



Dynamics of Refusal Strategies with Reference to Class and Gender: A Study of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

Huma Sattar^a, Liaqat Iqbal^{*a}

a. Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KPK, Pakistan

ARTICLE INFO

Received:

April 22, 2026

Revision Received:

June 25, 2026

Accepted:

June 27, 2026

Available Online:

June 30, 2026

Keywords:

gender differences,
refusal strategies,
speech acts,
Mansfield Park, Jane
Austen.

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the investigation of various strategies of refusal used by both male and female characters of the novel *Mansfield Park*. The study also explores how gender differences and social class influence the employment of refusal strategies by both the male and female characters in the novel. To achieve the goals, the study applied taxonomy of refusal strategies given by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). In refusals, individuals decline invitations, offers, suggestions and requests. Refusals are categorized into two categories: semantic formulas and adjuncts. Semantic formulas are categorized into two subtypes: direct refusal strategies and indirect refusal strategies. Research reveals that the main distinction in refusal strategies between males and females lies in their tendency to use direct or indirect refusals. The findings of the research show that both male and female characters employed both the direct refusals and indirect refusals, but their inclination is more towards the indirect refusals. The study also highlights that refusals of interlocutors of lower status (Fanny) assert their autonomy while that of higher status employed refusals to ensure their authority. The study has contributions to the study of speech acts.

1. Introduction

Language is an important component of interactions through which individuals express messages, thoughts, ideas, and emotions within specific socio-cultural contexts. People of different cultures and customs speak different dialects or languages, and the different cultures and customs have influences on the language of that country or region. As emphasized in Pragmatics, effective communication extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include the appropriate use of language in context. However, intercultural variation often leads to communicative breakdowns, especially when speakers from different cultural backgrounds interpret meaning differently. In this regard, the study of speech acts provides valuable insights into how meaning is negotiated in interaction. Rooted in Speech Act Theory, as developed by J. L. Austin and further advanced by John Searle, speech acts highlight how utterances perform actions within specific contexts, making them crucial to understanding everyday communication. Among many, the common speech act in our daily life is refusal. Refusals are inherently sensitive because they risk disrupting social harmony and interpersonal relationships. In communication, there is not always acceptance of an invitation, request or any others. Sometimes, the interlocutor responds with refusal to the speaker. Chen et al in Ren and Woodfield (2016) said that in speech act of refusal the speaker responds in negative to the interlocutor's action. Refusal is performed in different ways. Scholars like Felix-Brasdefer (2008) say that refusals can be performed directly, indirectly or by

* Correspondence to: Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KPK, Pakistan
E-mail address: liaqatiqbal@gmail.com (L. Iqbal).



using some external modification for refusal. Different strategies are used by the interlocutor for refusal speech act. Felix-Brasdefer (2008) further says that direct refusal strategy is one way of refusals used by interlocutor by using direct 'no'. However, Austin mentioned speech act of refusal is an illocutionary act. While refusing the speaker may not always use just "no", some other techniques are also utilized by the speaker for refusal. Taxonomy of refusal strategies provided by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) made a classification of refusal speech act into three categories; direct refusal (a straightforward refusal), indirect refusal (suggesting an alternative, making an excuse, hinting or giving reason) and adjuncts to refusal. He further classified these three categories into different strategies. Indirect refusal has the strategies of reason or explanation (providing a justification, making an excuse or giving a reason), mitigated refusal (softening the refusal by using polite language or expressions), indefinite reply (unclear statement or ambiguous reply), apology or regret (showing disappointment, apologizing or expressing regret), alternative (offering a compromise or suggesting an alternative), postponement (delaying, adjournment or putting off the request), repetition of part of previous discourse, request for additional information (requesting for further clarification or details about a specific issue), set condition for future or past acceptance, wish and promise. However, adjuncts to refusal are further classified into strategies of positive opinion.

Despite the extensive body of research on refusal strategies in everyday discourse and cross-cultural communication, comparatively limited attention has been paid to their representation in literary texts, particularly in canonical works of English literature. To address this gap, the present study investigates the refusal strategies employed by male and female characters in *Mansfield Park*. The study aims to investigate the influence of gender on pragmatic choices that contributes to the growing intersection between literary studies and pragmatics.

2. Literature Review

In recent decades, to better understand the use of a language scholars have directed their focus towards investigating the various areas of pragmatics. Refusals, distinctive type of speech acts, pose considerable challenge for non-native speakers as they require proficiency in both of the target language and the associated cultural context. Moreover, various social factors influence and shape refusal speech acts including gender, social status, and solidarity, so they exhibit variations. The traditional approach to linguistics primarily explores and emphasizes the meanings of individual words in isolation (Yuan, 2012). To understand pragmatics deeply, language users should adhere to some common rules connected to the underlying meaning or intent of messages (Pohl, 2004). So, we can say that in order to use a language effectively the user must be familiar with the meaning and use of individual words and the rules related to each word. Ji (2007) categorizes components of pragmatic knowledge into several general aspects, which includes general pragmatic awareness, metalanguage awareness, metapragmatic awareness, speech acts, cultural awareness, pragmatically focused tasks, and information about learning strategies. This categorization highlights the diverse requirements of pragmatic knowledge, such as having a basic and general understanding about pragmatics, being familiar with the concept of speech acts, having knowledge about the associated cultural context, and recognizing the importance of teaching pragmatics and so on. So familiarity with all the aspects of pragmatic knowledge is necessary to properly use a language in different settings and for different purposes.

The idea of communicative acts or speech acts is also related to pragmatics, which encompasses various kinds of situations such as refusing, apologizing, complimenting, and requesting and so forth. The theories of speech acts proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) provide primarily foundation to speech act theory. Austin's (1962) Speech act theory says that the purpose of language is not to be used only to convey messages and information, but it must also be used to do things. Emaliana and Perdhani (2013) stated that Austin and Searle in 1960 and 1970 introduced speech Act. Emaliana and Perdhani emphasized further that speech acts involve actions that are executed through different verbal communication.

According to Ausrin's classification, three types of speech acts are performed concurrently are; locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. This classification of speech act was proposed by Austin (1962). Locutionary act involves the speaker's utterance has some clear and meaningful sense and with a specific reference that is locutionary act, the sense or the meaning is traditional. Paltridge (2006) stated the in locutionary act the meaning of the word or utterance is literal. Illocutionary act, Austin stated that when there is certain force in the utterance of the speaker for the interlocutor is illocutionary act. The force refers to the orders, warnings, or information given by the speaker to the interlocutor. Here the force is called illocutionary force. Perlocutionary act; Austin (1962) said that the achievement of the speaker after the utterance is said is the perlocutionary act. When the speaker says something there is a purpose behind that, he wants the interlocutor to understand his intention and perform an action in response to the speaker's utterance. That effect on the interlocutor is the perlocutionary effect, and the action of the interlocutor is perlocutionary act

Based upon Austin's work, Searle (1969) expanded Austin's (1962) speech act theory and classified illocutionary force into five categories. The illocutionary force refers to the speaker's deliberate intention or objective in expressing themselves through an utterance. Like for example, through some specific utterances, the intention of a speaker may be to advise, give warning, or

promise for something. The illocutionary forces proposed by Searle (1969) involve representatives, expressive, commissives, directives, and declarative forces. Among all these categories, refusals fall in the category of commissives that is committed by the speaker to a future course of action.

The speech act of Refusal is characterized by negative replies or behavior to different situations like it is characterized by implicit or explicit negative responses, requests, offers, reactions, invitations, and propositions (Gass and Houck, 1999). Although various researchers and scholars in the field of discourse analysis and pragmatics consider refusal acts as a subtype of commissive speech acts which is comprising obligations or commitments (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; García, 2007), refusals do not always fit into this class, as they do not always include refusal; instead, they often encompass the dynamic process of negotiation, where the resolution or outcome remains contested, uncertain or ambiguous to the participants involved in the communication. In light of this, three different refusal approaches were proposed by Gass and Houck (1999): rejection, postponement, or suggesting an alternative. For example, if your cousin asks you to borrow your car for the next day, you can directly refuse to give your car by saying, "I am sorry, I will not be able to fulfill your request", here the speaker directly rejected or refused the request. Another possible response from the respondent might also be, "Can I get back to you after reviewing my daughter's schedule," here the respondent postponed the response. Another approach could be, "could we do this next week?" here the respondent is offering an alternative. All these responses are refusals because all the responses signal the disagreement of the respondent. However, these replies are not necessarily the same as the result of the conversation. If the receiver directly declines a request, the sender may offer an alternative solution (such as, "What if I only take it for an hour?"). When postponement occurs, the sender might wait patiently for a final confirmation or decision from the receiver or may try to get an immediate and concrete response. In situations where an alternative is offered or proposed, the sender in such situations may adjust their initial request or may find it impossible to do so. As demonstrated, when the initiator of an act rejects the initial response, multiple stages of dialogue may occur until they reach the resolution. Moreover, Gass and Houck (1999) noted that the outcome may not always be mutually beneficial and satisfactory. The articulation of three different refusal approaches is a commendable contribution; it provides a structured framework to understand how individuals respond to initiated acts. However, the practical illustration of these approaches through a borrowing-a-car scenario lacks depth and applicability. It could be beneficial by incorporating more vivid and relatable examples that vividly capture the intricate dynamics of each approach.

According Gass and Houck (1999), there are some possible reactions and outcomes that may arise in response to a proposal or request. These are:

	Initial Responses (Respondent = R)	Responses to R's Nonaccept (I)	Final Outcome
• Request	• Sincere Accept	• (Not available)	• Acceptance
• Invitation	• Nonaccept	• Acceptance of R's Nonaccept	• Refusal
• Offer	- Refuse	• Nonacceptance of R's Nonaccept Negotiation	• Postponement
• Suggestion	- Postpone (Sincere)	• (Abandon Process)	• Compromise (on an Alternative Action/Nonaction)
	- Propose Alternative		

Previous studies on refusal strategies in various languages and contexts provide a foundation for the present research while also revealing a gap that this study seeks to address. For instance, Morkus (2014) examined refusals in Egyptian Arabic and American English, finding that direct refusals are less frequent in Arabic compared to English, and in this way highlights cross-cultural variation in pragmatic choices. Similarly, Siebold Busch (2015) explored facework in Spanish and German refusals, which shows both differences and similarities in politeness systems across cultures. In another context, Ren Woodfield (2016) analyzed refusals by Chinese females in reality TV shows, that reveals a preference for involvement politeness and a limited range of strategies, while Miolo Emzir Supriadi (2018) highlighted the role of social hierarchy in Sundanese refusals, where politeness markers such as apologies are more frequently used with higher-status interlocutors. Furthermore, Rahayu (2019) identified cross-cultural variation in refusal strategies among Indonesian EFL learners despite similarities in overall strategy use. While all these studies share a common focus on the speech act of refusal within the domain of Pragmatics, they mostly rely on naturally occurring or elicited spoken data from participants. In contrast, the present study is different as its primary data source is a text, and hence it extends the investigation of refusal strategies into the domain of literary discourse.

3. Methodology

Qualitative method is used in this research as a research design. Qualitative method is used by the researcher to analyze the refusal strategies employed by different characters in *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austin. A qualitative approach is considered most appropriate as the research focuses on interpreting language use, contextual meaning, and pragmatic functions rather than quantifying linguistic features (Chang, 2014). Since the data source is a literary text, the researchers extract relevant instances of refusal embedded in character dialogues. Here, purposive sampling is used, where only those utterances that clearly

represent refusal strategies, such as declining invitations, offers, requests, or suggestions, are selected. These utterances constitute the primary dataset for analysis. The collected data was analyzed by applying the theoretical frameworks of this study. Beebe et al's., (1990) semantic criterion was utilized to categorize and analyze the refusal strategies utilized by the characters in the novel. This framework is utilized as the foundation for encoding and classifying the data, so that the examination of the character's refusal strategies and their underlying semantic structures are explored.

4. Analysis and Discussions

The data for this research were extracted from the textual content of the novel "*Mansfield Park*" by Jane Austin. Beebe et al's., (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies was employed to analyze the data of this study, as this taxonomy provided a systematic framework for categorizing refusal strategies. They categorize refusals into two primary groups: semantic formulas and adjuncts. Semantic formulas refer to words, phrases or sentences that explicitly serve as a refusal. Semantic formulas are further categorized into two subtypes: direct and indirect refusal strategies. In the context of refusal strategies, Adjuncts are supplementary expressions in language that complement a refusal but lack the ability to stand independently as a refusal.

4.1. Direct Refusal Strategies

The straightforward, simple, clear and unambiguous refusals to requests, invitations or suggestions are direct refusal strategies. Direct refusals are employed directly and clearly without any justification and explanation. For example, "No, I won't be." Following are the refusals that are directly employed by the characters in the novel *Mansfield Park*.

1. **Edmund Bertram's Refusal:** Edmund's siblings arranged a stage drama, and he was offered a character to act but he refused to act in the play and said that he cannot act in the play before so many people. "I cannot act; I cannot ... people." He directly refused to act in the play because of his clerical studies and moral objections. His refusal was in clear words. He refused this in multiple statements i.e. 'No, as to acting myself,' said Edmund, 'that I absolutely protest against.' (Chapter 13, page 97). In another statement he said, 'I cannot agree with you; I am convinced that my father would totally disapprove it.' (Chapter 13, page 96). In these words, he refused to take part in the play by stating the disagreement of his father to the play, as his father was out of station and was not available at the moment.
2. **Fanny Price's refusal:** Mr. Crawford offered Fanny a character to act in the play, but she declined Henry Crawford's invitation to act in the play by saying that she cannot act in the play 'No, indeed I cannot act.' (Chapter 15, page 110) She refused to act in the play by using clear and direct words without any hesitation.
3. **Mrs. Norris's refusal:** The family arranged a tour to Sotherton, all decided to go so Edmund suggested that Fanny would also visit but Mrs. Norris refused to take Fanny to be a part of their journey to Sotherton. Mrs. Norris said that she had no idea of Fanny going with them because the tour was for family members and Mrs. Norris did not consider Fanny as a part of that family because of her lower social status. She further said that Fanny is not going with us because she has to stay with her aunt. She refused in the following words; 'Fanny! Repeated Mrs. Norris; 'my dear Edmund, there is no idea of her going with us. She stays with her aunt. I told Mrs Rushworth so. She is not expected.' (Chapter 8, page 58). Mrs. Norris repeated Fanny's name emphatically, emphasizing her disapproval and surprise. This refusal highlights Mrs. Norris' control over Fanny's life, her prioritization of social status and appearances, not wanting to include Fanny in the journey, a poor relation, in their social outing to maintain family's reputation and her tendency to dictate and manage the lives of those around her.
4. **Edmund Bertram's refusal;** Edmund Bertram declined to continue the search for Mary Crawford and his sister, Maria, in the park. He refused to continue searching for his sister and Mary Crawford because he thought that he already had walked enough. He expressed his refusal through the following words; 'I do not believe I shall go any further,' said he sullenly; 'I see nothing of them. By the time I get to the knoll they may be gone somewhere else. I have had walking enough,' (Chapter 10, page 76). Edmund's refusal shows his reluctance, sullenness, and frustration to continue the search. He directly refused to go further and search for Mary Crawford and his sister, Maria.
5. **Henry Crawford's refusal to give role of Agatha to Julia;** Julia was given the role of Agatha in the play but Henry Crawford refused to allow Julia Bertram to act on the role of Agatha, 'I must entreat Miss Julia Bertram,' said he, 'not to engage in the part of Agatha, or it will be the ruin of all my solemnity.' (Chapter 14, Page 101). He directly refused to give the role of Agatha to Julia because he feared that it will affect and compromise the seriousness of the performance in the play. He employed his refusal in clear and direct words.
6. **Edmund's objection on the play;** when the play was decided to act on Edmund objected that the play is not suitable for private representation but Maria Bertram refused to agree with Edmund's objections on the play, saying that they see the things differently, she further added that there is nothing objectionable in the play that might hurt Edmund's feelings. She further added that all the other young ladies present there also consider the play to be fit for private representation. She refused in the following words; 'We see things differently,' cried Maria. 'I am perfectly acquainted with the play, I assure you; and with a very few omissions, and so forth, which will be made, of course, I can see

nothing objectionable in it; and I am not the only young woman you find who thinks it very fit for private representation.' (Chap 15, Page 106). Disagreement of Maria with Edmund's objections reveals her confidence in her own judgment and appeal to popular opinion among young women to validate her stance.

7. **Julia's refusal to act on the role of Amelia;** In the play, Julia Bertram was given the role of Amelia but she refused to take on the role of Amelia, saying; "I have no issue with it," she replied; "While I would not object to playing Amelia if the circumstances are right and if it is well-executed, I'd be connected about causing inconvenience. However, since they're disregarding your input, it's unlikely to make difference". (Chapter 15, Page 110). This refusal highlights Julia's reluctance to take on a role that may not be successful or well-received. She refused to take on the role of Amelia because of its unpopular role.
8. **Sir Thomas' refusal to take dinner;** Mrs. Grant invited Sir Thomas Bertram to dinner, she was trying to persuade him to stay and have dinner with them, but he declined her invitation to dinner. Fanny told Mrs. Grant that Sir Thomas had declined the invitation resolutely. Following are the words of refusal; 'but Sir Thomas would take nothing, nothing till tea came --- he would rather wait for tea.' (Chapter 19, Page 136). This was a clear and straight forward refusal. This refusal highlights Sir Thomas' commitment to his own values and principles and strong sense of self-discipline and willpower.
9. **Henry Crawford's refusal;** Henry Crawford refused to agree with Mary Crawford's negative assessment of Admiral Crawford. When Mary Crawford negatively assessed Admiral then in response, Henry Crawford told her that they are different at this point and further said that Admiral might have some faults, but he is a good man and is like a father to him. His statement of refusal is as; 'Well, well, we do not think quite alike here. The Admiral has his faults, but he is a very good man., and has been more than a father to me. Few fathers would have let me have my own way half so much. You must not prejudice Fanny against him. I must have them love one another.' (Chapter 30, Page 226). He refused Mary's statement because he was trying to create a more positive and perfect image of his family.
10. **Fanny's refusal of Henry's proposal;** Henry Crawford proposed Fanny and Fanny refused Henry's proposal of marriage. When Henry Crawford proposed to Fanny then in response Fanny cried while hiding her face and said that his proposal is nonsense and not to distress her. She further added that she cannot hear any more of that and that she is very obliged to him because of his kindness to her brother, William. Her words are; 'No, no, no!' she cried, hiding her face. 'This is all nonsense. Do not distress me. I can hear no more of this. Your kindness to William makes me more obliged to you than words can express; but I do not want, I cannot bear, I must not listen to such --- No, no, don't think of me. But you are *not* thinking of me. I know it is all nothing.' (Chapter 31, Page 231). She rejects Henry's charming but insincere offer, recognizing his true and flirty nature that he does not truly like her and is only gratifying his own vanity. Her refusal also highlights her strong sense of self-worth, moral integrity, and commitment to her own values. She directly refused his proposal without any apology and hesitation.

4.2. Baddeley's Refusal

When Baddeley, the butler came called Miss Price to meet Sir Thomas at this Mrs. Norris called out and stopped Fanny. Mrs. Norris told Fanny where is she going as she is not required there and Baddeley is calling her not Fanny. She further said that nobody needs her but she is just putting herself so forward, she said this while looking at Baddeley and asked him that 'you mean me, so I am coming because Sir Thomas does not need Fanny it is me who is needed.' Her words are; Stay, stay, Fanny! What are you about? Where are you going? Don't be in such a hurry. Depend upon it, it is not you who are wanted; depend upon it, it is me' (looking at the butler); but you are so very eager to put yourself forward. What should Sir Thomas want you for? But Baddeley was stout. 'No, ma'am, it is Miss Price; I am certain of its being Miss Price.'

In this scene, Mrs. Norris is trying to intervene and assume importance, but Baddeley, the butler, is insisting that Sir Thomas wants to see Fanny Price, not her. Mrs. Norris is refusing to accept this and is trying to assert her own importance, but Baddeley is firmly refusing her attempts, asserting that it is indeed Fanny who is wanted.

4.3. Indirect refusal strategies

The refusals that are not direct and offered explanations, either by changing the subject, delaying the subject like putting off the response or decision, counter asking a question to avoid giving direct refusals to the requests, providing explanations in response without directly saying "no" or by accepting a suggestion without actively agreeing. For indirect refusal, the following different strategies are employed by the interlocutors.

4.4. Statement of Alternative

1. **Mary Crawford's refusal;** When Henry Crawford told his sister of his choice and intentions for Fanny Price, Mary Crawford refused his brother's choice of Fanny and said that thinking about Fanny for marriage is nonsense and that

he should consider her cousins instead of her. Her words are, 'Fanny Price! Nonsense! No, no. you ought to be satisfied with her two cousins.' (Chapter 24, Page 173). She refused Fanny for her lower status and mediocre appearance while her cousins have higher status and charming appearance.

2. **Julia's refusal to travel in a post chaise;** Julia Bartram refused to travel in a post chaise. She disagreed with Edmund's plan of transportation. Edmund's idea of riding in a post-chaise was rejected by Julia because she was of the opinion that it is quite difficult to travel in enclosed vehicle with three people in such unpleasant weather. Instead, her preference was for barouche, an open and spacious carriage. Her refusal is; What! Cried Julia: 'go boxed up three in a post-chaise in this weather, when we may have seats in a barouche! No my dear Edmund, that will not quite do.' Julia's refusal is emphatic and dramatic, using an exclamation "what" to express her disbelief and distaste. She emphasizes her discomfort and inconvenience in travelling in a post chaise, especially in bad weather. She contrasts this with the comfort and luxury of travelling in a barouche, highlighting her preference for the finer things in life. Julia addresses Edmund with a familiar and affectionate term "my dear Edmund", suggesting a close relationship and a desire to persuade him to see things from her perspective.

4.5. Reasoning

Julia was suggested to act on the role of Amelia, but Tom Bertram refused to allow Julia Bertram to take on the role of Amelia in the play, citing her physical appearance and personality as reasons why she would not be suited for the part. He further added that she will not perform well because she is not tall and a tall person is needed for the character of Amelia. He refused in the following words; "No, no Julia must not be Amelia. It is not at all the part for her. She would not like it. She would not do well. She is too tall and robust. Amelia should be a small, light, girlish, skipping figure. It is fit for Miss Crawford, and Miss Crawford only. She looks the part, and I am persuaded will do it admirably.' (Chapter 14, Page 103)" He was refusing Julia to be Amelia because of her physical stature.

Maria Bertram refused to retract her consent to act in the play. She said she does not agree as nobody will be happy and Tom will be angry, so if we want to do anything good we need to not act. Her words are; "No, you must excuse me; I cannot retract my consent; it is too far settled, everybody would be so disappointed, Tom would be quite angry; and if we are so very nice, we shall never act anything. (Chapter 14, Page 107)" This refusal showcases Maria's concern for avoiding disappointment and conflict with others, especially Tom, and is willing to compromise her values to avoid social discomfort.

When Fanny was talking with her aunt and they were discussing the proposal of Mr. Crawford. She asked her aunt that even she would not be in favor of accepting proposal of Mr. Crawford as they both have a bond and Fanny accompanies her aunt every time so she asked her that her aunt would miss her company so she is not ready to accept the proposal of Mr. Crawford but her aunt replied that she will not think of missing her because she has a very good proposal in a way. And she recommended her to accept the proposal of Mr. Crawford, a man of such a great estate. Fanny said; 'my dear aunt, you cannot wish me to marry; for you would miss me, should not you? Yes, I am sure you would miss me too much for that.' (Chapter 33, page 252)'

In this scene Fanny is refusing her aunt's suggestion that she should marry Mr. Crawford, but she is doing so indirectly. The false agreement; "I am sure you would miss me too much for that" is a way of softening the refusal and avoiding direct confrontation. In the second part of discussion her aunt is refusing Fanny's opinion that she will support her in refusing the proposal of Mr. Crawford. She directly refused Fanny's opinion.

Edmund was trying to convince Fanny to accept Mr. Crawford's proposal. Edmund told her that accepting Mr. Crawford's proposal is advantageous. At this Fanny replied that she is totally different from Mr. Crawford, and that they have totally unlike inclinations. She further added that she does not think that they would be happy together and would love each other after having such difference. And that their relationship would be a miserable one. After hearing her apprehensions about her relationship with Mr. Crawford, Edmund replied that she is making mistake in understanding the personality of Mr. Crawford, as the difference is not that much and their tastes are much alike and common. He further added that they will be happy together. The discussion between them is; 'We are totally unlike,' said Fanny, avoiding a direct answer, 'we are so very, very different in all our inclinations and ways, that I consider it as quite impossible we should ever be tolerably happy together, even if I *could* like him. There never were two people more dissimilar. We have not one taste in common. We should be miserable.' (Chapter 35, page 265)' Here, initially Fanny is refusing Edmund's suggestion of reconsidering Henry's proposal and making it clear that she is not ready to change her mind, then Edmund is refusing Fanny's statement that she and Henry Crawford are very different.

The analysis of refusal strategies in Mansfield Park reveals significant patterns in the pragmatic behavior of characters, particularly in relation to gender, social status, and moral positioning. The findings show that both direct and indirect refusal strategies are employed extensively; however, their distribution and function vary across male and female characters. Interestingly, direct refusal is not limited to male characters. Fanny Price, employs direct refusal in crucial moments to reject

Henry Crawford's marriage proposal. This suggests that directness in refusal is not solely determined by gender but is also shaped by the moral stakes of the situation. Fanny's emphatic "No" signals a moment of agency and moral resistance. Thus, direct refusal in the novel often correlates with moments of ethical clarity and personal conviction rather than merely with gender or power. On the other side, indirect refusal strategies are more frequently associated with socially sensitive situations where maintaining politeness and interpersonal harmony is essential. Female characters such as Mary Crawford, Julia Bertram, and Maria Bertram frequently employ strategies such as offering alternatives, and provide reasons, or soften disagreement through elaboration. These strategies reflect an awareness of social expectations and the need to negotiate relationships tactfully.

5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that, when engaging in English refusal speech acts, both male and female characters utilize refusal strategies that can be broadly classified into three categories: direct refusal, indirect refusal, and the strategic use of adjuncts. Different refusal strategies are employed by different genders. A substantial number of male and female characters exhibit a marked inclination towards indirect refusal strategies, incorporating various forms of dissuasion, reasoning, excuse-making, explanation, suggestion, promise, apology and adjunctive language, while the direct refusal strategy is also employed by both male and female characters to some extent.

References

- Austen, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. Scarcella, E. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *On the development of communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-73). New York: Newbury House.
- Chen, H. J. (1996). *Cross-cultural comparison of English and Chinese metapragmatics in refusal*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2004). Interlanguage refusals: Linguistic politeness and length of residence in the target community. *Language Learning*, 54(4), 587-653. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.mnsu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/85612353?accountid=12259>
- García, C. (2007). 'Ché, mirá, vos sabés que no no voy a poder': How Argentineans refuse an invitation. *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese*, 90(3), 551-564. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.mnsu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1427743722?accountid=12259>
- Gass, S., & Houck, N. (1999). *Interlanguage refusals: A cross cultural study of Japanese-English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Horn, R. & Ward, G. (Eds.). (2004). *The handbook of pragmatics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Jones, D. (1980). Gossip: notes on women's oral culture. In D. Cameron (Ed.) 1990 *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*. (pp. 242-250). London: Routledge.
- Karuniawati, N. F., Of, F., & Training, T. (2018). *Gender Differences in Performing Refusal Strategies At The Sixth Semester Students of English Education Department At University Of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa*. on, Indiana University, United States.
- Searle, J. *Indirect Speech Acts* [C]. *Syntax and Semantics*, New York: Academic Press, 1975: 59-82.
- Searle. (1976). A classification of illocutionary Acts. In: *Language in society* 5. *Lang. Soc*, 5, 1-24.
- Searle, J. R. (1979). Studies in the theory of speech acts. In *Cambridge University Press*.