

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the analysis of the data will be presented in three sections: Sections one and two deal with the first research question. First the type and frequency of the refusal strategies which were used by the informants of the study are reported. Then, in the second section, more detailed results of the types and frequency of the refusal strategies with respect to their initiating acts are reported. In section three, the second research question is dealt with; that is, the effects of ‘social distance’ and ‘power’ on the refusals are addressed.

#### **4.2 Research Question Number One**

To answer the first research question “What strategies are frequently used by Iranian Farsi speakers as L1 in their production of refusals?” first, the total number of 208 refusals were recognized and broken into their constituent strategies. Refusals were varied according to their length and the number of strategies they were made up of. These strategies were coded and classified according to whether they were ‘direct’, ‘indirect’, or ‘adjuncts to refusals’ (Beebe, et al., 1990). The results yielded 869 strategies, since the majority of the refusals were made up of more than one strategy. Of the 869 identified number of strategies 165 strategies were ‘direct’, 628 were ‘indirect’ and 76 were ‘adjuncts to refusals’ (see table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1: Number of Direct, Indirect and Adjunct Strategies

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Number of strategies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Direct	165	18.98%
Indirect	628	72.26%
Adjuncts to refusals	76	8.74%
<b>Total</b>	869	100

#### 4.2.1 Types and Frequency of Refusal Strategies

Generally, 869 strategies were identified in all three categories of direct (165), indirect (628) and adjuncts (76) to refusals. These strategies are as follows:

##### 4.2.1.1 Direct Strategies

In the direct category, there were three strategies: (1) No, (2) Negative ability, (3) Negative willingness. Direct refusals happen when the participants are very close to each other, like a two close friends or when the relationship between two individuals are so distant that the speaker does not care for the hearer's face. The following example is a direct refusal of a close friend and colleague. Speaker 1 (a male 34-year-old lecturer) is talking about his need of help with his exam session. His words can be taken as an implicit request. Speaker 2 (S2) (male, 32) takes speaker 1 (S1)'s words as a request and refuses directly:

Excerpt 1: Transcript 2. A (28)

*S1: donbale ye nafar migardam jalase emtahanamo ye sar bezaneh choon khodam nistam*

L115. S1: I'm looking for someone to give me hand in my exam session because I myself won't be present

*S2: roo man hesab nakon [S1's name]*

L116. S2: Don't count on me [S1's name]

*S1: na na be to nemigam choon midoonam gereftari*

L117. S1: No no I'm not giving it to you because I know you are busy

In this exchange, although S1's words are very ambiguous in terms of the speaker's intentions, and if it is meant as a request, it is done implicitly, S2 refuses this tentative request very bluntly and directly by saying 'don't count on me'. In line 117, S1 denies meaning to request and emphasizes that pragmatic function of his words is other than to request.

Direct refusals also happen when people are distant and do not mind offending each other. For example in the following exchange, a student who has left his calculator and is about to sit for his exam is requesting another student whom he doesn't know for his calculator:

Excerpt 2: Transcript 2. C (6)

*S1: bebaxshid mashin hesab dari*

L10. S1: Excuse me! Do you have a calculator?

*S2: are daram*

L11. S2: Yeah I do

*S1: mishe bedi berm emtahan bedam ba'de emtehan behet pas bedam*

L12. S1: Can I borrow it? I have an exam. I'll give you back

*S2: na nemitunam*

L13. S2: No I can't

The two students in this exchange have no ongoing relationship with each other. They are just students of the same university. Student 1 (L10) makes such a request because he is in urgent need of the calculator and sees a calculator in student 2's hands. Student 2, however, refuses directly by using two direct strategy 'NO' and 'negative ability' (L13).

Table 4.2: Types and Frequency of Direct Strategies

<b>Direct Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	101	11.62%
Negative ability	45	5.17%
Negative willingness	19	2.18%
<b>Results - Direct</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>18.98%</b>

Table 4.2 shows that the strategy ‘NO’ has the most frequency (101) among other direct strategies. One possible reason for this is that the strategy ‘No’ accompanies other indirect strategies very often, as in ‘*na nemitunam bebaxshid*’ meaning ‘no I can’t sorry’. Here ‘NO’ precedes two other strategies. ‘Negative ability’ comes second in this table which is realized in Persian language as ‘*nemitunam*’ (I can’t).

#### 4.2.1.2 Indirect Strategies

Indirect strategies which are used in the present study are as follows: 'Statement of regret', 'Gratitude/ appreciation', 'Wish', 'Reason, explanation, excuse', 'statement of alternative', 'set condition for future/past acceptance', 'promise of future acceptance', 'statement of principle', 'attempt to dissuade the interlocutor', 'criticize the request/requester', 'request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping the request', 'let the interlocutor off the hook', 'self defense', 'unspecific reply', 'silence', 'ask for more information', 'joke', 'repeat the part of the question', 'conditional acceptance', 'returning the invitation', 'hedging', 'returning offer', and 'expressions of good willing'. Table 4.3 shows the details of the types and frequency of different, indirect strategies to refusals.

Generally, the participants of the present study preferred either indirect or a combination of direct and indirect strategies to perform refusals. Of the three categories of refusal strategies mentioned in the previous section, indirect strategies favored the highest frequency. Out of 165 direct strategies, 158 accompanied some other indirect strategies, especially reasoning and gratitude. Direct strategies were very rare (7).

The results show conformity to the findings of previous studies in that among the different indirect strategies used by the participants, the strategy 'reason, explanation or excuse' was the most frequent 31.76% (Beebe, et al., 1990; Kwon, 2003; Felix Brasdefer, 2004, 2006; Wannaruk, 2008; Izadi and Zuraidah, 2010; Shokouhi and Khalili, 2004; Al-Issa, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig, 1991). The second highest frequency was found in 'gratitude/appreciation' strategy at 13.46%.

The third common strategy, however, does not belong to the 'indirect' category. It is a direct category strategy; that is, 'No' (11.62%), which in almost all cases has prefaced indirect strategies.

The fourth strategy is 'statement of principle' (5.17%), 'statement of regret' (3.68%) followed by 'negative ability'. The other used indirect strategies by the informants of the present study are in order: 'statement of alternative' (3.22%), 'ask for more information' (2.76%), 'promise of future acceptance' (2.41%), and 'unspecific reply' (2.07%), 'criticize the request/ requester' (1.38%), 'set condition for future/ past acceptance' (1.26%) 'self defense' (0.92%), 'repetition of part of request' (0.69%), 'returning offer' (0.57%), 'returning the invitation' (0.57%), 'conditional acceptance' (0.46%), 'hedging' (0.46%), 'attempt to dissuade the interlocutor' (0.34%), 'silence' (0.34%), 'wish' (0.23%), 'Joke' (0.23%), 'request for help, empathy, & assistance by dropping the request' (0.11%), and 'let the interlocutor off the hook' (0.11%).

Table 4.3: Types and Frequency of Indirect Refusal Strategies

<b>Indirect Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Reason	276	31.76%
* Gratitude/appreciation	117	13.46%
Statement of principle	45	5.17%
Statement of regret	32	3.68%
Statement of alternative	28	3.22%
*Ask for more information	24	2.76%
Promise of future acceptance	21	2.41%
Unspecific reply	18	2.07%
Criticize the request/ requester	12	1.38%
Set condition for future/ past acceptance	11	1.26%
Self defense	8	0.92%
Repetition of part of request	6	0.69%
*Returning offer	5	0.57
* Returning the invitation	5	0.57%
Conditional acceptance	4	0.46%
Hedging	4	0.46%
Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor	3	0.34%
Silence	3	0.34%
Wish	2	0.23%
Joke	2	0.23%
Request for help, empathy,& assistance by dropping the request	1	0.11%
Let the interlocutor off the hook	1	0.11%
<b>Results - Indirect</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>72.26%</b>

Note: The strategies with asterisk are the new strategies which were identified in the present research.

As the table shows, only two indirect strategies show a remarkably high frequency. They are 'reason' and 'gratitude'. Other indirect strategies were not considerable and had a very low frequency compared to the first two. One can conclude that providing reason and expressing gratitude are two prominent features of refusals in Persian.

### 4.2.1.3 Adjunct Strategies to Refusals

The adjuncts used to refusal are 'statement of positive feeling', 'define relationship', and 'pause fillers'. The following is the list of adjuncts to refusals which have appeared in the data of the present research: 'define relationship' (4.02%), 'statement of positive feeling' (2.99%), 'pause fillers' (1.72%). Table 4.4 shows types, frequency and percentage of the adjunct strategies to refusal.

Table 4.4: Types and Frequency of Adjuncts to Refusals

<b>Adjuncts to refusals Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
* Define relationship	35	4.02%
Statement of positive feeling	26	2.99%
Pause fillers	15	1.72%
<b>Results – Adjuncts</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>8.74%</b>

Note: The strategy with asterisk is the new strategies which were identified in the present research.

The most frequent adjunct strategy was 'define relationship'. This strategy as mentioned earlier has been reported only in Arabic language in previous studies (e.g Al-Issa, 1998). An example of such a strategy is '*na mersi azizam*' (no thanks dear). The third strategy in this refusal to an offer; that is '*azizam*' (dear) shows an endearment relationship and belongs to strategy 'define relationship'. This strategy will be discussed in the next section under 'new strategies found'.

### 4.3 New Strategies Found

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies which are reported by previous studies on refusals (Beebe, et al., 1990; Kwon, 2003; Felix Brasdefer, 2004, 2006; Wannaruk, 2008; Izadi and Zuraidah, 2010; Shokouhi and Khalili, 2008; Al-Issa, 1998), the present study found four new strategies which were not reported by previous research. These strategies are 'returning invitation', 'returning offer' 'ask for more information' and 'expression of good willing' which are indirect strategies. These strategies were added to the list of strategies proposed by Beebe et al (1999).

#### 4.3.1 Returning the invitation/offer

An example of 'returning the invitation' is '*shoma biain khuneye ma*' meaning 'you come to our house' in response to an invitation 'come to our house for lunch'. The strategy 'returning offer' is also very common in refusing offers, especially food and drink offers. In these cases a typical response to the offer which is linguistically coded as '*befarmaeed*' is the same linguistic code; that is, '*befarmaeed*' which could be translated in English 'help yourself (plural: respectful)'.

The strategy 'returning invitation' is shown in the following example: Two friends and colleagues are the participants: The relationship type is equal-close, so the interaction is rather informal.

Excerpt 3: Transcript 4. A (22)

*S1: jom 'e biain samte ma*

L90. S1: come to our side (our house) on Friday

*S2: mersi vallah ye khorde gereftaram va ella*

L91. S2: Thanks well I'm a bit busy otherwise

*S2: SHOMA biain onvar*

L92. S2: You (plural) come that side (my house)



*S1: nobate shomast*

L93. S1: It's your turn

As the example shows, S1 (L91) thanks the inviter, followed by giving a reason (*ye khorde gereftaram*: I'm a bit busy). The third strategy (L92) is returning the invitation with emphasis on SHOMA (YOU plural). This returning the invitation is often accompanied by '*fargh nemikoneh*' (doesn't make any difference) or '*che farghi mikoneh*' (what is the difference). This implies that it does not matter who invites whom. The guest and the host's houses are taken as the same. The important thing is that they meet each other somewhere in any of the houses.

Refusing invitations are very difficult, because in a way a refuser is responding to a socially valued act (hospitality) by a socially unacceptable act of refusal. Such a refusal can be very face threatening. That is why, in refusing an invitation, Iranian participants of the current study used a greater number of strategies than refusing other initiating acts.

#### 4.3.2 Expression of gratitude/appreciation

The second finding of the present research regarding the strategies is that 'expression of gratitude/appreciation' which was categorized in previous studies as 'adjunct to refusals' was among the indirect strategies. Many a time, this strategy functions as the only strategy used to refuse an offer. It is quite frequent in the data of the present study that, a response to an offer such as 'help yourself' be '*merci*' (thank you).

The reason for this could be explainable in terms of the concept of '*taarof*' which is explained in section 6 of chapter two under 'sociocultural norms of Persian'. These kinds of offers are usually taken as '*taarof*'. This means that these offers are used to show respect to the addressee by adhering to the ritual politeness norm of '*taarof*'. These offers are not usually taken as serious and genuine (Koutlai, 2002; Sharifian, 2007). The refusal answer to this kind of offer is also part of '*taarof*'. In fact it is the other aspect of '*taarof*'. And usually refusals to these '*taarof*'-like offers are realized using a 'gratitude' strategy. This 'gratitude', however, takes a variety of linguistic forms including '*daste shoma dard nakone*' (literally may your hand not ache), 'merci', *mamnoon* (thank you), *motshakkream* (I'm grateful).

#### 4.3.3 Define relationship

There is one strategy which has only been reported in a study in Arabic language (Al-Issa, 1998). That strategy is called 'define relationship'. The present study also supported this finding. An 'endearment' relationship is commonly emphasized as a strategy to mitigate a refusal (Al-Issa, 1998). More elaborated kinds of relationship definition were observed in the present research data, for example, 'status marker' '*na ostad*' (no professor) which defines the status of the interlocutor as a university lecturer. 'Define relationship' strategy functions differently: They are sometimes used to claim solidarity, as in endearment following a 'No' strategy (*Na azizam*: No my dear). Or they may be expressed to claim social distance as in '*na aghaye mohtaram*' (No respected sir). Also they may be used to express status of the interlocutor as in '*na ostad*' (No professor) and '*na khanom moallem*' (No. Mrs teacher).

#### 4.3.4 Ask for more information

The speaker asks for more details related to the request, invitation, suggestion and offer to prepare the hearer for the refusal part. It may be a way for the refuser to find a plan to do the refusal. This type of strategy is known as verbal avoidance (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991). These authors also refer to this type of strategy as triggers interaction because it diverts the attention away from the interaction. Some examples from the current study are: 'What time is the birthday party?' '*Jashn tavalod saat chand ast?*' And 'Where is it?' '*Kojast?*'

### **4.4 Refusal Strategies with Respect to their Initiating Acts**

Refusals are secondary acts; in other words they are responses to other initiating acts. In the present study these acts are suggestions, requests, offers, and invitations. The refusals elicited were responses to 67 offers, 56 requests, 41 invitations and 44 suggestions.

The analysis of 208 refusals revealed a considerable variation in the realization of refusal speech acts, influenced by their initiating acts. These variations were observed both at the level of frequency and type of strategies.

#### **4.4.1 Number of Refusal Strategies Based on their Initiating Act**

The average number of strategies in each initiating act was calculated in order to find out any significant differences in employing the refusal strategies according to different initiating acts. This calculation also was done to see the differences of the length of the employed strategies in different initiating acts. It refers to how many strategies were

combined together to make up a refusal. This was calculated by dividing the total number of strategies in each initiating act (e.g. offer) by the number of total number of refusals in that initiating act. For example, the number of refusals to offer is 67. The total number of direct strategies which have been used to refuse these 67 offers is 72. By dividing 72 (number of direct strategies) to 67 (number of total refusals to offer) we calculate the average number of strategy used in offers. This means that on average, 1.07 direct strategies have been used to make up a refusal to offer. Table 4.5 shows the average number of strategies in each initiating act.

Table 4.5: Frequency and Number of Strategies with Respect to Each Initiating Act

<b>Initiating act</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>NDS</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>NIDS</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>NADJS</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>TNS</b>	<b>AVS</b>
<b>Offer</b>	67	72	1.07	177	2.64	20	0.29	269	4.01
<b>Request</b>	56	30	0.53	182	3.25	10	0.17	222	3.96
<b>Suggestion</b>	44	24	0.24	140	3.18	22	0.5	186	4.22
<b>Invitation</b>	41	39	0.95	129	3.14	24	0.58	192	4.68
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>165</b>		<b>628</b>		<b>76</b>		<b>869</b>	

NR= number of refusals in each initiating act

NDS= Number of direct strategies

NIDS= Number of indirect strategies

AVS = Average number of strategy in each initiating act

NADJS= Number of adjunct strategies to refusals

T N S= Total number of strategies

Table 4.5 represents the number of refusals and refusal strategies provided in response to different initiating acts. The table shows that Persian speakers of the current study employed higher number of strategies when refusing invitations (4.68) than other acts. Refusing suggestion was the next in this respect (4.22). The least strategies were found in refusing request (3.96).

#### 4.4.2 Types and Frequency of the Refusal Strategies Based on their Initiating Act

The occurrence of each specific strategy in refusals was also calculated with respect to each initiating act. Overall, some strategies are in common and hold more or less the same frequency in all initiating acts. Such strategies are "no", "negative willingness" "reason" "promise of future acceptance", "statement of principle", "unspecific reply" "ask for more information" and "define relationship". Appendecis C1, C2 and C3 indicate the details of types, frequencies and average number of refusal strategies with regard to the initiating acts.

Table 4.6: Strategies Based on Different Initiating Acts

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Request NR=56</b>	<b>Invitation NR=41</b>	<b>Offer NR= 67</b>	<b>Suggestion NR= 44</b>
	<b>AVS</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>AVS</b>
Reason/ explanation /excuse	1.51	1.58	0.83	1.59
* Gratitude /appreciation	0	0.46	1.38	0.11
No	0.26	0.58	0.83	0.13
Statement of alternative	0.39	0	0	0.13
Statement of regret	0.33	0.04	0	0.24
Statement of principle	0.19	0.07	0.23	0.34
*Ask for more information	0.10	0.02	0.02	0.34
*Define relationship	0.08	0.04	0.26	0.22

Note: Strategies with asterisk are the new strategies which were identified in the present research.

NR= number of refusals in each initiating act

AVS = average number of strategy in each initiating act

Certain strategies were found to be more common in a refusal to a specific act than the others (see table 4.6). While 'reason/ excuse and explanation' was the most frequent strategy in refusals regardless of their initiating acts (AVS= 1.32), its occurrence in refusing suggestions (AVS= 1.59) was much higher than the other refusals.

As table 4.6 shows, the most remarkable difference, however, is the difference in the frequency of the strategy “gratitude/appreciation” in refusals to offers with refusals to other acts. “Gratitude/appreciation” was the most frequent strategy in refusing offers. Its frequency was much higher compared to refusals towards invitations, suggestions, and requests. This strategy came second in refusing invitations (AVS= 0.46) in which “reason/ excuse and explanation” was the most frequent strategy. Gratitude functions as a conventional way to refuse offers, especially when these offers are part of ‘taarof’.

"Statement of alternative" and "statement of regret" are two strategies which are present with a high frequency in refusal strategies employed in requests (AVS= (0.39) and AVS= (0.33) respectively).

To refuse an invitation, the participants used a strategy which was not found in refusals to other acts. This strategy is named in the present study as "Returning the invitation". The frequency of this strategy in refusing invitations is 5 in 41 occurrences which favors the average (0.12).

The average number of strategies used in refusing invitations including direct, indirect and adjuncts to refusals was (4.68). For suggestions this average number is (4.22). These two average numbers, when compared to refusing offers (4.01) and request (3.96) are higher, which shows the importance of some initiating acts over the others. For example, invitations are kind favors to others; therefore, refusing a kind favor puts more challenge on the refuser. In a way, refusing an invitation is refusing a good social deed which is not easy to refuse. Tables 1, 2 and 3 in appendix C show the detailed frequency and the strategies used in refusing different initiating acts.

## **4.5 Research Question Number Two**

The second research question of the present study addressed the influence of ‘power’ and ‘social distance’ on the production of refusals. To answer this question, the following sections are put forward. First, the relationship between participants are categorized and named based on the degree of power and social distance. Second the influence of power on refusals are analyzed and finally how social distance affects the type and frequency of refusal strategies are reported.

### **4.5.1 Refusal Strategies in Different Relationship Types**

To answer the second research question, first the elicited refusal acts were categorized based on the power of the addressee over the refuser and the social distance between them. Based on the available data, the researcher classified the status/power of the refuser relative to the act initiator to three categories of high, equal and low. For example, in the case of student-teacher interaction, the student (refuser) is taken to have less power over his/her teacher.

Similarly, the social distance between the participants in the interactions was taken as close, familiar, or distant. Student-teacher relationship is an example of ‘familiar’ in terms of social distance. This means that the student and the teacher are neither distant (as strangers) nor close (as friends). This moderation in the degree of distance is termed as ‘familiar’. Therefore, the whole relationship is defined as ‘low-familiar’.

The variables of social distance and power demarcate a relative degree of difference and to a large extent are context-dependent. For example, the discourse shows the same form of familiarity between each single pair of participants. These contextual factors are taken into account in this study, but for the sake of ease in categorization, they are all

put under one category; ‘familiar’ (cf. Felix-Brasdefer, 2006) to reflect that the participants are not strangers but neither are they friends.

It should be noted that among strangers, power relationship is decided based on the context of language use. For example, in a request-refusal exchange in a university campus between two students, who are not acquainted, the power between the two participants is taken as equal, although in a different context there might be a different power relationship between them.

Generally, five different types of social relationship between the participants of the present study were identified, based on the two variables of ‘power’ and ‘social distance’. The first one is ‘equal- close’ relationship, like two close friends who are taking part in a conversation in which one refuses the other. The second relationship type is the ‘low- familiar’ in which a student refuses his/her teacher's request, offer, or suggestion. The third one is equal- distant in which a stranger refuses another stranger's request. In the present study, students of the same university who do not know each other and do not have any ongoing relationship are considered as strangers. The fourth relationship is ‘equal-familiar’ type which is exemplified as a relationship between two colleagues or classmates. An interaction between two classmates in which one is refusing the other is taken as equal familiar. And finally, higher-distant relationship in which a staff refuses a client. Table 4.7 shows these relationship types with their examples and number of strategies and refusals expressed in each.



Table 4.7: Characterizations of Relationship Type and Refusal Strategies Used

Refuser's status	Refuser's distance	Examples	NR	NDS	AVS	NIDS	AVS	NADJ	AVS	Total	AVS
Equal	Close	Close Friends	117	95	0.81	327	2.78	37	0.31	459	3.92
Equal	Familiar	Classmates/colleagues	55	36	0.65	160	2.90	13	0.23	209	3.8
Equal	Distant	Students of the university campus	8	4	0.5	18	2.25	0	0	22	2.75
Low	Familiar	Student/Teacher	21	24	0.87	94	4.47	30	1.42	148	7.04
High	Distant	Teacher/students	7	6	0.85	30	4.28	0	0	36	5.14

NR= Number of refusals

NDS= Number of direct strategies

NIDS= Number of indirect strategies

NADJS= Number of adjunct strategies to refusals

AVS = Average number of strategy in each initiating act

As table 4.7 shows, most refusal acts took place in 'equal-close' relationship type, followed by 'equal-familiar'. The number of strategies in refusals of 'low-familiar' relationship type is barely sufficient. In other relationship types the number of refusals was very limited and not sufficient to draw any conclusion.

#### 4.5.2 The Effects of 'Power' on Refusals

In line with pragmatic studies on speech acts, previous research on the speech act of refusal has confirmed the role of 'power' and 'social distance' (Beebe, et al., 1990; Kwon, 2003; Felix Brasdefer, 2004, 2006; Wannaruk, 2008; Izadi and Zuraidah, 2010; Al-Issa, 1998). In this study, one hypothesis was that the linguistic realizations of refusal speech act are subject to the status/power of the addressee over the speaker/refuser and the degree of social distance between them. This hypothesis is

verified in the present research. The two variables ‘power’ and ‘distance’ influenced both the type and the number of strategies employed by participants. In the next section, the difference in terms of types and frequency of strategies used between refusing a person of lower status, equal status and higher status is discussed.

#### **4.5.2.1 The Types and Frequency of Strategies Based on Power Relationship Types**

To show the length of the refusals in response to initiating acts by addressees of different power and distance, the frequency, percentage and average number of strategies used in each relationship type were calculated (table 4.7 above). The results showed a dramatic increase in the number of indirect strategies used to refuse a person of high power in comparison to refusing a person of equal and low power. As table 4.7 indicates the average numbers of refusal strategies used in three ‘equal’ relationship types are (3.92), (3.8), and (2.75). However, in the fourth relationship type; that is ‘low-familiar’, the average number of indirect refusal strategies goes up to 4.47. This means that for an Iranian speaker of Farsi, refusing a person of higher power demands almost twice as many strategies required to refuse a person of equal power. The following interaction shows an attempt by a female student (S) to refuse her male teacher and HOD’s (T) suggestion to take a course which has been offered by the teacher.

Excerpt 4: Transcript 3. B (7)

*S1: xanome [name] mæn in term dærse xandæne se ro erae dadæm*

L17. S1: Miss [name] this semester I have offered the course Reading 3

*S1: mitunid in dærso ba mæn begirid*

L18. S1: you can take this course with me

*S2: mmm jeddæn ostad? cheghædr heif shod=*

L19. S2: Mmm seriously professor? What a pity

*S2: Chunke vase terme bæ'd (.) man ye seri-*

L20. S2: Because for next semester I have a series of

S2: *xeili ahvaz chun særæm sholughe ye seri kara daræm vase hamin vase terme bæ'd*  
L21. S2: Very busy because I am in Ahvaz I've got a series of businesses to do for next sem

S2: *bishtær vahedhaye omumi bayæd værdaræm=*  
L22. S2: I have to take general courses more

S2: *Fek nækonam betunam dærse xandæne se ro begiræm*  
L23. S2: I don't think I can take Reading 3 course

S2: *chun dærse sænginieh(.)*  
L24. S2: Because it's a difficult course

S1: *are are*  
L25. S2: Yeah yeah

S2: *bayæd adæm amade bashe ye meghdar moshkel pish miad ba'd mmm væli*  
L26. S2: One must be ready there might be a bit of a problem but

S2: *xob tælashæmo mikonæm væli kollæn fek nemikonæm*  
L27. S2: ok I'll do my best but generally I don't think so

S1: *besyar xob enshalla termay ayænde dær khedmætetun hæstim*  
L28. S1 All right ok hopefully next semester I'll be at your service

S2: *xeili mæmnun ostad æz pishnæhadetun*  
L29. S2: Thank you very much professor for your suggestion

S1: *xahesh mikonæm*  
L30. S1 It's all right

Being fully aware of the mechanism of interactions in teacher-student relationships, S tries her best to employ as many 'face saving' strategies as possible to 'mitigate' the face threatening act of refusal (Brown and Levinson, 1978/87; Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Eslami, 2010). The perceived social distance between the two participants makes the situation formal. What is more important than the formality of the situation, however, is the power relation between S1 and S2. S2, consequently, finds this refusal very challenging, and does not suffice to provide only one reason for her refusal. She tends to elaborate on her explanation/excuse or reason to persuade teacher (S1) why she is not able to take the course.

S1 starts with a ‘request for approval’ strategy (jeddæn ostad: *seriously professor?*) following a ‘pause filler’ (mmm). The next strategy she uses is ‘expression of regret’ (cheghædr heif shod: *What a pity*). She shows (or pretends) to regret that she has missed a chance to take a course with T, which sets the scene for her refusal (pre-sequence). In refusal sequence, S2 is seemingly explaining why she feels pity, but actually she is refusing, using ‘reasoning strategy’. Given that the context is very power-sensitive and S2 is fully aware of that, she presents an elaborate reasoning combined with ‘statement of principle’ strategy (dærese sænginieh: *it’s a difficult course*, bayæd adæm amade bashe: *one must be ready*), negative ability (fek nækonam (.) betunam dærese xandæne se ro begiræm: *I don’t think I can take Reading 3 course*) and ‘self-defense’ (væli xob tælashamo mikonæm: *but I’ll do my best*). She then finishes by ‘expression of gratitude’ (xeili mæmnun ostad æz pishnæhadetun: *thank you very much for your suggestion professor*).

Generally, the data revealed the use of more indirect strategies than direct ones in refusals in ‘low-familiar’ relationship type. A combination of indirect strategies was used; participants were very elaborate in their refusals as they were fully aware of the relative power of their addressee over them.

Another difference was that in refusing a person of higher power, the strategies were not varied (8 strategies), although the number was very high. This means that a limited number of strategies were repeatedly used. While, in equal relationships the number of strategies was divided into varied strategies. This means that in refusing a person of higher power the participants did not have a high variety of strategies to choose. A total number of 8 strategy types (e.g. reason/ excuse or explanation) were used in ‘low-familiar’, while 24 strategy types were used in ‘equal-familiar’. Most direct strategies were also used in the ‘low-familiar’. All of these direct strategies are prefaces to indirect ones. No single direct strategy is used in this relationship type. The details of types and

frequencies of each direct, indirect and adjuncts with their average are put forward in appendix C (see tables 4, 5 and 6).

Table 4.8: Frequency and AVS of Strategies in Different Relationship Types

Strategy	strategies in equal-close relationship 117		strategies in equal-familiar relationship 55		strategies in equal-distant relationship 8		strategies in higher-distant relationship 7		strategies in low-familiar relationship 21	
	<b>F</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>AVS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>AVS</b>
Reason	151	1.32	62	1.12	8	1	19	2.71	36	1.71
Gratitude/appreciation	34	0.29	44	0.8	0	0	0	0	39	1.85
No	57	0.48	25	0.45	1	0.12	3	0.42	15	0.71
Define relationship	12	0.10	3	0.05	0	0	0	0	20	0.95
Statement of alternative	14	0.11	2	0.03	3	0.37	9	1.28	0	0

A close look at the above table reveals that the types of strategies which are used in refusals are affected by the ‘power’. The strategy ‘reason/excuse or explanation’ was found to be the most frequent strategy in the three equal relationships but the third most frequent in ‘low-familiar’ relationship type. In ‘low-familiar’ relationship type, ‘gratitude’ came first and ‘reason/ excuse or explanation’ was the second followed by direct ‘no’. It should again be emphasized that direct ‘no’ strategy is used to preface other indirect strategies in this relationship type.

Another difference in low-familiar relationship type with equal types is in the use of strategy ‘define relationship’. This strategy has been categorized in ‘adjuncts to refusals’ category. ‘Define relationship’ use in ‘low-familiar’ relationship type is far greater than other types. An example of this strategy is a refusal to an offer of some chocolate which is linguistically realized as ‘*Merci ostad, man rezhim daram*’ (thanks professor, I’m on a diet). Out of 21 refusals in ‘low-familiar’ there are 20 instances of this strategy. This strategy is very common especially in offers and suggestions initiated

by a more powerful addressee. This strategy was also present in Al-Issa's (1998) study in Arabic language. It is not therefore surprising to see that Persian and Arabic have this strategy in common in refusals, as they are two geographically neighboring languages. The example Al-Issa (1998) gives for this strategy is 'endearment'. However, in the current research the majority of instances of 'define relationship' strategy is 'status marker' (e. g. professor). Using this strategy in refusal implies that the refuser is aware of the higher status of the addressee and is using it to downtone its refusal.

#### **4.5.3 The Effects of 'Social Distance' on Refusals**

Some variation was also observed in close, familiar and distant relationship types. The influence of 'social distance' was also found in the data, although it was not as strong as 'power'. There are three relationship types in which power is taken almost the same, but the 'distance' between the participants are different. They are 'equal-close', 'equal-familiar' and 'equal distant'.

Strategies which were used in refusals in these three categories of relationship favor the frequency of (3.88), (3.8), and (2.75) respectively (table 4.7). This shows that the closer the participants are the more indirect strategies are needed to refuse. Participants who do not have ongoing relationship with each other are found to use fewer strategies by and large and more direct strategies in their refusals.

Moreover, slight differences were observed in the types of strategy use in the three equal relationship types. Any difference between these three relationship types is in fact an indication of the existence of social distance. Strategy 'reason/excuse/explanation' was the commonest of all three, but it was used more in 'equal-close' relationship type than the other two. The lowest frequency was in 'equal-distant' relationship. The direct

strategies also followed the same pattern; that is, they were not uncommon between strangers of equal status, as in the following example:

Excerpt 5: Transcript 2. C (3)

S1: *Karte ketabkhuneh dari?*

L3. S1: do you have library card?

S2: *motassefam nemitunam bedam*

L4. S2: sorry I can't give it to you

In fact, people adjust their refusal strategies depending on how distant they are to each other and how distant they want to be from each other. Usually, refusing someone with whom we have ongoing relationship and we also want to keep this ongoing relationship is more difficult than refusing those whom we do not know and do not care about them.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In sum, the study addressed two questions: 1) what strategies are frequently used by Iranian Farsi speakers to refuse an invitation, request, suggestion and offer? And 2) what is the role 'power' and 'distance' in their strategy use?

The findings show that generally there is tendency to use more indirect strategies to refuse in Iranian culture. As refusals are often taken as face threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1978), they are often softened using a variety of strategies such as 'reasoning', 'thanking', expression of positive attitude' and so on. Strategy 'reason' was found to be the most frequent strategy in the present study.

Regarding the second research question, it was found that refusal strategy choice by the participants was influenced by the perceived power and social distance between the participants. For example, when the power of the addressee was higher than the

refusers, the refusers tried to use many more strategies than when there was an equal power relationship. Also, when participants had ongoing relationship with each other, as in case of two friends, the refusals were more elaborate and softened compared to when they were totally strangers.