Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







LINGUOPRAGMATIC TRANSFORMATIONS OF INDIRECT REFUSALS IN ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND UZBEK

Madaliyeva Mohira Muxammadaminovna
Kokand State University
e-mail: madaliyevamohira17@gmail.com
Phone: +998 95 795 77 17

Abstract. This article examines indirect refusals as a pragmatic phenomenon in English literary dialogues and considers the ways in which their communicative meanings may be transformed in Russian and Uzbek translations. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between linguistic form and illocutionary force, since a refusal is not necessarily expressed by an explicit negative response. Reasons, apologies, expressions of inability, modal constructions, hesitation, alternatives, topic shifts, rhetorical questions and other indirect devices may perform the communicative function of refusal. The article argues that the translation of indirect refusals requires the preservation not only of propositional meaning but also of pragmatic force, degree of mitigation, interpersonal distance and communicative intention.

Keywords: refusal, indirect refusal, speech act, literary dialogue, pragmatics, illocutionary force, politeness, mitigation, translation, pragmatic transformation.

Introduction. Refusal is generally understood as a communicative act through which a speaker rejects a request, invitation, offer, suggestion or other action proposed by an interlocutor. Unlike ordinary statements, refusals are highly dependent on the interpersonal relationship between the participants and the communicative situation in which they occur. An important characteristic of refusal is that it is frequently realized indirectly. Instead of explicitly saying *No* or *I refuse*, speakers may provide a reason, express regret, indicate inability, postpone the decision or offer an alternative. The Indiana University Pragmatics resource distinguishes direct and indirect refusal strategies and identifies mitigation, reasons and explanations, and indefinite responses among the major indirect forms. Indiana University. *Refusals: Speech Acts: Pragmatics & Discourse*. Department of Linguistics, Indiana University. The indirect nature of refusal makes this speech act particularly relevant to literary dialogue. Literary characters rarely communicate only propositional information. Their utterances simultaneously express attitudes, social relationships, emotional states and interpersonal intentions. Consequently, a formally affirmative or neutral utterance may function pragmatically as a refusal.

For example: **A:** *Would you like to come with us?* **B:** *I have to work tonight.*

The second speaker does not explicitly say *No*. Nevertheless, within the communicative context, the statement about work can be interpreted as a refusal of the invitation. This type of indirectness is especially important in translation because the translator has to reproduce not merely the words of the source text but also the communicative function of the utterance.

Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







Direct and Indirect Refusal. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz developed one of the most influential classifications of refusal strategies. Their research examined refusals in response to requests, invitations, offers and suggestions and demonstrated that speakers employ a range of semantic formulas rather than relying exclusively on direct negative forms.[1]

Direct refusal may be realized through expressions such as: *No. I can't. I won't do it.*

Indirect refusal, by contrast, may take the following forms: *I'm afraid I can't. I have another appointment. I' love to, but I have to work. Perhaps another time. I'm not sure I'll be able to make it.*

These examples demonstrate that indirect refusal is often constructed through several components. A refusal may contain a positive statement, an apology, an explanation and finally an implied rejection.

Beebe et al.'s model has subsequently become one of the most frequently used frameworks for the analysis of refusal strategies.[2]

Politeness and Mitigation. Refusals are often regarded as potentially face-threatening acts because rejecting another person's request, invitation or proposal may negatively affect the interpersonal relationship. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory provides an important framework for explaining why speakers frequently mitigate potentially face-threatening utterances.[3]

For example: No, I won't help you. Is considerably more direct than:

I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I won't be able to help you. The propositional result is similar, but the interpersonal effect is different.

The second version contains:

1. apology;
2. hesitation;
3. mitigation;
4. modal expression;
5. explanation.

These elements reduce the apparent force of the refusal.

Research on English refusals has also demonstrated a strong preference for indirect strategies in particular communicative contexts. For example, El-Dakhs, examining teacher–student refusals, found a clear preference for indirect strategies and interpreted the findings in relation to politeness and contextual factors.[4]

8

[1] Beebe L. M., Takahashi T., Uliss-Weltz R. Pragmatic Transfer in ESL Refusals // *Developing Communicative Competence in a Second Language*. New York: Newbury House, 1990. P. 55–73.

[2] Reichl I. Refusals in Early Modern English Drama Texts: New Insights, New Classification // *Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 28, No. 2. P. 253–270.

[3] Brown P., Levinson S. C. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[4] El-Dakhs D. A. The Art of Saying "No" to University Students: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Speech Act of Refusal in Teacher-Student Role-Plays // *Journal of Language and Education*. 2020. Vol. 6, No. 4. P. 55–75. DOI: 10.17323/jle.2020.11271.

Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







6. Refusal in Literary Dialogue

Literary dialogue provides particularly valuable material for studying indirect refusal because the researcher can observe not only the utterance itself but also the surrounding narrative context, character relations and stage directions.

In drama, for example, a refusal may be expressed through:

- a verbal response;
- hesitation;
- silence;
- repetition;
- topic change;
- an ironic response;
- an alternative proposal;
- a stage direction.

Research on Early Modern English drama has demonstrated that refusals in dramatic texts cannot always be identified through simple lexical searches because they are frequently realized through non-routinized forms.[5] This observation is particularly relevant to the analysis of modern literary works because a refusal may be distributed across several consecutive turns.

For example: **A:** *Would you like to join us?*
B: *I'd love to.*
A: *Then you'll come?*
B: *Unfortunately, I have an early appointment tomorrow.*

The refusal is not located in one isolated sentence. It develops through a sequence of pragmatic moves**.**

Linguopragmatic Transformation in Translation. The translation of an indirect refusal involves more than lexical substitution. The translator must reproduce the relationship between form, communicative intention and interpersonal effect.

For example:

Source: *I'm afraid I can't accept your invitation.*

Possible translation: Боюсь, я не могу принять ваше приглашение**.** Here the indirectness and mitigation are preserved. However, if the translation becomes:

Я отказываюсь от вашего приглашения.

The propositional content is approximately retained, but the pragmatic structure changes. The source contains:

mitigation + inability → indirect refusal

while the translation contains:

explicit refusal → direct rejection

Thus, we may identify a pragmatic strengthening.

Types of Pragmatic Transformation: For the purposes of comparative English-Russian-Uzbek analysis, four major types can be distinguished.

1. Preservation of pragmatic meaning

The degree of indirectness remains essentially unchanged.

[5] Reichl I. Refusals in Early Modern English Drama Texts: New Insights, New Classification // *Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 28, No. 2. P. 253–270.

Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







I'm afraid I can't come.
Боюсь, я не смогу прийти.

The same mitigating device and communicative function are maintained.

2. Pragmatic strengthening

An indirect refusal becomes more explicit.

I don't think I can accept → Я не могу согласиться.

The English epistemic hedge is reduced, while the Russian version becomes more categorical.

3. Pragmatic weakening

A relatively direct refusal becomes more indirect.

I can't come → Наверное, у меня не получится прийти.

The categorical inability is replaced by a less definite construction.

4. Pragmatic restructuring

The translator changes the linguistic mechanism while preserving the communicative purpose.

For example: I'd love to, but I have another appointment. May be rendered by a construction based primarily on apology or inability.

The linguistic strategy changes, while the refusal function remains**.**

Cross-Linguistic Perspective. Research has demonstrated that indirectness in refusals can vary across languages and cultural contexts. Studies comparing different linguistic communities have shown that social status, familiarity and cultural norms may influence the selection of refusal strategies.[6] This is particularly important for an English–Russian–Uzbek comparison. A translator does not simply transfer an English refusal into another language. The translator also reconstructs:

1. interpersonal distance;
2. degree of politeness;
3. emotional intensity;
4. social status;
5. degree of certainty;
6. degree of directness;
7. communicative intention.

Therefore, translation can be understood as a process of pragmatic re-encoding**.**

Proposed Analytical Model

Based on the theoretical discussion, the present study proposes the following analytical model:

SOURCE UTTERANCE → LINGUISTIC FORM → CONTEXT → ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE → TRANSLATION → PRAGMATIC TRANSFORMATION

For example: *I have another appointment.*

Source level

Linguistic form: declarative statement.

Contextual level

The utterance responds to an invitation.

[6] Shafran R. W., Stavans A. In/directness in Requests and Refusals in EFL by Multilinguals with L1 Hebrew or Arabic: A Linguistic and Textual Perspective // *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2023. Vol. 211. P. 1–14. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2023.04.002.

Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







Pragmatic level

The communicative function is refusal.

Translation level

The translator chooses an equivalent Russian or Uzbek construction.

Comparative level

The researcher determines whether:

1. indirectness is preserved;
2. refusal is strengthened;
3. refusal is weakened;
4. mitigation is added;
5. mitigation is removed;
6. the strategy is replaced.

This model makes it possible to distinguish linguistic equivalence from pragmatic equivalence**.**

The analysis leads to several theoretical conclusions. First, refusal should not be reduced to explicit negative forms such as *no*, *I can't* or *I refuse*. A considerable part of refusal meaning can be communicated through reasons, apologies, modal constructions, alternatives, hesitation, topic shifts and other indirect devices.

Second, the interpretation of indirect refusal depends on the interaction between linguistic form and communicative context. Therefore, isolated sentences are insufficient for reliable identification of refusal in literary dialogue. Third, indirect refusal is closely related to politeness because speakers frequently attempt to reduce the interpersonal force of rejection. This explains the frequent combination of refusal with apologies, expressions of willingness, explanations and modal hedges. Research on refusal strategies confirms the importance of such combinations.

Literary dialogue is a particularly productive source for refusal research because it provides sequential interaction, character relationships and contextual information. Research on English drama has demonstrated that refusal strategies can be systematically identified and classified in dramatic texts.

Finally, in English-Russian-Uzbek translation, the principal issue is not merely whether the proposition has been translated correctly, but whether the communicative force of refusal has been preserved. Consequently, translation transformations should be analysed in terms of pragmatic preservation, strengthening, weakening and restructuring.

REFERENCES

1. Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
2. Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. “Pragmatic Transfer in ESL Refusals.” In R. C. Scarcella, E. S. Andersen & S. D. Krashen (eds.), *Developing Communicative Competence in a Second Language*. New York: Newbury House, 1990. P. 55–73.
3. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
4. Grice, H. P. “Logic and Conversation.” In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 1975. P. 41–58.
5. Searle, J. R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Email:

conference@houghtonstreetreview.com

Website:

www.houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

© 2026 International Online Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research. All Rights Reserved.

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Ewelum Johnson Nnadi

Managing Editors:

1.Harold Jan R. Terano

2.Dr. Mandakini Singla

3.Massoud Kaykhaii







6. El-Dakhs, D. A. "The Art of Saying 'No' to University Students: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Speech Act of Refusal in Teacher-Student Role-Plays." *Journal of Language and Education*. 2020. Vol. 6, No. 4. P. 55–75. DOI: 10.17323/jle.2020.11271.