



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS: THE LEI- BUAP STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE EMPLOYED WHEN CALLING THE SPEECH ACT OF REFUSAL

TESIS

PARA OBTENER EL TÍTULO DE
LIC. EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

PRESENTA:
JORDY DANIEL MORALES GRAJALES

DIRECTOR DE TESIS:
DRA. ELIZABETH FLORES SALGADO



H. PUEBLA DE Z., PUE.

SEPTIEMBRE 2017



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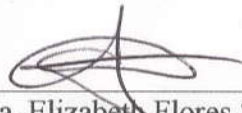
“Interlanguage pragmatics: The LEI-BUAP students’ pragmatic competence employed when calling the speech act of refusal”

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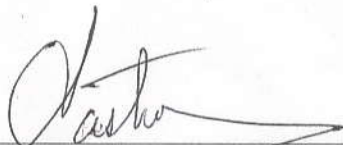
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Septiembre 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks...

...to the “Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla” (BUAP), for allowing students like me to pursue their dreams and give them the opportunity to study a bachelor.

...to all the teachers, who encouraged me to give my best.

...to PhD. Elizabeth Flores Salgado, for her guidance and help to finish up this research.

DEDICATION

I am so grateful to my parents: Adán & Andrea,
for their infinite love, support and encouragement.

To my sister: Magaly,
for being my inspiration and showing me
that perseverance brings good results in life.

I LOVE YOU ALL.

Abstract

Language is used by humans with the purpose of communicating with other individuals, which consequently makes humans social beings; and language a social tool. In the words of Mey (2001, p. 6), “pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society”. Therefore, EFL learners need to develop their pragmatic competence to be capable of identifying the contextual and social factors involved in a conversation so as to use effective and appropriate language forms/functions.

The present research paper, following a case study with a qualitative approach and a cross-sectional design, aims to explain and compare why native and non-native English speakers use certain refusal strategies when calling the speech act of refusal in real-life situations, by administering a Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET). Under these circumstances, a discourse analysis is employed to verify if the students from the “Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés” at BUAP (LEI-BUAP) are developing their pragmatic competence enough to use effective and appropriate refusal strategies in real-life contexts. Particularly, data was analyzed on 1) the frequency of semantic formulas, 2) the syntactic characteristics of the responses, 3) the number of words used to respond, 4) the correlation between language proficiency level and responses made. All of this so as to find out if LEI-BUAP students resorted to pragmatic competence to convey meaning.

This research can allow to comprehend better what the weaknesses are in the LEI program so that it could be possible to strengthen it in order to develop the students’ pragmatic competence as part of their formative process as English teachers. The results showed that LEI-BUAP students tend to be less direct, by not saying “No”; more explicative, giving more than one reason/excuse; and hesitant, taking more time to know how and what to say; than native English speakers when using the semantic formulas of reason/excuse, negative willingness and regret.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Knowing a language, either first language (L1) or second language (L2), requires learners to acquire the knowledge of a linguistic system so as to interpret and produce a message effectively and appropriately in a particular setting, through the use of language forms (e.g. tenses, modal verbs, moods, etc.) and the functions of these forms (e.g. refusing, requesting, and so on) based on social, cultural and historic premises which shape the interpretation and production of a message within a specific community/society. All of these aspects are part of what is known as **pragmatic competence** (Kasper, 1992). Nevertheless, meeting this knowledge is not an easy task for learners of a foreign language since they are not immersed in a speaking context of the language being learned. As a result, these learners develop an **interlanguage** which, definitely, is not the same as the First Language (L1) nor the Target Language (TL), but instead, it is influenced by both (Selinker, 1972). Additionally, inasmuch as people do not communicate through the solely use of words but **speech acts** instead, which are the performance of meaning and actions (Searle, 1969); L2 learners need to know and master how to employ language forms to call a certain function according to the surrounding context of an interaction (appropriateness).

In the event that L2 learners do not develop the pragmatic competence of a language, they will rely on their L1 knowledge to convey meaning in an L2. This phenomenon is called **pragmatic transfer**. It is important to realize that insofar as both languages (L1 and L2) are different linguistic systems, the transfer of knowledge from one language to another is risky and ill-fated, mostly. In that case, an L2 learner may encounter much more difficulties to call any speech act without compromising the success of a social intercourse.

There are certain speech acts which represent a major challenge to L2 learners. One of this speech acts is refusal. A **refusal** is "a major cross-cultural 'sticking point' for many nonnative speakers" (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990, p. 56) because its usage entails meeting certain aspects like social status, gender, and level of education (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Beebe et al., 1990). Thus, as previously said, L2 learners face a

harder path when it comes to meeting all the pragmatic rules a community of the L2 being learned has in order to have successful refusing interactions, since they do not live within a using-L2 context (besides, in a few cases, the schoolrooms).

1.2 Defining the Problem

Pragmatic competence is not considered, most of the times, an essential element in the acquisition of a second language. In fact, in Second Language Instruction (SLI), pragmatic competence is barely taken into account resulting in the prioritization of other types of language knowledge, for instance grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. As a consequence, most of students spend their time memorizing lists of words and practicing language structures and pronunciation. Under these circumstances, Second/Foreign Language (L2) learners face some difficulties to acquire, to develop and to use the pragmatic knowledge necessary to be competent in an L2.

Particularly speaking, it is well-known that students of the major “Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés” at BUAP (LEI-BUAP students) have expressed their concerns on the difficulties they encounter to produce and interpret a message on the L2 (which in this case is English), as when some of them have been face-to-face with native English speakers (NEs).

1.3 Justification of the Study

Studies on this topic can allow to find out more evidence about how L2 learners communicate in the Target Language (TL), based on how their pragmatic competence influences on the use of specific communicative strategies to refuse. Conducting this particular research allows to identify why LEI-BUAP students produce certain refusing forms in (in)formal situations ruled by 1) equal and higher social status and 2) close/distant relationships.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General Objectives

1. Analyze the refusing strategies produced by foreign language learners at different proficiency levels (basic, intermediate, advanced) when they respond to four real-life situations.
2. Compare the responses provided by foreign language learners with those produced by Native American-English speakers (NEs) and Native Mexican-Spanish speakers (NSs).

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. Identify if there was pragmatic transfer in the LEI-BUAP students' responses, as well as point out what is the correlation between language proficiency level and the responses made.
2. Compare the semantic formulas frequency, the syntactic structure and the number of words used by LEI-BUAP students with those of NEs and NSs.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Do MEs' refusing strategies approximate to native English's responses and to what extent their responses differ from the NEs'?
2. Is there any relation between the ME participants' responses and their English proficiency level?

1.6 Methodology

As the purpose of this research is to understand the nature and the factors involved in the phenomenon studied (EFL learners' refusals) within a particular community (LEI-BUAP students), this paper work follows a case study methodology and employs a qualitative approach. Moreover, this study has a cross-sectional design due to the three groups of participants which are at different English proficiency level (beginners, intermediate and advanced). Thus, the technique employed was a discourse analysis. This let to compare the NS, ME and NE's responses about refusing strategies to determine how similar/different

the non-natives' responses are from those by the natives' based on the frequency of semantic formulas, the syntactic structure and the length of responses EFL learners made.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research allows to verify if LEI-BUAP students are developing the pragmatic competence to communicate effectively and appropriately in the target language and, of course, to avoid relying on L1 knowledge to put meaning across in L2. Based on the results gotten, it is possible to identify what problems LEI-BUAP students are facing when using L2 language forms to refuse in real contexts. Therefore, this data could set the foundation to strengthen the LEI curriculum focusing on the awareness of the pragmatic competence development on LEI-BUAP students.

1.8 Organization

This research consists of five chapters. The first chapter contains the parameters in which the research is developed and the relationship this paper work has with other research which have studied the interlanguage pragmatics phenomenon and the speech act of refusal. Starting with the introduction, justification, objectives, research questions, methodology, significance, organization, limitations and key terms. The second chapter has the theoretical framework consisting of all the concepts that are part of the interlanguage pragmatics development (going from the most general field to the most particular one) supported each one by different authors' statements. The third one is related to the research subjects, the instrument administered, piloting, data collection data analysis. The fourth is about the findings in the instrument's administration. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further research are stated in the fifth chapter.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

As this research follows a qualitative approach, allowing to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research, the impossibility to generalize the results gotten marks a limitation. In addition, the number of participants taken is a small sample of the total LEI-BUAP students population, consequently, the results will give only an insight of the phenomenon studied from the participants collected not the entire community.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Interlanguage pragmatics: “as the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)” (Kasper, 1989; cited in Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3).

Pragmatics: “pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society” (Mey, 2001, p. 6).

Pragmatic competence: “relies very heavily on conversational, culturally appropriate, and socially acceptable ways of interacting”. (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2001, p. 20).

Pragmatic transfer: “the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of the L2 pragmatic information” (Kasper, 1992, p. 207)

Speech acts: “speech acts are verbal actions happening in the world.” (Mey, 2001, p. 95).

Refusals: “refusals are one of a relatively small number of speech acts which can be characterized as a response to another's act (e.g. to a request, invitation, offer, suggestion), rather than as an act initiated by the speaker.” (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 2).

Politeness: “Politeness, in an interaction, can then be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face.” (Yule, 1996, p. 60).

Face: “Face is a technical term to denote the public self-image all human beings wish to maintain. It includes emotional and social aspects, such as that one is honest, well-behaved, clean, and a member of particular groups and institutions in society.” (LoCastro, 2003, p. 113).

Positive face: “The need to be connected with others.” (LoCastro, 2003, p. 113).

Negative face: “A person’s negative face is the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others.” (Yule, 1996, p. 61).

Verbosity: “the feature of providing more information than is necessary by elaborating lengthy explanations” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 243)

1.11 Key Terms

Interlanguage pragmatics, refusals, pragmatic competence, pragmatic transfer, Mexican EFL learners.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the concepts of language, learning, foreign language learning, pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, competence, communicative competence, pragmatic competence, face, politeness, interlanguage, interlanguage pragmatics, speech acts, classification of speech acts, locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts, direct acts, indirect acts, felicity condition and illocutionary force indicator devices (IFIDs) are defined providing supported information on the basis of theories and studies already made by some researchers.

2.1 Language

Language is the tool which has allowed people to communicate since its development has set the foundation for social interaction and, henceforth, the human integration into communities and civilizations. Based on Finocchiano (1964, p. 8) “Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact.” (Cited in Brown, 1994). Clearly, language is directly shaped by a community according to its needs so as to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas. In addition, Finegan (2008) has said that the actual purpose of language is to connect words and expressions, based on feelings and ideas, with meaning in order to convey linguistic functions. He expressed that language grammar consists of three aspects. Besides meaning and expression, the third one is something known as *context*. This aspect gives the whole sense of an utterance’s meaning regarding the particular situation in which an interaction is immersed. Thus, it is necessary to comprehend our essence as humans with the aim to know how language works naturally and why this characterizes human race (Fromkin et al, 2011). Considering all these aspects, language involves many elements that make it work and which consists not only of grammar, words and sounds but also contextualized language.

2.2 Learning

Although it may be true that learning consists of “a change in an individual caused by experience” (Slavin, 2003, cited in Brown, 2007, p. 7), it is important to realize that how

one learns changes in the course of a lifetime. Despite this, some people still think that it is possible to learn anything in the same manner as babies do, taking the learning process as something given by nature (Wirth & Perkins, 2008). Nevertheless, learning does not work in this way. In fact, the proper description for the term has to take into account the cognitive processes occurring in the students' mind, not just like a mechanism affecting their behavior based on experiences (Houwer, Barnes-Holmes & Moors, 2013). On the whole, learning is the process of storing information on the mind for future purposes. A process which evolves along the biological and cognitive development of a person.

2.2.1 Foreign Language Learning

One of the biggest obstacles to learn a foreign language is that when pupils start doing it, they have already a “programmed” linguistic system on their brains. So, at the moment to internalize the linguistic structures of the target language (TL) students need to understand and assimilate all the components of a new language (Hall and Verplaetse, 2000). Foreign language learning is differed from what is more commonly known as Second language acquisition (SLA) because users do not belong, they are not simply close and/or in constant interaction to a community who has the TL/L2 as its L1. The tendency is that learners create and/or adapt moments and spaces where they can use the language being learned like if they were in a real context, for instance, the classroom (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In this situation, the learning process becomes more difficult, but not impossible if students are willing to be part of it. Brown (2007) added that L2 learning does not come in a package from which you can follow a series of steps to speak fully a language; indeed, it is necessary to be committed to getting involved in a new phase where you will change inside out (e.g. way of thinking, feeling and acting) to some external or physical changes. In brief, learning a foreign language is more challenging resulted from the lack of the TL use in real-life situations without being exposed to a target language culture, which undoubtedly would enhance a faster and more native-like development of the language being learned.

2.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a recent field of study that emerged as a result of the continuous questioning of how communication, and language itself, works. Morris (1938, p. 6) stated that

pragmatics is “the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters”; in his words, Morris shows the tendency of relating semiotics, a science already studied, with the meaning a hearer/reader might understand from an utterance. Nonetheless, pragmatics focuses on the actual meaning a speaker/writer wants to convey with a message he/she produces. However, throughout research and time, the perspective has changed. Nowadays, pragmatics is seen as a more independent field, an event that gave rise to the emergence of new definitions. For instance, Yule (1996) has mentioned that pragmatics focuses on studying the meaning attached in a message and how context affects the understanding of the meaning by both sides of the communicative process (the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader). Pursuing this further, context started to be seen as a fundamental element of pragmatics. Especially, when the discussion about if the communication’s success depends on the users’ proficiency of the language or if it is due to the users’ capability to suit language to their needs. Consequently, in a recent point of view, as language is used by humans within a society, speakers fix their utterances in regard of the cultural premises they are surrounded by. Mey (2001) supported this idea stating that “pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society” (p. 6). In brief, pragmatics emerged to clear things up for a better understanding of why and how language forms function in specific ways on particular contexts.

2.4 Competence

In linguistics, competence is a concept which relates the necessary abilities to perform language appropriately and effectively. Defining what those abilities are has become in an endless discussion. First, Hymes (1972) extended the meaning of the word “competence”. He considered that in order to be competent in a language learners do not only have to know how to structure utterances according to grammatical aspects but also to take into account the contextual premises when producing or comprehending messages in L2 (cited in Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan & Fernández Guerra, 2003). Nevertheless, other authors had a different point of view, Bachman (1990) pointed competence out as a union of two different sorts of competencies: 1) organizational, which is related with the ability to know if utterances are grammatically well-constructed; and 2) pragmatics, the ability to use and comprehend appropriately illocutionary acts in real situations. All in all, language users

make use of different linguistic abilities to perform language competently and avoid failure in their interactions.

2.4.1 Communicative competence

Communicative competence emerged after the discussion on how Chomsky's linguistic competence was too limited to describe learners' performance of a language because it considered only rules, which turn out unreal scenarios for successful real-life conversations and did not take factors that actually affect a speech into account (cited in Rickheit & Strohner, 2008). Factors which are taken into account in communicative competence such as pragmatics. Therefore, Hymes (1972) has suggested that communicative competence refers also to how language is used by users to produce or understand each other appropriately, based on the situation surrounding the communication process (cited in Barron, 2003). To say it differently, "communicative competence involves knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation" (Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 18). In this extent, some other linguists began to investigate more about what competence really means and what the link is with the communication process. Littlewood (1981) explained that a foreign learner is not necessarily competent in the target language just because he/she domains the construction of grammatically correct sentences but because he/she has got the skills to understand very well the surrounding circumstance involving the participants, by noticing if there is previous knowledge in common about the conversation's topic and being capable of identifying and taking what best elements can convey effectively his/her message across. In conclusion, meeting the grammar knowledge of a language is not sufficient to communicate effectively and appropriately, hence, having the knowledge of how to use language forms in context is crucial.

2.4.2 Pragmatic competence

People use language as they please to express what they want to be done or said following specific contextual premises that determine a message's intended meaning. But, why people are capable of understanding a meaning is stemmed from "the knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various

purposes” (Chomsky, 1980, p. 224). The conception of pragmatic competence changed when Canale and Swain (1980) included it as an element of what they stated to be communicative competence. They argued that pragmatic competence is the contextual knowledge employed when using language appropriately, insofar as “relies very heavily on conversational, culturally appropriate, and socially acceptable ways of interacting” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2001, p. 20). Indeed, as pragmatics deals with meaning and context, pragmatic competence is a type of knowledge people develop when they are surrounded and/or exposed to the community’s culture and language they are learning/living in. After all, speakers who are pragmatically competent to hold social interactions successfully with those who are around them in a particular situation produce more effective and appropriate language forms regarding a purpose/function.

2.5 Interlanguage

Interlanguage is regarded “as the separate linguistic system evidenced when adult second-language learners attempt to express meaning in a language they are in the process of learning” (Tarone, 2006, p. 748 from Selinker, 1972). Selinker’s definition mentioned the adult learners’ attempts to express meaning in the target language (TL) using certain structures, patterns and strategies based on a distinctive language. However, this linguistic system is considered different to the learner’s mother tongue and his/her target language because the strategies, structures and competences employed do not match completely to those in his/her L2; it is associated and influenced by both types of language, instead (Tarone, 2006). That is to say, interlanguage is “an intermediate stage between a learner’s L1 and L2, in which s/he uses rules from both linguistic systems in order to produce sentences in L2” (Muñoz Luna, 2010, p. 61), and which is markedly influenced by L1-transfer, previous learning strategies, strategies of L2 acquisition, L2 communication strategies, and overgeneralization of L2 language patterns (Selinker, 1972, cited in Tarone, 2006). In conclusion, interlanguage is a particular type of language developed and used by L2/FL a student during the process of learning the target language which enables him/her to communicate in the TL without using entirely the TL and NL’s knowledge.

2.5.1 *Interlanguage Pragmatics*

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a subfield in the interlanguage study dedicated to understand and explain how the contextual information (e.g. social status, culture, etc.) is closely attached to the interlanguage production of language functions. In the event that interlanguage is only developed by non-native speaker of the language in question, Kasper (1989) marked ILP out “as the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)” (cited in Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3). That is to say that ILP focuses on the understanding of a L2 learner’s learning and application of language functions in L2. With this in mind, Kasper and Rose (2002) considered two side to consider in the Interlanguage pragmatics field:

As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language. (Kasper & Rose, 2002, cited in Schauer, 2009, p. 15)

In fact, Interlanguage pragmatics is a discipline supported by the second language acquisition research and merely focuses on pragmatics issues due to the permanent interest for comprehending better and more about the contextual influence on language (as a factor) in the communicative process and learners’ language production (Schauer, 2009). Schauer (2009) argued that the main purpose is to figure out how learners understand and make linguistic constructions to convey meaning in the language they are acquiring the L2. On the whole, context is the central point in ILP study since it allows to understand what, how and why L2 learners acquire and produce particular linguistic actions in L2.

2.6 Pragmatic Transfer

Most of L2 learners’ problems to communicate in the TL are a consequence of the lack of knowledge about the language being learned. This meagerness gives rise to alternative strategies usage to convey and/or interpret meaning, such as transferring any type of linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, etc.) from L1 to L2 so that communication is held on. To put it differently, pragmatic transfer is understood as the influence resulted from the use of L1 knowledge to produce a discourse in L2 (Wolfson, 1989). In contrast, Odlin (1989) has not considered a speaker’s lack of L2 forms as a trigger for pragmatic

transfer. He described pragmatic transfer as the influence affecting L2 learners' linguistic knowledge according to the differences and similarities the languages acquired by the learner, whether mastered or not, have with L2. On the condition that those scholars generally define what transferring is or, merely, how this influence occurs when producing the language, Kasper (1992) regarded the term as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of the L2 pragmatic information" (p. 207). In this case, it is not just a matter of language production but comprehension and learning. Therefore, L2 learners use what they know (or at least, understand) about how a language works and how it must be used within a community to interact in the second language. Unfortunately, this influence is more characterized by others linguistic system rather than L2 itself which definitely will not always be the most effective and appropriate in the L2 community.

2.7 Face

A conversation implies participants to discuss or to talk about a topic; in which their contribution to the interaction may be influenced by the person and other circumstantial aspects causing some changes throughout the conversation. This person's feature is known as *face*. Particularly, Goffman (1967) defined the term "as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (cited in Schauer, 2009, p. 11). In other words, people have always a *face* that can be perceived by others. When humans have a social encounter this *face* will be shown to the other participant(s). In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) pointed the concept out as being composed of two associated aspects of *face*; (1) *negative face*, as the basic allegation to territories and human rights; and (2) *positive force*, which was described above by Goffman. Furthermore, they mentioned that there are certain language forms that can affect negatively to the other party's *face*, named as face-threatening-acts (FTA's). Seiwald (2011) marked out the term *face* as "the self-assumption of a person's own appearance in public which is determined by social features, such as profession, religion, gender and ethnicity". She also explained that a person's *face* stays constantly changing, whether to improve itself or for degradation. In brief, people lead a conversation and its outcome

according to how its participants interact and how their *faces* are affected throughout the social encounter.

2.8 Politeness

Politeness theory is one important element in interlanguage pragmatics because it concentrates on what many authors debate about what is to be polite when using language. There have been several authors, researchers and linguists arguing what actually politeness is in linguistics. Firstly, Lakoff (1977) said that “the pillars of our linguistic and as well as non-linguistic interactions with each other are to make yourself clear and be polite”, also she stated that there are three rules of politeness:

- 1) Formality: Don't impose/ remain aloof.
 - 2) Hesitancy: Allow his addressee his options.
 - 3) Equality or camaraderie: Act as though you and addressee were equal/ make him feel good
- (cited in Schauer, 2009, p. 10).

Secondly, Brown and Levinson (1987) described politeness as the use of particular language forms depending on who the speaker and addressee are, and what the social order is between them. Both factors influence language production and comprehension; which, at the same time, vary in different cultures and contexts. Thirdly, Watts (2003) has argued that politeness is not innate but a skill that has to be learned and improved with a social perspective. For instance, a child who is not taught the polite conditions existing in the culture he/she belongs to won't be able to interact appropriately without being considered impolite. To sum up, the importance of politeness theory is linked with how appropriate speakers are when communicating within a context and culture.

2.9 Speech acts

In a pragmatic perspective, communication works due to the use of speech acts rather than the production of words and their semantic meaning. Different from the idea that speech acts refer to “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein, 1953, cited in Schauer, 2009, p. 7), Searle (1969) contributed saying that the communication process is not fully composed by the meaning of graphic representations of the actual utterance (symbols, grammar and words) but, in fact, by the production and comprehension of the proposition when performing speech acts. Most importantly, any utterance occurs in

isolation; there will be always social, cultural or temporal premises determining what a language form's meaning refers to. After all, "speech acts are acts performed in uttering expressions" (Akamajian et al, 2010, p. 395) which meaning is determined by contextual rules. To conclude, speech acts theory does not refer to the words' meaning (semantics) but it focuses on the intention expected to be understood by a hearer through selected contextualized words, expressions and strategies so as to perform a desired language function.

2.9.1 Classification of Speech Acts

There are some classifications for speech acts for categorizing them according to some characteristics, like the function or nature the speech act has.

2.9.1.1 Locutionary acts

The first classification for speech acts entails the simplest or most basic level of communication. At this point, it is not necessary to go deeper in the understanding of an utterance to comprehend what is meant. Austin (1962) regarded locutionary acts as the plainest type of speech because the uttering message's meaning is distinguishable by the interlocutors since it is an explicit meaning, since "locutionary act is an act of saying something in the full normal sense" (Pandey, 2008, p. 109). In other words, the immediate purpose a speech has (e.g. refusing is used to refuse). Finally, Birner (2013) expressed, like the previous authors, that locutionary acts deal merely with the message's literal meaning, so that in a conversation a hearer/reader does not need to associate any pragmatic meaning because it leads to exactly what has been just said. In summary, locutionary acts are the easiest type of language functions since it is not necessary to have any pragmatic knowledge to produce and interpret them.

2.9.1.2 Illocutionary acts

To know what a message really means (if it is not the case of a locutionary acts) a hearer/reader requires to go beyond what was said regarding the speaker/writer's intention. As Birner (2013) mentioned, illocutionary acts refer to what the speaker/writer wants to achieve when using this kind of utterance (e.g. to convince, to persuade, to apologize or any

other purpose the speaker has), through illocutions containing illocutionary verbs. Nonetheless, these two are not the same thing. Searle (1979) stated that illocutionary verbs do strictly belong to a particular language, because their meaning is different from one language to another; whereas illocutionary acts can be found in every language, since it is a function used by people no matter what is the linguistic system they speak. Notwithstanding illocutionary acts are characterized by definite verbs, so when making use of a precise verb it will be “obvious” what speech act is being used (for instance, someone saying *I regret what I did last night* is performing a regret since he/she used the verb regret); Davis (1991) argued that it is not possible to reserve limited verbs to certain acts because some of them do not require verbal expressions to call a particular illocutionary act. In a word, illocutionary acts entail those contextualized language forms which contain an implicit meaning/function, rather than the literal one.

2.9.1.3 *Perlocutionary acts*

A perlocutionary act can be manifested after a previous speech act or not, because there is not always a reaction to what is expressed/interpreted in an utterance. Evidently, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts are linked because when a speaker utters a message with the purpose of accomplishing something (such as apologizing) there might be an effect on a hearer, not because of what was said but because the objective was gotten or not (Davis, 1979). In this sense, the probability of a perlocution’s presence depends on the resulting effect, as “an act is performed by saying something” (Gelber, 2002). For instance, “The speaker who exclaims *the dog has eaten the sausages* may cause someone else to shout at the dog, to berate the first person for leaving the sausages in a silly place or to go off to buy more sausages, or all three” (Brown & Miller, 2013, p. 336). Thus, Kissine (2013) stated that it is decisive to check if physical reactions as a result of what was said can be taken into account as a perlocution or if there are just part of it. Indeed, the relation between what is said and what is the response hearers might have had pointed out that perlocutionary acts cannot be performed without an illocution produced in advance.

2.9.1.4 Direct speech acts

Direct speech acts refer strictly to the connection between the locution's structure and the intended language function. That is to say if a language form and a language function are directly linked, it is a case of a direct speech act (Yule, 1996). For instance, "a direct speech act would relate a declarative structure to a statement", and not to another (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 9). In this sense, an utterance's intended purpose and meaning have a straight relationship with the semantic meaning of words, as with the explicit meaning of the linguistic construction. Denham and Lobeck (2012) suggested this as the whole meaning formed on the integration of each word, so it is the explicit significance an utterance has. In short, direct speech acts concentrate language utterances in which the meaning literally expressed matches with the actual communicative purpose for uttering what is meant to be understood.

2.9.1.5 Indirect speech acts

A speaker uses indirect speech acts not only to produce a message with an intended meaning (causing an illocutionary effect on a hearer), but also to make a hearer notice a desired intention based on the previous linguistic knowledge that a hearer possesses (Searle, 1979). That is to say, "whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an indirect speech act" (Yule, 1996). In other words, the grammatical structure and the speech act used in an utterance do not match in an indirect speech act (LoCastro, 2003). Altogether, users use indirect speech acts to convey a meaning that goes beyond what it is noticeable.

2.9.2 Felicity condition

Felicity conditions integrate essential, preparatory, sincerity and propositional content condition that set the expected circumstances to interpret appropriately speech acts (Searle, 1969). Moreover, Yule (1996) suggested that these conditions have the function of highlighting the speech act performed, so it can be detected and understood more clearly; just if these conditions are present in the correct context. Nonetheless, when a speech act is inappropriately understood it is said that the felicity conditions do not apply regarding the

situation, and now it is said to be infelicitous (Mukherji, 2010). Generally speaking, effective communication requires appropriate circumstances for expected responses.

2.9.3 *IFIDs*

The illocutionary force indicator devices (IFIDs) contemplate, at least in English, “word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and performative verbs” (Searle, 1969, p. 39) to detect speech acts. Then, in a more recent book, Searle and Vanderveken (1985) argued that performative verbs (Vps) and IFIDs are not always present in illocutionary forces (F), just like in the case of directive illocutionary force; which enables the hearer to execute an action. In addition to that, Yule (1996) agreed that people do not operate speech acts literally in their utterances but indicate what speech act is being used, instead. To sum up, IFIDs work as a highlighter for a hearer to detect a speaker’s proposition when performing a speech act so as to get an intended purpose.

2.9.4 *Speech act of refusal*

A speaker refuses to any proposition when they find a reason to not perform what he/she was intended to do. In this way, Gass and Houck (1999, p. 2) mentioned that “refusals are one of a relatively small number of speech acts which can be characterized as a response to another’s act (e.g. to a request, invitation, offer, suggestion), rather than as an act initiated by the speaker”. Additionally, Taguchi (2007) explained that the speech act of refusal can be regarded as a threaten for the effective communication process because they open up the opportunity for possible misunderstandings that may or may not result in offensive perlocutions. For this reason, it is important to be aware of what the appropriate means and ways for refusing are without allowing these problems to occur in a conversation. Equally important, “the negotiation of a refusal may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and various degrees of politeness that are appropriate to the situation” in order to cease the likelihood of offending a hearer (Eslami, 2010, p. 218). Given these points, how refusing can affect a conversation regarding the social relationship a speaker and a hearer have, how close/distant they are and what refusing forms are appropriately correct require a speaker to know and use the best and least leading-to-offence language forms.

2.9.4.1 *Previous research on Refusals*

Félix-Brasdefer (2006) investigated Mexican-Spanish speakers' refusals, elicited through open role plays. To be precise, the study concentrated on three politeness' features: degree of formality, politeness systems and strategy use; and politeness and the notion of face in Mexico. Apart from the four-role-play-interactional instrument, verbal reports (another instrument) was administered supplementary to analyze NSs' perception of refusals. Félix-Brasdefer found out that "politeness is accomplished largely by means of formulaic and semi-formulaic expressions that use ritualized linguistic forms to convey *respeto*, and by means of various linguistic forms that weaken the illocutionary force of a refusal" (p. 2180). A characteristic tendency in the Mexican community studied. Moreover, he found out that participants negotiate face, mostly, by indirect means to end up in a polite conclusion.

Using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), Moaveni (2014) conducted a research to investigate the difference between American's and international college students' refusing strategies and gender variation. All situations' social intercourse was set via e-mail. The instrument was responded by 16 American students and 32 international students. Data collected in this study was analyzed and interpreted based on the frequency, order and content of semantic formulas used. Findings illustrated a tendency to employ direct refusals by both groups. Nevertheless, American female participants tended to be more thankful and warm, while American male participants were inclined to express reasons and alternatives. In the case of international students, the evident use of a more extensive variety of semantic formulas and the greater frequency of specific excuses as well constituted a major finding than the lack of reasons and alternatives usage. Finally, Moaveni concluded that "in American culture, the right and the independence of an individual are valued" which may be not the same in other cultures, hence, people "make up an excuse that is not true" so as "to save face" (p. 109).

Another study that has dealt with the speech act of refusal is Lingyun's (2015) *An Empirical Study on Pragmatic Transfer in Refusal Speech Act Produced by Chinese High School EFL Learners*. The participants were divided into three groups: Native Chinese

speakers (NC), Chinese English learners (CE) and native English speaker (NE). CE were classified into two subgroups, according to the proficiency level they were at the moment of the research: Senior 1 (CE1) and Senior 3 (CE3). The participants' written responses, gathered through a DCT, were compared to their performance to find out the differences of refusals made by each group and subgroup, the characteristics of CE's pragmatic transfer and the relation between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency as well. Results showed that 1) American speakers used more direct refusing strategies and positive feelings than Chinese speakers. 2) CE1 and CE3 resorted to pragmatic transfer regarding to semantic formulas frequency, being used more by CE1. 3) Excuse was the semantic formula that evidenced a huge content of pragmatic transfer. 4) The proficiency-transfer relation was negative. As conclusion, Lingyun stated that the negative correlation between the CE's L2 proficiency and the pragmatic transfer "did not testify Beebe et al.'s (1990) positive correlation hypothesis" but "it is not an absolutely right conclusion" since this particular aspect is "complex" and has been "controversial" for a long time (p. 109).

All in all, each of these research have contributed to the study of the performance of refusals by different cultures from specific perspectives, such as politeness, gender variation and pragmatic transfer by using particular data-collecting instruments. The present study focuses on the perspective of how pragmatic competence influences in the production of refusals of EFL learners, as it is extensively described on the following chapter.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter comprises the context in which the study took place, the participants' characteristics, the instrument and materials designed, the sampling technique employed, the treatment for the data collected, the instrument's pilot study, the procedures followed to gather the data and the design and data analysis applied is described.

3.1 Description of the research context

This study was developed at the Faculty of Languages, which is part of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP). This university has, currently, the Minerva model aiming to form students with a socio-cultural and humanistic constructivist perspective based on competencies.

At the faculty mentioned above, there are two existing BAs: English teaching (LEI) and French teaching (LEF) (by their acronyms in Spanish, respectively). Both aim to form professional and well-prepared language teachers. As a result, there are five language courses to teach students (whether English or French) a target language until they accomplish an advanced proficiency level. Those courses are named as "Target Language" followed by a Roman number regarding the level of the language being taught, namely Target Language I, II, III, IV and V. Evidently, levels I and II refer to a basic proficiency level of the language; III and IV for intermediate; and V is considered to be an advanced level.

Finally, the LEI major was selected as the community from which participants would be collected to conduct the present research paper.

This research followed a cross-sectional design. The investigation took participants from three different courses during the Fall 2016 period at LEI-BUAP. These three subgroups (from ME group) provided information about the phenomenon at the specific time, already mentioned. Therefore, participants were never trained or taught before or during the research as part of an intervention. In brief, the students who were part of this research are

clear examples of Mexican EFL learners' spontaneous responses when calling the speech act of refusals for each of the situations. Thus, the data analysis for the participants' answers required to analyze and find out why they used specific strategies to refuse in the TL, by transcribing the participants' answers' recordings. As it allows to identify the semantic structures, as well, it was easier to employ this data analysis method for this research paper.

3.2 Participants

As shown in Table 1, for this study, three groups for this study were gathered: 1) A group of 18 Mexican EFL learners (ME), 2) six native American-English (NE) speakers and 3) nine native Mexican-Spanish (NS) speakers.

The ME group is constituted by three subgroups: a) beginners, b) intermediate and c) advanced. These students were specifically taken from three Target Language courses during the Fall 2016 term: Target Language I (TL1), Target Language III (TL3) and Target Language V (TL5). In spite of one half of the participants taken in each course were male students and the other half female, and the age range went around 18 to 22 years old; both factors are not being taken into consideration for the present study.

NE and NS groups were regarded as control groups (CGs) so as to distinguish the differences or similarities MEs' responses could have in relation with those of the CGs'. NEs were asked to answer the same instrument MEs did, to find out how approximate/distant ME refusals were from NE's; while NSs responded to a version in Spanish of the same instrument so that it would be possible to identify any pragmatic transfer LEI-BUAP students made from L1 to L2.

Table 1. Number of participants

	Groups				
	LEI-BUAP/ME			NS	NE
	TL1	TL3	TL5		
Men	3	3	3	3	***
Women	2*	3	3	6	***
Total	5	6	6	9	6

Note. *= There were originally three female participants. Nevertheless, one of them was discarded because she was not able to comprehend and to produce ideas in L2. **= NEs wanted no personal information exposure, hence, their sex is unknown (for further information see 3.7.3 section.)

3.3 Instrument

Since the purpose of the research was to analyze and understand how EFL learners employ the speech act of refusal in spoken language for particular real-life situations, a Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET) instrument was used for the data collection. According to Schauer (2009) MET instruments serve to obtain spontaneous-oral responses, instead of written ones. He created this instrument for a study about the speech act of requests, while, for this research paper it was adapted in order to conduct a discourse analysis regarding refusing strategies in English. Other advantages are mentioned as follows based on Schauer's study:

- Focusing on elicited data allowed me, in contrast to observing naturally occurring speech, to predetermine the contextual conditions that I aimed to investigate.
- By using a computer-based instrument, the participants could be provided with a high amount of audiovisual information, which made it easier for them to imagine being in the situation.
- The MET allowed participants to virtually 'meet' a variety of different interlocutors, without putting them in a stressful situation of having to converse with a number of different native speaker actors in role-plays.
- Since the instrument is computer-based, it ensures a high degree of comparability, as the situations and the tone of voice of the speaker are the same for each participant. Data Collection Techniques.
- The MET allowed me to work independently, that is, without native speakers taking the part of actors in role plays, while still providing the participants with native speaker input.
- The fact that the MET allowed the repetition of the data elicitation procedure with exactly the same computerized contextual conditions of the scenarios made it an ideal choice for a developmental investigation. (pp. 68-69)

The instrument was adapted for the objectives of this particular research; it contains four different situations which were designed based on the two parameters used in the study of the speech act of refusals: **power (P)** and **distance (D)**. The combination of these two parameters equals to four possibilities: [-P-D], [-P+D], [+P-D] and [+P+D]. In the one hand, **power** refers to the social status a person has in comparison to someone else. As an

illustration, when you talk with your father there is a higher social status [+P] between both of you, as a consequence, socially appropriate language is required to be employed; differently from when you interact with a friend of yours [-P]. On the other hand, **distance** is about how distant [+D] or closed [-D] the interlocutors' relationship is. For example, friends share a close relationship which might lead to a more less-restricted language. One situation per combination was designed and used for this study as it is presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Classification of situations

Situation	Power	Distance
1	-	-
2	-	+
3	+	-
4	+	+

Additionally, two more situations were included which had the purpose of distracting the participant from using the same refusing strategy in each situation. Consequently, students were kept on the alert for the following situation. These two were named situation X, which elicited the participants to employ the speech act of apologizing; and situation Y, that made participants go with the speech act of inviting instead. The first one was placed after the situation 1 and the second one after the situation 3. In brief, the four situations included had the intention of making students refuse to different speech acts as it can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Refusals called as a result of other speech acts

SITUATION	SPEECH ACT
1	Request
4	
2	Invitation
3	Order

It is important to mention that there were two versions of the same administered instrument. The first one, already described, contained the situations' description's audios in English, while the second version in Spanish. The latter was utilized to gather the responses of the NS group.

Finally, the audios for the instrument were recorded at the Faculty of Languages BUAP, with the help of a native American-English speaker professor's voice who is at the same

faculty. He was asked to read the situations (see Appendix 1) by using a neutral and clear tone of voice. Likewise, I read and recorded the situations for the Spanish version (see Appendix 2).

3.4 Materials

For the instrument's administration, it was necessary to use a computer in which it could be possible to run the instrument (created on PowerPoint). Moreover, as the instrument contained audible information, headphones were necessary so that the external sound would not interfere and the participants could listen to the audios with no difficulties. Finally, to collect data a cellphone was used to record the participants' answers.



Ilustración 1: Slide of situation 2

3.5 Sample

According to the conditions of the Fall 2016 period and the research purpose, participants were chosen by the convenience sampling method. Participants had to meet one requirement: to be studying in one of the three subjects taken for this investigation at the moment (Target Language I, III or V). Each class corresponds to a different English proficiency level. Target Language I is the basic level, III is the intermediate and V is the advanced and last course designed to learn, reinforce and practice the foreign language (English).

It is necessary to mention that the LEI-BUAP program allows students from any age to enter. Furthermore, each student can schedule what classes he/she will be taking in every scholar period. This permits students to accomplish the bachelor in their own pace within a maximum of six-year length. As a result, students from different generations (e.g. 2010, 2011, and so on) can be found taking a course together. For this reason, the participants' age and entering generation were not included as a quality for the sampling method. In conclusion, the use of this sampling method and the qualitative method itself do not have the aim to generalize conclusions. The main purpose is to understand the nature of the phenomenon and, based on the conclusions, possibly use the information to make improvements in the LEI-BUAP program as much as to give rise to future research on the topic.

3.6 Pilot study

The first design of the instrument was administered to the Morphology and Syntax course's students in the Fall 2016 period. The whole group participated as part of the instrument's piloting. The class was instructed to answer what they would say to each of the four situations included in the instrument, as if they were facing the situation after they hear the situational description. It is important to state that participants were told that they had to refuse to all the situations. After the instructions were mentioned, students were asked to raise any questions regarding what was said or if they had any doubt about it. One student asked if they were supposed to give an opinion based on their experiences or on what they would say, hypothetically. Hence, the instructions were explained once again, clearer, with an example of a situation, which was not included in the instrument. Students recorded their answers with their own cell phones, so they could send them by e-mail for future analysis.

In the end, students gave their opinions about the instrument. They came out with some doubts about the words used in the instrument, such as the use of the verb "borrow" and "lend" that were not employed appropriately and some others about the instrument's format.

After the analysis of the participants' answers, it was noticeable that most of the students repeated one or two types of structures in order to refuse each of the situations. Evidently, this was good because they could understand almost all the situations. However, it was something bad, as well. That is to say, the answers were, in some way, conditioned to be constructed using constantly certain words and expressions. This could mean that students weren't exactly paying attention to the situational context but providing just what they were expected to say since the beginning: to refuse.

In brief, it was decided that some elements of the instrument were removed to avoid misunderstandings and possible conditions to restrict answers to few types of structures and expressions, like the situations' titles shown previously to the slides with the oral and visual description; as the purpose of the instrument is to allow participants to freely respond according to their pragmatic competence in the English language. In addition, two more situations were added and placed strategically in the instrument. The first one, it was placed after the situation number one and the second one after the third. Nevertheless, they were not taken into account in the research. That is why they were labeled as situations (X) and (Y), respectively. These had the intention of making students to call a different speech act (apology and request), instead, which were just distracter items. Also, the time to respond each situation (2 minutes) was deleted so students could pass to the next slide as soon as they gave an answer. To conclude, grammatical mistakes were corrected so that the instrument was ready to be finally administered to the actual groups considered for this research paper.

3.7 Procedures

In this section, it is explained the procedures followed to gather the data through the administration of a MET instrument in each of the groups previously indicated. The first group, the LEI-BUAP students who are non-native speakers (NNSs) of English (ME), the second group is the native speakers (NSs) of English (NE) and the third group is the NSs of Spanish (NS).

3.7.1 *ME*

Data from the ME group was collected at the Faculty of Languages BUAP. Where I used to go Tuesdays and Thursdays in the morning. First at all, I checked if there was any class, of the courses considered for the study, available at the moment. Once I noticed there was one, I asked the teacher in charge to talk for a minute to explain what I was looking for and to ask for permission so I could talk to the class. Then, after the permission was authorized, I explained students generally that I needed six participants from that level. Three women and three men. I commented them how the instrument worked in order to let them know their voices would be recorded, too. The students who were willing to help were appointed for a specific date so that the instrument would be administered.

Unfortunately, it was not always possible to talk with students during a class. So, I had to look for participants that were in their free time. I approached students at the Faculty of Languages and asked them if they were LEI students and if they were taking whether Target Language I, III or V. If they confirmed I explain what I was asking and invited them to participate in the study. When I was seeking for students, I carried on the material needed and started administering the instrument.

Participants were seated in front of the computer and told about what the instrument consisted of without mentioning that they were expected to refuse to the situations. Their responses had to be actual reactions about the situation. No opinions or speculations about it. First, they wore the headphones and had to stare at an illustration for a few seconds before the audio about what was happening in the situation began. Implicitly, the social status and distance between the interlocutors were described. At the end of the situation's description, it was said "You refuse saying" or "You say". The latter was used only for the two situations that were not taken as part of the research and which recalled distinct speech acts. Then, the participants had to answer immediately to the situation. Afterward, they continue to the next situation until the last one. If by any chance the participants could not understand the situation or were not able to respond, it was not possible to repeat the situation. Finally, I thanked them for participating.

3.7.2 *NS*

The procedure to obtain the data from NMS group was similar to the one done for the piloting. The instrument was administered during the Spring 2017 term with the permission of a teacher to take her students from the Academic Writing class to collect the data. An explanation of what the instrument was and how it worked, as it was done with the other groups, was told. As the classroom is equipped with a computer, speakers and a TV screen, it was not required to carry out extra equipment. Particularly, in this case, students had to use their own cellphones to record their answers and were requested to send them by e-mail to an account for future analysis. Evidently, due to the simultaneous answering of the situations by NMS group, some recordings were too noisy to understand and transcribe the information.

3.7.3 *NE*

In the case of the native English speakers that collaborated as participants were really complicated to reach. First at all, there were several attempts to get them on some social media and virtual forums in which there were posted requests and invitations so that they were interested in contact me and get involved in the research paper. Unfortunately, any participant was ever reached with these means. Therefore, another strategy to collect the NE data was implemented. With the help of a professor from another university, the NE participants were gathered in the Summer 2017 period. As it was not possible for me to administer the instrument myself, due to the university policies, the professor did it himself. Thus, the instrument's English version was administered to them following the same procedure as with the ME group. In the end, data was transcribed and analyzed to find out any resemblance with the ME responses.

The participants' answers were recorded using a cellphone. Then, each participant's (A1, A2, A3...) responses were transcribed into Excel tables made for each of the situations used (S1, S1, S3 and S4), by group/subgroup (TL1, TL3, TL5, NEs and NSs) as it follows on Figure 1 (Note that all semantic formulas are not shown). Finally, the information was analyzed as it is described in the Data Analysis section (see chapter IV).

	Answer	Direct							Indirect						
		Performative	Non-performative		Statement of regret	Excuse, reason, explanation	Alternative	Promise of future acceptance	Statement of preference	Statement of principle	Attempts to dissuade interlocutor				Acceptance that functions as a refuse
			No	Negative willingness							Statement of negative feelings or opinions	Criticism	Let interlocutor off the hook	Self-defense	Unspecific or indefinite reply
S1	A1														
	A2														
	A3														
	A4														
	A5														
	A6														
	TOTAL														
S2	A1														
	A2														
	A3														
	A4														
	A5														
	A6														
	TOTAL														
S3	A1														
	A2														
	A3														
	A4														
	A5														
	A6														
	TOTAL														
S4	A1														
	A2														
	A3														
	A4														
	A5														
	A6														
	TOTAL														

Illustration 2: Example of Excel table for data analysis

Each participants' answers were recorded on one single tape. Therefore, there were thirty-three recordings which were transcribed and analyzed. On average, recordings last around four to five minutes. Furthermore, it was necessary to use headphones, as well, to listen clearly what the students had said as answers. Nevertheless, in some cases, it was impossible to identify certain words used because participants were timid during the administration so they did not use a proper volume of voice to answer.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data collected from the three groups (ME, NE and NS) was analyzed on the basis of oral discourse analysis following the semantic formulas of refusals by Lingyun (2015) which were adapted from Beebe et al's taxonomy (1990). Cohen (1996) refers a semantic formula to "a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy; any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question" (cited in Lingyun, 2015, p. 101). The classification of refusing strategies can be found in Appendix 3. As an example, here is a refusal for a request: "Sorry but I have some debts to pay to". Using the semantic

formula coding this sentence would be coded as [Statement of agreement] + [excuse, reason or explanation].

All responses were coded into semantic formulas by the researcher and a colleague to avoid any bias in the data analysis process. The frequency in which each of the semantic formulas were used in each situation by each participant was counted (e.g. the number of gratitude used). Subsequently, it was possible to obtain percentages related to these frequencies, as it is shown in Chapter IV. Those percentages were calculated through the following formula, based on Lingyun (2015, p. 101):

$$\frac{\text{The number of participants who use one specific strategy in one situation}}{\text{The number of participants in each group}} * 100\%$$

For example, in situation 1, three participants in TL1 group used an excuse, reason or explanation. The number of participants in TL1 was 5. Hence, the frequency of excuse, reason or explanation employed by TL1 group was “ $3/5 * 100 = 60\%$ ”.

Some responses did not call the speech act of refusal. Those cases had to be taken as “failures” because it was not possible to measure them using the same semantic formulas. These kinds of answers must have happened to the low level of the participants’ L2 proficiency development causing contextual misunderstanding, unknown vocabulary or nervousness.

In the same fashion, there were some cases in which participants opted to not give any answer. According to Rose and Ono (1995) and Rose (2000), “opting out carries two potential meanings: 1) intentional non-performance due to the relevant contextual factors, and 2) inability to carry out an act because of either limited proficiency in a language or limited familiarity with the situation” (cited in Flores Salgado, 2011, p. 54). Unfortunately, in this research paper, any separate instrument to identify the specific reasons why the participants had to resort to this type of answers was administered. These particular responses were counted as well to compare how frequently MEs used them.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the LEI-BUAP students' performance of refusals is analyzed and compared with the NEs' and NSs' based on 1) the frequency of semantic formulas, 2) the syntactic structure and 3) the number of words (length of responses) used to respond. Moreover, it is discussed if there was any pragmatic transfer in the MEs' responses and what relation exists between L2 proficiency and the refusing strategies chosen. All data is shown in Tables 4-8.

4.1 Frequency of semantic formulas and syntactic structure

The analysis of how frequent participants from each group/subgroup used specific semantic formulas is carried out per situation (Tables 4-7). In addition, examples are appended to this section as to observe the syntactic structure utilized by participants. These are examined, as well, in order to illustrate and compare any improvement on grammar complexity through the three Target Language (TL) courses. The participant (e.g. p1, p2...) who uttered the example shown and from which group (NS, ME or NE) or subgroup (TL1, TL3 or TL5) he/she belongs to is indicated.

4.1.1 Refusal to a request from a friend (-P, -D)

Situation 1 elicited participants to refuse a request made by a friend of theirs, which in this case sets the participant to utter a response according to an equal power and distance relationship between both interaction's parties. Results from situation 1 are pointed out in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 1

Semantic formulas		Frequency of semantic formulas				
		NS (N=9)	LEI-BUAP/ ME			NE (N=6)
			TL1 (N=5)	TL3 (N=6)	TL5 (N=6)	
Direct	No	33.3%	-	-	-	-
	Negative willingness	55.5%	-	16.6%	33.3%	33.3%
Indirect	Regret	77.7%	40%	50%	33.3%	66.6%
	Excuse/reason	44.4%	60%	66.6%	66.6%	83.3%
	Alternative	-	20%	-	16.6%	-
	Future acceptance	11.1%	-	-	16.6%	16.6%
	Negative feeling/opinion	11.1%	-	-	16.6%	33.3%

	Criticism	-	-	-	-	16.6%
	Self-defense	-	-	-	-	16.6%
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion	-	-	-	-	16.6%
	Pause fillers	22.2%	80%	50%	66.6%	16.6%
	Address forms	-	-	-	-	16.6%
	Failure	-	20%	33.3%	16.6%	-

4.1.1.1 Direct No

Illocutions containing the word “No” are considered to be direct refusals since the speaker’s intention to refuse a previous utterance is set clearly and immediately. As can be seen in Table 4, none of the ME subgroups (0%) nor NEs (0%) employed this direct semantic formula but NSs (33.3%), which reveals no pragmatic transfer at all. An example of this case is shown below (keyword is highlighted in bold):

- (1) **No**, ¿sabes qué? ya te presté demasiado. La verdad es que siempre te he ayudado. Así que discúlpame en ésta.
No, you know what? I’ve lent you a lot already. The truth is that I have always helped you. So, excuse me this time. (NSp3)

As example (1) demonstrates, the NS participant made use of the word “No” right away to let the opposing party clear that he/she is refusing the request. Moreover, this participant used a statement of negative feeling/opinion which in the Mexican culture threatens the hearer’s face because it is kind of rude.

4.1.1.2 Negative willingness

Then, participants who displayed grammatical constructions like *I can’t*, *I don’t want to*, and *I won’t*; performed a negative willingness so as to refuse in a smoother way than if they had said merely “No”. NSs (55.5%) used more the “negative willingness” semantic formula than NEs (33.3%). Nonetheless, it is noticeable that the advanced participants’ performance of this semantic formula (33.3%) as well as the NE’s is the same; meanwhile, the intermediate learners’ (16.6%) is more approximate to NEs since basic-level participants (0.0%) did not employ it whatsoever. Examples of this case are presented:

- (2) No, no puedo.
No, I can't. (NSp9)
- (3) Uh... sorry I can't borrow because I'm saving... and it is important that... I
have to save... a lot. (TL3p2)
- (4) Oh well, actually I need to buy some stuff... I... I can't lend you some
money. Sorry. (TL5p6)
- (5) I am sorry, but I cannot lend you money. I need to save it. (NEp2)

Comparatively, intermediate participant's utterance entails several pauses which gave the speaker time to think and prepare, by selecting the appropriate words, what he/she wanted to say and how to say it (being redundant in the outcome); which is not the same case of the advanced participant, who constructed more fluently the desired statement but still displaying some hesitation.

In the examples above, intermediate (21) and advanced students (18) employed more words to build their ideas. In contrast, this did not happen with the NS' participant (3), who employed the least amount of words; and the NE', who needed 15 words. For this reason, examples (3) and (4) are compelling evidence of the language acquisition stage these participants are going through. Grammatically speaking, they did not rely too much on L1 to structure their utterances nor L2. These participants tried to be as explicative as they could. However, the more they talked the less accurate and fluent they were due to overthinking what to say and how to say it in the target language when native groups were concise with their responses. A phenomenon called verbosity, which is "the feature of proving more information than is necessary by elaborating lengthy explanations" (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010: 243). Additionally, all responses above (2-4) contain the contracted-negative form of the modal verb *can* but example (5); the NE's participant used the form *cannot* to be more emphatic, instead.

Another finding is that there is an increase in the frequency of this semantic formula in the ME subgroups from TL1 to TL5 which reaches the percentage of the English native's.

4.1.1.3 Regret

Indirect refusals consist of utterances in which the intention of non-acceptance is implicitly stated by specific semantic formulas, as it is when employing regrets. NSs (77.7%) was the group with the highest regret usage, being basic learners (40%) the lowest. NE (66.6%) used slightly less frequently regrets in their utterances than the NS. As it can be seen, intermediate level students (50%) proved an increase in the regrets performance as the basic students (40%) did it less frequent. Despite this, advanced participants' (33.3%) frequency of regrets backed down unexpectedly, which it got further than the NE's. The following examples correspond to this type of semantic formula (keyword/phrases are underlined):

- (6) Eh, no tengo dinero. Disculpa, esta semana no he ahorrado.
Uh, I don't have money. Sorry, this week I haven't saved any. (NSp1)
- (7) Uh... sorry I need **to** money... for... the weekend. (TL1p2)
- (8) Sorry but I have some debts to pay **to**. (TL3p1)
- (9) Uh... actually, I don't have a lot of... a lot of money and I have to save for *my weekend* and sorry but I can't let you take **that**. (TL5p5)
- (10) I'm really sorry, but I need money for this weekend. Maybe another time.
(NEp6)

Paying close attention to how participants in each ME subgroup built their utterances (in the examples above), it is evident the increasing grammatical complexity construction developed throughout the Target Language courses. Unfortunately, there are still problems when using prepositions or demonstratives (in bold) in L2 production. Meanwhile, the advanced student translated an expression used in Spanish (in italics) which makes reference to the money needed for basic necessities or money usually spent throughout a regular week. This evidences pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2.

4.1.1.4 Excuse/reason

Excuse, reason or explanation was the most frequent semantic formula used. NEs (83.3%) were the highest and NSs (44.4%) the lowest. Intermediate (66.6%) and advanced students (66.6%) displayed a more native-like frequency of this semantic formula but basic learners (60%), due to the approximation to NSs'. At first glance, it could be said that basic level participants rely on L1 to convey the desired meaning in L2. The following examples serve as to clarify this:

- (11) Lo siento mucho, pero tengo un compromiso. (NSp7)
I'm sorry but I have an engagement.
- (12) Uh... I'm sorry but, I'm saving money because... in... on the weekend I'll go out. (TL1p5)
- (13) Oh! I'm sorry I don't have money because...uh... I bought a... yesterday I bought a book and I actually I have money. (TL3p5)
- (14) I don't have any more money right now and honestly you don't give me the money I borrow you. (TL5p2)
- (15) Sorry dude, no can do. I need to save money for the weekend. (NEp5)

As has been noted, examples (11), (12) and (13) started with an apology followed by the conjunctions *but* or *because* in order to provide a reason why they were refusing, whereas participant on example (14) did not employ them whatsoever. She preferred initiating with an explanation straight away accompanied by a statement of negative feeling/opinion. Then, how a native English speaker constructed a refusal for scenario 1 is instanced on example (15). He (as the expression *dude* is commonly used among men) employed a more semantically varied response entailing an apology, an address form, a negative willingness and an explanation (in this order). The NE's participant was entirely fluent about his idea, as in the case of the NS's. Meanwhile, non-native English speakers used more than once the reason/excuse semantic formula. In the end, this caused them more difficulties to deliver a fluent and non-redundant idea or not to be verbose; which is pretty obvious with the repetitive use of words, the re-structure of the utterance and the constant pauses and mumbling during speaking.

4.1.1.5 *Pause fillers*

Participants who used exclamations (e.g. uh, oh and well) evidence hesitation that can be interpreted as the time taken so as to think, select and/or construct an intended expression or piece of information. In using pause fillers, NEs (16.6%) used them less, being a little bit below NSs' (22.2%) frequency on this semantic formula. Interestingly, ME subgroups resorted more on it; where basic learners (80%) did more frequently (4 participants out of 5) than intermediate (50%) and advanced students (66.6%). In comparison with the rest, intermediate participants backed down surprisingly indicating some inconsistencies in the language acquisition development of MEs. For a deeper analysis, examples are presented as follows:

- (16) Am... no gracias, pero no tengo dinero en este momento.
Uh... no thanks but I don't have money in this moment. (NSp5)
- (17) Uh... I give you a half of a money because I need the other part... for me.
(TL1p4)
- (18) Uh... I'm going to travel to my hometown and... I need the money. (TL3p4)
- (19) Uh... actually I don't have a lot of... a lot of money and I have to save for my weekend and sorry but I can't let you take that. (TL5p5)
- (20) Well, you already owe me \$200... Do you have any idea when you can get that to me? (NEp4)

All examples above embody a tendency to use in the first place a pause filler. Firstly, example (16) has a direct “no” along a gratitude (in the Mexican culture it is pretty common to thank even though there is not any offering or invitation) finishing with an excuse. Secondly, example (17) contains an alternative followed by a reason. In a grammatical focus, it is possible to observe the mistake committed (underlined) that highlights the difficulty to apply appropriate or correct grammar (participant should have used a modal verb or future instead). Thirdly, example (18) used just one pause filler. He rather uttered two reasons/explanations without any different previous semantic formula functioning perfectly well as a refusal. Equally, advanced (example 19) used once a pause

filler. Nonetheless, he hesitated more when building his answer and tried to justify himself of not being capable of lending money (verbose). Finally, and going in a different direction, example (20) illustrates a completely different manner of refusing which is constituted, at first, by a pause filler along a self-defense and a statement of negative feeling.

4.1.1.6 *Failure*

Responses that did not call the speech act of refusal fell into the failure category since it is not possible to study any other speech act with the semantic formula analysis selected for this research but refusals.

As it can be seen in Table 1, NSs and NEs did not face problems to perform the expected speech act. Advanced students (16.6%) employed the less frequently and intermediate learners (33.3%) the most, being basic students (20%) between these two. This demonstrates a developmental pattern. Examples of this type of answers are presented below:

- (21) Can you pay me, please?... I need the money for this weekend. (TL1p6)
- (22) Oh! Can you... give me some money, please? I... I need it for the weekend, and... Ah... I will pay you, I will pay you soon. (TL3p3)
- (23) Well...I...I...uh... I need money because... need to buy something so... hum... I'll... uh... spend... uh... less... in the weekend. (TL5p1)

These examples point out the incompetency to comprehend the context description so as to give a coherent and appropriate response. Example (21) and (22) are question forms that possibly clarifies the misunderstanding which participants understood or believed they were supposed to ask for money instead of being asked for, whereas example (23) is not a question but functions as a request due to the same situation explain before. In addition, the last examples reflect lots of pauses, hesitation and redundancy which exhibits the participants' incapability to comprehend the scenario resulting in nonsense.

Altogether, MEs had a tendency to explain too much to the interlocutor why they were refusing to the request by giving several reasons even though both interactional parties had an equal social status, whereas NSs and NEs did not. In general, NSs and NEs were more direct when refusing and sometimes used slightly rude or more-likely-threatening-face responses.

4.1.2 Refusal to an invitation from a classmate (-P, +D)

Scenario 2 which required participants refusing to an invitation from a classmate to whom they do not get along. This situation set participants in an equal power relation (-P) but with a non-closed relationship (+D). The semantic formulas' frequency is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 2

Semantic formulas		Frequency of semantic formulas				
		NS (N=9)	LEI-BUAP/ ME			NE (N=6)
	TL1 (N=5)		TL3 (N=6)	TL5 (N=6)		
Direct	No	-	-	16.6%	-	33.3%
	Negative willingness	33.3%	20%	33.3%	66.6%	33.3%
Indirect	Regret	33.3%	80%	16.6%	33.3%	16.6%
	Excuse/reason	44.4%	100%	83.3%	66.6%	83.3%
	Alternative	-	-	16.6%	-	-
	Future acceptance	-	-	-	-	16.6%
	Criticism	-	-	-	-	16.6%
	Indefinite reply	33.3%	-	-	-	16.6%
	Hedging	22.2%	-	-	-	-
	Off the hook	-	-	16.6%	-	-
	Negative feeling/opinion	-	-	-	-	16.6%
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion	22.2%	-	16.6%	33.3%	33.3%
	Gratitude	22.2%	-	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%
	Pause fillers	33.3%	60%	50%	83.3%	-
	Address forms	11.1%	-	16.6%	16.6%	-
Failure	11.1%	-	16.6%	-	-	

4.1.2.1 Regret

Basic learners of English (80%) used more frequently regrets than advanced participants (33.3%); who employed them in the same frequency as NSs (33.3%); and intermediate level participants (16.6%), who resembled more to NEs (16.6%). Once again, when seeing Table 5, advanced learners seemed to rely more on their mother tongue (hence, their L1

pragmatic knowledge) to convey meaning in L2 something that is justifiable in TL1s due to their low L2 proficiency level along with their L2 pragmatic knowledge of itself. To be sure about what happened with the advance target language level, examples below demonstrate if there was any backing down (underlined words point out mistranslated expression/grammatical errors in L2):

- (24) Discúlrame, es que la verdad ya tengo otros planes. La verdad lamento mucho espero que te la pases muy bien.
Excuse me, the truth is I have already plans. Honestly, I'm really sorry but I hope you have a good time. (NSp3)
- (25) Uh... Sorry but this day I need go... to the... to the school and if... I will get out too late. (TL1p1)
- (26) Uh, it's fine but I, I can't go... I have something more to do. Sorry. (TL3p2)
- (27) Uh... this... I am busy... uh... I'm sorry. (TL5p3)
- (28) I am sorry. I cannot come to your party because I already have plans that day. (NEp2)

In example (25), the basic participant used a regret in the beginning following twice explanations facing some problems to put his idea across when building his answer (he thought much of the correct grammar).

Although intermediate and advanced participants still had difficulties deciding what to say and how to say it (having more hesitation in the response of the advanced), their answer was more concise and shorter. Differently to the basic level participant, they opted to employ a regret in the end of their answer, whereas CGs' participants did as the basic. Noticeable, advanced participant's response is considered to be the rudest of all the examples above because he did not say anything else to avoid threatening the hearer's *face*.

4.1.2.2 Excuse/reason

Intermediate students (83.3%) had the same excuse frequency than NEs (83.3%). Basic (100%) and advanced (66.6%) were more approximate to the English natives' too. In order

to know why TL3s had a more native-like performance, examples are included and explained below:

- (29) ¡Ay! disculpa, es que tengo mucha tarea y entonces ahorita no podría yo ir.
Pero te deseo lo mejor. Perdón.
Oh! excuse me, I have a lot of homework, hence, I couldn't go right now.
But I wish you the best. Sorry. (NSp2)
- (30) Uh... sorry I have other things to do. (TL1p4)
- (31) Oh! **I can't**... I have to go with my grandma and **I can't**. (TL3p6)
- (32) Uh... thank you for *invi...* *invist...* for consider me but I can't to... I can't to go to your party, maybe in this occasion... I can't... I can't go. (TL5p4)
- (33) I have dinner with my grandmother, so I may not have time. If I get out early I'll come. (NEp1)

As it can be noticed, there is a gradual improvement from example (30) to (31). Basic participant was the most direct when refusing the invitation (threatening more the hearer's *face*). Then, intermediate participant employed more words but was repetitive at the same time (see words in bold) when trying to be less rude. In spite of this, she resembled a little bit more to the NE participant's answer than the others MEs due to the absence of a regret and a statement of positive feeling, which were utilized by the native Spanish speakers. Finally, the most interesting answer for situation 2 was the advanced learner's. In example (32), the speaker constantly faced problems to put his response across. She not only repeated several times the same grammar structure (underlined) but also could not pronounce a word (in italics) so she used another one committing a grammatical mistake (considering instead of consider). The advanced participant's response points out an inconsistency in the students' acquisition language process; since she was an advanced-English-language-level sample, she was the could not respond according to her level but her fellows from lower ones.

4.1.2.3 *Address form*

Sometimes, speakers use vocatives (such as names or nicknames) to delimit some kind of rapport with an interlocutor to close the *distance* between the both of them and narrow down the possibilities of offending a hearer.

There was pragmatic transfer in the intermediate (16.6%) and advanced students (16.6%) responses since they used a kind of address form similarly to NSs (11.1%). In contrast, basic students (0%) performed no address forms as NEs (0%) did. Thus, examples below provide more compelling evidence whether there was, in fact, pragmatic transfer or not:

(34) Eh, gracias viejo por la invitación. Eh, voy a checar. No sé si pueda ir. No te aseguro nada, pero gracias por la invitación.

Uh, thanks dude for the invitation. Uh, I will see. I do not know if I can. I do not assure you anything, but thanks for the invitation. (NSp1)

(35) No man, I... I have other things to do... and... see you next weekend.
(TL3p4)

(36) Oh well, I'm kinda busy I have a lot of homework to do. Sorry, man.
(TL5p6)

Examples (35) and (36) comprise an address form in the final part of the sentence, whereas in example (34) it is in the beginning. Apart from that, the NS participant rather produced a more semantic-varied utterance while ME participants expressed a few; and more than once (example 36).

4.1.2.4 *Failure*

Scenario 2 was not the exception to call another speech act rather than a refusal or to be as linguistically incapable as to get an intended meaning across and/or construct an idea to refuse to the request stated in this real-life situation.

As a matter of fact, intermediate students (16.6%) were not the only ones who unfortunately committed a failure when answering but NSs (11.1%) also did. In the event

that the exact reason why this circumstance might have happened are unknown because any other instrument for measuring this was administered at the time, as it was mentioned before (see 3.8). Two examples are included as follows for better understanding:

(37) Pues bueno, está bien. ¿por qué no? Vamos un rato a divertirnos. Llevo las chelas.

Well, it's ok. Why not? Let's have fun for a while. I'm bringing the beers.

(NSp7)

(38) Thanks, **but...** **However,** *I wanna* go to your party. (TL3p1)

It is important to realize than example (38) instances a mistake when refusing. Considering the previous words utilized (in bold), it can be said that the participant forgot to include the negative form of the auxiliary verb “do” (*don't*) between the pronoun I and the verb “want” (in italics).

Notwithstanding the narrator said *you refuse by saying* after the context's description of each scenario, the intermediate participant (example 37) preferred to simply accept the invitation manifesting an evident problem to perform what would be a correct action: to refuse.

4.1.3 Refusal to an order from your mother (+P, -D)

Situation 3 elicited participants to refuse an order made by their “mother” since the context provided conditioned their answers to not follow what they were told to do so. The results of the specific semantic formulas frequency are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 3

Semantic formulas		Frequency of semantic formulas				
		NS (N=9)	LEI-BUAP/ ME			NE (N=6)
	TL1 (N=5)		TL3 (N=6)	TL5 (N=6)		
Direct	No	11.1%	-	-	-	-
	Negative willingness	33.3%	60%	16.6%	66.6%	66.6%

Indirect	Regret	55.5%	-	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
	Excuse/reason	77.7%	60%	83.3%	100%	83.3%
	Alternative	22.2%	-	16.6%	-	50%
	Preference	-	20%	-	-	-
	Principle	22.2%	-	-	50%	16.6%
	Self-defense	-	-	-	16.6%	-
	Hedging	11.1%	-	-	-	-
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion	22.2%	-	33.3%	-	16.6%
	Pause fillers	22.2%	80%	83.3%	83.3%	-
	Address forms	44.4%	60%	33.3%	50%	50%
Opt out	-	20%	-	-	-	

4.1.3.1 Negative willingness

Advanced learners (66.6%) were the most approximate to NEs (66.6%), whereas basic students (60%) used more frequently negative willingness than intermediate learners (16.6%); being this last one closer to NSs (33.3%).

The next examples serve as to identify why intermediate used the least frequently negative willingness strategy to refuse to scenario 3 (keywords are in bold).

- (39) Lo siento mamá, pero no puedo. Discúlpame con Dani, igual me gustaría estar ahí, pero hay cosas más importantes que una festejación... digo una boda. Tengo que pasar estos exámenes.
I'm sorry, mom. But I can't. Excuse me with Dany, I would like to be there but there are more important things than a celebration... I mean, a wedding. I have to succeed in these exams. (NSp5)
- (40) Uh, mom I have an exam the next day. I **won't** go to the wedding, because I need to study. (TL1p5)
- (41) Oh mom... hum... tomorrow I have a... exam... and I can't so I have to study. (TL3p6)
- (42) Oh well, I can't go, mom. I have a lot to... I have to [?] these nights... I have two exam. I don't want to go either. (TL5p6)
- (43) Mom, I will send my cousin a wedding gift, but I **cannot** go to the wedding because I need to study. (NEp2)

In examples (41) and (42), participants built their unwilling strategy based on the auxiliary verb “can”, rather than using other forms to express negative willingness like in example (40); in which the basic participant used “won’t”, instead.

Another finding is that the basic participant was more fluent and concise than the intermediate and the advanced, although the language proficiency level she belonged to was the lowest. Again, non-native English speakers revealed the problems they face to produce L2 language forms and functions. They repeated words and/or refusing strategies, paused to organize their ideas and had mispronouncing difficulties (see “?” in example 42; a word was undistinguishable).

4.1.3.2 *Excuse/reason*

On the condition that intermediate (83.3%) and advanced students (100%) performed excuses likewise NEs (83.3%) did, meanwhile basic learners (60%) did more closely to NSs (77.7%); another key point is to prove if the non-native intermediate and advanced English speakers used language forms and functions as the native English did.

The following examples demonstrate the grammatical complexity improvement by ME participants in scenario 3 at different language proficiency levels. Markedly, advanced learners produced more complex language forms than the rest of the ME subgroups.

- (44) ¡Ay mamá!... Disculpa, pero es que tengo muchos exámenes y yo quiero echarle muchas ganas y salir lo mejor posible. Tendré que estudiar.
Oh mom!... I’m sorry but I have many exams coming and I want to do my best and get as much as possible. (NSp2)
- (45) Uh... mom I can't I have to study for my... exam.. of tomorrow... tomorrow. (TL1p4)
- (46) Uh, sorry mom I **haven't** time to go for wedding. I have to study hard to pass my exam. (TL3p2)

- (47) Mom, I'm sorry I can't assist to the wedding *but you know I have my exams* and they're really important for me so I have to stay and study. (TL5p2)
- (48) Sorry mom, I know this is important to you, but my grades are more important to me right now. I will make sure and give a gift and send my love since I cannot be there. (NEp3)

Example (45) displays a simple but effective language form to refuse to the situation. This participant was unwilling to explain him/herself too much as he only used the modal verb “can” in its negative form and provided one reason to get off the hook. In a similar way, example (46) follows the same avoidance tendency to explain why the refusal is. This form was more fluent (there were not as many pauses as with the previous example) but the grammar is mistaken due to the wrong use of the negative form of the auxiliary verb “have” (in bold) when it should have been used “do”, instead. Conversely, the advanced learner formulated a more descriptive response to make the hearer reason why to refuse, by employing self-defense (in italics) and a statement of principle (underlined), as it was done by the NE’s participant in example (47). All examples contain at least one regret and one addressee form.

Finally, advanced learner’s example resembled more to the NE’s which leads to presume that advanced students use language forms more similarly than their fellows from previous levels.

4.1.3.3 *Alternative*

An alternative is a refusing strategy to soften an illocution and to protect oneself’s *face* and avoid threatening a hearer’s. To put simpler, a speaker going in a different direction to what he/she is expected to act implicitly refuses to it without getting on the hook.

None of the ME subgroups used alternatives but intermediate students (16.6%). They performed a few alternatives as NSs (22.2%) did, while NEs (50%) did much more frequent. Consequently, there was pragmatic transfer. To demonstrate this, the following three examples provide more compelling evidence.

- (49) Mamá, tengo que estudiar. Lo lamento. O si no, pues puedo ir un ratito y me regreso temprano porque tengo que estudiar.
- (50) Mom, I need to study. I'm sorry. Otherwise, I can go for a while and come back early because I have to study. (NSp3)
- (51) Ok, uh.. uh... **I will go to the wedding just... a few time** and then... I... I will... study for my exam. (TL3p3)
- (52) **I will send a card and gift**, but I can't afford to miss time to study. (NEp1)

As a matter of fact, the intermediate participant in example (51) partially refused/accepted to the order as he gave the alternative of going for a while (in bold), a similar pattern in example (50); notwithstanding that situation 3 required participants to refuse. Indeed, there is a clear pragmatic transfer evidence that indicated the tendency of non-refusal to this type of scenarios by Mexican-Spanish culture (probably because the order has a +P-D relationship, which in this case, comes from their “mother”), whereas NEs did perform another form of alternative. In example (52), NE participant built an apology and/or gratitude for being invited (in bold) but expressed unwillingness to go after all.

4.1.3.4 *Pause fillers*

As noted in Table 6, MEs utilized the most frequent pause fillers, where intermediate (83.3%) and advanced students (83.3%) employed them more than basic students (80%); followed by NSs (22.2%) and NEs (0%), who did not whatsoever. As an illustration, five examples are given as follows.

- (53) Mmm, hijole ma.... es que tengo que estudiar. Tengo que pasar el examen. Entonces, déjame checar, pero lo más seguro es que no pueda ir.
- (54) Uh, oh mom... I have to study. I have to pass this exam. Then, let me check but I don't assure you that I can go. (NSp1)
- (55) Uh... mom I can't I have a... test and I need to [?] this exam. (TL1p6)
- (56) Oh...hum... My, my exam is... is for... the next week... and... I want to go with... with you... at the wedding. (TL3p5)

(57) Uh... ah... mom I must do... do an exam this... the next day so I... I am not available... available to go. (TL5p3)

All of the examples above have at least one pause filler in the end of the response. This, as in situation 1 and 2, illustrate the problem MEs faced to refuse to each of the situations. Evidently, they use pause fillers, as well as pauses, to take their time to know exactly what they want to say, to organize the idea and to select the most appropriate language forms depending on what their intention is. Different from MEs and NSs, NEs knew what they wanted to convey without hesitation.

4.1.3.5 *Opt out*

When participants were not able to understand the contextual information of the situation, the chances to use appropriate and effective language forms and functions according to it are unlikely. As a consequence, participants prefer to opt out so as not to produce a non-sense utterance (which would lead to a failure, instead). In other words, they skipped the scenario.

As it can be seen in Table 6, the basic English level group (20%) was the only one that resorted to this strategy, probably to the low English language proficiency developed at this stage.

4.1.4 *Refusal to a request from strangers (+P, +D)*

In Scenario 4, the speech act of refusal was called when participants were requested to answer a quiz by two strangers on the street. Findings for this situation are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7. Frequency of semantic formulas used in situation 4

Semantic formulas		Frequency of semantic formulas				
		NS (N=9)	LEI-BUAP/ ME			NE (N=6)
	TL1 (N=5)		TL3 (N=6)	TL5 (N=6)		
Direct	Negative willingness	33.3%	60%	16.6%	50%	16.6%

Indirect	Regret	88.8%	80%	83.3%	33.3%	83.3%
	Excuse/reason	100%	60%	83.3%	100%	100%
	Future acceptance	33.3%	-	33.3%	16.6%	-
Adjuncts	Positive feeling/opinion	11.1%	-	-	-	16.6%
	Pause fillers	11.1%	60%	16.6%	66.6%	16.6%
	Address forms	-	-	16.6%	-	-
Opt out	-	-	16.6%	-	-	
Failure	-	20%	-	-	-	

4.1.4.1 Negative willingness

Basic students (60%) revealed more unwillingness than advanced (50%) and intermediate learners (16.6%). Comparatively, intermediate had the same performance as NEs (16.6%), whereas the other ME subgroups resembled more to NSs (33.3%). The five examples below are included for further analysis (keywords are in bold).

- (58) Lo siento, tengo mucha prisa y **no puedo** atenderlos.
I'm sorry but I am in a hurry and **I can't** help you. (NSp4)
- (59) Oh... I'm sorry but... I... go late for my job so **I can't** help you. (TL1p2)
- (60) Oh, I'm late, so sorry. **I can't** do it. But... maybe in other moment. (TL3p3)
- (61) Hum, but **I can't** answer your... your question and, just, I have some minutes to... to do my... my... I don't know... my activities. (TL5p4)
- (62) Sorry, **I can't** help you. I don't know about the subject. (NEp5)

Of course, all examples entail the same language form (can't) to display unwillingness but there is a change in which position of the discourse this form goes. Examples (58) and (59) have it in the end of the response. Then, example (60) contains it in the middle. Finally, participants in examples (61) and (62) used *can't* in the beginning. Furthermore, the advanced student and the native English participant's negative willingness was followed by an excuse, while the native Spanish, the basic and intermediate English proficiency level student's answer had an explanation before the modal *can't*. On the whole, the negative willingness strategy was used more similarly to how native English speaker do, accordingly to how close they are to an advanced English level.

4.1.4.2 *Future acceptance*

One way to protect one's *face* when doing a refusal is by making a promise of future acceptance since it is not possible for a speaker to accept in that moment what is asked or just to get off the hook.

On the condition that intermediate (33.3%) and advanced students (16.6%) performed future acceptance, so NSs (33.3%); meanwhile, basic learners (0%) and NEs (0%) did not use them whatsoever; the assumption of existing pragmatic transfer rises. In order to clarify this, examples are shown as follows. The semantic formula of future acceptance is highlighted in bold.

(63) Discúlpeme, traigo mucha prisa. Por favor, **en la siguiente**. Perdóneme.

Excuse me, I am in a hurry. Please, **next time**. Sorry. (NSp3)

(64) Sorry guys I don't have much time so... **maybe next time**. (TL3p2)

(65) I'm really busy right now and I can't stay to take the quiz but probably **in another moment**. So a bad time for me right now. (TL5p2)

All examples have the future acceptance strategy in the end. Example (64) is more similar to the NS participant performance (example 63) since both speakers displayed a regret before explaining anything rather than being less attentive as in example (65). Finally, these results support, once again, the resort to pragmatic transfer whenever a speaker does not know the target language appropriate manners to refuse in L2.

4.1.4.3 *Opt out*

Identically as in the scenario 3, opting out was used by none of the control groups (NS and NE) but the MEs.; specifically, by intermediate learners (16.6%). This result gives rise to believe that LEI-BUAP students do not only barely develop their pragmatic competence but also their listening skills that, for this paper work, allows them to catch the contextual information provided in each of the real-life situations.

4.1.4.4 Failure

Equally to situation 1, TL1s (11.1%) failed to understand the scenario's description, hence, to use the expected language function (refuse). Examples of this case are interpreted below.

(66) Uh... first, you need...hum... you need to be early. (TL1p1)

Resulted from a hearer's linguistic incompetence and not to a speaker's incomprehensible discourse, example (67) is a clear sample of what happens when a non-sense response is uttered due to poor language comprehension development. Given this point, MEs' problems to use appropriate and effective language function in L2 are coupled with their low English language competence developed so far.

4.2 Total number of words

All participants' amount of words used to respond each of the situations were counted to verify if MEs employed as many words as the other groups, besides the semantic formulas. This with the intention to identify if there were similarities among the number of words uttered by native Spanish/English speakers and non-native English speakers. Data are included on Table 8.

Table 8. Total number of words

		Groups				
		NS	LEI-BUAP/ME			NE
Scenario	TL1		TL3	TL5		
1	110	69	69	102	104	
2	131	59	85	134	91	
3	143	69	112	183	124	
4	101	62	71	116	77	
Total	485	259	337	535	396	
WPS	121.25	64.75	84.25	133.75	99	
WPP	13.47	12.95	14.04	22.29	16.50	

WPS = Words per situation; WPP = Words per participant

4.2.1 *Scenario 1*

Besides NSs (110) and NEs (104) do not have a statistically significant difference in the number of words used, basic (69) and intermediate learners (69) expose a compelling difference according to their counterparts by using far less words than the rest.

4.2.2 *Scenario 2*

Unlike situation 1, MEs manifest a rise in the number of words used. Visibly, basic learners (59) employed far less words than NSs which (supported by the examples included, see 4.1) encountered problems to use language forms that would allowed them to express themselves in L2. For this reason, intermediate and advanced English students do not face this problem but start to verbose, instead.

4.2.3 *Scenario 3*

Participants speak the most in situation 3, this mirrors a pragmatic resemblance between Mexican-Spanish and American-English when there is a +P-D relation within an interaction since both cultures require speakers to be more talkative

As in the previous scenario, the number of words used by MEs increases. In particular, advanced learners (183) have a big difference among their counterparts. Once again, advanced learners highlight a constant tendency in their L2 oral production: verbosity. Meanwhile, intermediate learners (112), as in scenario 2, had a more approximate performance to NEs (124).

4.2.4 *Scenario 4*

Although advanced students (116) produced more words to refuse, it is important to realize that intermediate learners (71) had a more native-like-English-speaker (77) performance in the number of words used in each of the situations, whereas basic students lack L2 language forms to put a message across.

In conclusion, as it can be seen in Table 8, there is an increase on the average words production per participant (WPP) in MEs. Basic (12.95) and intermediate learners (14.04)

evidence a similarity to the NSs (13.47), which can be ascribed to (1) pragmatic transfer and/or (2) the L2 knowledge meagerness. Regarding the previous semantic formula analysis (see 4.1) the latter is the most suitable reason to why basic learners used less words, intermediate learners did more than NSs.

The most interesting evidence is that advanced learners (22.29) produced extensively more words than the rest of the other groups and subgroups. For this reason, advanced English students tend to speak more but be less concise in their responses. Thus, they do not exactly produce language as NEs (16.50) do.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, conclusions about this research are pointed out, as well as opinions and recommendations for further research on this field of study are described below.

5.1 Conclusions

This research compared and identified the refusing strategies (semantic formulas) displayed by 1) EFL students at three different proficiency levels (beginners, intermediate and advanced), 2) native Mexican-Spanish speakers and 3) native American-English speakers in four real-life situations. The aim was to verify if LEI-BUAP students have the L2 pragmatic knowledge to use effective and appropriate language forms to call the speech act of refusal as native speakers of English do. The conclusions answer questions stated in Chapter I as it follows.

1. Do ME's refusing strategies approximate to native English speakers' responses and to what extent their responses differ from the NEs'?

Based on the semantic formulas analysis, it was found that NE participants tended to display direct refusing strategies in a similar frequency as NSs did when it came to decline requests, invitations and orders., but according to the syntactic analysis of the responses made by both groups' participants it is noticeable the great existing different between both cultural backgrounds. Previous studies (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Keshavartz et al, 2006; Lingyun, 2015; Morkus, 2014; Yinling, 2012) have shown that Americans refuse in a much more direct manner than other cultures do, avoiding to make up “white lies excuses” as a way to protect face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the case of Mexican English learners, they managed a wider variety of semantic formulas. MEs preferred to used expressions of preference, self-defense and alternative more frequently, whereas in most of the situations none of the control groups did. Most importantly, MEs opted far more to express reasons, although they had stated one already. A tendency which exposes a desire to justify a rejection as much as possible. It is presumed that this happens, as previously observed (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006), because Mexicans tried the hardest to make a refusal the least rude/offensive as in the Mexican culture saving face is an intrinsic objective. On the

contrary, Americans provided maximum two excuses. Moreover, EFL participants resorted to pause fillers (such as “Uh” and “Well”) while NEs barely did, mirroring pragmatic transfer since in the Mexican culture it is quite common that speakers include lots of pause fillers in their discourses.

2. Is there any relation between the ME participants’ responses and their English proficiency level?

Basic English level (TL1) learners faced a lot of problems not only to convey meaning but to execute successfully L2 language forms. Likewise, intermediate (TL3) and advanced (TL5) learners had also the same difficulties, less frequently of course. In terms of the responses’ content, the LEI-BUAP participants have poorly developed either pragmatic knowledge and language competence, mainly listening skills since at times they gave contextually non-related responses and called another speech act instead; resorting to say whatever they thought would be a right answer or merely opting out. Under this circumstance, students’ linguistic competence need to be improved as a whole.

The inconsistency on the MEs’ pragmatic competence development is the most appealing finding in this research. Statistically, TL3s performed more native-like refusing strategies, notwithstanding TL5s were the advanced English level students (who should have refused as Americans did). Evidently, there is an issue in the MEs’ language learning process which brings about this inconsistency. On the contrary, TL5s refusals were more fluent and grammatically more complex than their counterparts. This supports the idea that TL5s actually have the knowledge to use L2 language forms more freely, but brings to bear unnecessary talkativeness which resulted in redundancy and hesitancy (verbose). Probably, they did this as a way to demonstrate their language abilities which highlights the lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge since they ignored that concise discourses are ideal in American culture. All in all, there is a language development reflected in the EFL learners’ performance since basic English level students had more problems to refuse appropriately and affectively (even to employ grammatically correct language forms); and advanced learners almost kept up with the native English speakers’ performance of refusals.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

Inasmuch as the major's aim is to form competent English teachers, this paper work demonstrated the necessity to rise both teacher's and students' awareness to implement pragmatically inclusive teaching and learning strategies. Of course, this competency does not only require English teachers to master grammar, vocabulary and other so-called skills but to be capable of using L2 appropriately and effectively regarding specific contexts and to communicate successfully with native speakers of the language.

In the domain of Second Language Instruction (SLI), the fundamental step to diminish the students' errors in the use of appropriate and effective refusals is to incorporate activities that show students how English-language forms, specifically in American culture, are utilized to refuse in regard of a surrounding context. For example, by using movie or TV series extracts, teachers could point out that the expression "No can do, man" is appropriate in an informal context only when the hearer has a close relationship with the speaker and there is an equal social status level. These activities would permit EFL learners to comprehend better how English refusals work and to use this information to success in refusing interactions.

5.3 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for further Research

The most challenging aspect for conducting this research was (undoubtedly) the collection of the American-English speakers, notwithstanding the university (BUAP) itself welcomes foreign students annually; American students are scant. Thus, these participants had to be sought outside the Language Faculty and the university themselves.

Results obtained in this study are based on the responses of (1) a minority of the complete LEI community, (2) a small number of real-life situations per power-distance combination, and (3) participants from only three English proficiency levels in the LEI program. Thus, conclusions stated in this research must be taken as an insight of the phenomenon in question and cannot be generalized for the entire community. Then, for further research, it is necessary to conduct research taking a distinct sampling method, to collect a bigger portion of the population; focusing on other speech acts, to create a point of comparison on

the development of refusals with other acts; implementing other types of instruments or a more extensive MET, in order to gather a significant variety of data. All of these with the purpose of verifying if LEI-BUAP students are, indeed, fully developing their pragmatic competence. Not to mention that it would be captivating to investigate, through research on the pragmatic field, how different Mexican culture is from other ones besides American culture. All in all, conducting more research on this field can help to identify what weaknesses the LEI-BUAP program has so as to develop students' pragmatic competence more efficiently.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Scenario (1)

A friend of yours, who always asks you for money, comes to you and asks you to borrow some cash and promises to pay it back soon. You need to save money for the weekend. You refuse saying:



Scenario (X)

It has been a week since your best friend and you had a fight because you said something bad about her. One day, you get on the bus to school and your best friend is seated alone so you decide to sit next to her in order to talk about the problem and get over it. You say:



Scenario (2)

A classmate, to whom you do not get along with very well, invites you to his birthday party. This person is very insistent.

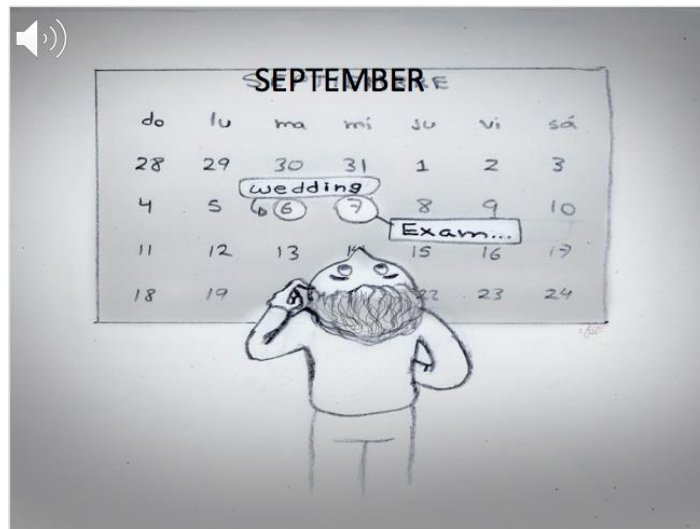
You refuse saying:



Scenario (3)

In a week, it is your cousin's wedding and your mother tells you to go. The final exams begin the day after the event. You need to get good grades and if you go to the wedding you will not have enough time to study.

You refuse saying:



Scenario (Y)

This weekend you are going to the beach with your cousin and his girlfriend. On Tuesday, you talk with your date and mention that your cousin told you that you could invite someone to go with them.

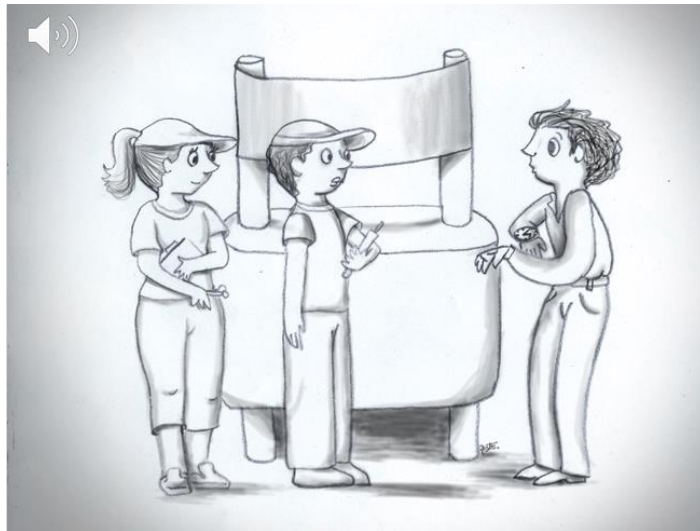
You say:



Scenario (4)

You are taking a walk downtown. Then, you walk next to two guys who are doing a quiz for homework and immediately ask you if you could help them answering it. You lie in order to get away and not to do the quiz.

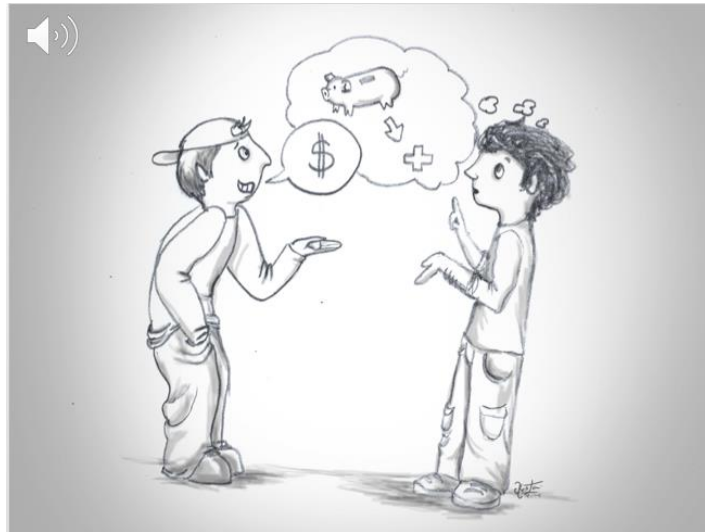
You refuse saying:



APPENDIX 2

Situación (1)

Un amigo tuyo, quien siempre te pide dinero, se te acerca y te pide dinero prestado prometiendo regresarlo pronto, pero sabes que tienes que ahorrar para el fin de semana. Tú dices:



Situación (X)

Ha pasado una semana desde que tu amiga y tú tuvieron una discusión porque dijiste algo malo sobre ella. Un día, te subes al autobús y encuentras a tu amiga sentada sola así que decides sentarte junto a ella para así hablar sobre el problema y solucionarlo. Tú dices:



Situación (2)

Un compañero de clase, que no te cae muy bien, te invita a su fiesta de cumpleaños. Es muy insistente.

Tú dices:



Situación (3)

En una semana será la boda de un primo y tu mamá te dice que vayas a la ceremonia. Los exámenes finales comienzan el día posterior a la celebración. Necesitas salir con buenas calificaciones y si vas no podrás estudiar lo suficiente.

Tú dices:



Situación (Y)

Este fin de semana vas con tu primo y su novia a la playa. El martes le comentas a la persona con la que estás saliendo que tu primo te dijo que podías llevar a alguien.

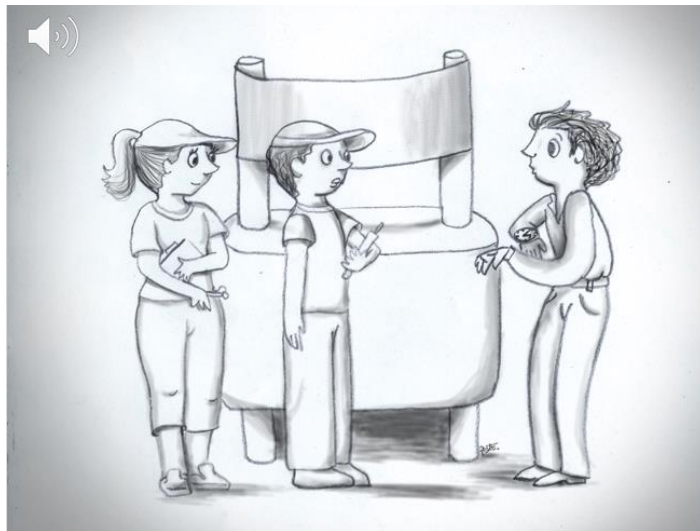
Tú dices:



Situación (4)

Estás caminando por la ciudad. Al pasar al lado de dos chicos quienes hacen una encuesta como tarea, te preguntan si puedes contestarla. Mientes para alejarte y no hacerla.

Tú dices:



APPENDIX 3

Classification of semantic formulas used in refusals from Lingyun (2015: pp. 112-113).
(Modified from Beebe et al., 1990).

I) Direct

- A) Performative (“I refuse”)
- B) Non-performative
 - 1) “No”
 - 2) Negative willingness/ability (“I can’t” “I won’t” “I don’t think so”)

II) Indirect

- A) Statement of regret (“I’m sorry” “unfortunately”)
- B) Excuse, reason, explanation (“I have other plans”)
- C) Alternative (“Why don’t you choose another person for the job”)
- D) Promise of future acceptance (“I will do it next time”)
- E) Statement of preference (“I’d rather...” “I’d prefer...”)
- F) Statement of principle (“I never do business with my friends”)
- G) Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
 - 1) Statement of negative feelings or opinions (“That’s a terrible idea”)
 - 2) Criticism (“Who do you think you are?”)
 - 3) Let interlocutor off the hook (“That’s ok” “You don’t have to”)
 - 4) Self-defense (“I’m trying my best” “I’m doing all I can do”)
- H) Acceptance that functions as a refusal
 - 1) Unspecific or indefinite reply (“Forget it”)
- I) Avoidance
 - 1) Topic switching
 - 2) Joke
 - 3) Repetition of part of request (“Today?”)
 - 4) Hedging (“I’m not sure”)
 - 5) Postponement (“I’ll think about it”)

Adjuncts to refusals

- 1) Statement of positive opinion, feeling or agreement (“I’d like to”)
- 2) Gratitude, appreciation (“Thank you for your proposal”)
- 3) Pause fillers (“Well” “Uhh”)
- 4) Address forms (“Boss” “Sir”)