Refusal Strategies of Saudi EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the refusal strategies used by Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) undergraduate students as well as to examine the relationship of these strategies to social status in the situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion. It provided an answer to the research question, what are the strategies used by EFL undergraduate students when performing the speech act of refusal and whether these strategies vary according to status in the situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion? The participants were 150 Saudi EFL students. Data were derived using a discourse completion task. It was composed of three request situations, three invitation situations, three offer situations, and three suggestion situations. Each of those situations consisted of a refusal to a person of a higher status, another one for a person of equal status, and finally one for a person of a lower status. Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy was selected as the most comprehensive one for the analysis of refusal strategies. The results indicated that the most popular refusal strategies the participants used were the indirect ones, followed by the direct ones and then by adjuncts. The results also revealed that the participants refused differently in each of the four types of situations. On the other hand, the results showed that social status has no significant influence on their use of refusal strategies. Based on these findings, some recommendations for the integration of pragmatic teaching were suggested to foster pragmatic competence among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Invitation, offer, refusal strategies, request, Saudi EFL students, social status, speech acts, suggestion

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