ELICITING REFUSALS:
A METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

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Abstract

This paper explores the problems of collecting relevant and accurate information about the way people refuse offers and invitations. After discussing a range of ways in which refusals have been collected by previous researchers in this area, a small study is described which was designed to compare the kinds of refusals elicited by three different methods of data collection: audio recording of face-to-face interaction in an authentic social context, oral role play, and written discourse completion task (DCT). It was found that the refusals elicited using the first two methods were relatively similar on a number of dimensions, while the written DCT data was rather different. It is concluded that, while written DCTs are useful for eliciting what people know about socio-pragmatic norms, routines and stereotyped ways of 'doing refusals', they should not be used to provide information on how people actually 'do' refusals in face-to-face interaction.

1. Introduction [1]

How do people express refusals? And how do we find out? This paper discusses ways of collecting data about the ways in which people express speech acts, focussing in particular on refusals. Speech act research has often been critiqued over the last three decades (e.g. Leech 1983, Thomas 1995, Toolan 1996, Mills 2003), but it remains one of the most productive and widely used approaches to the study of how people 'do things with words' (Austin 1962). It has been

especially productive in the area of cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Trosberg 1995; Gass and Neu 1996), and second language teaching and learning (e.g. Kasper and Rose 2002), where researchers have analysed and compared the way native speakers of different languages express a very wide range of speech acts including directives, requests, complaints, apologies, expressions of gratitude, and refusals. In this paper, we examine the methodology used by researchers in this area, and describe a small study which examines the ways in which native speakers of New Zealand English refuse offers of food and drink and invitational requests in a variety of different data elicitation conditions.

2. Literature survey

Most previous research has generally adopted one of two basic methods of collecting data on the expression of speech acts, namely written discourse completion tasks and oral role plays. Though there is overlap between them, in that a written DCT may ask respondents to imagine they are playing a specific role, the written-spoken dimension is particularly salient, since a written response encourages planned discourse and permits greater reflection than an oral response in a face-to-face encounter. In what follows, we briefly discuss the main features of each approach, distinguishing particularly between methods which require written vs oral responses.

2.1 Written Discourse Completion Task
The written discourse completion task (DCT) has much to recommend it from the researcher's standpoint (Beebe and Cummings 1996). It is easy to administer to large groups selected on the basis of known social characteristics, and the data produced is relatively straightforward to code and analyse compared to spontaneous, spoken response data. DCTs also allow greater control of the social variables being manipulated in the scenarios presented: for example, relative social status, social distance, weighting of the imposition, and so on.

Saeki and O'Keefe (1994), for instance, used a written DCT with 124 American students and 104 Japanese university students who each completed the DCT in their native language. The participants were required to imagine they were the head of a student organisation and were asked to write down the words they would use in rejecting an applicant to the organisation. Analysing responses, the authors identified eight themes in rejection messages, including

critical comments, offers of encouragement and consolation, explanations of the impersonality of the selection process, injunctions to the applicant not to be angry at the speaker, and injunctions to the applicant not to feel bad about the rejection.

While this study contributes to the development of potentially useful analytical categories for classifying the components of a refusal, it is clear that it could not be regarded as providing authentic data on the way people would actually reject a job application. Firstly, the students were being asked to respond to a situation that it was unlikely they had ever encountered. Hence the method was likely to elicit different responses according to the ability of the students to imaginatively place themselves in the scenario. Secondly, the fact that they had never met the applicant, and that the situation was entirely hypothetical was likely to greatly influence the degree of facework and directness involved in most responses (Craig, Tracy and Spisak 1986; Wolfson, Marmor and Jones 1989; Eelen 2001).[2] These criticisms apply with greater or lesser degree of fit to a good deal of the research which uses the written DCT as the primary method of eliciting data on how speech acts are expressed.

One DCT study which addressed the first of these criticisms asked participants to respond to situations that they would have been likely to encounter, such as the last time they turned down a date. Folkes (1982) concluded from this study that this method was most appropriately used with female participants, since, interestingly, it emerged that the situation presented was considerably more familiar to women than to men. Besson, Roloff, and Paulson (1998) conducted similar research sixteen years later using only female participants. The scenario required 'Susan' to reject 'John' in his request for a date for one of three reasons, which were classified as personal, impersonal or mixed personal and impersonal. While the responses in these cases were described as 'linguistically complex' (1998: 197), suggesting they were more realistic than in earlier research, the researchers themselves acknowledged that their DCT format had weaknesses, since the format (involving 'Susan' rather than 'I') encouraged the respondents to distance themselves from the refusal. Another obvious weakness is the use of written DCTs to elicit responses to scenarios involving face-to-face interactions. Written responses are unlike speech in a myriad of obvious respects. Moreover, DCTs typically elicit relatively simple responses in that the respondent contributes only one turn in response to the stimulus provided. Finally, it is widely recognised that people's intuitions about what they say are typically not closely related to what they actually say (e.g. Nunan 1992, Thomas 1995, Beebe and Cummings 1996, Turnbull 2001).

Despite their acknowledged disadvantages, Beebe and Cummings (1996: 80-81) argue that written DCTs have a role in data collection since they reveal respondents' knowledge of 'stereotypical responses that reflect the values of the native culture' (1996: 81). In other words, by investigating what respondents know about routine and stereotypical ways of encoding speech acts in the target culture, DCTs indicate the extent to which contributers are familiar with the socio-pragmatic norms of that culture. Hence DCTs have a role in demonstrating what respondents know about socio-culturally appropriate ways of responding in specific situations, and in providing information about their ability to produce routine, planned responses, but they should not be interpreted as revealing how respondents would spontaneously respond in authentic interaction.

2.2 Role play

Oral role plays address the second of the criticisms discussed above, in that they force people to deal face-to-face with another person, rather than permitting written responses in a social vacuum. Role plays can take a variety of forms, ranging from relatively constrained and choreographed or 'closed' situations, which function effectively as an orally administered DCT, to unstructured and 'open' invitations to respond freely in a scenario outlined or presented by the researcher. A relatively 'closed' oral DCT provides the respondent with clear instructions as to the kind of response expected: eg. Walkinshaw (2003) asked respondents to take the role of a flatmate and to disagree with him (playing the other flatmate) when he said he wanted to leave the heater on while they went out for the evening. Thus Walkinshaw specified the social relationship between the respondents, the precise situation involved, and the tenor of the response (i.e. disagreement) required of the respondent. Other more open scenarios permit respondents more freedom: eg. Gass and Houck (1999) asked Japanese students to role play their responses to requests from their English-speaking host families. The role play presented a situation with which they were presumed to be familiar, and though phrased to encourage a refusal, the students were permitted to respond in any way they felt appropriate, and they were allowed to take as many turns as they wished.

Interestingly, researchers who have compared the outputs of relatively 'closed' oral (DCT) role plays with the outputs of written DCTs have generally concluded that there is little difference between them. Gass and Houck (1999), for instance, comment that '...written and oral versions (sometimes referred to as closed role plays) of the same discourse completion test have produced

comparable results' (1999: 27). Similarly, Turnbull (1994 cited in Gass and Houck 1999: 27) concludes there is little difference between the results of DCTS in oral and written formats, although he notes that both generated what he describes as 'simplified' and hence thus potentially 'non-representational data'.

On the other hand, Rintell and Mitchell (1989) report that for second language speakers in particular, the oral versions of oral and written DCTs produced longer data than the written versions. This difference was not apparent in the native English speakers, leading the authors to conclude that it was not so much the methodology as the way in which the two groups approached the tasks that resulted in different responses. However, in general they too concluded that 'language elicited...is very similar whether collected in written or oral form' (Rintell and Mitchell 1989: 270).

Obviously, the more freedom the researcher allows to participants, the more demanding the data analysis, since the range of responses elicited will be more difficult to code. One might also expect that the more direction the participants are given, the less likely the researcher is to elicit spontaneous responses, but in fact the most important effect of using more open vs more closed role plays, appears to be the extent to which the speech act is extended and even negotiated between participants. Folkes' (1982) second study, for example, used closed role plays and provided the women participants with a reason for rejecting an invitation on a date. This helped elicit a wider range of responses than the written DCT, but it did not provide the kind of rich and complex interactional data that emerges when more open role plays are used. As mentioned above, Houck and Gass (1995) used open role plays to elicit refusals in a study of Japanese learners of English, and found that the responses were considerably more complex than those elicited by DCTs. The role-played refusal interactions were both negotiated and extended. A refusal typically does not terminate with the subject's initial response, and hence, they point out, DCTs cannot be as satisfactory as role plays, which allow multiple turns (1995: 52). In a more recent discussion of this issue, Gass and Houck (1999) conclude that the results of open role plays, where the interaction has no designated end-point, show that 'the performance of acts such as refusals involves the use of resources that are not required or even appropriate in non-interactional role play [i.e. oral DCT]' (1999: 51-2). See also Turnbull (2001).

The most thorough examination of the methodology of speech act research is Turnbull (2001) which focuses on request refusals. Turnbull compares five different elicitation techniques: oral and written discourse completion, role

play, experimental techniques, and natural recording. He argues that the 'ideal' technique elicits natural talk but under controlled conditions, that is the researcher obtains the quality natural output of the 'low control' approaches, but in a situation which reduces the amount of uncontrolled variation to a minimum.

> Data should be generated in situations in which researchers can control and manipulate variables in the systematic testing of hypotheses. At the same time, the data-generation situation should be one in which speakers can talk freely and spontaneously without awareness that their talk is the object of study. In other words, there should be a high level of researcher control over the situation in which speakers say what they say but there should be no control over what speakers say and how they say it (2001: 36).

Turnbull used the same scenario for all five elicitation techniques. A researcher phones a student who had earlier volunteered to take part in a project and asks them to come in to help with the research on a Saturday morning at 7am. In the natural condition, the research assistant had no idea that the project was focussing on refusals, whereas in the very similar design of the experimental method, where status was manipulated, the research assistant was aware of the project's goals. In the open and closed role plays, a screen separated the participants, and a research assistant with a real phone was used. In the written DCT, the subjects were required to write down what they thought they would say.

Turnbull's results showed considerable variability in the number and distribution of utterance turns across the conditions (2001: 44). In particular, the analysis of the type of head refusal statements used by the participants separated the responses into two groups, written and oral discourse completion in one group, and role play, experimental and natural conditions in the other. The study provides further support for Houck and Gass's (1995) claim that DCTs are not satisfactory elicitation techniques for collecting data on the way people actually express refusals in authentic situations.

In Turnbull's study, as in Beebe and Cumming's (1996) research, the participants were refusing a very specific request from a stranger on the end of a telephone. How do people refuse individuals whom they know when they are actually interacting with them face-to-face? This was the starting point for our study, which aimed to assess the relative merits of three conditions for eliciting refusals of invitational requests and offers of food/drink. We were interested

in examining whether people used different types of refusal in different elicitation conditions, as well as in comparing the length of responses in DCT, role play and natural conditions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

This study, unlike previous studies, used as participants people who were friends of one of the researchers, Anthea. All the participants were female, aged between twenty-one and twenty-nine years old, and they were Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descent). Although Anthea knew some a little better than others, there was no substantial difference in her relationship with these young women, all of whom she had known for at least a year. The participants were told we were researching informal conversation among friends, they were required to sign a consent form, and they were assured that they would not be identified in any way. They also had the option of editing any of the recordings at the end of the project, which none did. After the study was finished they were told more specifically what Anthea had been researching and were given a summary of the results.

3.2 Types of refusal

We collected data on two distinct types of refusal: (i) refusals of invitational requests (ii) refusal of offers of food/drink. Within requests, we planned to distinguish between quite specific invitational requests (to do something with the requestor at a particular time), and more general invitational requests (to do something with the requestor at an unspecified time in the future). We considered that each of these different types would elicit different patterns of refusal. So a simple offer of food/drink that the addressee does not want (e.g. 'do you want a cup of tea?') seems likely to elicit a plain refusal, with minimum need for supportive reasons; whereas a more complex invitation/request to do something with the requestor at some unspecified point in the future (e.g. 'do you want to come ice skating with me sometime?'), seems more likely to be accepted for the sake of politeness: in other words refusing a request with such a vague time specification is more likely to be interpreted as rude. Between these two extremes a request/invitation to do something very specific with the requestor, and at a specified point in time, seems most likely to elicit a more elaborate refusal if the addressee is unwilling to accept. In the

event, the specific request was dropped, for broadly ethical reasons (see below). The offers of food/drink and the invitational requests used to elicit refusals are provided in Appendix A.

3.3 Elicitation conditions

The study was designed as follows: (i) the data was first collected in the authentic social situation and was then transcribed. This data provided the basis for equivalent input for (ii) the role play which was collected next, and also for (iii) the DCT material which was collected last.[3] At least one week was allowed between each data collection condition for each participant. The natural condition and the role plays were audio-recorded. As far as we are aware, this is the first study using the *same* people in eliciting refusals all three conditions, and is thus of some interest methodologically.

3.3.1 Elicitation condition 1: 'natural'[4]

In the light of previous research, we were keen to ensure the refusal contexts were as normal as possible for the participants, and involved plausible scenarios. We therefore devised a natural situation which involved Anthea inviting each participant to join her for a chat in a situation where she was the host—at her home or in her office at work. This allowed her to make offers of food and drink in a natural way, and to 'manage' the conversation to the extent necessary to include her invitational requests.

To the extent that Anthea decided in advance what offers and invitational requests she would use with participants, this approach resembles Turnbull's (2001) 'experimental' condition. In other words, we did not wait for refusals to crop up at random in the conversations. The situation was manipulated to ensure participants were provided with plenty of opportunities to produce refusals in response to the speech act types that we had selected for study. On the other hand, the participants were not aware of the specific focus of the research, and, importantly, they were not told to produce refusals in this condition: ie. they were free to respond in any way they wished, to accept or to refuse as they felt inclined.

3.3.1.1 Offers

Participants were offered food and drink until they finally refused it. This is perfectly normal behaviour for a host, and so no unethical manipulation of the situation was involved. The tactic failed with only one participant, who accepted everything she was offered throughout the interaction.

3.3.1.2 Invitational requests

We originally planned to use an invitational request that specified a particular time for the relevant activity (e.g. *would you like to come tramping with me on Sunday afternoon?*). However, pilot work suggested that this kind of request was too face-threatening and might damage Anthea's relationship with her friends. It was therefore omitted from the final study.

To generate refusals to a request to participate in an activity at an unspecified time in the future, Anthea guided the conversation towards sport and physical exercise, where she would talk about her recent experience in running a half-marathon. Then she asked each participant if they wanted to join her on her next half-marathon. Not surprisingly, this invitational request resulted in a one hundred percent refusal rate. Anthea felt comfortable about the request, since if it had been accepted, she would have been very happy to have the addressee's company for the next half-marathon. If any participant had accepted, she planned to ask them to join her in further sporting activities, until she elicited a refusal.

3.3.2 Elicitation condition 2: role play

The role plays were conducted separately with each participant at least one week after the first interaction. Each young woman was given a list of ten scenarios and asked to play the role of one of the participants, with Anthea playing the complementary role.[5] Three of the situations were designed to elicit refusals; the remaining scenarios were used for warm-up and as distracters from the focus of the study. Each of the refusal scenarios described a situation where the participant was at a friend's house, and they were asked to do something that they did not want to do. The participants were not explicitly told they should refuse; rather they were simply asked to role play how they would respond in the situation. Even when they did not explicitly produce a refusal, Anthea did not put undue pressure on them. Again the emphasis in our research was on eliciting responses which were as spontaneous as possible, and on avoiding prescribing how people should behave.

3.3.3 Elicitation condition 3: Discourse completion task

One week after the role play, participants were presented with the written DCT. Participants were each given a sheet with seven scenarios, and told to write down what they thought they would do in each scenario. Again, only three scenarios were designed to elicit refusals, with the other four as warm-ups and distracters.

4. Analysis of the results

The refusals produced by respondents in all three conditions were analysed firstly according to the number of speaker turns taken to express the refusal as a whole, and secondly, following Takahashi and Beebe (1987), Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990), Beebe and Cummings (1996), and Sasaki (1998), according to the number and types of strategy used to express the refusal. A turn was defined as 'everything A says before B takes over and vice versa' (Stenström 1994: 34). In terms of strategies, a basic division was made between *direct* strategies and *indirect* strategies from which the refusal has to be inferred. Direct strategies put the refusal 'bald on record' in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, and include the word *no*, and statements of negative ability or willingness, such as 'I can't manage that, I don't like running'. Indirect strategies indicate refusal by means of another speech act, such as an expression of regret, an excuse, an alternative proposition, or an avoiding strategy, such as making a joke or changing the topic, since these are clearly strategies which imply a refusal, even if it applies only in the short term.

4.1 Number of turns and strategies
Table 1 presents the average number of turns taken to refuse in each of the three conditions.

Table 1: Average number of turns

	OFFER	REQUEST
Natural	1	2.7
Role play	1	3
DCT	1	1

The table indicates no differences between the three conditions in refusing offers of food/drink: one turn was used by participants in all three conditions. For invitational requests, however, the results for role play refusals are similar to those obtained in the natural situation, but different from the DCT responses. Natural requests elicited refusals involving an average of 2.7 turns, role play requests averaged 3 turns, while the DCT refusals involved only one turn. The refusals elicited through the written DCT are thus rather different from the

other two elicitation techniques – indeed the very structure of the DCT does not allow for interaction between participants.

Table 2 shows the total number of discourse strategies used to express refusals in each of the three conditions.

Table 2: Average number of strategies

	OFFER	REQUEST
Natural	1	5.2
Role play	1.6	5
DCT	2.5	2.5

Once again the patterns for the role play and natural conditions are more similar than those between the DCT and other conditions. Interestingly, in the DCT condition people wrote *more* in refusing an offer (using an average of 2.5 strategies), than they produced in the natural situation and the role play interaction, where they were very succinct using only an average of 1 strategy for the natural condition, and 1.6 strategies for the role play condition, typically the brief formulaic *no thanks* (see below). In face-to-face interaction, people clearly do not feel the need to provide elaborate refusals of simple offers of food and drink. This indicates that it is useful in studying refusals to distinguish such offers from more complex invitational requests.

Just the opposite pattern was found for refusing invitational requests. Here the DCT average remained at 2.5 strategies, while participants used twice as many refusal strategies in the natural and role play conditions, a pattern supporting results from earlier research (e.g. Beebe and Cummings 1996). The score of 2.5 for DCT refusals also indicates that people did not differentiate between offers of food/drink and invitational requests in this condition, while in the natural and the role play condition the participants used many more strategies for refusing invitational requests than they did for refusing offers of food/drink (average of 5.2 and 5 versus 1 and 1.6). Once again the pattern for DCT refusals was very different from that of the other two conditions. This suggests that DCT responses may be driven by different imperatives, such as filling in the space provided, while face-to-face interaction involves a different kind of pressure, namely to respond to one's interlocutor in an appropriate and socially acceptable manner.

4.2 Type of strategies

Turning to the type of strategies used, the data was analysed into three groups of strategies:

1. direct refusal only: e.g. *um no I'm alright thanks* (P4)
2. indirect refusal only: e.g. *can you do a walking one* (P3)
3. combination of direct plus indirect refusal: e.g. *nah I'd I'd embarrass you I'd be so far back* (P5)

Table 3 shows the different types of strategies used in each of the three conditions.

Table 3: Different types of strategies

	OFFER			REQUEST		
	D	I	D+I	D	I	D+I
Natural	5[6]	0	0	0	3	3
Role play	5	0	0	0	3	3
DCT	1	3	2	1	1	4

Again, the most dramatic difference revealed by table 3 is the difference between responses produced in the DCT versus the role play and natural conditions. In refusing an offer of food/drink, participants used *no* indirectness in the latter conditions, whereas refusals in the DCT conditions used indirect strategies as the main or a supplementary strategy five out of a possible six times. In refusing an invitational request the pattern was quite different, with no direct refusals at all in the role play and natural conditions, whereas there was one occurrence in the DCT condition.

Table 4 examines the frequency of the bald on record forms *no* and *no thanks* as refusal strategies in response to offers (there was only one instance with requests).

The table makes it very clear that these very direct strategies are the preferred strategies for refusing offers of food and drink in the natural and role play conditions, whereas in the DCT condition, the participants tended to use more elaborate strategies. This pattern is only true for offers, not for invitational requests. In this study, as in previous research, refusals of more

complex invitations/requests tended to be more elaborate in length, and in number and type of strategies, than in the DCT condition.

Table 4: Frequency of *no thanks* in refusing an offer

	'NO THANKS'	'NO'	OTHER
Natural	2	3	0
Role play	1	2	2
DCT	1	0	5

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that, although the pattern is not so marked for offers of food/drink as for invitational requests, refusals produced in the natural condition more closely resemble those in the role play condition than those used in the DCT. This is true in terms of their length, the number of strategies involved, and the type of strategies used. These results support Turnbull's (2001) results, where oral role play produced more extended refusals than DCTs. In sum, the analysis indicates firstly that refusals of simple offers of food/drink differ in length and complexity from refusals of invitational requests, and secondly that refusals elicited using DCTs are different in length and complexity from those elicited in the other two conditions. Most obviously, the natural condition and the role-playing situation do not limit the speaker in terms of how extensively they express their refusals, nor in terms of the range of strategies adopted.[7]

5. Conclusion

The small study outlined in this paper suggests that speech act (1996: 81), will benefit from adopting a range of methods of collecting data. Because of their ease of administration and data processing, written DCTs are an attractive method of providing information about what second language learners know about appropriate ways of responding in a range of situations. But DCTs cannot tell us how people actually respond to others in face-to-face inter-action. Clearly, there are advantages in adopting a range of methods of data collection, since, as Beebe and Cummings note 'each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses' (1996: 81).

This paper has described the results of three different methods of data collection for the speech act of refusal. The study differs from earlier research in using data from interaction between friends, and in eliciting responses from the same respondents in all three conditions. The study also compared refusals in response to offers of food and drink with refusals of more socially complex invitational requests.

Although the data set is small, the results confirm those of previous researchers in relation to the merits of using a variety of approaches in eliciting data on how people express speech acts in interaction. While DCTs are useful in revealing what participants know about stereotypical ways of responding to offers and invitational requests, this study supports Turnbull (2001), in suggesting that their limitations in terms of length and complexity of responses mean that other complementary approaches are also valuable. Ease of data collection clearly cannot justify using DCTs as a sole elicitation method.

This study also demonstrates the value of open role play as an elicitation technique. Refusals produced in role plays closely resembled those produced in natural conditions with respect to turn length, and in the number and type of strategies used. DCT responses, by contrast were considerably shorter and less complex. Since natural authentic data is so difficult to collect, this study is useful in indicating that more accessible role play data can offer valuable insights into the way people express different speech acts in different contexts.

Appendix A: Natural Data

Participant 1: Anna [8]

[half marathon]

AM: how's your running going

P1:   I haven't done anything cos of my toe

AM: oh

P1:   but I've strapped it to my other toe so it's sort of getting better

AM: yeah //cos you\ started running for a while eh

P1:   /(   )\\

P1:   mm and I was going cool I was really enthusiastic and //then\ it was like oh okay I can't do [laughs]: it anymore:

AM: /yeah\\

AM: you should do a marath- a half marathon with me

P1:   yeah [laughs]: probably not for a while ( ):

Participant 2: Brenda
[half marathon]
AM: you should do my marathon with me
P2:   + yeah I shouldn't even be jogging or //kickboxing or running or doing any\thing with my feet [laughs]
AM: well you should prove everyone wrong and show them [laughs]: (what else) you can do:
P2:   I don't like jogging I don't mind it but I'm just not fit enough
AM: yeah //(and)\
P2:   /and\\ I've got the wrong body type for long distance running
AM: yeah
P2:   which doesn't mean I can't do it
AM: yeah
[more food]
AM: do you wanna a um something else
P2:   oh no I'm fine thank yeah
AM: you're cool?
P2:   I'm cool

Participant 3: Catherine
[half marathon]
AM: but yeah I really enjoyed it eh you should do one with me
P3:   + can you do a walking one //[laughs]\
AM: /[laughs]\\
AM: a walking one [name]?
P3:   I can't run oh I know you can run and I'll be like in the wheelchair (like)
AM: [laughs] push along [laughs] there's one //in\ there's one in auckland
P3:   /(   )\\
P3:   (mm when)
AM: um (on) november the third ++
P3:   are you doing it
AM: yeah + are you
P3:   [laughs]: no:
AM: oh
P3:   [laughs]
AM: well I tried my hardest [laughs] (we'll) give that one a miss
[more food]

AM: would you like a another (one)
P3: [whispers]: no:
AM: no

Participant 4: Deana
[a drink]
AM: um do you wanna drink
P4: no I'm alright thanks
AM: okay cool
[half marathon]
AM: you should do a um a half marathon with me
P4: + yeah //[laughs]: right: um\
AM: /[laughs] (oh)\\ [name] //come on\ [laughs]
P4: /[laughs]\\
P4: nah I I wanna get fit but I the problem is is I like going to the gym
right //but\ none of the gyms I don't like the ones in town...
AM: /yeah\\

Participant 5: Edwina
[a drink]
AM: and do you want a drink of anything
P5: mm I've got my water [points to bottle]
AM: okay cool
[half marathon]
P5: so are you going to do another one
AM: yep yep + I just want some//one to do it with me\ [laughs]
P5: //you've got too much energy\
AM: [laughs]
P5: nah I'd I'd embarrass you //I'd be\ so far back
AM: /[laughs]\\
P5: you'd be sprinting off I'd be like [puts on voice]: I'll catch you at the
end:
AM: [laughs]
P5: come back and pick me up //[laughs]\
AM: /[laughs] on the way back I'll\\ I'll see you on the way

Participant 6: Fiona

[a drink]

AM: um oh do you want a drink or anything are you right

P6:   I'm alright

AM: you're good okay

[half marathon]

AM: um yeah it was great fun I thoroughly recommend it are you interested in doing it sometime or //+ ( )\

P6:   /um\\ I don't know [laughs]

AM: yeah that's fair enough it's not everyone's cup of tea [laughs]

P6:   oh no I like it but it wouldn't be for a while //I\ don't know maybe in [country] I'll start running or [laughs]

AM: /yeah\\

Appendix B: Role Play

Scenarios:

Each of these role plays describes a situation you are in where you want or are required to make a response. It also gives your opinion about what you think about the situation. I will be playing the other person in the situation. In your response, please try to imagine you are actually in the situation and say or do what you think you would do—it doesn't matter if what you would say is only a couple of words or quite long, just try to keep your responses as authentic as possible.

1. You have spent a lot of time cooking dinner and just as you are about to serve it, your flatmate Ian rings to say he won't be home for dinner. You are not happy.

2. You are at your friend Sally's house. When she leaves the room to go and get something you see a jacket that looks like the one you thought you lost a while ago. You are sure it's yours and you want to ask for it back when she comes back into the room.

3. You are at your friend Helen's house for a chat. Helen asks you if you want to go to Latin dancing classes with her sometime. You don't want to go.

4. You are about to go into the office of your lecturer, Dr. Simmons. You are unhappy with a mark you received on an essay. You think his marking was too hard.

5. You are at your friend Ann's house chatting about a recent television show you both watched. She asks you if you are too hot and want the window opened. You don't want it opened.

6. Your mum asks you whether you like the new blouse she brought. You don't think she looks very good in it but don't want to hurt her feelings.

7. Your friend Sarah is studying Sociology and asks you whether you want to go to a seminar with her next Thursday. You don't want to.

8. Your next-door neighbour, Fred, has music playing very loudly which you can hear from your place. This is annoying you as you are trying to study. You ring him up to tell him to turn it down.

9. You are walking to work and on the way you see a girl from school that you haven't seen for a number of years. She seems to want to chat but you don't want to.

10. You are at your friend Karen's house. You are talking to her when she asks you to go skiing with her next weekend. You don't want to go.

Notes

1 We would like to thank Meredith Marra for assistance with editing this paper, and the audience at the 15th Linguistics Society Conference held in Wellington, September 2003, for their useful comments. We are also appreciative of the helpful and constructive comments of the two anonymous reviewers.

2 Besson, Roloff and Paulson (1998: 185) also argue that the scenario allowed the participants to distance themselves from the rejection by being placed in the role of chair of an organisation rather than having to respond on a personal level.

3 The request for the role-play and DCTs were designed to be equivalent to, but not precisely the same as those which were used in the natural situation. For example, in the natural setting the participants were asked if they wanted to do a half-marathon with Anthea sometime. In the role-play, the participants were asked if they wanted to come along to Latin dance classes with Anthea sometime, and in the DCT, they were asked if they wanted to go on a tramp with Anthea sometime.

4 From this point on for stylistic reasons we do not use quotation marks around 'natural'. However, natural should be understood to refer throughout to the situation described in elicitation condition 1: ie. where Anthea was producing relatively planned discourse in the form of offers and invitational requests whose content (though not exact form) had been prepared in advance, while her addressees were responding spontaneously in real time.

5 See Appendix B.

6 Some situations, like this one, do not add up to 6 because one or more participants accepted the offer or request.

7 Appendix A illustrates the complexity and extended nature of the negotiations involved in participants' responses. This study has concentrated on quantitative analysis of the refusal responses. Future research will undertake a qualitative analysis of the discourse features of refusal responses, including a more detailed analysis of the range of strategies employed in doing refusals in different conditions.

8 All names are pseudonyms. The transcription conventions are those used in the Wellington Corpus of New Zealand English. http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/corpora/

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