CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design of the study and is as follows: In the first section, the participants of the study are introduced. The next section deals with research instrumentation and data collection procedures. How the data is analysed is the issue dealt with finally.

3.2 Participants

The population of this study consists of a large group of Iranian Farsi speakers. The total number of participants is 393 of whom 121 participants are male and 272 participants are female. Their age ranged from 20 to 45. The participants included undergraduate students, academics and non-academic staff of the university. The student participants of the study were in different majors including, Accounting, Engineering, Management, nursing, Architecture and Chemistry. The non-student participants' level of education ranged from Bachelor degree to PhDs.

All participants speak Farsi as their first language. Eleven participants were excluded because Farsi was not their first language. They speak Arabic and Turkish as their L1 and Farsi as L2.

3.3 Data

This study is based on 208 refusals in spoken Persian which were collected in March and April 2010. The data was collected in a university in Iran. The university is a branch of Islamic Azad University which is a private university. It is located in the southwest of Iran and offers one master program and 12 bachelor programs.

The first part of the data comes from audio-recorded refusals and second part of it is collected through an ethnographic approach to observation (Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1990) with the data written down and recorded in some cases.

The most preferred kind of data in pragmatic research is naturally occurring spontaneous data. Natural data are either video/audio-recorded or gathered through field note observation (Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Holmes 1990) of the researcher(s). According to Manes and Wolfson (1981) gathering speech act in natural setting without the awareness of the participants is the best approach through gathering specific speech act. Wolfson (1981) also indicates that "data need to be gathered through [direct] observation and participation in a great variety of spontaneously occurring speech situations".

Gathering data using field note observation, however, is not without shortcomings. For example, Beebe (1992) claimed that ethnographic data are often unsystematic. It is difficult to report the age, social status and ethnic group of the informants as they rely a lot on the memory of the observer.

This study uses a mixed method of field noting and audio-recording the data. The drawback of relying on memory will be compensated for by audio recording of the some of the exchanges. Their naturalness and spontaneity help the richness of the data.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The data was gathered over two months starting from March to April 2010. Two M.A students in linguistics helped the researcher to gather data. They were told to take note of demographic information of the interactants, and to focus on the speech act of refusals, and to write down on their data collection form these phenomena. They were trained to identify and list all exchanges. They walked around the campus vigilantly from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM every weekday to fieldnote any refusals they heard. Upon hearing a refusal, they did their best to take notes of that refusal as well as its initiating act. Then, they asked the refuser and the refusee for their demographic information and permission to use the noted refusal for a research purpose. The demographic information form appears in appendix B.

The researcher herself was audio-recording refusal interactions in different student gatherings in the university campus and dormitory. These recorded refusals were of two kinds: 1) the naturally occurring refusals to naturally occurring initiating acts, and 2) naturally occurring refusals to the acts which were deliberately initiated by the researcher/audio recorder to elicit refusals. Some refusals were also extracted from a recorded departmental meeting by a colleague of the researcher who was doing a conversation analysis research. The permission was asked after the recording. In case of a refusal to permission for recording, the whole exchange was deleted from the recorder at once to address the ethical considerations of the research.

Generally, the refusals were gathered in different contexts in university such as student gatherings outside the classrooms, canteens, dormitory, departmental meetings between lecturers, lecturers' offices and library. For example, in the university canteen, the researcher was standing near the payment counter with her voice recorder on. This is the place where many refusals take place because there are many friends who offer to pay

for their friends' food and drink. When a refusal is made and captured by voice recorder, the researcher approached the informants to take permission and demographic information. Overall, the recorded data resulted in two hours of talk out of which 97 chunks were identified as refusals. 111 refusals were gathered through fieldnoting technique.

3.5 Data Analysis

The present study consists of qualitative analyses supported with some descriptive statistics. The audio-recorded interactions were transcribed orthographically. The unintelligeable chunks were discarded. The intelligeable identified refusals aling with those refusals which were elicited from field note observations were classified and analyzed according to Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification of refusals. The detailed classification with the examples of strategies is presented in chapter two, section 2.4. Only a summary of it is reproduced here.

Direct Strategies

  a. Performative: e.g. I refuse you.

  b. Non-performative

   1. 'No' (*na*)

   2. Negative willingness/ability: e.g. 'I can't' (*nemitunam*).

Indirect strategies

  1. Statement of Apology / Regret

English	Persian equivalence
'I apologize'	*'Ozr mikham'*

2. Wish

    English   **Persian equivalence**
    'I wish I could stay.....'   *'Kash mitoonestam bemoonam ....'*

3. Excuse/ Reason/ Explanation

    English   **Persian equivalence**
    'I have a commitment.'   *'Gharar daram.'*

4. Statement of alternative

    English   **Persian equivalence**

    'Why don't you ask the lecturer? '   *'chera nemiri az ostad beporsi?'*

5. Set condition for future or past acceptance

    English   **Persian equivalence**

    'I'll do it next time.'   *' Dafe dige anjamesh midam.'*

6. Promise of future acceptance

    English   **Persian equivalence**

    'I'll do it next time.'   *'Dafe dige anjamesh midam.'*

7. Statement of principle

    English   **Persian equivalence**

    'I usually study alone.'   *' ma'amoolan tanha dars mikhoonam'.*

8. Statement of philosophy

    English   **Persian equivalence**

    'One can't be too careful'   *'adam nemituneh inhame movazeb bashe'*

9. Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor

English	Persian equivalence
'I won't be any fun tonight'	'man emshab jaleb nistam'

10. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

English	Persian equivalence
'I'll let you know'	'Behet khabar midam'

11. Avoidance

English	Persian equivalence
'I can come tomorrow and	'Mitoonam farda sobh beyaym va
do that together'	in kar ra anjam bedahim.'

Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement

English	Persian equivalence
'Congratulations on passing your exam, but......'	'tabrik migam ke emtehanet ra ghabool shodi vali .....'
I would love to stay and help out but...	Doost daram beyam va komak konam vali ...'

2. Statement of empathy

English	Persian equivalence
'Well the thing is I understand you perfectly but....'	'Khob masaaleh ine ke khoob darket mikonam vali...'

3. Pause fillers Some examples from the current study are: (e.g., "Uh,", "Well,' "Umm", "oh")

4. Gratitude / Appreciation

English	**Persian equivalence**
'Thanks for the invitation but...'	*'Az daavatetoon motshakeram ama...'*
'I appreciate the suggestion but....'	*'Vaghean az pishnehadetoon ghadrdani mikonam ama....'*

This classification is a widely used classification of refusals strategies in refusal research (Bardavi-Harlig and Hartfort, 1991, Gass and Houck, 1999, Nelson et al., 2002, Felix-Brasdefer, 2006). The refusals are divided into two main groups: direct and indirect refusals. The direct refusals have very limited subdivisions in comparison to indirect ones.

To do the analysis, first, the refusals speech acts were divided into sequences of pre act, head act or main act and post act. Then the acts are counted and classified as strategies according to Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification. For example the following refusal to an invitation will be classified as having three strategies:

Table 3.1: Refusal Sequences and Strategies

Linguistic utterances	Refusal sequences	Strategy
I'd really like to come very much (*Kheili dust daram biam*)	(pre-refusal)	(adjuncts to refusals) statement of positive feeling
But I 'm invited somewhere else tonight (*Vali man emshab ye jaie dige da'vatam*)	(main refusal)	(Indirect) reason/ explanation or excuse
Thanks for the invitation (*Merci az da'vatetun*)	(post- refusal)	(indirect) gratitude

This refusal has three strategies: the first strategy is 'statement of positive feeling' which is a pre-refusal. The second part is the main refusal which is expressed using the strategy 'reason/explanation or excuse'. The post refusal is a strategy of 'thanking'. Another colleague who is major in Linguistics and also a native speaker of Persian checked the coding to ensure the reliability of the coding.

To answer the second research question, the refusal strategies which were identified were examined to see how they were different according to nature of distance and power relationship between the participants who produced them. Based on the power and distance between the participants, five relationship types were identified. Three equal relationships in terms of power, which are categorized as close, familiar and distant and two unequal (low and high) were found. Then the refusals were checked against the type of relationship in which they were contextualized.

3.6 Summary

The present study draws upon naturally occurring refusals in Persian language in the context of academic environment in Iran. The participants are all academic and non-academic staff as well as the students of a university in Iran ranging from 20 to 45 years old. The data are collected through recording and field noting by the researcher and two of her assistants in March and April, 2010. The refusal classification of Beebe et al (1990) is used for the analysis of the data.