

REFUSALS OF REQUESTS IN HUNGARIAN, AMERICAN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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1 Introduction

Refusals of requests are speech acts that are considered highly face-sensitive (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as they have the potential of offending the requester and thus jeopardizing the rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) between interlocutors. They can also pose a threat to the speaker's face by creating the impression that one is rude and insensitive (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). Matters become even more complicated in intercultural situations, where interlocutors with different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds try to communicate. Without a thorough understanding of the pragmalinguistic conventions and sociopragmatic principles that govern interlocutors' linguistic behavior, intercultural communication often breaks down or fails (Thomas, 1983). As a result, misunderstandings, stereotypes and sometimes even conflicts arise not only on the individual level but also on the social, societal and cultural levels. Therefore, research investigating pragmatic norms within and across languages is particularly important to promote a harmonious co-existence of multiple cultures. Research may shed light on patterns of linguistic behavior and the explanations for them that can offer a more reliable alternative to account for speaker intention instead of interlocutors' often erroneous attributions¹ and intuitions.

The present study is a cross-cultural investigation that wishes to contribute to this body of research by comparing Hungarian, American English and Italian refusals of requests. Hungarian refusals of requests were elicited from Hungarian college students via a semi-structured interview, while results on American English and Italian refusals of requests were adapted from a relevant study by Verzella and Tommaso (2020). There are two main objectives in this study: the first aim is to ascertain similarities and differences among the three languages as regards refusal of request realizations and speaker orientation towards positive/negative politeness strategies. The second aim is to test how suitable the research instrument is for investigating refusals in spoken interaction. To my knowledge, cross-cultural pragmatic studies on Hungarian, Italian and American English refusals of requests have yet to be conducted; therefore, the present study aims at filling this gap in the literature. By investigating the differences in the pragmatic norms of these languages, communicative difficulties that

¹ See, for example Kelley, H. H. 1973. The processes of causal attribution. *American Psychologist*, 28(2), 107–128.

potentially emerge in intercultural situations can be identified and addressed. This can inform L2 English and L2 Italian teaching practices in Hungary, thus enabling second/foreign language learners to become more successful language users.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Politeness theories and refusals

Since refusals are viewed as highly face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and face is an essential part of most politeness theories (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021), it seems worthwhile to outline the most significant approaches to politeness for a better interpretation of linguacultural refusal realization patterns. The notion of face became widespread in pragmatics due to Goffman's (1955, 1967) work on social interaction, in which he defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular interaction". Brown and Levinson (1987) expanded Goffman's (1955, 1967) definition of face by differentiating between positive face and negative face. Positive face concerns the interlocutors' need to be appreciated and valued by others, while negative face refers to "the basic claims to territories, personal preserves, rights to [...] freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (1987:61).

Brown and Levinson (1987) also argue that face can be maintained, saved, enhanced or threatened. In their view, since face threats, such as humiliating someone (positive face) and ordering them around (negative face), can be reciprocated, it is usually in every interlocutor's best interest to maintain the other's face as a form of self-protection. However, people sometimes have to engage in face-threatening acts, for example, in refusing a request, that call for the employment of face-saving strategies, such as positive politeness and negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness concerns enhancing the positive face of the interlocutor with, for example, compliments and expressions of thanks. Negative politeness concerns negative face wants, such as showing deference and thus mitigating any potential offence (Leech, 2014) through, for instance, apologies and hedges. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that strategy choice depends on three main contextual variables: social distance, power and cultural ranking, which describes "how threatening a particular speech act is perceived to be within a specific culture" (O'Keeffe, 2020:113).

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-saving approach to politeness has been widely criticized because of its ethnocentricity (e.g. Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1989) and its static and cognitive view of face and politeness, thus ignoring the intersubjective (i.e. social *and* individual) nature of interaction and the importance of hearer evaluation (Locher and Watts,

2008), Maróti (2013) suggests² that ascertaining speaker orientation to negative/positive politeness may be a suitable means to describe refusals in European cultures. The reason for this is that saving face revolves around the idea of reducing social tension that seems to be inherently present in refusals. Therefore, following Maróti (2013) and Verzella and Tommaso (2020), I will also mainly rely on the concepts of positive politeness and negative politeness when analyzing Hungarian refusals of requests.

As a reaction to traditional, theoretical interpretations of politeness, Locher and Watts (2005) developed the concept of relational work, that is, “the ‘work’ individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others” (2005:10). Relational work covers not only polite behavior, but it also accounts for impolite as well as politic or appropriate behavior, in contrast to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory that, as Locher and Watts (2005:10) claim, “is not in fact a theory of politeness, but rather a theory of facework, dealing only with the mitigation of face-threatening acts”, such as refusals of requests. Locher and Watts (2005) also maintain that, since politeness is discursively constructed and negotiated in ongoing verbal interaction, it cannot be adequately described with a universal theoretical framework. Thus, a discursive approach to politeness may be more worthwhile than a pre-fixed analytic one. Also, they argue that politeness is primarily a “first-order construct” based on the evaluative judgements of interlocutors (2008:97), and, since these evaluations are subjective, “no linguistic structure can be considered inherently (im)polite” (Watts, 2003 in O’Keeffe et al., 2020:120). Furthermore, they point out that speaker evaluations of the appropriateness of a particular behavior in a given social interaction (first-order politeness or politeness1) may not coincide with theoretical evaluations of the same behavior (second-order politeness or politeness2). Therefore, they suggest that politeness research should rely on lay interpretations of interactional behavior. Following this suggestion, I will rely on participants’ remarks on (in)appropriate ways of refusing a request in my analysis³.

² Maróti (2013), in fact, suggested a combination of three theoretical frameworks for the analysis of refusals on a discourse level: Goffmann’s (1955) concept of face, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory and Watts et al.’s (2005) distinction between politeness1 and politeness2, which will be briefly described below.

³ It is important to point out that Locher and Watts (2005:17) “prefer to use an interpretive approach towards instances of verbal interaction rather than to ask the participants themselves how they felt about what they were doing. This latter method of accessing participants’ perceptions of politeness, like those in which informants are asked to react to real or intuited examples of interaction, is flawed precisely because they are being asked to evaluate consciously along a ‘polite-impolite’ parameter which might not correspond to what they perceived at the time.” However, I believe that participant reflections on personal experience regarding refusals can still be a valuable – or at least interesting – source of data, as it may shed light on participants’ motivations for using a particular strategy or their concerns about face, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals.

One of the most comprehensive politeness theories is Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management theory, in which rapport management is defined as "the management of interpersonal relations: the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations" (2008: 3). According to Spencer-Oatey (2008), rapport can be maintained, enhanced, neglected or challenged. These potential rapport outcomes are related to how face sensitivities, interactional goals and sociality rights and obligations are handled in ongoing verbal interaction by employing various rapport management strategies. These strategy choices depend on rapport orientation (rapport enhancement, rapport maintenance, rapport neglect and rapport challenge), contextual variables (social power, social distance, message content, social/interactional roles and activity type), and sociopragmatic principles and pragmalinguistic conventions.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) maintains that "[r]apport can be threatened by overlooking people's face sensitivities, by infringing their perceived sociality rights and by hampering their interactional goals" (2008:32). Thus, she differentiates among face-threatening behavior, rights-threatening behavior and interactional goal-threatening behavior that may or may not co-occur in interaction. Firstly, face may be threatened when an interlocutor is belittled, criticized or devalued in some way, thus causing a mismatch between claimed identity qualities by the self and attributed ones by others. Secondly, perceived sociality rights may be threatened when people "infringe our sense of social entitlements, and as a result we feel offended, uncomfortable, annoyed or angry" (2008:18). Lastly, interactional goals may be threatened when people obstruct us in achieving them. This distinction is important because it allows for a more profound understanding of how and why rapport may be (perceived to be) threatened in social interaction and thus how unintended rapport threat can be prevented in intercultural situations. In my analysis, I will use some concepts of Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management theory to explain findings on Hungarian, American English and Italian refusals of requests.

Rapport management theory was further developed in Spencer-Oatey and Kádár's (2021) interdisciplinary politeness evaluation and production model, which draws on the "interconnections between social group membership, cultural group identities/orientations, cultural patterning and the dynamics of cultural encounters" (2021:72) to interpret (im)politeness phenomena within and across cultures. Among many other aspects, they further elaborated on the contextual variable 'activity type' adapting Allwood's (2007) framework on communicative activities. Allwood (2007) identifies four essential contextual parameters in his

framework, namely (1) the purpose, function and related procedures of a given activity, (2) participant roles along with (perceived) pertaining rights, obligations and competences, (3) the necessary artefacts (e.g. tools and instruments) and (4) the social and physical environment. In this paper, I will draw on the framework of communicative activity to explain some potential differences between refusals elicited in guided conversations and semi-structured interviews.

2.2 The speech act of refusal

Within speech act theory, refusals are often categorized as commissives because they commit the speaker not to perform a future action (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Based on this categorization, refusals can be defined as a speech act by which “a speaker fails to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor” (Chen et al., 1995:121). Refusals are also responding actions (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2018) that follow offers, invitations, suggestions and requests. In other words, from a Conversation Analysis perspective, refusals are second pair actions in adjacency pairs, where the first pair-part can be an offer, an invitation, a suggestion or a request (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Because of this reactive nature of refusals, speakers have no chance of preparing their response in advance, which makes them a particularly complex and difficult speech act (Szili, 2004).

From a politeness theory perspective, the complexity of refusals lies in the fact that they emphasize the “different wants and needs” of their interlocutors (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2018:140). By refusing a request, the speaker may threaten the requester’s positive face and simultaneously they may risk seeming rude and insensitive to the interlocutor’s face needs, which could result in losing their own positive face (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). Also, by making a request, the requester imposes on the interlocutor’s free will and independence, thus threatening the latter’s negative face (or sociality rights, in Spencer-Oatey’s (2008) terms). Thus, the refuser may employ various strategies to save the face (Goffmann, 1955) of both parties by mitigating the illocutionary force of the refusal. This mitigation can be achieved, for example, through (a combination of) apologies, excuses, indirectness and hedging (negative politeness), as well as compliments, expressions of thanks and congratulations (positive politeness) (Leech, 2014; Levinson, 1983; Pomerantz, 1984 in Verzella & Tommaso, 2020).

Refusals are also sensitive to sociolinguistic and contextual variables, such as the social distance between interlocutors and status/power differences between them, the degree of imposition of the speech act and its cultural ranking (Brown & Levinson, 1987), the type of eliciting speech act (e.g. offer, suggestion, invitation or request) (Keshavarz et al., 2006) as well as its form and content (e.g. direct vs indirect request) (Maróti, 2013). Moreover, their

actual realization depends on the politeness norms of a given culture (Beebe et al., 1990; Siebold & Busch, 2015; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021). Because of this manifold variation in refusal realizations, a lot of classifications have been created in an attempt to describe refusal strategy patterns across and within cultures (e.g. Beebe et al., 1990; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b; Turnball & Saxton, 1983). The present research relied on a taxonomy of refusals developed by Verzella and Tommaso (2020) (see section 3.3 and Appendix A). Before turning to the results of the present study, some previous empirical research findings on Hungarian, American English and Italian refusals will be outlined to provide a context for my own findings.

2.3 Previous empirical research on refusals

Refusals have received a lot of attention in cross-cultural (e.g. Çiftçi, 2016; Kwon, 2004; Nelson et al. 2002; Nikmehr & Jahedi, 2014; Verzella & Tommaso, 2020), intralingual (e.g. Chen, 1995; Maróti, 2013; Szili, 2002b) and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2018; Beebe et al., 1990; Bella, 2014; Demirkol, 2016; Félix-Brasdefer & Bardovi-Harlig, 2010) studies alike. Many previous studies have relied on discourse completion tests (DCT) to reveal general cultural patterns of refusal realizations on an utterance level (e.g. Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Alrefaee et al., 2019; Maróti, 2013), while studies using, for example, role-plays (e.g. Morkus, 2014; Bella, 2014; Al-Gahtani and Roever, 2018) and guided conversations (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020) were interested in how refusals were actually realized and negotiated on a discourse level (Maróti, 2013⁴).

2.3.1. The Hungarian refusals

As regard Hungarian, Szili (2002b) conducted a comprehensive DCT study on Hungarian refusal strategies. She found that Hungarians primarily refused requests by using (a combination of) nonperformative statements, excuses and expressions of regret, mitigated by adjuncts like compliments, expressions of thanks and apologies. Falyuna (2016) came to similar conclusions in an intriguing DCT pilot study on Hungarian refusals of requests, where she examined how lies were employed as face-saving strategies and refusal strategies simultaneously. She found that the most frequent strategies were excuses, mostly referring to personal needs, duties and external circumstances, and were often combined with expressions

⁴ Maróti (2013:7) argues that it is important to distinguish between “utterance-level refusals and discourse-level refusals according to whether the goal is to study individual turns or a whole interaction”. Thus, DCTs may be suitable for the study of utterance-level refusals, while role-plays, guided conversations and interviews may be better for studying discourse-level refusals.

of regret, nonperformative statements and suggestions of alternatives. Falyuna (2016) argues that these strategies serve to protect the refuser's positive face (e.g. their identity as an altruistic person) by providing (pseudo-)legitimate reasons for the refusal, as well as the requester's positive face by mitigating the illocutionary force of the refusal and offering alternative ways for fulfilling the request, thus showing consideration towards the needs and wants of the interlocutor. Also, they protect both interlocutors' negative face: the refuser exercises their rights to freedom by refusing an unwanted request, while the requester is free to accept or dismiss the alternatives offered.

In a study on Hungarian refusals of offers, Maróti (2013) tested multiple data collection and elicitation methods (e.g. DCTs, role-plays, telephone calls) with the objective of finding the most suitable one for the study of refusals. She also analyzed a corpus of telemarketing calls, where agents tried to convince potential clients to apply for some banking and insurance services. Based on her findings, Maróti (2013:7) calls for the importance of distinguishing between "utterance-level refusals and discourse-level refusals", where the latter may consist of repeated refusal attempts of various types extended over several turns. She uses the term 'macrostrategy' to describe these discourse-level refusals. She also suggests that it may be important to study the position, number, length and content of the various 'microstrategies' within macrostrategies, as well as their relation to the form and content of the eliciting act, as this can also show cultural variation, which have implications for cross-cultural and intercultural research, as well as L2 pragmatics instruction.

2.3.2. The American English and Italian refusals

As for Italian and American English, Verzella and Tommaso (2020) used a smart guided conversation protocol to elicit refusals of requests from college students. The participants were stopped between classes for a short conversation about cultural diversity. Then they were requested "to join an organization of native speakers who met three times a week to have conversations with international students interested in improving their skills in spoken English (at NDSU) and spoken Italian (at Unimol)" (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:99) with the purpose of eliciting a refusal. The interlocutors were of equal status, and there was high social distance between them.

The collected data were then coded and analyzed using a taxonomy of refusals (see appendix A) that is based on a distinction between positive and negative face strategies (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). Results indicated that both groups predominantly resorted to the

use of redressive action to mitigate the impact of their refusal; however, the speakers of American English and Italian differed substantially in their preferred types of redressive action. While the American English speakers relied mainly on positive face strategies, the Italian speakers seemed to prefer negative face strategies, such as apologies and explanations. The Italians also relied more frequently on avoidance strategies compared to the Americans. Also, the Italians were lengthier than their American counterparts, making their responses more indirect in general.

Another difference was found with regard to explanations. While the Italians often offered long, detailed explanations with reference to external circumstances or personal reasons, Americans avoided the “disclosure of personal information⁵” (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:108). In addition, an intriguing strategy observed among some of the Italian participants was the transformation of requests into offers. Since declining offers is considered appropriate in Italian culture, treating requests as offers may have served as a means of reducing the self-face threat posed by the formulation of the refusal (Verzella and Tommaso, 2020).

As Verzella and Tommaso (2020) explain, speakers’ choice between negative and positive face strategies when refusing a request seems to be consistent with their attitudes towards refusing; that is, whether they are more concerned about their own face or the interlocutor’s face. The Italians seemed to treat refusals as a threat to the refuser’s face, which was reflected in their reliance on negative politeness strategies. The American English speakers, on the other hand, “did not see the speech act of requesting as particularly face-threatening. (...) For this reason, they dispreferred negative face strategies such as the use of explanations and apologies” (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:104). Also, the Americans’ reluctance to share personal information as a justification for their refusal was explained by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of territory and its relation to negative face. That is, by refraining from giving detailed accounts of one’s reasons for saying no, one is protecting one’s own territory. These results will serve as a point of comparison for my own findings, which I will turn to after the Methodology section.

3 Methodology

⁵ This seems to be in contrast with some DCT findings on American English refusals of requests, where Americans were found to provide rather specific, though brief, excuses related to personal needs and duties (e.g. Beebe et al., 1990; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Alrefaee et al., 2019). However, both the data collection instrument and the type of request used for refusal elicitation may have an impact on the data. Thus, in the present paper, I will only consider findings on naturally-occurring (or close to naturally-occurring) refusals.

The present study aimed at examining Hungarian refusal strategy preferences in relation to Italian and American English refusals of requests. A semi-structured interview was designed to elicit refusals of requests from Hungarian college students in verbal interaction. Results were then compared to American English and Italian refusal strategy patterns based on Verzella and Tommaso's (2020) findings to ascertain similarities and differences among the three languages as regards refusal of request realizations and speaker orientation towards positive/negative politeness strategies. Another aim was to test the applicability of the research instrument for investigating refusals in spoken interaction.

3.1 Participants

The participants were nine Hungarian students from the University of Szeged doing their MA degrees either in English Studies or in English Translation and Interpretation. Their average age was 24, and there were four females and five males. Most of the participants came from different regions of Hungary, while two of them were from Vojvodina. All of them had an at least C1 proficiency in English with 15 years of formal study on average, and most of them had varying degrees of proficiency in (sometimes multiple) other languages, for instance, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, French, and Serbian⁶.

3.2 Instruments and procedures

In this study a semi-structured interview was used to elicit refusals of requests from the participants. The interview was created based on Dörnyei's (2008) principles for interview design and conduct, and Verzella and Tommaso's (2020) guided conversation protocol (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews use a pre-defined set of prompts and questions; however, these function only as a guidance for the interviewer to initiate a conversation about a given topic. Once the respondent starts to elaborate on the topic, the interviewer reacts to these responses and the conversation can unfold similarly to how it would in a non-research situation. This flexibility and reciprocity help to create an equal-status relationship and thus a relaxed environment in which respondents can feel free to openly discuss various issues, in this way providing the researcher with rich qualitative data (Borg, 2007; Dörnyei, 2008). Also, asking participants to talk about their personal experience engages them actively and diverts their attention from being recorded, which may help decrease the observer's paradox (Labov,

⁶ One participant was, in fact, a Hungarian-Serbian bilingual.

1997⁷), thus, leading to more authentic data. This near-authentic nature of semi-structured interviews seem to make them appropriate for eliciting speech acts in spoken interaction⁸ (O’Keeffe et al., 2020).

The participants of this study were informed that they would be asked about their language learning attitudes, motivations and strategies. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and were audio recorded⁹ after the informed consent of the participants. Each conversation lasted about twelve minutes, and each recording was labelled according to a coding scheme to ensure anonymity. After a few open-ended questions on English learning motivations and strategies, respondents were thanked for their contributions, and they were told that the interview would conclude with an unrelated and a bit unusual request. Following Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) eliciting speech act, participants were asked to join an organization called the Hungarian Conversation Club¹⁰ to help foreign university students learn Hungarian. They were told that volunteers would have to meet three times a week for two hour-long sessions for a semester. The purpose of the request was to elicit refusals, as it was expected that most college students would not have this much free time at their disposal to dedicate it to volunteer work. After the refusal sequence ended and participants were reassured that no offense had been taken by their saying no, the true purpose of the study was revealed. Lastly, participants were asked to reflect on how they usually said no to requests and what their choices might depend on before ending the interview.

3.3 Data analysis

The collected data were coded¹¹ and analyzed based on an adapted version of Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) taxonomy of refusals (see Appendix A). Most studies investigating refusals rely on Beebe et al.’s (1990) classic taxonomy of refusals consisting of direct and

⁷ “The effort to observe how speakers talked when they were not being observed created the Observer’s Paradox. Among the partial solutions to that paradox within the face-to-face interview, the elicitation of narratives of personal experience proved to be the most effective” (Labov, 1997:395).

⁸ Schneider (2007), for example, analyzed the thanking sequences at the end of interviews that were previously conducted for research on attitudes towards English regional varieties.

⁹ Cameras were turned off during the Zoom calls because only audio recordings were required for the research. However, this made the interviews more similar to phone calls instead of face-to-face interactions, which may have biased the results and hence needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

¹⁰ See Appendix B for the eliciting request used.

¹¹ Coding was carried out by only one person relying on her own subjective interpretations when assigning utterances to the different categories. Even though a taxonomy was used as a point of reference, not all utterances were straightforward. For example, it was not always clear which was the ‘emphasized strategy’ when several strategies co-occurred multiple times. In these cases, a subjective judgement was made as to where to assign these particular utterances. For more details on the difficulties of coding the data, see the end of the Results section.

indirect semantic formulas, as well as adjuncts coded in terms of their order, frequency and content. The present study, however, was more concerned with speaker orientation towards positive/negative politeness strategies in refusals, which called for a classification that distinguishes between positive and negative face strategies. As Verzella and Tommaso (2020) argue, their “taxonomy is less fine-grained but more generalizable” than other taxonomies and thus moves “towards a more culture-independent analytical framework” (2020:101), which may render it more appropriate for cross-cultural research. Also, a more practical reason for choosing this particular taxonomy was that it allowed for a comparison between my own data and the results from Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) study.

Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) taxonomy differentiates between refusals without redressive action (blunt/direct refusals) as well as refusals with redressive action (positive face strategies, negative face strategies and avoidance) in different strategy combinations. Positive face strategies cover *No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on positive opinion* and *Emphasis on positive opinion + Explanation*. In contrast, negative face strategies consist of *No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on explanation* and *Explanation + Apology*¹²/*Regret*¹³. Finally, avoidance strategies (e.g. postponements and hesitations) comprise *Avoidance + emphasis on positive opinion* and *Avoidance + emphasis on explanation*. Based on my findings, I also added an additional category to refusals with redressive action, which I labelled as a combination of positive face and negative face strategies, and which includes the *Explanation + Apology/Regret + Positive opinion* strategy.

The Hungarian refusals were then divided into idea units following Nelson et al. (2002) and Verzella and Tommaso (2020) as regards the most dominant strategies in a particular response¹⁴. Based on the most prevalent strategies, the refusals were then assigned to one of the categories in the taxonomy. Also, the number and percentage of strategy combinations employed were calculated and compared to findings on American English and Italian refusals (see Table 1 in the following section). Lastly, the number of words in refusal utterances were

¹² Although I agree with Maróti (2013) that expressions of regret and apologies should be treated as adjunct speech acts rather than refusal strategies because they cannot function as refusals in themselves but precede or follow them to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal (which is the very definition of adjuncts, according to Beebe et al., 1990), for the sake of comparability, I treated apologies the same way as Verzella and Tommaso (2020) did.

¹³ I found that expressions such as ‘I’m sorry’ do not always function as an apology but rather as an expression of regret. This difference is quite notable in Hungarian where ‘Bocsi’ is used to express the former and ‘Sajnálom’ is used to express the latter in the data. Therefore, I found it useful to add ‘Regret’ to the strategy of ‘Apology’.

¹⁴ This was not always easy to decide, hence the addition of a new category; also, see additional observations at the end of the Results section.

counted, average utterance length was calculated and contrasted with that of the American English and Italian responses.

4 Results

4.1 Quantitative analysis

The following table summarizes the quantitative findings on Hungarian refusal strategy combinations in relation to American English and Italian refusals.

Refusal strategies	American English (50 participants)	Italian (50 participants)	Hungarian (9 participants)
1. Refusal without redressive action			
Blunt refusal: No or other types of direct refusal	0	0	0
2. Refusal with redressive action: positive face			
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on positive opinion	10 20%	2 4 %	0 0 %
Emphasis on positive opinion + Explanation	8 16%	3 6 %	2 22 %
3. Refusal with redressive action: negative face			
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on explanation	5 10%	7 14 %	1 11 %
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on apology/regret	4 8%	5 10%	0 0%
Explanation + Apology/Regret	4 8%	10 20%	2 22%
4. Refusal with redressive action: a combination of positive face and negative face			
Explanation + Apology/Regret + Positive opinion	0 0%	0 0%	2 22%
5. Avoidance			
Avoidance + emphasis on positive opinion	12 24%	8 16%	0 0%
Avoidance + emphasis on explanation	7 14%	15 30%	2 22%

Table 1. Number and percentage of strategy combinations in the American English, Italian and Hungarian refusals (adapted from Verzella & Tommaso, 2020)

What is immediately striking is that explanations seem to be a core part of the Hungarian refusals of requests. That is, virtually all the Hungarian refusals contained an

explanation (100%), most often combined with apologies/expressions of regret and/or expressions of positive opinion as well as avoidance strategies. In this respect, the Hungarians seem to be similar to the Italians (70%), who also often resorted to explanations following similar patterns. In contrast, the American English speakers (48%) were less likely to provide explanations for their refusals and seemed to prefer expressions of positive opinion. Below is an example of a Hungarian refusal combining explanations with expressions of regret and positive opinion.

Example 1: Explanation + Apology/Regret + Positive opinion:

- (i) *Hát az igazság az, hogy érdekelne [Well, the truth is that it sounds interesting].* **(positive opinion)**
- (ii) *viszont szabadidőm az nem sok van sajnos, úgyhogy nem biztos, hogy beleférne. Hát ugye most írom a szakdolgozatomat is, sok a teendőm a beadandókkal kapcsolatban is úgyhogy nem biztos, hogy a hét folyamán lenne rá alkalom [but unfortunately I don't have much free time so I don't think I could fit it in. So I'm writing my thesis now, I have a lot to do because of my assignments so I don't think I would have the time during the week].* **(regret + explanation)**
- (iii) *Hát sajnálom egyébként [Well, anyway, I'm sorry],* **(apology/regret)**
- (iv) *mer érdekelt volna, jól hangzik ['cause I would've been interested, it sounds good].* **(positive opinion)**
- (v) *csak ténleg nem hiszem, hogy beleférne [I just really don't think I could fit it in].* **(explanation)**

Although blunt refusals were never used in any of the three languages, there were considerable differences in the directness of the responses. The American English speakers (38%), for example, seem to be the most direct among the three groups. They often resorted to direct refusals mitigated mostly by expressions of positive opinion. The Italians (28%) seem to be in the middle where their direct refusals were mainly softened by apologies and explanations. The Hungarians (11%), on the other hand, rarely opted for a direct refusal¹⁵, and, when they did, it was mitigated by explanations. At the other end of the scale, avoidance as a main strategy was employed by 46% of the Italian speakers, 38% of the American English speakers and 22% of the Hungarian speakers.

Apologies/expressions of regret were most prevalent among the Hungarian speakers (44%), followed by the Italian speakers (30%) and the American English speakers (16%). The Italians and Americans combined apologies with either direct refusals or explanations, whereas the Hungarians resorted either to explanations or to explanations and expressions of positive opinions. As for expressions of positive opinion, the American English speakers (60%) employed this strategy most frequently combined with direct refusals or avoidance. The Hungarians (44%) also often expressed positive opinions although in different patterns; that is, mostly with explanations and sometimes with expressions of regret. The Italians (26%), in

¹⁵ There were only two participants who resorted to this strategy; however, one response was coded as *Explanation + Apology* because these two strategies seemed to be more dominant.

contrast, were less likely to use this strategy, and, when they did, it mainly occurred with avoidance. Here are two examples relating to the patterning of apologies/regrets and positive opinions:

Example 2: Explanation + Apology/Regret:

(i) *Ő...hát, bocsí [Ehm..Well, sorry..].* **(apology)**

(ii) *de ne-ehhez nem lesz időm sajnos [but unfortunately I won't have time for that].* **(explanation)**

Example 3: Emphasis on positive opinion + Explanation:

(i) *Oh, hát köszi, hogy felajánlottad [Oh, well, thanks for the offer].* **(gratitude – treating request as an offer)**

(ii) *sajnos ez a 10-12 óra számomra is sok így az egyetem mellett meg egyéb elfoglaltságaim mellett [Unfortunately, these 10–12 hours are too much for me besides university and other engagements].* **(explanation)**

(iii) *de maga a projekt nagyon jól hangzik és sok sikert nektek [But the project sounds really great and good luck to you].* **(positive opinion)**

All in all, as Verzella and Tommaso (2020) observe, Italians seem to prefer negative face strategies, while Americans seem to favor positive face strategies. In contrast, Hungarians seem to be somewhat in between: they slightly tend towards negative face strategies, but they also often employ positive face strategies, sometimes in combination with the former (see Example 1).

Finally, regarding utterance length, the Hungarian responses (50 words) were significantly longer on average compared to the Italian (21 words) and American responses (17 words). Although there was considerable standard deviation, with the shortest response totaling 9 words and the longest response containing 90 words, most responses fell between 40 and 60 words. This remarkable lengthiness of the Hungarian refusals may be partly due to the omnipresent explanations; on the other hand, it may be related to the particular type of communicative activity in which the refusals were elicited, to which I will come back in the Discussion section.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

4.2.1. Content of the explanations

As highlighted above, the most prevalent strategy among the Hungarian respondents was explanations. Some explanations were rather specific with reference to duties, such as doing university assignments, writing a thesis or working. Some also said that they did not feel competent enough to teach Hungarian to foreigners, while some others mentioned that they commuted a lot and would not be spending enough time in Szeged to fulfill the requirements of the Hungarian Conversation Club. Others were vaguer and simply stated that they were busy or did not have time for a project like this. All in all, most explanations referred to a lack of

time or duties. Also, many respondents tended to resort to more and different types of explanations in terms of their content and specificity to improve the mitigating force of their refusal strategy. An example is provided below that showcases a combination of explanations with reference to university and work duties, lack of time, physical distance and (alleged) pedagogic incompetence:

Example 4: Explanation + Apology/Regret

- (i) *Hát saj-sajnos én nem tudom ezt bevállalni [Well, un-unfortunately, I can't take this on].* **(expression of regret + direct refusal)**
- (ii) *mert dolgozom egyetem mellett és még a szakdolgozatomat is írom, plusz jövök haza, tehát viszonylag sokszor {város} [because I'm working besides university and I'm writing my thesis, too, and I come home to {city} like quite as often].* **(explanation: work, thesis and physical distance)**
- (iii) *tehát én ezt most úgy érzem, hogy nem-nem férne bele [so I feel like I couldn't fit this in now].* **(explanation: lack of time)**
- (iv) *meg alapvetően én a magyar nyelvet nem tudnám tanítani, ezt már megtapasztaltam, tehát nem-nem hiszem hogy-hogy az nekem menne [and basically I couldn't teach Hungarian, I have some experience with that, so I don't think that-that I'd be able to do it].* **(explanation: (alleged) pedagogic incompetence)**
- (v) *, de-de-de sajnálom, de ez mos-most nekem ne-nem férne bele [but-but-but I'm sorry, but I couldn't fit this in now].* **(expression of regret + explanation)**

As Verzella and Tommaso's (2020) findings indicate, the Italians often offered long, detailed explanations with references to external circumstances or personal reasons – similarly to the Hungarians in this study – while the Americans avoided sharing any personal information (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020).

4.2.2. Turning requests into an offer

Another intriguing finding is related to how some speakers treated the request before or after refusing it. In a similar fashion to the Italian respondents, some of the Hungarians elaborated the request into an offer, as can be seen from the example below.

Example 5: Avoidance + Emphasis on explanation

- (i) *Hát nekem az a gond, hogy én ténleg ebben a szemeszterbe fejezem be a képzésemet és a szakdolgozatomon is dolgozok, úgyhogy most sajnos így nagyon kevés idő van, úgyhogy kevés ilyen szabadidős tevékenységre jut idő is [Well, my problem is that I'm actually finishing my degree this semester and I'm working on my thesis, so unfortunately I don't have much time now, so I don't have much time for leisure activities].* **(explanation + expression of regret)**
- (ii) *köszönöm az ajánlatot [thank you for the offer].* **(expression of gratitude – treating request as an offer)**

However, it is also worth noting that this particular request may have been ambiguous. Even though the word 'request' was explicitly used several times when the interviewer asked

the participants to join the Hungarian Conversation Club, some refusals and the following participant comments both suggested a different interpretation. For example, when asked to reflect on refusals in general, some of the participants kept referring back to the request as an offer and brought up additional personal examples of refusing offers (such as saying ‘no’ to telemarketers). The ambiguity of this particular request was noted in a n unpublished DCT study on Hungarian EFL refusals of requests (Author, 2022). To address the problem, the request was first piloted with a short questionnaire, in which respondents¹⁶ were asked to decide whether they think a particular speech act is a suggestion/request/invitation/offer. Since half of the participants interpreted it as either an offer or an invitation, the request was then made more explicit for the interview by incorporating phrases such as “I know it’s a big request...”.

Nevertheless, as the example above indicates, some of the interview participants still treated the request as an offer both in this research and in Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) study. On the one hand, Verzella and Tommaso (2020:108) argue that “it is ingrained in southern Italian culture that it is polite to decline offers”. Thus, an offer may be perceived as less impolite to refuse in Italian culture (and probably in Hungarian culture), and hence transforming a request into an offer could be used as a strategy to mitigate the perceived face-threat of the refusal. On the other hand, I would maintain that asking college students to join a conversation club could also be interpreted as an invitation or an offer depending on the phrasing and the requester¹⁷. Since the type of eliciting speech act has an impact on the realization of refusals (Keshavarz et al., 2006), the eliciting speech act needs to be carefully worded and piloted.

4.3. Difficulties with the data analysis

Another difficulty emerged during the coding of the data when the dominant strategy had to be selected in a particular response. Although Verzella and Tommaso (2020) claim that their taxonomy is “less likely to cause disagreement between coders” and even though strategies may overlap, “the main strategy for redressive action is usually clear” (2020:101), I would argue that, in fact, many categories may not be straightforward. The main problem is that it is not clearly defined what the authors mean by ‘emphasis’ on a particular strategy. It does not seem to be determined based on the frequency of a strategy within a given response,

¹⁶ These respondents were not part of the interview research.

¹⁷ For instance, in the DCT study mentioned above (Author, 2022), a ‘professor’ said “I’d be delighted if you could join our Hungarian Conversation Club. It would mean a lot to our learners.”, which was interpreted by some respondents as an offer or invitation.

at least not consistently. For instance, Example 2 (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:102–103) consists of an apology, a direct refusal and three explanations, and it is coded as *No + emphasis on explanation*. This suggests that emphasis was determined according to the relatively high occurrence of explanations in this response. However, in Example 7 (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:106), although all strategies occur in equal number (one explanation, one direct refusal and one apology), the response is coded as *Explanation + Apology*, thus ignoring the presence of a direct refusal.

This seems to make coding approximate and arbitrary, and it may also distort the picture on actual refusal realizations. The strategies employed in a particular refusal seem to be strongly interrelated, and they each have a function; thus, ignoring one of its components may alter how that refusal is evaluated in politeness terms. For instance, the apology in Example 2 (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020:102–103) seems to serve to mitigate the force of the direct refusal that follows, and without this immediate mitigation the refusal may be perceived as too direct and thus impolite. Therefore, coding this refusal as *No + emphasis on explanation* and hence disregarding the strategy of apology may lead to an inaccurate and incomplete description of how this speaker manages rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) when refusing a request.

Since the present study relied on this coding scheme, the same limitations are true for the data on the Hungarian refusals. For instance, Example 4 was coded as *Explanation + Apology/Regret* even though a direct refusal was also employed. For these reasons, I would argue that Verzella and Tommaso's (2020) classification may need to be further developed to provide a more reliable analytic tool for refusals. Nevertheless, Verzella and Tommaso's (2020) study still provided some intriguing insights into how American English and Italian speakers tended to refuse requests, which will be discussed in relation to Hungarian refusals in the next section.

5 Discussion

Previous studies on Hungarian refusals (e.g. Maróti, 2013; Szili, 2002b;) suggest that Hungarians seem to be reluctant to directly refuse a request; instead, they postpone or completely avoid direct refusals by coming up with explanations and excuses, apologizing or sometimes expressing a positive opinion to mitigate the unpleasant act of refusing. These observations are also in line with many participants' remarks, where they pointed out their efforts to avoid saying 'no' or at least postpone it until a reasonable explanation or a legitimate excuse (sometimes even a white lie) for the refusal had been provided.

Although many participants mentioned that their main concern in refusals was not to offend the requester and be gentle with them, suggesting that they oriented towards the face needs of their interlocutor, the prevalent use of explanations also indicates a concern for self-face. Thus, the use of explanations as a refusal strategy seems to have a threefold purpose: (1) giving (pseudo-)legitimate excuses may help maintain the positive face of the requester, who is reassured that the refusal does not stem from the refuser's negligence towards their wants and needs but is due to external circumstances; (2) offering (pseudo-)legitimate excuses can also serve to maintain the refuser's own positive face by avoiding seeming idle or unwilling; and (3) referring to duties or lack of time may imply the refuser's wish not to be further burdened, thus protecting their own negative face (Falyuna, 2016).

It seems, however, that the third point can be turned around to claim just the opposite; that is, *not* providing an explanation for the refusal can also be a strategy for protecting one's negative face. As Verzella and Tommaso (2020) argue, reluctance to share personal information as a justification for a refusal may serve to protect one's territory (Goffmann, 1967; Brown & Levinson, 1987), which is an aspect of one's negative face wants. Thus, the distinction between negative politeness strategies and positive politeness strategies may not be clean-cut, as the same strategy (e.g. explanations) may be used both for negative face goals and positive face goals (Leech, 2007), or the same negative face goal (e.g. asserting one's right to be independent and not be imposed on) may be achieved through both the use and the omission of the same strategy (i.e. giving explanations or not).

Strategy choice also seems to be related to the cultural ranking (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of the refusal and perceptions about who is more potentially threatened by it (i.e. the refuser or the requester). Italians seemed to treat refusals as a threat to the refuser's face, which was evident in their use of detailed explanations to provide legitimate justifications for their refusals and in their frequent apologies (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). Similarly, Hungarians generally seemed to find it uncomfortable to refuse a request, probably because of the risk of offending the requester and thus seeming rude and unwilling. Their simultaneous concern for self-face and other-face was reflected in the combination of explanations with expressions of positive opinions and/or apologies/regrets. American English speakers, on the other hand, did not seem to consider requests as face-threatening, which resulted in a dispreference for negative face strategies (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020).

In rapport management theory (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021) terms, it could be argued that all three groups shared the interactional goal of refusing the request along with a rapport maintenance orientation that was reflected in their employment of various types of redressive

action. However, the choice and combination of redressive action for refusals seemed to differ according to speaker attitudes to face sensitivities and perceived sociality rights and obligations in the interaction, which had consequences for how refusals were negotiated. That is, the Italians and Hungarians in general may have perceived the refusal of the request as face-sensitive because it entailed the risk of seeming rude. This could have caused a mismatch between self-claimed identity qualities (“I’m polite”) and (perceived) other-attributed qualities (“He/she is rude”), leading to an experience of face loss. And since people do not usually enjoy feeling embarrassed, the (perceived) prospect of it may be a strong motivator to employ self-face-saving strategies, such as lengthy explanations and apologies. In contrast, the Americans seemed to be relatively unconcerned about face issues and more interested in their perceived sociality rights and obligations. They oriented towards the request as something that they were entitled to refuse without repercussions for their image as polite people (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). That is, refusal strategy choice seems to be consistent with how face sensitivities and sociality rights and obligations are perceived in a given situation and cultural context.

Another factor that may have had an impact on the refusal realizations, particularly on utterance length, is the communicative activity (Allwood, 2007) in which the participants were engaged in the two studies. In Verzella and Tommaso’s (2020) study, a guided conversation protocol was used, in which participants were stopped between classes to have a short conversation with unfamiliar peers, creating relatively informal and “random” situations. In the present study, the respondents were asked in advance to participate in a 15-minute interview for a study, which rendered the situation slightly more formal. They were also told that they would be recorded, which may have further motivated the use of various types of redressive action to make a good impression ‘on record’. Also, interviews in general have specific roles with particular social rights and obligations. For example, the interviewer usually has the right to control the conversation (e.g. when to start and finish it) and ask questions, while the interviewee is expected to give elaborate answers. In addition, the interviewees commit themselves to the interview, so they could not “hurry away” before the end when things grow uncomfortable, which may further motivate participants to make an effort in maintaining rapport through various strategies. These factors in combination may partly explain why these Hungarian refusals, often negotiated over extended turns, were more than twice as long on average as the Italian and American English refusals.

All in all, even though the semi-structured interview used in this study has its limitations, such as the potential impact of the observer’s paradox and the similarity of the interviews to telephone conversations instead of face-to-face interactions because of the off-

camera mode, it still seems to be a promising method for the study of refusals, as it can provide the researcher with rich spoken data as well as participants' reflections on refusals. It also allows for the collection and recording of 'real life-like' data in a controlled and systematic manner. Although using this method on large samples would certainly be laborious, it could yield valuable insights into general patterns of refusal realizations within and across cultures.

6 Conclusions

This research aimed at comparing Italian, American English and Hungarian refusals of requests based on elicited spoken data. Since the sample was non-representative, further research involving a large number of participants and a wide range of social variables would be necessary to obtain a clearer picture of how refusals are negotiated and managed in real-life interactions in Hungarian. Some interesting issues to investigate would be regional differences in refusal strategies within Hungary and in Hungarian communities in neighboring countries. It would also be intriguing to ascertain cross-linguistic influence on refusal realizations. Most participants had multiple languages in their repertoire, and most of them had been exposed to and used English for over a decade, which certainly must have had at least some impact on their interpretations and evaluations of (im)polite behavior.

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Appendix A. Taxonomy of refusals

Refusal strategies	Example: English	Example: Italian	Example: Hungarian
1. Refusal without redressive action			
Blunt refusal: No or other types of direct refusal	<i>No/I can't/I don't think so</i>	<i>No/non posso/non penso..</i>	<i>Nem fogok tudni menni.</i>
2. Refusal with redressive action: positive face			
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on positive opinion	<i>It's a great initiative, but I can't come.</i>	<i>È una ottima iniziativa, ma non posso venire.</i>	<i>Jól hangzik, de nem fogok tudni menni.</i>
Emphasis on positive opinion + Explanation	<i>It's a great idea, but I'm busy.</i>	<i>È una grande idea, ma sono impegnato.</i>	<i>Jól hangzik, de nem férne bele az időmbe.</i>
3. Refusal with redressive action: negative face			
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on explanation	<i>No, I have a doctor's appointment.</i>	<i>No, ho un appuntamento dal dottore.</i>	<i>Nem tudok menni, mert időpontom van az orvoshoz.</i>
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on apology/regret	<i>I'm really sorry, but I can't.</i>	<i>Mi dispiace molto, ma non posso.</i>	<i>Sajnálom, de nem tudok menni.</i>
Explanation + Apology/Regret	<i>I'm too busy, I'm really sorry.</i>	<i>Sono troppo occupato, mi dispiace veramente.</i>	<i>Elég elfoglalt vagyok, tényleg bocsí.</i>
4. Refusal with redressive action: a combination of positive face and negative face			
Explanation + Apology/Regret + Positive opinion	<i>It sounds great, but I'm too busy, sorry.</i>	<i>È una grande idea, ma sono impegnato, mi dispiace.</i>	<i>Bocsi, de nincs időm, de amúgy nagyon jól hangzik.</i>
5. Avoidance			
Avoidance + emphasis on positive opinion	<i>It sounds like a good initiative; I'll see if I can.</i>	<i>Sembra una bella iniziativa; vedrò se posso.</i>	<i>Jól hangzik, meglátom, hogy lesz időm.</i>
Avoidance + emphasis on explanation	<i>I'm busy, but I'll think about it.</i>	<i>Sono impegnato, ma ci penserò.</i>	<i>Elég elfoglalt vagyok, de még meglátom.</i>

Table 1. Taxonomy of refusals adapted from Verzella and Tommaso (2020:101–102)

Appendix B. Semi-structured interview

INTERJÚ

based on Dörnyei (2008) and Verzella and Tommaso (2020)

1, Nyitás

-Szia! Hogy vagy?

-Először is nagyon köszönöm, hogy beleegyeztél a részvételbe, óriási segítség. Ez most egy teljesen kötetlen beszélgetés lesz a nyelvtanulási motivációról, céljaidról, tapasztalataidról.

-Még egy fontos dolog, hogy hangfelvételt fogok készíteni, amennyiben hozzájárulsz természetesen. Minden adatot bizalmasan fogok kezelni, a hangfelvételekből anonim átiratok készülnek majd, amelyekből egy-egy példát fogok felhasználni, tehát senki nem lesz beazonosítható. Ezzel kapcsolatban van-e esetleg kérdésed?

-Szólok, ha elindítom a felvételt, előtte viszont lenne néhány információ, amelyekre szükségem lenne:

- életkor
- tanulmányok
- angol tanulás hossza (évek)
- egyéb idegennyelvek
- lakhely (település)

-Akkor, ha készen állsz, elindítom a felvételt.

2, Interjú kérdések (lehetséges témák egy kötetlen beszélgetéshez)

- Milyen idegennyelveket tanulsz/tanultál?
- Milyen céllal tanulsz/tanultad ez(ek)e(t) a nyelv(ek)et (pl. iskolai kötelezettség, hobbi, nyelvvizsga miatt)?
- Hogyan változtak a nyelvtanulási céljaid az évek során?
- Használsz-e őket a mindennapi életben? Mire és hogyan (pl. olvasás, chatelés, sorozatozás, munka, stb)?
- Számodra mi a leghatékonyabb nyelvtanulási módszer?
- Mi az, amivel elégedett/elégedetlen vagy az iskolai nyelvtanítás kapcsán? Szerinted min kellene változtatni?

3, Kérés

-Nagyon köszönöm a válaszaid, rengeteget segítettél. Még egy utolsó dolog lenne, amely már az interjútól független. A beszélgetések végén meg szoktam ragadni az alkalmat, hogy egy rendhagyó kéréssel forduljak a résztvevőkhöz. Nem tudom, hallottál-e róla, de jelenleg szerveződik egy Magyar Társalkodókör nevű csoport, amelynek a célja magyarul tanuló egyetemisták segítése. Ehhez keresünk önkénteseket. Heti három kétórás társalkodókör lenne, ahol beszélgetni kellene a tanulókkal, illetve ezen felül segíteni kellene a szervezésben, lebonyolításban. Összesen ez heti körülbelül 10-12 órás elfoglaltságot jelentene egy félév erejéig. Tudom, hogy elég nagy kérés, de úgy voltam vele, hogy ha már itt vagyunk, egy próbát megér a kérdés.

--> VISSZAUTASÍTÁS

4, Felfedés

-Jól van, azért köszi szépen.

-Viszont most már elárulhatok egy titkot. Ez egy pragmatikai kutatás, és azt vizsgálom, hogy hogyan utasítanak vissza kéréseket a magyarok.

-Még lenne egy pár kérdésem a magyarok visszautasítási szokásaival kapcsolatban.

- Hogyan szoktál nemet mondani kérésekre, amelyeket akármilyen okból nem tudsz vagy nem akarsz teljesíteni? Emlékszel konkrét példákra?
- Mitől függ az, hogy hogyan mondasz nemet egy kérésre?
- Szerinted a magyarok általában hogyan mondanak nemet kérésekre?
- Szerinted mire kell figyelni, amikor visszautasítjuk valaki kérését, hogy ne bántuk meg másikat?
- Mi a személyes tapasztalatod? Volt esetleg negatív tapasztalatod?
- Mit tanácsolnál magyarul tanulóknak, hogyan mondjanak udvariasan nemet egy kérésre?

5, Zárás

-Van-e esetleg bármilyen kérdésed, egyéb gondolatod?

-Akkor még egyszer nagyon köszönöm, hogy itt voltál, örülök, hogy megismertelek és nagyon sokat segítettél.

-Ha esetleg érdekelnének a kutatás eredményei, szívesen továbbítom őket, amint meglesznek.

Appendix C. Hungarian refusals from the interviews

Refusal strategies	Hungarian refusals
1. Refusal without redressive action	
Blunt refusal: No or other types of direct refusal	-
2. Refusal with redressive action: positive face	
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on positive opinion	-
Emphasis on positive opinion + Explanation	(i) <i>Oh, hát köszö, hogy felajánlottad [Oh, well, thanks for the offer]. (gratitude – treating request as an offer)</i> (ii) <i>sajnos ez a 10-12 óra számomra is sok így az egyetem mellett meg egyéb elfoglaltságaim mellett [Unfortunately, these 10–12 hours are too much for me besides university and other engagements]. (explanation)</i> (iii) <i>de maga a projekt nagyon jól hangzik és sok sikert nektek [But the project sounds really great and good luck to you]. (positive opinion)</i> (i) <i>de amúgy tök jó. tök jó, érdekesen hangzik [Well, it sounds great, it sounds great, sounds interesting]. (positive opinion)</i> (ii) <i>hát az biztos hogy pl nekem erre én most erre nem lenne kapacitásom [Well, it's for sure that I wouldn't have the capacity for this]. (explanation)</i> (iii) <i>de de ha neked meg időd engedi és és belefér és izgalmasnak biztos hogy izgalmas lehet egyébként [but but if you have the time and and you can fit it in and it must be exciting by the way]. (positive opinion)</i> (iv) <i>de de szóval nekem például most nem férne bele egy plusz heti 10-12 órás elfoglaltság [but but so right now I couldn't fit these 10-12 hours a week in]. (explanation)</i>
3. Refusal with redressive action: negative face	
No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on explanation	(i) <i>Mh. Hát ő, én őszinte leszek veled, szerintem maga a kezdeményezés az-az nagyon jó [Well, I'll be honest with you, I think the initiative itself is-is really good]. (positive opinion)</i> (ii) <i>viszont én ebben nem hiszem hogy részt fogok tudni venni [but I don't think I will be able to take part in it]. (direct refusal)</i> (iii) <i>mer hát így a bokros teendőim miatt, hogy nagyképpően fejezzem ki magam [because of, well, all my duties, to put it pompously]. (explanation)</i> (iv) <i>nekem most ebben a félévben nem lesz rá kapacitásom [I wouldn't have the capacity for this in this semester]. (explanation)</i>

No (or other types of direct refusal) + emphasis on apology/regret	
Explanation + Apology/Regret	(i) Hát saj-sajnos én nem tudom ezt bevállalni [Well, un-unfortunately, I can't take this on]. (expression of regret + direct refusal) (ii) mert dolgozom egyetem mellett és még a szakdolgozatomat is írom, plusz jövök haza, tehát viszonylag sokszor {város} [because I'm working besides university and I'm writing my thesis, too, and I come home to {city} like quite as often]. (explanation: work, thesis and physical distance) (iii) tehát én ezt most úgy érzem, hogy nem-nem férne bele [so I feel like I couldn't fit this in now]. (explanation: lack of time) (iv) meg alapvetően én a magyar nyelvet nem tudnám tanítani, ezt már megtapasztaltam, tehát nem-nem hiszem hogy-hogy az nekem menne [and basically I couldn't teach Hungarian, I have some experience with that, so I don't think that-that I'd be able to do it]. (explanation: (alleged) pedagogic incompetence) (v) , de-de-de sajnálom, de ez mos-most nekem ne-nem férne bele [but-but-but I'm sorry, but I couldn't fit this in now]. (expression of regret + explanation)
	(i) Ő...hát, bocs [Ehm..Well, sorry..]. (apology) (ii) de ne-ehhez nem lesz időm sajnos [but unfortunately I won't have time for that]. (explanation)
4. Refusal with redressive action: a combination of positive face and negative face	
Explanation + Apology/Regret + Positive opinion	(i) Hát az igazság az, hogy érdekelne [Well, the truth is that it sounds interesting]. (positive opinion) (ii) viszont szabadidőm az nem sok van sajnos, úgyhogy nem biztos, hogy beleférne. Hát ugye most írom a szakdolgozatomat is, sok a teendőm a beadandókkal kapcsolatban is úgyhogy nem biztos, hogy a hét folyamán lenne rá alkalom [but unfortunately I don't have much free time so I don't think I could fit it in. So I'm writing my thesis now, I have a lot to do because of my assignments so I don't think I would have the time during the week]. (regret + explanation) (iii) Hát sajnálom egyébként [Well, anyway, I'm sorry], (apology/regret) (iv) mer érdekelt volna, jól hangzik ['cause I would've been interested, it sounds good]. (positive opinion) (v) csak tényleg nem hiszem, hogy beleférne [I just really don't think I could fit it in]. (explanation)
	(i) értem, értem, uh, hát akkor, igen, igen, mert sokszor van hétfőn intézni valóm itthon és-és nem mindig tudnák visszamenni. Ajj, de sajnálom, pedig a szerda az szuper lenne [I see, I see, oh, well then yeah, yeah, because I often have errands to run at home on Mondays and-and I couldn't always come back. Oh, it's such a pity, but Wednesday would be great]. (explanation + expression of regret)

	(ii) Ahh. ténleg, pedig jó lett volna még örültem is neki hogy végre valami kis szakmai gyakorlat vagy nem tudom nyelvtanítás téren. Ajj. Sajnálom. [Oh, yeah, but it would have been great, it would have been nice to have some professional experience or I don't know in language teaching]. (positive opinion + expression of regret) (55)
5. Avoidance	
Avoidance + emphasis on positive opinion	
Avoidance + emphasis on explanation	(i) Hát nekem az a gond, hogy én ténleg ebben a szemeszterbe fejezem be a képzésemet és a szakdolgozatomon is dolgozok, úgyhogy most sajnos így nagyon kevés idő van, úgyhogy kevés ilyen szabadidős tevékenységre jut idő is [Well, my problem is that I'm actually finishing my degree this semester and I'm working on my thesis, so unfortunately I don't have much time now, so I don't have much time for leisure activities]. (explanation + expression of regret) (ii) köszönöm az ajánlatot [thank you for the offer]. (expression of gratitude – treating request as an offer)
	(i) Hát hogy ha valamilyen más nyelv lenne, akkor benne lennék [Well, if it was a different language, I'd be in]. (conditions for future acceptance - avoidance) (ii) de ténleg a magyarba, az-az a gond, hogy nekem egy picit az (?) mint hogy hallod, ahogy beszélek, tudod-tudod hogy feltűnt más embereknek is hogy-hogy nem nagyon érzem nagyon kényelmesen azt hogy-hogy magyarul beszélek egyrészt, másrészt meg nem érzem úgy, mintha én nekem lenne olyan nem is tehetségem hanem-hanem hát hogy, én-én lennék a megfelelő ember ehhez az egész szituációhoz. Szóval szerintem-szerintem hogy ő-szerintem én nem vagyok erre a-ehhez a megfelelő ember [but really, my problem with Hungarian is-is that for me it's as you can hear the way I speak, you know-you know, others noticed it, too that-that I don't really feel comfortable speaking in Hungarian on the one hand, and on the other hand I don't feel like that I have not exactly talent but-but, that I would be the right person for this whole situation. So I think-I think that eh I think I'm not the right person for this]. (explanation)