



The Impact of Age and Sex on the Refusal Strategies Used by Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

One major problem for non-native speakers is using refusals and because of this, second language teachers and others who communicate in that language should have the cultural differences in mind. When the interlocutors say “no” to a request or invitation, either directly or indirectly, they use speech act of refusal. Refusal is considered a face threatening act, as there exists a kind of contradiction in it and is always realized indirectly. Thus, a high level of pragmatic competence is needed to realize it. The aim of this study is to find out whether the age and sex of Iranian learners have any effect on their used refusal strategies and if the existence of such an effect was demonstrated which group is more native like in terms of content and form of used strategies. To achieve this end, graduated students (male/female) of different age, sex and different fields of study were selected. Three groups of participants participated in this study. The first group includes 30 American English Speakers (A.E.S). The second group consists of participants whose ages were between 22-29 and the third group was a group of 30 participants of both sexes who speak English as a second language (sex is the only variable under study in this group). Using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), a number of refusal situations were collected, responded by participants and analyzed. The results revealed that the age and sex of EFL learners does not have any significant effect on using refusal strategies.

Keywords: Speech Act, Refusal, Pragmatic Competence.

1. Theoretical framework

Refusals, which mean to give negative respond to an offer, request, invitation, etc, exist in all languages. When a speaker says ‘No’ to a request or invitation, either directly or indirectly, the speech act of refusal has occurred. The way of refusing differs in different languages and cultures. If people cannot use these strategies appropriately, they may endanger interpersonal relations of speakers. As Beebe et al. (1990) has pointed out, refusals are generally classified into two major classes: A, Direct and B, Indirect, which have their own subclasses, as follows:

I. Direct

A. Performative (e.g., “I refuse”)

B. Non performative statement

1. “No”

2. Negative willingness/ability (“I can’t”, “I won’t.”, “I don’t think so.”)

II. Indirect

A. Statement of regret (e.g., “I’m sorry ... “; “I feel terrible ... “)

B. Wish (e.g., “ I wish I could help you ... “)

C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., “My children will be home that night.”
“I have a headache.”)

D. Statement of alternative

1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., “I’d rather ...” “I’d prefer ...”)

2. Why don’t you do X instead of Y (e.g., “why don’t you ask some one else?”)

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., “If you have asked me earlier, I would have ... “)

F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., “I’ll do it next time”; “I promise I’ll ... “ or “ Next time I’ll ... “ using “will” of promise or “promise”)

G. Statement of principle (e.g., “I never do business with friends”)

- H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., “one can’t be too careful”)
- I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
 - 1. Treat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., “I won’t “one can’t be too careful”)
 - 2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: “I can’t make a living off people who just order coffee.”)
 - 3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., “ Who do you think you are?”; “That a terrible idea.”)
 - 4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the Request.
 - 5. Let the interlocutor off the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it.” “That’s Okay.” “You don’t have to.”)
 - 6. Self-defense (e.g., “I am trying my best.” “I’m doing all I can do”).
- J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
 - 1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
 - 2. Lack of enthusiasm
- K. Avoidance
 - 1. nonverbal
 - a. silence
 - b. hesitation
 - c. Do nothing
 - d. physical departure
 - 2. Verbal
 - a. Topic switch
 - b. Joke
 - c. Repetition of part of request, etc (e.g., “Monday.”)
 - d. Postponement (e.g., “I’ll think about it”)
 - e. Hedging (e.g., “Gee, I don’t know” “I’m not sure”).

2. Statement of problem

Second language acquisition research shows that refusal strategies exist among students and culture and first language of students has some effects on the used strategies.

Because second language learners are not familiar with norms of production of speech acts, they may have some difficulties that lead to breakdowns in communication (Gumperz, Jupp, and Roberts 1979). When people don’t have same knowledge of rules of language, they face communication difficulties. Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) stated that frequency of such difficulties is due to the transfer of first language rules into second language.

This study tends to investigate the strategies of refusals used by Iranian EFL learners and to investigate whether the age and sex have any effect on these refusals or not. The intention is to elicit the strategies used by Iranians and Americans and compare them in order to find whether these strategies are similar in both languages and also find if this similarity is more evident in a certain age group or certain sex.

3. Research Questions

- 1- Does age make a difference in the application of refusal strategies used by Iranian EFL learners?
- 2- Does sex make a difference in the application of refusal strategies used by Iranian EFL learners?
- 3- Does the frequency of direct and indirect strategy use differ among different age groups and different sexes?

4. Participants

Three groups of graduated students (male/female) of different age, sex and different fields of study were participated in this study. The first group was 30 American English Speaker (A.E.S). The second group was consisted of 30 participants whose ages were between 22-29 and the third group was a group of 30 participants (both male/ females).

5. Material

In this study a modified version of the DCT (Eslami Rasekh, 1992) was used. The DCT is a kind of questionnaire in which different social situations are explained and the participants should say what they would do if they were in those situations. Two variables, age and sex are going to be investigated.

6. The Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

A questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the experiment was prepared both in English and Persian. There are two parts in this questionnaire. The first part is consisted of some questions on the personal characteristics of the respondents; their age, sex, level of education, native language, and field of study at university, and the second part included twenty seven fixed discourse situations which a person may encounter in his/her daily language interactions.

Participants should read each situation and say what they would do if it was in real life. The sex and age of the hearer were factors under the study.

Each situation contained a blank in which only a refusal would fit. The directions were written out on the DCT. The word "refusal" was not used in order to avoid biasing the respondent's choice of response. But a rejoinder that followed the blank made it difficult to write anything sociolinguistically appropriate other than a refusal. Four types of refusals are included in this questionnaire: requests, invitations, offers and Suggestions. Situations involved, for example, refusing a worker's request for a raise, refusing an invitation to a boss's house for a party, refusing an offer, etc.

7. Procedure

In preparing the questionnaire for this research, a form of speech act, refuse, was studied. The questionnaire has two parts. In the first part, there are questions on personal characteristics of the respondents, i.e., sex, age, field of study, native language and level of education. The second part included twenty-seven situations. Subjects are asked to answer these twenty-seven questions. There was no time limit on the part of the subjects for giving the responses. Then, the responses to each item were classified.

Except the questionnaire for A.E.S which was administered through internet, the test for other groups were administered and conducted by researcher in Isfahan and Khorasgan Azad Universities.

8. Result and discussion

8.1 Comparison of the Responses of the Subjects in 22-25 and 26-29

8.1.1 Comparison of Types of Strategies in Direct Mode

Age has received considerable attention from sociolinguists. The younger generation (10-19 years) used non-standard variants, while middle-aged speakers (30-60 years) preferred the standard variant. Older speakers (70+ years) demonstrated use of non-standard variants, although not to the same extent as the younger generation. Crippen & Widdowson (1900) seek to explain this pattern by suggesting that younger speakers are subject to social pressures from their peer group, while middle-aged speakers have less cohesive social networks and are more influenced by mainstream societal values. In older, retired people, social pressures lessen and social networks again become narrow.

Learners who commence learning an L2 after the onset of puberty (and possibly earlier) are unlikely to acquire a native-speaker accent, while those who begin learning an L2 after the age of about 15 years are less likely to develop as much grammatical ability as those who developed before.

A response of a subject can consist of more than one simple utterance of refusing or rejecting. For example, it could be rejecting + hoping for future contribution.

As shown in Table 1, among the different ages, the overall frequency of the response type in the direct mode is low, 22.67% of total responses in 22-25 age group and 12.96% in 26-29 age group. This suggests that the majority of both groups seem to prefer the indirect mode which allows the speaker to avoid showing direct disagreement.

Table 1. Distribution of the total speech acts of two age groups (22-25 and 26-29) into direct and indirect mode.

Mode	22-25	26-29
Direct	234 (22.67%)	137 (12.96%)
Indirect	798 (77.33%)	920 (87.04%)
total	1032 (100%)	1057 (100%)

Table 2 shows the response types in the direct modes of performative and non-performative. There is only one type in the first one and two types in the latter.

Type 1 is a very short response: refusing only. The other two types, in the latter are very short answers such as "NO" and the other is "negative willingness/ability" such as "I can't, I won't and I don't think so". As the distribution rate of the direct mode between performative and non-performative statements shows, just the second group, 26-29, have used the performative mode. The overall frequency of this response is very low, just 0.73% of all responses. The use of non-performative mode is higher in both groups. But a great difference was observed when non-performative statements were compared.

Table 2. Response types and distribution of the direct mode between performative and non-performative statements

Types of response	Performative		Non-performative	
	22-25	26-29	22-25	26-29
1.NO	----	----	50 (21.36%)	49 (35.76%)
2.negative willingness	----	----	184 (78.64%)	87(63.50%)
3.I refuse	0	1(0.73%)	----	----
Total	0	1(0.73%)	234 (100%)	136 (99.27%)

As it can be understood from Table 2, first direct strategy (saying NO) is more popular among 26-29 (35.76%), whereas the frequency of this strategy is 21.36% in 22-25.

The second direct strategy is negative willingness/ability. The number of responses given shows these two age groups act differently in using direct strategies.

In addition, the investigator also did some statistical analyses with SPSS. In all these analyses the researcher states the result with 0.95 confidences and alpha level is considered 0.05. Table 3 depicted the result of chi-square test for first strategy. Considering the P-value (0.860), which is more than alpha (0.05), it is concluded that age of learners is not an effective factor on the use of indirect refusal strategies.

The chi-square test for the second direct strategy (negative willingness/ability) indicates that the age of learners does have an effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies. There is a column in the table, named Cramer's V which shows the intensity of this relationship, 0.140 here.

The result of chi-square test for the third strategy (I refuse) shows that the age of learners is not an effective factor on the use of indirect refusal strategies, as the P-value is 0.321, more than alpha (0.05).

Table 3. Results of Chi-square test for comparison of level of language proficiency and the use of direct strategies

direct strategies	Chi-square value	Asymp.sig	Cramer's V
1.NO	0.031 ^b	0.860	-----
2.negative willingness	41.365 ^b	0.000	0.140
3.I refuse	0.986 ^b	0.321	-----

8.1.2. Comparison of Types of Strategies in Indirect Mode

Table 4 shows types of verbal strategies for indirect mode. All the responses for the indirect mode fell into 16 identifiable strategies for the two age groups (22-25 and 26-29). In the indirect mode, some interesting phenomena were shown.

With respect to the data in Table 4, a great difference does exist between the two age groups in using the first strategy, II.A strategy (statement of regret). Rate of using this strategy is 2.88% in 22-25 age group and 15.10% in 26-29 age group. Besides, the two age groups did not reveal any significant different in using indirect refusal strategies.

Based on the information provided in Table 5, which describes the result of Chi-square test for indirect mode of verbal strategies, the P value for II.A strategy (statement of regret), is .000 which is less than alpha (0.05). This indicates that age does not have an effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies. The Cramer's V of this strategy, which shows the intensity of this relationship, is 0.204. According to the table, all of the other P values are more than alpha (0.95). So, for all other strategies, age does not have any effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies.

Table 4. Types of verbal strategies for the indirect modes of refusal in two age groups, (22-25) and (26-29)

Types of verbal strategies	22-25	26-29
1.statement of regret (II.A)	23 (2.88%)	139 (15.10%)
2.wish (II.B)	25 (3.13%)	22 (2.39%)
3.excuse, reason, explanation (II.C)	399 (50%)	405 (44.02%)
4.statement of alternative (II.D)	100 (12.53%)	85 (9.23%)
5.set condition for future or past acceptance (II.E)	19 (2.38%)	15 (1.63%)
6.promise of future acceptance (II.F)	16 (2%)	24 (2.60%)
7.statement of principle (II.G)	28 (3.50%)	22 (2.39%)
8.statement of philosophy (II.H)	26 (3.25%)	39 (4.23%)
9_1. treat or statement of negative consequences (II.i.1)	12 (1.50%)	13 (1.41%)
9_2.guilt trip (II.i.2)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
9_3.criticize the request/requestee (II.i.3)	34 (4.26%)	36 (3.91%)
9_4.request for help (II.i.4)	6 (0.75%)	8 (0.86%)
9_5.let interlocutor off the book (II.i.5)	52 (6.51%)	46 (5%)
9_6.self-defence (II.i.6)	35 (4.38%)	35 (3.80%)
9_7.acceptance that functions as a refusal (II.J)	18 (2.25%)	24 (2.60%)
10. avoidance (II.K)	5 (0.62%)	7 (0.76%)
TOTAL	798 (100%)	920 (100%)

Table 5. Results of Chi-square test for comparison of age and the use of indirect strategies

Indirect strategies	Chi-square value	Asymp.sig	Cramer's V
1.statement of regret (II.A)	87.072 ^b	.000	0.204
2.wish (II.B)	0.242 ^b	.623	----
3.excuse, reason, explanation (II.C)	0.000 ^b	.991	----
4.statement of alternative (II.D)	1.579 ^b	.209	----
5.set condition for future or past acceptance (II.E)	0.538 ^b	.463	----
6.promise of future acceptance (II.F)	1.517 ^b	.218	----
7.statement of principle (II.G)	0.828 ^b	.363	----
8.statement of philosophy (II.H)	2.495 ^b	.114	----
9_1. treat or statement of negative consequences (II.i.1)	0.015 ^b	.901	----
9_2.guilt trip (II.i.2)	----	----	----
9_3.criticize the request/requester (II.i.3)	0.024 ^b	.877	----
9_4.request for help (II.i.4)	0.260 ^b	.610	----
9_5.let interlocutor off the book (II.i.5)	0.481 ^b	.488	----
9_6.self-defence (II.i.6)	0.004 ^b	.952	----
9_7.acceptance that functions as a refusal (II.J)	0.789 ^b	.374	----
10. avoidance (II.K)	0.307 ^b	.579	----

8.2. Comparison of the Responses of the Subjects in Men and Women

8.2.1. Comparison of Types of Strategies in Direct Mode

Sociolinguistics and applied linguistics try to study language and sex and develop a variety of speech which is specially used with a particular sex, named sexlect or sociolect. Different works have been done on sex and language since 1970s and the most prominent scholars in this field include Deborah Cameron, Penelope Eckert, Janet Holmes, Deborah Tannen, and others.

The data in Table 6 shows that, among the men and women, the overall frequency of the response type in the direct mode is low, 21.76% of total responses in men and 17.44% in women. This suggests that the majority of both groups seem to prefer the indirect mode which allows the speaker to avoid showing direct disagreement.

Table 6. Distribution of the total speech acts of men and women into direct and indirect mode

Mode	men	women
Direct	257 (21.76%)	205 (17.44%)
Indirect	906 (78.24%)	970 (82.56%)
total	1181 (100%)	1175 (100%)

Table 7 shows the response types in the direct modes of performative and non-performative. There is only one type in the first one and two types in the latter.

As the distribution rate of the direct mode between performative and non-performative statement, just the first group, men, have used the performative mode. The overall frequency of this response is very low, just 0.38% of all responses. The use of non-performative mode is higher in both groups. But a great difference was observed when non-performative statements were compared.

As it is clear from Table 7, the use of first direct strategy (saying NO) is similar in both groups of men and women, 21.40% in men and 20.48% in women.

The second direct strategy is negative willingness/ability. The number of responses given by men is 78.22% which is again similar to the responses given by women (79.52%). The data of this table show that there is not any significant difference between men and women in using direct strategies.

Table 7. Response types and distribution of the direct mode between performative and non-performative statements

Types of response	Performative		Non-performative	
	Men	women	Men	women
1-NO	-----	-----	55 (21.40%)	42 (20.48%)
2-Negative willingness/ability	-----	-----	201 (78.22%)	163 (79.52%)
3-I refuse	1(0.38%)	0	-----	-----
Total	1(0.38%)	0	256 (99.62%)	205 (100%)

In addition, the investigator also did some statistical analysis with SPSS. In all these analyses the researcher stated the results with 0.95 confidences and alpha level was considered 0.05. According to the result of chi-square test, Table 8,

and considering the P-value (0.218), which is more than alpha (0.05), it is clear that sex is not an effective variable for first strategy.

The results of Chi-square test for second direct strategy (negative willingness/ability) indicates that sex does not have any effect on the use of this strategy because P-value is equal to .054 and is more than alpha (0.05).

The results of Chi-square test for third strategy (I refuse) shows a P-value of 0.323, which means that sex cannot be considered as an effective variable in using this strategy.

Table 8. Results of Chi-square test for comparison between sex and use of direct strategies

Direct strategy	Chi-square value	Asymp.sig	Crammer's V
1- NO	1.514 ^b	0.218	-----
2- negative willingness/ability	3.713 ^b	0.054	-----
3- I refuse	0.977 ^b	0.323	-----

8.2.2. Comparison of Types of Strategies in Indirect Mode

Table 9 shows different types of verbal strategies for indirect mode. According to Table 9, the distribution rates of all strategies are similar in both groups and no noticeable difference was found. The only difference was in II.i.4 (request for help) which was used by 0.55% of men but 4.94% of women.

Table 10 shows the result of chi-square test for indirect mode of verbal strategies. According to the data of this table, the P value for 14 strategies, out of 16 strategies, is more than alpha (0.05) which indicates that sex does not have any effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies. But P value is less than alpha (0.05) for 2 out of 16 indirect strategies, therefore, it can be said that sex is an effective variable on the use of indirect refusal strategies. These strategies are strategies II.E and II.i.4.

In II.E strategy (set condition for future or past acceptance), the P value is 0.013, which is less than alpha (0.05). This implies that sex has an effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies. The Cramer's V which shows the intensity of this relation is equal to 0.052.

In II.i.4 strategy (request for help), the P value is 0.000, which is less than alpha (0.05). This implies that sex has an effect on the use of indirect refusal strategies. The Cramer's V which shows the intensity of this relation is equal to 0.126.

Table 9. Types of verbal strategies for the indirect modes of refusal in men and women

TYPES OF VERBAL STRATEGY	men	Women
1.statement of regret (II.A)	143 (15.78%)	132 (13.60%)
2.wish (II.B)	19 (2.09%)	32 (3.29%)
3.excuse, reason, explanation (II.C)	405 (44.70%)	397 (40.92%)
4.statement of alternative (II.D)	89 (9.82%)	95 (9.79%)
5.set condition for future or past acceptance (II.E)	10 (1.10%)	24 (2.47%)
6.promise of future acceptance (II.F)	19 (2.09%)	23 (2.37%)
7.statement of principle (II.G)	24 (2.64%)	26 (2.68%)
8.statement of philosophy (II.H)	29 (3.20%)	37 (3.81%)
9_1. treat or statement of negative consequences (II.i.1)	9 (0.99%)	16 (1.64%)
9_2.guilt trip (II.i.2)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
9_3.criticize the request/requestee (II.i.3)	36 (3.97%)	33 (3.40%)
9_4.request for help (II.i.4)	5 (0.55%)	48 (4.94%)
9_5.let interlocutor off the hook (II.i.5)	52 (5.73%)	48 (4.94%)
9_6.self-defence (II.i.6)	40 (4.41%)	31 (3.19%)
9_7.acceptance that functions as a refusal (II.J)	19 (2.09%)	23 (2.37%)
10. avoidance (II.K)	7 (0.77%)	5 (0.51%)
TOTAL	906 (100%)	970 (100%)

Table 10. Results of Chi-square test for comparison between sex and the use of indirect strategies

Indirect strategies	Chi-square value	Asymp.sig	Cramer's V
1.statement of regret (II.A)	0.249 ^b	0.617	----
2.wish (II.B)	3.709 ^b	0.054	----
3.excuse, reason, explanation (II.C)	0.215 ^b	0.643	----
4.statement of alternative (II.D)	0.394 ^b	0.530	----
5.set condition for future or past acceptance (II.E)	6.191 ^b	0.013	0.052
6.promise of future acceptance (II.F)	0.490 ^b	0.484	----
7.statement of principle (II.G)	0.137 ^b	0.711	----
8.statement of philosophy (II.H)	1.201 ^b	0.273	----
9_1. treat or statement of negative consequences (II.i.1)	2.152 ^b	0.142	----
9_2.guilt trip (II.i.2)	----	----	----
9_3.criticize the request/requestee (II.i.3)	0.072 ^b	0.7890	----
9_4.request for help (II.i.4)	36.756 ^b	0.000	0.126
9_5.let interlocutor off the book (II.i.5)	0.083 ^b	0.773	----
9_6.self-defence (II.i.6)	0.969 ^b	0.325	----
9_7.acceptance that functions as a refusal (II.J)	0.490 ^b	0.484	----
10. avoidance (II.K)	0.290 ^b	0.591	----

9. Content Analysis

Now let us turn to the analysis of content typically used to fulfill the function of given formulas. It is in this domain that pragmatic transfer seems to be most evident. There is pragmatic transfer in the content of several formulas, and the most interesting one is excuses and the statement of alternative.

Excuses are perhaps the most promising area for content analysis. Considering the data, it seems that Iranian excuses are less specific and they transfer this pattern of excusing to their second language. Other examples of Iranian's English (IE) excuse that seemed vague in details, in comparison to American's English (AE) excuses, were found in the DCT data. When a friend asks others to teach English to his/her child for exam (knowing that his/her child does not have a good memory), one IE responded, "I don't have time to do this." When refusing the boss's invitation to a party at his home, one IE responded, "My children have many problems." Another said, "I have a previous engagement." American people speaking English tended to be a little more specific about their plans, naming the place they had to go." One AE said in a situation that "I promised my friend to look after her dog."

It was initially anticipated that Iranian respondents would refuse the offer of a promotion and raise an excuse that Iranians find airtight, referring, say, to the children's schooling. One respondent said "I like living here." One IE, said, "Because I like it here, I don't move." Further analysis and categorization of excuse types is needed for a full understanding of pragmatic transfer. Claiming that IE excuses are less specific may turn out to be too stereotyping in the final analysis. Certainly some excuses were very specific and quite graphic. In general, Iranian informants elaborated more when refusing food. American people tended to say "No thank you," but Iranians favored longer responses using reasons.

Other strategy which is common in IE is the statement of alternative. Refusing to give notes to a friend, one IE replied "Why you don't say it earlier? If you had told me some days ago, I could print it for you." Another IE refused going picnic, saying "Don't you think it's better to spend holiday with your family?"

In addition, Iranians also use statements of philosophy and principle in order to refuse something. An IE refused to try the diet a friend suggested, saying "I make it a rule to be temperate in eating". Another refused by replying "I don't really like diets

Regarding the age and sex of the Iranian EFL learners, and considering tables which were described before, it is clear that there isn't any difference between their answers. This shows that our society is going to become a uniform one, without so much difference between men and women of different age groups.

10. Preference for Directness and Indirectness

Two variables were evaluated in this study. One of them was sex and the other one was age. Two age groups, one 22-25 and the other 26-28 participated in this study. Considering tables and also studying used strategies, it can be said that, there were no meaningful relationship between age and using refusal strategies in both groups. Reviewing the content of refuses shows that both groups have used the same contents and the distribution rate of direct and indirect strategies was similar.

Results of this study showed that, likewise age, sex of participants does not have any significant effect on the type and content of the used strategies and both sexes have acted the same in using refusal strategies.

The tables show that distribution rate of using direct and indirect strategies between men and women were similar. This implies that Iranian society is going to become more uniform.

11. Research questions and hypotheses revisited

1- Does age of Iranian EFL learners make a difference in the application of refusal strategies used?

Considering tables, there was no meaningful relationship between age and use of refusal strategies in most cases. So, age doesn't have any significant effect on the application of refusal strategies used by Iranian EFL learners.

2- Does sex of Iranian EFL learners make a difference in the application of refusal strategies used?

It is clear that there was no meaningful relationship between sex and use of refusal strategies in most cases. So, sex doesn't have any significant effect on the application of refusal strategies used by Iranian EFL learners.

3- Does the frequency of direct and indirect strategy use differ between different age groups and different sex s?

Regarding Tables 1 and 6, using direct strategies is more popular in the second age group (22-25). Also it is more used by men than women. So the results show that the use of direct and indirect strategies differs between different age groups.

12. Conclusion

One of the variables which were studied in this research was the age of EFL learners. Two age groups (22-25 and 26-29) were compared using direct and indirect strategies. Results showed that these two groups were similar in form and content of used strategies. Tables show the distribution rate of types of indirect strategies, indicates that in most cases, there is no significant difference between form, content and distribution rate of the strategies used by two groups (22-25 and 26-27).

The next variable of this study was sex. Regarding sex, like age, there observed no difference between men and women using refusal strategies. Moreover, these two groups have similar frequency rates using direct and indirect strategies. Also, in indirect strategies, the frequency rate, content and form of used strategies were similar.

In addition to lack of difference in these two age groups, two sexes were not different in using refusal strategies, too. Although there were so many differences between Iranian men and women in past, the results of this study show that the society is going to become more homogeneous and the cultural and social differences are going to become less than before.

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