Emergence of Marked Semantic Formulas in Refusal Strategy Hierarchies

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate semantic formulas of refusal strategies emerging in such various language circumstances as Korean, Chinese, Persian, German, and English and then to account for similarities and differences of refusal strategies in these languages from the perspective of typology. The focus of most previous research has been on employments of refusal strategies of

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two different culturally-oriented individuals (i.e., usually one language in comparison with English, thereby failing to provide a comprehensive analysis to ensure what strategies languages favor or disfavor in refusing someone. In light of this observation, this paper reanalyzes refusal strategy data in cases of invitation from five language speakers and then adopts the notion of "Markedness Theory" to propose semantic formula hierarchies for each language (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011). Furthermore, this paper suggests that "Explanation" is the most unmarked semantic formula of refusal strategies from the perspective of typology; some marked ones emerge depending on a given language and social status.

1. Introduction

In cross-cultural communication, interlocutors need to have knowledge of pragmatic rules as well as a good command of the language because, as Thomas (1983, 1984) points out, violating sociolinguistic rules can have a more serious impact than making linguistic errors. Speakers of different languages have difficulties in certain speech acts such as complaints, disapproval, disagreement, requests, or refusal. The speech act of refusal, as a major cross-cultural "sticking point" for nonnative speakers (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz 1990), has attracted many scholars to this topic since research in this field can provide some insights into the culture of a target language.

In the last few decades, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on the speech act of refusal from different perspectives: cross-cultural comparative studies between English and

other languages such as Japanese (Kinjo 1987; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz 1990), Chinese (Liao & Breshnahan 1996, Honglin 2007, Li 2008, Guo 2012), Korean (Lyuh 1992, Kwon 2004), Arabic (Nelson et al. 2002, Al-Issa 2003), German (Beckers 1999, Johnson 2013), Persian (Allami & Naeimi 2011; Ghazanfari, Bonyadi & Malekzadeh 2013), Spanish (Lauper 1997, Félix-Brasdefer 2003) or on the pragmatic transfer from a native language to English (Al-Issa 2003; Eslami & Ghahreman 2006; Chang 2009, 2011; Hong 2011; Sahragard & Javanmardi 2011; Hashemian 2012; Chung & Min 2013; Keshavarz, Hosseini & Talebinezhad 2014; Jiang 2015; Lee 2015; Wijayanti 2016; Jafari & Sadeghoghl 2018). The results of extensive studies on refusal show both similarities and differences. The data in most of these studies are obtained through the elicitation method called the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which is a written questionnaire that presents scenarios to the subjects requiring them to give responses. DCT questions generally include different eliciting acts (i.e., requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions) with different variables, such as social status (low, equal, high), social distance (distant, acquaintance, to intimate), and gender (male or female). DCT has been adopted by many researchers for its advantages; the variables can be easily controlled, and the subjects can respond to the same scenarios (Chen 1996).

In order to investigate which strategies are preferred in refusal in a language in question, the data from various studies are reviewed in this paper. Regardless of different types of studies, comparing the production of refusals by either native speakers or non-native speakers, this paper suggests that each language employs its own hierarchy of refusal strategies incorporated with semantic formulas such as "Explanation", "Regret", "Statement of Positive Opinion", "Direct", and so on. Furthermore, it is proposed in this paper that

"Explanation" is most frequently employed across all cultures, and thereby can be considered as universal or unmarked. Depending on refusal environments, a certain semantic formula, which is called floating, emerges or promotes in the hierarchy with a fixed semantic formula ranking, Explanation >> Regret >> Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, Pause Filler.

This paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, preliminary remarks relevant to the present study are given. Section 3 presents the data on refusal strategies of five languages, and Section 4 analyzes the data within the realm of "Markedness Theory", which ensure that unmarked features are more frequently employed (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011). Then, in Section 5, conclusions are offered.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. Semantic Formula in Refusal Strategies

This paper discusses refusal strategies to invitation in relation to social status in five languages, namely Korean, Chinese, Persian, German and English. In addition, to account for refusal strategies in a uniform way, semantic formulas constituting a strategy are also facilitated.

In the speech act of refusal, the refusal to an invitation is particularly noteworthy compared to other refusal elicitation situations since the speech act of invitation is perceived differently in different cultures (Garcia 1992, 1996, 1999; Félix-Brasdefer 2003; Hong 2011,). In the study of politeness strategies of Peruvian speakers, Garcia (1992) in Félix-Brasdefe (2003), states that the

refusal to an invitation consists of two stages: invitation-response and insistence-response. Insistence by the inviter is expected in Peruvian culture; otherwise, the invitation is not considered sincere (Garcia 1992: 237 in Félix-Brasdefer 2003). In the study of Venezuelan Spanish (Garcia 1999), a similar series of speech acts are involved in an invitation, extending an invitation, insistence-response, and wrap-up. Japanese speakers also share the same sentiment as Latin Americans regarding an invitation. The typical American way of invitation, "Come if you want to", added to an invitation makes a Japanese invitee feel uncomfortable or suspect the sincerity of the invitation because persistent invitation of the inviter is the Japanese norm in invitation (Wolfson 1989). This tendency is common among Eastern cultures. According to Jia (2007), however, in American culture, insistence from the person inviting is viewed differently because "to invite others to a party is considered to 'borrow' other's time" (Jia 2007: 42). An inviter's insistence may be considered as an imposition on the invitees' autonomy. In the American context, the Eastern way of insisting an invitation upon an invitee may even be considered offensive. Persians tend to use ostensible invitations in daily life as a way of ritual politeness (ta'arof) (Dastpak & Mollaei 2011), while 'ostensible invitations are rare in most situations' among English speakers according to Issacs & Clark (1990: 494). Ta'arof is a very important concept in Persian culture, whether positively viewed as a "Compliment", "Token of Goodwill", "Courtesy", or display of "Good Manners", or negatively perceived as an empty formality (Esmali 2005:457). Since invitations can be either sincere or ostensible, refusing invitations is difficult. Ta'arof requires multiple refusals before accepting an invitation. At the same time, the insistence from the inviter is expected, while both gratitude and a return of the act on the part of the refuser are usually offered.

This complexity of ta'arof makes refusal especially difficult for those who do not understand Persian culture (Izadi & Zilaie 2014).

It has also been found that the variable of social status is another important factor in how respondents make refusals. Speaking to people of a different status affects the way people make refusals (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz 1990, Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford & Beverly 1991, Nelson et al. 1998, Hosseini & Talebinezhad 2014). Kwon (2002) in the study of comparing the refusal strategies between Americans and Koreans, finds Koreans tend to apologize much more to higher status (65%) than to lower status (28%) inviters, whereas Americans apologize noticeably less than Koreans do to both higher status (43%) and lower status inviters (27%). Also, Americans express more gratitude and positive opinion when refusing an invitation from a higher status person. Americans offer alternatives to the invitation only to status equals, while Koreans predominantly offer alternatives to people of a lower status. Research by Liao & Bresnahan (1996), Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990), and Allami & Naeimi (2011) reveal that Chinese and Japanese used different refusal strategies to people of different status, compared to Americans who do not demonstrate significant differences in their refusal strategies towards people of different status.

In this paper, the five most significant indirect semantic formulas are analyzed. The employment of the rest of the semantic formulas is insignificant, and therefore, will not be discussed. The number of studies with relevant data is quite limited. Most of the studies either combine all the semantic formulas (Keshavarz, Eslami & Ghahreman 2006; Hosseini & Talebinezhad 2014; Izadi & Zilaie 2014; Lin 2014) or do not categorize the data based on the situation of an invitation with the appropriate variable of social status (Chen, Ye & Zhang 1995; Liao & Bresnahan 1996; Beckers 1999; Chang 2009;

Sahragard & Javanmardi 2011; Ghazanfari, Bonyadi & Malekzadeh 2013; Farashaiyanl & Muthusamy 2017). Given these reasons, the studies for this research are carefully selected, considering their relevance and representativeness. In discussing refusal strategies in terms of semantic formulas, the taxonomy of refusals will be amended accordingly for the discussion of this paper. The relevant semantic formulas are seen as in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Refusals Based on Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990)[1]

Strategy	Semantic Formula	
Direct	Direct Refusal	
Indirect	Regret (Apology in Kwon 2004, Allami & Naeimi 2011)	
	Explanation (Excuse, Reason in others)	
	Alternative	
	Set Conditions for Future or Past Acceptance	
	Future Acceptance	
	Avoidance	Postponement
		Hedge (Hesitation in Kwon 2004, Allami & Naeimi 2011)
Adjunct	Statement of Positive Opinion (Positive Feeling in Lyuh 1992, Consideration of Feelings in Guo 2012)	
	Pause Fillers	
	Gratitude	
	Address Forms	

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[1] The terminology of the semantic formula is slightly different from study to study and a few terms are changed to make the data consistent for the discussion. For example, "Apology" is changed to "Regret", "Positive Feeling" and "Consideration of Feelings" to "Statement of Positive Opinion", and "Hesitation" to "Hedge".

2.2. Research Questions

In order to pursue the aims of the present research, the following research questions are manifested based on the two assumptions: (1) different languages share certain universal refusal properties even though they facilitate their own peculiar refusal strategies; and (2) the distinctive refusal semantic formulas emerge and are ranked high in refusal strategy hierachies:

1. Are there similarities and differences among the five different languages (i.e., Chinese, Korean, English, German, Persian)?
2. Which semantic formula (i.e., direct or indirect tactics) is most frequently preferred, depending on languages?
   This question aims to find out the most common refusal tactics that are used in languages. Especially, this research is interested in the frequency of refusal tactics employed in different languages.
3. What is a refusal strategy hierarchy employed in invitation circumstances in the five languages? What are the crucial semantic formulas that differ a language from the others?

3. Realizations of Refusal Strategies in Different Languages

3.1. Korean

Korean data are drawn from Lyuh (1992) and Kwon (2004), the most frequently cited studies on Korean refusal. In addition, they have a large number of subjects compared to other studies.

Consider Lyuh's (1992) comparative study of refusals between Koreans and Americans in the native language settings, in which the total number of 175 subjects participated in the first phase of the study, 67 Americans and 108 Koreans. The strategies favored by Korean speakers to the interlocutor of higher status are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Invitation Refusals (Lyuh 1992: 137, 143, 146)[2]

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	39.8%	49.1%	40.5%
Direct	11.6%	14.3%	19.2%
Statement of Positive Opinion	8.4%	11.6%	10.7%
Regret	13.3%	8.5%	7.0%
Avoidance	11.6%	4.0%	2.8%
Future Acceptance	5.6%	0.4%	8.4%
Pause Fillers	2.0%	2.2%	0.5%
Gratitude	1.2%	0.9%	0.9%
Alternative	0%	4.0%	8.8%

As seen above, Koreans' five most preferred strategies are as following: strategies to higher status are "Explanation"(39.8%), "Regret"(13.3%), "Avoidance"(11.6%), "Direct"(11.6%), and "Statement of Positive Opinion"(8.4%), while to the interlocutors of equal status are "Explanation"(49.1%), "Direct"(14.3%), "Statement

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[2] The numbers in the Tables of the relative frequency of semantic formula in Lyuh's study are "derived by taking the total number of one type of semantic formula in one situation divided by the total number of semantic formulas of that situation" (1992: 61), whereas those in Kwon's study are "percentage of each group that used a given formula" (2004: 349). That is why the numbers in Kwon's study are much larger than those in Lyuh's.

of Positive Opinion"(11.6%), "Regret"(8.5%), "Alternative"(4%), and "Avoidance"(4%). Strategies employed to lower status are ranked as follows: "Explanation"(40.5%), "Direct"(19.2%), "Statement of Positive Opinion"(10.7%), "Alternative"(8.8%), and "Avoidance"(2.8%).

The subjects of Kwon's (2004) study are composed of 40 native Koreans in Korea and 37 Americans in the U.S. In Table 3, Korean responses are listed.

Table 3. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Invitation Refusals (Kwon 2004: 349)

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	95%	100%	68%
Regret	65%	48%	28%
Avoidance	20%	43%	54%
Direct	38%	15%	40%
Pause Fillers	18%	28%	18%
Address Forms	20%	0%	0%
Statement of Positive Opinion	5%	3%	3%
Gratitude	5%	5%	13%
Alternative	3%	3.0%	18%

The results show that Koreans' most frequently used response to interlocutors of high status in the situation of invitation is semantic formula "Explanation"(95%); it is followed by "Regret"(65%), "Direct"(38%), "Address Forms"(20%), and "Elaboration on the Reason"(20%). In response to equal status, the most frequently employed semantic formula is also "Explanation"(100%); it is also followed by "Regret"(48%). On the other hand, to those of lower status than they are, "Avoidance"(54%) and "Direct"(40%) are used more frequently than "Regret"(28%), and "Pause Fillers"(18%).

3.2. Chinese

In spite of a number of studies on Chinese refusals, research with the data categorized according to the present analysis is not available. Therefore, both Guo's (2012) study on equal and lower status and Hong's (2011) study on higher status are considered in this paper. In Guo's study, 120 subjects took part in the study: 60 native speakers of Chinese, 30 Americans college students in the United States, and 30 American teachers working in China. The subjects of Hong's study were 30 native speakers of Mandarin studying at a university in the U.S. when they completed the DCT. The results of Guo's and Hong's studies are seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Semantic Formulas of Invitation Refusals (Guo 2012: 250, Hong 2011: 127)[3]

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	100	93.33	103.0
Alternatives	20	63.33	46.67
Regret	77	23.33	18.33
Gratitude	87	0	0
Address Forms	87	0	0
Statement of Positive Opinion	0	10.0	33.33
Direct	10	14.0	16.0
Avoidance	0	1.67	16.67

As seen above, Chinese use "Explanation"(100%), "Gratitude"

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[3] Semantic formulas "Gratitude" and "Address Forms" are not included in the Guo's data, neither are "Statement of Positive Opinion" and "Avoidance" in Hong's data. It is probably due to different elicitation situations or simply not being considered as meaningful in the analysis. Anyhow, it can be assumed that employment of these semantic formulas is insignificant in the DCT data, and thus will be treated as 0% employment.

(87%), and "Address Forms"(87%) most to the interlocutor of higher status, followed by "Regret"(77%), "Alternative"(20%), and "Avoidance"(33%). The most frequently employed semantic formula to the interlocutors of equal status is "Explanation"(93.3%). "Alternative"(63%), "Regret"(23%), "Direct"(14%), and "Positive Opinion"(10%) are ranked lower than "Explanation". They use "Explanation"(103%), "Alternative"(47%), "Statement of Positive Opinion"(33%), "Regret"(18%), and "Avoidance"(16.67%) to refuse lower status persons' invitations. Different from other languages, Chinese facilitate "Direct" less frequently to lower status.

3.3. Persian

Allami & Naeimi's (2011) study is chosen for the analysis of Persian data. This study is selected for its high citation rate and the relevant categorization of the data. The subjects of this study are 30 Persian speaking learners of English and 31 native Persian speakers. The Persians' preference of the refusal strategies is indicated in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Allami & Naeimi 2011: 394)

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	93%	93%	67%
Regret	67%	48%	48%
Direct	37%	27%	44%
Statement of Positive Opinion	31%	13%	20%
Avoidance (Postponement)	13%	6%	27%
Gratitude	10%	17%	10%
Set Condition	3%	17%	3%
Pause Fillers	3%	3%	3%
Alternative	0%	0%	0%

The typical characteristic of Persian refusal is predominant utilization of the semantic formula of "Regret". Apart from "Explanation"(93%, 93%, 67%), they consistently use "Regret" to the interlocutors of all status. In responding to higher status interlocutors, they use "Regret"(67%),   "Direct Refusal"(37%), "Statement of Positive Opinion"(31%), and "Avoidance"(13%), while to equal status they employed "Regret"(48%), "Direct"(27%), "Gratitude"(17%), and "Set Condition"(17%). Most preferred refusal semantic formula to the lower status are "Regret"(48%), "Direct"(44%), "Avoidance"(27%), and "Statement of Positive Opinion"(20%).

3.4. German

In Beckers's (1999) cross-cultural study of refusal strategies, 400 subjects, 200 native Germans and 200 native-born Americans, participated in the study. The results indicate that Germans use "Gratitude" and "Avoidance" more often than Americans do; they were very sensitive to status in refusing, concluding that German responses reflect the characteristics of collectivistic culture. Despite large number of subjects, this study is excluded from the analysis because the data are examined according to the directness of refusal strategies and the frequency of the employment of semantic formulas. Furthermore, there are no specified data on the situation of invitation with status variable. Therefore, the data for the analysis of this research is taken from Johnson's (2013) study, even though it had a rather small number of subjects: only 15 native Germans and 15 Native Americans participated in the study. Johnson's data are recent and contain an appropriate categorization for the analysis. The results of the study do not support that of Beckers (1999) in that these two groups have more similarities than differences. The results of the Johnson's study in response to invitations are as follows in Table 6:

Table 6. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Johnson 2013: 119)

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	27%	29%	38%
Regret	16%	15%	19%
Alternative	14%	18%	3%
Gratitude	14%	9%	8%
Statement of Positive Opinion	11%	3%	8%
Future/Past Acceptance	2%	3%	11%

When refusing an invitation to a person of higher status, Germans utilize "Explanation"(27%) the most, followed by "Regret"(16%), "Alternative"(14%), "Gratitude"(14%). By contrast, to an equal status person "Explanation"(29%) is used most often, followed by "Alternative"(18%), "Regret"(15%), "Gratitude"(9%), "Statement of Positive Opinion"(3%), and "Future/Past Acceptance"(3%) in this sequence. Similar usage of semantic formulas is found toward a person of lower status: "Explanation"(38%), "Regret"(19%), "Future/Past Acceptance"(11%), "Gratitude"(8%), and "Statement of Positive Opinion"(8%).

3.5. English

Data for the analysis of American English refusals are adopted from the studies of Lyuh (1992) and Kwon (2004). The data in Lyuh's study are collected from large number of subjects, which would better represent the American group than data from studies with a smaller number of subjects. The American data of Kwon's study are also utilized for the discussion of Iranian refusals in Allami & Naeimi's study, which is analyzed in this study. The use of the

same data has the advantage of minimizing data distortion which can emerge from the difference in eliciting stimuli. Above all, the scarcity of appropriately categorized data for the study leads to select these two studies. American data are shown in Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 7. Relative Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Lyuh 1992: 137, 143, 146)

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	43.6%	56.6%	52.1%
Regret	12.4%	4.9%	3.8%
Direct	15.9%	17.1%	15%
Gratitude	9.3%	8.0%	10.7%
Statement of Positive Opinion	6.6%	11.5%	5%
Future Acceptance	2.7%	1%	3.4%
Avoidance (Hedge &Postponement)	2.7%	0.9%	1.5%
Pause Fillers	1.2%	0.4%	1.1%
Alternative	0%	0.9%	0.8%

Table 8. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Kwon 2004: 349)

Strategies	Higher	Equal	Lower
Explanation	97%	97%	81%
Regret	43%	35%	27%
Direct	24%	27%	32%
Gratitude	22%	30%	14%
Statement of Positive Opinion	22%	11%	14%
Pause Fillers	8%	24%	3%
Avoidance (Postponement)	0%	8%	3%
Alternative	0%	11%	14%

As seen in the above tables, Kwon's data demonstrate similar patterns to Lyuh's study that Americans tend to use "Explanation", "Regret", "Direct", "Gratitude", and "Statement of Positive Opinion" when they refuse invitations. However, the preference of the employment of each semantic formula is slightly different depending on the social status. In Kwon's study, Americans use "Explanation"(97%) the most, followed by "Regret"(43%), "Direct"(24%), "Statement of Positive Opinion"(22%), and "Gratitude"(22%) to those of higher status. As for the interlocutors of the equal status, the hierarchy is realized as "Explanation"(97%), "Regret"(35%), "Gratitude"(30%), "Direct"(27%), "Pause Fillers"(24%), whereas to the those of lower status, it is as "Explanation"(81%), "Direct"(32%), "Regret"(27%), "Gratitude"(14%) "Alternative"(14%), and "Statement of Positive Opinion"(14%).

In Section 3, the five language groups' refusal tendencies are reanalyzed with means of semantic formula classifications of refusals based on Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990).
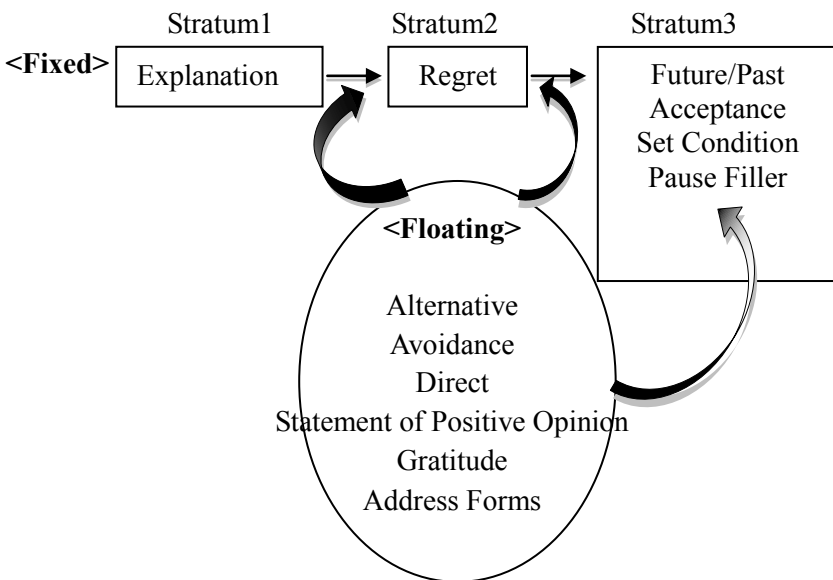
4. Analysis

Considering similarities and differences in refusal strategies of the five language groups (i.e., the speakers of Korean, Chinese, Persians, German and English), this paper proposes that there is a universal tendency of refusal strategy hierarchies along with culture or language specific-manifestations. For instance, it is well documented that indirect refusal strategies are more dominantly utilized than direct refusal strategies cross-culturally. Therefore, all the speakers belonging to the five different languages comprehensively show the patterns in that "Explanation", one of the indirect strategies, is the

most frequently used, implying that it is ranked highest (i.e., unmarked) in the refusal strategy hierarchies (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011). In light of this assumption, it is also suggested that each language develops its own refusal strategy hierarchy geared by a universally fixed semantic formula ranking and language-specific manifestations. The mechanical system of the refusal strategy hierarchy is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Semantic Formulas of Refusal Strategy Hierarchy

In the current analysis, there are two types of semantic formulas: fixed and floating. "Explanation, Regret, Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, Pause Filler" are fixed semantic formulas, while the others are floating. Fixed semantic formulas refer to those which are

fixed in the hierarchy across language as well as social status. Within the realms of "Markedness Theory", the semantic formula "Explanation" is always most frequently used (i.e., unmarked), dominating "Regret" (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011). In turn, "Regret" is always employed more often than "Future/Past Acceptance", "Set Condition", and "Pause Filler". Given this observation, it is proposed in this paper that there is a universally fixed refusal strategy hierarchy: Explanation >> Regret >> Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, and Pause Filler.

By contrast, floating semantic formulas rankings are not fixed in a hierarchy; they are situated, depending on the language and social status. For example, as for the hierarchy drawn from Table 2, it is proposed that when Korean speakers refuse an invitation to higher status interlocutors, floating semantic formulas "Direct" and "Avoidance" emerge and are ranked below "Regret" and above "Statement of Positive Opinion". Of course, "Explanation" is ranked highest in the hierarchy, resulting in the ranking of Explanation >> Regret >> Direct, Avoidance >> Statement of Positive Opinion.[4]

On the other hand, as to the equals and the lowers, the floating semantic formula "Direct" promotes and is ranked above "Regret" and "Statement of Positive Opinion". The refusal strategy hierarchy is as follows: Explanation >> Direct >> Regret Statement of Positive Opinion >> Regret. Based on this observation, it can be suggested that "Direct" is a social class-sensitive semantic formula in Korea; therefore, it emerges and promotes when someone refuse an invitation to the equal or lower persons.

Different from Korean cases, Chinese speakers, as seen in Table 4, employ semantic formula "Alternative" more often than "Regret" or "Direct" to the interlocutors of the equal or lower status. As for the

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[4] Afterwards, insignificant semantic formulas in hierarchies are not included.

higher, Chinese speakers show a similar pattern in such a way that semantic formula "Regret" is ranked second highest, dominating the other semantic formulas except for the highest ranked semantic formula "Explanation".

As shown in Table 5, Persian speakers are unlikely to be sensitive to the social status, since the three social classes show similar refusal strategy hierarchies: Explanation >> Regret >> Direct. Of course, even though there is a slight modification for the lower ranked semantic formulas, still Persian speakers obey universally fixed refusal strategy hierarchy: Explanation >> Regret >> Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, and Pause Filler.

In contrast, German speakers use "Alternative" and "Gratitude" frequently, showing similar patterns to the Chinese cases. "Regret" is ranked high when speakers refuse invitations to the higher or lower persons, while "Alternative" emerges and is ranked second highest to equals.

Last, English speakers employ "Direct" more often than "Regret" even though, according to Kwon (2004), "Direct" is ranked below "Regret" to lower status. Additionally, "Gratitude" emerges, and is used more frequently.

Based on Markedness Theory (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011), this paper posits that "Explanation" is an unmarked semantic formula across languages, which is used most frequently and in a rudimentary fashion. Then, each language develops its own refusal strategy hierarchy incorporating with a universally fixed hierarchy (i.e., Explanation >> Regret >> Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, and Pause Filler), and the emergence of marked semantic formulas in each language is indicated in Table 9.

Table 9. Semantic Formulas of Refusal Strategies

Speakers	Semantic Formula	
	Most Frequent	Emerging
Korean	Explanation	Direct, Statement of Positive Opinion
Chinese	Explanation	Alternative, Gratitude, Address Form
Persian	Explanation	Direct, Statement of Positive Opinion
German	Explanation	Alternative, Gratitude
English	Explanation	Direct, Gratitude

4. Conclusion

In this paper, refusal strategy data of five language groups were examined within the framework of Markedness Theory (Archangeli 1992, Bybee 2011, Hume 2011). By comprehensively reanalyzing data, this paper argued that there are two types of semantic formulas in term of their roles in refusal strategy hierarchies: fixed and floating. The fixed semantic formulas are represented with a universal ranked order: Explanation >> Regret >> Future/Past Acceptance, Set Condition, Pause Filler. The ranking orders of these semantic formulas did not change. However, due to floating semantic formulas, each language happens to have different ranking hierarchies since the rankings of floating semantic formulas are not fixed, and they emerge and are located, sensitive to language and social status.

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