Verbal and Non-verbal Refusal Strategies in English: Refusing Promotions

Nour Al Okla

Department of Foundation and General Studies
Al Ghurair University
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Abstract

Since the speech act of refusal is a face-threatening act, it is essential that some strategies be used to soften the refusal to save the listener's face. Although the domain of refusal strategies is one of the very important domains in the pragmatic aspect in English, none of the studies conducted about the English language in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have studied refusal strategies used by people in this region. This study aims to investigate the strategies that different people in Dubai use to refuse promotions by sales assistants in different shopping malls in Dubai. The data in this study was collected during field observations conducted in two shopping malls in Dubai. The findings in this study show that most participants chose to refuse the promotions non-verbally. They used different refusal strategies such as avoidance, hand gestures, and nodding their heads. Only two verbal refusal expressions were used. The reasons for these findings might be related to different factors such as the different cultural backgrounds of the participants, the level of English proficiency, and the nature of promotions as imposition on people's privacy. Therefore, in order to enable second language learners to use refusal strategies politely and effectively, English teachers should introduce the different strategies that people might use to refuse offers or suggestions in English.

Keywords: English language, refusal strategies, verbal refusals

Cite as: Al Okla, N. (2018). Verbal and Non-verbal Refusal Strategies in English: Refusing Promotions. *Arab World English Journal*, 9 (1).

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no1.23>