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UKRAINIAN REFUSAL SPEECH ACT IN NATIONAL CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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A Refusal Speech Act (RSA) is a speech act in which a refusal is made to cooperate with a specific request (invite, suggestion, offer, etc.). Such a speech act threatens to save the face of the communicators, putting both communicators in an uncomfortable situation and even destroying harmonious interpersonal relations between the speakers. In carrying out such acts, it is necessary to adopt some strategies and tactics of refusal to reduce the threat of loss of face and ensure the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relations. Each lingual culture has its own peculiarities in implementing speech acts of refusal. Within the framework of this article, we studied the peculiarities of implementing RSAs in Ukrainian linguoculture.

The refusal strategy has two primary levels of implementation: deep and surface. The surface level contains lexical sub-strategy and syntactic sub-strategy, which are provided by 17 verbalizations and communicative tactics. Based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, it was shown that the choice of specific tactics in the Ukrainian RSA is determined by cultural factors, in particular, the peculiarities of the Ukrainian mentality, the formation of which was primarily influenced both by the Cossack cultural and spiritual heritage and religious beliefs of Ukrainians.

Studying RSA is essential to understanding a nation's character and cultural peculiarities.

Keywords: *refusal speech act, face threat, strategy of refusal, sub-strategies of refusal, verbalizations and tactics of refusal, Ukrainian lingual culture, national mentality.*

从民族文化的角度看乌克兰的拒绝言论行为

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拒绝言语行为 (RSA) 是一种拒绝配合 (请求、邀请、建议或提供帮助等) 的言语行为。它是一种面子威胁行为。为了减少对对方面子的威胁程度并维持和谐的人际关系, 需要采取一定的拒绝策略。不同语言文化中的拒绝言语行为有不同的特点。本文研究乌克兰语言文化中RSA的特点。

拒绝策略包括深层策略和表层策略, 共17个子策略。通过定量和定性分析, 结果表明乌克兰语 RSA 的具体策略选择取决于文化因素, 尤其是乌克兰人心态的特点, 其形成主要受到哥萨克文化、精神遗产以及宗教信仰的影响。

RSA 的研究对于更好地理解一个国家的性格及其文化特点至关重要。

关键词: 拒绝言语行为, 面子威胁, 拒绝策略, 子拒绝策略, 拒绝语言及方法, 乌克兰语言文化, 民族心态

УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ МОВЛЕННИЙ АКТ ВІДМОВИ ПІД КУТОМ ЗОРУ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ

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Мовленнєвий акт відмови є актом відмови від співпраці на конкретний запит (наприклад, прохання, пропозиція, запрошення, пропозиція допомоги тощо). По суті, він є таким мовленнєвим актом, що загрожує збереженню обличчя комунікантів, будучи спроможним поставити обидвох комунікантів у незручну ситуацію і навіть зруйнувати гармонійні міжособистісні стосунки між ними. У процесі здійснення подібних актів необхідно прийняти деякі стратегії і тактики відмови, щоб зменшити загрози втрати обличчя та забезпечити підтримку гармонійних

міжособистісних стосунків. Кожна лінгвальна культура має свої особливості реалізації мовленнєвих актів відмови. У рамках даної статті ми вивчали особливості здійснення мовленнєвих актів відмови у рамках української лінгвокультури.

Було встановлено, що стратегія відмови має два основні рівня реалізації: глибинний і поверхневий. Поверхневий рівень містить лексичну субстратегію та синтаксичну субстратегію, які забезпечуються 17 комунікативними тактиками. На основі кількісно-якісного аналізу було встановлено, що вибір тих чи тих тактик в українському мовленнєвому акті відмови зумовлюється культурними факторами, зокрема особливостями української ментальності, на формування якої великою мірою вплинула козацька культурно-духовна спадщина та релігійні вірування українців. Дослідження мовленнєвих актів відмови є важливим для кращого розуміння характеру нації та особливостей її культури.

Ключові слова: мовленнєвий акт відмови, загроза обличчю, стратегія відмови, субстратегії відмови, тактики відмови, українська лінгвокультура, національна ментальність

“Refusal” is a speech act that is often encountered and used in daily life. Refusal speech act as a face-threatening act sometimes would harm the other party’s face. So certain strategies should be adopted to protect each other’s faces and maintain a harmonious relationship. Language is the carrier of culture, especially in different cultural backgrounds, customs, national characteristics, and values, which all impact the speech acts. However, little research has been done on the Ukrainian and Chinese refusal speech acts. Therefore, studying the refusal speech act in Ukrainian lingual culture has important practical significance. It can promote understanding of the characteristics of the Ukrainian Refusal Speech Act (URSA), its cultural values, and implications to reduce pragmatic errors in cross-cultural communication. The paper presents the particularities of the Ukrainian Refusal Speech Act through data analysis combined with the essential cultural background. On the other hand, it also enriches the study of refusal speech acts as a whole.

Speech Act Theory (SAT) was first proposed by Oxford University scholar J. Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words* in the 1960s [Austin 1962, p. 26]. According to P. Brown and S. C. Levinson’s “face-threatening act” (FTA) theory [Brown et al. 1987, p. 68], refusal speech act, as a common speech act in daily life, carries the potential of face-threatening nature. The study of RSA abroad began with Beebe & Takahashi, who jointly completed the description and analysis of RSA in English and Japanese [Beebe et al. 1990, p. 55].

Nicola Daly and co-researchers came up with the idea that “refusals are typically the second part of a pair of the adjacency pairs¹; the core component of a refusal is a denial or an expression of unwillingness to comply with a previous request, invitation or offer.” [Daly et al. 2004, p. 945] According to Chinese scholar Chang Shan, the RSA belongs to such a process of verbal communication, when the passive party uses words to deny the request, demand, arrangement, invitation, suggestion, etc. put forward by the active party that can affect his behavior. Such speech act process is called the refusal speech act [Chang Shan, 2014, p. 12].

Based on the previous studies, refusal speech acts are basically divided into direct, indirect, and implicit refusal speech acts. However, a unique type of RSA in the Chinese cultural context is the ostensible refusal speech act. On the other hand, previous studies have also shown that to protect the faces of both sides and maintain good interpersonal relationships, people tend to adopt RSA strategies and tactics. For instance, the Japanese scholar Takuro Moriyama classifies four types of RSA in Japanese: “humility type”, “lie type”, “postponement type”, and “deception type” [Takuro Moriyama 1990, p. 59].

We define RSA as a speech act of uncooperative response to a specific request in the four contexts: request, suggestion, invitation, offering.

Politeness is a symbol of human civilization and an important criterion for human social activities. It is a code of conduct that has moral or ethical significance in daily life, including various efforts made by people to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. The linguistic activity as one social activity is also bound by this criterion. L. Charles and the co-researcher stated that the main function of “face work” – Interactional work oriented towards affirming and protecting the dignity of social participants – is to maintain the ritual order of social life [Charles et al. 1997, p. 1].

In the 1950s, American scholar E. Goffman proposed the ‘functional’ definition of the “face” concept: “Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants” [Goffman 1955, p. 5]. Later, according to P. Brown & S. C. Levinson, “face” was associated with the “public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for himself” [Brown et al. 1978, p. 66]. They also identified distinctive features of Face-threatening acts (FTAs) in “Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use,”

1 An adjacency pair is an example of conversational [turn-taking](#) in [linguistics](#). An adjacency pair is composed of two [utterances](#) by two speakers, one after the other. The speaking of the first utterance (the first-pair part, or the first turn) provokes a responding utterance (the second-pair part, or the second turn).

which are determined by whether the threat is to the addressee's face or the speaker's face.

The refusal speech act belongs to the FTAs, for it is an act against the other party's will, and carries the risk of hurting the other person's self-esteem and damaging interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to use refusal strategies that are appropriate to the situation at the time to keep the conversation going smoothly and successfully maintain a harmonious interpersonal relationship. However, language is the carrier of culture. Different cultures will imprint different characteristics on people's speech and behavior, and there are differences among politeness strategies under different cultural backgrounds. It is necessary to do a pragmatic analysis and realize the cultural factors behind this special kind of speech act.

It is well known that Slavic culture has a long history, and its language, art, and religion are major components of European culture. Ukraine is the birthplace of the Eastern Slavs, who established the first unified monarchy in Kyiv and its surrounding areas in 882 AD, namely Kyivan Rus. "Kyivan Rus, the first state of the Eastern Slavs, rose in the second half of the 9th century AD in a vast area centered on the Dnieper River. It soon became one of the politically and economically developed countries in Eastern Europe." [Zhao Yun 2004, p. 9] Due to the history of constant invasions and integration by powerful foreign forces, the Slavs maintained a strong sense of independence and national consciousness. Therefore, "independence" and "freedom" are two important parts in Slavic culture.

In the cultural traditions of the Slavs, Christianity plays an important role. Religious beliefs are widespread in Ukraine. Within a regional scope, Ukraine might be described as one of the most religious countries in Europe [Druzenko 2015, p. 719]. On the territory of the Old Rus in Kiev, Christianity became the dominant religion since its official acceptance in 989 by Vladimir the Great (Volodymyr the Great). The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the largest in the country. Meanwhile, ancestral worships were preserved, as were beliefs in house, forest, and water gnomes. Christianity and ancient beliefs together coalesced in the consciousness of Ukraine. This history shaped the traits of Ukrainian religiosity: openness, syncretism, and tolerance [Kolodniy 2000, p. 2].

In addition, as one of the most important parts of Ukrainian history and culture, the Cossack Culture should be highlighted. The Cossacks are East Slavic Orthodox Christians, who once lived in Zaporizhia Sich in the heartland of Ukraine. They played an important role in the development of Ukraine. Chinese scholar Zhao Yun once pointed out in the book *"Ukraine: The Heavy Footsteps of History"*: "The

Cossack phenomenon, which has been recorded in history books since the 1470s, emerged as a “free man” who resisted tyranny. Later, as they wandered in remote areas and fought against foreign races ... During hundreds of years of war, they have left a glorious mark in Ukrainian history and even in world history with their distinctive characteristics of bravery and freedom.” [Zhao Yun 2004, p. 16] It is an important part of the formation of the national pursuit of “free will (*vólja*)”. According to Stephen Shulman’s opinion, the pursuit of “self-management” and “political equality” is a prominent feature of Ukrainian traditional culture. The specific symbol of this feature is the “Cossack phenomenon” in Ukrainian history [Stephen 1999, p. 153].

Therefore, based on Ukraine’s own historical and cultural factors, RSA will reflect its unique characteristics.

The research on RSA in China began in the 1990s. The earliest research on refusal speech behavior began with the comparison between English and Chinese. Ma Yuelan conducted a comparative study of the refusal speech strategies of Chinese and American college students through questionnaires from a pragmatic perspective. She believed that the refusal speech strategy was mainly implemented through conversational adjuncts. She stated that due to cultural differences, the expression patterns and frequencies of refusal speech in China and the United States are different [Ma Yuelan 2000, p. 46]. There are also some comparative research between Chinese and other languages, such as the research of Zhang Xiaoyin and Xiong Hongzhi focused on the “request-refusal” speech acts in Chinese and Japanese [Zhang Xiaoyin et al. 2017, p. 54]; Wang Wei compared the refusal strategies used by Chinese and Korean [Wang Wei 2019, p. 1]; Gao Yuyuan compared the similarities and differences between the communication strategies in Russian and Chinese RSA [Gao Yuyuan 2018, p. 1].

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, Chinese scholar Yan Xiaoping surveyed college students using a speech completion questionnaire in “Gender, power, and politeness strategies in Chinese request and refusal speech behaviors” [Yan Xiaoping 2004, p. 81]. Chen Lanxiang explored the classification of indirect refusal and its metonymic thinking mechanism from the perspective of cognitive linguistics [Chen Lanxiang 2012, p. 65].

In addition, several Chinese scholars conducted research focusing on the unique topic of the Chinese ostensible refusal speech act. Such as Ran Yongping, Lai Huidi (2014); Wang Hui (2014) and Ma Jing (2020) [Ran Yongping et al. 2014, p. 65; Wang Hui 2014, p. 95; Ma Jing 2020, p. 1].

In 2005, Ukrainian scholar Nadia Oleksiuk conducted a study that regards refusal as an independent speech act with pragmatic characteristics. In the study, she delineates the characteristics of the speech situation in which refusal is enacted and determines the organizational rules of this speech act [Nadiya Oleksiuk 2005, p. 152].

In conclusion, as for the research on RSA, whether in China or abroad, it can be found that the research content and research methods have continuously expanded and deepened. For instance, there is a shift of study from the initial language, English, to many other languages, and there is a discussion on RSA from the perspective of pragmatic analysis, cognitive linguistics, and sociolinguistics.

In addition, the scope of comparison has also begun to spread from different languages, along with the increasing frequency of international exchanges. However, according to the literature search engine, the research on the Ukrainian RSA is still in the blank stage. Therefore, it is important to conduct relevant research to enhance the domestic understanding of the characteristics of Ukrainian RSAs and the cultural factors behind them, avoid pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication, and enrich the research on RSAs.

This article mainly adopts a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), a written role-play questionnaire comprising 10 discourses that provide the contexts eliciting the desired speech act. Each situation contains a blank in which only a refusal would fit. It is widely used to investigate pragmatic language transfer. The DCT is a highly constrained instrument that elicits pragmalinguistic production data [Kasper 1992, p. 203]. The participants of this research are 60 students from Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. (All participants are Ukrainian native speakers). Based on the strict requirements of the examination, 60 data collection can undoubtedly be used for the research.

Based on the questionnaires in some previous studies [Ma Jing 2020, p. 64], the questionnaire consists of 4 refusal situations according to the discourse completion task. To improve the questionnaire's efficiency, the author asks 6 students to offer the refusal sentences as topics lately before designing the questionnaire. Each situation contains several questions. The author selects a topic that is frequently used as a questionnaire. It aims to ensure the issues or sentences about greetings are familiar to students. Then, the author gives the pre-questionnaire to some students who will not participate in the research and makes them read and find the improper places so that the collected data strictly avoids improper situations. Based on it, the questionnaire is formed. The situation is given, and then students

will write the answer on the blank according to the problem. From their answers, the paper will find the characteristics of Ukrainian students when they make refusals.

M. Stubbs in his “*Discourse Analysis*” (1983) divided the text’s deep and surface level of the text. He pointed out that the discourse surface level refers to the lexical and syntactic means that can predict and mark the speaker’s purpose. The depth of discourse refers to the indirect degree of speech; that is, it does not express the real purpose of the speaker on the surface but relies on pragmatic principles to deduce his real intention. Drawing on this point of view, we divide refusal communicative strategies into two types: superficial and deep.

Through the DCT questionnaire by collecting the obtained corpus, and based on M. Stubbs’ opinion in his “*Discourse Analysis*” [Stubbs 1983, p. 34], the refusal strategies can be classified as superficial and deep. The superficial level refers to the lexical and syntactic means that can predict and mark the speaker’s purpose, containing lexical and syntactic sub-strategies. The deep level refers to the indirect degree of speech; that is, it does not express the real purpose of the speaker on the surface but relies on pragmatic principles to deduce his real intention, such as the method of explaining the reason, making an apology, and giving praise, etc.

After the corpus is often sorted, it can be found that there are five main lexical sub-strategies used to implement the RSA: a) words expressing the meaning of refusal; b) parentheses or insert structures; c) salutations; d) adverbs of degree, e) interjections. And four main syntactic sub-strategies: a) interrogative sentences; b) subjunctive hypothetical sentences; c) repetitive structures; d) elliptical structures. Meanwhile, eight deep strategies were adopted: a) explain the reason; b) make an apology; c) express thankfulness; d) give praise or approval; e) show sympathy; f) give a suggestion; g) false consent; h) vague expression.

Table 1

Classification of Refusal Strategies

Classification	Sub-classification	Mode of verbalization	Instances
Superficial refusal strategies	lexical sub-strategies	a) words expressing the meaning of refusal	[2/5] Hi , для кожного виду роботи наданий чіткий дедлайн, який не підлягає перенесенню, тож будь ласка, виконуйте роботи вчасно. [9/11] Я не буду працювати понаднормово. [10/35] Я уже обрала тему, тому ВІДМОВЛЮСЬ .

		b) parentheses or insert structures	[3/24] Дякую, але мені здається , що цей колір мені не дуже личить. Чи є у Вас така сама модель іншого кольору? [10/4] Дякую за пропозицію, але я вже знайшла тему, яка, на мою думку , є ґрунтовнішою та сподобалась мені більше ніж запропонована.
		c) salutations	[6/41] Дорогі батьки , я ціную вашу турботу та підтримку, але я не хочу займатися справою, яка мені не подобається. Я спробую знайти роботу за своїми вподобаннями. [8/45] Чувак , конспект я не дам бо мені самому по ньому вчити.
		d) adverbs of degree	[9/30] Дуже перепрошую, але Я буду походити у вихідні дні на роботу за окрему виплату, адже в документах додаткові дні не обговорювались.
		e) interjections	[6/30] Ну ні, мені це не подобається.
		syntactic sub-strategies	a) interrogative sentences
	b) subjunctive hypothetical sentences		[6/22] у мене ніколи не буде швидкого кар'єрного зростання, якщо робота, яку я роблю - нудна і зовсім мені не до вподоби . Краще витратити цей час на освіту та зайнятись своїм ділом, тому я не згодна йти на цю роботу
	c) repetitive structures		[3/19] Ні, ні , це не мій колір, дякую. Можливо у вас є щось в зеленому відтінку?
	d) elliptical structures		[1/20] Я б залюбки пішла, але, на жаль...
	Deep Refusal Strategies	a) explaining the reason tactics	[1/42] Вибачте, у мене сьогодні інша зустріч .

		[4/38] Виbach, але ти мені подобаєшся лише як хороший друг. Зустрічатися з тобою, буде лише означати, що я обманюю себе і тебе, даючи тобі фальшиві почуття
	b) making an apology tactics	[7/35] Виbachте, мені потрібно сьогодні до лікаря це терміново. [9/4] Перепрошую, але я не зобов'язана працювати поднаднормово, я теж маю право на відпочинок.
	c) expressing thankfulness tactics	[6/32] Я дякую за допомогу і вашу турботу, але це моє життя. Мій вибір. Я не хочу працювати там. [10/51] Я Вам дуже вдячна, але вже маю тему для дипломної роботи.
	d) giving praise or approval tactics	[4/4] Виbach, ти хороша людина, але ти мені не подобаєшся, тому я не бачусенсу у зустрічі. [3/41] Виbachте, це чудовий екземпляр одягу, але мене не влаштовує його колір.
	e) showing sympathy tactics	[5/40] Не засмучуйся. Ваза - всього лише матеріальна річ, головне, щоб ти сам був в порядку. Гроші повертати не треба, я давно хотів її замінити.
	f) making a suggestion tactics	[3/5] Дякую за рекомендацію, але мені не дуже до вподоби цей колір. Чи може ви покажете інші варіанти? [4/45] На жаль, це не взаємно. Проте ми можемо залишитись друзями.
	g) giving false consent tactics	[3/30] Я б його взяла, але мені здається, що це все ж таки не мій колір [10/20] Згодна з Вами, але вважаю що на даному етапі є актуальнішою інша тема: я

		вивчала закордонні джерела і там ця тема досить детально розвивається, тому раджу обрати іншу.
	h) vague expression tactics	[1/41] Вибачте, але в мене немає часу на це, тому давайте іншим разом. [10/44] Я прийму до уваги Вашу пораду. Дякую. Однак я вже вибрала тему дипломної роботи і почала її писати.

In the DCT, there are four main contexts of refusal: refusal to request, refusal to invitation, refusal to offer, and refusal to suggestion. All the refusal speech acts in these contexts have been sorted and categorized after the corpus collecting ready. According to statistics, 1276 modes of refusal realization were adopted in total. The quantity and percentage of specific tactics and verbalizations of the refusal strategy is shown in the table below.

Table 2

Refusal strategy tactics quantitative analysis

Tactics and verbalizations	Quantity	Percentage
Explaining the reason	360	28.21 %
Using words with the meaning of the refusal	224	17.55 %
Making an apology	151	11.83 %
Giving a suggestion	109	8.54 %
Expressing thankfulness	83	6.50 %
Using salutations	63	4.94 %
Showing sympathy	63	4.94 %
Using parentheses or insert structures	57	4.47 %
Using adverbs of degree	37	2.90 %
Using subjunctive hypothetical sentences	37	2.90 %
Using interjections	23	1.80 %
Using interrogative sentences	22	1.72 %
Giving praise or approval	22	1.72 %
Using repetitive structures	8	0.63 %
Giving false consent	8	0.63 %
Using vague expression	8	0.63 %
Using elliptical structures	1	0.08 %
Total	1276	100 %

According to Table 2, it can be found that the top five tactics of the refusal strategy are: “Explaining the reason”, “Using words with the meaning of the refusal”, “Making an apology”, “Giving a suggestion”, and “Expressing thankfulness”. And the sum of them exceeds more than 70 % of the total. Meanwhile, the last four tactics of the refusal strategy are extremely rare, which are “Using repetitive structures”, “Giving false consent”, “Using vague expression”, “Using elliptical structures”, with each of them accounting for less than one percent. These two parts will be discussed in detail in the article.

Speech acts are like human beings themselves, with universal characteristics and, at the same time, unique features, which is the difference in the patterns of speech acts. Ukrainian is a language of the East Slavic branch of the Slavic language family. One of the characteristics of Ukrainian is “concise”, and the communication dialogues are often shorter and more purposeful. In Ukrainian, the content of communication (the purpose of communication) is more focused than the form. Therefore, it may seem cold and stiff to foreigners, such as Chinese and Japanese speakers. It will be apparent from the following examples:

Ukrainian:

Хазяїн: Чи хочеться вам нити чай? [Host: Would you like some tea?]

Гість : Ні. Дякую. [Guest: No. Thank you.]

Chinese:

主人 : 我给你倒杯水吧! [Host: Would you like some tea?]

客人 : 不用麻烦! 我不渴, 待一会儿就走了。 [Guest: It's too troublesome! I'm not thirsty. I'll leave soon.]

主人 : 不麻烦, 天挺热的, 喝点。 [Host: No trouble at all. It's quite hot, drink some!]

客人 : 那好吧! 麻烦你了啊! [Guest: Okay then, thank you!]

In the same context, the Ukrainian conversation is very brief, and the information is obvious. Both parties can understand each other's communication purpose through each other's speech acts without too much guesswork. It can be said that the Ukrainian Speech Act is a straightforward and transparent way of understanding.

Because of “independence” and “freedom” have been playing important roles in the history and culture of Ukraine, the Ukrainian national spirit of “free will” has been passed down from generation to generation and has penetrated every aspect of life. They tend to express the idea clearly and do not want to do things against their will. This is also why the percentage of the adoption of tactics “Using words with the

meaning of the refusal” is so large. The straight and brief style of speech act pattern is seen to be sincere and show respect to the other party.

“Words that express refusal” in Ukrainian, are such as *відмовляюся, ні, не можу, не хочу*, etc. If it is due to subjective reasons, the speaker usually intends to refuse by denying his own ability and willingness. In Ukrainian, *відмовляюся, ні, не можу*, etc., are generally used to indicate that the speaker is unable to meet a specific request/invitation/offer/suggestion, etc. In addition, words like *не хочу, не бажаю*, etc., are generally used to indicate that the speaker is unwilling to meet the other party’s request/ invitation/ offer/ suggestion, etc.

Although words that express refusal can clearly and concisely show the speaker’s intention to refuse without causing ambiguity, they violate the politeness principle. The direct RSA poses a significant threat to the other party’s face and can easily affect or even destroy the relationship between the two parties.

On the other hand, Ukraine is a religious country; religious beliefs are spread throughout the country. Vladimir the Great established Christianity as the state religion in 989. The teaching of Christianity allows people to pursue equality, friendliness, and harmony when getting along with each other.

Therefore, in the situation of taking RSAs, which are inherently face-threatening, to reduce the degree of offense to the other party and avoid making him/her feel embarrassed, the speaker often uses words that express refusal together with other strategies. Such as “thankfulness + refusal”, “apology + refusal”, “refusal + explanation of reasons”, “refusal + suggestions”, “apology + refusal + explanation of reasons”, “thankfulness + refusal + explanation of reasons + suggestions”, etc. The combined use of these strategies can reduce the threat to the other party’s face and maintain good interpersonal relationships.

“Apology” and “Thankfulness” can be universally regarded as two of the most frequently used polite speech acts. Usually, people will apologize when they do something impolite or make a mistake and will be thankful when they get help or benefit from others. They aim to eliminate conflicts and maintain good interpersonal relationships between the two parties. The refusal speech act is an act against the other’s will or goodness, threatening the other’s face and even causing a broken interpersonal relationship. Therefore, when people have to conduct the refusal speech act, “apology” or “thankfulness” is usually taken to express the feeling of regret or appreciation, which makes the other party feel respected. It will reduce the threat to the other party’s face. As a global politeness phenomenon, the frequency of using them in the collected corpus is high.

“Explaining the reasons” can alleviate the threat to the other party’s face to a certain extent and prevent the refusal from appearing too blunt. Especially when the speaker expresses a direct or firm refusal, he or she will usually use a paragraph to explain the reason. Many strategy formulas, “refusal + explanation,” are found in the DCT-based corpus. Such as *Ні, у мене є більш цікава тема, яку я хочу розкрити; Ні, я б хотів інший колір, Ні, у вас було достатньо часу на виконання та задачу роботи; Ні, вибачте, але я не ходжу по ресторанах з співробітниками, можемо зустрітись в більш діловому місці*, etc. Explaining the facts will make it easier for the other party to deal with the “being refused” part and accept it.

However, the reason for refusal may be subjective or objective, specific or general, natural, or an excuse just made up by the speaker. No matter which one it is, it can avoid putting the relationship between the two parties into an awkward situation, even though the speaker himself cannot meet the other party’s psychological expectations or immediately perform the required actions.

“Making suggestions” is a supplementary strategy designed to move things more positively. Although the speaker cannot meet the other party’s expectations or requirements, by making suggestions, the speaker can show a positive attitude of helping to find alternative solutions and reach a consensus. By expressing friendship and showing support in this way, the speaker leaves a buffer zone for both parties to maneuver and ensures that the relationship between the two parties does not reach a deadlock. However, it is worth noting that based on the corpora of the ninth context (being asked by the company boss to stay and work overtime on weekends), very few suggestions are found.

There is no suggestion to find other people to do overtime work. Instead, there are suggestions for the company, such as improving efficiency and arranging work better so that all work can be completed within regular working hours, or according to the contract, additional wages should be paid beyond the working days etc. The most common keywords here are “law”, “contract”, “union”, “legal holiday”, “power”, etc. This reflects that people have a strong sense of law and are good at using legal weapons to protect their legitimate rights and interests and their quality of maintaining and adhering to rules. They resist unfairness in work and life, which can also be seen as a manifestation of the consciousness of “free will”.

As for the last four tactics of refusal tactics which are rarely taken, such as “Using repetitive structures”, “Giving false consent”, “Using vague expression”, “Using elliptical structures”. It is easier to understand when taking the cultural elements into analyzing why they are rare. It can be seen that Ukrainians’ tendency to adopt clear intentions with a matter-of-fact attitude is a sign of sincerity, respect,

and politeness. However, the repetitive structure is opposite to the character of “concise”. In contrast, using the elliptical structure, vague expression, and false consent may cause inaccurate understanding or misunderstanding by the other party and fail the communication intention.

Through quantitative and pragmatic analysis of the corpus, it was found that it is consistent with the general research findings that when people have to conduct RSAs, refusal strategies are often adopted to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. However, speech acts in different cultures have their own characteristics. Due to the concise, clarity, and purposefulness of the Ukrainian language style itself and the background culture of pursuing “free will”, “independence”, “love and equality” etc., Ukrainian RSA has certain characteristics in the use of speech tactics.

Those are the words that express refusal, which are frequently taken as a sign of being sincere and respectful, as well as the manifestation of free will. Meanwhile, it is usually accompanied by highly polite speech acts of “apology” or “thankfulness”. In addition, “explaining the reason” or “giving a suggestion”, etc. to reduce the threats to other’s faces also contributes into good interpersonal relationships. At the same time, some refusal tactics are rarely taken because they go against the values of “concise, purposefulness and sincerity” adopted in Ukrainian lingual culture: they are “Using repetitive structures”, “Giving false consent”, “Using vague Expression”, “Using elliptical structures”.

Finally, it should be noted that there are some shortcomings in the study: the participants of the DCT questionnaire were only college students, and the number was limited. The context design of the DCT questionnaire also had room for improvement. In the future, the authority of the research results on URSA can be increased by expanding the group of people who take the questionnaire (students, teachers, workers, people of different ages and interests, etc.). Exercising a regular sociolinguistic approach would probably enrich the research data dealing with URSA.

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