



## Evaluating Refusal to requests, suggestions, and invitations across different Situations

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### Abstract

Pragmatic competence appears to be an important aspect of language learning, especially in a foreign language learning context. Among the various aspects of pragmatic competence, this study aimed to investigate if there is any significant difference between the direct and indirect refusal strategies of MBA and law students in real life situations and academic contexts. The participants (N=100) with equal number of MBA and Law students answered a unique pragmatic questionnaire. The pragmatic questionnaire was developed on the basis of direct and indirect refusal of requests, suggestions and invitations in real life and in academic contexts. The results of this study showed (1) no significant difference in law and MBA students' using of all direct statements in real life situations, but there is a significant difference in using real life direct request between law and MBA students; (2) no significant difference in using direct statements in academic contexts between law and MBA students; (3) no significant difference between law and MBA students' using of all probability statements in real life situation; (4) no significant difference between the use of excuse statements by law and MBA students; (5) no significant difference between law and MBA students' using of all excuse statements in academic contexts; (6) a significant difference in using conditional statements in real life and academic contexts; (7) a significant difference in using conditional statement in academic context between law and MBA students; (8) no significant difference in law and MBA students' use of conditional statements in real life situation.

**Key terms:** Pragmatic knowledge, Refusal to requests, suggestions, and invitations. Refusals in academic and real life contexts.

## 1. Introduction

It is believed that learning a new language is an achievement beyond memorizing its lexical items and mastering its grammatical structures. As Austin (1962) suggests, in addition to learning the form of the target language, i.e. syntactic and lexical knowledge that can be considered as linguistic competence, language learners need to learn how to use this knowledge to carry out functions in the target language and how these communicative acts shape and react to situations and social relationships. The notion of the speech act theory has motivated a good number of researchers to explore the depth of the relationships between form and meaning in written and spoken discourse in specific social contexts.

Murray (2009) illustrated pragmatic competence as an understanding of the relationship between form and context that enables us, accurately and appropriately, to express and interpret intended meaning.

Among the many aspects of pragmatic knowledge, this study aims to focus on refusal. Refusing is a complex issue, as the speaker directly or indirectly says NO to his/her interlocutor's request, invitation or suggestion. According to Chen (1996), refusals are often realized through indirect strategies which require a high pragmatic competence.

More specifically, the aim of this study is to make a comparison of refusal knowledge between the performances of MBA and law students who study English as a foreign language, on a refusal pragmatic test. These participants also have different reading comprehension ability levels.

## 2. Background

Some investigators have found it appropriate to introduce a distinction between sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. In this distinction, sociolinguistics will be concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication; while the equivalent goal in sociology of language will be to discover how social structure can be understood better through the study of language. Cohen (1995) describes the difference as follows: sociolinguistics is "the study of language in relation to society", whereas the sociology of language is "the study of society in relation to language".

### 2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics, which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Pragmatics encompasses speech act theory, conversational implicature, talk in interaction and other approaches to language behavior in philosophy, sociology, and linguistics. That is to say, transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge of speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, the inferred intent of the speaker. Successful communication entails knowledge of grammar and text organization as well as pragmatic aspects of the target language. According to Kasper (1992), one can define pragmatic competence as "the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts." (p.279)

### 2.2. Speech Act Theory

Currently, speech act theory appears to be the most conventional part in pragmatics studies. Speech acts can be as 'function' of language, such as complaining, thanking, apologizing,

refusing, requesting, and inviting. According to Johnson and Johnson (1998), it is part of pragmatics explaining how utterances affect social action, and how people realize and infer the intended function of an utterance when it is not explicitly stated.

The underlying theme behind Austin's philosophy is that a statement not only describes a situation or states some facts, but also performs a certain kind of action by itself. Making a statement may be the typical example of using language, but there are some other things we can do with words: we can make promises, ask questions, give orders, make requests, give thanks, offer apologies, and so on. Widdowson (1983) also came to think of language not primarily as a system of representation but as a vehicle for all sorts of social activity.

### 2.3. The Speech Act of Refusal

According to Chen (1995), refusals function as a response to "an initiating act" and are considered a speech act by which "a speaker fails to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" (p.121). Chen et al., (1995) stated that it is a speech act by which a speaker denies to participate in an action proposed by the interlocutor.

According to Beebe et al., (1990), refusals are a difficult aspect from cross-cultural point for many nonnative speakers. Different cultures have different perceptions and interpretations of appropriateness and politeness. Therefore, refusal is important for second language learners and educators. Because making refusal implies that the refuser will decline the wish of the requester, the refuser runs a great risk of appearing impolite or offending the requester. Making a refusal in one's native language can be awkward and it is even more awkward in a second language. EFL learners, in particular, are likely to encounter problems in performing the speech act of refusal appropriately in English. It should be mentioned that improper performance might lead to serious consequences, including misunderstanding and making a negative impression during interaction with English native speakers.

#### 2.3.1. Direct Refusal vs. Indirect Refusal

Refusals are realized by means of both direct and mostly indirect strategies the use of which depends on some other sociolinguistic variables such as status of the interlocutor (e.g. high, equal or low status) and the form and the content of the refusals (e.g. refusing invitation, request, offer or suggestion).

According to Beebe (1990), refusals classified in to taxonomy. They categorized refusals as two types: direct and indirect. Direct refusals include phrases such as 'I refuse' or 'no'. In the category of indirect refusals, three major strategies were frequently found to be used by native speakers of English to begin a refusal. These three strategies include (1) an expression of positive opinion (e.g., 'I'd like to'), (2) an expression of regret (e.g., 'I'm sorry'), and (3) an excuse, reason, or explanation. Other indirect refusal strategies include a statement expressing a wish to be able to comply with the request, the statement of an alternative (e.g., 'why don't you ask someone else'), a condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., 'if you had asked me earlier...'), a promise of future acceptance (e.g., 'I'll do it next time'), a statement of principle (e.g., 'I never do business with friends'), a statement of philosophy (e.g., 'one can't be too careful'), an attempt to dissuade the interlocutor, a criticism of the request, a request for empathy, a statement letting the interlocutor off the hook (e.g., 'it's ok'), self-defense (e.g., 'I'm doing my best'), and verbal or nonverbal avoidance such as silence or a topic switch.





### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The sample chosen for the study consisted of 100 M.A. students majoring in MBA and Law from University of Tehran, Kish international campus.

All subjects, 50 MBA and 50 Law students, belonged to two different groups. They were selected from the same proficiency level of English language, based on test of proficiency of U-Test. They had been learning English as their foreign language for an average of eight years in high school, university and different institutes. Ranging in age from 22 to 27, they were all Iranian native speakers of Persian from the same linguistic, cultural, and ethnic background, whose parents spoke Persian as their native language.

#### 3.2. Instrumentation

A general English proficiency test to students with the same proficiency level, and a pragmatic test, on the basis of refusal performance, constituted the main instruments implemented in the current research.

##### 3.2.1. Pragmatic test

Pragmatic test in this study consisted of *fourteen* situations, divided into three categories based on the eliciting speech acts: requests, invitations, and suggestions in real life and educational system. So the fourteen situations were categorized into three stimulus types eliciting a refusal: requests, suggestions and invitations, all of them required a refusal to an equal status interlocutor. Each situation was rated by degree of appropriateness on a four-point Likert scale. It should be noted that since Beebe et al.'s questionnaire was based on four stimulus types eliciting a refusal (requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions), and the focus of this study was just on requests, invitations and suggestions, the questionnaire was modified in order to fit the purposes of the present study.

This Likert-scale questionnaire consisted of 14 situations dealing with everyday topics requiring the participants to use refusal to different stimuli as requests, invitations, and suggestions. The respondents were asked to evaluate the refusals given in each conversation as *always*, *usually*, *rarely*, and *never*. In this Likert-scale questionnaire, all six alternatives in fourteen situations were mainly constructed, and modified if necessary, in a way that they were classified under the same categories in Beebe, et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusals. One or two of the six alternatives in all items were 'direct' refusal; while the other four or five were 'indirect' ones. In this study four indirect strategies were selected from Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification: (1) Statement of excuse, reason, or explanation, (2) Probability, (3) Statement of alternative and (4) Set conditions for future or past acceptance.

#### 3.3. Procedure

Having collected the data, the following data analyses were performed. An independent T-test and also pair T-test were used to find the difference in the performances of participants in direct and indirect refusal strategies in academic situations and real life contexts.

Non-parametric statistics was used for examining the performances of participants on pragmatics questionnaire. The data gathered from the Likert-scale questionnaire was entered into the SPSS software and statistical analyses were carried out. Frequency of each choice from the four point

Likert scale questionnaire--*always, usually, rarely, never*-- was determined for each item, and the total number of each choice was calculated for each group and non-parametric statistics was used for examining the performances of participants on pragmatics questionnaire.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The present study aimed to find out if there is any significant difference between pragmatic knowledge of Law and MBA students in the real life and academic contexts. This chapter, first, reports the differences in the performances of students of these two fields of study on the type of statements they preferred to use in real life and in academic contexts. Each context followed by two general types of statements which were classified as *direct* and *indirect* statements. The indirect statements were then classified as *excuse*, and elaborated excuse, probability, condition, and providing other suggestions. To examine the difference in the performances of participants, on these statements, a *Mann Whitney U test* was performed.

#### 4.1. Field of study and types of pragmatic statements

In order to examine the difference in the performances of MBA and Law students on any single type of pragmatic statements, a Mann Whitney U test was employed. The results are summarized under each statement type.

##### 4.1.1. Direct Statements in Real Life Situations

Four direct requests in real life situations were used in this study. The results of descriptive statistics appeared in Table 4.1, shows that the agreement in using direct statements varies in different situations. For example, the participants agree more on **6a**. Moreover, the responses to this particular direct statement are more homogenous.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for the direct request statements in real life situation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1a. I apologize. I'm not able to give you money.	100	2.7100	1.12182
6a. No. I cannot do it.	100	3.6200	.73553
8a. No. I cannot do it.	100	2.5200	1.16758
13a. No. It is impossible.	100	2.8600	1.09194
13b. No. I'm sorry.	100	2.6600	1.18253

The results of Mann Whitney U test show that there is a significant difference in using direct statements in real life situation by Law and MBA students in **6a**, **13a** and **13b**. According to Marion Puzo, the first thing that will strike you about **lawyers** is that you speak to them and you will see that they are cautious. Law is the set of rules which governs the behaviour of person, companies, the government at the centre and states. The offending party can be punished under the rule of law. In line with this, the results show that the mean for law students in **6a** on direct refusal in real life request is **61.22** and the mean for MBA students is **39.78**, and mean for Law students is higher than MBA students, so it can be concluded that Law students act more cautiously than MBA students especially about political issues, so there is a significant difference in using direct statements in real life situations between law and MBA students in **6a**,

**13a** and **13b**. The results show that the mean for MBA students in **13a** and **13b** on direct refusal in real life request is higher than law students, so it can be concluded that MBA students are the most influential people in finance.

As indicated in table 4.1 'Real life direct request' statements have the highest mean among the other statements, i.e. **6.a**. So, we can conclude that this statement was more frequently used in comparison with other statements. Further, table 4.2 compares the utilization of direct request statements in real life situation by Law and MBA students. As shown in this table, the results of Mann Whitney U test demonstrate that there is a significant difference in using 'real life direct request' between Law and MBA students, i.e. Sig.<.05

Table 4.2. Comparing the use of direct request statements in real life situation by law and MBA students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test	Z	Sig.
1a. I apologize. I'm not able to give you money.	Law	50	48.79	2439.50	1164.5	-.620	.535
	MBA	50	52.21	2610.50			
6a. No. I cannot do it.	Law	50	61.22	3061.00	714.00	-4.874	.000
	MBA	50	39.78	1989.00			
8a. No. I cannot do it.	Law	50	52.64	2632.00	1143.0	-.763	.446
	MB	50	48.36	2418.00			
13a.No.It is impossible.	Law	50	40.67	2033.50	758.50	-3.580	.000
	MB	50	60.33	3016.50			
13b. No. I'm sorry.	Law	50	40.74	2037.00	762.00	-3.505	.000
	MB	50	60.26	3013.00			

Having computed the scores of statements in each situation, an independent samples t-test was also performed to find the difference in using direct statements in real life contexts. The results, as appeared in Table 4.3 which shows that there is no significant difference in Law and MBA students' using direct statements in real life situations ( $t_{(98)}=1.49$ ,  $p=0.13$ ). Moreover, Table 4.3 illustrates that MBA students have more agreement in using direct statements and they are more homogenous in using direct statements in real life situations.

Table 4.3 Compare Law and MBA students' using of all direct statements in real life situations

	Field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Dir_Request_real life 5	Law	50	69.4000	17.19160	2.43126	-1.499	98	.137
	MBA	50	74.3000	15.45269	2.18534			

#### 4.1.2 Direct Refusal Statements in Academic Situations





The descriptive statistics on the direct request statements in academic situations are presented in Table 4.4 The agreement in using these statements is relatively the same except in two situations, in **10a** and **10b**.

Table 4.4. Descriptive Statistics for the direct refusal statements in academic situation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
5a. No. I don't want to help you.	100	2.0700	1.16563
7a. No. I cannot lend you.	100	2.3500	1.26631
9a. No. I cannot stay.	100	2.3900	1.18828
<b>10a. I apologize, I cannot come.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.1700</b>	1.03529
<b>10b. It is not a good time.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.0300</b>	<b>.94767</b>
11a. No. I cannot come.	100	2.8100	1.06073
11b. No. I'm sorry.	100	2.5400	<b>.94730</b>
12a. I apologize, I cannot speak to you.	100	2.6200	1.22911

The result of the Mann Whitney U test that examines the differences of Law and MBA students' judgments in using different choices in these statements is apparent in Table 4.5 The results show that there is a significant difference in using direct request statements in academic situations in **11b** and **12a**.

Table 4.5. Comparing the use of direct refusal statements in academic situation by law and MBA students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	of Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig.
5a. No. I don't want to help you.	Law	50	47.65	2382.50	1107.500	-1.048	.295
	MBA	50	53.35	2667.50			
7a. No. I cannot lend you.	Law	50	48.99	2449.50	1174.500	-.547	.584
	MBA	50	52.01	2600.50			
9a. No. I cannot stay.	Law	50	49.78	2489.00	1214.000	-.260	.795
	MBA	50	51.22	2561.00			
10a. I apologize, I cannot come.	Law	50	54.77	2738.50	1036.500	-1.601	.109
	MBA	50	46.23	2311.50			
10b. It is not a good time.	Law	50	52.10	2605.00	1170.00	-.585	.559
	MBA	50	48.90	2445.00			
11a. No. I cannot come.	Law	50	53.34	2667.00	1108.000	-1.019	.308
	MBA	50	47.66	2383.00			
11b. No. I'm sorry.	Law	50	42.48	2124.00	849.000	-2.964	<b>.003</b>
	MBA	50	58.52	2926.00			
12a. I apologize, I cannot speak to you.	Law	50	44.60	2230.00	955.000	-2.124	<b>.034</b>
	MBA	50	56.40	2820.00			

Also, the comparison of Law and MBA students' judgments in all direct statements in academic contexts is shown in Table 4.8 the results illustrate that there is no significant difference in using these statements in academic contexts. ( $t_{(98)}=0.83$ ,  $p=0.4$ )

Table 4.6. Comparing Law and MBA students' using of all direct refusal statements in academic situations

	field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Direct_Request_academic 8	Law	50	64.1250	19.99721	2.82803	-.833	98	.407
	MBA	50	67.0000	13.99196	1.97876			

### 4.1.3 Indirect Refusal Statements

As mentioned in Chapter three, five different types of indirect statements, i.e., probability, prediction, excuse, condition, and other suggestions, were used in this study. Each of the above-mentioned subcategories will be examined separately in the following sections.

#### 4.1.3.1. Probability Statements

The results of descriptive statistics in Table 4.7, show that the agreement in using this indirect statement varies in different situations. For example, it seems that the participants agreed more on 6b.

Table 4.7. Descriptive Statistics for probability statements in real life situation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1b. I need it myself.	100	2.6400	.89352	1.00	4.00
6b. I do not think it is going to be possible.	100	3.1000	.81029	1.00	4.00
8b. I do not think it is going to be possible.	100	2.3700	.93911	1.00	4.00
13d. I don't think it is going to be possible.	100	2.8200	.90319	1.00	4.00

However, the results of Mann Whitney U test show that there is not a significant difference in using 'real life' indirect request.

Table 4.8. comparing the use of probability statements in real life situation by law and students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig.
1b. I need it myself.	Law	50	51.82	2591.00	1184.000	-.483	.629
	MBA	50	49.18	2459.00			
6b. I do not think it is going to be possible.	Law	50	46.04	2302.00	1027.000	-1.647	.099
	MBA	50	54.96	2748.00			
8b. I do not think it is going to be possible.	Law	50	49.24	2462.00	1187.000	-.457	.648
	MBA	50	51.76	2588.00			
13d. I don't think it is going to be possible.	Law	50	52.07	2603.50	1171.500	-.569	.569
	MBA	50	48.93	2446.50			



Moreover, an independent Samples t-test was also performed to find the difference in refusal statements in which the Law and MBA students prefer to use a probable condition to refuse a request. The results in Table 4.9, illustrate that there is no significant difference between Law and MBA student's using of all probability statements in real life situation ( $t(98) = 0.54, p = 0.5$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

4.9. Comparison between Law and MBA student's using of all probability statements in real life situation

	field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Indir_prob_RL	Law	50	67.6250	15.44875	2.18478	-.544	98	.588
	MBA	50	69.0000	9.01388	1.27475			

#### 4.1.3.2. Excuse Statements

Simple and elaborated excuse statements employed in both real life and academic contexts were also analyzed. A paired t-test was performed to find the difference in the use of excuse statements in real life and in academic contexts. The results, as appeared in Table 4.10, show that there is a significant difference in the use of *excuse statements* in academic and real life contexts ( $f(98) = 36.3, p = 0.000$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4.10. Comparison between excuse statements in real life and in academic situations

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pair 1	Ind Excuse Real Life	67.9375	100	11.92341	1.19234	36.303	99	.000
	Ind Excuse Academic	35.3900	100	7.53965	.75397			

#### 4.1.3.2.1. Excuse Statements in Real Life Situations

The difference in the judgment of Law and MBA students in using these two types of excuse statements (simple excuse and elaborated excuse) in real life situations is presented in Table 4.11 the results show that the participants are significantly different in using statements **2f**, **6c**, **6d**, **8f**, **13f**, so it can be concluded that Law students act more cautiously than MBA students and they elaborate more than MBA students. The result shows that Law students used elaborated excuse more than MBA students. This implies that context affects the use of a particular statement.

Table 4.11. Ranks comparing the use of excuse statements in real life situation by law and MBA students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney Z	Sig.
2b. Sorry, I am very busy in these days.	Law	50	55.76	987.000	-1.935
	MBA	50	45.24		
2f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	42.09	829.500	<b>.003</b>

	MBA	50	58.91				
3b. I would like to come, but I have a big test.	Law	50	45.64	1007.000	-1.788	.074	
	MBA	50	55.36				
6c. Sorry, I do not have enough time.	Law	50	42.36	843.000	-2.907	.004	
	MBA	50	58.64				
6d. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	59.86	782.000	-3.481	.001	
	MBA	50	41.14				
8c. Sorry, I do not have enough time.	Law	50	55.55	997.500	-1.838	.066	
	MBA	50	45.45				
8d. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	52.13	1168.500	-.590	.555	
	MBA	50	48.87				
8f. I have plans. / I have a commitment.	Law	50	59.05	822.500	-3.088	.002	
	MBA	50	41.95				
13e. I am in a hurry.	Law	50	48.79	1164.500	-.617	.537	
	MBA	50	52.21				
13f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	43.12	881.000	-2.630	.009	
	MBA	50	57.88				

The total scores of excuse statements were used in an independent samples t-test. The results in Table 4.12 illustrate that there is no significant difference between the use of excuse statements by Law and MBA students ( $f(98) = .94, p = .34$ ), therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4.12. Compare law and MBA students' using of all excuse statements in real life situations

field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Indirect Excuse RealLife	Law	50	66.8125	13.15094	1.85982	-.943	.348
	MBA	50	69.0625	10.56914	1.49470		

#### 4.1.3.2.2. Excuse Statements in Academic Contexts

Twenty -two statements in the fourteen situations were employed to examine the excuse refusal statements used by Law and MBA students. As it is illustrated in Table 4.13, there is a significant difference in **4b, 7d, 8f, 9e, 11e, 12b**. Table 4.13 also shows that Law students had more agreement in using elaborated excuse in academic context, so Law students use elaborated excuse more than MBA students in academic contexts. According to David Roper (1983) a lawyer, as a representative of clients, performs various functions. As advisor, a lawyer provides a client with an informed understanding of the client's legal rights and obligations and explains their practical implications. Results show that MBA students have more agreement in using simple excuse in **7d, 8f, 9e, 12b** more than law students.

Table 4.13. comparing the use of excuse statements in academic contexts by law and MBA students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
4b. Sorry, I am very busy in these days.	Law	50	56.34	2817.00	958.000	-2.122	.034
	MBA	50	44.66	2233.00			
4e. Your home is so far away.	Law	50	47.83	2391.50	1116.500	-.953	.340
	MBA	50	53.17	2658.50			
4f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	50.82	2541.00	1234.000	-.117	.907
	MBA	50	50.18	2509.00			
5c. I was absent in these sessions.	Law	50	54.39	2719.50	1055.500	-1.423	.155
	MBA	50	46.61	2330.50			
5d. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	47.90	2395.00	1120.000	-.931	.352
	MBA	50	53.10	2655.00			
7d. I left it at home.	Law	50	43.54	2177.00	902.000	-2.495	.013
	MBA	50	57.46	2873.00			
7e. I am in a hurry.	Law	50	46.22	2311.00	1036.000	-1.569	.117
	MBA	50	54.78	2739.00			
7f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	46.74	2337.00	1062.000	-1.340	.180
	MBA	50	54.26	2713.00			
8c. Sorry, I do not have enough time.	Law	50	55.55	2777.50	997.500	-1.838	.066
	MBA	50	45.45	2272.50			
8d. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	52.13	2606.50	1168.500	-.590	.555
	MBA	50	48.87	2443.50			
8f. I have plans. / I have a commitment.	Law	50	41.95	2952.50	822.500	-3.088	.002
	MBA	50	59.05	2097.50			
9e. I am in a hurry.	Law	50	42.40	2120.00	845.000	-2.924	.003
	MBA	50	58.60	2930.00			
9f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	55.03	2751.50	1023.500	-1.615	.106
	MBA	50	45.97	2298.50			
10c. Sorry, I do not have enough time.	Law	50	49.08	2454.00	1179.000	-.513	.608
	MBA	50	51.92	2596.00			
10f. I have plans. / I have a commitment.	Law	50	46.82	2341.00	1066.000	-1.328	.184
	MBA	50	54.18	2709.00			
11e. I am in a hurry.	Law	50	64.18	3209.00	566.000	-5.032	.000
	MBA	50	36.82	1841.00			
11f. I apologize. / I am so sorry.	Law	50	45.77	2288.50	1013.500	-1.716	.086
	MBA	50	55.23	2761.50			



12b. It is too late.	Law	50	39.18	1959.00	684.000	-4.169	.000
	MBA	50	61.82	3091.00			
12c. Sorry, I do not have enough time.	Law	50	53.11	2655.50	1119.50	-.934	.350
	MBA	50	47.89	2394.50	0		
12d. I apologize. /I'm so sorry.	Law	50	49.81	2490.50	1215.50	-.248	.804
	MBA	50	51.19	2559.50	0		

An Independent Samples t-test was used to find the difference in using excuse statements in refusing a request in academic contexts (See Table 4.18). Table 4.14, shows that there is no significant difference between law and MBA students' using of all excuse statements in academic contexts

Table 4.14. compare law and MBA students' using of all excuse statements in academic contexts

field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ind Excu Ac	Law	50	35.2600	9.54433	1.34977	-.172	.864
	MBA	50	35.5200	4.87074	.68883		

#### 4.1.3.3. Condition Statements

To examine the difference in the judgements of Law and MBA students in real life and academic contexts, a paired t-test was performed. The results, in Table 4.15, shows that there is a significant difference in using conditional statements in real life and in academic situations ( $t_{(99)} = 6.74$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4.15. comparing conditional statements in real life and in academic situations

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pair 1	Ind Condition Real Life	54.3125	100	15.83371	1.58337	-6.744	.000
	Ind Condition Academic	64.6000	100	12.78572	1.27857		

#### 4.2.3.3.1. Condition Statements in Real Life Contexts

The results of Mann Whitney U test show that there is no significant difference in condition statements in real life context (See Table 4.16).

Table 4.16. Comparing the use of conditional statements in real life situation by law and MBA students

field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
6e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	48.57	2428.50	1153.500	-.712
	MBA	50	52.43	2621.50		
8e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	53.43	2671.50	1103.500	-
	MBA	50	50.57	2548.50		1.057

	MBA	50	47.57	2378.50			
13c. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	45.58	2279.00	1004.000	-	.078
						1.765	
	MBA	50	55.42	2771.00			
14e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	48.13	2406.50	1131.500	-.860	.390
	MBA	50	52.87	2643.50			

#### 4.1.3.3.2. Condition Statements in Academic Contexts

The results of Mann Whitney U test show that there is significant difference in using conditional statement in academic context between law and MBA students in 11e. (See Table 4.17)

Table 4.17. Comparing the use of conditional statements in academic contexts by law and MBA students

	field of study	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
5e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	51.65	2582.50	1192.500	-.417	.677
	MBA	50	49.35	2467.50			
9c. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	47.74	2387.00	1112.000	-	.293
	MBA	50	53.26	2663.00		1.053	
10e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	48.76	2438.00	1163.000	-.635	.525
	MBA	50	52.24	2612.00			
11e. I am in a hurry.	Law	50	64.18	3209.00	566.000	-	.000
	MBA	50	36.82	1841.00		5.032	
12e. If you had asked before, I would have accepted.	Law	50	58.14	2907.00	868.000	-	.006
	MBA	50	42.86	2143.00		2.738	

Having computed the scores of statements in each situation, an independent samples t-test was also performed to find the difference in using conditional statements in real life and academic contexts between MBA and Law students. The results, in Table 4.18, show that there is no significant difference in Law and MBA students' use of conditional statements in real life situations ( $t_{(98)} = .66, p = 0.50$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for real life situations between law and MBA students. Table 4.19 also shows that MBA students had more agreement in using conditional statements and they were more homogenous in using conditional statements in real life situations. Moreover, the results show that there is significant difference in Law and MBA students' using conditional statements in academic situations ( $t_{(98)} = 2.65, p = 0.009$ ) (See Table 4.18). Table 4.18 also shows that Law students had more agreement in using conditional statements and they were more homogenous in using conditional statements in academic situations. The null hypothesis is rejected in academic contexts.

Table 4.18. comparing conditional statements in real life and in academic situations between law and MBA students



	field of study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ind Cond RL	Law	50	53.2500	16.76290	2.37063	-.669	98	.505
	MBA	50	55.3750	14.94089	2.11296			
Ind Cond AC	Law	50	67.9000	13.85383	1.95923	<b>2.659</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>.009</b>
	MBA	50	61.3000	10.77649	1.52403			

## 5. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to make a comparison between direct and indirect refusal knowledge of MBA and Law students in real life and academic contexts, on a refusal pragmatic test.

The results obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire showed that MBA and Law students had different evaluations of refusal strategies in real life situations and academic contexts. Students rated the direct answers as *always* or *usually in real life situation* much more than in academic context (M=71.85 versus M= 65.56). EFL respondents hardly employed 'no', except in responding to interlocuter in real life situation and informal situation. Based on the evidence, the respondents had similar opinions concerning the use of 'no'. That is, it was appropriate to say 'no' directly in certain situations, such as to friends because friends were close to them.

As the results revealed, while all groups were affected by the concept of social status of the interlocutor, these effects were not identical for different groups. It was observed that EFL learners tended to care more about the social status of their interlocutors in academic contexts, while these students treated more informal in real life situations. EFL learners in academic contexts were apt to be more polite with higher status interlocutors by using expressions of indirect refusal strategies than direct refusal strategies and conditional statements than excuse statements.

Based on the findings, there was a difference in using conditional statements in academic contexts between MBA and Law students. Law students used elaborated excuse more than MBA students which can point to the fact that one of the recognizable characteristics of a lawyer student is the use of particular vocabulary, phrases, and clichés. It appears that this maybe directly linked to the language used in the elaboration of laws and codes, which are central to a lawyer's work.

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