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[DOR: 20.1001.1.23223081.1400.12.3.7.7]

[DOI: https://doi.org/10.29252/LRR.12.3.8]

Language Related Research
E-ISSN: 2383-0816
https://lrr.modares.ac.ir
https://doi.org/10.29252/LRR.12.3.8

Tarbiat Modares University

Vol. 12, No. 3
pp. 215-253
August & September 2021

Received: 16 October 2020
Received in revised form: 16 November 2020
Accepted: 29 December 2020

The Interplay of Action, Context, and Linguistic vs. Non-linguistic Resources in L2 Pragmatic Performance: The Case of Requests and Refusals

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Abstract

Despite the critical relationships among pragmatic action, context, and linguistic vs. non-linguistic resources for producing various adjacency pairs in foreign or second language (L2) exchanges, their interplay has not been adequately investigated. Therefore, the present study examined these relations in the production of request-refusal adjacency pairs. The needed data were collected from 108 upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners. Three hundred conversations were audio-recorded from learners' role-plays that involved making request-refusal adjacency pairs. MAXQDA software was used for data transcription, codification, and analysis. Data analysis revealed that request-refusal adjacency pairs were co-constructed in discursive contexts through multiple turns using both linguistic and nonlinguistic turn construction units (TCUs). Learners significantly used more linguistic rather than nonlinguistic TCUs and more sentential and clausal TCUs than phrasal and lexical TCUs. Moreover, the use of pauses and continuers was significantly more than laughter, facial expression, and body language. These findings have some pedagogical implications for teachers to raise learners' awareness of context, action, and linguistic and nonlinguistic TCUs in the production of speech act adjacency pairs.

Keywords: linguistic/forms, non-linguistic/non-verbal forms, pragmatic action, pragmatic context, request-refusal adjacency pairs, turn construction units (TCUs)

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence as the ability to engage in conversations in a foreign or second language (L2) with native speakers or competent non-native speakers, to perceive and understand the exchanged utterances, and to express intended meanings has always been a very important component of communicative competence. Taguchi (2017) mentioned that pragmatic competence is the L2 learner's ability to bridge the system side of the language with its function side that requires the knowledge of form-function-context mappings. Kasper and Rose (2002) asserted that pragmatic competence implies the ability to use pragmalinguistic forms in accordance with the socio-pragmatic norms in the target language. Knowledge of speech acts as the core of pragmatic competence is crucially important for effective interaction in an L2. Speech acts are the meaning-carrying packages that encompass the knowledge of pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms that are used to achieve communicative functions as defined by the existing literature (e.g., Barron, 2017; Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Derakhshan, 2019b, 2020; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2019; Flowerdew, 2013; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schauer, 2009; Shakki et al., 2020; Taguchi, 2017; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). L2 speech acts are mostly not produced in isolation, rather they are developed as adjacency pairs through multiple turns by the involved interlocutors. As defined by Taguchi (2006), adjacency pairs are two speech acts that are semantically and pragmatically related to each other, and the second one is a kind of response to the first one. Flowerdew (2013) mentioned that adjacency pairs have some features. First, they are two-utterance combinations, and each part or each speech act is produced by one of the interactants. Second, the First Pair Part (FPP) precedes the Second Pair Part (SPP), and they have preferred and dispreferred relationships. Third, the sequence of the first and second pair parts cannot be optionally changed.

A great deal of research has been done on the production (e.g., Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011; Shabani et al., 2019) or comprehension (e.g., Cook & Liddicoat, 2002; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Derakhshan & Shakki, 2020, 2021; Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020a; Taguchi, 2006, 2007) of various L2 speech acts in isolation or adjacency pairs and various types of implicatures. Some of these studies have tried to use various instructional tasks and activities for enhancing L2 learners' production of speech acts, including requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, compliments and compliment responses,

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agreements, and other less frequent L2 speech acts (e.g., Birjandi & Derakhshan, 2014; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Malmir, 2020a; Rose, 2000; Taguchi, 2018). Besides extensive research for pragmatic instruction, some other studies have investigated the relationship between individual differences (IDs) such as age and gender (e.g., Tajeddin & Malmir, 2014), language proficiency (Derakhshan, 2019a; Takahashi, 2015; Xiao, 2015), motivation (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012; Takahashi, 2005), willingness to communicate, personality traits (e.g., Taguchi, 2014b), intelligence and aptitude (Derakhshan et al., in press; Sarani & Malmir, 2020), pragmatic learning strategies (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2021; Tajeddin & Malmir, 2015), L2 social identity (Malmir, 2020b), learner subjectivity (LoCastro, 2001; Mohammad Hosseinpur & Bagheri Nevisi, 2017, 2018), L2 identity processing styles (Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020b), intercultural communicative competence (ICC) intercultural competence (e.g., Malmir, 2021; Taguchi et al., 2016), pragmatic learning strategies (e.g., Cohen, 2005, 2010; Tajeddin & Malmir, 2015), and other sociocultural variables on the one hand and L2 learners' acquisition of pragmatic knowledge on the other. However, as pointed out by Taguchi (2019), comparatively less research has been done to study the production of speech act adjacency pairs in the pragmatic context by studying the inherent sociocultural actions through extended discourse and other conversation analysis (DA) feasibilities. More importantly, the interconnectedness of the pragmatic action with various features of the pragmatic contexts is also under the influence of the linguistic/verbal resources and nonlinguistic/non-verbal resources that learners bring to the scene other interaction.

As asserted by Taguchi (2017), the interplay among the pragmatic context, the sociocultural action, and the linguistic and nonlinguistic resources exerts a momentous influence over the production of speech acts in adjacency pairs. Moreover, many scholars and pragmaticians have offered that the production of speech acts in the form of adjacency pairs happens in a discursive context and learners will try to reconstruct their turns and meanings, and learners cannot use the prefabricated patterns and memorized speech acts in their multiple turns during authentic conversations (e.g., Taguchi, 2011, 2019). Unfortunately, the proffered claims about the relationship among various aspects of the pragmatic context, multilayeredness of the sociocultural action, and the use of numerous

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verbal and non-verbal forms all remain in the realm of theoretical speculations, and a limited number of empirical and data-based studies have been done in this regard (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012, 2014 a, 2014b; Hellermann, 2011; Lee & Hellermann, 2014). To add to the opaqueness of this previously blurred picture, the existing literature has mentioned and accepted that the speech acts are reconstructed through cooperation in discursive contexts; nevertheless, this claim has also not been scrutinized through experimentation and data-driven research. Accordingly, the present study was launched to explore if the production of request-refusal adjacency pairs is based on co-constructed cooperation through gathering data about learners' interactions in L2 and to reveal how pragmatic context, sociocultural action, and various verbal and non-verbal resources are interacting in producing request-refusal adjacency pairs among Iranian EFL learners. Moreover, the current study sought to determine the types of verbal versus non-verbal resources/forms and to investigate if learners use them differently. Specifically, the current study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1) Is producing request and refusal speech acts in adjacency pairs a pre-planned or a co-constructed pragmatic action?
2) Do request-refusal adjacency pairs occur in isolation or a discursive context? How does context shape L2 pragmatic performance when making request-refusal adjacency pairs?
3) What are the main linguistic vs. non-linguistic forms used to produce request-refusal adjacency pairs? Are there any significant differences between the linguistic vs. non-linguistic forms used to produce request-refusal adjacency pairs?
4) Are there any significant differences among various conventional linguistic forms used to produce request-refusal adjacency pairs?
5) Are there any significant differences among various non-linguistic forms used to produce request-refusal adjacency pairs?

2. Literature Review

Pragmatic competence is mostly described as the potentiality of appropriate usage of language forms in a particular sociocultural context and is the most

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important element of communicative competence (Taguchi, 2011). Pragmatic ability is the learner's capability to make a connection between linguistic forms and the intended meanings for a specific context. According to Barren (2017), successful pragmatic performance is an accomplishment that relies heavily on the ability to distinguish the direct intended meanings of a sentence. Thus, not only should one consider the form-meaning relationship (pragmalinguistic knowledge) but also, s/he should regard the form and context of a sentence (sociopragmatic knowledge). This dichotomous conception of pragmatic competence has been reflected in the most important definitions of the concept since its inception in the 1990s (e.g., Derakhshan & Eslami, 2019; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Mey, 2001; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2011, 2017, 2019; Thomas, 1995; Trosborg, 1995). Taguchi (2011), for instance, asserted that pragmatic competence could be interpreted best as the relationship between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former refers to the linguistic resources to represent language functions, and the latter points to how the users evaluate the language of the text. For example, learners' knowledge of syntactic forms and lexis is essential to refuse an invitation from someone. According to Thomas (1995), pragmalinguistics refers to the ability to use linguistic forms such as grammar rules and words to make sentences correctly. Sociopragmatics, by contrast, recommends the ability to communicate efficiently based upon the social norms and cultural rules of a target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Inabilities in each category may lead to pragmatic failure in communication.

According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), all definitions of pragmatic competence hinge around the appropriateness of L2 learners' linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, which is robustly dependent on the context of the pragmatic encounter and the pragmatic action itself. As mentioned by Barron (2017), the pragmatic context in its narrow micro definition and its macro conceptualization, encompassing all of the socio-pragmatic aspects of the L2 interactions, is a transient dynamic scene over which L2 learners' form-function mappings materialize. Furthermore, Taguchi and Roever (2017) commented that any communication entailing form-function-context mappings is an ongoing action that follows the rules of conversation and social interaction. Therefore, understanding the relationship among pragmatic context, pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge, and the pragmatic action itself is a very worthwhile

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endeavor that can unearth a more realistic picture of how pragmatic encounters start, continue, and close effectually among L2 users.

The pragmatic action arises in the course of conversation through participants' mutual understandings of the topic and reactions to each other's contribution to the ongoing discourse (Taguchi, 2017). Nearly all models of pragmatic competence have defined pragmatic action as inseparable from the context. Based on Taguchi (2011), with the emergence of interactional competence, the ability and language knowledge are jointly constructed, and the ability and context are straightly associated. Taguchi (2018) studied pragmatics in different real-world contexts and accentuated the importance of micro and macro contexts in pragmatic learning, arguing that the ability to perform a specific function highly relies on the details of the context.

Taguchi (2019) argued that during the pragmatic action in a specific pragmatic context, L2 learners rely upon many linguistic/verbal and nonlinguistic/non-verbal resources that are acquired during the L2 acquisition process or are successfully transferred from that L1 culture. The appropriate use of such verbal and non-verbal resources demonstrates L2 learners' effective knowledge of socio-pragmatic norms and pragmalinguistic forms. Kasper and Roever (2005) stated that the use of such resources or forms is exquisitely interwoven into the fabric of the conversation and the target pragmatic action. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2013), L2 learners try to actuate many linguistic forms ranging from single words to prefabricated conversation gambits and suprasentential stretches based on their understanding of the features of the pragmatic context such as social distance, power relations, degree of imposition, code of acceptable polite behavior, other top-level determinants of the L2 culture, and intercultural milieu that governs the temporal and spatial context. Furthermore, the application of non-verbal resources, based on Flowerdew (2013), consists of pauses, continuers, facial expressions, and body movements is also an indispensable part of engaging in conversation in any human language. These non-verbal forms, based on the existing literature, play a crucial part in the successful conveyance of the meanings among the interlocutors engaged in authentic conversation in the L2 and they are highly socioculturally burdened (Félix-Brasdefer, 2013; Liddicoat, 2007). According to Cohen (2010), these non-verbal resources can vary from one language to another language and from one culture to another culture; nonetheless, they are as important as the linguistic resources and any deficiency in

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recognizing, interpreting, and responding based on these nonlinguistic sources can jeopardize the successful flow of the meanings and the conversation turns.

A very prominent theoretical stance in L2 pragmatics is how pragmatic action occurs in a specific context and how meanings are exchanged among the interactants. Although the majority of the scholars have claimed that pragmatic action is reconstructed, modified, and shaped based on the dynamism of the contextual factors and that pragmatic action cannot be accomplished by relying on the prefabricated patterns, linguistic forms of the required functions, and the previously accumulated socio-pragmatic knowledge in the brain (Cohen, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015; Taguchi, 2018; Taguchi & Roever, 2017), such claims have mostly remained speculative and theoretical and only a limited number studies have been done in this regard. Additionally, these few studies about the aforementioned issues have focused on the production or comprehension of individualist speech acts, implicatures, and conversational routines as separate entities, and they have sought to scrutinize how they are separately influenced by the linguistic, pragmalinguistic, and socio-pragmatic forces. However, a meticulous consideration of the pragmatic exchanges discloses this reality that any pragmatic action is consistent with multiple turns, conversational moves, openers, continuers, closers, and the production of speech acts in the form of adjacency pairs with different types of expansion moves (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015). The production of such adjacency pairs and their internal expansion moves is the actual scene where the linguistic and nonlinguistic resources appear based on the mutual reconstruction of the meanings between the two interlocutors.

Taguchi and Roever (2017) pointed out that knowing about the relationship between linguistic and nonlinguistic resources within the pragmatic context and how they interact with each other during the reconstruction of the pragmatic action can broaden our insights into the true nature of pragmatic encounters. Filling such a research gap is very invaluable for expanding both our theoretical knowledge and our practical pedagogical instructions. Due to the importance of this issue and the paucity of empirical and data-driven studies in this regard, the present study was launched, the purpose of which was to investigate the interplay of action, context, and linguistic resources in L2 pragmatic performance. Put it another way, the current study sought to examine how the production of request-

refusal adjacency pairs occurs based on the interactions among the contextual factors, linguistic and nonlinguistic resources, and pragmatic action.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

A sample of 74 Iranian upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners took part in this investigation. The initial sample was selected conveniently from 108 learners at Mehrnegar language institute in Karaj. All of the participants were female learners, and their ages ranged from 15 to 25 (*M*=17.5, *SD*=2.2). The learners' educational majors were either diploma or BA in humanities, science, math, and other academic disciplines. Their mother tongues were mostly Persian; of course, there were other L1s such as Turkish and Kurdish. They had been studying English in the target language institute for two to four years. The learners of this institute mostly had been studying American English conversation books such as American File and Touchstone series.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was given to 108 upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners to homogenize them about their general English language proficiency. The used OPT had 60 items in grammar (20 items), vocabulary (20 items), and cloze text (20 items). The time consideration for completing this part was 50 minutes. Those 84 learners whose scores were at or over 40 were selected for the purposes of the current study. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the proficiency level of those students who score at or above 40 equals B1 and C1 on the CEFR, and they can be considered as upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners. The test indicated a reliability value of .85 in the current study.

3.2.2 Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

A written discourse completion test (WDCT) was used to check learners' knowledge of requests and refusals based on pragmatic situations at the outset. Any item had a scenario in which the context has been given. Then, there was a conversation between two or three interlocutors, and one of the interlocutor's

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turns was a blank. The learners were required to read the conversation and provide an appropriate short answer either in the form of a request or a refusal for that blank. Different variations of requests and refusals were used, ranging from the informal to formal cases. The reliability and validity of the WDCT were checked before administration in a pilot study, and all its features such as item discrimination (ID), item facility (IF), choice distribution, item reliability, and other features, were checked and modified. Since including more items might lead to frustration or mental fatigue, as mentioned by Bardovi-Harlig (2013), this test only included 30 items given the length of the pragmatic scenarios and the conversations. The reliability of the test using Cronbach's Alpha formula turned out to be .83.

3.2.3 Role-Plays

To check how learners produced request-refusal adjacency pairs during the authentic conversations, they were asked to do role-plays. These role-plays were either audio-recorded or video-recorded for further analysis by the permission of the participants. Learners were asked to produce conversations that demanded the use of requests and refusals, and the teacher was an observer and a guide. Participants were free to continue their conversations as they wanted, and they were not interrupted until their conversation reached a saturation point. The researcher and his colleague audio-taped or videotaped the learners' conversations. These video- or audio-taped conversations were listened to meticulously and transcribed using MAXQDA software. According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), role-plays are a type of interactive tests for assessing pragmatic performance, and they occupy the second position after the nationalistic data-gathering instruments in terms of the information they provide and their applicability.

3.2.4 MAXQDA Software

The MAXQDA software was used to transcribe, codify, and analyze the content of the role-plays. MAXQDA is one of the best softwares for qualitative data analysis and helps researchers collect, organize, and analyze the data. It also supports methodological frameworks like literature reviews and qualitative content analyses. Furthermore, by MAXQDA we can import documents, PDF files, tables, and many types of media files. According to Cresswell and Cresswell

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(2018), MAXQDA (2018 version) is a qualitative tool that helps the researcher change the audio and video tracks into transcriptions and find regularities in the transcriptions.

3.3 Procedure

A sample of 74 of the intermediate to advanced level EFL learners took part in the current study. They were selected based on convenience sampling from an initial sample of 108 so-called intermediate and advanced EFL learners at a language institute in Karaj. Those 74 learners whose scores were beyond 40 and based on the test rubrics could be considered as upper-intermediate to advanced proficiency level students were accepted into the present study. Accordingly, 34 students were excluded. Afterward, the WDCT as a pragmatic pretest was administered to measure students' knowledge of requests and refusals. The results of this written discourse completion test revealed that 11 learners had pragmatic scores less than 10, i.e., they could answer one-third of the questions appropriately; therefore, they were also excluded from the study because, based on the current literature (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Taguchi, 2010), upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners should at least have a mediocre pragmatic competence. Accordingly, the study sample was curtailed to 63 learners.

In the next step, the selected learners participated in the intended conversations in their own classes, and we try to act out the role-plays as required by the pragmatic scenarios given by the researcher. The students' performances were either audio-recorded or video-recorded for further investigation. During the data collection procedure, learners were asked to engage in conversations that demanded making requests and rejecting those requests in pair group role-plays. At the same time, the researcher paid attention to what was happening during the conversations and tried to take notes, observe meticulously, and reflect upon what happens in the conversations. Unfortunately, three more students did not completely cooperate with the researcher and did not participate in the assigned role-plays. Therefore, only 60 of the students ended up completing the assigned role-plays.

About five conversations, including requests and refusals, were recorded for each pair of students, i.e., 300 conversations were gathered from the sample before the data analysis. It should be noted that the pragmatic scenarios were the

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same for all participants because the researchers wanted to study the patterns used by different learners for the same target speech acts. These scenarios were selected after consulting with two experts in pragmatics, one of whom was the supervisor of this thesis, and the other was an associate professor at a state university. The appropriacy and relevance of the scenarios were checked based on the existing literature on pragmatic assessment and the criteria proffered for the optimal characteristics of pragmatic scenarios by Biber (2006), Roever and Al-Gahtani (2015), Roever et al. (2014), and Timpe (2013). Criteria such as lexical and grammatical accuracy, politeness indicators, formality and informality aspects, social distance and symmetrical versus asymmetrical power relations, the degree of position, history of the relationships between the two parties involved in the conversation, and macro and micro aspects of the dynamic situation where all considered based on the suggestions offered by the aforementioned researchers. Additionally, the researcher paid meticulous attention to the L2 context of the learners and all the possible consequences of this reality. Analysis of the recorded role-plays using manual inspection and a more precise analysis by MAXQDA software persuaded the researchers to pull out 42 conversations due to their short length and shallow structures. Therefore, the final data analysis was done for the remaining 258 conversations. It should be mentioned that 62 of these conversations were video-recorded, and the rest 196 were only audio-recorded.

The credibility, transferability, trustworthiness as three important features for qualitative data collection mentioned by Mackey and Gass (2016) were hence dealt with. The credibility of the data was guaranteed through the long period spent for data collection and the close rapport between the researchers and the study participants who waved the researchers' students in the target language institute for several consecutive semesters. Moreover, the thick descriptions were provided for the content of the conversations that were audio or video recorded based on the role-plays conducted by the study participants based on Jefferson's (2004) system for conversation analysis, demonstrating an acceptable degree of transferability that permits the results of the study to be transferred to other similar EFL contexts. The researchers tried to encourage students to conduct role-plays as naturally as possible that further promoted transferability of the data and hence the findings. Confirmability or trustworthiness of the gathered qualitative data was established through providing detailed and rotund descriptions provided about the

various steps of the data collection procedure and all the invaluable pieces of information that could be significant based on the CA principles.

3.4 Research Design

The current study, like most studies in pragmatics and discourse analysis, enjoys a descriptive design. As discussed by Taguchi (2018), the description is the most significant type of study in pragmatics and L2 discourse analysis, and the researchers try to consider analyzing and integrating different patterns of use of language to decipher general regularities and come to general conclusions. According to Roever et al. (2014), descriptive studies that yield full and thick descriptions of pragmatic actions are the most reliable tools for pragmatics scholars. Highlighting the merits of descriptive designs, Taguchi (2018) also argued that thick descriptions that include both linguistic and nonlinguistic conversational features could provide very rich input for deterring pragmatic and discoursal issues.

3.5 Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics and qualitative interpretations were used for data analysis. Descriptive analysis, including frequency, mean, standard deviation (SD), and median were provided using the SPSS program (version 23). The audio and video-recorder conversations were listened to several times, and they were transcribed and codified using MAXQDA. Whatever had been said, including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, pauses, commas, intonation, exclamations, question marks, laughter, stress, and all other discoursal features, were written based on Jefferson's (2004) system of CA symbols. Then, to answer question one, turn construction units (TCUs) and expansion moves were determined and quantified to compare their frequency with the most suggested criteria in the existing CA and pragmatics literature. Descriptive and frequency-based qualitative interpretations were employed for analyzing the role of context and its discursive nature in producing the target adjacency pairs. For answering question three, the data were particularly reviewed by the use of MAXQDA to locate conventional linguistic and non-linguistic devices that had helped learners produce request-refusal adjacency pairs, and descriptive statistics and quantitative reports were employed. After counting the frequency of verbal and non-verbal TCUs, Mann-Whitney U Test was used to examine if there were any significant differences between the two extracted

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types of TCUs. Finally, to answer questions four and five, the five Friedman test was employed twice to check the significant differences among the various TCUs for each of the verbal and non-verbal categories.

4.Results

4.1.First Research Question

The first research question purported to examine whether producing request-refusal speech acts in the form of adjacency pairs was a pre-planned or a co-constructed pragmatic action; nevertheless, determining the degree of pre-planeness or joint co-construction of the target speech acts is not an easy task. According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), most of the phenomena in interlanguage pragmatics could not be studied based on objective measurements through established analytical procedures, and the only recourse for delving into the processes in L2 pragmatics is through new methodologies such as conversation analysis, extended discourse, and other descriptive orientations. Therefore, the only possible methodology for answering this first research question was through the suggestions given by conversation analysis. CA has also been utilized by some outstanding studies aimed at examining the moves and chains of conversation prior after an intended speech act has been produced by the interlocutors (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2014a, 2015b; Lee & Hellermann, 2014; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2011, 2015). The adopted CA-based approach provided two key mechanisms for answering this question: turn construction units (TCUs), and conversation structure, including pre-, insert, and post-expansion moves.

Turn-taking patterns, which can be quantitatively estimated through turn TCUs, demonstrate if the learners are negotiating the meanings between/among themselves in the conversations or they just try to use a preplanned or prefabricated structure to express their meanings and get rid of the cognitive and psychological pressure they feel during the L2 conversations. Liddicoat's (2007) criterion was used as a yardstick for deciding how many TCUs show the dynamic negotiation between the two parties for making the requests and appropriately refusing those requests. Irrespective of the conversation openers that are mainly in the form of greetings or small talks, two to four TCUs are indicative of the reality

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that learners cannot maintain the conversation satisfactorily to put their own intended meanings in the target request smoothly and politely or to reject the request. However, when learners do not use the previously memorized pragmalinguistic forms of the target speech acts, the only available alternative is to embark upon reconstructing more and longer TCUs. In line with this benchmark offered by Liddicoat's (2007), various forms of verbal versus non-verbal TCUs were determined and counted. The following table summarizes the frequency of the TCUs in the 258 conversations for the two studied speech acts:

Table 1

Turn Construction Units (TCUs) in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Turn Construction Units (TCUs)	Average per conversation	Total Frequency
Verbal (linguistic)	8.4	2200
sentential	2.5	670
clausal	2.4	617
phrasal	1.7	450
lexical	1.8	463
Non-verbal (non-linguistic)	5.5	1045
silence/pause	1.8	363
continuers	1.4	352
laughter	1.1	151
bodily and facial movements**	1.2	179
Total	13.9	3245

As shown in Table 1, the average number of TCUs in each conversation was 13.9, with average numbers of 8.4 and 5.5 for verbal and non-verbal TCUs. The obtained total average number is greater than the maximum number (n=4) set by the existing literature, including Liddicoat's (2007) suggestion. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the requests and refusals speech acts as adjacency parts were reconstructed through the cooperation and dynamic negotiations between the two interlocutors rather than recalled as preplanned or predetermined pragmatic chunks.

The second procedure for determining if L2 speech acts are reconstructed or recalled from the memory as preplanned and prefabricated structures was the conversation structure irrespective of the openers and closers. As mentioned by Al-Gahtani and Roever (2012), conversation analysis is the best approach for researching the processes and trends in discourse and pragmatic encounters

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because CA pays extreme attention to every minute specifications of the unfolding conversations through its micro-analytic approach and emic stance by considering how speech acts are materialized through a chain of pre-expansion, insert expansion, and post-expansion moves. Therefore, the transcriptions of the recorded conversations were qualitatively analyzed to locate the expansion moves and to quantify the frequency of such moves using MAXQDA. Two examples are provided here to show how the number of moves in the process of co-construction of request-refusal adjacency pairs was traced.

Example 1:

Pragmatic Scenario:

One of you should play the role of a 16-years old high schoolboy. This boy has done poorly on the previous examinations. This boy wants to go out. He asks for permission from his father. Another student should play the role of the father. A middle-aged 50 years old father who is a little bit strict and angry. The father is going to reject his son's request?

1.*A: Hi Dad*! ((*smile*)) **Pre-expansion 1**
2.*B: Hi David.*
3.*A: Dad?* (0.5) *Can we talk?* (.) ((*smile*))**Pre-expansion 2**
4.*B: Sure. What is it?* (0.5)
5.*A: My friend and I are going to meet tonight.* **Pre-expansion 3**
6.*B: (angry serious look)* (.)**Pre-expansion 4**
7.*A: You know, oh… it is the* <u>*birthday*</u> *of one of our football teammates.*
8.*B: Well…?*! (.)
9.*A: mmm… can I go out tonight?* **Request**
10.*B: It's a* <u>*school night*</u>*.* (0.5) *I'm afraid.* <u>*That's not possible*</u>*.* (.) **Refusal**
11.*A: Dad? All my friends are going to be together.* ↑↓ **Insert-expansion 1**
12.*B: Not possible*! (0.5) *Bad for your courses at school.* **Insert-expansion 2**
13.*He has invited all of us, the team members.* ↑↓ **Insert-expansion 3**
14.*B: I'm sorry son*!*, you were weak recently. I'm saying* <u>*no*</u>*.* (.) **Insert-expansion 4**
15.*A: Okay, okay. You do it all the time.* ((*son leaves the sitting room and closed the door with a bang*)) **Post-expansion 1**
16.*B: No more*! ((*a deep breath, a sigh, and look in the direction*)) **Post-expansion 2**

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As seen in this example, learners usually used 2 to 6 pre-expansion moves before making the main request, and then they embarked upon some insert expansion moves to mitigate the face-threatening load of the request although with a fewer number of moves from 1 to 3. And finally, interlocutors added some post-expansion moves to further alleviate their refusal by some positive politeness strategies (from 1 to 3 moves). It should be noted that there is no agreement between the CA researchers and pragmaticians that any expansion move should be considered as an adjacency pair or as a single conversation strategy. Al-Gahtani and Roever (2012) maintained that the function of each turn should be the criterion for deciding whether a turn should be considered a kind of expansion or not. This study adheres to this criterion. Moreover, only the most important CA symbols that were somehow related to the verbal and non-verbal turn construction units outlined above, were used for analyzing the transcribing conversations. Another example has been given for better elucidation.

Example 2:

Pragmatic Scenario:

Your close friend calls you after a long time and she needs some money. But you've just bought a new car and have no money. How do you refuse her request? You can choose your favorite male or female names if you like.

1.A: Hi Carol! **Pre-expansion 1**

2.B: Hi Kevin. I've not seen you since last month. ((*smile*))

3.A: Yes, it's a long time. **Pre-expansion 2**

4.B: I am really glad to see you.

5.A: So am I! ((*smile*))

6.B: You look upset. <u>What's wrong</u>? **Pre-expansion 3**

7.A: Actually (0.5)*, Carol I need some help.* **Pre-expansion 4**

8.B: Go on. What is it? ↑↓

9.A: emmm…mmy check is late……(.) *and I need to pay the rent today. I really need 500 dollars for rent. Can you help me, please?* ↑↓ **Request**

10.B: Oh, yeah, I like to….(.) *but:::…*((*sad face*)) **Insert-expansion 1**

11.A: But. What?

12.B: Well? I wish you said sooner. I bought a new car and I don't have much money. I'm really sorry. **Insert-expansions 2, 3+ Refusal**

13.A: Oh! *<u>Congratulations</u>. That's ok. No problem.* **Post-expansion 1**

14.B: Maybe (0.5) *….. it'd better to talk to your landlord.* **Post-expansion 2**

15.A: Yeah. I see.

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16.B: Sorry again. **Post-expansion 3**

17.A: No problem.

Such transcription using the significant symbols proposed by Jefferson's (2004) system of transcription symbols were provided for all the 254 conversations that included request-refusal adjacency pairs to qualitatively and then qualitatively spot the pre-expansion, insert-expansion, and post-expansion moves. The frequency of the aforementioned moves in the transcribed conversations have been presented in the following table:

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-, Insert-., and Post-Expansion Moves in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Move	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Total Frequency
pre-expansion	3.3	1.25	2	7	941
insert-expansion	1.5	1.07	1	4	463
post-expansion	1.7	1.16	1	4	602
Total	2.65	1.43	1	7	2006

As depicted in the table, no conversation without two pre-expansion moves or at least one insert- and post-expansion moves were located among the transcribed conversations, indicating the co-construction and joint cooperation of the two parties in producing request-refusal adjacency pairs. As mentioned by Taguchi (2014a), such use of conversational moves in the structure of the produced request-refusal adjacency pairs can be suggestive of the genuine nature of the conversations that have been developed based on the dynamic dimensions of the context through performing a pragmatic action. If learners used prefabricated patterns and did reconstruct the conversation through their cooperation, they could not engage in producing various expansions moves that shape the fabric of any conversation.

4.2. Second Research Question

The second research question attempted to explore if request-refusal adjacency pairs occur in isolation or a discursive context and how context shapes L2

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pragmatic performance. According to the existing literature, the best indicators about the discursive construction of speech-act adjacency pairs is the number of turns and turn-taking patterns in extended discourse (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012, 2014 a, 2014 b; Hellermann, 2011; Lee & Hellermann, 2014; Taguchi, 2014b). As elucidated in the two above-mentioned examples and also in Tables 1 and 2, participants used various turn-taking patterns using numerous TCUs and expansion moves to make a request and refuse it. Nearly all the analyzed conversations had from 5 to 10 TCUs, indicating that the production of request-refusal adjacency pairs occurred in a discursive context rather than in isolation.

As mentioned by Taguchi and Roever (2017), the best way to investigate the role of context in pragmatic exchanges is through CA-based analysis. It should be noted that in the current study, the micro-context of the conversations, which is also inevitably under the influence of the macro context, was the focus of analysis and scrutiny. The microanalysis strength of CA revealed that request-refusal adjacency pairs were produced by Iranian EFL learners based on the fabric of discursive context and that learners did not produce isolated requests and refusals in the form of single adjacency pairs. The context helped learners start their conversations, extend their meanings, take their turns appropriately, use mitigators and various positive and negative politeness strategies, and close their conversations successfully.

In the conversations analyzed by the current study, some of the significant characteristics of the context were provided in the scenarios, including power relations, social distance, and degree of imposition. These complex indicators were materialized in the choice of various verbal and non-verbal turn construction units. For example, the degree of politeness and directness in most conversations was based on the distance and power relations between the two interlocutors as mentioned in the pragmatic scenarios. It should be noted that, due to the role-playing nature of the gathered data and the close intimacy of the students, there were some minor deviations in the use of lexical and grammatical structures by some students. As asserted by Taguchi and Roever (2017), decisions about participants' adherence to various dimensions of context are highly subjective and prone to personal judgments; however, two Ph.D. holders of applied linguistics with expertise in pragmatics and discourse analysis provided the researcher with their judgments about the degree of adherence to the main dimensions of the context as depicted in the pragmatic scenarios and their real lexicogrammatical

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materializations. These two experts were asked to judge about the equality or inequality of the power relations, social distance, and a degree of position in producing request-refusal adjacency pairs in the recorded conversations. Moreover, they were asked to comment on the lexicogrammatical appropriacy of the conversations based on the aforementioned features of the pragmatic contexts. The percentages were provided based on the inter-coder reliability function in the MAXQDA software.

Table 3

Adherence for the Main Context Features in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Move	Degree of Adherence Among the Data	Lexicogrammatical Appropriacy
Power (P+, P-, P=)	89%	72%
Social Distance (D+, D-, D=)	78%	69%
Imposition (I+, I-, I=)	77%	70%

However, pragmatic context is very dynamic and fleeting during real-world conversations, making it impossible to be completely documented and controlled. Clarifying the role of context in carrying out pragmatic actions using various adjacency pairs in L2 pragmatics research is still in its infancy and far regressive research methodologies and analytic procedures are needed for further in-depth investigation of the issue at hand.

4.3.Third Research Question

The third research question attempted to reveal the main linguistic vs. non-linguistic forms used to convey request-refusal adjacency pairs and to check if there were any significant differences between the use of these two types of TCUs. The frequency of various linguistic and nonlinguistic forms in the analyzed conversations are presented in Table 4. Based on this table, participants used verbal/linguistic TCUs (*f*=2200) about twice more than the non-verbal/nonlinguistic TCUs (*f*=1045). Moreover, irrespective of the nature of the used forms (linguistic vs. nonlinguistic) or their specific type, learners utilized more forms in the turns that included refusals (*f*=1874) rather than requests (*f*=1371). Among the linguistic TCUs, learners employed more

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sentential (*f*=670) and clausal ones (*f*=617) in comparison with lexical (*f*=463) and phrasal (*f*=450) TCUs. With regard to the non-linguistic forms, the participatory EFL learners made use of continuers (*f*=363) and pauses (*f*=352) more than body language (*f*=151) and laughter/smile (*f*=179). Of course, it should be noted that only 62 of the conversations were videotaped, and therefore, the frequency of the laughter/smile and body language forms could only be determined for these conversations.

Table 4

The Main Verbal Vs. Non-verbal TCUs in the Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Pragmalinguistic Forms	Frequency in Requests	Frequency in Refusals	Total Frequency
Verbal (linguistic)	971	1229	2200
sentential	309	361	670
clausal	261	356	617
phrasal	203	247	450
lexical	198	265	463
Non-verbal (non-linguistic)	400	645	1045
silence/pause	122	241	363
continuers	147	205	352
Laughter/smile*	55	96	151
bodily and facial movements**	76	103	179
Total	1371	1874	3245

After quantification of these linguistic and non-linguistic forms, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare these two categories of TCU frequencies that were not normally distributed based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests (n=254, p< .05) for both verbal and non-verbal TCUs. The Mann-Whitney U test is applied to compare the differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but with non-normal distribution. The mean ranks and the medians were provided for the two types of turn construction units (TCUs):

Table 5

The Mean Ranks and Medians for Verbal and Non-verbal TCUs in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

		N	Median	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
TCUs	Verbal Forms	254	9	336.07	85361.00
	Non-verbal Forms	254	6	172.93	43925.00
	Total	508			

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As seen in Table 5, the linguistic TCUs had a median of 9, which is 1.5 times larger than the median for nonlinguistic TCUs (*M*=6). The mean rank for the verbal TCUs turned out to be 336.07, which is roughly 1.5 times greater than the mean rank for the non-linguistic forms.

Table 6

Mann-Whitney U Test for Verbal and Non-verbal TCUs in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

	TCUs
Mann-Whitney U	11540
Wilcoxon W	43925
Z	-12.650
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test indicated that learners used more linguistic TCUs than the non-linguistic ones (U = 11540, Z=-12.650, p = .000< .05).

4.4. Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question tried to determine if there were any significant differences among the use of four types of linguistic TCUs. As depicted in Table 1, participants used more sentential and clausal TCUs than the lexical and verbal ones. The Friedman test was employed to examine whether there were significant differences among the four types of linguistic TCUs. Median (IQR) for the sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical TCUs were 4.10 (2.1 to 5.1), 4.10 (2.1 to 5.03), 3.30 (2 to 4.3), and 3.3 (2 to 4.3), respectively.

Table 7

Percentiles for Four Linguistic TCUs in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Verbal TCUs	N	25th	50th (Median)	75th
sentential	254	2.10	4.10	5.10
clausal	254	2.10	4.10	5.03
phrasal	254	2.00	3.30	4.30
lexical	254	2.00	3.30	4.30

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Generally speaking, sentential TCUs had higher percentiles than other types of linguistic/verbal forms followed by clausal TCUs. Phrasal and lexical TCUs had the lowest percentile ranks. This same trend can be witnessed for the mean ranks as presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Mean Ranks for Four Verbal TCUs in Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Verbal TCUs	Mean Rank
sentential	3.28
clausal	3.17
phrasal	1.76
lexical	1.79

Sentential and clausal TCUs had mean ranks of 3.28 and 3.17 followed by lexical forms with a mean rank of 1.79. The lowest mean rank was obtained for the phrasal TCUs (M_{Rank}=1.76). The results of the Friedman test in Table 9 showed that there were significant differences among the four various types of verbal TCUs ($\chi^2(3) = 406.907$, $p = .000 < .05$).

Table 9
The Friedman test for Four Verbal TCUs in Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
254	406.907	3	.000

To scrutinize where the differences occurred, separate Wicoxon signed-rank tests as post hoc tests were run for on the six groupings of the verbal TCUs. To avoid Type I error due to the multiple comparisons, Bonferroni adjustment was obtained by dividing the significance level (p=.05) by six (the number of the applied Wilcoxon signed-rank tests). The new significance level hence was .008. Results of these separate Wilcoxon signed-rank tests are given in Table 10.

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Table 10
Separate Wilcoxon Signed-rank Tests for Four Verbal TCUs

	clausal - sentential	phrasal - sentential	lexical - sentential	phrasal - clausal	lexical - clausal	lexical - phrasal
Z	-2.236	-9.876	-9.221	-10.579	-9.851	-1.419
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.000	.000	.000	.000	.156

There were significant differences between the sentential and phrasal TCUs (Z = -9.876, p = .000< .008), sentential and lexical TCUs (Z = -9.221, p = .000< .008), clausal and phrasal TCUs (Z = -10.579, p = .000< .008), and clausal and lexical TCUs (Z = -9.851, p = .000< .008); however, there were not statistically significant differences between the sentential and clausal TCUs (Z = -2.236, p = .025> .008), and phrasal and lexical TCUs (Z = -1.419, p = .156> .008).

4.5.Fifth Research Question

Another Friedman test was employed to scrutinize whether there were significant differences among the use of four types of non-verbal/non-linguistic TCUs. Percentiles of all the four types of non-verbal TCUs can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11
Percentiles for Four Non-verbal TCUs in Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Verbal TCUs	N	25th	50th (Median)	75th
pauses	254	1.00	2.00	2.00
continuers	254	1.00	1.00	2.00
laughter	254	1.00	1.00	1.90
body language	254	1.00	1.00	2.00

Medians (IQR) for the pauses/silence, continuers, laughter, and body language and facial expressions were 2 (1 to 2), 1 (1 to 2), 1 (1 to 1.9), and 2 (1 to 2), respectively. Based on the mean ranks provided in Table 12, study participants used more pauses (M_{Rank}=3.09) followed by continuers (M_{Rank}=2.52) and body language/facial expressions (M_{Rank}=2.24). The lowest mean rank belongs to laughter (M_{Rank}=2.15).

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Table 12

Mean Ranks for Four Non-verbal TCUs in Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

Verbal TCUs	Mean Rank
Pause	3.09
Continuers	2.52
Laughter	2.15
body language	2.24

The application of the Friedman test demonstrated significant discrepancies among the mean ranks for various non-verbal TCUs ($\chi^2(3) = 162.016$, $p = .000 < .05$).

Table 13

The Friedman test for Four Non-verbal TCUs in the Production of Request-Refusal Adjacency Pairs

N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
254	162.016	3	.000

Six separate Wicoxon signed-rank tests were utilized to pinpoint the exact location of the differences among the four types of non-verbal TCUs relying on the Bonferroni adjustment at a new significance level (p=.008).

Table 14

Separate Wilcoxon Signed-rank Tests for Four Non-verbal TCUs

	continuers - pauses	laughter - pauses	body lang.- pauses	laughter - continuers	body lang.- continuers	body lang. - laughter
Z	-6.345	-9.026	-8.211	-5.969	-5.560	-2.418
P	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.016

As shown in Table 1, significant differences were found between the pauses and continuers ($Z = -6.345$, $p = .000 < .008$), pauses and laughter ($Z = -9.026$, $p = .000 < .008$), pauses and body language/facial expressions ($Z = -8.211$, $p = .000 < .008$), continuers and laughter ($Z = -5.969$, $p = .000 < .008$), and continuers and body language/facial expressions ($Z = -5.560$, $p = .000 < .008$); nevertheless, no statistically significant differences were observed between the laughter and body

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language/facial expressions (Z = -2.418, p = .016> .008).

5. Discussion

The current study tried to investigate the interplay of pragmatic context, pragmatic action, and the linguistic versus nonlinguistic elements in the production of request-refusal adjacency pairs. By answering six postulated questions, this study revealed some important findings. First, request and refusal speech acts were co-constructed through the joint cooperation and dynamic negotiations between the two interlocutors rather than pre-planned or pre-determined. In terms of pre-planned or co-constructed actions, the results of the current study are in line with Taguchi (2017), who pointed out that participants co-construct the actions consecutively in turns and, indeed, the participant's intentions are expressed through various turns and are jointly constructed within interactions. Moreover, this study is in agreement with the study conducted by Taguchi (2014a), who found that the use of conversational moves in the form of produced request-refusal adjacency pairs is the main essence of dynamic dimensions of effective, pragmatic performance. The results of this study are also consistent with Ishida's (2009) and Félix-Brasdefer's (2013) findings, which showed that actions are more co-constructed than preplanned. Finally, the findings of this study disclosed that L2 learners did not recall memorized conversations, nor did they employ prefabricated patterns; otherwise, they could not participate in introducing various expansions that formed the structure of the conversations.

Second, findings showed that request-refusal adjacency pairs occur in discursive chains rather than in isolation and that all the chosen conversations had from 5 to 10 turns and learners applied numerous pre-, insert-, and post-expansion moves to make a request or a refusal, implying that the production of request and refusal adjacency pairs appeared considerably in a discursive context rather than in isolation. In fact, second and foreign language learners decide how to map out the relationship between the pragmalinguistic forms of the intended speech acts, their sociopragmatic norms and politeness considerations, illocutionary forces or the pragmatic functions, and various dimensions of the context. Learners decided upon these form-function-context mappings during the interaction and based on the events in the context of the conversation. Before entering the real

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conversation, the learners are not ready to decide about their pragmatic, linguistic, and sociocultural choices rather, they should engage in conversations in real-world situations.

As Taguchi and Roever (2017) pointed out, speech act production and interpretation has a discursive process, and thinking about isolated production of speech acts is impossible, and this is one of the peculiar attributes of the discursive potential of the real-world conversations that provide a meaningful, coherence, and dynamic foundation for the exchange of speech acts. Considering the context, it shapes, reshapes, and determines how L2 speech acts (requests and refusals in this study) are produced, perceived, and interpreted by the interlocutors in a piece of oral/spoken discourse. Context has the most determinants for how to express the pragmatic meanings considering all linguistic, sociocultural, discoursal, and semantic aspects of pragmatic context, how to set the stage for the initiation of the pragmatic exchange, and later how to shape what type of pre-expansion, insert-expansion and post-expansion chains and turns can and should be produced and conveyed. According to Schauer (2009), context is a fabric upon which any production of speech acts is dependent and based on which the social interchanges among the speakers and the hearers can materialize.

As maintained by Taguchi (2018), the discursive production of pragmatic performance in the form of adjacency pairs has a robust theoretical underpinning based on which participants' intense are shaped during the flow of the conversation based on the most appropriate form-function-context mappings and no predetermined sketch can be imposed for such externally imposed framework cannot capture the dynamism of any national conversation. Al-Gahtani and Roever (2014a) also claimed that co-construction of adjacency pairs is inevitably embedded in authentic interactions, and if learners are going to pursue their knowledge of prefabricated patterns and conversational gambits, they will suffer from pragmatic failures. This result is in line with Félix-Brasdefer and Hasler-Barker's (2015) study that reported communication might not occur but in a discursive flux of step-by-step use of language through multiple turns. Furthermore, there some studies that indicated conversations and speech acts are discursively produced in various turn-taking forms in contexts (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Hellermann, 2011; Lee & Hellermann, 2014).

Regarding the importance of context, other studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Cohen & Olshtain 1993; Economidou-Kogestdisis, 2008; Taguchi, 2017)

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highlighted the importance of context in pragmatic performance and argued that context helps learners start the conversation, extend their meanings, and take their turns appropriately to open and close the conversation. As Rose (2000) and Eslami-Rasekh (2005) mentioned, pragmatic awareness is mainly achieved through using language appropriately based on context, and if L2 learners possess a high level of pragmatic awareness, they may reach a standard pragmatic ability for conveying their meanings and intentions.

Third, regarding verbal/linguistic TCUs, the participants used more sentential and clausal than the phrasal and lexical TCUs. Considering the non-verbal (non-linguistic) TCUs, participants used silent/pause and continuer TCUs than laughter/smile, and bodily and facial movements. Moreover, the participants significantly applied more verbal TCUs than non-verbal ones. This discrepancy in the use of verbal versus non-verbal turn construction units is in line with Liddicoat's (2007) categorization in this regard, demonstrating that the exchange of any adjacency pairs in real-world conversations is mainly done through pragmalinguistic forms. The more application of linguistic TCUs corroborates with Hassall's (2001) study, indicating that linguistic elements were used by learners quiet more than other non-linguistic devices. Similarly, regarding linguistic forms, various studies (e.g., Cook & Liddocoat, 2002; Cunningham, 2017; Economidou-Kogestdisis, 2008, 2010) supported that learners prefer to use verbal (conventional) rather than other modifications. Li (2012) also pointed out that linguistic factors can help learners engage in the exchange of intended meanings better than nonlinguistic elements. Besides, as asserted by Taguchi (2018), knowledge of linguistic forms and linguistic devices that are inherent in the higher L2 proficiency is a far vigorous determinant of communication success in comparison with gestures and body language specifically when learners are engaged in extended discourse with multiple turns.

This finding has also been reinforced by pragmaticians and scholars that less competent L2 learners used conventional linguistic structures and patterns more; mainly because of their lower proficiency in L2, which is more obvious for pragmatic production rather than comprehension (Taguchi, 2019). As mentioned by Barron (2012), when L2 learners do not possess a good proficiency in L2, they are less creative to the use of non-linguistic forms that encompass more unmarked forms.

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Fourth, there were significant differences among the four types of verbal/linguistic forms. Participants significantly used more sentential TCUs than phrasal and lexical TCUs, more clausal TCUs than phrasal and lexical ones; nonetheless, there were no statically significant differences between the use of sentential and clausal lexical and between the phrasal and lexical linguistic TCUs. The more use of sentential and clausal TCUs turned out to be in line with Liddicoat's (2007) prediction, and it seems logical that learners prefer more linguistic forms that act upon the whole sentence and their related clauses in comparison with lower-level forms that include phrasal and lexical TCUs. As suggested by Liddicoat (2007), the exchange of meanings and accordingly the development of adjacency pairs occurs at the sentence level and beyond it in the form of semantic coherence and pragmatic relatedness, suggestive of the fact that L2 learners need more sentential and suprasentential devices to convey these social functions.

Finally, there were significant differences in the use of four types of non-verbal TCUs. The learners significantly employed more pauses than continuers, laughter, and body language/facial expressions, used more continuers than laughter and body language/facial expressions; nonetheless, no statistically significant differences were detected between the laughter and body language/facial expressions. These discrepancies in the use of non-verbal devices can be accounted for by the reality that pause/silence is the most frequent nonlinguistic device that determined the boundaries between each party's turns and the most pernicious time to take the floor.

Furthermore, as mentioned by Flowerdew (2013), continuers are also frequently used during the exchange of meanings specifically when learners are engaged in constructing their own turns in a chain of adjacency pairs like requesting-refusing. Flowerdew (2013) stated that pauses and continuers are like the nails that attach different blocks of the conversation. Besides, laughter, facial expression, and body language as a secondary role in most cases; therefore, they are less significant in the successful completion of conversations and the optimal exchange of meanings. Unfortunately, very few descriptive and corpus-based studies have been previously conducted the result of which can be compared and contrasted with the findings of the current study. For instance, Lee and Hellermann's (2014) research indicated L2 learners were likely to use more pauses and remained silent to demonstrate refusal in comparison with native

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speakers who wanted to refuse positively using sentential and clausal devices.

6. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, some important conclusions can be made as follows. First, the production of request-refusal adjacency pairs is mostly a co-constructed rather than a pre-determined pragmatic action, and those L2 learners tried to reconstruct their own speech acts based on the ecological and dynamic nature of both the macro and the micro levels in the pragmatic context. Second, the production of grouped speech acts, request-refusal adjacency pairs in this study, occurs in a discursive context in multiple connections with many other discoursal and pragmatic characteristics. Third, in producing request-refusal adjacency pairs, participants used four types of linguistic or verbal forms, including sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical TCUs. Moreover, concerning non-linguistic forms, the main types were silence/pauses, continuers, laughter, and body language. Fourth, participants use more conventional linguistic forms in comparison with non-linguistic forms in their production request-refusal adjacency pairs. Finally, learners utilized more sentential and clausal TCUs than phrasal and lexical linguistic forms. Moreover, the participants preferred to use more pauses and continuers than laughter, facial expression, and body language TCUs.

The pedagogical implications of this study imply that L2 teachers can raise their learners' awareness of different contexts for making request-refusal adjacency pairs. They can also increase their students' knowledge about the use of the most frequent verbal and non-verbal TCUs with a particular focus on sentential and clausal verbal TCUs and pauses and continuers. Furthermore, teachers can provide highly contextualized input that involves adjacency pairs such as request-refusal pairs for their learners. To enhance L2 learners' competency for conducting successful conversations that entail the appropriate use of various adjacency pairs, teachers can use various types of role-plays, conversation exercises, free discussions, opinion gap exchanges, and so forth that give a boost to learners' understanding of the dynamic nature between the pragmatic context, social action, and various linguistic versus nonlinguistic TCUs that are constructed based on the flow of the conversation.

Like any other research in applied linguistic, the current investigation had some

shortcomings and limitations that can provide some suggestions for further research. This study only focused on request and refusal adjacency pairs with a limited number of participants; therefore, further research can be done to investigate the relationships among context, pragmatic action, and linguistic resources for a larger number of participants and speech acts. Conversation analysis can also be employed for studying the mechanisms that are involved in the comprehension and production of other types of pragmatic knowledge including various types of implicatures and conversational routines. Furthermore, the current investigated did not consider various individual differences (IDs); thus, the mediating role of individual differences in the relationship between context, pragmatic action, and linguistic knowledge can be examined through more robust qualitative or mix-method studies. Individual differences such as age, gender, intelligence, personality, motivation, willingness to communicate (WTC) are among such significant individual differences.

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[DOI: https://doi.org/10.29252/LRR.12.3.8]

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