

Using audiovisual material to teach refusals from a discursive perspective: a research-based proposal

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Abstract. Refusals are complex face-threatening speech acts whose appropriate performance requires not only lengthy sequences of negotiation and cooperative achievements, but also face-saving strategies to accommodate the disruptive nature of the act (Gass & Houck 1999). Also, since they have a face threatening nature, they are subject to cultural variations. Consequently, care must be taken in the choice of refusal strategies. On that account, this paper first describes the speech act of refusal and reviews findings of empirical interventional studies on this speech act, with particular interest in understanding their methodological choices. Then, it presents the benefits of using audiovisual material for teaching pragmatics in a foreign or a second language instructional context. Finally, relying on excerpts from TV series, an instructional method for teaching refusals at the discourse level is presented. All the designed activities are built upon research-based recommendations for teaching refusals in hopes to provide teachers with resources and ideas for including pragmatics into their language courses.

Keywords: pragmatic competence; refusals, audiovisual material; instructional method; discursive perspective

[es] El uso de material audiovisual en la enseñanza de los rechazos desde una perspectiva discursiva: una propuesta basada en la investigación

Resumen. Los rechazos son actos de habla amenazadores cuyo uso apropiado requiere no sólo largas secuencias de negociación y logros de cooperación sino también estrategias para preservar la cara con el fin de acomodar la naturaleza disruptiva del acto (Gass & Houck 1999). Además, dado que tienen una naturaleza amenazadora, están sujetos a variaciones culturales. Consecuentemente, se debe tener cuidado en la elección de las estrategias del rechazo. En este sentido, este artículo describe en primer lugar el acto de habla del rechazo y revisa los resultados de estudios intervencionistas sobre este acto, con particular interés en comprender las opciones metodológicas que se siguen. A continuación, presenta los beneficios del uso de material audiovisual para la enseñanza de la pragmática en un contexto de enseñanza-aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera o segunda lengua. Finalmente, basándose en extractos de series de televisión, se presenta un método de instrucción para la enseñanza-aprendizaje de los rechazos a nivel discursivo. Las actividades diseñadas han seguido las recomendaciones de los estudios revisados con el fin de proporcionar al profesorado recursos e ideas didácticas para incorporar la pragmática en sus cursos de lengua.

Palabras clave: competencia pragmática; rechazos; material audiovisual; método instruccional; perspectiva discursiva

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1. Introduction³

Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to convey and interpret meaning in social interaction. In recent years, however, this definition has expanded and now is described as a “multi-layered” construct that includes “(1) linguistic and sociocultural knowledge of what forms to use in what context; (2) interactional abilities to use the knowledge in a flexible, adaptive manner corresponding to the changing context; and (3) agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement the knowledge in the community” (Taguchi 2019: 4). The first dimension (i.e. knowledge of form-function-context mapping) is the primary layer of pragmatic knowledge and reflects the early definition of pragmatic competence as consisting of two complementary elements: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). *Pragmalinguistics* refers to the grammatical side of pragmatics and addresses the resources for conveying particular communicative acts and interpersonal meaning. Such resources include pragmatic strategies like directness and indirectness, pragmatic routines, and a range of modification devices which can intensify or soften the communicative act. Sociopragmatics deals with the relationship between linguistic action and social structure, since it refers to the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative acts. Although these two areas are interrelated and not necessary clear-cut, the distinction of pragmalinguistic competence/ sociopragmatic competence has been acknowledged in major models of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell 1995; Bachman & Palmer 1996).

The second dimension (i.e. interaction skills) includes skills in co-constructing a communicative act collaboratively during interaction. These interactional resources include the sequential organisation of speech acts, turn-taking, repair and boundaries (Young 2011) which are shared exclusively among participants. Finally, the third dimension (i.e. agency) considers the learners’ willingness to adhere to the normative form-function-context mapping in the particular community, retain their first language (L1) identity or blend both perspectives, based on their own beliefs and values (LoCastro 2003). Hence, when teaching pragmatic competence, it is necessary to address the complex interplay of these three dimensions, that is, to develop consciousness-raising of form-function-context mapping alongside interactional knowledge and support learner agency.

This paper thus represents an effort in this direction and introduces a research-based instructional method to develop learners’ pragmatic competence by focusing on the speech act of refusals, given its face-threatening nature and its disruptive potential if performed inappropriately. To that end, it first explains the speech act of refusal and reviews findings of empirical interventional studies on this speech act, with particular interest in understanding their methodological choices. Then, it describes the benefits of using audiovisual material for teaching pragmatics in a foreign (FL) or a second language (L2) instructional context. Finally, adopting a discursive approach, a proposal for teaching refusals through TV series is presented.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The speech act of refusals

Refusals belong to the class of commissive acts (Searle 1976) because they commit the refuser to (not) performing an action. Refusals function as a response to an initiating act (i.e., request, invitation, offer or suggestion) and are considered a speech act by which a speaker “fails to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor” (Chen, Ye & Zhang 1995: 121). Following Brown & Levinson (1987), a refusal is a face-threatening act that tends to disrupt harmony in relationships because it acts in opposition to the wants and desires of the interlocutor, and subsequently it may cause damage to both the face of the speaker and the listener. As such, it is generally performed through indirect strategies, includes mitigation and/or delay within the turn or across multiple turns (Eslami 2010). Furthermore, it often requires not only long sequences of negotiation and cooperative achievements, but also “face-saving manoeuvres” to accommodate its noncompliant nature and avoid conflict (Gass & Houck 2009: 2).

In order to describe the different pragmatic realisations that can be used to perform this speech act, Salazar, Safont & Codina (2009: 145) present a workable taxonomy of refusals for pedagogical purposes. This taxonomy, which relies heavily on the well-known coding system elaborated by Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990), has been adopted in the present study because of these three reasons: i) it takes into account previous research conducted on refusals in the fields of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) (Félix-Brasdefer 2003; Kwon 2004; Al-Eryani 2007; Lin 2014; Satic & Ciftci 2018; among others), ii) it considers the importance of how the contextual variables of social distance, power and imposition affect the

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appropriate use of refusal routine (Brown & Levinson 1987) and iii) it follows the work by Kasper (2006) on ILP to account for a discourse perspective in the study of refusal behaviour. Such taxonomy classifies refusal categories into semantic formulas (i.e. those expressions used to perform a refusal) and adjuncts (i.e. those expressions that cannot be used by themselves but accompany refusal strategies to soften the nonacceptance). Two direct strategies (see 1-2 below), seven indirect strategies (see 3-9 below) and 5 adjuncts ((see 10-14 below) have been identified:

I. Direct strategies

1. bluntness – i.e. the use of flat ‘no’ or the performative verb (e.g. *No, I refuse*)
2. negation of proposition – i.e. expressions than include negations (e.g. *I don't think so, I can't*)

II. Indirect strategies

3. plain indirect – i.e. to mitigate the refusal (e.g. *It looks I won't be able to go*)
4. reason or explanation – i.e. to provide a motive for the nonacceptance (e.g. *I have to study for the maths exam*)
5. regret or apology – i.e. to show the refuser's bad feelings for turning down the request (e.g. *I'm so sorry*)
6. alternative – i.e. to provide a change of option (e.g. *I would join you if you choose another restaurant*) or time to fulfill the request (e.g. *I can't go right now, but I could next week*)
7. disagreement/dissuasion/criticism – i.e. to point out the negative effect that the act of requesting exerts on the addressee (e.g. *Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!*)
8. statement of principle/philosophy – i.e. to resort to moral convictions or beliefs to avoid performing the request (e.g. *It goes against my beliefs*)
9. avoidance – i.e. non-verbal avoidance (e.g. silence) or verbal avoidance (e.g. changing the topic).

III. Adjuncts

10. positive opinion – i.e. to express that the request is a good idea but difficult to comply (e.g. *This is a great idea, but...*)
11. willingness – i.e. to show that the refuser would be willing to perform the request but he/she cannot (e.g. *I'd love to, but...*)
12. gratitude – i.e. to thank the interlocutor for the request (e.g. *Thanks so much, but...*)
13. agreement – i.e. to express the refuser's consent before uttering the refusal itself (e.g. *Fine, but...*)
14. solidarity or empathy – i.e. to solicit the requester's solidarity by asking his/her sympathy (e.g. *I'm sure you will understand, but..."*)

2.2. Interventional studies on refusals

Due to the complex construction of this speech act, a number of studies on the effect of instruction on learners' acquisition of polite refusals in English have been conducted. As displayed in Table 1, out of the ten most influential studies on the effects of pragmatic intervention on refusals, seven studies compared learners' performance from pre- to post-instruction without control group (Kondo 2008; Alcón & Guzmán 2010, 2013; Usó-Juan 2013) or with control group (King & Silver 1993; Bacelar Da Silva 2003; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami 2012), whereas three studies compared different instructional methods (Lingli & Wannaruk 2010; Farrokhi & Atashian 2012; Ahmadian 2020).

Table 1: Interventional studies on refusals

Study	Design*	Groups	Delayed Posttest	Languages	Proficiency Level**	Modality	Treatment Type	Assessment Type	Outcome
King & Silver (1993)	Instruction vs. no-instruction	1+control	+(2 weeks)	L1: mixed SL: English	Intermediate	Production	Explicit	Written DCT Delayed posttest: telephone talks	Inconclusive
Bacelar Da Silva (2003)	Instruction vs. no-instruction	1+control	-	L1: mixed SL: English	Low-intermediate	Production	Explicit	Role-plays & verbal report	Effective
Kondo (2008)	Teachability	1	-	L1: Japanese FL: English	Low-intermediate	Production	Explicit	Oral DCT	Effective
Alcón & Guzmán (2010)	Teachability	1	-	L1: Spanish FL: English	Same level	Awareness	Explicit	Interviews	Effective
Lingli & Wannaruk (2010)	Different teaching approaches	2	-	L1: Chinese FL: English	Same level	Production	Explicit vs Implicit	Written DCT & self-report	Explicit > Implicit
Farahian et al. (2012)	Instruction vs. no-instruction	1+control	+(2 weeks)	L1: Iranian FL: English	Intermediate	Production	Explicit	Written DCT & self-report	Effective
Farroki & Atashian (2012)	Different teaching approaches	2+control	-	L1: Iranian FL: English	Upper-intermediate	Production	Explicit vs Implicit	Written DCT	Explicit > Implicit
Alcón & Guzmán (2013)	Teachability	1	-	L1: Spanish FL: English	Same level	Production & negotiation	Explicit	Interviews	Effective
Usó-Juan (2013)	Teachability	1	-	L1: Spanish FL: English	Low-intermediate	Production	Explicit	Interactive written DCT	Effective
Ahmadian (2020)	Different teaching approaches	2+control	+(8 weeks)	L1: Farsi FL: English	Upper-intermediate	Production & comprehension	Explicit vs Implicit	Written DCT & questionnaire	Explicit > Implicit

*Teachability = one group pretest-posttest design; Instruction vs. No-instruction = pretest-posttest design with control group; Different teaching approaches = pretest-posttest design with or without control group.

**Same level = as measured by a University entrance examination.

A close analysis of the studies that examined learners' performance from pre- to post-instructional phase reveals the positive effect of pragmatic instruction on learners' awareness (Alcón & Guzmán 2010), negotiation and production (Alcón & Guzmán 2013) and production (Bacelar Da Silva 2003; Kondo 2008; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami 2012; Usó-Juan 2013) of appropriate refusals. For instance, Kondo (2008) reported the positive effects of carrying out an instructional period to develop learners' use of appropriate refusals. The instructional treatment, delivered during a ninety-minute class, included model dialogues, explicit explanations, analysis of semantic formulas, controlled/free tasks, cross-cultural comparison and discussion. Findings revealed that learners used a wider variety of refusal strategies approximating the American English pattern of refusals. Similarly, Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami (2012) investigated the effect of explicit instruction on appropriate performance of refusals. To this end, learners were provided with i) information about the function and use of refusals, ii) exposure to native models of refusals, iii) opportunities for planning the production of refusals, iv) communicative practice where refusals are used in extended discourse and v) corrective feedback sessions. Unfortunately, instructional time is not provided. Results showed that the taught group performed much better than the control group not only after instruction but also in the delayed post-test two weeks later.

Additionally, several studies have pointed out the benefits of using TV series (Bacelar Da Silva 2003) or film data (Usó-Juan 2013) as a basis of pragmatics-focused instruction and argued that audiovisual material can be an excellent input source for designing pedagogical tasks. On the one hand, Bacelar Da Silva (2003), incorporating metapragmatic awareness into the task-based methodological principles, examined the effects of explicit instruction on learners' production of refusals to invitations. The treatment session lasted fifty-five minutes and included three main steps. In the first step, learners were presented with awareness-raising activities after watching three video segments from the sitcom *Friends* which depicted invitation/refusal events. Additionally, this step also engaged learners in cross-cultural awareness activities in refusing in English and their L1. In the second step, learners were given an inductive presentation of semantic formulas and modifiers. In the third and final step, learners were asked to plan and perform role-plays in front of the class and then they received explicit corrective feedback from both the teacher and peers. The control group did not receive any instruction on refusals. Learners in this group were given a video activity about an episode of the sitcom *Friends* which lacked instances of refusals. Results showed that the instructional approach enhanced learners' pragmatic ability of performing refusals. Moreover, learners also displayed a high level of accuracy in terms of order of strategies in their refusal turns.

Usó-Juan (2013), on the other hand, analysed the effectiveness of the 6R's pedagogical framework for teaching pragmatics (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan 2006) to assess learners' ability to use refusal strategies in a variety of situations. Instruction, which lasted three two-hour sessions, was sequenced according to six stages. The first two stages exposed learners to key concepts in pragmatics and had them gather L1 data on refusals and analyse these data according to social variables. In the third and fourth stages, learners received explicit metapragmatic explanations of refusals by using film data. The last two stages provided opportunities for learners to use refusals in interaction and receive feedback. Refusal data revealed that after instruction, learners produced a greater and wider variety of refusal strategies in different social contexts.

The issue of teaching refusals at the discourse level was the goal of a series of studies, which examined learners' awareness (Alcón & Guzmán 2010) and use and negotiation (Alcón & Guzmán 2013) of appropriate refusals. The four-step instructional treatment, which lasted six two-hour sessions, consisted of i) identifying refusals in interaction, ii) explaining the speech act sets, iii) noticing and understanding refusal sequences and iv) negotiating learners' use of refusals. Results revealed post-instructional improvements in learners' awareness and production of appropriate refusals. Furthermore, learners' attempts to accommodate the non-compliant nature of refusals over extended negotiations were also influenced.

Out of all these studies, King & Silver (1993) was the only study that did not produce the desired effect of instruction. The authors investigated the effects of intervention on learners' use of refusals to requests and invitations. The treatment group had a 70 minute-lesson which focused on important sociolinguistic variables in refusing in American English. The lesson included four segments: i) an introduction with general questions about students' experiences in the U.S., ii) a cross-cultural comparison segment with activities for building awareness and practice, iii) a teaching segment with explicit teaching of common refusal strategies and finally iv) a closing segment with discussion of possible ways to apply the information to their daily lives. Due to time constraints, learners had limited opportunities for output practice. The control group participated in a class on how to make small talk with Americans. Results indicated little effect of instruction on the post-test and no effect of instruction in the delayed post-test. The authors speculated that lack of exposure to natural data as input and limited output practice could have justified these results, thus lacking two major components needed in any instructional approach design to teach pragmatics, and more specifically speech acts (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan 2010, 2020).

Aside from studying learners' performance from pre- to post-instructional phase, three studies addressed whether different instructional approaches on refusals yielded different outcomes (Lingli & Wannaruk 2010; Farrokhi & Atashian 2012; Ahmadian 2020). Lingli & Wannaruk (2010) contrasted the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on the use of English refusals to four stimulus types: invitations, suggestions, offers

and requests. FL learners formed two groups: an explicit training group and an implicit training group. The treatment implemented lasted two hours for each stimulus type and was similar in both groups, except that no explicit information and explicit feedback was provided for the implicit group. The general features of teaching for the two groups included five main stages: i) presentation of learning targets, ii) awareness raising activities, iii) planning sessions, iv) communication sessions and v) feedback. Quantitative data showed that the explicit training group outperformed the implicit training group. The qualitative analysis confirmed this superiority for the learners' refusals of invitations and requests. However, with regard to refusals to offers both methods were equally successful, while for refusals to invitations, they were equally ineffective. As to the amount of information, strategy choices and level of formality, the performance of the explicit group was better than the performance of the implicit group.

Farrokhi & Atashian (2012) is an example of an interventional study with a control group that analysed the effect of explicit and implicit instruction on FL learners' use of refusal strategies in English. Learners were distributed into three groups: i) an explicit group, who received metapragmatic information based on awareness-raising tasks, ii) an implicit group, who received input enhancement based on awareness-raising tasks and iii) a control group, who did not receive equivalent instruction. Unfortunately, the length of instruction is not provided. Results proved the efficiency of explicit training over implicit one in boosting learners' pragmatic performance of refusals.

Finally, the FL learners in Ahmadian (2020), were also assigned to three groups (explicit, implicit and control) for about twelve hours of instruction on refusals. The learners in the explicit group were provided with descriptions and exemplifications of refusal strategies as well as explicit corrective feedback. Instruction for the implicit group was operationalised through input enhancement and provision of recast (in the form of confirmation checks) and learners in the control group did not do any activity on refusals. Results revealed that overall, both explicit and implicit instruction led to significant improvements in both production and comprehension of refusals; yet explicit instruction proved more effective than implicit instruction. Also, findings showed the positive effects of instruction were maintained over the delayed post-test (administered two months later) for the explicit and implicit group.

Taken together, the interventional studies on refusals reviewed above clearly suggest that refusals could be included within the range of pragmatic features teachable to learners and that the simple exposure to English as the target language (TL) is unlikely to be sufficient for learning this particular speech act. Indeed, pragmatic intervention increased not just learners' awareness/comprehension and production of appropriate refusals but also learners' ability to negotiate them across multiple turns. As to the effect of different instructional approaches, these studies indicated a clear advantage for explicit over implicit instruction. Nevertheless, the efficacy of implicit intervention techniques also remained important. With regard to intervention techniques that facilitate the teaching/learning of refusals, the following recommendations may be drawn:

1. The instructional components of exposure to appropriate input, opportunities for collaborative output and provision of feedback should be addressed in the design of an instructional approach to develop refusals (e.g. Usó-Juan 2013; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami 2012).
2. An explicit treatment (i.e. metapragmatic explanations followed by focused practice) for developing refusals could maximise the learning of refusals in instructional contexts (Farrokhi & Atashian 2012; Usó-Juan 2013). However, in order to develop their comprehension, an implicit treatment (specifically, input enhancement and recasts) could also be effective (e.g. Ahmadian 2020).
3. Cross-cultural awareness activities may be facilitative of learning how to make refusals appropriately (Bacelar Da Silva 2003).
4. A discursive approach that addresses the conversational sequences of refusals could help learners understand how refusals are co-constructed through the use of conversational skills (Alcón & Guzmán 2010, 2013), and
5. Audiovisual materials such as TV series or film excerpts can expose learners to authentic language samples in which refusals appear in different contextual situations, thus promoting discovery learning (i.e. learner's examination of a particular refusal behaviour on a given situation) (Bacelar Da Silva 2003; Usó-Juan 2013).

2.3. Audiovisual input

Together with output and feedback, input has been considered one of the three necessary conditions for learners' development of their pragmatic competence (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan 2010, 2020). Input refers to the language samples learners are exposed to. In the FL context, however, exposure to authentic input can be, at times, a challenge. Indeed, learners in a FL classroom lack real pragmatic input and opportunities for interacting beyond the classroom as the input they receive comes mainly from two main sources: the instructor and course textbooks, which have come under criticism for their failure to provide learners with adequate pragmatic input (Barón, Roquet, Evnitskaya & Navarro 2020; Jakupčević & Čavar Portolan 2021). The provision of authentic input is necessary for pragmatic development, and that is something that audiovisual

material can address comfortably in the FL classroom (Bardovi-Harlig 2019). Among the many advantages of using audiovisual material in the language classroom, the following can be highlighted: i) it provides rich, varied and contextualised language samples and consequently pragmatic features (Nieto 2016; Qi & Chun 2017), ii) it strengthens audio/visual linguistic perception simultaneously (Canning-Wilson 2000), iii) it increases awareness of discourse conventions and formulaic expressions (Fernández-Guerra & Martínez-Flor 2003), iv) it shows a variety of accents and dialects (Yamanaka 2003), v) it enhances awareness of target cultures (Usó-Juan 2013; Abrams 2016), vi) it helps to observe non-verbal aspects of communication (e.g. gestures, posture, eye contact and facial expressions) (Washburn 2001; Martínez-Flor 2007) and vii) it builds motivation (Ryan 1998; Abrams 2016).

Moreover, TV series in general, and sitcoms in particular, are a type of audiovisual input that has been praised for presenting optimal conditions for pragmatic learning and teaching. As discussed by Washburn (2001), in sitcoms certain speech routines may illicit humour by exaggerating or breaking the pragmatic norms of the particular speech act or routine. Importantly, the marked violations of the norms provided in sitcoms may allow learners to recognise the boundaries of the speech acts and observe the characters' reaction to these violations. Indeed, they may serve as models with reliable markers of norm violations that could help learners interpret the pragmatic language use. Due to all these salient advantages, filmic material stands out from other materials when incorporating pragmatics in language courses (Abrams 2016; Khazdouzian, Celaya & Barón 2021; Barón & Celaya 2022, among the most recent studies). For example, Abrams (2016) used scenes from a TV series (i.e. *Roseanne*) and a film (i.e. *In July*) for developing German beginning L2 learners' awareness of different pragmatic aspects. The author compared how filmic material, in contrast with textbook models helped learners develop pragmatic skills in collaborative dialogues. Findings from her research reported that film-based dialogues prompted more pragmatically nuanced interactions than did textbook tasks. Indeed, learners incorporated communicative patterns used in films into their own dialogues.

Further, recent research attests to the importance of watching TV series to aid incidental learning of pragmatic competence. Khazdouzian, Celaya & Barón (2021) analysed the effect of watching one season of a hit sitcom (i.e. *Modern Family*) without instruction with captioned/non-captioned conditions as an out-of-class activity. Overall, results showed a positive effect of the audiovisual support on the use of some request and suggestion strategies and on certain aspects of pragmatic awareness. However, there was not evident advantage in favour of the captioned condition. Alike, Barón & Celaya (2022) addressed whether exposing learners in the classroom to different video excerpts (captioned and non-captioned) taken from TV series (i.e. *Big Bang Theory*, *Stranger Things*, *Supernatural* and *Friends*) might influence the incidental learning of pragmatic sequences. Findings showed that learners were able to use more polite strategies after watching different video excerpts, regardless of the captioned/non-captioned condition.

It should be noted that many researchers say filmic material does not portray certain aspects of natural discourse. Instead, they argue scripted and planned elements are used to reflect conversations (e.g. Kozloff 2000; Ryan & Granville 2020). Nevertheless, and in agreement with Kaiser & Shibahara (2014: 1), this material constitutes "a window into the world of the target language and culture," and it represents a more useful source than textbooks to describe the context of meaning. Indeed, if paired with the right teaching practices, filmic material is likely to boost learners' pragmatic competence.

3. Instructional method for teaching refusals at a discursive level

Fuelled by insights from the interventional studies reviewed above (see section 2.2) and considering the value of TV series as an appropriate material to create a context for teaching pragmatics (see section 2.3), this section builds an instructional method to showcase how the teaching of refusals at the discursive level can be facilitated by utilising material from TV series. This pragmatic instruction has been designed to be carried out with English L2/FL university students at CEFR levels B1 and B2. However, it is flexible and adaptable to be used with students with a higher proficiency CEFR level since the complexity and ambiguousness of the activities will largely depend on the language used in the selected video excerpts (see Roever 2022 as an example of how a particular speech act can be taught and adapted at the A1, B1 and C1 CEFR levels). The teaching procedure consists of pre-, while- and post-video stages, which, in turn, are organised into six consecutive steps. Although the amount of instructional intervention may vary depending on the pace of the classroom discussions, this intervention should consist of at least three two hours sessions (i.e. six hours in total) to accomplish learning gains. See Table 2 for the structure of the teaching procedure and goals of each step.

Table 2: Outline of the instructional method

<i>Teaching Procedure</i>	<i>Goals</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Pre-watching</i> Step 1. Teaching the pragmatics of refusals Step 2. Discussing refusals in context	Metapragmatic explanations Whole-class discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>While-watching</i> Step 3. Analysing the context of refusals Step 4. Analysing the linguistic expressions employed in a refusal sequence	Input-based practice Input-based practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Post-watching</i> Step 5. Co-constructing refusals Step 6. Assessing refusals	Output-based practice Learners' self-assessment +Teacher's feedback

3.1. Pre-watching activities

Pre-watching activities try to arouse learners' interest in the topic of refusals and prepare them for understanding refusals in context. First, learners receive some explanations about key concepts in pragmatics to gain a holistic understanding of this concept (step 1), and then they are encouraged to discuss refusals in dialogue transcripts taken from a TV series (step 2).

3.1.1. Step 1: Teaching the pragmatics of refusals

Learners are provided with a brief introduction about the nature of pragmatic competence (i.e. metapragmatic instruction). Following the definition of pragmatic competence given in the paper (see section 1), the concept is introduced as a "multi-layered" construct which comprises the dimensions of i) knowledge of form-function-context mapping (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983), ii) interaction skills (Young 2011) and iii) agency (LoCastro 2003). Once the concept of pragmatics has been discussed in class, the teacher explains to the learners that they are going to focus on a subfield of pragmatics, that is, the theory of speech acts and particularly on the speech act of refusing. Then, they are given a basic explanation of what the speech act of refusal implies (i.e. the fact that it is a dispreferred response in four action sequences: requests, invitations, offers or suggestions, and it precludes extensive planning and preparation on the part of the refuser) as well as how it can be performed (i.e. by means of direct strategies, indirect strategies and/or adjuncts). Importantly, they are alerted that a refusal is often co-constructed and negotiated over multiple turns.

3.1.2. Step 2: Discussing refusals in context

Learners are provided with the transcripts of selected scenes from a TV series (see for instance Nieto 2016, for excerpts from *Grey's Anatomy* that contextualise all refusal strategies presented in section 2.1), and a whole-class discussion is conducted to orient learners to those factors that may affect the preferred form and/or sequence of the refusal. That is, learners are presented with appropriate input necessary to discuss: i) how the selection of refusal expressions may depend on social features (e.g. setting, social distance and power between the interlocutors or their gender and age) and ii) how interactional skills (sequential organisation, turn-taking, repair and boundaries) are used to co-construct the refusal during interaction. Finally, further discussion is carried out on the role agency plays in pragmatics learning. Here, awareness-raising questions related to the three dimensions of pragmatic competence (i.e. knowledge of form-function-context mapping, interaction skills and agency) may be addressed (see Table 3).

Table 3: Questions related to the three dimensions of pragmatic competence

(1) <i>Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the refusal realised by the speaker, i.e. directly, indirectly or a combination of both? What linguistic expressions does the speaker use to convey the refusal? Where do you think the interactants are? What is the relationship between the interactants? What is the status between the interactants? How is the refusal perceived by the interactants?
(2) <i>Interaction skills</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the interactant's first turn a request, an invitation, an offer or a suggestion? Can you delimit the boundaries of the refusal sequence? In how many turns is the refusal sequence realised?

(3) Agency

- Would you refuse in the same way in your L1 if you encounter yourself in the same situation? If not,
- What changes would you make?

3.2. While-watching activities

While-watching activities try to sharpen learners' understanding of the relationships between form, function and context and help them become more sensitive to some conventionalised patterns of English native speakers. To that aim, learners are provided with awareness-raising questions about the different contexts in which refusal strategies appear in TV series excerpts (step 3) and the refusal expressions employed in these particular contexts (step 4).

3.2.1. Step 3: Analysing the context of refusals

Learners watch a wide range of series excerpts depicting refusal sequences in different contextual and social settings as well as portraying different participant relationships, and they are asked to conduct the contextual analysis of each conversation. To that aim, the SPEAKING model developed by Hymes (1974) (which has recently been employed by Abrams 2016 and Zhao & Liu 2019, among others) may be used as a guiding framework to conduct the contextual analysis of filmic material. The word SPEAKING is a mnemonic device that stands for the eight key components which underline the construction and interpretation of any conversation, and they are as follows: Setting (S) (i.e. physical circumstances), Participants (P) (i.e. speakers and audience), Ends (E) (i.e. purposes), Act sequence (A) (i.e. form and order of events), Key (K) (i.e. tone of conversation), Instrumentalities (I) (i.e. style of speech), Norm (N) (i.e. rules of interaction) and Genre (G) (i.e. kind of speech event). Here, awareness-raising questions related to these eight categories could be of help (see Table 4). An exemplification of how to conduct the contextual analysis of a dialogue excerpt taken from a TV series is included in the Appendix.

Table 4: Awareness-raising questions for the contextual analysis (taken from Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2021: 101)

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Awareness-raising questions</i>
S	• Where are the interactants having this conversation?
P	• What is the social relationship between interactants?
E	• What is the interactants' goal for having this conversation?
A	• How is the sequence of the conversation developed?
K	• What clues let the viewer know the tone of communication or feelings of the interactants?
I	• Is the language used in this conversation polite, casual, or in-between?
N	• Can interactional norms for politeness be observed in the conversation?
G	• What type of discourse is the interaction?

3.2.2. Step 4: Analysing the linguistic expressions employed in a refusal sequence

Once learners have a good understanding of how interpersonal communication is co-constructed by interactants within a particular social setting, they can proceed with the linguistic analysis of the refusal sequences used in the dialogues. Thus, awareness-raising questions related to the linguistic expressions used to realise the refusals could be discussed (see Table 5). This activity can be done collaboratively by arranging students in pairs or in small groups. See the Appendix for an exemplification of how to conduct the linguistic analysis of a dialogue excerpt taken from a TV series.

Table 5: Awareness-raising questions for the linguistic analysis

- | |
|---|
| • Is the interactant's first turn a request, an invitation, an offer or a suggestion? |
| • How is the refusal realised? (i.e. direct strategies, indirect strategies or a combination of both) |
| • How many turns are used in making the refusal? (i.e. single-turn or multiple-turn techniques) |
| • Where does the refusal sequence start? |
| • Where does the refusal sequence end? |

The total number of TV series excerpts that students may watch and analyse in Steps 3 and 4 depends on the amount of time available for supplementing course-materials with instruction on refusals. However, it is advisable to present learners with many and varied dialogue excerpts to help them make the appropriate sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic decisions in the TL.

3.3. Post-watching activities

Post-watching activities aim to provide learners with opportunities for practising refusals in interaction after completing pre- and while-watching activities. To that aim, they are presented with controlled (i.e. with prompts to evoke behaviour) and freer communicative production activities (i.e. without prompts to evoke behaviour) (step 5) coupled with meaningful feedback (step 6).

3.3.1. Step 5: Co-constructing refusals

As a controlled production activity, learners complete a *dictogloss task* (Rashtchi, Porkar & MirSaeed 2020), which combines watching, note-taking and reconstructing activities. After pairing learners, the teacher plays the selected scene for the first time. Next, the transcription of the dialogue with the refusals strategies in bold is given to the pairs to enhance their focus on refusals. The scene is played again and this time, learners can read the transcription and take notes. Finally, the teacher collects the transcriptions and asks learners to role-play the situation, while their performance is recorded for later discussion. Another controlled production activity could ask learners to complete a *dialogic task* (van Compernelle 2014), which requires them to explain their understanding of pragmatic competence to another person. After pairing learners, the teacher plays the selected scene and pauses it when the refusal sequence is about to start. Then, learners have to continue the conversation and the one who takes the role of the refuser has to verbalise his/her thinking about the aspects he/she pays attention to for the appropriate selection of the refusal strategy. During the activity learners record their performance for assessment and feedback.

Finally, in freer production practice, learners may be given the chance to participate in role-playing activities similar to the dialogue excerpts they watched in steps 3 and 4, while recording their conversation (Alcón 2012). Later, they watch the video excerpts and compare their recorded conversation with the audiovisual input.

3.3.2. Step 6: Assessing refusals

Learners' self-assessment of their pragmatic ability during the role-play activities is required in this step. Here, they are asked to indicate any divergence from the video excerpts, in terms of pragmatic input. In the case of any divergence, learners should explain it against five factors (Cohen 2012: 256): i) negative transfer of pragmatic behaviour from their L1, ii) overgeneralisation of L2/FL norms to a situation they are inappropriate, iii) limited L2/FL grammatical ability, iv) the effect of instruction or instructional material or v) resistance to TL norms for pragmatic behaviour. This activity should be followed by the teacher's metapragmatic feedback on the learners' performance to create a better match between the learners' intent as speakers and the most likely interpretation that listeners would have in the TL and culture. In large classes, peer assessment could also be an alternative so that learners could collaboratively provide feedback to their classmates. To help learners master this complex activity, they should be trained with scaffolded modelling.

4. Concluding remarks

Refusals are complex speech acts that require not only lengthy sequences of negotiation and cooperative achievements, but also face-saving strategies to accommodate the unruly nature of the act (Gass & Houck 1999: 2). Also, since they have a face threatening nature, they are subject to cultural variations. These facts pose a challenge to many L2/FL learners with limited knowledge of the TL and culture. Consequently, learners' exposure to the way refusals are uttered in a variety of intercultural contexts (including English as a lingua franca contexts), and learners' development of cross-cultural sensitivity are crucial to prevent misunderstandings or hurt the speaker's feelings. In this sense, audiovisual material (be it TV series or films) is a tool that can greatly facilitate this daunting task (Abrams 2016).

On that account, this paper has presented a practical research-based instructional method for developing the speech act of refusals through TV series. The lesson integrates pre-, while- and post-watching activities which aim at: i) exposing learners to a variety of contextualised refusal sequences, ii) providing ample opportunities for meaningful practice and co-construction of refusals, iii) encouraging metapragmatic discussion of forms and norms for making refusals as well as discussion of cultural differences and similarities between the L1 and the TL and iv) empowering learners with agency. All activities are built upon recommended research-

based techniques presented in interventional studies on refusals, with the hope to remediate the handicapping situation where teachers have limited knowledge about how to incorporate pragmatics into their language courses.

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Appendix

TV series *Emily in Paris*

In the series, Emily is a marketing executive in her mid-twenties from Chicago who moves to Paris after her company acquires *Savoir*, a French marketing company, and she is tasked with improving its social media strategy. This TV series is suitable to raise students' intercultural awareness and can provide learners with insights into what they should or should not do if they travel to France. In the analysed excerpt, Emily is with her boss (i.e. Sylvie), her workmates (i.e. Julien and Luc), a well-known client (i.e. Antoine) and a potential new client (i.e. Mr Zimmer.) Except for Emily, they are all French and are going to have a business dinner together to discuss the possibility of having the perfume from Laboratoire Lavaux (Antoine's firm) in Mr Zimmer's hotel chain. Emily has booked a table in a five-star Michelin restaurant, but there is a misunderstanding with the date, and they do not have a reserved table for the dinner. Emily is inside the restaurant while the rest of people are waiting for her in the street. When Emily acknowledges of this misunderstanding, she decides to phone Gabriel, a French neighbour and friend, who is the chef at a restaurant and asks him for help. Gabriel is in the kitchen, working in his restaurant when she receives the call from Emily:

Selected dialogue (Season 1. Episode 4) (19:20-20:00)

1. Gabriel: [in French] Halo
2. Emily: [in English] Hi. Gabriel. It's Emily.
3. Gabriel: Who?
4. Emily: Emily! Emily Cooper, your neighbour
5. Gabriel: Oh, Emily, hi! It's hard to hear you.
6. Emily: Yeah, I've got a massive favour, okay? I have a very important client.
7. Gabriel: Uh. The lingerie ...
8. Emily: Yeah, yeah and some other clients. Can you take six?
9. Gabriel: Uh, tonight?
10. Emily: Yes, perfect ...
11. Gabriel: No, no, no
12. Emily: I really need your help, Gabriel, okay? My job depends on it.

13. Gabriel: We're planning to close in 3 min.

14. Emily: Okay, I'll see you in 15. Merci

(The refusal sequence is underlined for readers' quick identification)

Analysing the context of refusals

<i>Components</i>	<i>Answer to the awareness-raising questions</i> (see Table 4 for questions)
S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily is inside a 5-star restaurant, and Gabriel is working in his restaurant.
P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily and Gabriel participate in the telephone conversation. They are friends.
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily does not have a reserved table for a business dinner and asks Gabriel to take 6 people at his restaurant for dinner when he is about to close.
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily requests help from Gabriel, and he turns down her request. However, she simply does not accept the refusal, thanks him, and plans to have dinner at Gabriel's restaurant.
K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone is completely friendly.
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The channel is oral, and the register is informal.
N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The request is formulated in a routinised way, and the refusal is made directly.
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendly conversation over the telephone.

Analysing the linguistic expressions employed in a refusal sequence

<i>Answer to the awareness-raising questions</i> (see Table 5 for questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first turn is a request (see line 6 for a pre-request and line 8 for the request) The refusal is realised with a combination of direct (see line 11) and indirect strategies (see line 13) Multiple-turn techniques are employed (see lines 9, 11 and 13) The refusal sequence starts in line 9 The refusal sequence ends in line 13