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Refusals in Early Modern English drama texts

New insights, new classification

Isabella Reichl
University of Kent

Due to their largely non-routinized forms and their not being retrievable in computerised corpus searches, refusals have hitherto not been examined from a diachronic perspective. The present paper presents an inventory of refusal strategies in Early Modern English drama texts. Five comedies from two periods (1560–1599 and 1720–1760), respectively, taken from the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (Kytö and Culpeper 2006) were examined manually and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis lead to an alternative classification of refusals which differs considerably from the frequently used taxonomy by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The proposed classification takes into account three levels of analysis: the propositional content of the utterance, the functional super-strategy, and the speaker's stance. The development of refusal within the period under investigation partially matches findings regarding related speech acts that show a development towards increased indirectness (Culpeper and Demmen 2011, Pakkala-Weckström 2008, Del Lungo Camiciotti 2008).

Keywords: speech acts, refusals, historical linguistics, Early Modern English, stance, drama

1. Introduction

The speech act (henceforth SA) of refusing has been researched extensively in the last 25 years. The focus has been on cross-cultural investigations and language learning/teaching, however, and, no study has previously examined refusals in earlier stages of the English language. This is most likely due the fact that refusals are frequently realized by means of non-routinized forms which are not automatically retrievable with corpus software. The present paper represents a first step into the historical study of refusals by examining realizations of this SA in Early Modern English (henceforth EModE) drama texts. Based on the realization strategies found in the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (CED) (Kytö and Culpeper 2006),

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and taking into account recent work on interpersonal pragmatics, I propose a new classification, which differs considerably from the hitherto most frequently used taxonomy by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990).

A refusal is "a responding act in which the speaker denies to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" (Chen, Y. and Zhang 1995, 121). Performing this SA can be like walking a tightrope: it is potentially problematic, because it signals a conflict of interest and can trigger a verbal conflict (Vuchinich 1990, 118–119). In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terminology, it constitutes a face-threatening act. A large variety of SAs can elicit refusals. They are responses to a preceding SA of the directive or commissive type (Searle 1976) and can themselves be classified as commissives (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 192). According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985, 195), however, orders and commands cannot be refused.

1.1 Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) – Taxonomy and impact

The most influential study on refusals was conducted by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) (henceforth BTU), who looked at pragmatic transfer of Japanese speakers of English. Using discourse completion tasks (henceforth DCT), they elicit refusals of four types of SAs: 'requests', 'invitations', 'offer', and 'suggestions'. Based on their findings, they established a taxonomy of refusal strategies or 'semantic formulae' (Figure 1), which has since been frequently used. Their taxonomy distinguishes between a direct and an indirect super-category, each consisting of multiple categories and sub-categories. In addition, they include adjuncts to refusals which do not function as refusals themselves. Their choice to differentiate between direct and indirect realizations can be explained with the theoretical environment at the time: Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was the most dominant account of politeness, postulating that more indirect SA realizations are more polite than direct ones. More recent approaches to im/politeness and interpersonal pragmatics (see e.g. Haugh, Kádár, and Mills 2013; Locher and Graham 2010 for trends and current debates) have moved away from this equation and look at a variety of linguistic means for interpersonal effects (see e.g. Part II in Locher and Graham 2010).

I. Direct
  A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
  B. Nonperformative statement
    1. "No"
    2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")
II. Indirect
  A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry…"; "I feel terrible…")
  B. Wish (e.g. "I wish I could help you…")
  C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache…")

D. Statement of alternative
   1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather…" "I'd prefer…")
   2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")
E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have…")
F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"; "I promise I'll…" or "Next time I'll…" – using "will" of promise or "promise")
G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")
I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
   1. threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
   2. guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: " I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")
   3. criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")
   4. request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
   5. let interlocutor off the hook
   6. self defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can do." "I no do nutting wrong.")
J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
   1. unspecific or indefinite reply
   2. lack of enthusiasm
K. Avoidance
   1. nonverbal
      a. silence
      b. hesitation
      c. do nothing
      d. physic departure
   2. verbal
      a. topic switch
      b. joke
      c. repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
      d. postponement (e.g., I'll think about it.")
      e. hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm nor sure.")

Adjuncts to refusals
1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement ("that's a good idea"; "I'd love to…")
2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
3. Pause fillers (e.g.. "uhh"; "well"; "oh"; "uhm")
4. Gratitude/appreciation

Figure 1. Classification of refusals taken from BTU (72–73)

Not only BTU's classification is still frequently used in analyses of refusals (e.g. Allami and Naeimi 2011; Siebold and Busch 2015; Bella 2014; Lee 2013; Babai Shishavan and Sharifian 2016; Guo 2012; Nikmehr and Jahedi 2014; Sattar, Lah, and Suleiman 2011; Félix-Brasdefer 2003, 2008); their study design itself has been

replicated (somewhat modified) in numerous papers, for instance in Chen, Ye, and Zhang (1995), Yamagashira (2001), Chang (2011), Kwon (2004), Nelson et al. (2002), Hashemian (2012), and Abed (2011). All of these studies, however, employ either DCTs or role plays.

Despite (or maybe because of) this taxonomy's popularity, only few modifications and additions have been suggested over the years (e.g. Félix-Brasdefer 2003; Salazar Campillo 2009) – none of them, however, being substantial.

Since BTU's taxonomy was designed with the objective of applying it to various languages, it was assumed that it is equally suitable for the analysis of different language *varieties*. Their categories were consequently taken as the starting point for this study.

1.2 Historical development of commissives and directives

Although BTU's data differs from the one examined here, their findings are a good starting point. Their results are, however, not straight-forward to read. The authors focus on pragmatic transfer, comparing Japanese speakers of English with American native speakers of English, and do not provide a full account of strategy frequencies. They do state that refusals of requests and invitations by American native speakers typically include the strategies 'regret' and 'excuse', as well as adjuncts – not taken into account in this paper – expressing a positive opinion or gratitude. In the case of offers, 'no' and letting the interlocutor off the hook are common. With the exception of 'no', these strategies are classified as indirect ones.

While no diachronic studies of refusals have hitherto been conducted, linguists have looked at the development of related SAs: other commissives and directives. What both types have in common is what Searle calls their direction of fit, which expresses "how [the propositional] content is supposed to relate to the world" (1976, 4). Commissives and directives have a world-to-word direction of fit: they are attempts to get the world to match their content by demanding, asking for, promising, etc. some future action.

Researchers have mostly grouped strategies in terms of their level of (in)directness. Findings suggests that so called 'conventionally indirect' realizations (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 201) are the most frequent type for directives in Present Day English (henceforth PDE) (e.g. Aijmer 1996; Blum-Kulka and House 1989) and promises (which are commissives) in 19th century business letters (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2008). At earlier periods of the English language, 'direct strategies' (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 201) appear to have been the most common ones, for instance in the case of binding promises in Middle English (Pakkala-Weckström 2008) and directives in EModE (Culpeper and Archer 2008). Culpeper and Archer (2008, 72) found that, in the EModE drama texts and trial proceedings they analysed, ¾ of all directives were realized directly by imperatives. What is interesting is that

BTU's categories 'excuse' and 'hook' are actually non-conventionally rather than conventionally indirect (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 201) strategies. This raises the question why the results for refusals differ from the overall preference of conventional realizations for commissives and directives in PDE and where EModE refusals fit in.

1.3 Defining refusals

A wide range of SAs can elicit refusals. The first methodological step in the present study was to determine which utterances were to be included. Since it has a diachronic perspective, the tertium comparationis had to be independent of language varieties. Relying on SA labels, or more specifically SA verbs, might have been problematic. All the refusal-eliciting SAs used in previous studies have one thing in common: their world-to-word direction of fit. This provided the basis for delineating what counts as a refusal. The below definition (Reichl 2015) is as broad as necessary in order for it to be applicable to (a) corpus data and (b) data sets from different periods:

1. Conditions applying to the refusal-eliciting SA
   a. the refusal-eliciting SA performed by a *speaker 1* (*S1*) has a world-to-word direction of fit;
   b. the propositional content condition of the eliciting SA is a future action *X* to be performed by *S1* and/or the *addressee/speaker 2* (*S2*) and/or third parties (*S3*);
   c. the performance of action *X* (by *S1* and/or *S2* and/or *S3*) as put forth by *S1* depends on *S2*'s cooperation;
   d. action *X* can be a physical, verbal, or mental action;
   e. the intended perlocutionary effect of the eliciting SA hence consists of two parts: first, the cooperation of *S2* and, second, the performance of *X*. The two could, in some cases, happen simultaneously, e.g. if *S2* (truthfully) responds to a question, he/she cooperates and, at the same time, performs *X*;
2. Conditions applying to the refusal
   a. a refusal, performed by *S2* is a second-pair part in response to a SA performed by *S1*;
   b. the response performed by *S2* is a denegation of the SA performed by *S1*;

This definition has a number of advantages: first, the distinction between 'orders' and 'requests' (Searle and Vanderveken 1985) is obsolete; if there is a refusal, it is irrelevant whether S1's eliciting SA intends to give the option to refuse or not; second, questions, i.e. requests for information (Searle 1969, 66; Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 199), are included, while other types of questions such as rhetorical questions or 'outlouds' (Stivers and Enfield 2010, 2623) are not. The definition also excludes a number of SAs. Utterances which represent, as Culpeper and Archer (2008, 59) put it, "[i]ndirect speech acts in which the requestive force is the direct force and not the indirect force", such as apologising by begging someone pardon, were not

considered. SAs in which S1 informs interlocutors about a future action (e.g. holiday plans) are also excluded. Mediated third person SAs, i.e. utterances in which S1 speaks for an S3 but not him/herself, were not included either.

2. Data and methodology

The data was taken from the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (Kytö and Culpeper 2006). The corpus is divided into five periods of 40 years[1] each and includes five text types: trial proceedings and witness depositions, which are authentic dialogues, as well as drama comedy, didactic works, and prose fiction, considered 'constructed' dialogues (Kytö and Walker 2006, 12).

Since close reading of the texts was required to find instances of refusals, it was not feasible to incorporate all text types in the study. Trial proceedings and witness depositions as well as didactic works were ruled out, because they were not considered likely to include a high number of refusals. The decision against prose fiction is based on the fact that, in this text type, "the presence of the narrator is often explicit, as the 'storyteller', and the dialogue may be mediated as both direct and indirect speech" (Kytö and Walker 2006, 24). In the case of drama comedy, by contrast, narratorial intervention is minimal (Kytö and Walker 2006, 22). For this reason, drama comedy was chosen.

Each period consists of five text files, but due to feasibility only the first (1560–1599) and last period (1720–1760) of the corpus were examined. The assumption was, however, that these two periods should suffice for the identification of changes over time, if there are any. Although periods 1 and 5 of the corpus were used, they will henceforth be referred to as *period 1* (*P1*) and *period 2* (*P2*).

The refusal realizations found where coded manually, initially guided by the preliminary categories adopted from BTU. In the course of the analysis, however, additional categories were added, some of the preliminary categories were modified, redefined, split up, or merged, and a new classification was established based on the data. The methodology was hence data-driven and (partially)[2] bottom-up in the tradition of grounded theory approaches (see, for instance, Jaccard and Jacoby 2010, 256–308).

The basic units of analysis in this study is the adjacency pair, consisting of a refusal-eliciting SA followed by a refusal.[3] The occurrences found, however, quickly revealed that interactions of this kind can be longer than just one move of S1 and

1. Period 5 in fact spans 41 years.

2. I approached the data with a set of categories, but did not attempt to impose BTU's taxonomy.

3. The dissertation on which this paper is based includes an analysis of the refusal-eliciting SAs and the correlations between content and form of refusal-eliciting SA and the refusal.

S2, respectively. The first eliciting SA of an interaction shall henceforth be referred to as *initial proposal* (*IP*),[4] and the first elicited refusal as *initial refusal* (*IR*). Any further persuasive attempts by S1 are termed *continuations of the proposal* (*CP*) and the corresponding responses by S2 *continuations of the refusal* (*CR*). Both are numbered consecutively. In total, 149 interactions were found in P1 and 135 in P2. In addition to the IPs and IRs, there are a total of 48 CP-CR pairs in P2 and 101 in P2. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of IP-IR pairs followed by CP-CR pairs.

Table 1. Percentages of IP-IR pairs followed by CP-CR pairs

	P1	P2
No CP-CR pair	67.8	25.2
≥ 1 CP-CR pairs	18.8	26.7
≥ 2 CP-CR pairs	8.1	12.6
≥ 3 CP-CR pairs	2.7	8.9
≥ 4 CP-CR pairs	2.0	5.9
≥ 5 CP-CR pairs	0.7	20.7

3. Analysis

Rather than differentiating between direct and indirect strategies, the revised categories were grouped according to their broad function. These functional super-strategies are partially present in BTU but not fully followed through. Like BTU, I consider some strategies to aim at dissuading – though I do not class exactly the same categories in this super-strategy –, while others are attempts to deflect – or avoid a refusal, as they call it. But if a realization fits in neither of these groups, it must belong to some other super-strategy. I propose to consider such categories 'definite' refusals, which may or may not convey a reason for refusing.

With current research on interpersonal pragmatics in mind, it became apparent during the qualitative analysis that some strategies inherently convey a positive or negative stance – i.e. "personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or assessments" (Biber et al. 1999, 966). This aspect, disregarded by BTU, was hence integrated in the present taxonomy and the individual strategies were classified according to the stance expressed with them. Strategies are considered neutral if they do not convey any information concerning how S2 feels about S1 or the proposal. It is important to note, however, that the expressed stance does not say anything about the potential effects a refusal might have, nor are 'negative' and 'positive' strategies to be equated with impoliteness and politeness, respectively.

4. The term 'proposal' is use as an umbrella term for all refusal-eliciting SAs.

3.1 Classification of strategies

In the following subsections, the different super-strategies of the proposed revised classification shall be introduced. In addition, the provided examples will also illustrate the dimension of intrinsically expressed stance.

3.1.1 *Definite refusals*

Group 1 subsumes strategies expressing a definite refusal and consists of two further sub-sets. Strategies in the first sub-group simply express – implicitly or explicitly – that X will not happen. It consists of six strategies, four of which are neutral in terms of stance and two of which express a positive stance.

(1) Constable: [*No*], [*I can't do't*]; my Orders are positive. (D5CMILLE)	[no] [negA/F]
(2) Priest: Trulie I cannot affoord it, [*I would I could*] [...] (D1CKNAVE)	[wish]

Example (1) illustrates two neutral categories: [no], consisting of the one-word responses 'no' or 'nay', and [negA/F] a modified version of BTU's 'negative willingness and ability'. In this classification, it includes negations of ability, as shown above, as well as negations of the future act X happening. Neither of the strategies in (1) expresses a stance. The emphasized utterance in (2), by contrast, does. Here, the speaker expresses their hypothetical wish for X to happen, implying it will not. In doing so, they convey a positive stance towards X.

Realizations of the second sub-group, by contrast, provide a reason – implicitly or explicitly – why X will not happen. This subset is the largest one, consisting of 13 strategies: six neutral, six negative, and one positive.

(3) Perin: Trulie Honesty, [*if I were furnisht with money, I would not stick to giue thee thy dinner*], [*But now thou seest I am but a guest my selfe*]. (D1CKNAVE)	[cond>hyp] [exc]
(4) Sylvius: Howe saiest thou Perim, wilte thou bee with him? Perim: [*I, so he will teach me first to runne away*]. (D1CLYLY)	[sarc]

In (3), we see two strategies expressing a positive stance and no stance, respectively. Initially, the speaker states their theoretical willingness to comply under different, hypothetical circumstances ([cond>hyp]). This hypothetical willingness conveys a positive stance. The second strategy constitutes a plain excuse or reason ([exc]) why X will not happen without the speaker taking a stance. An instance of a strategy communicating a reason and a negative stance is given in (4). Using sarcasm ([sarc]), the speaker indirectly expresses a negative stance towards X, simultaneously implying the reason for the refusal: they do not want X to happen.

3.1.2 *Attempts at dissuasion*

The strategies in this second group differ from the previous one in that, rather than expressing a definitive refusal to cooperate, they constitute attempts at dissuading S1. Three negative, two neutral, and one positive strategy form this group.

(5) Countess Moren: Go to, you shall not go and leaue me alone. Count Moren: For one meale gentle bird: Veron inuites vs to buy some iewels he hath brought of late from Italie: [*Ile buy the best, and bring it thee, so thou wilt let me go*]. (D1CCHAPM)	[comp]
(6) Frankly: I understand you. [*Any time but now*. You will certainly be discover'd. [*To-morrow – at your Chambers*]. (D5CHOADL)	[alt]
(7) Daffodil: You must go again, Ruffle, to Night, perhaps you may be in better Luck. Ruffle: [*If I go again, Sir, may I be can'd, kick'd, and Horse-ponded for my Pains – I believe I have been lucky enough to bring an old House over your Head*]. (D5CGARRI)	[guilt]

A neutral dissuasive strategy is exemplified in (5). This new category includes offers of compensation and bribery ([comp]). In the above example, the speaker attempts to dissuade his wife from her request that he stays home, suggesting the decisive power is with the listener rather than the speaker. The strategy is neutral, because it does not reveal a positive or negative feeling towards X or S1. In (6), by contrast, the refuser takes a positive stance towards X by proposing an alternative time and location ([alt]), conveying his overall willingness for X to happen, if in a somewhat modified form. The strategy 'guilt trip' ([guilt]), on the other hand, is inherently negative regarding its expressed stance: it consists of utterances intended to make S1 feel guilty in order for them to drop the proposal, as illustrated in Example (7).

3.1.3 *Attempts at deflection*

The final group comprises strategies which constitute refusals by means of deflection, i.e. neither a clear acceptance nor refusal is performed. None of these strategies consequently expresses a stance. The strategy 'avoidance' ([avoid]), for instants represents utterances in which S2 evades S1's proposal. In (8), S2 deliberately builds his response on a word play and so avoids performing an acceptance or refusal.

(8) Hephestion: Let her passe. Alexander: [*So shee shall for the fairest on the earth*]. (D1CLYLY)	[avoid]

All strategies found in the data, and those retained from BTU, can be categorized in terms of one of these super-strategies. The benefits of clearly defined functional sub-classes will be addressed in the subsequent section.

3.2 An alternative classification – Differences and advantages

The classification proposed here (Figure 2) differs considerably from BTU's. The second and third super-strategy are based on their categories 'attempts to dissuade interlocutor' and 'avoidance', respectively. In contrast to BTU's dissuasion strategies, however, Group 2 does not include criticism, requests for help, letting the interlocutor of the hook, and self-defence[5] – all of which are treated here as definite refusals rather than attempts at dissuasion. In addition, proposals of alternatives and lack of enthusiasm were subsumed under Group 2, unlike in BTU, and two new categories were added: compensation and dissuasion. Group 3 differs from BTU's group 'avoidance' as well: first, no non-verbal responses were included; second, jokes and repetitions were subsumed under the new category avoid; finally, indefinite responses were considered deflection as well and the new class 'questioning the proposal' was established.

All remaining of BTU's strategies, if retained, were classified as 'definite' refusals – either providing or not providing a reason. Newly created definite strategies are: oppositions and counters, preconditions, exclamations, requests to stop, sarcasm, and hypothetical conditions – split off BTU's conditions for future or past acceptance, since the former is neutral whereas the latter expresses a positive stance.

Strategies grouped by super-strategy	Stance	Explanation
Group 1: strategies suggesting definite refusal		
Group 1a: strategies expressing, explicitly or implicitly, that X will not happen		
– performative [perf]*	neutral	Use of performative verb
– [no]	neutral	Use of 'no' or 'nay'
– opposition and counter [opp]	neutral	Statement expressing S2 will do the opposite of S1's proposal or counter-proposal
– negation of ability condition or X happening [negA/F]	neutral	S2 expresses X can or will not happen
– [wish]	positive	S2 expresses hypothetical wish for X to happen, implying that it will not
– apology and regret [apol]	positive	S2 expresses regret, implying that X will not happen
Group 1b: strategies directly or indirectly expressing a reason why X can/will not happen (other than [negA/F])		
– 'plain' excuse or reason [exc]	neutral	reason, justification, excuse why X can/will not happen
– negation of want or willingness [negwill]	negative	S1 expresses they do not want X to happen
– statement of principle or philosophy [princ]	neutral	reason in form of universal/principle statement

5. This strategy was subsumed under 'plain excuse'.

Strategies grouped by super-strategy	Stance	Explanation
– precondition or quid pro quo [precond]	neutral	precondition requested by S2 of S1 in order for S2 to accept
– exclamation or interjection [exclam]	negative	Expression of emotion implying S2's opposition towards proposal
– [hook]	neutral	letting S1 (and S2) off the hook by stating that X is not necessary
– [help]*	neutral	Request for help or assistance, implying S2 cannot do it by themselves
– condition for future acceptance [cond>future]	neutral	S2 expresses future state of affairs required for X to happen
– hypothetical condition [cond>hyp]	positive	S2 expresses their hypothetical willingness if it were not for some reason preventing X from happening
– criticism [crit]	negative	Insult, curse, or criticism of S1 or proposal, expressing S2's negative attitude towards S1 or proposal
– [stop]	negative	S2 tells S1 to stop talking, go away, not pursue the issue any further, implying S2's unwillingness to cooperate
– sarcasm [sarc]	negative	utterance expressing opposite of what S2 means, implying (reason for) S2's unwillingness to cooperate
– making fun or mocking [fun]	negative	criticising S1 or proposal by mocking
Group 2: strategies attempting to dissuade S1		
– dissuasion [diss]	neutral	attempt to dissuade S1 by asking what S2 can do to dissolve S1's reasons for wanting X
– offer compensation [comp]	neutral	S2 offers compensation, bribery
– proposal of alternative [alt]	positive	S2 offers alternative, implying that X will not happen the way S1 proposed it
– guilt trip [guilt]	negative	utterance meant to make S1 feel guilty in order to dissuade them
– [threat]	negative	'real' threats against S1 implying S2s negative attitude towards S1 or X
– lack of enthusiasm [lack]	negative	'acceptance' expressing lack of enthusiasm
Group 3: strategies attempting to deflect		
– indefinite reply [indef]	neutral	vague formulation that constitutes neither a clear commitment nor a clear refusal of cooperation
– hedging [hedge]*	neutral	"I don't know, I'm not sure"
– questioning the proposal [questP]	neutral	S2 questions S1's reason/motivation for proposal
– postponement [post]	neutral	decision concerning cooperation is postponed to a later point
– avoid response [avoid]	neutral	S2 acknowledges proposal but avoids responding to it
– topic change [topic]	neutral	S2 changes topic without reacting the proposal

Figure 2. Classification of refusal strategies

Establishing hypothetical conditions as a category on its own was consequently necessitated by the introduction of stance as a classification dimension. The number of sub-categories which are completely new suggests considerable differences between BTU's data and those analysed here. In terms of super-strategies, their taxonomy proved inconsistent and not fully thought through. They furthermore did not consider that some strategies intrinsically express stance – a shortcoming probably owing to the theoretical environment of their study. This analysis dimension may prove a more useful tool in the analysis of interpersonal effects than in/directness. Similarly, systematically grouping realizations in functional super-strategies may also aid in the analysis of im/politeness or identity construction.

3.3 Most frequent strategies – Comparison to BTU's findings

The usefulness of the classification dimensions proposed in the previous section can be further corroborated by quantitative analyses. In total, the IRs in P1 contained 283 instances of refusal strategies, those in P2 216. An additional 74 and 137 locutions were found in the CRs in P1 and P2, respectively. Overall, excuses are the most common strategy in my data, followed by expressions of criticism (Table 2). The former do, however, increase over time, while the latter decreases – in IRs as well as CRs. A slight decline can also be seen in the frequencies of noes and expressions of oppositions, whereas the percentage of exclamations rises. Interesting, none of these top strategies expresses a positive stance; they are all either neutral or even negative.

Table 2. Percentages of most frequent strategies

Super-strategy	Stance	Strategy	IR		CRs	
			P1	P2	P1	P2
definite, no reason	neut	[no]	8.8	6.5	6.8	2.9
	neut	[opp]	13.4	10.2	9.5	4.4
	neut	[exc]	20.8	30.6	31.1	46.7
definite, reason	neg	[crit]	18.7	12.5	28.4	13.9
	neg	[exclam]	9.9	11.1	2.7	7.3

As already mentioned, BTU found that 'regret', 'excuse', 'no', and 'letting the interlocutor off the hook' are commonly used in Present Day American English refusals. As Table 2 shows, 'no' and excuses are common in the drama texts under investigation as well. Most significant, however, is the fact that BTU attest the frequent use of expressions of regret or apologies, which only appear a handful of times in the EModE data. This strategy is considered to express a positive stance in the revised classification – a feature, as mentioned above, not prominent in my findings. Rather, expressions of criticism, which express a negative stance, are the second

most common strategy in the drama texts, whereas they do not seem to emerge in BTU's data. This may, however, not (merely) be a difference in terms of language change over time, but could well have to do with the types of data.

3.4 Differences in the use of super-strategies and stance as time and interactions progress

A number of trends with regard to the super-strategies used and stance expressed can be detected when we compare (a) the two periods and (b) the initial refusals with the CRs.

Definite refusals which express a reason make up the majority of utterances. In both the IR and the CRs of both P1 and P2, this super-strategy is used in more than 60% and up to ¾ of the realizations, as Table 3 shows.[6] Looking at the frequencies in the IR compared to the CRs, we see that this super-strategy is more common in CRs than in IRs in both periods. Definite refusals not expressing a reason and deflecting strategies, by contrast, are overall more frequently used in initial refusals than the CRs. For dissuading strategies, no general trend can be detected when comparing IRs and CRs, due to the low number of occurrences. As an interaction progresses, then, strategies conveying a reason for the refusal are used more frequently whereas the number of realizations expressing a definitive refusal without a reason as well as attempts at deflecting decrease compared to the IRs.

Table 3. Percentages of realizations by super-strategy

Super-strategy	IR		CRs	
	P1	P2	P1	P2
definite, no reason	26.1	19.9	21.6	10.9
definite, reason	62.9	63.0	77.0	76.6
dissuasion	1.8	2.8	1.4	4.4
deflection[a]	9.2	14.4	0.0	8.0

[a] Eight instances of [avoid] and 13 instances of [topic], found in one interaction, respectively, were excluded from P2, since they skewed the results and made the increase of G3 strategies appear much greater than if they were not included.

While the use of definite strategies expressing a reason remained consistent over time, there is a noteworthy decrease of those not expressing a reason and an increase of deflecting realizations. This partially matches the general trend towards increased indirectness in other commissives and directives, as discussed in the introduction. Where the above results, as well as those of BTU, differ, however, is that non-conventionally indirect rather than conventionally indirect realizations

6. Chi-square yielded a p-value of 0.0004

feature most prominently in the case of refusals and – as far as the EModE data is concerned – increased over time. One possible reason for this may be that refusals are second-pair parts, whereas the directives and commissives in the above studies are first-pair parts. There is, however, a methodological aspect to this discrepancy as well. Kohnen (2007, 139) points out that non-conventionally indirect realizations are often 'hidden' – and hence not analysed – in corpus studies, because they are not automatically retrievable. Although Culpeper and Archer (2008) do take into account non-conventionally indirect directives, their differentiation between head acts and support acts means that non-conventionally strategies are treated as 'second-class realizations' and often categorized as mere supporting moves rather than directives proper when they occur together with more direct forms. In the approach by BTU, which we followed here, by contrast, any locution expressing a refusal, no matter how (in)directly, was classified as such.[7]

Regarding the stance expressed in refusal realizations, neutral strategies are overall the most common, as shown in Table 4.[8] They amount to roughly 2/3 of all locutions, followed by negative strategies, which make up the final third. Interestingly, strategies expressing a positive stance are hardly used at all in either period. As already addressed briefly, however, the reason for the high amount of negative strategies may lie in the text type under investigation: conflicts are, after all, a central part of drama (2008). A comparison with refusal strategies in other text types of the same periods would hence be highly interesting, but unfortunately available and suitable data is scarce.

Table 4. Percentages of realizations by expressed stance

stance	IR		CRs	
	P1	**P2**	**P1**	**P2**
neutral[a]	60.1	58.5	69.0	67.9
positive	1.1	4.1	0.5	2.9
negative	38.9	36.5	30.6	29.2

a The same instances of [avoid] and [topic] in P2 were excluded (cf. Table 3).

7. Adopting the methodology of strategy sequences to the refusal-eliciting SAs, the data revealed that the majority of those realizations are in fact of the so called non-conventionally indirect type, as Table 5 in the appendix shows. In addition, non-conventional strategies are, by far, the predominant group in S1's continued attempts at persuading S2, making up 74.1% and 90% in P1 and P2, respectively. This points to another question regarding methodology: while it is apparent from BTU's study design that they elicited only an initial refusal, but no continued attempts, it is unclear whether CPs were taken into account in previous (historical) studies on directives and commissives such as Culpeper and Archer's (2008). If they were, the authors do not explicitly state so and do not compare IPs with CPs.

8. p-value: 0.506.

The diachronic comparison of expressed stances in refusal realizations does not reveal any substantial developments. Although there is a minimal decrease of neutral and negative strategies and a corresponding increase in positive ones, both in the IRs and CRs, evaluating the meaningfulness of this change is impossible due to the small number of positive strategy tokens. We can, however, detect differences between IRs and CRs once more: as interactions progress, neutral strategies are used more frequently and negative ones less so. The expression of (negative) stance is hence somewhat more common in initial refusals rather than at later stages of an interaction.

4. Conclusion

This paper presents an inventory of refusal strategies in EModE and traced changes in realizations in the course of that period. Departing from BTU's influential taxonomy and with recent work in the field of interpersonal pragmatics in mind, a new classification was proposed, which is deemed to be more suitable for the analysis of interpersonal effects. Moving away from a focus on in/directness, the taxonomy is more fine-grained and consistent in terms of functional super-strategies and furthermore takes into account the strategy-intrinsic expression of stance.

The diachronic comparison showed that, overall, definite refusals not providing reasons decrease over time, while deflecting realizations increase. This can be interpreted as being in line with attested developments towards increased indirectness since the EModE period for related SAs. The presented results, as well as BTU's results, however, show a predominance of what are traditionally considered non-conventionally indirect rather than conventionally indirect strategies – a finding contrasting the generally assumed trend for directives and commissives. This discrepancy may be due to differences between first- and second-pair parts.

The introduction of stance as an analysis dimension revealed substantial differences when comparing my results to BTU's. They found that strategies which, according to the revised classification, express a positive stance are common, whereas the EModE data showed a considerable amount of negative strategies. It is unclear, whether this is truly a diachronic difference or related to the text type analysed here. What is apparent, however, is that neutral strategies are less frequent and negative ones more frequent in initial refusals then in continued attempts – an aspect not addressed by BTU and other researchers. Similarly, definite refusals not expressing a reason and deflecting strategies decrease as the exchange continues, whereas definite refusals providing a reason increase.

Due to the substantially different data sets, a comparison between my and BTU's results is problematic. Comparing these findings with refusals in other EModE text types would hence be interesting. A further important next step is to test the applicability and usefulness of the proposed classification on authentic PDE data. The

present paper hence represents a first contribution to the diachronic investigation of refusals and a step towards an interactional pragmatics perspective of refusals.

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Appendix

File name	First print	Publ. date	Short text title	Author	Word count
D1CLYLY	1584	1584	*Alexander and Campaspe*	John Lyly	9,450
D1CKNAVE	1594	1594	*A Knacke to Knowe a Knaue*	Anonymous	10,740
D1CWARNE	1595	1595	*Menaecmi*	William Warner	10,290
D1CPEELE	1595	1595	*The Old Wiues Tale*	George Peele	7,920
D1CCHAMPM	1599	1599	*An Humerous Dayes Myrth*	George Champman	9,190
D5CSTEEL	1723	1723	*The Conscious Lovers*	Richard Steele	9,190
D5CMILLE	1734	1734	*The Mother-in-Law*	James Miller	9,670
D5CFIELD	1737	1744	*The Historical Register*	Henry Fielding	8,790
D5CHOADL	1747	1747	*The Suspicious Husband*	Benjamin Hoadly	11,340
D5CGARRI	1757	1757	*The Male-Coquette*	David Garrick	9,520

Figure 3. List of text files, taken from Kytö and Walker (2006, 17)

Table 5. Percentages of refusal-eliciting realizations by level of (in)directness

	IP		CPs	
	P1	P2	P1	P2
direct	39.7	25.9	12.9	6.5
conventionally indirect	19.8	20.8	12.9	3.5
non-conventionally indirect	40.5	54.3	74.1	90