

**Patterns in Declining an Invitation:  
Cross-cultural differences in Korean and Thai refusals**

**รูปแบบในการปฏิเสธคำเชิญ:  
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**Abstract**

The present study examines refusal strategies and patterns of refusals to invitations by Korean and Thai native speakers, as well as how it is affected by the power hierarchy and social distance. Sixty Korean native speakers and sixty Thai native speakers participate in the data collection. A six-situation discourse completion task is used to elicit the refusal speech act in the participants' first languages (Korean and Thai). The results show that both native speaker groups employed indirect refusal strategies the most in turning down an invitation. In terms of the refusal patterns, the refusal strategies are categorized into the head (H) and the supportive move (S). The analysis reveals that the pattern of refusals by the two native speaker groups are different. The Korean native speakers (KNS) are more sensitive to the change in social power as their refusals become more S-initial as the levels of the addressee's social power become higher. On the other hand, the pattern of refusals by the Thai native speakers (TNS) change when the relationship between the interlocutors shifts from distant to close. The TNSs tend to be more direct with the more frequent use of H-initial utterances towards people whom they think they are close to, regardless of their social power level.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural speech act, Refusal, Declining invitations, Korean native speakers, Thai native speakers

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งเน้นศึกษาลักษณะการปฏิเสธและรูปแบบของการปฏิเสธคำเชิญโดยผู้ใช้ภาษาเกาหลีที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาและผู้ใช้ภาษาไทยที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา รวมถึงผลกระทบที่ลำดับชั้นอำนาจทางสังคมและระดับทางสังคมอาจมีต่อการปฏิเสธ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นผู้ใช้ภาษาเกาหลีที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาและผู้ใช้ภาษาไทยที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา กลุ่มลงทะเบียนสิบคน โดยผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยตอบแบบสอบถามชนิดเติมเต็มบทสนทนากันจำนวน 6 สถานการณ์โดยใช้ภาษาแรกของผู้เข้าร่วม (ภาษาเกาหลีและภาษาไทย) ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้ใช้ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาทั้งสองกลุ่ม ใช้กลยุทธ์การปฏิเสธโดยอ้อมมากที่สุดในการปฏิเสธคำเชิญ ในแง่ของรูปแบบในการปฏิเสธ กลยุทธ์การปฏิเสธจะแบ่งออกเป็นส่วนหลัก (H) และส่วนสนับสนุน (S) จากการวิเคราะห์พบว่า รูปแบบการปฏิเสธของผู้ใช้ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาทั้งสองกลุ่มแตกต่างกัน ผู้ใช้ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาเกาหลีปฏิเสธ โดยเริ่มต้นด้วยส่วนสนับสนุนมากขึ้นเมื่อระดับของอำนาจทางสังคมของผู้พูดสูงขึ้น ในทางกลับกันรูปแบบการปฏิเสธโดยผู้ใช้ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาไทย จะเปลี่ยนไปเมื่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างคู่สนทนาระหว่างเปลี่ยนจากห่างเหินเป็นใกล้ชิด ผู้ใช้ที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาไทยมักพูดตรงมากขึ้นกับผู้พูดที่พากษาคิดว่าสนิทสนมด้วย ด้วยการเริ่มต้นการปฏิเสธด้วยส่วนหลัก (H) บ่อยกว่า โดยไม่คำนึงถึงระดับอำนาจทางสังคมของผู้พูด

**คำสำคัญ:** ความแตกต่างข้ามวัฒนธรรมในวัฒนธรรม, การปฏิเสธ, การปฏิเสธคำเชิญ, ผู้ใช้ภาษาเกาหลีที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา, ผู้ใช้ภาษาไทยที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา

## Introduction

Refusal is the act of refusing or denying, and it is defined as the negative counterpart of acceptance or agreement (Searle, 1969). As it involves turning down others, refusal threatens the face of the listener by its nature (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which means that it is quite challenging for a speaker to perform the act and at the same time maintain the harmony in interaction. In addition to this intrinsic nature of refusals, the norm of how refusals are performed in one culture may not be applied in another as Cheng (2014) pointed out that the performance of a speech act in a social interaction can be cultural-specific or language-specific. Therefore, a cross-cultural study of speech acts is important as it can help us understand a source of cross-cultural miscommunications (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

Research on refusal has been done in many languages – for example, Chinese-English (Chang, 2009; Lin, 2014), Egyptian Arabic-English (Nelson, Carson, Batal, & Bakary, 2002), English-Korean (Byon, 2003; Yoon, 2011), Japanese-Korean (Kanako, 2012; Lee, 2003), Japanese-English (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). Javanese-English (Wijayanto, 2016), Korean-English (Chung & Min, 2013; Kang, 2011; Kim & Kwon, 2010; Park & Oh, 2019), Persian-English (Hashemian, 2012), Spanish-English (Felix-Brasdefer, 2003), Thai-English (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019; Kasemsin, 2006; Wannaruk 2008), and Thai-Korean (Jeong, 2012; Wongsittikan & You 2017; Yi, 2017; Yoon, 2017). These studies on refusals mainly focused on the interlanguage aspect. They examined how learners perform refusals in the target language and the pragmatic transfer in relation to the learners' level of second language proficiency. In some of the research, cross-cultural differences were also investigated in order to use the data of the two native speaker groups – the first language and the target language – as a baseline for the analysis of the interlanguage aspect, such as in the work of Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990), Byon (2003), Chang (2009), Felix-Brasdefer (2003), Hashemian (2012), Kang (2011), Lee (2003), Lin (2014), and Wannaruk (2008). A few studies (Kanako, 2012; Li, 2009; Nelson, Carson, Batal, & Bakary, 2002) were conducted on cross-cultural differences only.

The majority of these studies on refusals examined the speech act in terms of the semantic formulae and the frequency types of the refusal strategies. Some also investigated the order of refusal strategies (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Kanako, 2012). The results of several studies (Felix-Brasdefer 2003; Kang 2011; Kim & Kwon 2010; Lee, 2003; Li, 2009) suggested that the range of refusal strategies used was similar, but the differences were in the frequency and the content, and that refusals tended to be indirect (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019; Lin, 2014). However, the frequency of refusal strategies does not provide enough information to understand the similarities or differences between the speech act of the languages examined. Moreover, English is mostly studied as the target language for learners who study English as a foreign language (EFL). There is not much literature on Thai-Korean refusals.

In relation to this issue, this study aimed to examine further the patterns of how these refusal strategies are ordered and employed in performing the speech act of refusal in Korean

and Thai and how the patterns are influenced by the two social variables – social power and social distance.

### Review of Literature

How people use language to communicate and how they perform social interaction can be studied in terms of different speech acts. The speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), regards language as a tool that people can use to perform different actions in social interactions, such as using language to apologize, complain, thank, invite, or make compliments, etc. Speech acts are concerned with the intention of the speaker. When the speaker's intention, the illocutionary force, is the same as the literal meaning of the utterance, the locutionary force, the utterance is called a direct speech act. On the other hand, when the intention and the surface meaning are different, the utterance is seen as an indirect speech act. To illustrate, a speaker may invite one to a meal by saying "Would you like to join us for dinner?", and one replies, "I have to study for tomorrow's exam." On the surface, the locutionary force of the reply can be understood as a statement – simply providing information. However, if the intention of the speaker, the illocutionary force, is to give a reason to turn down the invitation. This utterance can be regarded as an indirect refusal.

Speech acts have been considered to be a linguistic carrier of politeness, and politeness is inherent in some speech acts (Cheng, 2014). Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) regard refusals as a complex speech act which often contains indirectness and some negotiation due to the risk of offending the interlocutor's face. For the concept of politeness and face, the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) involves a person's public face, face-threatening acts, and strategies used in redressing face-threatening acts. A person's public face can be divided into a positive face, the want to be accepted by others, and a negative face, the want to be independent. For example, a refusal to an invitation is an act that can threaten the positive face want of the inviter because the speaker rejects what the inviter asks or wants to do, which may mean that the inviter is not accepted or liked. This also depends on how the refusal is made. A face-threatening act can be performed by using different strategies: bald on record (not minimizing the threat), redressing with positive politeness strategies, redressing with negative politeness strategies,

off-record, or not performing the act. Take the aforementioned refusal as an example, a simple ‘no’ would be considered as ‘bald on record’ while refusing by offering another alternative or promising to accept a future invitation would be considered as ‘redressing with positive politeness strategies’ as it tries to show that the speaker is actually willing to do what the inviter’s asks him/her to do.

There are three factors which determine how a face-threatening act may be performed or mitigated – the level of imposition of the act in a particular culture, the social power, and the social distance between interlocutors. These factors, together with the differences in social or cultural norms in speech communities, play an important role in determining how a speech act is realized. For example, the results from Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) show that in refusing a request, Japanese native speakers tend to apologize and give reasons or excuses for their refusals to interlocutors of lower social status while native speakers of American English tend to give positive opinion or empathy first followed by regrets and excuses.

Regarding cultures, Tannen (1984) stated that communication is culturally relative by its nature. How a speech act is realized can vary in different cultures as it is apparent from the example above. Knowing the system will let interlocutors know what signals to look for in a conversation. Therefore, the cross-cultural study of speech acts is deemed important. The term ‘cross-cultural’ refers to how cultures have different communication behaviors and styles (Watson, 2017). As norms of speech acts are cultural-specific (Cheng, 2014), lack of understanding of other cultures’ norms may lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure, which is defined as a failure to communicate meaning which causes misunderstandings or communication breakdowns between speakers from different cultural backgrounds (Nouichi, 2015). For example, the results of Park and Oh’s (2019) work on appropriateness of refusals by Korean EFL learners show that despite some of the Korean EFL learners’ confidence with their refusals and thought of them as successful, the English native speakers rated their replies as inappropriate and rude, such as refusing their professor with the expression “I don’t want to.”

### Research on refusals in Korean and Thai

Refusals in Korean language have been studied quite extensively with the focus mainly on the interlanguage aspect. In the research where Korean is used as the first language, English has often been used as the target language of the study with different emphasis – for example, on the refusal strategies (Chung & Min, 2013; Chung, Min & Uehara, 2013; Kang, 2011; Kim & Kwon, 2010; Min, 2013), and on the appropriateness of refusals by Korean learners of English (Park & Oh, 2019; Yoon, 2010). Korean has also been investigated as the target language for learners of various languages – such as Chinese learners of Korean (Li, 2009), English learners of Korean (Byon, 2003; Yoon, 2011), Japanese learners of Korean (Kanako, 2012; Lee, 2003), and Thai learners of Korean (Jeong, 2012; Wongsittikan & You 2017; Yi, 2017; Yoon, 2017). For the Thai language, some research has been conducted on Thai refusals (Panpothong, 2001; Panpothong & Phakdeephasook 2014). However, most studies on Thai refusals focused on the interlanguage aspect. Boonsuk & Ambele (2019), Kasemsin (2006), Rattanapian (2019), and Wannaruk (2008) examined Thai refusals with English as the target language. These studies put emphasis more on how Thai learners of English performed refusals in English.

The results of the research involving Korean native speakers and Korean refusals (Byon, 2003; Hur, 2010; Kang, 2011; Kim & Kwon, 2010; Kanako, 2012; Lee, 2015; Wongsittikan & You, 2017; Yoon, 2011) show that Korean people are sensitive to the power status. This confirmed Sohn's (1981) observation on the importance of age and social status in Korean society. When converse with a higher-power interlocutors, Korean refusals tend to be indirect (Hur, 2010; Kang, 2011), become longer and contain more semantic formulae (Kang, 2011; Wongsittikan & You, 2017; Yoon, 2011) to mitigate the face-threatening act. Their refusals also contain higher occurrence of apology (Byon, 2003; Wongsittikan & You, 2017) and displayed high use of address terms (Kanako, 2012; Kang, 2011; Wongsittikan & You, 2017). On the other hand, while the influence of familiarity between the interlocutors on the realization of refusals was not as distinct and systematic (Byon, 2003), Korean people are likely to be more direct towards the interlocutors of lower social power (Kang, 2011). Reasons and offers or alternatives are often used to mitigate the refusals (Byon, 2003; Hur, 2010; Kanako, 2012).

The research on Thai refusals provided quite mixed results. The results from Panpothong (2001) show that Thai speakers often employed apology and reason in refusing and it was more

difficult for the Thai to refuse their teacher and also their close friends. It was less burdened to the Thai speakers to refuse a stranger, someone of lower power status, or a classmate. The results of the study also show that Thai speakers felt ‘krengchai’ when refusing someone who was older or of higher social power. The concept of ‘krengchai’ focuses on the heart (‘chai’ in Thai) metaphor and refers to a ‘concern’ about how others may feel because of one’s words or action (Intachakra, 2012). Panpoothong and Phakdeephasook (2014) also noted that ‘krengchai’ often occurred with the expression ‘mai-pen-rai’ meaning “It’s not substantial.” or “It’s not troublesome, I’ll be fine.” as a way to say ‘no’. This concept is quite unique to Thai culture.

Other studies suggested that Thais tended to be quite direct in their refusals. The results from Wannaruk (2008) show that apart from providing reasons, Thais tend to use ‘negative ability’ to refuse. Thai speakers seem to regard their ‘being unable’ to perform is a less direct and is a more polite way of saying no. Rattanapian (2019) reported that Thai people employed bald on record the most in refusing close friends or family members. Children were reported to use a direct strategy when disagree with their parents. This can be seen that the relationship variable outweighed the power variable in Thai family setting. In the work setting, Thai native speakers also used bald on record the most with the alternation in the content of the refusals, such as adding the final discourse particles. This study also suggested that being direct in Thai culture is not considered rude.

For the literature on Korean and Thai refusals, Thai acted as the first language and Korean was studied as the target language of Thai learners. The results of Jeong, (2012) and Wongsittikan & You (2017) show that the refusal strategies used were similar but with the difference in the frequency. ‘Giving reason’, which was regarded as a more indirect way to refuse, was used the most in their refusals. The content of the explanation may vary depending on the situations and the interlocutors. Other commonly used strategies were apology, alternative, promise, and non-performative refusals, depending on the contexts. The results of Yi’s (2017) study also suggested that stating the reason would allow them to show that their refusals were not from their unwillingness but from uncontrollable factors, which supported the findings of Wannaruk (2008).

The existing literature on refusals by Korean and Thai native speakers is quite limit. Moreover, the types of refusal strategies and number of strategies alone cannot fully explain the

cultural differences in communication between the two languages. Based on past research findings, the current study aimed to examine the patterns of refusals in addition to the frequency and content of refusal strategies to get deeper understanding of the refusal speech act by Korean and Thai native speakers. By examining how the refusal strategies were realized and ordered into patterns, this study aimed to answer three research questions:

1. How are refusals realized by Korean and Thai native speakers?
2. What are the patterns of refusals made by Korean and Thai native speakers?
3. Do the social factors, power and distance, affect the realization of refusals made by Korean and Thai native speakers?

## Methodology

### Participants

There were two participant groups in this study – Korean native speakers (KNS) and Thai native speakers (TNS). Each group consisted of 60 participants. The participants from both groups were university students, aged 21-23 years old, studying at a university in their home country. A consent form was signed prior to the distribution of the questionnaire.

### Instrument

A written discourse completion task (WDCT) was employed to elicit refusals in response to the speech act of invitation. The WDCT was used to collect the data as it allowed a large amount of data to be collected within a limited time frame and the control of investigated variables, which is difficult to be done if the data is collected from spontaneous speech occurred in natural settings. The social variables which were investigated in this paper were power hierarchy and the degree of social distance. The power hierarchy was divided into 3 levels: lower (-), equal (=), and higher (+), which signify the level of power relationship between the speaker and the listener. For the degree of social distance, although the concept is rather a continuum, it was categorized into two levels – close and distant. Close social relationship refers to a relationship in which the interlocutors knew each other well while the counterpart refers to the relationship

in which the interlocutors were acquaintance and did not have much interaction between them. The combination of the social variables made up of 6 situations as shown in Table 1 below.

No.	Power		Relationships
	+ / = / -	+ / -	
1	-	-	Junior
2	-	+	Close junior
3	=	-	Friend
4	=	+	Close friend
5	+	-	Professor
6	+	+	Close professor

**Table 1.** Combination of social variables

The scenarios of each situation were designed to ensure the consistent contexts and controlled variables across 6 situations. The eliciting speech act was an invitation. The participants were invited to a meal. A short description of the situation, the relationship of the interlocutors, and what the inviter would say were provided to offer the participants as much context as possible to ensure that participants were in the same controlled situations and could imagine what situation they were put into. The Korean version of the WDCT was distributed to the KNSs, and they were asked to complete tasks in Korean. In the same way, the TNSs were provided with the Thai version of the WDCT, and they completed the tasks using Thai.

In addition to the elicitation of refusal, the WDCT also asked the participants to provide reasons for their answers in order to get a better understanding of their responses.

## Data analysis

The responses were encoded for semantic formulae and categorized according to the taxonomy of refusal strategies (Wongsittikan & You, 2017) as shown in Table 2, which is based on the taxonomy used in Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) and Jeong (2012). However, not all of the refusal strategies in Wongsittikan and You (2017) occurred in this study and therefore not

shown in Table 2 because the results confirmed Chang's (2009) observation that the eliciting act constrains the types of semantic formulae used in refusals.

Direct refusal	1. Performative verb	e.g., <u>거절하다</u> 'geo-jeol-ha-da' and <u>ปฏิเสธ</u> 'patiset', meaning 'to refuse'
	2. Non-performative verb	e.g., <u>'아니다'</u> 'a-ni-da', <u>'싫다'</u> 'sil-da', <u>'됐다'</u> 'dwaet-da' meaning 'No'; <u>'힘들다'</u> 'him-deul-da', <u>'어렵다'</u> 'eo-nyeop-da', meaning 'hard or difficult'
	2.1 Assertive	
	2.2 Negative willingness/ability	e.g. <u>'안/못 - (으)르 것 같다'</u> 'an/mos-(eu)l geos gat-da', <u>'-(으)르 수 없다'</u> '(eu)l su eobs-da meaning 'cannot', <u>'ไม่ได้'</u> 'mai dai', and <u>'ไม่สะดวก'</u> 'mai saduak' meaning 'cannot' and 'not convenient'
	1.:	e.g., <u>'죄송하다'</u> 'joe-song-ha-da' meaning 'I am sorry.' or <u>'ขอโทษ'</u> 'khothot' meaning 'I apologize'
	2. Reason	general or specific reasons
	3. Regret	e.g., <u>'아깝다'</u> 'a-kkab-da', <u>'아쉽다'</u> 'a-swib-da' or <u>'เสียดาย'</u> 'siadai' meaning 'what a shame/ what a pity'
	4. Let off the hook	e.g., <u>'괜찮다'</u> 'gwaen-chanh-da', <u>'ไม่เป็นไร'</u> 'mai penrai' meaning 'It's okay.'
	5. Willingness	when the speaker expresses desire to accept the invitation e.g. <u>'싫다'</u> 'sip-da' or <u>'่อยาก..'</u> 'yak' meaning 'want to ...'
	6. Alternative	when the speaker provides other possible options that they can do for the inviter
	7. Suggestion	when the speaker gives other ideas or choices that the inviter can do e.g. <u>'그냥</u> <u>집에 가자.'</u> 'geu-nyang jib-e ga-ja' 'Let's just go home.'
	8. Promise of future acceptance	when the speaker promises to accept the invitation next time
	9. Asking for understanding	when the speaker asks for empathy, e.g. <u>'오늘 좀 봐줘.'</u> 'o-neul jom bwa-iwo' 'Please understand me today.'
Indirect refusal	10. Asking questions	when the speaker asks questions about the invitation or other questions
	11. Postponement	when the speaker asks for the delay in the answer e.g. <u>'ขอคิดก่อน'</u> 'kho khit kon' meaning 'Let me think about it.'
	12. Hedge	the utterances that show the speaker's hesitation e.g. <u>'어떡하지'</u> 'eo-tteog-haji' <u>'어찌지'</u> 'eo-jeo-ji', literally meaning 'What do I supposed to do'.
	13. Pause filler	e.g. <u>'음...'</u> 'eum...', <u>'아...'</u> 'a...', <u>'으...'</u> 'o...', <u>'으으...'</u> 'o...'
	14. Indefinite reply	vague answers which may looks like an acceptance superficially, but the speaker may not have the intention to fulfill it
	1. Positive opinion/feeling	agreement or positive comments towards the invitation e.g. <u>'그래'</u> 'geu-lae' '네', <u>'응'</u> 'eung', <u>'으'</u> 'o' or <u>'기다'</u> 'kodai' meaning 'yes' or 'Okay'.
	2. Gratitude/appreciation	e.g. <u>'감사하다'</u> 'gam-sa-ha-da' or <u>'ขอบคุณ'</u> 'khopkhun' meaning 'Thank you'
	3. Showing humbleness	when the speaker expresses their willingness and appreciation for the invitation e.g., <u>'별로 어려운 일도 아니었습니다.'</u> 'byeol-lo eo-lyeo-un il-do a-ni-eoss-seub-ni-da' 'It's not a big deal.'
	4. Well-wishing	when the speakers wish well to the interlocutors. It acts as phatic expression that help maintain good rapport between the interlocutors e.g. <u>'กินข้าวให้อร่อยนะ'</u> 'kin khao hai groi na' 'Enjoy your meal.'
	5. Address terms	e.g. <u>'교수님'</u> 'eo-su-nim' meaning 'professor' or <u>'น้อง'</u> 'nong' meaning 'a younger sister/a younger brother or a junior'
	6. Emoticons	symbols or letters which express the nonlinguistic elements e.g. laughter as in <u>'555'</u> 'hahahaha' or <u>'ㅎㅎ'</u> 'hh' <u>'ㅋㅋ'</u> 'kk', or facial expressions such as :)
	7. Other speech acts	when the speakers use other type of speech acts e.g. an offer, an invitation, a request or a greeting

Table 2. Semantic formulae for refusal strategies

The semantic formulae are divided into three categories: direct refusal strategies, indirect refusal strategies, and adjuncts. The direct refusal strategies refer to the semantic formulae which contain negation or negative meaning as their locutionary act. The indirect refusal strategies refer to utterances that do not contain negation but carry negative meanings in their illocutionary force. For adjuncts, these are expressions that do not have negative meaning as their locutionary or illocutionary forces and cannot be considered a refusal itself.

For the analysis of patterns, the refusal strategies were divided into head acts (H) and supportive (S) moves (Byon, 2003). The head act (H) refers to the part which contains the direct refusal act while the supportive move (S) refers to the modifiers which add to the main refusal messages. The refusals were categorized into four groups: refusals with only the head act (H-only), refusals which start with the head act (H-initial), refusals with only the supportive move (S-only), and refusals which start with the supportive move (S-initial). The head act of a refusal includes the direct refusal strategies and the conventionalized refusals – reasons and apology. As speakers usually offer reasons solely or as the key part in their refusals, reasons are considered as the head act of the refusals (Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995). The supportive move includes the rest of the refusal strategies: twelve semantic formulae of the indirect refusal strategies and all the adjuncts to refusals shown in Table 2.

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine if the difference in the length of refusals between the two native speaker groups in each situation is significantly different. Fisher's exact test of independence was used to test the association between the social factors and the patterns of refusals by the two native speaker groups.

The examples of responses in Korean and Thai shown in this paper were translated into English by the researcher. In order to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the translation, the Korean-English translation was checked by an English native speaker and two Korean native speakers who are in the field of linguistics. The Thai-English translation was checked by two Thai native speakers who are in the field of English language teaching.

## Results and Discussion

### Strategies Used in the KNS and TNS refusals

To answer the first research question and provide an overall picture of the data, Table 3 shows the total and the average number of refusal strategies employed in each situation by the two participant groups, together with the mean and standard deviation of the data.

Situations	Sample Groups						<i>p</i> -value	
	KNS (N=60)			TNS (N=60)				
	No. of str.	Mean	SD	No. of str.	Mean	SD		
Junior	208	3.7	0.14	168	2.8	0.1	0.000*	
Close junior	232	3.9	0.2	201	3.4	0.13	0.086	
Friend	236	3.9	0.18	206	3.5	0.15	0.039*	
Close friend	233	3.8	0.17	200	3.3	0.14	0.025*	
Professor	266	5	0.27	233	3.9	0.14	0.035*	
Close professor	264	4.7	0.17	216	3.6	0.14	0.000*	

Table 3. Number of strategies used in refusals

Generally, the KNSs were more verbose than the TNSs. On average, the KNSs' refusals were longer in every situation. There are more variations in the KNSs' refusal as the standard deviations also show that the data of the KNS group are more spread out than those of the TNSs'. The TNSs normally provided shorter answers and their refusals were quite similar to each together. The results of Mann-Whitney U tests indicate that there were significant differences in the length of refusals produced by the two native speaker groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) in almost every situation, except in the situation when the refusals were directed at a close junior.

This characteristic of Korean refusals confirms Lee's (2003) observation that Korean refusals are quite long, and the longer responses in the higher-power situations confirms Kang's (2011), Wongsittikan and You (2017), and Yoon's (2011) findings that showed the native Korean speaker group using more refusal strategies when refusing people of higher status.

It should be noted that in some situations some participants chose not to perform the refusal act by accepting the invitation. The number of agreements to the invitation is shown in Table 4. The agreements were excluded from the analysis of the refusal strategies.

Situations	KNSs (N=60)	TNSs (N=60)
Junior	4	1
Close junior	0	1
Friend	0	1
Close friend	0	0
Professor	8	0
Close professor	4	0

**Table 4.** Number of agreements to invitations

According to the reasons provided by the participants, the KNSs stated that they felt the pressure to say no to people of higher social power. In the higher-power distant-relationship situation, five out of eight reasons from the KNSs who chose to accept the invitation stated the difficulty in refusing their professor's invitation. Three of them considered a professor's invitation scarce and therefore shouldn't be turned down. In the higher-power close-relationship situation, the KNSs felt the obligation to accept the invitation as a part of their duty in addition to the burden to refuse their professor. (1)a provides an example of the reason given in accepting the invitation from a professor. In the interaction with their junior, the KNSs and TNSs seemed to exercise their positive face need. Those who accepted the invitation from acquaintances -- juniors and friends -- explained that they saw it as a good opportunity to make new friends and become closer to the inviters. They saw no point of refusing, as shown in example (1)b.

(1) a. 일반적으로 교수님께서 하신 제의에 거절하기 힘들 것 같아 친구와의 약속을 미루고 교수님과 식사를 한다.

In general, it seems difficult to turn down an offer from your professor. I would postpone plans with my friend and have dinner with the professor instead.

b. จะได้ผูกสัมพันธ์กับน้อง ตอนมีงานกลุ่มจะได้หาที่ลงได้

I want to befriend my juniors so that when there is a group project, I can join them.

For the realization of refusals made by the KNSs and the TNSs, Table 5 shows the refusal strategies in the three main categories: direct strategies, indirect strategies, and adjuncts to refusals. It can be seen that indirect refusal strategies were used the most by both participant groups in every situation. Refusals in equal-power situations became slightly more direct as the percentages of direct strategies increased, especially in the TNS group. In the higher-power situations, the direct strategies were employed less in contrast to the use of adjunct which increased remarkably in both groups.

Strategies	Junior		Close junior		Friend		Close friend		Professor		Close professor	
	KNS	TNS	KNS	TNS	KNS	TNS	KNS	TNS	KNS	TNS	KNS	TNS
Direct	11%	4%	8%	4%	18%	19%	10%	17%	5%	2%	6%	7%
Indirect	72%	78%	81%	79%	70%	72%	76%	76%	62%	56%	70%	58%
Adjunct	17%	18%	11%	17%	12%	8%	13%	8%	32%	42%	24%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 5. Percentages of refusal strategies in the refusals by the KNSs and TNSs

Table 6 shows the five most-used refusal strategies in each situation by the two participant groups. The strategies in each situation are arranged in separate cells to show how the most used strategies changed in different contexts. In most of the situations, the top five strategies accounted for over 75% of the strategies employed in each situation. ‘Reason’ almost always ranks first in every scenario. This confirmed the results of previous research on the common use of ‘giving explanation’ or ‘providing reason’ strategy in different groups of native speakers (Chang, 2009; Chung & Min, 2013; Felix-Brasdefer, 2003; Jeong, 2012; Kim & Kwon, 2010; Kang, 2011; Wijayanto, 2016; Wongsittikan & You 2017; Yi, 2017). Moreover, this reflects the categorization of reason and apology as the conventionalized form of refusal (Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995). Reason and

apology can be considered to carry a stronger illocutionary force of negation than other indirect refusal strategies.

For the KNSs, ‘promise’ and ‘apology’ were often used to mitigate the refusals. In refusing an invitation from their juniors, the refusals seem to be relatively shorter and more direct confirming the results of Kang (2011), with the higher use of ‘assertive’ strategy, such as ‘아니’ *a-ni* or ‘아니야’ *a-ni-ya* meaning ‘no’. Pause fillers and emotions, such as ‘ㅎㅎ’ signifying laughter, ‘ㅠㅠ’ signifying tears, or ‘^^’ signifying smiling eyes, were also employed to mitigate the refusal. The high use of emotions by the KNSs may results from the familiarity with a chatting application in everyday interaction.

Situation	KNS			TNS		
	Strategies	Token	%	Strategies	Token	%
Junior	Reason	61	29.33%	Reason	60	35.93%
	Promise	36	17.31%	Let Off The Hook	32	19.16%
	Apology	23	11.06%	Promise	17	10.18%
	Assertive	18	8.65%	Gratitude	14	8.38%
	Pause Filler	16	7.69%	Pause Filler	12	7.19%
Total		154	74.04%	Total	135	80.84%
Close junior	Reason	70	30.17%	Reason	75	37.31%
	Alternative	39	16.81%	Promise	38	18.91%
	Promise	35	15.09%	Well-Wishing	18	8.96%
	Pause Filler	19	8.19%	Alternative	12	5.97%
	Emoticon	13	5.60%	Pause Filler	9	4.48%
Total		176	75.86%	Total	152	75.62%
Friend	Reason	65	27.54%	Reason	71	34.47%
	Neg Ability	37	15.68%	Assertive	33	16.02%
	Apology	28	11.86%	Apology	19	9.22%
	Promise	28	11.86%	Pause Filler	18	8.74%
	Pause Filler	17	7.20%	Promise	15	7.28%
Total		175	74.15%	Total	156	68.45%
Close friend	Reason	88	37.77%	Reason	75	37.50%
	Promise	33	14.16%	Promise	34	17.00%
	Apology	20	8.58%	Assertive	30	15.00%
	Emoticon	12	5.15%	Joke	10	5.00%

Professor	Assertive	11	4.72%	Apology	9	4.50%
	Total	164	70.39%	Total	158	74.50%
	Reason	70	26.32%	Reason	65	27.90%
	Apology	38	14.29%	Address Term	46	19.74%
	Address Term	37	13.91%	Gratitude	43	18.45%
	Gratitude	27	10.15%	Let Off The Hook	41	17.60%
Close Professor	Promise	24	9.02%	Pause Filler	11	4.72%
	Total	196	73.68%	Total	206	88.41%
	Reason	79	29.92%	Address Term	69	31.94%
	Apology	54	20.45%	Reason	57	26.39%
	Address Term	48	18.18%	Apology	36	16.67%
	Promise	23	8.71%	Gratitude	11	5.09%
	Pause Filler	18	6.82%	Promise	10	4.63%
	Total	222	84.47%	Total	183	84.72%

Table 6. Five most-used refusal strategies by the KNSs and TNSs in each situation

In refusing people of higher social status, the percentage of address terms and apologies remarkably increased as the KNSs used it to show deference to the interlocutors. This lends support to the findings of Byon (2003), Kanako (2012), Kang (2011), and Wongsittikan and You (2017) which indicated the high use of apology and address terms in turning down interlocutors of higher social status. Example (2)a and (2)b show the refusals to a professor and a close professor respectively. In (2)a, there is a unique Korean expression ‘어떡하죠’ eo-tteo-kha-jyo which is literally translated as “What to do?”. This phrase is commonly used by Korean people in refusing (Kanako, 2012) and is considered as a hedge “well” or “hmm” by Korean people, which shows the speaker’s hesitation and signals a refusal. Also note the use of address terms, apology, pause filler, and emotion in the responses.

(2) a. 아, 교수님 그.. 사실 친구 랑 선약이 있었는데 지금 저 기다리고 있대요.  
 a, gyo-su-nim geu.. sa-sil chin-gu rang seon-yag-i iss-eoss-neun-de ji-geum jeo gi-da-ri-go I ss-dae-yo.

Ah, professor. Um, actually I have plans with my friend who is waiting for me now.

어떡하죠.. 너무 죄송해요. 다음에 꼭 같이 먹고 싶어요, 정말 죄송합니다.  
 eo-tteo-kha-jyo..neo-mu joe-song-hae-yo. da-eum-e kkok gat-i meok-go sip-eo-yo, jeong-mal joe-song-hap-ni-da.  
 Well.. I’m very sorry. I would definitely like to join you for a meal next time. I’m really sorry.

b. 교수님 정말 죄송한데 제가 오늘 선약이 있어서요... 오늘은  
 gyo-su-nim jeong-mal joe-song-han-de je-ga o-neul seon-yag-i iss-eo-seo-yo.. o-neur-eun  
 Professor, I'm really sorry, but I've already made plans today. Today

조금 힘들 것 같아요. 다음에 꼭 먹으러 가요! 정말 죄송합니다 ㅠㅠ  
 jo-geum him-deul geot gat-a-yo. da-eum-e kkok meog-eu-reo ga-yo! jeong-mal joe-song-hap-ni-da u u  
 I can't make it. I would definitely go next time! I'm really sorry. (tears)

For the TNS data, the refusals in Junior and Close Junior situations were mitigated with promise, let off the hook, well-wishing, and gratitude. These strategies soften the refusals with positive politeness. However, when the TNS refused the interlocutor of equal social power, they became relatively direct, which confirmed the findings of Rattanapian (2019). The use of 'assertive' is relatively high, and the use of 'apology' is low when compared with the refusals in the other situations. In addition to the directness, 'joke', which was not seen in other situations, was employed to mitigate the refusals towards close friends. An example of a refusal to a close friend and the use of joke is provided in 3a.

(3) a. ขอโทษนะแก ไว้คราวหน้า แต่ถ้าคราวนี้แกเลี้ยงเรา ก็ไปนะ อ้าวไม่ใช่หรอ ย่าๆ ล้อเล่นๆ  
 khothot na kae wai khrao na tae tha khrao ni kae liang rao ko pai na ao mai chai ro ha ha lo len lo len  
 Sorry. [Let's do it] next time, but this time if you pay, I will go. Oh, no? (laughter) Just kidding.

b. ขอบใจมาก ตามสบายเลยจ้า ทานข้าวให้อร่อยนะ  
 khopchai mak tam sabai loei cha than khao hai aroi na  
 Thanks a lot. Please go ahead. Enjoy your meal.

c. ไม่เป็นไรเลยค่ะอาจารย์ หนูเกรงใจ พอดีนัดกับเพื่อนไว้แล้วด้วยค่ะ  
 maipenrai loei kha achan nu krengchai phodi nat kap phuean wai laeoduai kha  
 It's alright, professor. I feel bad. I have also made plans with my friend.

For the higher-status situations, the TNS refusals were also performed with notably higher use of address terms. Both participant groups were sensitive to the change in social status. (3)b

shows the TNS refusal towards a junior while (3)c demonstrates the refusal in the higher-power distant-relationship situation, a professor. Note the length of the TNS refusals. They are noticeably shorter when compared with the KNS refusals in example (2).

Another interesting point is the high use of ‘let off the hook’ in refusals toward the interlocutors with more and less power with distant relationship, Junior and Professor situations. The high occurrence of this strategy is quite unique to the data of the TNSs with 32 occurrences or 19% in Junior situation and 41 occurrences or 17.6% in Professor situation. This strategy was also employed in other situations but with lower frequency rate, about four to eight times lower. This strategy can be said to be specific to the eliciting act of invitation as it was not present in the refusal elicited by the speech act of request (Wongsittikan & You, 2017). ‘Let off the hook’ was used to redress the effect of the refusals by letting the inviter know that their good intention or positive face want is recognized by the speaker. ‘Let off the hook’ in the KNS data was also seen in Junior and Professor situations, but with only five and two occurrences respectively. The strategy was realized with the phrase ‘괜찮아(요)’ *gwaen-chanh-a(yo)* or ‘괜찮습니다’ *gwaen-chanh-seup-ni-da* meaning ‘It is all right’. (3)b and (3)c are examples of the use of let off the hook strategy.

In ‘let off the hook’ strategy, the concept ‘krengchai’, as seen in (3)c, is also unique to Thai culture and does not have a direct translation to English. Thai has numerous expressions using the metaphor of heart ‘chai’. In different contexts, it can involve the desire to be respectful, considerate of others or the desire not to impose on others (Intachakra, 2012). ‘Krengchai’ can be said to be adopted in a refusal to mitigate the positive face of the listener. The refuser was being considerate or ‘krengchai’ towards the inviter. The expression ‘mai-pen-rai’ in (3)c can appear in a wide range of situations. Panpoothong and Phakdeephasook (2014) have listed different usage of ‘mai-pen-rai’ including apologizing, thanking, refusing, consolidating, or ending verbal conflicts. The expressions ‘krengchai’ and ‘mai-pen-rai’ are categorized as ‘let off the hook’ strategy as it let the listener off the burden of the act, the invitation. These two expressions can be considered as a Thai norm of saying no (Panpoothong & Phakdeephasook, 2014).

From the examination of the number and types of refusal strategies, it is apparent that the KNSs and TNSs employed ‘reason’ the most in turning down an invitation. Both native speaker

groups tend to be more direct towards friends, and they also show high use of address terms towards interlocutors of higher-power status. Despite some common elements, the data show some characteristics of each participant group: the use of ‘let off the hook’ by the TNSs and the use of ‘hedge’ or ‘emoticon’ by the KNSs.

### Patterns of KNS and TNS refusals

This section answers the second research question: what the patterns of refusals made by Korean and Thai native speakers are. The linguistic realization of refusals is examined in terms of refusal patterns in addition to the refusal strategies in order to gain a better understanding of each participant group’s style. Tables 7 shows the patterns of refusals by the KNS and TNS groups. The patterns are categorized according to the social factors in each situation.

Fisher’s exact tests were performed in order to determine whether there was a significant association between each social variable and the refusal patterns made by each participant group. For the KNS data, the results of the test run with the two relationship groups show that there were significant differences in both distant,  $p < .001$ , and close,  $p < .000$ , relationship groups. This means that for the KNSs, their refusals tend to shift from starting with the head act (H-initial) to starting with supportive moves (S-initial) as the social power of the addressee became higher.

Friend (Lower social power)	Pattern	KNS				TNS			
		Distant relationship		Close relationship		Distant relationship		Close relationship	
		Token	%	Token	%	Token	%	Token	%
Junior	H-only	7	12.50%	3	5.00%	8	13.56%	2	3.39%
	H-initial	26	46.43%	32	53.33%	12	20.34%	30	50.85%
	S-only	3	5.36%	1	1.67%	3	5.08%	1	1.69%
	S-initial	20	35.71%	24	40.00%	36	61.02%	26	44.07%
	Total	56*	100.00%	60	100.00%	59*	100.00%	59*	100.00%
Friend	H-only	8	13.33%	7	11.67%	16	27.12%	7	11.67%

	H-initial	21	35.00%	26	43.33%	12	20.34%	32	53.33%
	S-only	5	8.33%	0	0.00%	2	3.39%	0	0.00%
	S-initial	26	43.33%	27	45.00%	29	49.15%	21	35.00%
	Total	60	100.00%	60	100.00%	59*	100.00%	60	100.00%
Professor (Higher social power)	H-only	4	7.69%	3	5.36%	0	0.00%	7	11.67%
	H-initial	6	11.54%	5	8.93%	4	6.67%	29	48.33%
	S-only	1	1.92%	0	0.00%	4	6.67%	0	0.00%
	S-initial	41	78.85%	48	85.71%	52	86.67%	24	40.00%
	Total	52*	100.00%	56*	100.00%	60	100.00%	60	100.00%

Table 7. Patterns of refusals by the KNSs and the TNSs

\*Agreement to the Invitation was excluded.

For the TNS data, the results of the Fisher's Exact Tests show that the number of patterns used in each pair of distant-close relationship is significantly different, with  $p = .003$  in lower status relationships,  $p < .001$  in equal status relationships, and  $p < .000$  in higher status relationships. This indicates that there is a statistically significant association between the distance factor and the tendency for the TNS to switch from the H- to S-initial refusal patterns when the level of social distance changes. From Table 7, we can see that the patterns of the TNS refusals shifted to be oriented more towards the head act when the relationship between the interlocutors changed from distant to close.

The percentages of the S-initial of the KNS refusals increase as the level of social hierarchy becomes higher. In refusing the interlocutors of lower social status in both situations, the KNSs tended to be more straightforward with almost 60% of the utterances started with or contained only the head act (H-initial and H-only). In equal power situations, the refusals became less direct when compared with their interaction with lower-power status. The shift became more evident in higher-power situations, Professor and Close Professor. The patterns of KNS refusals notably shifted to S-initial pattern with the percentage of S-only and S-initial patterns in distant- and close-relationship 81% and 86% respectively. This shows that the KNSs were more likely to use S-initial refusals in response to interlocutors with higher social power. In another word, they became more indirect as the social power of the listeners became higher. The bars on the left side of Figure 1 illustrate the shifts in the KNS refusal patterns as the power status of the interlocutors changes. The percentage of H-only and H-initial patterns, and S-only and S-initial patterns are grouped together for a clearer picture.

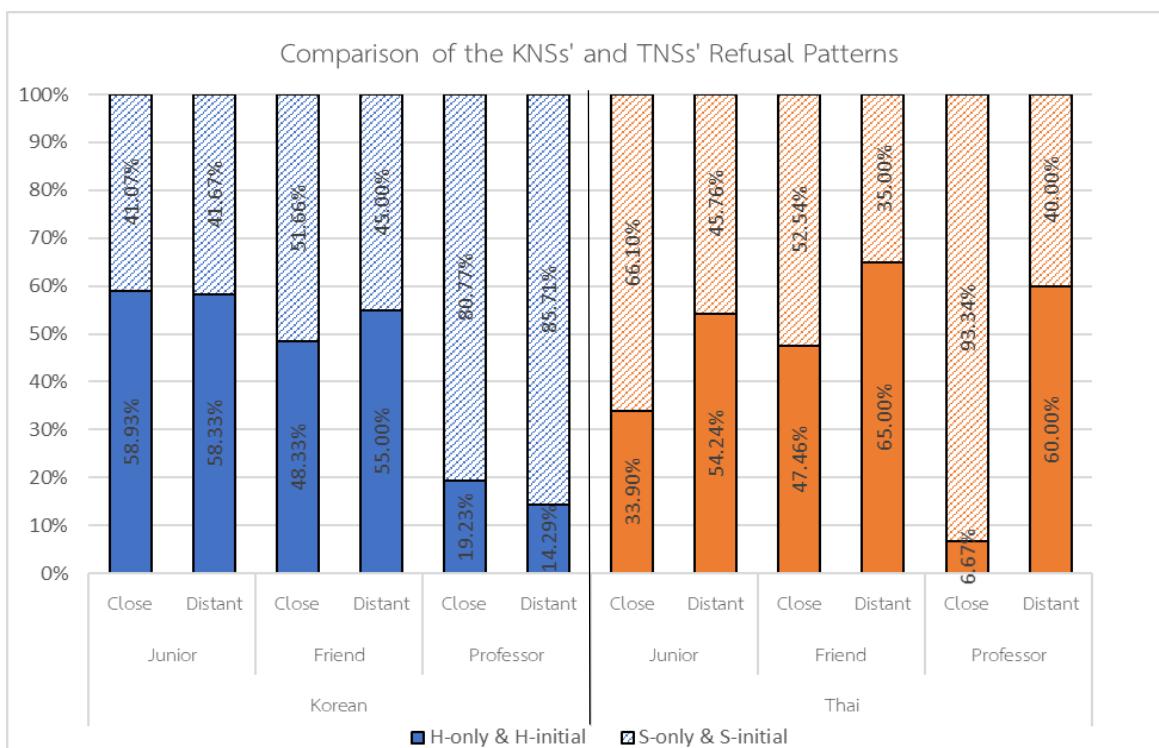


Figure 1. Comparison of the KNSs' and TNSs' refusal patterns

As for the TNS data, the percentages of the H-only and H-initial refusals in the lower-power situations increased by 20% when the degree of closeness changed from distant to close.

In the equal-power situation, the number of H-only and H-initial answers also increased by 10% when the speakers were in the close relationship situation. In the higher-power situations, the percentage of H-initial refusals increased from approximately 7% in the distant relationship to 48% in the close relationship situation. On the right side of Figure 1, the same tendency can be observed in every power level. The H-only & H-initial bars become higher in the close-relationship counterparts. The TNSs were more sensitive to the level of intimacy and tended to be more direct towards interlocutors of close relationship.

Examples (4) and (5) below provide instances of KNS refusals in different patterns. (4)a and (4)b show H-initial refusals in Junior and Close Junior situations respectively. Starting the refusals with a head act followed by only one or two supportive moves -- a ‘well-wishing’ strategy and an emoticon or a promise – to mitigate the utterance implies that the speakers felt low burden in refusing inviters of lower social status. Examples (4)c and (4)d are refusals from equal-power distant-relationship situation. Both utterances are also rather short and contain few mitigating strategies. (4)c is categorized as an S-initial as it starts with a pause filler, but the tone of the answer is still blunt and direct with the use of only ‘reason’ and ‘negative ability’ strategies. (4)d consists mainly of three head acts and ends with a crying emoticon. We can see the same pattern in (4)e, a refusal to a close friend. The speaker also employed few supportive moves to mitigate the refusal. The examples show that the refusals mostly consist of explanation.

(4) a. 아냐, 난 별로 먹고 싶지 않네! 너희들끼리 맛있게 먹어 ㅎㅎ  
a-nya, nan byeol-lo meok-go sip-ji anh-ne! neo-hui-deul-kki-ri mas-iss-ge meog-eo h h  
No, I'm not really in the mood for food! You guys enjoy your meal. (laughter)

b. 나 점심 먹은 지 얼마 안 돼서 배가 하나도 안 고프다. 다음에 같이 먹자!  
na jeom-sim meog-eun ji eol-ma an dwae-seo bae-ga ha-na-do an go-peu-da. da-eum-e gat-i meok-ja!  
I've just had lunch, so I'm not hungry at all. Let's eat together next time!

c. 아 근데 나 오늘 알바 있어서 못 갈듯  
a geun-de na o-neul al-ba iss-eo-seo mot gal-deut

ah, but I have to work at my part-time job today, so I don't think I can go.

d. 미안 나는 약속이 있어서 못 갈 거 같당 ㅜㅜ  
mi-an na-neun yak-sog-i iss-eo-seo mot gal geo gat-dang u u  
Sorry. I have other plans today, so I don't think I can go. (tears)

e. 나 이번 달 돈도 너무 많이 쓰고, 오늘 피곤해서 집에 일찍 가고 싶어. 다음에 먹자.

na i-beon dal don-do neo-mu manh-i sseu-go, o-neul pi-gon-hae-seo jib-e il-jjik ga-go sip-eo. d-aeum-e meok-ja.  
I spent a lot of money this month. Today I'm tired so I want to go home early. Let's eat next time.

(5)a and (5)b are the refusals in the Professor and Close Professor situations respectively.

Both answers have an S-initial pattern. We can see the use of supportive moves – a pause filler and an address term – at the beginning of the utterance to soften the refusals and show deference. In (5)a, the supportive moves are followed by the head act and ended with another two mitigating strategies. When compared with (5)b, the refusal towards a close professor begins with three supportive moves – pause filler, address term, and willingness – followed by the head act – reason and apology. The length of the refusals is quite long when compared to the ones in lower- and equal-power situations, and the S-initial pattern prevails in higher-power situations.

(5) a. 아 교수님 죄송하지만 제가 이미 점심에 선약이 있어서요..

a gyo-su-nim joe-song-ha-ji-man je-ga i-mi jeom-sim-e seon-yag-i iss-eo-seo-yo..  
ah, professor. I'm sorry but since I've already made plans for lunch..

한달전부터 잡은 약속이라 지금 낼 수가 없습니다..  
han-dal-jeon-bu-teo jab-eun yak-sog-i-ra ji-geum kkael su-ga eops-seup-ni-da..  
I made this appointment last month, so I can't cancel it now.

다음에 제가 연락 드려도 될까요? 감사합니다.

d-aeum-e je-ga yeon-rak deu-ryeo-do doel-kka-yo? gam-sa-hap-ni-da.  
Is it all right if I contact you next time? Thank you.

b. 아, 선생님, 저도 선생님과 같이 먹으러 가고 싶습니다만

a, seon-saeng-nim, jeo-do seon-saeng-nim-gwa gat-i meog-eu-reo ga-go sip-seup-ni-da-man

Ah, teacher. I'd also love to eat with you, but

오늘 빨 수 없는 중요한 일이 있어 가지고... 죄송합니다.

o-neul ppael su eops-neun jung-yo-han ir-i iss-eo ga-ji-go... joe-song-hap-ni-da

Today I have something very important that can't be canceled.. I'm sorry.

The reasons which the KNSs provided also confirm the increasing burden the KNSs felt as the social status of the inviters changed from lower to equal and to higher than the speakers. The KNSs stated that they felt more comfortable towards their juniors; therefore, it was easier for them to turn down the invitation directly. Similarly, the KNSs felt that they could be honest with their friends and refused directly without much burden, especially towards close friends as they knew each other well. For professors and close professors, the KNSs stated that they felt burdened by the invitation itself and by the fact that they needed to refuse. They mentioned that it was difficult to be honest and say no directly, and that courtesy towards professors were crucial. They felt obliged to make up a sound explanation to refuse by emphasizing or exaggerating the importance of another appointment that they had to attend. Some participants mentioned that the close relationship did not make the refusal easier while some participants pointed out that it might be less burdensome to refute a close professor as there was a good chance that they could eat together another time.

Example (6) shows refusals by the TNSs. We can see that overall, the TNS refusals are relatively short when compared to those of the KNSs. A stark contrast can be observed between (5)a, (5)b and (6)e, (6)f. Examples (6)a and (6)b illustrate refusals from Junior and Close Junior situations respectively. 6a is an example of an S-initial which starts with two supportive moves – pause filler and let off the hook – followed by reason while (6)b starts with reason – the head act – followed by alternative. Example (6)c shows the refusal in Friend situation, which is labeled as S-initial as it starts with a pause filler. The language used in the refusal was also relatively casual, signifying that the speaker felt no burden in refusing. The refusal to a close friend in 6d is very direct and blunt with the use of head act, reflecting the close relationship between the interlocutors.

(6) a. อ้อ ไม่เป็นไร พี่นัดเพื่อนไว้แล้ว  
o mai penrai phi nat phuean wai laeo

Oh, that's all right. I have plans with my friend(s).

b. พีເພີ່ງກິນຂ້າວເຖິງມາອະ ຍັງອື່ມອູ່ເລຍ ແຕ່ພີ່ເປັ້ນເປັນເພື່ອນກີ່ໄດ້ນະ  
phi phoeng kin khao thiang ma a yang im yu loei tae phi pai nang pen phuean kodai na  
I've just had lunch. I'm still full. But I can go with you if you want.

c. ອ້າ ເຮັດກອບາຍອະແກ ຕິດຮູ່ຮອດຝີເລຍ ຄ້າໄງຄຣາວໜ້ານະ  
a rao khong kho bai a kae tit thura phodi loei tha ngai khrao na na  
Oh, I'll pass. I have other stuff to do. Next time, okay?

d. ໄມເອາວະ ວັນນີ້ມີມີຕັ້ງຄໍ ແກໄປເລຍ  
mai ao a wanni mai mi tang kae pai loei  
Nah, I'm broke today. You go ahead.

e. ເຂີ້ມູງອາຈາຍຕາມສບາຍເລຍຄໍ ພອດີໜູ້ນັດກັບເພື່ອນໄວ້ແລ້ວ  
choen achan tam sabai loei kha phodi nu nat kap phuean wai laeo  
Professor, please don't worry about me. I've already made plans with my friends.

f. ວັນນີ້ຂອໂທໜະຈາຮຍ ທູ້ນີ້ນັດແລ້ວຄໍ ອດເລຍ  
wanni khot hot na chan nu mi nat laeo kha ot loei  
I'm sorry today, prof. I have another plan. That's too bad.

From the examples of refusals in Professor and Close Professor situations in (6)e and (6)f, the patterns of the refusals did not vary much from the refusals performed in the lower levels of social status. Although hierarchical status is important in Thai culture, using direct strategy in turning down invitations from people of higher status is common. The mitigation seems to be realized in the word selection, such as pronouns, hedges, and polite ending articles. In 6e and 6f, note the use of the word ທູ້ *nu* which literally means 'rodents' but is commonly used as a first-person pronoun 'I' by Thai children and adults. Khanittanan (1988) observed the use of the first-person pronoun '*nu*' as a way the speaker indicated self-deprecation and deference towards interlocutors. In this case, the choice of this first-person pronoun helped mitigate the refusals and express deference towards the higher-power inviters. In contrast to the KNSs' strategies to soften

the refusals, politeness in Thai is not always performed in elaborate linguistic formulae. Instead, it seems to be expressed in the tone and content of both direct and indirect refusal strategies.

When considering only the refusal strategies or patterns, the TNS refusals to higher-power interlocutors may seem too direct and employed few mitigating devices. However, the reasons given by the TNSs provide us with valuable insight.

To account for the high occurrence of ‘reason’ strategy in the TNS refusals, several participants reported that they refuted by providing explanations as they regard ‘reason’ as a polite and considerate way of turning down an invitation. Instead of using the word ‘no’, reason is an indirect way to imply a refusal. In the Junior situation, several participants stated that they did not want to hurt the inviter’s feelings and that they tried to be considerate. In refusing to a close junior, a TNS stated that being direct was acceptable because the inviter was younger and close to him/her. Some TNSs reported that vague reasons, such as ‘I’m busy.’, were appropriate to refuse a friend. Some participants regarded a vague reason as a good indirect and considerate way of refusing; some regarded it as an appropriate amount of information to be given to someone of distant relationship. The participants stated that they could be very straightforward to close friends as they knew each other well and their friends would understand them.

In turning down a professor, the TNSs stressed the importance of being polite in their answers. Some used the word ‘krengchai’ as a reason to refuse. They said that they did not want to impose on someone of higher social power and distant relationship. In refusing a close professor, the TNSs also emphasized being polite. Being direct with a close professor is acceptable, but they should maintain politeness. Similar to the KNSs, providing or making up an appropriate reason was regarded as a way to show deference to their professor.

### **Social variables and the KNS and TNS refusals**

Regarding the third research question of this study – “Do power and distance affect the realization of refusals made by the two native speaker groups? – it is apparent throughout the study and especially in the refusal pattern section that the KNS refusals were affected by the

change in the power variable. The KNS refusals became more S-initial or more indirect as the level of social power increased. The TNS refusals are realized in a more indirect way towards the interlocutors of distant relationships and become more direct towards the listeners of close relationship in all of the three levels of social power. This signifies that the social hierarchy and social distance factors are associated with how Korean and Thai refusals are realized. Korean native speakers were more sensitive to the power hierarchy of the listeners, confirming the findings of previous research (Sohn, 1981; Byon 2003; Kim & Kwon, 2010). Thai native speakers were more sensitive to the level of closeness with the interlocutors although Asian countries are thought to have hierarchical cultures.

## Conclusions

This study examined the cross-cultural differences in the realization of refusals in Korean and Thai in terms of refusal strategies, patterns, and the social variables that may influence the realization of refusals. The results show that overall, the KNS and TNS refusals were indirect with a similar range of refusal strategies employed. ‘Let off the hook’, e.g., ‘krengchai’ and ‘mai-pen-rai’, and short responses seem to be the distinctive features of Thai refusals. The KNSs were more sensitive to the social power, which was realized in the tendency towards the refusals with S-initial pattern as the social power of the interlocutors become higher, and the longer responses, increase usage of apology and address terms when refusing interlocutors of higher power status. The TNSs were affected by the distance variable more as the patterns of the TNS refusals shifted from S-initial to H-initial when the relationship changed from distance to close, regardless of the level of power. Moreover, word choices seem to be another important element in mitigating the refusals or expressing deference in Thai refusals.

The reason which the participants reported acted as a good source to help us understand their refusals more. It also emphasized the importance of cultural awareness. Two Asian cultures, Korean and Thai, do not have the same norm of communication or the same perception of politeness or hierarchical status. Values are realized differently even among Asian cultures.

The findings of this study can act as a baseline for interlanguage studies of Thai-Korean refusals in the aspect of performance, perception, or appropriateness as there is little literature on this topic, especially the study in which Thai is used as the target language. The pedagogical implication of this study is regarding raising the cultural awareness in language education. We can see that the norms of refusals in each language community are not the same. Regardless of what languages students are learning, they should be taught to be aware of the cultural aspect of social interactions and that they should not judge other people according to our cultural norms.

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