to *do* something under certain social circumstances and conventions even though the sentences are not labeled as true or false (constatives). Some famous examples of performative utterances are (1) I name this ship 'Queen Elizabeth' and (2) I promise that I'll come tomorrow. He proposed the acts of naming and promising in the sentences above as speech acts and the sentences as performative. This was different from the traditional view of meaning in language at that time. The traditional view regarded declarative sentences as the basic type and accepted that the meaning of utterances can be described in terms of being true or false. Austin proposed performatives, which cannot be really labeled as true or false but perform acts. In the case of performatives, they can only be labeled as felicitous or infelicitous.

There are some criteria that must be fulfilled for illocutionary acts to achieve their purpose. Austin (1962) names these criteria as felicity conditions and presents 3 different types of felicity conditions:

(i)   There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.

(ii)   The circumstances and people should be appropriate, as reported in the procedure.

(iii)   The procedure must be executed correctly and thoroughly.

His felicity conditions for performatives were discussed and developed by many linguists. Allan (1994) gives a brief summary of Austin's framework of felicity conditions and illustrate them as follows:

(i)   A preparatory condition, meant to establish if the circumstances of the speech act and the participants in it are appropriate to its successful performance or not.

(ii)   An executive condition, meant to determine if the speech act has been properly executed or not.

(iii)   A sincerity condition includes speaker's responsibility for the illocutions in the utterance. Typically, hearer will assume that speaker is being sincere unless s/he has good reason to believe.

(iv)   A fulfillment condition designated by the perlocutionary effect of the speech act (Allan 1994).

Searle (1976), Austin's student, further develops his framework and suggest that felicity conditions correspond to the rules of preparatory, propositional, sincerity, essential that govern speech acts. If certain conditions are not fulfilled, the act is not successful then. For example when a priest says "I hereby pronounce you man and wife" in an informal setting, not in an authorized place, then he violates Austin's first condition stated above. If someone commands his boss to do something in a workplace, it is then violation of Austin's second condition, because the act of commanding is normally performed by someone who is superior in terms of status and power, not by someone with lower status or power.

Instead of following constatives and performatives, Austin (1962) proposed a new three-fold model. According to his theory speech acts, the basic units of communication, have three facets; *locutionary act* which refers to the act of saying something, *illocutionary act* which refers to the social function of what is said, and *perlocutionary act* which can be defined as the effects of what is said upon the thoughts, feelings, or actions of the speaker or of other people. In his famous work

How to do things with Words, Austin (1962) clarifies these terms with the following example: *He said to me, 'You can't do that'*. Locution here is the literal meaning of the sentence. The illocution has the force of warning: He protested against my doing it. 'You can't do that' is an utterance that has illocutionary force warning the hearer not to do something. The perlocution is the effect of what is said upon the hearer: He stopped me up, he brought me to my senses.

Following Austin, John R. Searle (1969) developed his theory and proposed a taxonomy with five components of illocutionary acts: representative or assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. Searle's broad categories were studied by many linguists and more specific concepts were also added over the years. Refusals, which are the main focus of this study, can be simply defined as negative responses to an offer, invitation, request or suggestion. Searle (1976) suggests that refusals are in the category of commissives. This is because they commit the refuser to (not) performing an action which requires great cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the refuser. Because they vary both linguistically and cross-culturally, refusals are likely to cause misunderstandings. Fraser (1990) states that refusals are susceptible to many social variables like gender, age, level of education, occupation, power and social distance. All these factors stated above make refusals a more complicated act which needs to be enlightened.

1.2.3. Taxonomy of speech acts. Austin (1962) proposed five distinct types of illocutionary forces of utterances, including, exercitives, expositives, behabitives, verdictives and commissives. Austin's student John R. Searle (1969) developed his theory and proposed a taxonomy which has five components of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. It is important here to highlight that the divisions above include the phrases 'illocutionary force' and 'illocutionary act', not the speech act. This is because the speech act theory is almost devoted to illocutionary level, and these two terms-speech act and illocutionary act-are used interchangeably in the literature. Turning back to Searle's taxonomy, the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition in *representatives* (or assertives); stating, asserting, reporting, denying or claiming are some examples of this class. In *directives,* the speaker requests hearer to perform some action; ordering, asking, requesting, inviting and commanding belong to this class. The aim of the *commissives* is to commit the speaker to perform some action; promising, guaranteeing, swearing,

refusing and offering are components of it. In *expressives,* speakers express their feelings or attitude; congratulating, apologizing, thanking, welcoming and appreciating are some of the acts that fall into this category. Finally, the speaker changes the external status or condition of a situation by representing him/herself as doing that action in *declarations.* "I pronounce you man and wife" or "I sentence you to be hanged" are examples of declarations.

The general framework of speech act theory was criticized in many ways concerning the internal structure within the theory. Verschueren and Östman (2009) state that the main problem in speech act theory arises regarding how the theory itself can contribute to certain preexistent problems of language and language use. Although many problems regarding the theory have been addressed, there is a lot to discover in this area and "there is still much work to be done both in the direction of theory and in that of application to research about particular languages or to the analysis of actual discourse and interaction" (Verschueren & Östman 2009, p.242).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There are four skills that are addressed in a regular language teaching curricula; listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it is never enough to know these skills in order to communicate thoroughly. The target culture or how the users of that language respond to in certain situations are generally not highlighted in language teaching curricula. Learners are more likely to comprehend what is intended to be meant in target language and communicate more effectively and naturally if educators raise awareness on pragmatic issues. Not being aware of cultural and pragmatic differences and not giving attention to them are some of the problems that hinder communication, and they needed to be solved in EFL contexts particularly.

In addition, there used to be a debate on whether speech acts are culture- and language-specific or universal. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) stated that there is a great need to conduct theoretical studies of speech acts that complements empirical studies, depending on speech acts that were produced by native speakers of languages in strictly defined contexts. Since then, a great deal of research has been conducted which has shown the effect of culture on speech acts. Nevertheless, very little research has focused on the perception or production of speech acts by EFL or ESL learners.

Speech act of refusals is particularly an interesting area of research to study because of its complicated and culturally-bounded structure. They have been called "a major cross-cultural 'sticking point' for many nonnative speakers" (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990, p. 56). Social variables such as gender, age, level of education, occupation, power and social distance, make refusing even more complicated (Fraser, 1990). Moreover, the directness level of refusals depends on the speech act from which the refusals are elicited. For instance, respondents might prefer to use different refusal strategies while responding negatively to a suggestion than they do while responding to a request.

Sadler and Eröz (2002) state that the amount of research on refusals is much more limited than the other speech acts, and they highlight the lack of research regarding refusals in the case of language speakers of English particularly. Since then, not a great number of studies have been conducted which examine refusals in this context, and this shows the need for further research on refusals.

Collecting refusal data in an L2 context could reveal surprising details about socio-cultural factors of refusing as the learners are almost completely surrounded by their L1 and cultural background but learn and try to speak a second language in such context rather than target language or culture. It is even more interesting to collect refusal data in Turkish context, because the refusal utterances of Turkish natives to an undesired situation seem much more culture-bound, complex and open to comments than the refusal utterances of the English. The strategy choice of Turkish learners of English when they refuse, and the reasons why they particularly choose those strategies may shed a light on their cognition and pragmatic knowledge of refusals, cultural understanding of social factors, and sociocultural differences between Turkish and English.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine refusal strategies of Turkish EFL learners in different social situations, and their perceptions on their own refusal strategy use and social factors that impact their linguistic choice.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is conducted in an attempt to find out answers to the following questions:

1. What refusal strategies do Turkish EFL learners use in different social situations?

2. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners on their own refusal strategy use and social factors?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Learning a second language has been regarded as a more diverse process that focuses on various aspects, not the four skills particularly, for some time. Pragmatics, which is one of the aspects that complements language learning, has been studied for four decades only. Although certain speech acts have been abundantly studied to understand L2 learners' pragmatic competence, very few researchers have focused on refusal performance when compared to other speech acts. In other words, the speech act of refusal has remained an under-researched area (Chang, 2009). Research on refusals has been studied from different perspectives. The present study aims to contribute to the area from learners' perspective. Their perceptions will be explored and strategies they use will be examined.

1.7 Overview of Methodology

This section gives a brief overview of the methods used in this study under eight subtitles including research design, participants, setting, instruments, data analysis, basic assumptions, organization and operational definitions.

1.7.1 Research design. A research design can be described as a detailed outline of how the research will take place including the way the data collected, instruments to be employed, the way they will be utilized and the intended means for analyzing data collected. This study has a qualitative design where three data sources were utilized, and explores one group of individuals, namely, Turkish EFL learners, in their own setting. The researcher in this study is the primary instrument because she was

personally involved throughout the process by doing the observations, interviews and analyzing the responses of attendants with flexible methods focusing on quality. In addition, this study aims to contextualize findings, understand and interpret attendants' intention or their perceptions in a specific context. All these characteristics belong to a qualitative design. Specifically, the study attempts to examine refusal strategies of Turkish EFL students and their perceptions using qualitative methods.

1.7.2 Participants. The participants of the present study were 80 Turkish B1 level students who have been learning English as a foreign language. The levels of the students are designated according to Common European Framework (CEF).

1.7.3 Setting. This study was conducted in the English Language Preparatory School of a private university in the west of Turkey. The program aims to provide students with an intensive English course and prepare students for their studies at their faculties. The modules in the program are designed in accordance with CEF as A1, A2, B1 and B2. A1, A2, B1 and B2 in CEF refer to beginner, elementary, intermediate and upper intermediate levels respectively. A student who completes these four modules within a year can study at his faculty.

1.7.4 Data collection instruments. This study is qualitative in nature. The primary data collection method in this study includes a written discourse completion task (DCT). The DCTs were specifically designed for this study as e-mails. Additional data collection tools were retrospective verbal reports and interviews with randomly selected participants among those who took the DCT and volunteered to participate in such further data collection procedures.

1.7.5 Data analysis. The most commonly used model that classifies refusals is proposed by Beebe et. al. (1990). Their refusal taxonomy consists of three basic categories: direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals. This taxonomy is adopted as theoretical framework in classifying the responses of the attendants in this study.

In response to the first research question, the data were collected through written DCT. The Turkish EFL learners were asked to respond to the invitation and request e-mail tasks that were specifically designed to elicit refusals. Their replies were coded according to the taxonomy of refusals developed by Beebe et al. (1990). In order to address the second question, the attendants were asked to give verbal reports right after

the email tasks were replied. The questions aimed to reveal how the attendants cognize refusals and their pragmatic knowledge of refusals. Their retrospective reports were analyzed with respect to cognition and pragmatic knowledge through pattern coding. For the last question, 8 randomly selected attendants were interviewed in order to have a deeper understanding on the concept of refusing in an attempt to come up with some cultural understanding of social factors. The questions which were addressed to the attendants in the interview were related to sociocultural differences with respect to refusals, making cross-cultural comparison and situations when we refuse. The responses to the interview questions were analyzed qualitatively in order to generate themes and patterns.

1.8 Basic Assumptions

The researcher assumes that the participants of the study responded the questions of the interview and retrospective verbal reports honestly. The researcher also assumes that the participants of the study are representatives of the general population. Finally, the data collection instruments utilized in this study are assumed to be appropriate and reliable.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis involves five chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, includes general background information about the study. The problem, significance and purpose are stated, and research questions are asked. In addition, this chapter has a brief overview of the methodology. Basic assumptions and operational definitions of terms are also given in the first chapter together with the organization of the study. The second chapter, *Literature Review,* is designed to provide readers with detailed information about pragmatics, speech acts, speech act of refusals and the importance of teaching speech act of refusals. Local and international studies which focused on speech act of refusals are categorized in this chapter, too. The next chapter entitled *Methodology* gives details about the setting, design, participants, instruments, procedure and data analysis of the study. In chapter fours, findings of the study are presented in three categories. Finally, in chapter five, the results of the study are discussed along with a conclusion. This chapter includes theoretical implications and recommendations for further research. References and appendices are provided at the end.

1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms

The terms used frequently in this study are used to refer the definitions below:

1.10.1 English as a foreign language (EFL). It is defined as the learning of a language thought to those for whom the English language does not have internal function in their L1 country (Jenkins, 2000).

1.10.2 Pragmatics. It is defined as the study of language from the users' viewpoint, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants in the act of communication (Crystal, 1987).

1.10.3 Pragmatic competence. Pragmatic Competence is associated with the ability to express and comprehend messages, and includes the sub-traits vocabulary, cohesion and organization or coherence (Bachman, 1990).

1.10.4 Pragmatic failure. It occurs when a L2 speaker communicates with a native speaker and the native speaker understands the purpose of the utterance differently than what the L2 user intended (Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary, 2002).

1.10.5 Speech act. They are the basic units of language; illocutionary acts (Searle, 1969).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides relevant literature with regard to the scope of the study. First of all, pragmatic competence and interlanguage pragmatics are addressed. Then, the speech act of refusal is touched upon with regards to foreign language learners. Finally, the studies which were related to speech act of refusals are reviewed.

2.2 Pragmatic Competence

The term pragmatic competence has been studied under many models of communicative competence sometimes under different names. One of the earliest definitions of pragmatic competence comes from Chomsky (1980), who highlights the importance of appropriateness and purpose of the language used while defining the concept by stating that it is the "knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use, in conformity with various purposes" (p.224). In their communicative competence model, Canale and Swain (1980) regarded pragmatic competence as an important element, and named it as sociolinguistic competence. Bachman and Palmer (1996), on the other hand, made a more comprehensible model, and divided pragmatic competence into two as functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Functional knowledge in the model includes ideational, manipulative and heuristic functions, and cultural references and figures of speech, while sociolinguistic knowledge encompasses registers, dialects and language varieties, and natural and idiomatic expressions. In the comprehensive model they proposed, pragmatic competence is made up of as a set of abilities for creating and interpreting discourse. Similarly, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) detailed pragmatic competence in depth in their model. They regarded pragmatic competence as actional competence, which includes knowledge of language functions and knowledge of speech act sets. In other words, pragmalinguistic aspects of language were highlighted in their model. In addition, they considered sociocultural competence an important component that refers to knowledge regarding appropriate use within particular social and cultural contexts.

Taking the abovementioned models into consideration, it can be said that pragmatic competence has been redefined and discussed further over the years. Additionally, developing pragmatic competence seems an inextricable component of language competence. In order to ensure pragmatic competence in foreign language classrooms, more attention has been given to the components of pragmatics mentioned above over the years. The researchers considered learners' pragmatic competence in a foreign language specifically. This will be further discussed in the next section.

2.3 Interlanguage Pragmatics

It is quite natural for learners of a foreign language to use a system which includes elements from their first and second language throughout the learning process. It is also necessary to discover how learners of a second language "comprehend and produce speech acts, and how their second language-related speech act knowledge is acquired" (Kasper & Dahl, 1991) in order to shed a light on how non-natives acquire pragmatic elements. It was Kasper (1992) who introduced the term interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) the first time and defined it as "the branch of second language (L2) research which studies how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge" (p. 203). As it is understood from the definition above, studies in ILP mainly focus on comprehension and use of speech acts, and their acquisition. It is of great importance to discover more about ILP and develop the pragmatic competence of non-native speakers of a second language, because failures in communication, misunderstandings or unpleasant situations may occur due to the lack of pragmatic knowledge or transfer when native and non-native speakers interact.

2.4 The Speech Act of Refusals

Refusals, as the main focus of the study, can be defined as negative responses to an offer, invitation, request or suggestion. Searle (1976) suggests that refusals belong to the category of commissives because they commit the refuser to (not) performing an action that calls for considerable cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the refuser. Similarly, Félix-Brasdefer (2009) regards refusal acts as a type of commissive based on the nature of the act of refusing and states that "refusals are second pair parts in conversation and belong to the speech act of dissent which represents one type of assertive act or negative expression" (p. 3).

Speech act of refusals are rather problematic and complicated in a foreign language for some reasons. Fraser (1990) states that refusals are sensitive to social variables such as gender, age, level of education, occupation, power and social distance, which make it even more complicated for foreign language learners. In addition, it is not common to simply say *"no"* in many of the cultures; people tend to be indirect when they refuse because refusing is a face-threatening act. Refusals are often realized through indirect strategies and thus require a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996). Moreover, the concept of refusing may lead to misunderstandings or offend the interlocutors if they lack pragmatic knowledge of the target culture, because what is considered appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate, or even be offensive in another culture. Also, cultural beliefs and background of the interlocutors may have an effect on performing or not performing a refusal in certain cases depending on sociocultural factors. People tend to be indirect not to be offensive, soften their refusals with politeness strategies, and negotiate in certain cases because it is in their culture to do so.

In the light of the discussion regarding the speech act of refusals above, it can be concluded that refusals are sensitive, sociocultural, complicated because of being indirect, and may lead to misunderstandings.

2.5 Studies on Refusals

Speech act of refusals have been studied from different perspectives for some time. The studies in the literature regarding the speech act of refusals can be roughly divided into three. In the first group, studies aim to compare and contrast the refusals produced across different languages and cultures. The second group aims to investigate refusal production of nonnatives in order to find out the strategy use, and pragmatic or cultural transfer in their L2 responses. The other group of research aims to focus mainly on the perceptions and processes involved in the production of refusals in a foreign language. A brief overview of studies from these three different perspectives will be presented with a focus on nonnative speakers' refusals in a second language.

Beebe et al. (1990) compared refusal production of native speakers of English and Japanese in their study. The researchers used a discourse completion task that included requests, invitations, suggestions and offers for data collection from 60 participants (20 Japanese, 20 EFL Japanese learners, 20 Americans) in an attempt to

see the pragmatic transfer in refusals to equal and unequal interlocutors. In the end, they found out that there are differences between native speakers and Japanese speakers of English in terms of the frequency and order of the formulas, and the content. The findings in their study also showed that the status difference played an important role in the choice of strategies. It is important here to note that the classification they developed using the data elicited from this study is the mostly used taxonomy in the literature, and so regarded as a significant study in this respect. There are three categories in their refusal taxonomy; namely, direct refusals, indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals. Performative (e.g. *I refuse you*) and nonperformative statements (*No*, and *I can't / I* won't) are regarded as direct strategies. Indirect strategies include 11 distinct refusal strategies such as explanation/reason/excuse (ERE), statement of regret (e.g. *I am sorry*) or wish (e.g. *I wish I could help you*). Adjunct refusals consist of four strategies such as statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (e.g. *I'd love to*), statement of empathy (e.g. *I realize you are in a difficult situation*), pause fillers (e.g. *uhh; well; oh; uhm*) and, statement of gratitude or appreciation (e.g. *thanks; I really appreciate it*).

Liao and Breshnahan (1996) conducted a contrastive quantitative study on Mandarin Chinese and American English refusals. The data were collected through the six scenarios of requests. The analysis showed that the frequency of the politeness markers used by Americans and Taiwanese are similar. In addition, the Americans utilize multiple approaches highlighting different reasons, but the Taiwanese use fewer approaches. The study also indicated that 27.9% of the Americans and 2.7% of the Taiwanese could not refuse the requests, and the contents of the requests they did not refuse differed in many ways. This study is significant in that the authors of the study proposed a politeness hypothesis of 'marginally touching the point' and suggested that the politeness strategies used while refusing depend on the modest nature of the Oriental countries and the non-self-designative nature of the Western countries.

Al-Issa (2003) did a contrastive research on refusals with Jordanian EFL learners, Jordanian and American native speakers. He collected the data through written DCT and follow-up interviews and found out some evidence of pragmatic transfer. In addition, Jordanian refusals were found to be lengthy and elaborate with vague excuses with reference to God. His data indicated that the Jordanians employed more indirect strategies than the Americans, which is not consistent with Nelson et

al.'s (2002) results. They conducted a study on Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals using a modified oral discourse completion task that included invitations, suggestions, requests and offers. Finally, both the American and Egyptian Arabic speakers utilized similar indirect strategies with similar frequency.

In another study, Félix-Brasdefer (2006) investigated refusal strategies of male speakers of Mexican Spanish in formal and informal interactions from the politeness perspective. He focused on the degree of formality, politeness systems and strategy use, politeness and the notion of face particularly. He collected the data through four role-play interactions and verbal reports. The findings indicated that social factors such as power and distance play an important role determining appropriate degrees of politeness. In addition, politeness in this Mexican community is accomplished through formulaic and semi-formulaic expressions. Finally, the negotiation of face was achieved indirectly in a polite manner when there was insistence.

Wannaruk (2008) studied similarities and differences between refusals in American English and Thai, and incidences of pragmatic transfer by Thai EFL learners when making refusals. The data were collected through a DCT. Results indicated that all three groups shared most of the refusal strategies. In addition, he found out the traces of pragmatic transfer in the choice and content of refusal strategies. Awareness of a person of a higher status, the characteristics of being modest in L1 culture and language proficiency were the elements that motivated pragmatic transfer. He also suggested that EFL learners with lower English proficiency translate from L1 to L2 because of their lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge.

Previously, Sadler and Eröz (2002) examined English refusals produced by 30 subjects that consisted of Turkish, American, and Lao native speakers specifically to find out whether or not the non-native speakers' L1 played a role in forming L2 refusals. Similar to Wannaruk's (2008) study, the three groups followed a pattern when forming a refusal statement and pragmatic transfer played a role in some cases. Additionally, they found out that males and females employed different patterns when they performed refusals.

Chang (2009) compared the refusal strategies of Chinese EFL learners with American native speakers of English and Chinese native speakers of Mandarin. The study indicated that Chinese EFL learners utilize as many direct, indirect, and adjunct

strategies as American native speakers of English and Chinese native speakers of Mandarin while refusing requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. However, she found differences in the degree of directness and specific of content between American native speakers of English and Chinese EFL learners. Her study indicated no apparent difference in the amount of pragmatic transfer with regard to the frequency of semantic formulas between the learners of distinct proficiency levels. Finally she suggested contextual factors might affect the use of refusals by EFL learners.

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) analyzed the cognitive processes involved in the production of refusals to invitations from a person of equal and higher status, and perceptions of 20 male native speakers of US English who were advanced learners of Spanish as a foreign language. He elicited data through role-plays and retrospective verbal reports (RVR). As a result, he shed a light on language-learning and language-use strategies that were employed by learners of Spanish use to communicate pragmatic intent. Refusals, whether direct or indirect, are employed with varying levels of complexity due to the necessity of picking correct form of communication to reduce the negative effects. That is why, he suggests researchers to take societal variables like age, gender, power distance, education level, and social distance into consideration. He also emphasizes that RVRs are instrumental in collecting supplemental information about perception of sociocultural information. It is important to note that this is one of the few interlanguage refusal studies that focus mainly on the perception of EFL learners and explore the minds of foreign language learners.

Lee (2008) compared Chinese high and low proficiency level EFL learners' refusal production with native speakers of Chinese and American English, and investigated the perception of Chinese EFLs' social values in her study. The data were elicited using DCTs and perception interviews. They were asked if they find it hard to refuse the interlocutors in specific situations, and if their refusal would be appropriate in their culture in the perception questionnaire. DCTs were analyzed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy. Face was found to be the main concern while refusing for speakers of the both cultures, and some cross-cultural differences were observed. For instance, Chinese L1 participants were found to distinguish in-groups and out-groups while American L1 participants emphasized equality under the influence of their own cultural values. Although both of the groups tended to use indirect refusals rather than direct ones and the same range of refusal strategies, frequency of the strategies and

some preference of the use differed. She also detected a positive correlation between the EFL learners' English proficiency and their interlanguage pragmatic competence. Similar to Félix-Brasdefer (2008), Lee (2008) studied the perception and production of the speech act of refusals in interlanguage. Both of the researchers suggest data triangulation and replication of similar perception studies for better understanding of interlanguage speech act of refusals.

Another recent study on refusal perceptions of EFL learners was conducted by Huwari (2015). The study investigated the perception of Jordanian EFL learners' pragmatic transfer of refusal strategies in terms of cultural and contextual factors. He collected production data through a DCT and perception data using a scaled-response questionnaire. Findings indicated that in all social categories, the right the speaker has to refuse the initiating act was assigned high ratings by all the groups; however, the groups individually displayed the rating value differently. In addition, the researcher detected negative pragmatic transfer of Jordanian EFLs and the effect of cultural values. It is important to note that this study showed refusal speech acts reflect cultural values and norms of each group of participants. People from different cultural backgrounds are likely to perceive refusals differently, and this might cause misunderstandings or communication problems.

The review of literature indicates that although researchers had different approaches to refusals, the majority of them have employed Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy in order to analyze the findings. DCTs have been criticized for some time because they may not elicit natural responses; however, it was used in many of the studies as primary data collection tool. In addition, there have been contradictory results in different languages in terms of strategy choice and frequency choice of the groups. Pragmatic transfer was also found to be related to proficiency level in some cases and not related in others. Studies that analyzed perceptions have indicated the complexity of the refusing act, and highlighted the effect of cultural norms, values, education level, social and power distance. All the variables discussed above show that more studies should be done taking each variable into consideration and from different point of views. Finally, most of the studies on interlanguage refusals focused on Chinese, Arabic and Japanese.

The studies involving Turkish L2 learners' refusal performance are limited, the methods used for collecting the data is more or less the same, refusal perception of learners' on their own strategy use sociocultural factors are often ignored in the existing studies within the context. To this end, this study aims to contribute to the field by analyzing production of refusals to invitations and requests in a second language context and by discovering participants' cultural understanding of refusals. When looked at from a broader perspective, the study may provide insights into English Language Teaching to Turkish learners in some ways.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. The research questions, philosophical paradigm, research design, settings, participants, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis, and limitations of the study are detailed respectively.

The study aims to respond to the research questions below:

1. What refusal strategies do Turkish EFL learners use in different social situations in English?

2. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners on their own refusal strategy use and social factors?

3.2 Philosophical Paradigm

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) describe paradigm as "a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts, and propositions that orient thinking and research" (p. 30). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), paradigm is basically the belief system or world view that guides the investigation. There are some certain types of theoretical paradigms that are discussed in the literature, namely positivist, constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatist and deconstructivist.

Many researchers in the literature state that research, which applies the positivist or postpositivist paradigm, tends to predominantly use quantitative approaches (methods) to data collection and analysis, though not necessarily exclusively, while the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm generally operates using predominantly qualitative methods (Silverman, 2000; Bogdan & Biklen 1998; Mertens, 1998; Burns, 1997; Cohen & Manion 1994; Glesne & Peshkin 1992). It can be said that the choice of paradigm sets down the intent, expectations and motive for research. It serves as a basis for methodology. Therefore, it functions as a road map research. Creswell (1994) suggests that qualitative research has a complicated and comprehensive approach

expressed through words and reports of people in their natural settings, while quantitative studies base their inquiries on tests, measurements, numbers and statistical analysis to be able to make anticipating generalizations.

The current study relies on the tenets of qualitative research, and utilizes a written DCT, retrospective verbal reports, and interviews. In other words, the data is consisted of productions of the attendants, retrospective verbal reports, and interviews. In this respect, this research applies interpretivist paradigm that draws on qualitative methods to collect data.

3.3 Research Design

The data for this study were collected through qualitative research instruments like written responses to a written DCT in an email format, retrospective verbal reports, and interviews.

3.4 Setting

This study was conducted in the English Language Preparatory School of a foundation (non-profit, private) university in the west of Turkey. The program aims to provide students with an intensive English course and prepare students for their studies at their faculties. The modules in the program are designed in accordance with CEF as A1, A2, B1 and B2. These levels refer to beginner, elementary, intermediate and upper intermediate language proficiency respectively. A student who completes these four modules within a year can study at his faculty the next year.

The preparatory program, which lasts for one academic year from September to July, aims to prepare students for their future studies and help them develop their four skills in English. As stated above, the program offers four levels of English language proficiency within the modular system. The students who are successful in the eight-week module pass to the next level. The students who cannot complete B2 level by the end of the fourth quarter can complete it in summer school. The institution is also in the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) process in an attempt to give a more standardized education in language teaching. CEA aims to promote excellence in the field of English language administration and teaching through the accreditation of English language programs and institutions worldwide.

3.5 Participants

The participants of the present study are 80 Turkish EFL students (40 male and 40 female) who were studying at a foundation university preparatory school. They are aged between 18 and 22, and have studied English 1 to 12 years. Ten students stated that they know elementary to intermediate level of German; four of them speak elementary level of French; and one student stated that she knows Kurdish.

3.6 Procedures

This section presents the procedures of the study under five subheadings; types of sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and limitations.

3.6.1 Types of sampling. Different sampling techniques could be utilized in a research study depending on the purpose. As a qualitative study in nature, purposive sampling was used in this study in order to come up with detailed and sound interpretations for the first step, which was responding to a written DCT. As every person is not as good as others at noticing, understanding and expressing what is asked of them, purposive sampling helps researchers select the participants who will contribute more and come up with more comprehensive and detailed interpretations, which makes data collection process more productive and sound (Marshall, 1996). Eighty B1 level students (40 male and 40 female), who agreed to go through data collection process, were asked to respond to the written DCT delivered in an email format.

In the second step of the study, while getting retrospective verbal reports and conducting interviews, simple random sampling were used because of time constraints. Eight students (4 male and 4 female), who were willing to go through the further processes, responded to the questions for the verbal reports and in the interview right after they completed the written DCT. The verbal reports and interviews were recorded, and then transcribed. The entire data collection procedures were conducted by the researcher.

3.6.2 Data collection instruments. The data were collected through three instruments, such as a written DCT in email format, retrospective verbal reports and interviews for data triangulation purposes.

3.6.2.1 The Written DCT. A DCT can be described as "written questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study" (Kasper and Dahl, 1991, p.221). Although DCTs have long been criticized because they do not provide learners with multiple turns, repetitions, inversions and ellipsis (Turnbull, 2001), and they cannot be compared to actual interaction because they are more like "short decontextualized written segments" (Wolfson, Marmor and Jones, 1989), they reveal a good amount of data in the given speech act situation in a relatively short period of time. Gass and Neu (1996) regards DCTs advantageous because researchers are able to collect large amounts of data in a short amount of time, and it is possible to make comparisons in terms of age, gender or ethnicity thanks to the consistency of the situations used in these tasks.   In addition, because refusals are generally regarded as infrequently occurring speech acts, it seems that using written DCTs to collect refusal data is more practical than collecting naturally occurring conversations. The aim of the study is also an important factor in the choice of data collection tools. If the aim of a study is to find out the multiple turns, repetitions, inversions and ellipsis, it is better to use role-plays or naturally occurring conversations. However, if the aim is to find out strategies or linguistic choices of the attendants, using a written DCT seems the best choice to collect data. The production data were obtained from a self-created written DCT in the form of an email. Emails are a type asynchronous medium that is widely used in educational context. When students write or respond to emails, they plan what to say and how to say it prior to sending because it is a permanent means of communication; when they send it, it is impossible to get things back and revise. Email technology also affords the opportunity to edit not only for grammar and mechanics, but also for pragmatic clarity and politeness (Lucas, 2007). That is why; the tasks designed for this study were designed as emails. This written task was also enhanced in order to get longer and more elaborated responses. A number of social and contextual variables were added in order to enhance the task because the production data was the primary tool for this study. Although Billmyer's (2000) study indicated that enhancing DCTs

do not affect the strategy use, the amount of production data was longer and more elaborated. In addition, two invitations and requests which were made by someone equal and unequal social status with various initiating acts were addressed to the learners. Invitations and requests were specifically chosen because students are more likely to get invitation and request emails than the other initiating acts to elicit refusals. The situations created for the task were the ones that students are likely to encounter in their school life (e.g. graduation ceremony, asking lecture notes, a close friend's birthday party and a request from the boss in your new job). This is designed accordingly in order to get more natural responses and help them empathize with the situation easily. It is important to highlight that these situations were designed in a way that the respondents would need to refuse the situation. Table 1 below demonstrates the refusal situations responded to by Turkish EFL learners:

Table 1

Refusal situations that Turkish EFL learners responded to by e-mail.

Speech act	Power	Distance	Initiating act
Invitation I	-	-	A birthday party in Alsancak
Invitation II	+	+	Graduation party
Request I	-	+	Asking lecture notes
Request II	+	+	A request from the boss

In Invitation I, the participants are asked to respond to the invitation email delivered by a close friend. They are reminded that they have another important arrangement which they cannot cancel. In other words, the situation involves interlocutors with no difference in power and social distance. In Invitation II, the participants are assigned the role of a lecturer, and they are asked to respond to the invitation e-mail that is sent by a last-year student for the graduation party.

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Unfortunately they have to attend a wedding ceremony of their close friends the same day. That means the participants are in a superordinate position where the relationship is distant in this invitation. In Request I, one classmate asks them to share the lecture notes with him. This classmate is neither a friend of theirs, nor do they talk. Feeling that he wants to take advantage of them, they are asked to respond to the request coming from him. In other words, the interlocutors do not have power over the other this time, but there is a distant relationship between the two. In Request II, the participants are asked to reply the e-mail coming from their boss. They have recently started working at a place and their boss asks for help for his son's English exam. Knowing that their boss will not pay anything for his special request, they are asked to reply his email. Similar to Invitation II, this situation incorporates hierarchy where there is a social distance. However participants are expected to refuse somebody who is in a superordinate position in this case.

3.6.2.2 Retrospective verbal reports. The main purpose of using retrospective verbal reports (RVR) is to reveal in detail what information learners attend to while performing a task (Cohen, 1998). Therefore, the purpose of using retrospective verbal reports in the current study is to examine the participants' sociopragmatic understanding of refusals in particular. To do this, a number of open-ended questions were asked (see Appendix B) to eight randomly selected participants immediately after they completed the written DCT, and their responses were audiotaped. While the participants were asked questions, their responses to emails were reminded so that they could give more detailed responses regarding the cognitive process. The participants were asked the following questions in order to collect RVRs:

- What were you paying attention to when you refused in situation1, 2, 3 and 4?
- Which situation was the hardest to refuse? Briefly explain the reason.
- Which situation was easiest to refuse? Briefly explain the reason.
- What affects your responses while refusing?
- How do you feel when you refuse someone superior or elder than you?
- How do you feel when you refuse someone you are less or more?

The questions above were aimed at elaborating on each situation in detail, and they were ranked from simple to complicated. Participants were asked the questions

in Turkish so that they could express themselves easily while elaborating on each situation and their feelings.

3.6.2.3 Interviews. Following the verbal reports, these eight randomly selected participants were interviewed in order to have a deeper understanding of their perceptions of social factors while refusing. The question (see Appendix C) addressed to the participants in the interview were related to sociocultural differences with respect to refusals, cross-cultural comparisons, and situations when they refuse. Some of these questions are as follows:

- What do you think about refusing someone's invitation/request?

- How of often do you refuse people in real life?

- Do you think it is common or acceptable to refuse someone in our culture?

- What factor do you consider before you refuse people?

- In what situations do you refuse people?

- Have you noticed any cultural or social differences with respect to refusing between in Turkish and English before? If so, what are they?

3.6.3 Data analysis procedure. In this study, the data were collected from 80 intermediate B1 level students. In response to the first research question, the data were collected through a written DCT designed as invitation and request emails. As presented earlier, eighty (40 male and 40 female) Turkish EFL learners were asked to respond to the situations in the written DCT, which were specifically designed to elicit refusals. Their replies were coded according to the taxonomy of refusals developed by Beebe et al. (1990). The Turkish EFL learners mostly used multiple strategies when they refused the situations in the DCT. For instance, if a participant refused an invitation saying *I would love to come to your party but I am busy on that that so I can't come. How about meeting tomorrow?,* it was coded in the following way: [statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement] + [excuse, reason or explanation] + [negative ability] + [statement of offer or alternative] using Beebe et al.'s (1990) coding scheme. After the strategy coding process, the semantic formulas in each situation were calculated in order to come up with a total number. Next, a comparison

of semantic formulas for each initiating act was made, and the most frequently used six semantic formulas for each initiating act were presented.

In order to address the second question, eight randomly selected participants were asked to give verbal reports right after the emails were replied. The questions aimed to reveal how the Turkish EFL learners perceive their refusals. Their retrospective reports were analyzed with respect to perception and pragmatic knowledge through pattern coding. The same Turkish EFL learners were later interviewed in order to have a deeper understanding on the concept of refusing in an attempt to come up with some cultural understanding of how and why they refuse. The questions which were addressed to the attendants in the interview were related to certain anticipated sociocultural differences with respect to refusals and the concept of refusing. The responses to the interview questions were analyzed qualitatively in order to generate themes and patterns. Table 2 summarizes the research questions and the corresponding features:

Table 2

Overview of Research Questions and Corresponding Procedures

Research Question	Data Collection Instrument	Data Analysis
1. What refusal strategies do Turkish EFL learners use in different social situations in English?	Written discourse completion task	Data coding (taxonomy of refusals developed by Beebe et. al 1990).
2. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners on their own refusal strategy use and social factors?	Retrospective verbal report Interview	Pattern coding to generate themes

3.6.4 Trustworthiness. Throughout the data collection and analysis, the researcher needs to ensure that their findings and interpretations are accurate. Many researchers have addressed the idea of validating findings through strategies such as member checking and triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Morrow (2005) states, "qualitative research ensuing from a variety of disciplines, paradigms and epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality, known variously as *validity, credibility, rigor* or *trustworthiness"* (p.250). Although the terms and strategies vary, they all serve one purpose; to have accurate results. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the current study, the researcher sought feedback on the interpretations of the data from diverse colleagues in the workplace. In addition, she preferred to classify the responses using a valid classification from the literature which has been used extensively. Finally, the data triangulation was maintained through by utilizing various data sources.

3.6.5 Limitations. This study examines the use of refusal strategies by Turkish EFL learners, and their perceptions of sociopragmatic understanding of refusals. Although it gives an idea regarding how they employ refusal strategies and their perceptions of social factors, this study has some limitations. First of all, there are a number of variables that affect the refusal responses of learners, and all of them cannot be controlled at the same time. Although the participants are all selected from a certain proficiency level, their language backgrounds are different. Additionally, although the researcher aimed to create familiar situations that Turkish EFL learners are likely to encounter in their daily lives in an attempt to elicit refusal responses, she had to create an unfamiliar case in Situation 4 (a request email from the boss). The reason for this was to examine the power and distance relations between the interlocutors. Next, although it is not a small-scale study, it was conducted in one setting only; at a university. Therefore, the goal is not to generalize the findings but gain preliminary insights into how Turkish EFL learners utilize refusal strategies in English and their perceptions. However, even though different results could be seen in different contexts, it is also quite likely to observe similarities in other EFL contexts. Thus, more studies are needed for replication purposes in other contexts in order to have a better understanding of refusals by EFL learners.

Chapter Four

Results

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the results regarding the use of refusal strategies and perceptions of Turkish EFL students who were studying in English Language Preparatory School at a foundation (non-profit private) university in the west of Turkey. As stated previously, the data were collected through a written DCT, verbal reports, and interviews. The following section presents the results related to each research question addressed in the study.

4.2 Results Related to the Use of Refusal Strategies

To answer the first question, which aimed to examine the use of refusal strategies by Turkish EFL learners, the data were obtained through written DCTs which were designed as emails and coded using Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy. Below, Table 3 presents the overall results related to the use of refusal strategies by Turkish EFL learners in this study:

Table 3

Overall Results Related to the Use of Refusal Strategies

Initiating Acts	Direct	Indirect	Adjunct	Total
Refusals to Invitations	85	317	48	450
Refusals to Requests	41	224	6	271
Total	126	541	54	721

The results above show the overall number of refusal strategies that Turkish EFL learners employed in each initiating act, namely invitations and requests. The results of the study indicated that the total number of the refusal strategies employed by 80 Turkish EFL learners was 721. When we looked at the initiating acts, the total number of strategies used while refusing the given invitations was 450, and the total number of strategies used while refusing the given requests was 271. That is, a lot more strategies were employed while refusing the invitations in the written DCT than the requests. Therefore, it can be seen that the distribution of the refusal strategies for invitations and requests differ in amount.

With regard to the directness/indirectness, a large number of the strategies were found to be indirect refusal strategies. Among the total number of refusal strategies employed in the study (N=721), 541 were indirect strategies, 126 direct strategies and 54 adjuncts to refusals. In addition, more direct and indirect strategies, and adjuncts to refusals were employed in response to invitations than they were in response to requests. The number of direct refusal strategies used in response to in invitations was found 85, and this number was only 41 in response to requests. Similarly, the learners employed 317 indirect refusal strategies when they responded to invitations, and this number was 224 in response to requests. Finally, the number of the adjunct to refusals in response to invitations was 48 whereas this number was only 6 in response to requests.

4.3 Results Related to Semantic Formulas for Refusals

As presented in the methodology chapter, Beebe et al.'s (1990) category was used in order to classify the refusal strategies in the present study. The Turkish EFL learners in the study employed 18 out of 32 different semantic formulas in the coding scheme. Table 4 below demonstrates the strategies employed by Turkish EFL learners for each situation and their frequencies:

Table 4

The Strategies Employed by Turkish EFL Learners per Situation and Their Frequency

	Strategy type	Situation1 (Invitation)	Situation 2 (Invitation)	Situation 3 (Request)	Situation 4 (Request)
		Frequency per situation			
1.	Statement of ERE	73 (31%)	71 (33%)	34 (26%)	56 (38.6%)
2.	Statement of Regret	58 (25%)	45 (21%)	32 (25%)	36 (24.8%)
3.	Negative Willingness/Ability	36 (15%)	41 (19%)	26 (20%)	13 (8.9%)
4.	Promise of Future Acceptance	28 (12%)	9 (4.1%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.06%)
5.	Wish	12 (5%)	13 (6%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.7%)
6.	Positive Opinion	14 (6%)	17 (8%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.6%)
7.	No	5 (2%)	3 (1.3%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.6%)
8.	Alternative Statement	3 (1%)	4 (1.8%)	5 (3.9%)	9 (6.2%)
9.	Gratitude	6 (3%)	11 (5.1%)	0	1 (0.6%)
10.	Criticize the Request/Requestor	0	0	10 (7.8%)	0
11.	Guilt Trip	0	0	3 (2%)	0
12.	Self Defense	0	0	10 (7.8%)	2 (1.3%)
13.	Statement of Principle	0	0	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.3%)
14.	Set Condition	0	0	4 (3%)	12 (8.2%)
15.	Unspecific Reply	0	0	2 (1%)	3 (2.06%)
16.	Empathy	0	0	0	1 (0.6%)
17.	Lack of Enthusiasm	0	0	0	1 (0.6%)
18.	Avoidance	0	1 (0.7%)	0	0
	Total	235 (100%)	215 (100%)	126 (100%)	145 (100%)

Table 4 above presents an overview of the strategy use in each situation. While 17 different strategies out of 32 were employed in response to request emails, this number is only 10 in invitations. In addition, the total number of semantic formulas while responding to invitations is 450 (235 in Invitation 1 and 215 in Invitation 2). However, only 271 (126 in Request 1 and 145 in Request 2) semantic formulas were employed in response to request emails by the Turkish EFL learners. Initially, the overall comparison of refusals shows that Turkish EFL learners tend to use more strategy types when they refuse requests than they refuse invitations, and they use strategies more frequently when they refuse invitations than they refuse requests.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the distribution of refusal strategies employed in refusals of requests and invitations:
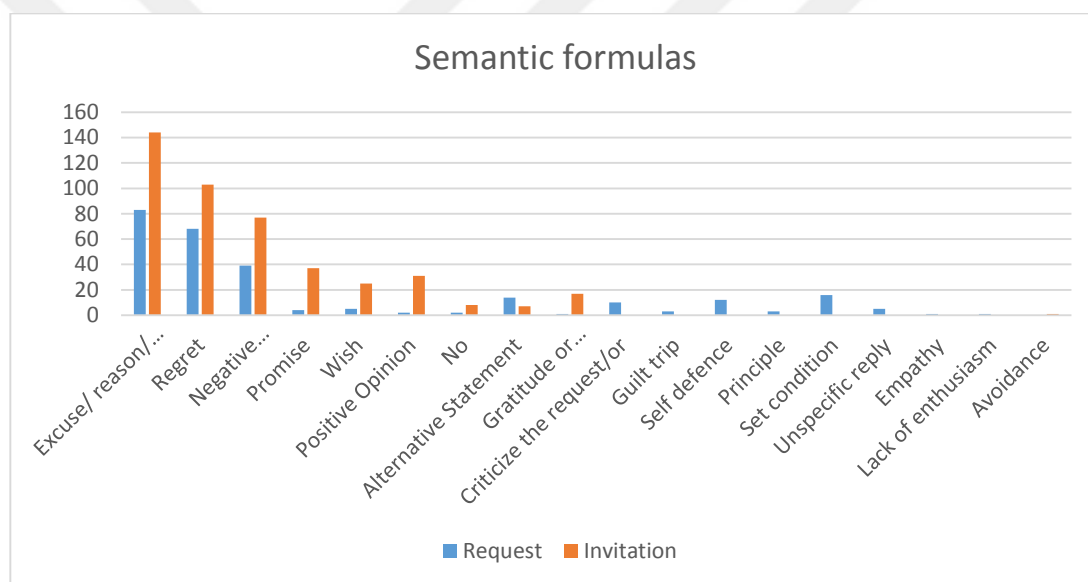

Figure 1. Distribution of refusal strategies employed in refusals of requests and invitations.

The findings above indicated that the semantic formulas used in response to requests and invitations differ quite a lot in amount and variety. Although the most frequently used three strategies remained the same (Table 4) in both requests and invitations, they were much more frequently employed while refusing the invitation tasks (Figure 1). The top three strategies were utilized 317 times when responding to invitation task, but this number is only 190 in response to refusal tasks. When we looked at the each semantic formula separately, it was seen that the strategy of ERE was employed 144 times in invitations and 83 times in requests. The second commonly

used strategy, statement of regret was used 103 times in invitations and 68 times in requests. Negative willingness/ability, on the other hand, was employed 77 times in invitations but only 39 times in requests (Table 4).

Although the learners chose to employ the same three strategies both in requests and invitations, the other strategies they used differ greatly in variety and frequency. They used the strategy of setting condition for future or past acceptance for 16 times (*e.g.* "*...**if you told me before, I would help him**. Thank you for your understanding*" in Situation 4, a request from the boss), statement of alternative for 14 times (e.g. "…but *I could give you my English teacher friend's phone number…*" in Situation 4, a request from your boss), self-defense for 12 times (*e.g.* "*...I can give you the titles only.....and **this is all I can do**" in Situation 3, an request from a classmate), and criticizing the request/requestor for 10 times (*e.g.* "*Of course I won't. **You never talk to me in the class** and ask for the notes. **I think this is a bad idea**...*" in Situation 3, a request from a classmate) while responding to requests. When it comes to responding to invitations, though, it was seen that totally different strategies like promise of future acceptance (*e.g.* "***I promise to see buy you** some coffee next time...*", Situation 2, an invitation from a student), statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (*e.g.* Hi Ayşe, **I feel so happy because**...in Situation 2, an invitation from a student), wish (e.g. "***I wish we could be together,** but...*" in Situation 1, an invitation from a close friend) and statement of gratitude or appreciation (e.g. "***I would like to thank you very much** for…*" in Situation 2, an invitation from a student) were employed 37, 31, 25 and 17 times by the learners respectively.

The other strategies that occurred less than ten times in responses to requests were the strategy of wish (e.g. ***"I wish I could help you** but…"* in Situation 3, a request from a classmate), unspecific or indefinite reply (*e.g.* ***"I am not sure if I have them"*** in Situation 3, a request from the boss), "I'll promise of future acceptance (e.g. "***I will help you next month** after my course finishes.*" in Situation 4, a request from your boss), guilt trip (e.g. "***I don't make notes to help you get better grades** than mine"* in Situation 3, a request from a classmate), statement of principle (e.g. "***I never give my lecture notes**" (Situation 3), statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (*e.g.* "***I would love to help your son,** but…*", nonperformative statement "no" (e.g. "***No, I can't,** I am sorry...*" in Situation 4, a request from the boss), statement of gratitude or appreciation (e.g. "***Thank you for the compliments**…*" in Situation 4, a request from

the boss) , and lack of enthusiasm (e.g. "***I am not interested in teaching*** but if…" in Situation 4, a request from the boss) respectively. In response to invitations, the strategies nonperformative statement "no" (e.g. "***No***, *thanks because my friend is getting*…" in Situation 2, an invitation from student and "***No***, *thanks because a friend is having a party tonight in*…" in Situation 1, an invitation from a close friend), statement of alternative (e.g. "***Let's meet in the morning***…" in Situation 1, an invitation from a close friend), and avoidance (one student intentionally left it blank and left a note saying "I would not respond to this email" in Situation 2, an invitation from a student) were employed less than ten times by Turkish EFL learners.

The most frequently employed six semantic formulas will be examined in the following paragraph in order to have a better understanding of the strategy use. Figure 2 below demonstrates the most frequently used six semantic formulas in response to the written DCT:
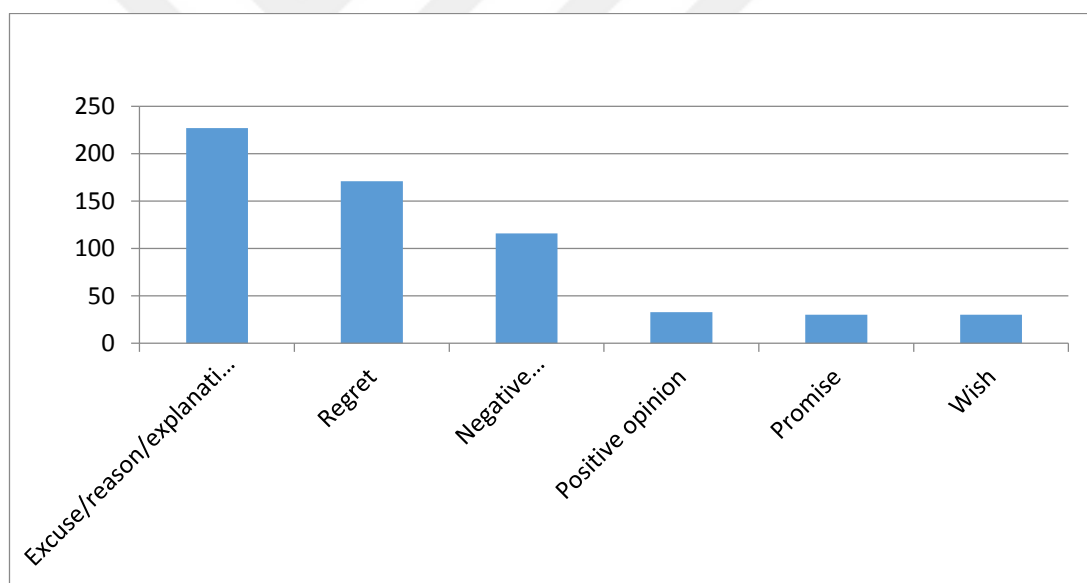

Figure 2. The most frequently used six semantic formulas in response to the written DCT.

Among the most frequently used 6 semantic formulas in the study, 4 of them were indirect strategies, 1 was direct strategy and 1 was adjunct to refusals. The findings showed that six most popular refusal strategies among the Turkish EFL learners were ERE, regret, negative willingness/ability, statement of positive opinions, promise and wish respectively. The strategy of ERE was by far the most popular strategy that was employed 227 times within all tasks by the Turkish EFL learners in

this study, similar to what many refusal studies indicated (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Beebe et al., 1990; Çiftçi, 2016; Nelson et al., 2002). It was typically employed in combination with other strategies as it could be seen in the following examples from the data:

Hello Sir, I am sorry to tell this, but **I have been taking a dance class**. *So if you want, I have a friend that could help your son as well*. (Situation 4 - a request from the boss)

Hello my friend, I am so happy to hear that you're giving a party but I am sorry I can't come. **My brother is ill and he is at the hospital and I am going to stay with him.** *Happy birthday to you!* (Situation 1 - an invitation from a close friend)

The strategy of showing regret closely followed ERE with a total number of 171 as the second mostly used strategy by the Turkish EFL learners (e.g. *Hi Ayşe,* **I feel so bad now**. *I won't be in your graduation party although I want to. My friend has a wedding ceremony so I have to be there* in Situation 2 - an invitation from your student). In addition, negative willingness/ability was the only direct strategy that was employed by the Turkish EFL learners among these six strategies. It was employed for 116 times in total, and ranked as the third popular formula used by the Turkish EFL learners. The use of negative willingness/ability as the only direct strategy of the six commonly used refusal strategies in the study could be exemplified as follows:

Hi Sir, I have been taking a dance class on weekdays, so **I can't help you** *for now but I'll try to sort the things out later*. (Situation 4- a request from the boss)

Hey, that sounds good but I am sorry. **I can't come** *because I have another important arrangement at that time*. (Situation 1- an invitation from a close friend)

As the only adjunct to refusals, the strategy of statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement was also frequently seen in the data with a total number of 33 (e.g. *Dear Ayşe,* **I really want to come to your ceremony** *but my close friend will get married the same day…* in Situation 2 - an invitation from your student, or *Hi John,* **I would like to lend you my notes** *but I can't….* in Situation 3 - a classmate asking for lecture notes). Finally, the strategies of promise and wish are equally employed for 30

times by the Turkish EFL learners in this study. The use of promise of future acceptance was commonly detected in the data as follows:

...If it is OK for you, **I will help him next month when my dance course finishes.** (Situation 4 - a request from the boss)

...I am so sorry because I won't come to your party. **I promise I will visit you in the morning***...*. (Situation 1 - an invitation from a close friend)

Similarly, the strategy of wish appeared in the data as follows:

Dear Ayşe, **I wish I could join you on this special day** *but my best friend will get married the same day...* (Situation 2 - an invitation from your student)

Hi! **I wish to help you** *but I don't have the lecture notes...* (Situation 3 - a classmate asking for lecture notes)

The excerpts of the data above were chosen randomly in an attempt to offer readers typical examples from responses of Turkish EFL learners. It could be said that the most frequent 6 strategies that Turkish EFL learners employed in the data were mostly combined with a number of other strategies. In other words, while refusing an interlocutor in each situation, the Turkish EFL learners utilized various strategies.

4.4 Results Related to the Type and Content of Situations

In order to answer the first research question in more detail, this section presents the results with regard to the Turkish EFL learners' strategy use according to power relationship and the degree of social distance between the speaker and hearer in DCT situations. As presented earlier, the speech act of refusals in the current study were elicited through 2 request and 2 invitation situations in the form of emails. The eliciting tasks were designed in a way that there was different social distance and power relationship in each situation. Additionally, the initiating act was found to be one of the most effective factors among Turkish EFL learners in giving the decision to refuse or not.

As explained in the methodology chapter, two of the situations in the DCT were invitations, and the other two were requests. These four situations were presented in the written DCT in an attempt to elicit refusals from the Turkish EFL learners. The following section will compare the refusal strategies employed in each eliciting act. In

what follows, Figure 3 presents the distribution of the refusal strategies that were employed in situations 1 and 2, where the elicitation act is invitations:
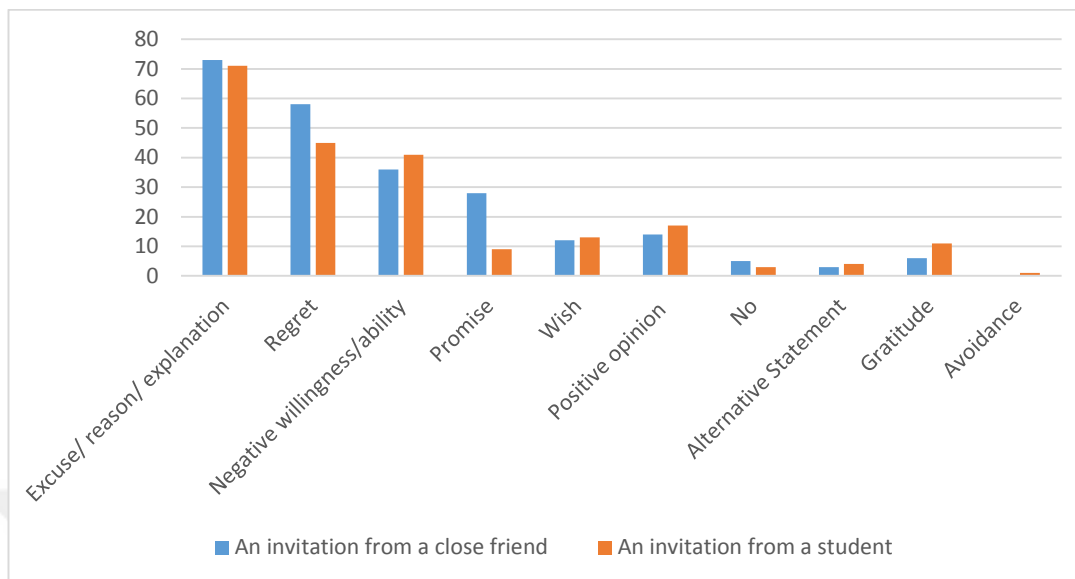
Figure 3. Distribution of the refusal strategies that were employed in response to Situation 1 and 2.

In situation 1, learners were asked to respond to an email from a close friend who invited them to his birthday party. The relation between the hearer and speaker was equal, and it was a familiar situation that they were likely to encounter in their daily lives. Thirteen students did not refuse Situation 1 (Table 5), and half of the interviewees stated in the verbal report that they had difficulty while refusing situation 1. Similarly, in situation 2, the learners were asked to respond to the graduation party invitation from a senior student. The relationship between the hearer and speaker was unequal in this case. The hearers were lecturers and were supposed to refuse a student, who is someone with a lower status. Only 1 of the learners did not refuse in situation 2 (see Table 5). In addition, only 2 of the learners stated in the verbal report that it was hard to refuse the graduation party invitation.

As seen in Figure 3, Turkish EFL learners employed the strategies of ERE, statement of regret, and negative willingness/ability in both of the invitations. However, the strategies of ERE and statement of regret were more frequent in response to the invitation from a close friend whereas the strategy of negative willingness/ability was more frequent in response to the invitation from a student. Additionally, Promise of Future Acceptance was much higher in Situation 1 when compared to Situation 2.

Finally, the strategies employed in response to Invitation 1 and Invitation 2 showed parallelism regardless of the status of the interlocutor and the power difference between them.

As it was explained in the methodology chapter before, situation 3 and 4 in the DCT were requests. Figure 4 presents the distribution of the refusal strategies that were employed in situations 3 and 4:
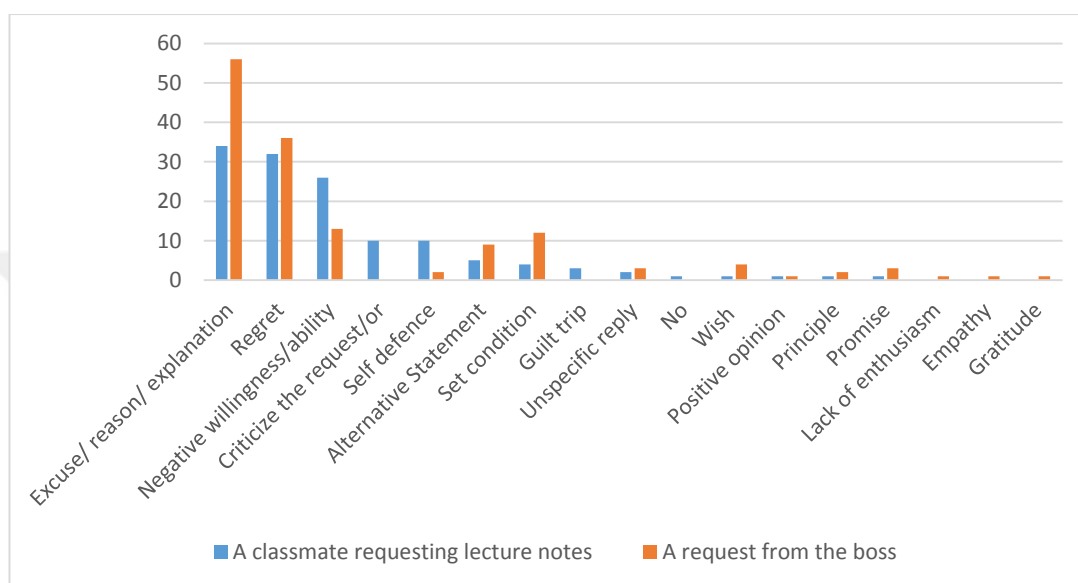

Figure 4. Distribution of the refusal strategies that were employed in response to Situation 3 and 4.

In Situation 3, the Turkish EFL learners were asked to respond to a classmate's request, in which they do not have a close relationship. Therefore, they have equal social status and power but social distance, and it was again a common situation that they were likely to encounter at school. Nineteen Turkish EFL learners did not refuse their classmate in DCT surprisingly (Table 5). Similarly, the learners were asked to respond to a request from their bosses in situation 4. Learners were supposed to refuse someone with a higher status in this case, and they were implicated that there was an obvious distance between the hearer and the speaker. The number of Turkish EFL learners who did not refuse their bosses in the DCT was 15 (Table 5).

As seen in Figure 4, the strategies of ERE, regret, and negative willingness/ability are the most frequently employed strategies in both of the situations. However, the strategy of ERE was preferred much more frequently in response to the boss's unpaid request than in response to a classmate asking for the

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lecture notes. In addition, learners preferred the strategy of negative willingness/ability more in situation 3 than they did in situation 4. Additionally, learners employed the strategy of self-defense in response to the request from the classmate, but this strategy was used at a very low frequency in response to the request of the boss. As for the strategy of criticizing the request, it was commonly used in response to situation 3 but was not used at all in situation 4.

Overall, the distribution of the refusal strategies that were employed in the situations in the DCT indicated that Turkish EFL learners employed a lot more strategies when the initiating act was invitation than it was request. Additionally, a variety of strategies were employed in response to requests when compared to the strategies used in response to invitations: the total number of strategies used in response to requests was 17, and this number was 10 in response to invitations. The most frequently used three strategies in both refusals of invitations and refusals to requests were the same (the strategies of ERE, statement of regret, negative willingness/ability). However, the other strategies showed diversity depending on each situation.

Although the tasks in the DCT were designed in a way that refusals could be elicited, some learners did not refuse some of the situations. The table below indicates the number of the Turkish EFL students who refused and did not refuse in each situation:

Table 5

The Refusal Performances of the Turkish EFL Learners in Each Situation

Situation	Refused	Did not refuse	Total
Invitation 1 (birthday party invitation from a close friend)	67	13	80
Invitation 2 (graduation ceremony invitation from a student)	79	1	80

Table 5 (cont.d)

Request 1 (a classmate requesting lecture notes)	61	19	80
Request 2 (an unpaid request from the boss)	65	15	80

After examining the number of the Turkish EFL learners who did not refuse the given situations, it was seen that only 1 Turkish EFL learner did not refuse Invitation 2, where they were expected to refuse their student's graduation party invitation. In other words, Situation 2 was refused more than the other situations with 79 respondents out of 80. It was also interesting to see that, nineteen Turkish EFL learners did not refuse a classmate requesting lecture notes, which makes Request 3, where they were expected to refuse a classmate requesting lecture notes, the least refused situations out of four.

4.5 Results Related to Perceptions of Turkish EFL Learners on Their Own Strategies

In order to address the second research question, which aimed to have a better understanding of the strategy choice of the Turkish EFL learners, the RVRs and interviews were conducted with eight voluntary Turkish EFL learners. The RVRs were conducted right after the Turkish EFL learners completed their written DCTs because it was observed that getting verbal reports right after the task may provide insights into the production and perception of speech acts (Cohen, 1998). The Turkish EFL learners were asked some questions and reminded the responses they gave while conducting the RVRs. In addition, Turkish EFL learners were interviewed after they completed the task and gave the RVR. The questions in the RVR and interview aimed at understanding the perceptions of social factors when Turkish EFL learners refuse. The data that were elicited through the RVRs and interviews were merged and analyzed through content analysis. As presented earlier, open coding was done in order to find

out distinct concepts and categories in the data. The codes were induced to categories and general themes were created in order to respond to the second question.

Four general themes emerged from the perception data regarding the social factors that affect Turkish EFL learners' refusal responses: Type and Degree of Relationship, Content and Purpose of the Situation, Emotions and Expectations, and Cultural Understanding. The perceptions of Turkish EFL learners on their own strategy use will be presented under the categories stated above.

4.5.1 Type and degree of relationship. Fraser (1990) regards power and social distance as two distinct variables that have an effect on refusals. The traces of the impacts of social status and distance were commonly found in the perception data, and an analysis of the RVRs indicated that Turkish EFL learners consider type and degree of relationship when they refuse. They were implicitly asked how they felt when they refused someone with a lower, equal and higher social status, and different social distance after they were reminded the social situations in the DCT. It seemed that refusing an interlocutor with a lower status was not a big deal for Turkish EFL learners. However, they seemed cautious when they refuse equals or interlocutors with higher status. Some of the responses from the interview and RVRs are as follows:

"I consider the consequences of my response when I refuse somebody superordinate like a boss or a lecturer, and act accordingly. I also try to find good excuses..." (Student 1, interview)

"I felt sorry when I refused my close friend's birthday party invitation. It was the most difficult situation to refuse because I did not want to hurt her feelings because she is important to me..." (Student 2, RVR)

"I was able to refuse my student easily because I thought he invited me to the graduation ceremony only out of courtesy. He didn't expect me to go there... My best friend was getting married. I am sure he would understand me." (Student 4, RVR).

"I told the reason honestly to my student...I know that party would be better without me and students wouldn't mind if I didn't come." (Student 1, RVR)

A detailed examination of retrospective verbal reports and interviews showed that difference in social status and distance have effect on Turkish EFL learners'

responses, and Turkish EFL leaners take these two into consideration before they refuse somebody. The responses indicate that they feel uncomfortable; need to give good excuses; and try not to hurt feelings when it comes to refusing somebody with higher and equal social status (Student 1 and 2). However, they find it easy to refuse somebody with a lower status because they do not feel sorry or worry about misunderstandings; and they honestly tell the reason of their refusal without any extra effort to show the impossibility of the invitation or request (Student 4 and 1) because there is social distance between them.

Turkish EFL learners also stated that they worry about misunderstandings, make careful lexical choices, and try to be extra polite when there is social distance between the two interlocutors but they did not do so with equals or lowers. In addition, they stated that they prefer to tell the reason directly (Student 1), and expect the interlocutor to understand (Student 4) instead of making up excuses or giving explanations when there is social distance between the interlocutors.

Overall, an analysis of the perception data indicated perceptions of Turkish EFL learners in terms of the social status and distance. These two factors seemed to be an influential factor in the strategy use of Turkish EFL learners.

4.5.2 Content and purpose of the situation. An analysis of the RVRs and interviews indicated that Turkish EFL learners think content and purpose of the situation play an important role when they refuse. Student 6 states in the RVR that she empathizes with the speaker and further says:

It doesn't matter if we are close or not. I listen to the content and then decide to refuse or not.

Some students say they refuse without any doubt when they feel the intention of self-interest in the situation:

I think the classmate was taking the advantage of the fact that I was attending regularly to the lectures, and I didn't like this. (Student 7 in RVR)

We are not close and he asks me to do her a favor just because she wants to get high grades... (Student 2 in interview)

Special days were given importance by some of the students:

I found it hard to refuse my close friend's invitation because it was his birthday. (Student 2 in RVR),

I really would like to be with my friend on his special day. (Student 3 in interview)

Helping somebody for educational purposes was also commonly found in the data:

He is in need because he missed the lectures and this will affect his education life…I wouldn't be selfish so I didn't refuse. (Student 8 in RVR)

Although I refused my boss, I showed that I cared about his son's case. It's about learning English, not about something nonsense. (Student 4 in RVR).

Overall, the perception data indicated that content of the situation and its purpose play significant role when Turkish EFL learners refuse the invitations or requests. They try to emphasize, listen to the content of the situation, and take into purpose of the interlocutor into consideration in response to invitations and requests. Additionally, they choose to refuse without any doubt if they feel self-interest. They specifically give importance to special days and educational issues, too.

4.5.3 Emotions and expectations. The data from the interviews and RVRS indicated that emotions and expectations of Turkish EFL learners play significant role when they perform the act of refusing. The Turkish society usually do not hide their feelings easily and emotional in many cases. They also care deeply about how others feel. Many Turkish EFL learners seemed to be affected by their emotional condition when they performed the act of refusing as the following excerpts indicate:

Whether I am in good mood or not… I think this affects my choices the most. (Student 8 in interview)

If I feel sorry for him, I hesitate before I refuse. (Student 1 in interview)

The data also indicated that Turkish EFL learners care about how others feel even more than how they feel themselves:

…it is again hard to refuse because I don't want him to feel bad. (Student 7 in RVR),

I am afraid of breaking his heart. (Student 6 in RVR),

I was not comfortable when I refused my boss. I thought I left a bad impression on him. After all, he is my boss. (Student 7 in RVR).

Similarly, expectations play a significant role while performing refusals. Many of them thought everybody expects his/her close friend to be with him/her on a special occasion like birthday:

I can't leave my best friend alone in her party…We are best friends." (Student 4 in interview)

It was quite normal to get a graduation party invitation from a student because it was out of courtesy to invite lecturers although no one expects them to accept the invitation:

I was able to refuse my student easily because…he invited me to the graduation ceremony only out of courtesy. He didn't expect me to go there. (Student 5 in RVR).

Overall the RVRS and interviews present that emotions and expectations of Turkish EFL learners play a significant role in performing the refusals. Specifically, they care about what others think and how they feel, and the expectations of the society as well.

4.5.4 Cultural understanding. An analysis of the RVRs and interviews indicated that cultural understanding plays a significant role when Turkish EFL learners perform the act of refusing. Turkish people culturally regard refusing as something inappropriate especially if the interlocutor is a family member (e.g. *I try not to hurt my relationship with the family all the time, so I hardly ever refuse my family members because we don't do so in Turkey.*, Student 8) superordinate (e.g. *I feel sorry…I respect him so I feel ashamed and try to compensate somehow because it is unacceptable to refuse such a person.*, Student 6) or older than them (e.g. *I have difficulty in refusing the elderly and I feel sorry. I feel ashamed and usually say I am going to compensate what I just refused…We try not to hurt the elderly by refusing.*, Student 2). Additionally, a strict hierarchical relationship was observed in respond to the request from the boss (e.g. *…my refusing will definitely pose a problem in the future. This is the case in many workplaces so I gave a very detailed excuse before*

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refusing and said I was sorry for 3 times at least, Student 3; and *I preferred to create an urgent case to prove that I really cannot do what he asked me to do and promised to help him later*, Student 6). In order to soften their refusals, Turkish EFL learners chose to give detailed explanations and imaginary urgent cases. Too specific details about private life were given in order to show the impossibility of the situation, too:

> *My grandmother is in the hospital and I am going to stay with her because she has a serious condition and there is nobody else to accompany her…* (Student 4)

Similar responses that give too specific details about private issues were encountered in the data many times. The other cultural concept that emerged was being welcomed in the society. Turkish EFL learners hesitate to refuse because of the societal concerns, and in order to be accepted by the society, they try to accord with the others although they want to refuse:

> *I believe I try to accord with the others sometimes… It is the herd mentality. I sometimes remain silent rather than refusing especially in online conversations.* (Student 2)

Overall, RVR and interview data indicated that cultural understanding played a significant role in performing the refusal data. Specifically, Turkish EFL learners found refusing family members, the elderly and people with higher status culturally inappropriate, and gave too specific and urgent reasons if they really had to refuse them. They tend to not refuse sometimes due to societal constraints, too.

To conclude, the results driven from the written DCTs and interviews showed the strategies Turkish EFL learners use when they refuse in response to invitations and refusals. The data suggested that 18 strategies out of 32 were employed by Turkish EFL learners in total. Additionally, the number of the strategies that Turkish EFL learners used when they responded to invitations was more than the number of strategies that they did to requests. In response to both requests and invitations, Turkish EFL learners tended to use indirect strategies. The top three strategies that were employed in response to both eliciting acts remained the same (the strategy of ERE, statement of regret and negative willingness/ability). Some changes were also detected in the semantic formulas when Turkish EFL learners responded to invitations and requests. Additionally, retrospective verbal reports and interviews gave insights about

the strategy choice of the Turkish EFL learners and how they perceived social factors that influence their choices. The perception data revealed four general themes the regarding the social factors that affect Turkish EFL learners' refusal responses: Type and Degree of Relationship, Content and Purpose of the Situation, Emotions and Expectations, and Cultural Understanding. Turkish EFL learners' perceptions were analyzed under the categories above in order to have a better understanding of the refusing concept. The following chapter further discusses the results presented within this chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

The results pertaining to each research question will further be discussed in this chapter. Following this, recommendations for future research and conclusion will be addressed in this chapter.

5.1 Discussion of Results for Research Questions

This study had two main purposes. One of the purposes of this study was to examine the refusal strategies used by Turkish EFL learners in different social situations. The data were elicited through a written DCT. The task included four situations: two invitations and two requests to elicit refusals. In addition, the tasks were presented in an email format in order make them as close as possible to their communicative activities in real life. Another purpose of the study was to have a deeper understanding of Turkish EFL learners' perceptions on their own refusal strategy use and social factors. To do so, two data sources were utilized: retrospective verbal reports and interviews. In what follows, discussion of results for each research question will be presented.

5.1.1 Discussion of results of RQ 1: The findings suggested an outline of the preferred semantic formulas used in refusals. The total number of the refusal strategies was 721. Although there was no meaningful difference between males and females in terms of the amount of strategies, both of the groups used more strategies when they responded to invitations. This number is 450 in invitations and only 271 in requests. One reason might be because of the sociopragmatic transfer that they make. Turkish people are and highly sensitive when they are being invited to somewhere and feel responsible. Therefore the Turkish EFL learners in the study may have felt the need to clarify their case in details in response to invitations, but did not bother to make detailed explanations in requests. The difference in total numbers of strategies also indicates that it is more common and easy for Turkish EFL learners to refuse requests than it is to refuse invitations. This might be because invitations are the signs of being remembered by others, and there is no possibility of the interlocutor thinking his self-interest. He cares about you and would like to see you somewhere, and so he sends

you an invitation email. However, the case is different when the eliciting act is a request. In requests, the interlocutor asks you to do something: he might the intention of self-interest or maybe he is just in need of something that only you could do. In other words, he asks you to do something for him in requests, but you are expected to go somewhere in invitation.

In addition, it is possible to consider Turkish EFL learners indirect in their refusal realization to invitations and requests when looked at the numbers given for each initiating act (Table 3). 541 of the strategies that were employed (N=721) in the DCT was found to be indirect, 126 direct and 54 adjuncts. Regardless of the situation that is presented to elicit refusals, Turkish EFL learners chose to be indirect in refusal realizations as it was the case in many studies about different languages.

When the refusal strategies of Turkish EFL learners were categorized, the strategy of ERE was found to be the most frequent refusal strategy regardless of the initiating act, which is similar to the results of many studies in the literature (Al-Issa, 2003; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Beebe et al., 1990; Çiftçi, 2016; Felix-Brasdefer, 2003; Nelson et al., 2002 Sadler & Eröz, 2002; Wannaruk, 2008). These formulas were followed by statement of regret and negative willingness/ability, statement of positive opinion, wish and promise respectively, showing a similar pattern with many studies in the literature. The most frequently used semantic formulas in present study might show that Turkish EFL learners have some sort of pragmatic knowledge in English. In addition, they employed a variety of indirect strategies in combination with direct strategies. This may indicate that they might be aware of status and power with the interlocutors from equal and unequal status, and know how to soften a refusal by making combinations.

The strategy of ERE was widely employed in combination with other strategies by the Turkish EFL learners no matter what the eliciting act was. They felt the need to make detailed explanations even about private issues, make up urgent situations and make explanations about their imaginary problems in order to soften their refusals. .This might be because people in Turkey feel the need to justify themselves by giving too specific details to people whom they are not supposed to. When they were asked whether they gave true reasons or white lies, most of them stated that they told white lies as a face-saving technique.

When we looked at the content of the semantic formulas, it was seen that the most frequent 6 strategies employed by Turkish EFL learners were mostly combined with two, three or even four refusal strategies at once. It might be because Turkish people need to express themselves thoroughly in order to avoid misunderstandings, and they are highly sensitive about being misunderstood by a foreign speaker.

When we looked at each initiating act separately, it was seen that the overall participants tended to use more strategy types when they refused requests than they refused invitations. Seventeen strategy types were employed in response to requests, and 10 were employed in response to invitations. It is important to interpret this data carefully. Although learners employed 18 different semantic formulas in total out of 32 formulas in the category, 10 of the semantic formulas (the strategy of wish, unspecific or indefinite reply, promise of future acceptance, guilt trip, statement of principle, statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement, nonperformative statement "no", statement of gratitude or appreciation, request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request, lack of enthusiasm and avoidance) occurred less than ten times in the DCT. In other words, very few of the learners employed these ten strategies, and this shows that they realized refusals to invitations and requests mostly using eight strategies, which shows their lack of information of alternative refusal strategies.

The fact that semantic formulas vary in response to requests when compared to invitations might be due to the role that the situational factors have. Turkish EFL learners sometimes try to use a combination of strategies or do not even bother to use more than 3 words depending on the situation they refuse. In response to the boss's invitation for example, a good number of Turkish EFL learners employed the strategy of ERE together with other strategies, while this number is lower in response to the classmate's requesting lecture notes. This might be because of the hierarchical and predetermined context of boss-employee relationship in the source culture. Bosses and employees have pre-determined roles in Turkish culture, and it is not common for an employee to refuse his boss in the Turkish context. Therefore, Turkish EFL learners had problems in refusing their bosses taking the Turkish context into consideration. As a result, the felt the need to use more explanations, statement of regret, excuses and promises to compensate the issue and express themselves better. In Request 2, however, they did not need to make such explanations, give excuses or used words

that express their regret mainly because they did not feel the need to do so due to the context of the situation. Most of them refused their classmate without any doubt with less strategy use because they did not feel the need to better express themselves. They thought the classmate was thinking his self-interest so did not bother to make explanations, give excuses or express their regret much. They chose to employ the strategy of self-defense and criticism, and negative willingness/ability in response to their classmate's request, which were rarely found strategies in response to the boss's request. All in all, although the eliciting acts of the two examples above were requests, the semantic formulas and syntactic forms differed depending on the situation.

The results showed that participants of the study employed 450 semantic formulas when they responded to invitations and 271 to requests. This huge difference might be due to the requests that they could not refuse (Table 5), too. In Situation 4, where they were expected to refuse their boss, for instance, 15 Turkish EFL learners did not refuse the interlocutors. When they were asked the reason why they did not refuse situation 4, many of them stated that they wanted to refuse but did not because they were afraid of being fired and misunderstandings. It seems that they did sociopragmatic transfer from their source culture. A workplace is a setting where predefined roles are played. Because of this, a boss and an employer usually do not negotiate because "interlocutors know exactly where they stand with one another" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 131). In Turkey, one can hardly refuse his/her boss even if the requester asks for something nonsense. It is expected from employees to do what is asked or at least compensate it and give very specific reasons to show that you really cannot perform it. This might be the reason why 15 Turkish EFL learners could not refuse, and the others refused with very specific excuses and setting conditions for future purposes. Table 5 also indicates that Turkish EFL learners refuse somebody with a lower status much easier than the others as there was only 1 student who did not refuse in Situation 2, where they were expected to refuse their student's graduation party invitation. The same data reveals that 19 Turkish EFL learners did not refuse Situation 3, a request from a classmate asking for the lecture notes, making it the least refused situation of the four situations. They might have empathized with the requestor and decided not to refuse somebody in need. The others immediately refused this request using various formulas without giving detailed explanations or excuses. It

seems that this situation was responded to by taking many different variables into consideration and that is why it should be interpreted cautiously.

5.1.2 Discussion of results of RQ 2: Retrospective verbal reports and interviews were conducted in order to respond to the second question that aims to explore the strategy choice of the Turkish EFL learners and how they perceived social factors that influence their choices. Patterns were coded and emerging items that could be the answer to question two were categorized. The perception data revealed four general themes about the social factors that affect Turkish EFL learners' refusal responses: Type and Degree of Relationship, Content and Purpose of the Situation, Emotions and Expectations, and Cultural Understanding.

Type and Degree of Relationship was one important factor that was elicited from Turkish EFL learners' perception data. The power relationship and the social status shape Turkish EFL learners' refusal strategies. It is the most commonly encountered theme that was both found in RVRS and interviews. The numbers of strategies used their diversity and the combinations done with 2, 3 or even 4 strategies depend on the social power and distance of the interlocutors. Although they cannot explain explicitly the reason why they use different strategies for interlocutors with different status and power, they state they consider age, occupation and school setting before they refuse. With regard to higher social status, the data suggests that Turkish ELF learners feel uncomfortable and the need to give excuses when they refuse somebody more powerful. In addition, they tend to state alternatives in order not to hurt someone with a higher status. Some reported that they act carefully in order not to hurt people who are older than them, and even not refuse if they are from the family. The data also suggested that Turkish EFL learners worry about misunderstandings and choose their words carefully in order not to be offensive when they refuse someone they are distant. In addition, they tell the reason directly rather than making detailed explanations or trying to compensate things. Finally they try to be polite with people if there is distance. All these patterns might indicate that Turkish EFL learners are aware of the two variables, social status and power, and act accordingly when it comes to refusing interlocutors from equal or unequal status.

The perception data from the RVRs and interviews indicated that Content of the Situation and its Purpose are of great importance when Turkish EFL learners refuse

the invitations or requests. When they are asked to respond to a request or an invitation, they mainly consider the content, and then decide whether to refuse or not. If the content is not appropriate, they prefer to refuse politely. It is interesting to note that they give special attention to purpose of the interlocutor. Turkish EFL students automatically analyze the intention of the speaker, and this directly affects their responses. If they feel self-interest, then they do not hesitate to refuse, but if a requestor is asking for something he/she cannot perform, they prefer not to refuse generally. The data also indicated that Turkish EFL learners specifically gave importance to special days and education, too.

Emotions and Expectations was another theme that were extracted from the RVRs and interviews. Turkish EFL learners play a significant role in performing the refusals. The Turkish society is believed to express their feelings explicitly and unexpectedly. If the invitation or request contradict personal and general beliefs, they are likely to refuse then. It is quite normal that Turkish EFL learners' responses are affected by the emotions. Additionally, Turkish people regard others' feelings and thoughts even more than their own feelings. With regard to the situation that the Turkish EFL learners had difficulty in refusing for example, the data showed that they had difficulty in refusing a close friend's birthday invitation. Most of them reported that hurting a close friend was the last thing they would think of. Because Turkish people are very sensitive about hurting their close friends and relatives in social life, this may have affected their responses in English, too. Their using compensation techniques in this situation the most may be the sign of how sensitive they are about the feelings of their friends and people from the family.

Cultural Understanding was the other factor that emerged from RVRs and interviews. The learners might not refuse an act because it is not welcomed by the society. Additionally, family concept plays an important role in Turkish culture, and they cannot refuse someone from the family easily. Showing courtesy was another cultural sub theme that emerged from the data. Turkish people may easily refuse some formal invitations because they know they are invited there out of courtesy. They may even remain silent rather than responding to an invitation and this is not regarded as a weird act. The other cultural factor is the hierarchy in some occupations. A lecturer-student and an employer-employee relationship were encountered in the DCT. These two have a traditional hierarchical relationship in Turkish culture, and traces of this

were seen in the data. Respondents had hard time refusing in the situations where there is hierarchical relationship. They employed multiple strategies while refusing, promised they would compensate what they refused and expressed their regret commonly. They also gave too specific and urgent reasons if they really had to refuse them. They tend not to refuse sometimes due to societal constraints, too. All these give clues regarding Turkish culture and its effect on refusals.

Some other interesting factors were encountered in the data though not common: some Turkish EFL learners give excuses to prevent the speaker from insisting. In Turkish culture, insistence is a way of showing sincerity and not accepted as a rude behavior. It seems that they give excuses just because they do not want to be insisted. Some of the Turkish EFL learners also believed that they could not express their true feelings while refusing in English because the emotional content of Turkish vocabulary is richer but in English it is not. They believe that there are a lot of words in Turkish that do not have equivalence in English. They might not have felt comfortable in expressing themselves due to this. The Turkish EFL learners also criticize themselves for overthinking about the others but state that they cannot help doing so. This might be because of the strong relationship among friends and family in Turkish culture. Some of them stated that they can be condemned if they refuse in some cases. This also affects their choice to refuse or not.

It can be concluded from the perception data that Type and Degree of Relationship, Content and Purpose of the Situation, Emotions and Expectations, and Cultural Understanding have great impacts on Turkish EFL learners' refusal responses to invitations and refusals. Turkish EFL learners, to some extent, are aware of the fact that there are cultural differences between the two cultures, and the differences between these two cultures affect their refusal responses to requests and invitations. It can also be concluded that Turkish people are affected by the social rules established by the society when they refuse invitations and requests.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The results of the present study provided insights into the refusal strategy choice and perceptions of Turkish EFLs on their own choices and social factors. This study suggests many implications for teaching English in EFL context. First of all, although the interviewees seemed to be aware of variables like power and distance, teachers

should make sure that they focus the students' attention on social variables like distance, power, age, occupation, level of education and gender before eliciting refusals from speech acts. In addition, formality and informality of a situation change the semantic types learners use. In addition, some sort of semantic formulas have not been used at all. These could be taught as an option along with the frequently used formulas.

This study also explored the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners on their own strategy use and cultural factors. Therefore it may give EFL learners some ideas on how to learn culture as the fifth skill. Although the data suggest that they seem aware of some of the cultural differences and their effect on language, they should be exposed to authentic situational materials to see how the two cultures differ in responding to the same situations. They can brainstorm about the variables and cultural factors, and then act out the situation both in Turkish and English with cultural elements.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

It is not possible to generalize the results of the current study to all Turkish EFL speakers. Although the Turkish EFL learners in the study were 40 male and 40 female B1 level learners aged between 18 to 22, their length of learning English and cultural backgrounds were different. It is possible that researchers can get different results if they conduct a similar study at a state university, with students who have a similar cultural or educational background. The situations in the DCT comprised of invitations and requests. Other eliciting acts might give different results. The small number of participants was also one of the limitations of this study. A large amount of participants could offer more generalizable results. The focus of this study was the perception of the participants on their own strategy use and cultural issues, a relatively new focus that has not been studied extensively. Therefore, it should be considered as preliminary insights in terms of perceptions to refusals to invitations and requests.

5.4 Conclusion

The results of the study presented an outline of the mostly used refusal strategies employed by B1 level Turkish EFL students to invitations and requests. In addition, learners' minds during refusal process were explored. Their cultural perceptions also gave an insight about their cultural awareness in both source and target culture.

To conclude, more attention should be given to speech acts and their realization in EFL context as true communication and interaction is only possible if language learners are supported with pragmatic elements.

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APPENDIX A

DCT Questionnaire

Consent Form

I am a student at Bahçeşehir University and I would like to ask for your help for my MA thesis. For the thesis, I am gathering information on how attendants refuse the e-mail tasks I will give them in English. The information gathered by this form and tasks will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. The names of the participants will not be used in the study itself. The information requested below is gathered so that the researcher may consider whether the factors below might have a possible influence on the responses to the e-mails.

Name:	
Age:	
Male or female?	
Nationality:	
Native language:	
How many years did you study English?	
Other languages you speak:	
E-mail address:	

Thank you for your contribution.

<div align="right">Lec. Canan ÖNAL</div>

Responding to Emails

Read the situations and respond to the e-mails below.

Situation 1: We've been close friends for some time and sharing the same class for a while. It's my birthday tomorrow and I write you an e-mail to invite you to my birthday party. However, you have another important arrangement that you cannot cancel:

my party!!! 📒 Inbox x

12:47 (0 minutes ago) ☆

to your.email@gmail.com

Hey, what's up? I'm having a party tonight in Alsancak. It's my birthday, you know 😊 . Do you want to come?

xxx
Your close friend ;)

↰ ▾ Recipients

|

Send   A 📎 △ 🖼 🔗 🙂   Saved

Situation 2: You are my lecturer from the university and I am a last-year student. I want to invite you to our graduation ceremony and e-mail you. Unfortunately you have to attend a wedding ceremony of your close friend the same day:

Graduation ceremony   Inbox   x

12:51 (0 minutes ago)

to ▼   your.email@gmail.com

Dear Mr. /Mrs ....,

Our graduation ceremony will be held in Bordo Restaurant on June 10th. Would you like to join us on this special day?

Regards
Ayşe SÖNMEZ

↩ ▼   Recipients

Situation 3: One of your classmates asks you the lecture notes because the final exam is next week. Because he's not even your friend and you do not chat so often, he doesn't ask you anything in the classroom. As a student who never misses classes, you feel that he wants to take advantage of this situation. He writes to you:

lecture notes 📁 Inbox x

13:00 (0 minutes ago)

to ▾ your.email@gmail.com

Hi, the exam is next week but I don't have most of the lecture notes. ☹ Could you lend me your notes so that I can photocopy them?

Thanks
John

↩ ▾ To   Cc B

...

Send   Saved 🗑
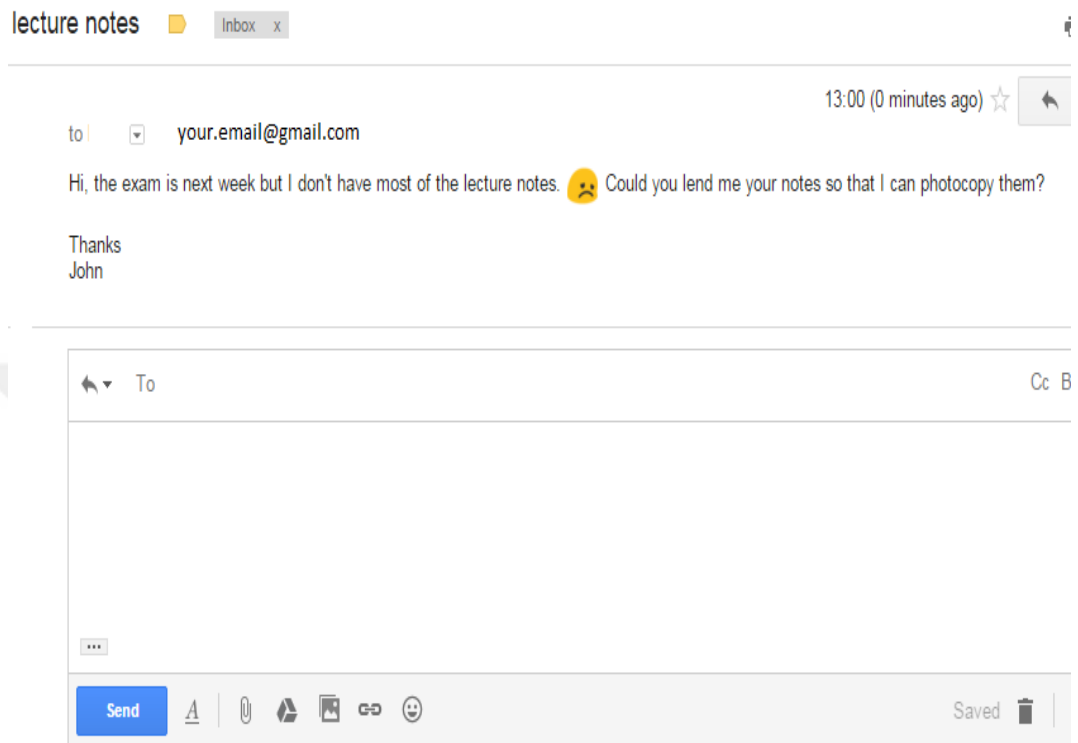
Situation 4: You have been working in the same place for 4 months. You know English well, and your boss sends you an email requesting help for his son's English exam. However, you have been taking a dance class on weekdays recently and it's fun and relaxing. Knowing that your boss will not pay anything for his special request, you answer his email.

English course Inbox x

12:59 (0 minutes ago)

to

Hi ......,

My son needs to study English on weekdays this week. I know your English is better than anyone in the workplace. Could you help him after work for two hours every day?

John Tilmon
Chief Executive Officer
Cornwell Co. Ltd.

Send

Saved

APPENDIX B

Retrospective Verbal Reports

Elaborate on each situation	1. What were you paying attention to when you refused in situation1,2,3 and 4?
Own strategy use	2. Which situation was the hardest to refuse? Briefly explain the reason. 3. Which situation was easiest to refuse? Briefly explain the reason. 4. What affects your responses while refusing? 5. How do you feel when you refuse someone superior or elder than you? 6. How do you feel when you refuse someone you are less or more distant?

Interview Questions

- What do you think about refusing someone's invitation/request?

- How of often do you refuse people in real life?

- Do you think it is coomon or acceptable to refuse someone in our culture?

- What factor do you consider before you refuse people?

- In what situations do you refuse people?

- How do you respond to people when you refuse them in real life situations? What are the factors that affect your responses?

- Have you noticed any cultural or social differences with respect to refusing between in Turkish and English before? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX D

Classification of Refusals (Beebe et. al, 1990)

I. Direct

a. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")

b. Nonperformative statement

    i."No"

    ii. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't thinkso.")

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

    i. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather..." "I'd prefer...")

    ii. 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

i. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "Iwon't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)

ii. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off of people who just order coffee.")

iii. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative fee

ling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a

terrible idea!")

iv. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the

request.

v. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")

vi. 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

i. Unspecific or indefinite reply

ii. Lack of enthusiasm

k. Avoidance

i. Nonverbal

1. Silence

2. Hesitation

3. Do nothing

4. Physical departure

ii. Verbal

1. Topic switch

2. Joke

3. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")

4. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")

5. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement
2. Statement of empathy
3. Pause fillers
4. Gratitude/appreciation

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