

A project entitled

***Saying No: an investigation of Hong Kong tertiary learners'
pragmatic competency on refusal***

submitted by

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Saying No: An investigation of Hong Kong tertiary students' pragmatic competency on making a refusal

Abstract

This project aims at investigating Hong Kong tertiary students' pragmatic competency on making a refusal. Pragmatic competency, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately in a social context" (Taguchi, 2009, p.1), is an important area of the language competence but it is rarely addressed in teaching and learning of the English Language in formal curriculum in Hong Kong. Previous studies (e.g. Han & Burgucu-Tazegul, 2016; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015; Jiang, 2015; Lin, 2014) have also shown that it is difficult for people who learn a second or foreign language to make refusals while most native speakers of English tend to be direct in making a refusal by saying "no" right away. Although there have been previous studies exploring Chinese EFL learners' refusal patterns, the way how Hong Kong tertiary students' make refusals was relatively less investigated. In order to fill this research gap, a discourse completion test (DCT) was conducted and students were asked to write down the responses that they would make to refuse three requests. The results showed that Hong Kong tertiary students still applied more indirect strategies when refusing and they mostly included excuse, reasons and explanations in their refusals. Moreover, the nature of the

requests in the DCT also influenced the refusal strategies given by the students.

1. Introduction

As a former British colony, Hong Kong is a place where English is widely used in various sectors in the society. Even after the handover to China in 1997, English is still a co-official language alongside the Chinese language, which is the mother tongue of the majority of the population. Meanwhile, in schools English is still an important compulsory subject from primary to secondary.

Both in primary and secondary schools, English has been taught and assessed in terms of the four language skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking (grammar is also focused although it is not separately tested). Mastering accuracy in these areas, people will be considered as proficient language users. This idea is also supported by the fact that Hong Kong is a test-driven society (Carless, 2010) as tests and assessments are always used to determine one's ability. There are a lot of qualifying English language examinations which take place in Hong Kong and overseas, for example, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) (English language) for the local curriculum and International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

One important area of language competence, however, has rarely been addressed in the school English education curriculum. It is the pragmatic competence of using a foreign language. Pragmatic competence refers to “the ability to use language appropriately in a social context” (Taguchi, 2009, p.1). Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) put forward an idea that in order to allow learners to be communicatively competent in their second or foreign language, both their grammatical knowledge and pragmatic competence need to be in place. Communication will be hindered if the grammatical forms are correct but pragmatic competence is inadequate. In light of this phenomenon, the following study tries to examine tertiary English learners’ ability to use English to communicate with others.

2. Literature review

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a sub-area in linguistics developed in the late 1970s (Huang, 2015). It examines the use of language (Huang, 2015; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010), such as implicature, speech act, deixis, reference, etc. The idea of pragmatic competence was defined by Chomsky (1980, p.224), referring to “the knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use of the language”. Pragmatic competence also involves one’s awareness of the social distance, social

status and cultural knowledge amongst the speakers, etc. (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010).

Moreover, as there might be a gap between the literal meaning of an expression and the underlying meaning, it is also important for competent language learners to possess the ability to interpret both the literal and underlying meaning when they communicate.

2.2 Pragmatics and Speech acts

The speech act theory, a sub-field of pragmatics, helps us to understand how people accomplish things with their words. It was first proposed by Austin in 1975. He observed that there are certain utterances which not only “say” things, but also perform actions. Therefore, he named such utterances as performatives in contrast to those which are just to make declaration or statements as constatives (Austin, 1975).

In addition to the classification of the utterances, there are also a total of three facets of a speech act. They are (1) locutionary act which is to produce a linguistic expression, (2) illocutionary act, which is the intended action to be performed by the speaker when expressing the linguistic expression and (3) perlocutionary act which refers to the consequences or effects through that linguistic expression (Huang, 2015). For example, an example to illustrate the facets of a speech act can be the expression “can you pass me the salt?” Although this utterance, linguistically, is an interrogative and requires the person to

respond either a “yes” or a “no”, it does not focus on the responses but the perlocutionary act, which is to pass the object as requested to the person who initiated the expression.

Speech acts can be found in a number of contexts in our everyday lives, for example, offering, requesting, suggesting and inviting. All these involve responses like expressing agreements or disagreements, accepting, refusing, etc. Expressing such responses involve “face”. “Face” is “the public image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61) and it can be positive or negative. People in general cooperate in maintaining face in an interaction. Positive face refers to the positive self-image while negative face refers to the basic claim to personal preserves and the freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, the concept of face-threatening act (FTA) refers to expressions that can directly threaten an addressee’s positive face, for example, disapproval, criticisms, refusals, disagreements, etc.

2.3 Speech acts on refusals

In a conversation, many interactions involve adjacency pairs (Holmes, 2013). For example, some common adjacency pairs include greeting-greeting, thanking-response, request-acceptance/refusal, etc. Under adjacency pairs, the response can usually be classified into preferred or dispreferred part. Requests and refusals are an example of adjacency pair but

the refusal is considered as a dispreferred response. Holmes (2013) also mentioned that the dispreferred response is often marked in some ways like by “an initial pause” or a delaying discourse marker like “well” (p.385). In particular, refusals, or basically “saying no” is difficult for non-native speakers of a language and therefore, responding to a request with “no” needs special skills (Abarghoui, 2012, p.2439) because the speaker has to know when to use the appropriate form depending on the speaker and the interlocutor’s relationship, culture, status, etc. These factors are further elaborated in the following section.

2.3.1 Demography

2.3.1.1 Gender

There has been sociolinguistic research focusing on the differences between male’s and female’s speech in terms of pronunciation, morphology, syntactic constructions, etc. A popular research conducted by Robin Lakoff found a number of linguistic features present in female’s speech only as a result of their subordinate social status in American history, for example, more hedging (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, gender does play a role in influencing speech patterns and structures made by speakers.

Apart from the linguistic features found in female’s speech, politeness is often considered to

be female's concern, because there have been stereotypes of how female in general should behave. From past studies, female's linguistic behaviour is often characterised as being cooperative and they tend to avoid conflict. An assumption proposed to explain this behaviour is that female is powerless and such powerlessness is displayed in language. However, because of changes in female's participation in the public sphere, such stereotypes have changed throughout the years (Mills, 2003).

Therefore, gender and speech behaviours are interrelated. Abarghoui (2012, p.2443) also supports the idea by mentioning that "speech behaviours depend on the gender relationship between interlocutors". In this way, refusing people of the same or the opposite gender may require different strategies or the linguistic features used may be different.

In studies which specifically study the speech behaviours by gender, male Iranian speakers refuse people of the opposite gender with more direct strategies while female would be more sensitive when making refusals (Hedayatnejad & Rahbar, 2014). In another study (Ghazanfari et al., 2013) which also looks at speech behaviours of Iranian speakers finds that female expressed more regret, excuse than men, they tend to express their feelings more than men and are more extrovert. These two studies confirm what Mills (2003) has suggested that female tends to be more sensitive.

2.3.1.2 Relationship between interlocutors in a conversation

The way how interlocutors interact in a conversation differs when they have different relationships like whether they are family members of each other, friends, colleagues, etc. Such relationships are examples of social distance which refers to the level of intimacy between interlocutors and also how well they know each other (Koppen et al., 2016). As a result, the conversations amongst different people may differ in terms of word choice, pronunciation and sentence structures, etc. (Koppen et al., 2016)

Abarghoui (2012, p.2442) suggests “politeness increases with social distance” as the speech behaviours differ because of the relationships amongst speakers in a conversation. He also points out that people with higher social status tend to receive more respectful and considerate behaviour, like negative politeness. Thus those with lower social status tend to avoid being rude to those with higher status. Therefore, the relationship between interlocutors in a conversation does play a role in influencing their refusal patterns when responding to requests.

2.3.1.3 Culture

Huth (2013, p.1) points out that pragmatics is indeed “a cultural system of linguistic practices” and is already rooted in first language acquisition. Children develop awareness of social contexts of certain language behaviours in their everyday language environment. They already know some patterns of language behaviours and thus this helps them to identify social contexts and situations that they should behave in a particular way. They will also have certain linguistic or even extra-linguistic resources to communicate under specific contexts or situations effectively.

As a result, for language learners, apart from mastering the use of the language, they also have to understand pragmatics across cultures as the cultural awareness is ingrained in speakers’ interactional behaviour already. The pragmatic knowledge from the first language will also be transferred to the second or foreign languages when one is learning a new language (Huth, 2013). Empirical research has shown that such pragmatic transfer leads to miscommunication across languages and cultures (Kasper, 1992).

With the fact that many speech acts are “culture-specific” (Huang, 2015, p.152), certain speech acts may only be present in certain cultures only. For example, in the Australian aboriginal language Walmajaari, the speech act of requests is based on kinship rights and

obligations. The verb used to make a request is “japirlyung”, and it conveys a message meaning roughly “I request you to do something for me, and I expect you to do it simply because of how you are related to me”. As a result, it will be very hard to refuse a kinship-based speech act of requests (Huang, 2015, p.153).

As a result of the “culture-specificity”, a large scale Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns Project (CCSARP) was conducted to look for speech patterns of apologising and requesting in various languages. From the project, Argentinean Spanish speakers are the most direct, followed by speakers of Hebrew. Then Canadian French speakers are in the middle while Australian English speakers are the most indirect (Huang, 2015, p.159). Therefore, people’s origins and the language environments that they have grown up with have an impact on their pragmatic competency and knowledge. Even if they have moved to other places, such knowledge and ways of interactions may still persist.

2.3.2 Speech styles of refusals to requests

Fillers and hedges are commonly found from refusals to requests (Ebsworth & Kodama, 2011).

Fillers are believed to be a “nearly universal feature of language” (Irvine et al., 2016, p. 1061),

for example, “um” and “uh” are common fillers in American English. The use of fillers is

present in usual conversations in order to signal a pause or provide the addressees with a pause to think.

On the other hand, hedges are first mentioned in Lakoff's article (1972) to refer to the fuzziness of language. They are a group of words used to carry out communication and the communicative functions of those hedges cannot work without a context (Tang, 2013). It is a kind of communicative strategy. Markkanen & Schröder (2007) add that if people hedge a problem or question, they avoid committing themselves to a particular action or decision. The other reason of using hedges is that people want to mitigate what others may consider too forceful or it is also a way to show politeness or respects to strangers and superordinate and this has to do with social distance amongst speakers in a conversation too.

2.3.3 Nature of requests

The nature of requests also influences the likelihood of whether the requestees would accept or refuse requests. The requesters and requestees may have a different perception towards the degrees of requests, i.e. whether they are big or small favours and whether the requestees may need to take risks to bear the consequences when accepting the requests, for example, whether such requests would affect one's safety or whether the requests are indeed legal or not. All these constraints alongside the requests influence requestees' willingness to accept the

requests or not. If the requestees are to make a refusal, the nature of requests also plays a role in affecting the strategies used by requestees to refuse.

2.4 Related studies about speech acts on refusals

Existing studies (e.g. Han & Burgucu-Tazegul, 2016; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015; Jiang, 2015; Lin, 2014) on refusals have found that cultural norms, awareness of social and situation factors, as well as participants' exposure to the English language and culture affect the way they responded to refusals. These studies made use of native speakers of American English as the norm to interpret the appropriateness of the refusals made by foreign or L2 speakers. This present study focuses on speech acts on refusals, a type of face threatening act, bring about the loss of "face" explicitly.

2.4.1 Chinese contexts

Lin's study (2014) involved three groups of participants which are (1) native speakers of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan (who do not study English in their tertiary education), (2) Mandarin Chinese EFL learners in Taiwan (who study English in their tertiary education) and (3) native speakers of American English in the United States. All participants were already in their tertiary level of study. In his study, he created a discourse completion test (DCT) in both

English and Chinese versions for participants to complete. The test consists of three situations and participants needed to refuse using the way that they thought is “more appropriate” or is commonly used by them. The third group used direct strategies the most as this is influenced by their own culture and native language, followed by indirect strategies expressing excuse, reason and explanation. Although the second group of participants are exposed to both cultures and languages extensively, they still applied more indirect strategies when refusing, similar to the first group of participants who have little contact with English language. Indirect strategies were used more often by the first two groups of participants, followed by direct strategies and adjuncts. The EFL learners in Taiwan tended to provide alternatives while native speakers of Mandarin tried to avoid refusals more. He found that Chinese used direct strategies to refuse the least. They tended to provide their excuses before expressing regret or negative willingness in order to refuse.

Jiang (2015) conducted a similar research as in Lin’s study (2014). However, he studied Chinese secondary school EFL learners’ pragmatic transfer in refusal speech act. He also adopted a DCT in which there are situations including request, offer, invitation and suggestion. The test was given to three groups of participants to complete, which were (1) native Chinese speakers who do not speak English, (2) native English speakers and (3) Chinese learners of English. He found that native English speakers used more direct refusals than both native

Chinese speakers and Chinese learners of English in a request, offer and invitation. Between native Chinese speakers and Chinese learners of English, Chinese learners of English provided slightly more direct and specific refusals. He attributed the reason to the fact that Chinese learners of English have more exposure in a foreign language than those who do not speak English. Moreover, Jiang's study also found that American English speakers like to mention their positive feelings more than native Chinese speakers. For example, they used "I'd like to" before refusing others. The two studies, although the age range and educational levels of the participants are different, confirm the fact that Chinese-speaking people like to refuse more indirectly.

2.4.2 Non-Chinese contexts

Similarly, Shishavan and Sharifian (2016) examined the refusal speech act of (1) Persian speaking Iranian undergraduate students and (2) Anglo-Australian undergraduate and postgraduate students. Apart from using the DCT like the two studies above, they also conducted a focus group interview in order to better understand the social and cultural norms when the participants express refusals. They found that both the Iranian participants use less direct strategies than Australian participants when refusing. The reason for using less direct refusal is because of the face-threatening properties of refusals as they believe that "the recipient of a direct refusal might take it as a sign of disapproval, impoliteness or ultimately

dislike” (Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016, p.83). The study also found that social and situational factors can influence the production of refusals. For instance, their participants expressed that they were reluctant to make refusals when the initiator was of a higher social status as they wanted to save the face of the initiator and they were also afraid that the relationship between the people in a conversation will be hampered.

In another context of Turkey, Han and Burgucu-Tazegul (2016) looked into the refusals and pragmatic competence of Turkish EFL learners. Both lower-intermediate and higher-intermediate Turkish tertiary EFL learners participated in their study as well as English native speakers. Their study found that Turkish EFL learners preferred to use indirect strategies to refuse in order to be more polite. Comparing the two groups at different proficiency levels of English, the lower proficiency group used more pragmatic transfer than high proficiency learners.

To sum up, existing studies on refusal have shown that participants who only speak their first language and are not native speakers of English refuse more indirectly than those who are native speakers of American English. The first two studies, although took place in different Chinese-speaking areas, showed that Chinese EFL learners tended to use indirect refusals. More in-depth analysis could be carried out in order to understand the learners’ education

background (whether they study language or culture related programmes), cultural background (whether they notice that different speakers have different ways to respond to a situation), etc. The other studies mentioned above took place in other place where English is not the native language. Similarly, EFL learners have a tendency to use indirect refusal strategies more often than native English speakers. Yet, there are not many studies focusing on this area and there is also not any updated research on the development of pragmatic competency of local Hong Kong students at any level. Therefore, this study looks at the pragmatic competency of local tertiary students on making a refusal since they have finished primary and secondary education and it is a good stage to check whether they are pragmatically competent after receiving years of language education.

Two research questions are formed in response to the research topic:

1. What are the refusal patterns made by Hong Kong tertiary students?

For example, whether learners refuse directly or express positive feelings first, etc. as to agree or disagree with existing research findings.

2. Do the demographic factors influence the refusal patterns made by Hong Kong tertiary learners?

For example, whether learners' gender, age or other demographic factors would affect the way how they made the refusal patterns.

3. Research design

3.1 Participants

There are a total of 68 participants in the study including (1) Hong Kong Chinese tertiary students, (2) mainland Chinese tertiary students and (3) non-Chinese (e.g. South-east Asian, Japanese, Korean, etc.) learners who study in Hong Kong. 51 of them are female and 17 of them are male participants. All levels of undergraduate students are recruited and they are around 18 to 24 years old. These participants major in English Language, Science (Mathematics, pure science, etc.) and Social Science (Liberal studies, Psychology, etc.). The grouping of participants can be summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Grouping of participants in the study

Group	N	Gender (M:F)	Major		
			English language	Science	Social science
1. Hong Kong Chinese students	20	10:10	9	8	3
2. Mainland Chinese students	39	6:33	30	6	3
3. Non-Chinese students	9	1:8	7	1	1

3.2 Instrument

The instrument used in the study is a discourse completion test (DCT) (Appendix 1). A DCT is commonly used in studies involving cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (Lin, 2014). Although the DCT is not able to elicit spoken data from the participants, it allows open-ended responses from the participants.

In the DCT used in this study designed, three situations of requests where participants were expected to make refusal. The first requester asks participants to sign the attendance for the requester who is the coursemate of the participants. This can be easily rejected because it is also easy for the course teacher to discover. In reality, it is also difficult to do so as some teachers might take the attendance by him/her. The participants may have to consider the fact that signing attendance for others in breaching the university's policy and more importantly, forging one signature is illegal.

For the second request, it asks for participants' possession (i.e. money). Participants have a high chance to reject this request because participants (who are all students) do not have that much amount of money. Even if they have so, it is not likely for them to lend a large sum of money to others. The participants have to consider the risk that after lending the sum of

money to the requester, they may not have any money left.

The final request also involves the participants' ability to do something for the requester (i.e. provide a place for the requester to stay for a short time). Again, this is easily rejected because the participants do not live on their own as almost all of them are with their parents or other family members so they cannot decide. Some participants also live in the student hostels for most of the time. They have to take a risk that their family members who live in the same place have a high tendency to refuse (their approval is not obtained).

Participants are allowed to respond freely as they should not be restricted to forms of responses like multiple choices, rating, etc. Under each situation, the participants' status (higher, lower or equal) and the distance (distant or familiar) are recorded by the researcher (refer to Table 2). Yet, such information will not be disclosed to the participants but will be known to the researchers only.

Table 2: Status and distance of each situation in the DCT and distribution of participants

	Status	Distance	Participants distribution (N= 68)
1.	Equal	Familiar	19
		Distant	13
2.	Lower	Familiar	14
		Distant	22

3.3 Coding and Data analysis

The responses made by participants in the DCT are classified in the following way as in Beebe et al.'s (1990) work which is usually used in studies in pragmatics. The following coding and classification is an adapted list from Beebe et al.'s (1990) work in order to make the classification better suit this study. One addition category has been added under indirect refusal which is "B8: Suggestion" as there are instances of responses in which participants made suggestions when they refuse.

Table 3: Coding and classification of participants' responses in DCT

A. Direct refusal	B. Indirect refusal
<p>A1. "No"</p> <p>A2. Negative willingness: e.g. "I won't", "I don't think so", etc.</p>	<p>B1. Statement of regret: e.g. "I'm sorry"</p> <p>B2. Wish: e.g. "I wish I could"</p> <p>B3. Excuse, reason and explanation</p> <p>B4: Future acceptance: e.g. "Maybe next time!"</p> <p>B5: Compensation for the refusal: e.g. "Let me treat you a meal another time"</p> <p>B6. Topic switch (avoidance)</p> <p>B7. Joke</p> <p><i>B8. Suggestion</i></p>

The responses given by participants in DCT are then coded and classified. After coding and classification, the number of participants who used a particular type of refusal strategy in each group are counted and compared with other groups. Other specific wordings or phrases used by the participants are also studied.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic analysis of the participants

Before the participants made refusals to the requests, some background information has been collected from the participants in order to investigate whether there is a correlation between such demographic information and responses.

4.1.1 Gender

Table 4: Distribution of refusal patterns by participants' gender

Refusal strategies \ Gender	Female	Male	χ^2	df	<i>p</i>
Direct strategies only	5 (3.268%)	2 (4.167%)	6.462	2	.040
Indirect strategies only	104 (67.974%)	26 (54.167%)	8.110	2	.017
Combination of both strategies	44 (28.758%)	20 (41.667%)	8.640	2	.013
Total	153 (100%)	48 (100%)			

Participants of both genders used all the refusal strategies when making refusals. All the participants used indirect strategies only the most, followed by combination of both strategies, then direct strategies only.

For female participants, around two-third of them used indirect strategies only to make refusals while for male participants, the distribution of indirect and combination of strategies is more even, meaning that they tend not to use indirect strategies alone when making refusals. More often the participants used excuse, reason or explanation for their refusal responses, followed by expressing statements of regrets. However, the findings here do not confirm Hedayatnejad & Rahbar's (2014) study in the literature review section in which male speakers refuse people of the opposite gender with more direct strategies. Both gender applied direct strategies the least when making refusals.

Speaking in terms of the gender of the requester, Shams & Afghari (2011) state that there is not effect on the strategies used to make refusals. However, there is a substantial influence of the gender of the requester in this study since the requester was female. It is believed that it may be more difficult or embarrassing for female participants to refuse the interlocutor using direct or a combination of direct and indirect strategies in this study.

4.1.2 Relationship between interlocutors in a conversation

Table 5: Distribution of refusal patterns by participants' relationship with the interlocutor

Relationship with the requester	Equal	Equal	Lower	Lower	χ^2	df	p
	Familiar	Distant	Familiar	Distant			
Refusal strategies							
Direct strategies only	1 (2.564%)	3 (5.263%)	3 (4.688%)	0 (0%)	5.314	3	.150
Indirect strategies only	28 (71.795%)	33 (57.895%)	41 (64.063%)	28 (68.293%)	2.101	3	.552
Combination of both strategies	10 (25.641%)	21 (36.842%)	20 (31.250%)	13 (31.707%)	1.166	3	.761
Total	39 (100%)	57 (100%)	64 (100%)	41 (100%)			

Table 5 shows the distribution of refusal patterns according to the participants' relationship with the requester. A majority of the participants, regardless of their relationships with the requester, used indirect strategies more often than other strategies to refuse.

Even if the participants have different distances and familiarities with the requester, there seems to be no difference in terms of the refusal strategies that they used. It could be attributed to the fact that the requests covered in the experiment are not too hierarchical so not

much difference can be observed from the participants. Yet, it is interesting to note that for participants who have a lower distance and distant familiarity with the requester, none of them applied direct strategies only to refuse. The reason to explain this finding is that since that group of participants do not know the requester well and they have a lower position than the requester, it would be better for them to stay polite and also not to make the refusals too direct and blunt to make the requester feel bad.

4.1.3 Culture

Table 6: Distribution of refusal patterns by participants' nationality

Refusal strategies \ Nationality	Nationality			χ^2	df	p
	Hong Kong Chinese	Mainland Chinese	Non- Chinese			
Direct strategies only	4 (3.419%)	1 (1.754%)	2 (7.407%)	2.730	2	.255
Indirect strategies only	79 (67.521%)	35 (61.404%)	16 (59.259%)	0.275	2	.872
Combination of strategies	34 (29.060%)	21 (36.842%)	9 (33.333%)	0.381	2	.827
Total	117 (100%)	57 (100%)	27 (100%)			

As explored in the literature review, previous studies usually consider native speakers of American English as the norm as they refuse more directly than speakers of other languages.

In the present study, there are a total of three types of participants who are (1) Hong Kong

Chinese learners, (2) mainland Chinese learners and (3) learners of other nationalities like Filipino, Pakistani, etc. Yet, table 6 shows that a large portion of them tends to apply indirect strategies when making refusals regardless of their nationalities. One reason to explain this is because of the influence of the place where they reside currently for their tertiary education. All the participants in this study are year one or above, that means they have at least stayed in Hong Kong for half a year and even longer time. They have been influenced by the culture and speech styles of Hong Kong people and therefore their speech patterns, regardless of their own native cultures are also likely to be changed when they live in Hong Kong.

4.2 Lexical analysis of participants' responses

After analysing the relationship between the demographic details of the participants and the refusals patterns that they made, each of the responses made are studied. The instances of particular use of lexicons are counted using AntConc.

4.2.1 Distribution of response types

Table 7: Distribution of response types to all Requests

Requests	Request 1 (N = 68)	Request 2 (N = 68)	Request 3 (N = 68)
<i>A: Direct refusal only</i>			
1. A1	2 (2.941%)	2 (2.941%)	
2. A1A2	1 (1.471%)		
3. A2	1 (1.471%)		1 (1.471%)
<i>B: Indirect refusal only</i>			
1. B1			1 (1.471%)
2. B1B3	17 (25.000%)	21 (30.882%)	20 (29.412%)
3. B1B3B5			2 (2.941%)
4. B1B3B8	2 (2.941%)		1 (1.471%)
5. B1B8	1 (1.471%)		
6. B2B3		1 (1.471%)	
7. B3	12 (17.647%)	26 (38.235%)	20 (29.412%)
8. B3B8			4 (5.882%)
9. B7		1 (1.471%)	

10. B8			1 (1.471%)
<i>Combination of direct and indirect refusals</i>			
1. A1A2B3		1 (1.471%)	1 (1.471%)
2. A1B1B3	2 (2.941%)	2 (2.941%)	2 (2.941%)
3. A1B3	10 (14.706%)	11 (16.177%)	7 (10.294%)
4. A1B6		1 (1.471%)	
5. A1B8			1 (1.471%)
6. A2B1	1 (1.471%)		
7. A2B1B3	12 (17.647%)	1 (1.471%)	3 (4.412%)
8. A2B3	6 (8.824%)	1 (1.471%)	2 (2.941%)
<i>Others</i>			
1. (null response)	1 (1.471%)		2 (2.941%)

*Legends to the coloured labels:

Black: absent strategies in each Request

Yellow: the most common three strategies in each Request

Red: distinct strategies in each Request

The first request is to ask the participants to help sign the attendance in a class. The most

common response type for this request is first to give a statement of regret, which is usually

“sorry”, followed by an excuse, reason or explanation (B1B3 as in Table 7). When explaining, the more common response or excuse is that the participants are going to skip the class as well. Alternatively, they would explain that it is not appropriate to ask others to help take the attendance or state that the teacher takes the attendance by him/herself. There are three instances of responses which are suggestions or providing alternatives which is only found in this and the third request.

The second request is to ask the participants to lend money to the requester. The most common response type is only an excuse, reason or explanation (B3 as in Table 7). When explaining, the participants simply stated that they do not have that large amount of money but they did not apply any statements of regrets like “sorry” in the first place as they did in the first request. However, some strategies are only found under this request. When refusing indirectly, participants expressed wish (B2 as in Table 7) as they mentioned something like “I wish I could but...” avoided the topic (B6 as in Table 7) and talked about something else and made jokes (B7 as in Table 7). These strategies used by participants are not found in the responses in the other two requests.

The last request is to ask for participants’ permission to stay in their place for two weeks. Both types of responses (B1B3 and B3 as in Table 7) are commonly used by participants as a

part of them also expressed statement of regret, then an excuse, reason or explanation. A part of them left the statement of regret but just included the excuse, reason or explanation. When explaining, participants usually pointed out that their place is not large enough to accommodate one more person (the requester). Similar to the second request, participants here gave compensation for the refusal (B5 as in Table 7) which is only found under this request. After they made an explanation, they attempted to offer something for the requester, for example, “please let me know if there is anything I can do” or “I can help you look for a place”, etc.

It is also interesting to note that from the participants’ responses in this study, they combined direct and indirect refusals as opposed to previous studies which only contained direct or indirect refusals. Participants in this study liked to say “no” at the beginning, then explain or make up reasons for refusing the requests.

4.2.2 Responsibilities that participants bear in each Request

Another aspect worth exploring in this study is about the responsibilities that participants bear in each Request. From the literature review, the nature of requests does have an influence on how the requestees respond to the requests. For example, whether those requests are big or small favours or and whether the requestees may need to take risks to bear the consequences

when accepting the requests.

In light of the nature of the requests and participants' responses in general, their responses can be classified into five different categories which are:

Table 8: Distribution and examples of participants' responses according to the categories classified

Requests \ Categories	Request 1		Request 2		Request 3	
	Distribution	Example	Distribution	Example	Distribution	Example
Category 1: involving the 3 rd party to help (same level in the hierarchy)	5 (7.352%)	<i>Would you like to ask <u>another</u> <u>student</u>?</i>	0 (0%)		6 (9.231%)	<i>Maybe can you ask <u>somebody</u> <u>else</u>?</i>
Category 2: involving the 3 rd party to help (higher level in the hierarchy)	15 (22.059%)	<i>The <u>tutor</u> will know / it's the <u>school policy</u></i>	0 (0%)		16 (24.615%)	<i>I need to ask <u>my parents</u> <u>first</u></i>

Category 3: questions directed back to the requester	1 (1.471%)	<u>How</u> to <u>explain "you are here" but no one answers the question?</u>	5 (7.353%)	<u>(making a joke) Can I use octopus? / Do you think you really need an expensive phone?</u>	0 (0%)	
Category 4: participants' responsibility (emphasis of "I")	36 (52.941%)	<u>I cannot help / I am going to miss the lesson</u>	54 (79.412%)	<u>I cannot help / I do not have so much money</u>	42 (64.615%)	<u>I do not have a spare room to let you sleep in</u>
Category 5: requester's responsibility	11 (16.176%)	<u>You should come to class!</u>	9 (13.235%)	<u>You should use your own money</u>	1 (1.538%)	<u>You can look for other places</u>
Total	68 (100%)		68 (100%)		65 (100%)	

A special finding is that only when participants responded to Requests 1 and 3, they usually involved the third party to help (as in categories 1 and 2). For category 1 which is about people who are in the same level in the hierarchy, for example, students or friends while for category 2 which is about people in higher position in the hierarchy, for example, teachers or parents. Nevertheless, any other people are never mentioned Request 2 which is about borrowing money. This can be attributed to the fact that the act of “borrowing money” is limited to people whom participants are familiar with (e.g. friends, close classmates, somebody they are familiar with etc.). Therefore, it is difficult and quite impossible that if they ask another random person to help, he/she is willing to help out. For Requests 1 and 3, the matters raised in the requests are not as serious in the second request, so even if the participants suggested that the requester could ask others for help, it is still possible.

For the third category, there are just a few instances of questions or in one occasion, jokes. Interestingly, the use of questions or jokes can only be found in Requests 1 and 2 only. The use of questions is expected to allow the requester to think again of whether or not to continue to make the request. The use of jokes is simply to avoid the request but it is presented in form of a question in this case.

The fourth category is indeed the most common among all participants’ responses as the

participants considered the refusals as their own responsibility and their own problems if they cannot help fulfil the requests. Chinese in general do not like to reject others (Huang, 2015). However they are asked to reject all the Requests in this study, they may feel apologetic about not agreeing to help even if they can. Then they may like to take up all the responsibilities as much as they could. In contrast, the next category is that when the participants give all the responsibilities back to the requester. Using the second-person pronoun “you”, the participants gave the responsibilities back to the requester as they thought the requester should solve the problems and avoid the requests by themselves. Yet, this category is only accounting for a small part in all the categories.

The above analysis confirms with what has been mentioned in the literature review part about the nature of requests. Moreover, when the situations are more intruding, the requestees tend to take the responsibilities. If the situations tend to be less intruding, the requestees would let other people take the responsibilities instead.

4.2.3 Features of the response types

Table 9: Distribution of features of response types in different requests

	Request 1	Request 2	Request 3
Word type	187	185	206
Word tokens	829	791	920
Type-token ratio	0.22557	0.23388	0.22391
The use of			
1. “sorry”	35	24	32
2. Modals, e.g. “can”, “will”, “should”, etc.	39	15	31
3. Negative response, i.e. “do not...”	5	41	11
4. Hedges and fillers	11	0	7

4.2.3.1 The use of “sorry”

The use of “sorry” is more common in Requests 1 and 3. It can be attributed to the fact that participants think they should bear more the responsibility so they included “sorry” in their responses. As suggested by Trosborg (1995), the use of “sorry” is often to express regret, offer

apology and request forgiveness. From the responses, such expressions are usually to express regret and offer apology.

4.2.3.2 The use of modals and negation

A wide range of modals has been used when participants gave their responses. According to Collins & Hollo (2010, p.81), there are a total of three categories of modality. First, “epistemic modality” is used to relate to the speaker’s knowledge concerning a situation. In the responses, the participants usually used “can” or “will” to express their own situations to the requester.

The second type of modality is “deontic modality” which is about permission, obligation and undertaking. For this modality, words like “must”, “should” and “may” are usually used. Although this type of modality is present in all the three responses to requests, the choice of modal verbs varies among different requests. For the second request, there are more instances of using “should” than “may” to suggest the requester to save up money or consider other cheaper phones instead of borrowing other’s money to get a more expensive phone.

The final category is “dynamic modality” which involves some attributes or characteristics of the subject-referent, such as ability or volition. Yet, this type of modality is not found from the

responses made by the participants.

In addition to the use of modals, negation is also commonly used by the participants when they responded to the requests. In particular, they used “do not...” in their responses. Request 2 recorded the most number of the use of “do not...” as the participants frequently mentioned that they *do not* have enough money to lend to the requester.

4.2.3.3 The use of hedges and fillers

Two hedges are commonly used among the responses in requests, they are “I guess” and “I am afraid”. They are hedges of shields as Prince, Frader & Bosk (1982) defined it. Different from hedges of approximators like “kind of” and “roughly”, hedges of shields do not modify the original content of the utterances. The primary function is to change the tone of the speakers. Since the two examples found from participants’ responses include the first person pronouns “I”, this shows that the participants are willing to take the responsibility of the truthfulness of the statements or to provide alternative opinions or ideas. When the participants are rejecting, they are already certain that they cannot help or perform particular actions requested by the researcher. However, they still use hedges in order to soften their tones. This is also in line with what Brown & Levinson (1987) proposed that hedges are considered as a negative politeness strategy in order to avoid disagreement.

5. Further research

Since the present study only included three requests, more different types of requests involving different situations can be included for further studies. A larger scale of participants from more diverse backgrounds can be recruited to compare and contrast the differences in terms of their responses. Moreover, since the present study is conducted in paper forms, it is difficult to realise some aspects of responses in written formats, for example, topic switch or joke. This experiment can be repeated in natural face-to-face conversations so that more instant responses can be observed from the participants. It would be better if the participants do not know about the research background in advance so that they can give the most authentic responses. In order to observe whether bilingual or multilingual speakers are pragmatically competent, the experiments can also be conducted in both languages (e.g. Chinese and English) separately in order to display differences between the use of languages when making refusals.

6. Conclusion

The present study has filled the gaps of researching tertiary learners' pragmatic competency in Hong Kong as it helps us understand the refusal patterns made by those learners. Similar to some previous research findings done in different cultural contexts, speakers who learn English as a second or foreign language tend to reject more indirectly and they have adopted various strategies when refusing. The present study also sheds lights on teaching learners to be aware of the pragmatic competency in spite of simply attaining the language proficiency alone. This has also raised another issue of whether pragmatic competency should explicitly be taught to learners of English. However, this would need further research on the practicality of the issue.

(6423 words; excluding tables)

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Appendix 1: Data collection instrument

Questionnaire

Ref:

Part A: Background information

*Please put a tick (✓).

1. Gender*: Female Male
2. Age*: 20 or below 21 to 23 24 or above
3. Programme/ Major: _____
4. Nationality: _____
5. How do you rate your English proficiency*? (1 = beginner; 5 = advanced)
 1 2 3 4 5

6. What are your scores in public examinations (if any)?

IELTS: _____

TOEFL: _____

HKDSE English Language: _____

Others (please specify): Name of the test: _____ Score: _____

7. What is your first language?

8. What other language(s) do you speak?

Part B: Situations

Consider the following situations as if you are going to refuse them. Put down the ways that you will use to refuse the following requests.

1. Can you please help me sign on the attendance sheet today in the tutorial session?

2. Can I borrow \$10,000 from you? Because I want to buy the latest iPhone X.

3. There is a renovation in my home for about two weeks. Can I sleep over in your place for two weeks?

END
THANK YOU!

Appendix 2: Data

Part 2a: Scanned copies of all the questionnaires:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1JFaUS6xFjck4EdUiGAF0NA7JSGZYLgpe>

Part 2b: Excel spreadsheets of questionnaire data:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qtL7NR5wkBr7EaaBZh6lYz_jRszZRpez

Part 2c: Sample questionnaires filled

<u>Questionnaire</u>	Ref:
Part A: Background information	
*Please put a tick (✓).	
9. Gender*:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
10. Age*:	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 or below <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 21 to 23 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 or above
11. Programme/ Major:	<u>B.Ed. in English Language</u>
12. Nationality:	<u>Pakistani</u>
13. How do you rate your English proficiency*? (1 = beginner; 5 = advanced)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. What are your scores in public examinations (if any)?	
IELTS:	_____
TOEFL:	_____
HKDSE English Language:	<u>5*</u>
Others (please specify): Name of the test:	_____ Score: _____
15. What is your first language?	
	<u>Urdu</u>
16. What other language(s) do you speak?	
	<u>English, Cantonese, French (little), Mandarin (little)</u>
Part B: Situations	
Consider the following situations as if you are going to refuse them. Put down the ways that you will use to refuse the following requests.	
4. Can you please help me sign on the attendance sheet today in the tutorial session?	
	<u>The tutor knows you really well, so if you are not here, it's so easy for the tutor to know.</u>
5. Can I borrow \$10,000 from you? Because I want to buy the latest iPhone X.	
	<u>You know what? Even I wanted to, but I don't have money right now.</u>
6. There is a renovation in my home for about two weeks. Can I sleep over in your place for two weeks?	
	<u>Oh I'm so sorry, I don't think I can help. We already don't have enough space at home for every family member.</u>
END	
THANK YOU!	

Part 2d: Classification & categories to the participants' responses to Requests

Response to Request 1

No.	Classification	Categories	Response
1.	A1B3	4	No, I am going to miss this tutorial session too.
2.	B1B3	4	Um... I am sorry I cannot help.
3.	A1B3	5	No, you should attend the class.
4.	A1	/	No, thanks!
5.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am not available for helping you to sign.
6.	B1B3	1	Sorry, would you like to ask another student?
7.	B3	4	I am honest and I do not want to create false record for the others.
8.	B1B3	1	Sorry, I am not going to attend lesson today. Maybe you ask others to help you sign?
9.	A2B3	2	Maybe not, because the tutor is going to take the attendance.
10.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I do not think that is a good idea.
11.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I will be absent today as well.
12.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am still considering whether to attend today's tutorial.
13.	A2B1	4	I am sorry but I cannot.
14.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I will not do that. I do not take attendance for others.
15.	A2B1B3	4	I cannot and I am sorry. It is not appropriate as it is lying and I wish to be honest to our teacher as I am honest with you.
16.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry I cannot cause it is not appropriate.
17.	A2B3	2	Probably not because the tutor is staring at the attendance sheet. It is kind of difficult to help you.
18.	A2B1B3	2	Sorry I cannot. The tutor might call your name in the class.
19.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am not attending the class today.
20.	/	/	I am not going to refuse.
21.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I will be late for the lesson so I am afraid I cannot help you.
22.	B1B3B8	1	Sorry but I am afraid the tutor will find out and I might be in trouble. Maybe you can find another to help you?

23.	B1B3	4	Sorry I am not going to attend the session as well.
24.	A1B3	5	No, because it is your responsibility to go to class.
25.	A2B3	4	I will also be late, I am afraid that I cannot help you to sign the attendance sheet.
26.	B3	4	I will try but I am not sure I can do it or not.
27.	B3	2	I think he calls our names.
28.	A1A2	4	No, I cannot.
29.	B3	4	Opps I also skip it today.
30.	A2B3	2	I am afraid that I cannot because the tutor will check the attendance in the lesson.
31.	A2B3	4	I cannot. I sit in the front.
32.	B1B3	2	Sorry, we will get into trouble if the tutor discovers that ...
33.	A1B3	2	No, this is because the professor will speak out students' name one by one.
34.	A1B3	4	No, none of my business. Thanks!
35.	B3	2	The professor can recognize all students' faces, so it is hard to help you sign on the attendance sheet.
36.	B3	4	I will not attend the class today too!
37.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I cannot. I am not able to attend the class today.
38.	A1B3	5	No, it is your responsibility to participate in every lesson and you cannot learn anything if you miss the lesson.
39.	A1B3	5	No, this is your responsibility to sign by yourself.
40.	B1B3	5	I am sorry. You need to sign on ot by yourself. It is your own responsibility.
41.	B1B3	4	I am sorry. I may need to pay attention to the course cause I really get difficulties.
42.	B3	2 & 3	The teacher would pick somebody to answer the question. How to explain "you are here" but no one answer the question?
43.	B1B3	2	I would love to, but the teacher may call out your name in class and I cannot help with that.
44.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry I cannot do that. It is dishonesty to do so.
45.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I will not go, either.
46.	A2B1B3	5	Sorry, I cannot. It is not good for both of us. You should come to class and sign up by yourself.
47.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I cannot, I sit in the front.
48.	A2	4	I am afraid I cannot.

49.	A1B3	4	No, I do not want to put myself into such uncomfortable situation.
50.	A1B1B3	4	No, I am sorry. I do not think it is a good idea.
51.	A1B3	4 & 5	Sorry, I guess it is not so appropriate to do so. Come to class!
52.	B3	2	I am afraid the tutor will notice it.
53.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I cannot. I will not be attending the tutorial.
54.	B1B3	5	Sorry, I think you should come to the class and sign it yourself.
55.	B1B3	5	Sorry, but that is your own responsibility. Please do it yourself.
56.	B1B3	2	The lecturer has already collected the attendance sheet, cannot help you, sorry.
57.	A2B1B3	4 & 5	I am sorry. I will not help you. It is your responsibility to attend the tutorial session, skipping class would not help you anywhere.
58.	A1B3	5	No. You should come to class. It is your responsibility.
59.	B3	2	Today no attendance sheet, tutor asked our name to take the attendance.
60.	A2B3	4	I am afraid I cannot do that for you, cuz it is not an good way.
61.	B3	2	I am afraid not coz it is against the school policy.
62.	A1	/	No
63.	B3	4	Oh I am going to skip that lesson too.
64.	B3	2	The tutor knows you really well, so if you are not here, it is so easy for the tutor to know.
65.	B1B8	1	I am sorry, can you ask someone else?
66.	A1B1B3	4	No I am sorry that I will not attend the lesson today.
67.	A2B1B3	4	I am sorry. I cannot help you because I think it is inappropriate.
68.	B1B3B8	1	I am sorry that I would not attain to the tutorial class today either. It would be better for you to ask the others.

Response to Request 2

No.	Classification	Categories	Response
1.	A1B3	4	No, I have no money coz I bought Iphone X yesterday.
2.	A1B3	4	No, I am poor.
3.	A1	/	No way!

4.	B7	3	Can I use octopus?
5.	B1B3	4	Sorry, but I do not have enough cash at this stage.
6.	B1B3	4	I really do not have \$10000. Sorry.
7.	B3	/	The phone does not worth creating debts.
8.	A2B3	4	I am broke, I do not think I can help you.
9.	A1B3	4	No, I do not have that much money.
10.	A1B6	3	Of course no! Are you kidding?
11.	B1B3	4	Well, you have got an iPhone 8 already... and \$10000 is quite a lot for me, sorry!
12.	A1B3	4	No. It is too much and I don't think you need the iPhone X.
13.	B3	5	iPhone X? You should get your own money to buy it.
14.	B3	5	I would recommend you to save your own money instead of asking others to borrow to you.
15.	B3	3	Maybe you can think again if the latest iPhone is a necessity for you? It might not be a great idea to splunge such amount of money in something unnecessary.
16.	B1B3	4	Sorry. I cannot cause I do not have this large sum of money.
17.	B1B3	4	Sorry I do not have that much money.
18.	B1B3	4	Sorry but I do not have this much money as well.
19.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am broke.
20.	B3	4	I do not have that much money, and I need all the money I have. I will not have enough if I borrow such large sum money to someone.
21.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I have no money.
22.	B3	4 & 5	I am saving money to buy things I want. Maybe you should start saving up for you new phone.
23.	B1B3	4	Sorry I do not have money.
24.	A1B3	5	No, because you should use your own money to buy something that you want.
25.	B1B3	4	I am sorry that I have no money too.
26.	B3	4	I do not have that much and I need to save some money.
27.	B3	4	I need a new phone myself.
28.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I do not have so much money in my bank account.
29.	B3	4	I do not have much money.
30.	B3	4	What?! It is too much and I do not have enough money. I also buy one if I have \$10000.

31.	B3	4	I do not have enough money wor.
32.	A1B1B3	4	Nah, I do not have that much money at all. Sorry about that.
33.	A2B1B3	5	Sorry, I cannot. You should pay it using your salary.
34.	A1B3	4	No, I want to buy too!
35.	B3	4	I had spent a lot of money this month and I do not have \$10000 that much money.
36.	B3	4	I do not have much huge amount of money.
37.	A1B1B3	4	No I do not have that much money. Sorry bro.
38.	A1B3	5	No! You should not follow the trend and buy the latest iPhone X when yours is still working. It is not a necessary thing for you. Think before you buy it.
39.	A1B3	4	No, I do not have too much money.
40.	B3	4	I do not have that much money in my wallet.
41.	B1B3	4	I am sorry, my parents give my pocket money monthly, so I do not have that much.
42.	B3	4	My parents give me the money every month. So I do not have extra money too.
43.	B3	3 & 4	Man, even myself cannot afford the iPhone X. How can I suppose to help you with that.
44.	B1B3	4	Sorry I do not have so much money and I get support from my parents.
45.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I do not have so much money.
46.	A1A2B3	4	No, I cannot. If you really want that, you can by your own.
47.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am poor as you can see.
48.	B1B3	4	Sorry to say but I do not have that money.
49.	A1B3	5	No, it is not alright to borrow such amount from others. Go earn by yourself or find alternative ways.
50.	B2B3	4	I would love to but I do not have the money.
51.	B1B3	4	I am sorry! I do not have that much money to help!
52.	B3	4	I do not have so much money. Plus, I do not suggest you to get iPhone X.
53.	B1B3	4	I am sorry, but I do not have adequate amount of money in my account.
54.	B3	4	I do not think you should borrow money in advanced just to buy electronic gadget before you start earning money by yourself.

55.	B3	4	No offense, but I do not feel comfortable leading so much money to someone I do not know so well.
56.	B3	4	I am poor as fuck also.
57.	A1B3	4	No, my wallet is empty.
58.	A1B3	5	No. You should work hard and earn the money yourself.
59.	B3	4	I am poor. I even do not have money to buy for my lunch.
60.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I do not have \$10000 either.
61.	B1B3	4	I am sorry not coz I do not have that much money.
62.	B3	4	I do not have.
63.	B3	4	I do not have so much money in hand.
64.	B3	4	You know what? Even I wanted to, but I do not have money right now.
65.	A1	3	Are you kidding? No.
66.	B1B3	4	Sorry I do not have money.
67.	B3	4	I do not have money at all.
68.	B3	5	iPhone X is a good phone but it may not suitable for you to buy at this age.

Response to Request 3

No.	Classification	Categories	Response
1.	A1B8	1	No. I suggest you to book a serviced apartment.
2.	A1B3	4	No, I will be away for a month.
3.	B8	1	Um... maybe you sleep over in others place?
4.	B3	4	No space for me neither.
5.	B1B3	4	I am sorry that my home is not large enough for you to sleep.
6.	A1B3	2	No, I need to have mum's permission.
7.	B3	4	I would explain that my place is already full of people and there will not be enough room.
8.	A1B3	4	My home has 6 family members so may be a bit crush if you sleep over, Sorry!
9.	B1B3	2	Sorry, but I think that my parents may mind it.
10.	B1B3	4	Sorry, my house is not available.
11.	B1B3	4	Sorry, I am afraid my flat is too small.
12.	A2B1B3	4	Sorry, I cannot help. My home is small and there is not enough space for you.
13.	B3	2	I need to ask my parents.
14.	A2	4	Um... I am not sure, but probably not possible.

15.	B1B3B5	4	It is lovely to know that you will have a refurbished home soon. It is great for you to ask for a short stay as it shows the trust between us. And our family love hosting guests too. However, it is not a convenient time as we will be travelling during these two weeks, and we do not hope to left our guest unattended. I am sorry and please let me know if there is anything I can do.
16.	B1B3	4	I am sorry that it might not be possible.
17.	B3B8	1	My place is too small for both of us to stay. Maybe you could seek help from others?
18.	B3B8	1	Maybe you can ask someone else. Two weeks is a bit long for me & my family.
19.	B1B3	4	Sorry, there is no room in my place.
20.	/	/	I am not going to refuse.
21.	B1B3	4	I think it is impossible! Haha! Sorry ar
22.	B1B3	2 & 4	It would be great if you come and sleep over but I am sorry to tell you that my place is too crowded and my parents would not allow.
23.	B1	/	Sorry.
24.	B3	4	I would if you are my friend; however, since I do not know you I would have to refuse you.
25.	A2B3	4	Oh... my house is too small, so I cannot do that.
26.	B3	2	I need to ask my parents first.
27.	B3	2	My whole family will be at home.
28.	B3	4	My house is too small for one more person to live.
29.	B3	4	Erm... I lived in hall and it not allow foreigner to overnight...
30.	A2B1B3	4	Oh, I am sorry that I cannot. My home is too small and there is no space or extra room for you.
31.	B3	4	But we live so far away from each other.
32.	B1B3	2	Um... my family will not be happy about that. Sorry mate.
33.	A1A2B3	4	No, I cannot. There is no space room or space available for you.
34.	A1B3	4	No, or you give me money.
35.	B3B8	4	My home is too small, but would help you to find a place to live.
36.	B3	4	I do not think there are enough place for you to stay in

			my home.
37.	/	/	(blank)
38.	B1B3	4	I am sorry but I am afraid I cannot help since there is not enough space in my home.
39.	A1B3	2	No. my mum will not allow.
40.	B1B3	4	I am sorry. All the beds in my house are occupied.
41.	B1B3	2	I am sorry, my parents will come to see me recently, they will live there.
42.	B3B8	5	I live in dormitory of the school now. There is no place for you. Are you okay that rent the house near school?
43.	B1B3	4	Sorry, my room is too small for two.
44.	B3	4	I really want to accept but I do not have space room.
45.	B1B3	4	Sorry, there is no extra room and bed for you.
46.	B1B3	4	I am sorry that I cannot have you in my house. No space space.
47.	B3	4	Excuse me, I do not even have space for myself we are 8 persons family.
48.	B1B3	2	I am sorry but I have guests coming over in 2 days.
49.	A1B1B3	4	I am so sorry, but no. I do not have a space room to let you sleep in.
50.	B3	4	I do not have any space rooms or beds in my home.
51.	B3	2	Oh... really? I am sorry, I guess my parents may not agree.
52.	B3	2	My home is kinda messy, and my mum probably will not allow it.
53.	B3	4	Unfortunately, my apartment is too small for two people to stay.
54.	B1B3B8	1	I am so sorry, my home does not have enough space and bed for you to stay with us. May be you can ask someone else.
55.	B3	1	Please ask someone else.
56.	B3	4	My house is too small, you may feel uncomfortable.
57.	B1B3B5	4	I am not quite available in these two weeks. I really cannot lend you my place. I can help you find one though. Give me a few days.
58.	A1B3	2	No. I am sorry but my family will not allowed.
59.	B3	2	My mum does not allow me to bring people to my place.
60.	A1B1B3	4	No, sorry. My home is a bit too cramped and I think there

			may be enough spaces for you.
61.	B1B3	2	Sorry. My parents do not permit strangers to sleep in our home.
62.	B3	4	Erm... not sure if there are places for you.
63.	B1B3	4	I do not have spare room sorry.
64.	A2B1B3	4	Oh I am so sorry, I do not think I can help. We already do not have enough space at home for every family member.
65.	B1B3	2	I am so sorry but I am having family over at my place for the coming weeks so my house is also occupied.
66.	A2B3	4	My home is small. I am afraid that I cannot offer place for you to sleep
67.	A1B3	/	It is inconvenient, sorry.
68.	B1B3	4	There are not enough rooms even for my family to sleep so I am sorry not to yes.