
**RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES IN PRAGMATICS:
ELICITING REFUSALS TO REQUESTS**

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The speech act of refusing, as a dispreferred response, is complex to perform and it usually involves indirect strategies as well as mitigating devices to avoid risking the initiator's positive face. The appropriate choice of refusal strategies may depend on sociopragmatic issues such as the social status of the requester relative to the refuser (low, equal, high), social distance between the interactants (stranger, acquaintance, intimate) and the setting. Therefore, learners may require a certain level of pragmatic competence to perform this speech act in an appropriate way. On that account, the aim of the present paper is the elaboration of three different types of instruments (i.e. oral role-plays, written discourse completion tasks and awareness tests) on learners' production and comprehension of refusals to requestive situations in a foreign language context. These three instruments may serve as both data collection instruments for researchers as well as pedagogical teaching materials for instructors. The paper is organised as follows. First, it reviews the data collection instruments employed in interlanguage pragmatics by particularly specifying the characteristics of oral and written production data, as well as awareness collection data. Then, it explains how the three particular instruments were elaborated. Finally, concluding remarks

and pedagogical implications are suggested concerning the use of the proposed instruments in the English as a foreign language learning setting.

Key words: refusals, interlanguage pragmatics, data collection methods, pragmatic production, pragmatic awareness, teaching pragmatics.

El acto de habla de los rechazos es un tipo de respuesta no deseada, cuya complejidad implica el uso de estrategias indirectas así como de mitigación para evitar que se ofenda la persona que ha iniciado la interacción. La elección apropiada de estas estrategias puede depender de aspectos sociopragmáticos como el estatus social del que realiza la petición en relación con la persona que realiza el rechazo (bajo, igual, alto), la distancia social entre los que interactúan (desconocidos, conocidos, íntimos) y el contexto comunicativo. Así pues, para que los aprendices de una lengua puedan realizar este acto de habla de manera apropiada, es fundamental que dispongan de un determinado nivel de competencia pragmática en dicha lengua. Teniendo en cuenta este aspecto, la finalidad de este artículo es la elaboración de tres tipos diferentes de instrumentos (i.e. actividades de role-play, tareas escritas de completar conversaciones y tests de activación de la consciencia pragmática) para la producción y comprensión del acto de habla de los rechazos a las peticiones formuladas. El valor de dichos instrumentos reside en su doble aplicación, bien sea para investigadores que desean recoger datos de aprendices o para profesores que los puedan utilizar como materiales pedagógicos. El artículo presenta las siguientes secciones. En primer lugar, se ofrece una revisión teórica de los instrumentos de recogida de datos más utilizados en el campo de la pragmática del interlenguaje especificando las características de aquellos que recogen producción oral y escrita, así como los que activan la consciencia pragmática. En segundo lugar, se explica cómo se han elaborado los tres instrumentos de recogida de datos sobre el acto de habla de los rechazos y finalmente,

se sugieren implicaciones pedagógicas relacionadas con el uso de estos instrumentos en contextos de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: rechazos, pragmática del interlenguaje, instrumentos de recogida de datos, producción pragmática, consciencia pragmática, enseñanza de la pragmática.

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the area of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has experienced an increasing interest in examining how learners' pragmatic competence in a second (L2) or foreign (FL) language is learnt and taught (Alcón & Martínez-Flor, 2005, 2008; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Martínez Flor et al., 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Tatsuki, 2005). Since pragmatic language use is a very complex phenomenon with a lot of contextual factors influencing its actual performance, it is of paramount importance to carefully design the methods that elicit learners' production or comprehension/awareness of a particular pragmatic feature. In fact, how to collect appropriate data is a crucial issue in pragmatic research since the use of a particular elicitation instrument may potentially influence research outcomes (Alcón & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Nurani, 2009). That is the reason why continuous improvements concerning research methodologies in the pragmatics realm have been developed (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Cohen, 2004; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010; Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper & Roever, 2005), although there is still the need to further investigate this area by widening the types of data collection instruments created, as well as including learners from different linguistic backgrounds (Trosborg, 2010).

Within this framework, the aim of this article is to design three different types of instruments on learners' production and comprehension

of refusals to requestive situations in a FL context namely, oral role-plays, written discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and rating assessment instruments. To this end, we will first provide a detailed literature review on data collection instruments employed in ILP by particularly specifying the characteristics of oral and written production data, as well as awareness collection data. Then, we will provide an explanation of how the three data collection instruments were elaborated. Finally, concluding remarks and pedagogical implications concerning the use of the proposed instruments in the FL setting will be suggested.

2. Literature review on collecting pragmatic data in ILP

Kasper and Roever (2005) have examined the main methodological approaches that have been employed to analyse how target language pragmatics is learnt. The authors divide the data collection instruments used in ILP into three groups: i) examining spoken interaction; ii) questionnaires; and iii) self-report data. The method employed in the first group has been the recording of *authentic discourse* which allows the researcher to observe how participants produce and understand pragmatic information and how they interact in contextual settings. However, since the researcher has no control over the interaction or over how different variables influence participants' behaviour in conversation, other instruments have been proposed within this group such as *elicited conversation* and *role-plays*. In those cases, interactional data are obtained under controlled conditions, since the researcher can determine the setting of the interaction and control the variables intervening in it. Moving to the second group, different questionnaires have been used to examine learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, DCTs have been used to collect pragmatic production of speech act strategies, *multiple choice questionnaires* serve to measure recognition and interpretation of utterances and *scaled-response formats* have been utilised to evaluate learners' perceptions of pragmatic errors or appropriateness of speech

act realisation strategies. Finally, in relation to the third group, that of self-report data, the use of *interviews*, *diaries* and *think-aloud protocols* have been proposed in order to obtain information on learners' cognitive processes regarding their pragmatic performance.

Among these data collection methods, the most widely used to collect learners' production data, either oral or written have been the role-play and the DCT, respectively. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2010), a common characteristic of these two elicitation instruments concerns the fact that different variables, such as the situation, politeness factors, gender and age of the participants, or their proficiency level, can be controlled. Additionally, bearing in mind Kasper and Rose's (2002) and Cohen's (2004) suggestions of taking a multi-method approach when collecting speech act data, apart from considering instruments that elicit the production of a particular speech act, we have also taken into account learners' awareness when judging the appropriateness of refusals in different requestive situations. Therefore, for the purposes of the present paper we focus on two production instruments which are described in detail in the next subsections 2.1 and 2.2 respectively, as well as the description of a rating assessment test which is presented in subsection 2.3.

2.1. Collecting oral production data: Role-play

The role-play has been considered as a type of instrument that provides learners with a detailed description of a situation they are required to perform. More specifically, it is a simulation of a communicative encounter "that elicits spoken data in which two interlocutors assume roles under predefined experimental conditions" (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010: 47). Depending on the extent of the interaction (i.e. amount and variety of production involved), a distinction has been made between closed and open role-plays (Kasper & Roever, 2005). Closed role-plays consist of a single informant turn in response to the description of a situation that

involves specific instructions. In contrast, learners engaged in open role-plays are only presented with the situation and asked to perform it without any further guidelines. Thus, open role-plays may involve as many turns and discourse phases as interlocutors need in order to maintain their interaction. Furthermore, arranging different roles may allow researchers to observe how the sociopragmatic factors of power, distance and degree of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987) may influence learners' selection of particular pragmalinguistic forms to express the communicative act involved in the role-play performance.

Apart from all these positive characteristics, namely those of representing oral production, operating the turn-taking mechanism and the fact that they involve opportunities for interaction/negotiation, the use of role-plays to collect learners' oral production also entails certain limitations. As Golato (2003) points out, the roles learners may be asked to perform are often fictitious or imagined, and this fact may influence their production when they have to act roles they have never played in real life. In addition, this author also mentions that learners know that the fact of performing role-plays is not going to imply any pragmatic consequences for them, in contrast to what really happens in authentic conversations. In this sense, not only *what* is linguistically said in the role-plays but *how* it is pragmatically said may not reflect real speech. Other aspects that should also be taken into account refer to the number of participants to get involved in this oral task, since it may not be possible to arrange the appropriate conditions for a large number of pairs to perform the role-plays and the subsequent transcription of the long conversations may be very time-consuming for the researcher. In spite of these limitations, the role-play has still been regarded as more ethnographic and similar to authentic language use, by involving a face-to-face interaction between two interlocutors, than written production techniques, such as the DCT which is described below.

2.2. Collecting written production data: DCT

The DCT involves a written description of a situation followed by a short dialogue with an empty gap that has to be completed by the learner. The context specified in the situation is designed in such a way that the particular pragmatic aspect under study is elicited. One of the advantages attributed to this instrument consists of its allowing control over the contextual variables that appear in the situational description and which may affect learners' choice of particular forms when writing their responses. Moreover, the use of DCTs allows the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time (Houck & Gass, 1996). However, as noted by Kasper and Roever (2005), the fact that they can be administered faster than other data collection instruments does not mean that this is always the easiest instrument to be employed. As these authors argue, it is designing the DCT that is best suited to the goals of the study and the evaluation process that takes time to develop (see also Bardovi-Harlig, 1999 on this point).

In addition to this consideration, this research method has also been criticised for being too artificial, as it presents short written segments rather than real-life extracts (Rose, 1994) and, as a pen and paper instrument, it has also been claimed to resemble a test-like method (Sasaki, 1998). This is because, despite the responses being regarded as oral, learners are asked to respond in a written mode what they would say orally. Therefore, their written responses may not exactly correspond to what they would actually say in the same setting under real circumstances (Golato, 2003). This is the reason why current attempts to strengthen the design of the typical single-turn DCT are done so that the quality of a particular study can be improved (see for instance the content-enriched DCT in Billmyer and Varghese (2000); the cartoon oral production task in Rose (2000); the multiple-rejoinder DCT in Cohen and Shively (2003); the computer-based multimedia elicitation task in Schauer (2004) or the student-generated DCT in McLean (2005); among others).

Additionally, although employing a DCT may involve all the previously mentioned limitations, Kasper and Rose (2002) point out that this instrument still indicates which particular forms and strategies learners choose to employ in a given situation. Thus, the authors claim that although not comparable to face-to-face interaction, it can provide pertinent information regarding learners' pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic knowledge on the specific pragmatic feature under study. In fact, Kasper (2000: 329) indicates that DCT is an effective data collection instrument when the objective of the investigation is "to inform the speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategic and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategies and linguistic choices are appropriate". In contrast, if the aim of the study is to focus on conversational interaction and the sequencing of communication, then an interactive elicitation technique such as the role-play should be employed.

2.3. Collecting comprehension data: Rating assessment instrument

The rating assessment test (also called scaled-response questionnaire) involves a detailed description of a situation in which relevant information, such as power or imposition, is presented to the learners. After the contextualised situation has been introduced, a given response to that setting is provided along with a rating scale, which may be divided into five to seven steps, and learners are asked to assess that response by choosing one of the steps on the scale. In this sense, scaled-response items have been employed to examine learners' metapragmatic assessments (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Two different types of assessment data have been distinguished (Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). On the one hand, learners' assessment may be elicited on pragmalinguistic aspects, such as how the linguistic realisations employed in the situations are evaluated in terms of appropriateness and politeness. On the other

hand, sociopragmatic aspects may also be addressed by asking learners to assess the contextual factors that can influence the choice of a particular speech act realisation. An example of an assessment questionnaire designed to measure sociopragmatic judgments in terms of social distance and social dominance can be found in Barron's (2003) study on Irish learners' production of offer-refusal exchanges, pragmatic routines and mitigation in German during a study-abroad context.

As Kasper and Rose (2002) point out, eliciting metapragmatic data has been regarded as a way of complementing other data that is normally collected by means of production instruments. In a study examining the use of apologies by two groups of Japanese students of English as an L2, Maeshiba et al. (1996) employed a scaled-response instrument to complement the main questionnaire used, which was a DCT. The authors were interested in examining whether there was a correlation between learners' production of apologies and their assessment of different contextual factors that affected the appropriate use of this speech act. Results confirmed what the authors had hypothesised, since the transfer from the first language observed from learners' production was positive when the assessments had also been made appropriately. In another study, Takahashi (2001) also complemented the DCT instrument designed to elicit learners' requests with a scaled-response questionnaire dealing with their degree of confidence when using a particular request expression. To this end, the author elaborated a 5-point rating scale on which the value 1 meant *not confident at all*, whereas the value 5 corresponded to being *completely confident*. By means of this instrument, apart from examining the effects of instruction on learners' appropriate use of requests, the author also examined whether learners' confidence in formulating these request strategies was influenced by the type of treatment received. Therefore, this data collection method seems to be a valuable instrument to corroborate the findings of the production tests.

3. Design and elaboration of the three instruments

3.1. Pragmatic feature examined

The pragmatic feature addressed in this study is that of refusal, a highly complex speech act that functions as a response to an initiating act (i.e., request, invitation, suggestion or offer). Since acceptance or agreement is usually preferred in response to these four speech acts, saying “no” can mean disapproval of the interlocutor’s intentions and consequently, a threat to the interlocutor’s face. Therefore, as Chen (1995: 6) points out, “refusals are considered to be a face threatening act (FTA) in that either the speaker’s or listener’s positive or negative face is risked when a refusal is called for or carried out”. Due to the face-threatening nature they entail, refusals tend to be indirect, include mitigation, and/or delay within the turn or across turns (Houck & Gass, 1999). In fact, they involve a long negotiated sequence with lots of face-saving maneuvers to accommodate its noncompliant nature (Houck & Gass, 1996), and that is why refusing appropriately requires a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen, 1995).

Given the complexity involved in the performance of this FTA, various strategies need to be used to avoid offending the interlocutor. Indeed, to refuse appropriately and in a socially acceptable manner, special attention needs to be paid to what is said since as Takahashi and Beebe (1987: 133) note, “the inability to say ‘no’ clearly and politely... has led many nonnative speakers to offend their interlocutors.” Indeed, if refusals are challenging for native speakers due to the lengthy negotiation moves they may involve, they are even more challenging for nonnative speakers and learners who may lack the necessary linguistic proficiency, sociocultural knowledge and pragmatic ability to produce this speech act appropriately (Salazar et al., 2009). In this sense, in order to avoid learners being perceived as rude, demanding or even offensive, there is

a need to make them aware of how “the negotiation of a refusal may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and various degrees of politeness that are appropriate to the situation” (Eslami, 2010: 218).

Different classifications of refusal strategies have been proposed (Ueda, 1972; Rubin, 1983; Beebe et al., 1990; Turnbull & Saxton, 1997), among which the most influential and well-known is the one elaborated by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). Their classification is divided into semantic formulas, either direct or indirect (i.e. those expressions used to perform a refusal) and adjuncts (i.e. those expressions which accompany a refusal but which cannot by themselves be used to perform a refusal). Drawing on this classification, Salazar et al. (2009) present a taxonomy for the analysis of learners’ refusal behaviour by adopting a conversational perspective. On the one hand, the semantic formulas are divided into direct and indirect. Direct strategies include two main subtypes: i) *bluntness*, which entails the use of a flat “no” or the performative verb “I refuse”, and ii) *negation of proposition*, which involves expressions that contain negations (e.g. “I can’t”, “I don’t think so”).

Indirect strategies are divided into seven main subtypes: i) *plain indirect*, which refers to those expressions that mitigate the refusal (e.g. “It seems I can’t”); ii) *reason or explanation*, in which the refuser indicates the reason why he/she is rejecting the request (e.g. “I have a meeting”, “My mum is sick”); iii) *regret or apology*, in which the refuser expresses he/she feels bad for turning down the request (e.g. “Sorry”, “I’m so sorry, I can’t”); iv) *alternative*, which includes change of option, in which the refuser suggests a different alternative in which the request can be fulfilled (e.g. “I can do it if you choose a different place”) and change of time, in which the refuser promises to comply the request at later time (e.g. “I promise to do it next week”); v) *disagreement/dissuasion/criticism*, in which the refuser disagrees about the requester’s action of asking or dissuades him/her from asking (e.g. “with this weather, you should not be asking to go out for a walk!); vi) *statement of principle/philosophy*, in

which the refuser resorts to moral beliefs to avoid performing the request (e.g. “I never lend money to strangers”); and vii) *avoidance*, which includes non-verbal avoidance, in which the refuser merely ignores the request by means of silence or going away, and verbal avoidance, in which the refusal is performed by using some hedges (e.g. “Well”, “I’ll see”), changing the topic or making a joke.

On the other hand, adjuncts refer to those expressions that accompany a refusal but do not constitute a refusal by themselves. They include five subtypes: i) *positive opinion*, in which the refuser expresses that the request is a good idea but he/she cannot comply it (e.g. This is a great idea, but ...); ii) *willingness*, in which the refuser expresses that he/she would be willing to perform the request but he/she cannot (e.g. I’d love to help, but ...); iii) *gratitude*, in which the refuser softens his/her refusal by thanking his/her interlocutor (e.g. “Thanks a lot, but ...”); iv) *agreement*, in which the refuser expresses his/her consent before actually making the refusal itself (e.g. “Yes, but ...”); and v) *solidarity or empathy*, in which the refuser demands the solidarity of the requester by asking for his/her sympathy (e.g. I realise you are in a difficult situation, but ...”).

It is important to point out that, as previously stated, refusals function as a second pair part in response to other speech acts such as requests, suggestions, invitations and offers. In the present chapter, we have considered the refusal strategies given to a particular speech act, that of requests. Requests, as Trosborg (1995: 187) claims, are considered as “an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker”. Therefore, the speaker’s role is to perform a request which he/she would like to be complied in his/her benefit, whereas the hearer’s response would be that of refusing such a request. Consequently, performing that refusal in an appropriate way would require a good level of pragmatic competence in order not to offend the speaker’s request.

3.2. Elaboration of the instruments

Three particular data collection instruments were elaborated in the present study: i) an oral role-play test, ii) a written DCT and iii) an awareness test. For their design, we took previous research on the field of ILP into account. First, all situations vary according to the sociopragmatic factors of social status and social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and, consequently, three levels of social status were considered (i.e., low, equal and high) as well as three levels of social distance (i.e., stranger, acquaintance and intimate). Second, given the fact that all our participants were University students, we followed the guidelines developed by Hudson et al. (1995) and set all the situations at familiar contexts to these participants (i.e., University, a hairdresser's, a cafeteria, a butcher's, cinema, home, a greengrocer's, a bakery, a bank and a bookshop). Finally, in all situations, learners have to perform refusals in the role of students, that is, they are asked to be themselves and perform as they think they would actually do under the same circumstances (Trosborg, 1995).

It is important to mention that the three type of tests (i.e. oral role-play, written DCT and awareness test) were first used in a pilot study with nine participants (5 native speakers of English and 4 FL learners with an advanced English proficiency) to analyse whether the situations: i) were clearly understood and ii) elicited the speech act under study (i.e. refusals). After receiving the participants' comments and checking their responses, some situations were modified to overcome the limitations noted by the participants.

The role-play test comprises nine situations, which are classified as occurring within the university context (situations 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8) or settings located within the environment of the learners (at the cafeteria= situation 2; at the butcher's = situation 6, and at the hairdresser's = situation 9). All scenarios include an enhanced photograph, which can be presented to learners on a computer screen, with a written descriptive

caption for the requester and the refuser. Photographs are used in order to provide interlocutors with sufficient and detailed information regarding the context of interaction, so that learners may recognise them as real scenarios and social locations in everyday life. Additionally, the situations are considered for the status of the requester relative to the learner and social distance between the interactants. As for the status, situations are classified as low (situations 2, 5 and 7), equal (situations 1, 4 and 9) and high (situations 3, 6 and 8). Social distance is understood in terms of the degree of familiarity between the participants in the role-play descriptions, which is conceptualised as intimate (situations 5, 8 and 9), acquaintance (situations 1, 3 and 7) and stranger (situations 2, 4 and 6). The nine refusal situations are described in detail in Table 1 (See Appendix A for full description of each role play and the enhanced photo).

Table 1: Variable distribution in the nine situations from the oral role-play

Sit.	Contextual setting	Participants' roles	Social status	Social distance
1	University	Student refuses lending his/her class notes to another student	equal	acquaintance
2	Cafeteria	Research student refuses giving the exact amount of money to a waitress	low	stranger
3	University	Student refuses leaving the classroom (interacting with a Professor)	high	acquaintance
4	University	Student refuses lending his/her car to another student	equal	stranger
5	University	Research student refuses fixing the laptop from a first-year student	low	intimate

6	Butcher's	Student refuses wearing plastic gloves (interacting with a woman from the town hall)	high	stranger
7	University	Research assistant refuses leaving a document in the library (interacting with the secretary of the department)	low	acquaintance
8	University	Research assistant refuses helping a Professor finishing an online questionnaire	high	intimate
9	Hairdresser's	Student refuses bringing a coffee for his/her colleague	equal	intimate

Note. Sit = situation

The written DCT consists of nine situations in which learners are expected to give written responses in the form of refusals to the nine people making requests on different occasions. The situational descriptions are classified as occurring within the university context (situations 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9) or settings located within the environment of the learners (situation 2 = at the greengrocer's; situation 4 = at the cinema, and situation 6= at home). The description of the situations suggests the status of the requester relative to the learner and social distance between the interactants. As for the status of the requester relative to the learner, situations are classified as low (situations 3, 6 and 8), equal (situations 2, 5 and 9) and high (situations 1, 4 and 7). Regarding the social distance between the interactants, situations are planned to be as intimate (situations 1, 5 and 6), acquaintance (situations 2, 3 and 7) and stranger (situations 4, 8 and 9). The nine situations are described in detail in Table 2 (See Appendix B for full description of each scenario).

Table 2: Variable distribution in the nine situations from the written DCT.

Sit.	Contextual setting	Participants' roles	Social status	S o c i a l distance
1	University	Research assistant refuses helping a Professor organising an international conference	high	intimate
2	Greengrocer's	Student refuses giving the exact amount of money to a shop assistant	equal	acquaintance
3	University	A fourth-year student refuses participating in an interview for a class project	low	acquaintance
4	Cinema	Student refuses buying a cinema ticket to see a different film you were expecting to see	high	stranger
5	University	Student refuses lending his/her English dictionary to another student	equal	intimate
6	Home	Student refuses helping his/her cousin with some homework assignments	low	intimate
7	University	Student refuses helping a lecturer carrying some books and papers to his/her office	high	acquaintance
8	University	Graduate student refuses giving his/her signature for a political cause	low	stranger
9	University	Student refuses watching another student's books on the table from the canteen while asking for some food	equal	stranger

Note. Sit = situation

The awareness test involves nine requesting situations in which a possible refusal has already been provided. After reading the situations, learners are asked to provide feedback on the appropriateness of the

refusal and give a reason why they provide that particular feedback. The situational descriptions are classified as occurring within the university context (situations 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8) or settings located within the environment of the learners (situation 4 = at the bank; situation 6 = at the bakery, and situation 9 = at the bookshop). Additionally, the descriptions of the situations suggest the social status and degree of social distance between the requester and refuser. As for the status of the requester relative to the refuser, situations are classified as low (situations 2, 4 and 7), equal (situations 1, 5 and 9) and high (situations 3, 6 and 8). Regarding the social distance between the interactants, situations are planned to be as intimate (situations 4, 5 and 8), acquaintance (situations 3, 7 and 9) and stranger (situations 1, 2 and 6). The nine situations are described in detail in Table 3 (See Appendix C for full description of each scenario and Appendix D for the analysis of each refusing response).

Table 3: Variable distribution in the nine situations from the awareness test.

Sit.	Contextual setting	Participants' roles	Social status	S o c i a l distance
1	University	Student refuses giving a lift home to another student	equal	stranger
2	University	Graduate student refuses changing the date of a test	low	stranger
3	University	Student refuses picking up a lecturer from his/her house everyday to go to the University	high	acquaintance
4	Bank	Student refuses paying for his/her brother's/sister's excursion	low	intimate
5	University	Student refuses lending his/her class notes to another student	equal	intimate
6	Bakery	Student refuses buying a different pastry	high	stranger

7	University	Research student refuses changing the date of a consultation appointment	low	acquaintance
8	University	Research assistant refuses helping a Professor organising some papers	high	intimate
9	Bookshop	Student refuses filling out a 30-minute questionnaire	equal	acquaintance

Note. Sit = situation

5. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

A refusal functions as a response to an initiating act such as a request, invitation, offer or suggestion. The core component of a refusal is a denial to comply with the interlocutor's proposed action plan and therefore, tends to risk the initiator's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Learners can be perceived as rude, demanding and offensive if they do not use this speech act in an appropriate way. Consequently, there is a need to examine those conditions that influence how the speech act of refusing is learned and taught in formal contexts, and more particularly in FL settings in which the learners have less contact with the target language. This requires the elaboration of research method instruments that elicit this speech act in a variety of communicative situations. On that account, this paper has aimed to present the elaboration of two production tasks (i.e. role plays and DCT) and a rating assessment instrument. In so doing, the context where our learners are studying (i.e. University) as well as other settings located within their environment (i.e. bakery, bank or cafeteria, among others) have been taken into account in order to create the contextualised settings that appear in the scenarios of the three different tasks. Those scenarios have been carefully selected in an attempt to make learners feel identified with those situations that take place in their daily lives. Additionally, the situations have also been considered in relation to both the status of the requester relative to the learner and the

social distance between the interactants so that learners could be aware of the role that sociopragmatic issues play when selecting appropriate pragmalinguistic strategies to perform the refusal.

Considering all the previous aspects related to the design of the three pragmatic instruments, it is worth mentioning that the value of those tasks is two-fold: i) they can be employed to collect learners' pragmatic data regarding their production and awareness of the speech act of refusing in different requestive situations (see for example the study conducted by Martínez-Flor, forthcoming), and ii) they can also serve for pedagogical purposes (see for example the study conducted by Usó-Juan, forthcoming). In fact, these tasks could be implemented as oral and written tasks in different ways with the aim of making learners reflect on their own production, and guiding them in their process of acquiring pragmatic knowledge in the FL setting. With this type of activities, learners can begin to take notice of the importance of sociopragmatic issues in the acquisition of any L2 or FL.

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Appendix A: Oral role-plays

Role-play 1

A. You are a student at University. You have been sick and were not able to attend classes last week. You want to know if one of your classmates can lend you the class notes. *You ask the classmate:*

B. You are a student at University. You have attended all classes during this semester. One of your classmates wants to borrow your class notes. Although you understand he/she has been sick, you do not want to lend your notes. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo



Role-play 2

A. You are a waitress who works in a cafeteria located close to the local University. A research assistant, whom you have never seen before, wants to buy a doughnut. You tell him/her it costs 2 euros and ask him/her if he/she could give you the exact amount of money since you only have money in the form of notes. *You ask the research student:*

B. You are a research student at University. You go to a cafeteria, where you have never been before, to buy a doughnut. Since you don't know the exact price of the doughnut you have only brought a 20 euro note. When you are about to pay, the waitress tells you it costs 2 euros and asks you if you could give him/her the exact amount of money since he/she only has money in the form of notes. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 3

A. You are a Professor who is in the middle of a lesson. At that moment, a student walks into class half an hour late and interrupts the lesson. The course policy states that late arrivals are not permitted, except for serious documented excuses. You tell the student that his/her *behaviour is* disruptive and ask him/her to leave the class. *You ask the student:*

B. You are a student who arrives half an hour late to class because you had to go to the doctor for an important health issue. The course policy states that late arrivals are not permitted, except for serious documented excuses. The Professor tells you that your *behaviour is* disruptive and asks you to leave the class. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 4

A. You are a student at University. You are about to go home when you see a student parking the car you are so eager to buy. You have not had the opportunity to go to the local car dealer to request a test drive. Although you do not know him/her, you ask if he/she could lend you the car just to drive it within the University campus for a while. *You ask the student:*

B. You are a student parking at the University campus. You have already parked your car when a student, whom you have never seen before, explains to you that he/she is very eager to buy the same car you have. He/she asks you if he/she could borrow it to drive it for a while within the University campus. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 5

A. You are a first-year student at University. You have a paper due in three days and you haven't started working on it yet. The day you start working on it your laptop doesn't work. A close friend of yours is working as a research student in the department of Computer Science at University. You ask him/her if he/she can urgently help you fix the laptop. *You ask the research student:*

B. You are a research student in the department of Computer Science at University. While in your office, a first-year student, who is also a close friend of yours, asks whether you can urgently help her fix the laptop. He/she explains to you he/she has a paper due in three days and he/she urgently needs the laptop to start working on it. Although you understand the urgency of the matter you cannot do it. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 6

A. You are a middle-aged man/woman who is responsible for the office of primary care and health of your town hall. Right now, your office is informing all local shops about flu prevention techniques they may use to keep themselves and clients healthy. An important one is the use of plastic gloves when handling food. You see the shop assistant who is working in the butcher's is not wearing them. *You ask the shop assistant:*

B. You are a student at University who helps your father working in his butcher's. Very recently, the office of the primary care and health of your town hall has sent all local shops flu prevention techniques they may use to keep themselves and clients healthy. An important one is the use of gloves when handling food. A middle-aged man/woman explains to you that he/she is responsible for the office of primary care and health of your town hall and asks you to wear plastic gloves to handle food. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 7

A. You are a secretary in the English Studies department at University. You are in an office giving some documents to a research assistant who works in the same department. It is getting close to the end of the day, and you still have a lot of things to do, among others leaving a document in the library. This building is on the research assistant's way home, so you wonder whether he/she could help you by leaving the document in the library when going home. *You ask the research assistant.*

B. You are a research assistant working in the English Studies department at University. You are in your office with the secretary of your department who is giving you some documents. It is getting close to the end of the day, and he/she tells you the list of things he/she still has to do, among others leaving a document in the library which is in your way home. He/she asks you if you could help him/her by leaving the document in the library when going home. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 8

A. You are a Professor working in your office. Your assistant, with whom you have a good academic relationship, doesn't understand some concepts in one of your books. You clarify them to him/her and when he/she is about to leave, you ask him/her whether he/she can help you to finish an online questionnaire by discussing some items. *You ask the assistant:*

B. You are an assistant to a Professor, with whom you have a good academic relationship. You go to his/her office to clarify some doubts about one of his/her books. After discussing them with him/her, you are about to leave when he/she asks you whether you can help him/her to finish an online questionnaire by discussing some items. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Role-play 9

A. You are a student enrolled in a hairdressing program at an Academy. As part of your practicum you are in a reputable salon cutting a woman's hair. You feel tired and you need to drink a coffee to wake up. Your colleague, and close friend, is not with a client at that moment so you ask him/her whether he/she can take a coffee for you. *You ask your colleague:*

B. You are a student enrolled in a hairdressing program at an Academy. As part of your practicum you are working in a reputable salon. As you do not have clients, you are sweeping the salon floor. Your colleague, and close friend, is cutting a woman's hair and asks you whether you could take him/her a coffee to wake up. *You refuse by saying:*

Enhanced photo

Appendix B: Written DCT

Name:.....

Read the following nine communicative situations in which you interact with someone. Pretend you are the person in the situation and reject all requests. Write what you would say in an actual situation.

[Some situations are adapted from the studies conducted by King and Silver (1993), Al-Issa (2003), Nguyen (2006) and Duan (2008)].

1. You are a research assistant to a Professor, with whom you have a good academic relationship. At the end of the academic year you are very busy finishing several projects and studying for your final exams. The Professor is the main organiser of a large international conference. He/she finds plenty of work to do and asks you to help him/her in the organisation of this big event. You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)

2. You are a student who enters a greengrocer's you regularly go to, to buy a lettuce. The item is 1 euro and you only have a 50 euro note. The shop assistant explains that he/she is short of change and asks you for the exact amount of money. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

3. You are a fourth-year student at University. A first-year student on the same degree as you is doing a class project and asks if he/she could interview you. Although you would like to help him/her, you do not have the time. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

4. You are a student who is in the queue to buy a cinema ticket to see the latest film by your favourite actor. After queuing more than one hour, you are about to pay for the last entrance to see the film when a well-dressed middle-aged man/woman behind you suddenly explains how eager he/she drove 200 kms on purpose to come to see the film and asks you to see a different one. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

5. You are a student at University. During one of the translation classes, a classmate, and close friend of yours, asks if he/she can borrow your English dictionary for a while. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

6. You are a student with just one day left before taking a final exam. While you are studying for the exam, your cousin, who is in High School, asks if you would help him/her with his/her homework assignments but you cannot that day. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

7. You are a student in a Law class at the university. One of your lecturers comes into the classroom with many books and papers to share with you and your fellow students. After class, he/she asks if you can assist him/her with carrying the books and papers to the office, which is located in the next building, but you cannot help him/her because you are in a hurry. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

8. You are a graduate student conducting research at university. While in your office, a student, whom you have never met before, asks you to give your signature for a political cause but you do not want to. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

9. You are a student sitting in the University canteen finishing your lunch. Another student, whom you have never met before, puts his/her books on the table and asks you to watch them until he/she brings the food. You see there is a long queue to buy the food and you do not want to miss class, so you cannot wait. *You refuse by saying: (allow more space here)*

Appendix C: Awareness test

Name:

Read the following nine communicative situations in which someone is making a request and a rejection for a response to each situation. Tick (✓) whether the rejection is appropriate or inappropriate to each particular situation and explain your answer.

[Some situations from this test were adapted from the study conducted by Nguyen (2006)]

1. You are a student at a University. You are about to go home in your car. Another student, whom you have never met before, approaches you and asks you for a lift home saying that you both live in the same area of the city. *You refuse by saying:*

- I'm sorry, but I am not going straight home. There are quite a few things I need to do before heading home! Perhaps another day.

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

2. You are a graduate student conducting research at University and teaching a course on History. You have scheduled a test on the first day of the following month, and one of your students, whom you have never met before, asks if he/she can take the test one day earlier so that he/she can go on holiday with his/her family, as they have bought tickets on the day of the test. *You refuse by saying:*

- Sorry, it's not possible, as all students must sit the exam on the scheduled date. I can't make exceptions for you as then I would have to do so for everyone.

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

3. You are a student in a Business studies class at the university. One of your lecturers asks you to pick him/her up every day from his/her home, saying that his/her house is near yours. You refuse by saying:

- *No, I can't. I always have things to attend to before classes.*

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

4. You are a student going to the bank to withdraw some money to pay for a ski trip organised by the university. Once in the bank, you meet your younger brother/sister who is also there to withdraw some money to pay for an excursion organised by the High School. He/she is always short of money and this time, again, he/she asks you to pay for the excursion. You refuse by saying:

- *I can't lend you any money right now. Next week's your birthday, just ask mum for it.*

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

5. You are a student at University. A classmate, and close friend of yours, has been sick and has not been able to attend classes. He/she asks if he/she can borrow your class notes. You refuse by saying:

- *I don't want to. It goes against my convictions!*

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

6. You are a student who enters a bakery to buy the only cherry oat muffin left in the shop. You are about to pay for the muffin when a businessman/woman behind you suddenly explains how he/she came to the bakery on purpose to buy the delicious muffins baked there for his pregnant friend and asks you to buy another pastry. You refuse by saying:

- I understand you, but I also came here on purpose to buy this delicious muffin. Why don't you try the bakery opposite here?

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

7. You are a research student at University who teaches a course in the Tourism degree. One of your students has made an appointment to see you for a consultation at a time you do not have office hours. However, he/she calls and says he/she cannot come on that date and asks for an alternative date for the consultation. You are pretty busy writing your PhD dissertation. You refuse by saying:

- No way. Appointments are meant to be kept unless there is a serious matter intervening! So I don't want to change our appointment.

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

8. You are a research assistant to a Professor, with whom you have a good academic relationship. At the end of the office hours, you are going to

leave. The Professor asks if you can stay with him/her and help him/her with some papers. You refuse by saying:

- I am sorry, but I have an urgent appointment that I simply must attend. I can definitely help tomorrow.

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:.....

9. You are a business student who enters a bookshop looking for a book. In the bookshop you are stopped by another student doing the same degree as you, who asks you to fill out a 30-minute questionnaire as part of a work project. However, you do not have the time to spend 30 minutes filling in the questionnaire out. You refuse by saying:

- In your dreams! I'm a busy person.

Appropriate Inappropriate

Reason:

Appendix D: Key to Awareness test

Situation 1

- *[I'm sorry, but], [I am not going straight home] [There are quite a few things I need to do before heading home!] / [Perhaps another day]*
Appropriate: [regret]+[reason]+[explanation]+[alternative: another time]

Situation 2

- *[Sorry, it's not possible], [as all students must sit the exam on the scheduled date], [I can't make exceptions for you as then I would for everyone]*
Appropriate: [regret]+[explanation]+[explanation]

Situation 3

- *[No], [I can't]. [I always have things to attend to before classes].*
Inappropriate: [direct refusal]+[negation of proposition]+[explanation]

Situation 4

- *[I can't lend you any money right now]. [Next week's your birthday, just ask mum for it].*
Appropriate: [direct refusal]+[alternative: another option]

Situation 5

- *[I don't want to], [It goes against my convictions!]*
Inappropriate: [negation of proposition]+[statement of principle/philosophy]

Situation 6

- *[I understand you, but], [I also came on purpose to buy this delicious muffin]. [Why don't you try the bakery opposite here?].*
Appropriate: [empathy]+[explanation]+[alternative: another option]

Situation 7

- [No way], [Appointments are meant to be kept unless there is a serious matter intervening!], [So I don't want to change our appointment]
Inappropriate: [direct refusal]+[explanation]+[negation of proposition]

Situation 8

- [I am sorry], [but I have an urgent appointment that I simply must attend]. [I can definitely help tomorrow].

Appropriate: [regret]+[explanation]+[alternative: another time]

Situation 9

- [In your dreams!], [I'm a busy person]

Inappropriate: [Avoidance/verbal/sarcasm]+[explanation]

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