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GRADUATION PAPER
A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON REJECTING
INVITATION IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

BY

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CLASS

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SUPERVISOR

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HAIPHONG - 2010

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG

Nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp

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(về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

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2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

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3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

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- 1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp:**

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Người chấm phản biện

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Abbreviation

Tables

	Page
<i>PART I: INTRODUCTION</i>	1
1. Rationale of the study	1
2. Aims of the study	1
3. Scope of the study	1
4. Method of the study.....	1
5. Comments on the survey questionnaires.....	2
6. Design of the study.....	3
<i>PART II: DEVELOPMENT</i>	4
CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	4
1. What is speech acts?.....	4
1.1. <i>Speech acts</i>	4
1.2. <i>Classification of speech acts</i>	7
2.	W
hat is invitation?.....	11
3. Rejecting invitation.....	12
CHAPTER II: WAYS OF REJECTING INVITATION IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE	16
1. Directly rejecting invitation in English	16
1.1. <i>Directly rejecting invitation in English</i>	16
1.2. <i>Directly rejecting invitation in Vietnamese</i>	16
2. Indirectly rejecting invitation	17

2.1. <i>Indirectly rejecting invitation</i>	17
2.1.1. Regret + Reason (R+r)	17
2.1.2. Dilemma (D).....	19
2.1.3. Reason + Suggestion (r+S).....	20
2.1.4. Reason (r)	20
2.1.5. Alternative Suggestion (AS)	20
2.1.6. Hesitation.....	21
2.1.7. Avoiding Conflicts	22
2.2. <i>Indirectly rejecting invitation in Vietnamese</i>	23
2.2.1. Reason (r)	23
2.2.2. Negative Presupposition (-PRES)	23
2.2.3. Suggestion + Reason (S+r).....	24
2.2.4. Alternative Suggestion (AS)	25
3. The similarities and differences in rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese	25
3.1. <i>Similarities</i>	25
3.2. <i>Differences</i>	30
CHAPTER III: THE DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS	31
1. Data collection	31
2. Data analysis	32
2.1. <i>English finding</i>	32
2.2. <i>Vietnamese finding</i>	33
3. Tips for rejecting invitation	33
PART III: CONCLUSION	36
1. Summary.....	36
2. Suggestion for further study	36
REFERENCES	37

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ABBREVIATIONS

FTAs	Face – threatening acts
R+r	Regret + Reason
D	Dilemma
r+S	Reason + Suggestion
r	Reason
AS	Alternative Suggestion
-PRES.	Negative Presupposition
S+r	Suggestion + Reason
d	Directly rejecting invitation

TABLES

	Page
Table 1 : The five general functions of speech acts	9
Table 2 : Data of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese.....	36

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

In everyday social life, people are sometimes invited to go somewhere or to do something. Accepting an invitation is a delicate matter although it is much easier than rejecting as the latter is a face-threatening act. However, there are situations in which invitations cannot avoid refusal. For these reasons, I have decided to choose the subject: “A comparative study on rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese” to enhance the efficiency of the teaching and learning of this speech act in English and Vietnamese, create the tactfulness and flexibility in language use for both Vietnamese learner of English and English-speaking learners of Vietnam with the maxim declared in a Vietnamese proverb: “You don’t have to buy words, so don’t let them hurt the feelings of others.”

2. Aims of the study

This study aims at:

- Defining invitation in English and Vietnamese.
- Defining rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese.
- Finding out the similarities and differences in rejecting invitation

between English and Vietnamese

3. Scope of the study

- When rejecting invitation, we have both of direct and indirect rejecting. To avoid face-threatening act when giving rejecting invitation so this study much focuses on indirect rejecting invitation.

- This study discusses some ways of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese to find out some similarities and differences on theory.

- In this research, the writer interviews 10 foreigners and conducts survey questionnaire to 50 Vietnamese people to find out how English and Vietnamese reject invitation and gives some recommendations.

4. Method of the study

The practical approaches are:

- Comparative and contrastive analysis
- Studying relevant publications
- Consulting with the supervisor
- Conducting survey questionnaires and interviewing

5. Comments on the survey questionnaire

Because of restricted geographic position so the survey is just conducted to fifty Vietnamese informants and interviewed ten foreigners. There are two groups of informants. The first group who administered the questionnaire in Vietnamese consists of the Vietnamese all living in Northern Vietnam. The second group who administered in English includes American and English native speakers. The information about the informants is quite necessary for data analysis, so the informants were requested to provide the following parameters:

- Age
- Gender

Below is the table which shows the number of informants with their status parameters.

STATUS PARAMETERS		INFORMANTS	
		Vietnamese	English
Age	- Above 20 and below 30	32	7
	- Above 30 and below 40	10	3
	- Above 40	8	0
Gender	- Male	23	6
	- Female	27	4

6. Design of the study

The study is divided into three parts:

Part I: “Introduction” includes rationale, aims, scope, comments and design of the study.

Part II: “Development” includes 3 chapters:

Chapter I: “The theoretical background”

Chapter II: “The ways of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese”

Chapter III: “The Data collection and Data analysis”

Part III: “Conclusion” giving the summary of whole the study

PART II: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. What is speech acts?

1.1. Speech acts

In many ways of expressing themselves, “ *people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances*” (Yule, 1996: 47). If you work in a situation where a boss has a great deal of power, then his utterance of expression, “*You are fired*”, is more than just a statement. This utterance can be used to perform the act of ending your employment. However, the actions performed by utterances do not have to be as unpleasant as in the one above. Actions can be quite pleasant, as in the acknowledgement of thanks: “*You’re welcome*”, or the expression of surprise: “*Who’d have thought it?*”, or in Vietnamese “*Ai mà nghĩ thế?*”.

Making a statement may be the paradigmatic use of language, but there are all sorts of other things we can do with words. We can make requests, ask questions, give orders, make promises, give thanks, offer apologies, and so on. Moreover, almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention: there is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience.

The theory of speech acts is partly taxonomic and partly explanatory. It must systematically classify types of speech acts and the ways in which they can succeed or fail. It must reckon with the fact that the relationship between the words being used and the force of their utterance is often oblique. For example, the sentence “*This is a pig sty*” might be used nonliterally to state that a certain room is messy and filthy and, further, to demand indirectly that it be straightened out and cleaned up. Even when this sentence is used literally and directly, say to describe a certain area of a barnyard, the content of its utterance is not fully determined by its linguistic meaning--in particular, the

meaning of the word 'this' does not determine which area is being referred to. A major task for the theory of speech acts is to account for how speakers can succeed in what they do despite the various ways in which linguistic meaning underdetermines use.

In general, speech acts are acts of communication. To communicate is to express a certain attitude, and the type of speech act being performed corresponds to the type of attitude being expressed. For example, a statement expresses a belief, a request expresses a desire, and an apology expresses a regret. As an act of communication, a speech act succeeds if the audience identifies, in accordance with the speaker's intention, the attitude being expressed.

Some speech acts, however, are not primarily acts of communication and have the function not of communicating but of affecting institutional states of affairs. They can do so in either of two ways. Some officially judge something to be the case, and others actually make something the case. Those of the first kind include judges' rulings, referees' calls and assessors' appraisals, and the latter include sentencing, bequeathing and appointing. Acts of both kinds can be performed only in certain ways under certain circumstances by those in certain institutional or social positions.

Actions performed by utterances are generally called *speech acts* and, in English, are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. "*The number of speech acts performed by the average individual in the course of any ordinary day when our work and leisure bring us into contact with others probably runs into the thousands*" (Austin, 1962).

These descriptive terms for different kinds of speech acts apply to the speaker's communicative intention in producing an utterance. The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer. Both the speaker and the hearer are helped in this process by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. These circumstances are called

the speech event. In many ways, it is nature of the speech event that determines the interpretation of an utterance as performing a particular speech act. For example, in the wintry day the speaker take a cup of coffee but it is too iced, and produce the utterance which is likely to be interpreted as a complaint: *“This coffee is really cold !”*. Changing the circumstance to a really hot summer day and the speaker, being given a glass of iced coffee and producing the utterance, it is likely to be interpreted as a praise. *“It means that there is more to the interpretation of speech act than can be found in the utterance alone”*(Yule, 1996:48).

A Speech Act is an utterance that serves a function in communication. Some examples are an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment or refusal. A speech act might contain just one word such as ‘No’ to perform a refusal or several words or sentences such as: *“I’m sorry, I can’t, I have a prior engagement”*. It is important to mention that speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also appropriate use of that language within a given culture. The influence of these variables often differs from one culture to another. This study focuses primarily on the patterns of refusals in American English native speakers and whether or not there are some cultural tendencies in refusal patterns.

The speech act of refusals occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says *no* to a request or invitation. According to Tanck (2002:2), ***“refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/ requester /inviter because it contradicts his/her expectations and is often realized through an indirect strategy”***. Amongst Vietnamese people and foreigners living in Vietnam, it is said to be true that as a cultural norm, most Vietnamese people do not give a direct *no* when refusing a favor and much less when refusing an invitation. Vietnamese people tend to be very polite and less direct in their forms of refusal and will most often either say *yes* or *maybe* which can be a masked *no* or *no* followed by an excuse or reason for refusing the offer. In general want to get along with people and make a good impression in a social encounter to appear

amiable. It is not common amongst Vietnamese people to refuse an invitation or offer with just a direct *no*, *in* order to save face or avoid conflict. In hopes of further testing the existence of a cultural tendency towards politeness and avoiding conflict, a survey was conducted to test the refusal patterns of Vietnamese when asked to do a favor or when given an invitation.

1.2. Classifications of speech acts

Austin (1962) introduces a classifications of acts performed when a person speaks. The first is a **locutionary act** producing a meaningful expression. For example, if we make a simple sentence like “*I want a cup of coffee*”, we are likely to produce a locutionary act. Moreover, if we do not only simply say that sentence but also attend to require the listener to bring us a cup of coffee, this kind of acts via utterances we produce with purposes in mind is generally known as **illocutionary acts**. These acts are performed for communicative function. “*In communicating, we do not simply create an utterance without intending to have an effect*” (G.Yule,1996:48). For the sentence above, we all want the act of bringing us a cup of coffee to be done or the **perlocutionary force** is performed. That is the third related act, **perlocutionary acts**.

Pretheoretically, we think of an act of communication, linguistic or otherwise, as an act of expressing oneself. This rather vague idea can be made more precise if we get more specific about what is being expressed. The perlocutionary act is a matter of trying to get the hearer to form some correlative attitude and in some cases to act in a certain way. For example, a statement expresses a belief and normally has the further purpose of getting the addressee form the same belief. A request expresses a desire for the addressee to do a certain thing and normally aims for the addressee to intend to and, indeed, actually do that thing. A promise expresses the speaker's firm intention to do something, together with the belief that by his utterance he is obligated to do it, and normally aims further for the addressee to expect, and to feel entitled to expect, the speaker to do it.

Searle (1969:70) lists five types of speech acts based on the speaker's intentions:

Declarations: change states of affair, comprising naming, firing, appointment, etc.

Representatives: state what the speaker believes to be the case or not, including assertion, description, report, statement, etc.

Expressives: state what the speaker feels; express psychological states or attitude. They can be apologizing, compliment, greeting, thanking, accepting, condoling and congratulating.

Directives: attempt to get the hearer to do something and express what the speaker wants. They are advising, admonishing, asking, begging, dismissing, excusing, forbidding, instructing, ordering, permitting, requesting, requiring, suggesting, urging and warning.

Commissives: commit the speaker to a course of action, expressing his/her intention such as agreeing, guaranteeing, inviting, offering, promising, swearing and volunteering.

These five types of speech acts are also presented by G.Yule (1996:55) as in the table below:

Speech act type	Direction of fit	S = Speaker X = Situation
Declarations	words change the world	S causes X
Representatives	make words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	make words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	make the world fit words	S wants X
Commissives	make the world fit words	S intends X

Table 1: The five general functions of speech acts

(following G.Yule 1996)

According to Yule (1996:54), a different approach to distinguishing types of speech acts can be made on the basis of structure. For example:

{1}a. *You wear a seat belt.*

b. *Do you wear a seat belt?*

c. *Wear a seat belt!*

As shown in {1}, there is an easily recognized relationship between the structural forms (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and the three general communicative functions (statement, question, command/ request). “Whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function, we have a direct speech act. Whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an indirect speech act” (Yule, 1996:55).

For instance, a question in English (“*Could/ can you.....?*”), or in Vietnamese (“*Anh có thểkhông?*”) is used to give a request, not to ask for information. Thus, a declarative used to make a statement is a direct speech act, but a declarative used to make a request is an indirect speech act. The utterance in {2a} is a declarative. When it is used to make a statement, as paraphrased in {2b}, it is functioning as a direct speech act. But when it is used to make a command/request, as paraphrased in {2c}, it is functioning as an indirect speech act.

{2} a. *It's cold outside.*

b. *I hereby tell you about the weather.*

c. *I hereby request of you that you close the door.*

Besides, Yule (1996:55) points that different structures can be used to accomplish the same basic function, as in {3}, where the speaker wants the addressee not to stand in front of the TV. The basic function of all the utterances in {3} is a command/request, but only the imperative structure in {3a} represents a direct speech act. The interrogative structure in {3b} is not being used only a question, hence it is an indirect speech act. The declarative structure in {3c}, and {3d} are also indirect acts.

{3}a. *Move out of the way!*

b. *Do you have to stand in front of the TV?*

c. *You're standing in front of the TV.*

d. *You're making a better door than a window.*

In English, indirect speech acts are often felt to be more polite to perform some kinds of speech acts such as requesting, commanding, refusing, inviting.

As Austin observed, the content of a locutionary act (what is said) is not always determined by what is meant by the sentence being uttered. Ambiguous words or phrases need to be disambiguated and the references of indexical and other context-sensitive expressions need to be fixed in order for what is said to be determined fully. Moreover, what is said does not determine the illocutionary act(s) being performed. We can perform a speech act (1) directly or indirectly, by way of performing another speech act, (2) literally or nonliterally, depending on how we are using our words, and (3) explicitly or inexplicitly, depending on whether we fully spell out what we mean.

These three contrasts are distinct and should not be confused. The first two concern the relation between the utterance and the speech act(s) thereby performed. In indirection a single utterance is the performance of one illocutionary act by way of performing another. For example, we can make a request or give permission by way of making a statement, say by uttering 'I am getting thirsty' or 'It doesn't matter to me', and we can make a statement or give an order by way of asking a question, such as 'Will the sun rise tomorrow?' or 'Can you clean up your room?' When an illocutionary act is performed indirectly, it is performed by way of performing some other one directly. In the case of nonliteral utterances, we do not mean what our words mean but something else instead. With nonliterality the illocutionary act we are performing is not the one that would be predicted just from the meanings of the words being used, as with likely utterances of 'My mind got derailed' or 'You can stick that in your ear'. Occasionally utterances are both nonliteral

and indirect. For example, one might utter 'I love the sound of your voice' to tell someone nonliterally (ironically) that she can't stand the sound of his voice and thereby indirectly to ask him to stop singing.

Nonliterality and indirection are the two main ways in which the semantic content of a sentence can fail to determine the full force and content of the illocutionary act being performed in using the sentence. They rely on the same sorts of processes that Grice discovered in connection with what he called 'conversational implicature', which, as is clear from Grice's examples, is nothing more than the special case of nonliteral or indirect constatives made with the use of indicative sentences. A few of Grice's examples illustrate nonliterality, e.g., 'He was a little intoxicated', used to explain why a man smashed some furniture, but most of them are indirect statements, e.g., 'There is a garage around the corner' used to tell someone where to get petrol, and 'Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance has been regular', giving the high points in a letter of recommendation. These are all examples in which what is meant is not determined by what is said. However, Grice overlooks a different kind of case, marked by contrast (3) listed above.

2. What is invitation?

Inviting is mostly a social habit. It is one of the most sensitive and communicative acts to strengthen the relation or intimacy.

Inviting, like thanking, complementing, requesting, etc., is regarded as one of the most *sensitive illocutionary acts* in communication (Tank 2002). According to Nguyen Van Lap (1989,3): ***“Inviting Act is one of the polite request forms. The situation, participants, relationship and objective of communication greatly influence the structure of invitation formulae. The article has researched deep into the structure forms of invitation in the Vietnamese language.”***

Like another request forms (request, command, asking), invitation can express different polite levels of the speaker. Inviting means polite, hurry

somebody to act that this action is to make both of the speaker and the hearer satisfied. On the other hand, implementing invitation is suitable for dialog person's interest.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary [6:685]: "**Invitation** is *request someone to take part in a social event*" or "*request someone to go to somewhere or to do something politely*":

Eg: "Would you like to see a tennis match with me on Sunday?"

The same, Vietnamese Dictionary 1 define that "**Invitation**" is "*have requiring someone to come*".

Eg: "Mời anh đến chơi."

But this definition just gives a feature of meaning. According to Vietnamese Dictionary 2 says that: "*invitation is have requirement someone to go somewhere or do something*". Although this definition is more sufficient meaning, it hasn't distinguished among inviting act with another act such as: request, order, ask, etc. Invitation is the speech which expresses friendly attitude, polite attitude, respect and hospitality of the speaker and starts from the interest of both of the speaker and the hearer.

Invitation is also a very popular speech act used in daily communication. Invitation is language reality in every culture. "**Invitation**" expresses the concern to share with others, helps consolidate the relationship and makes the life more and more diversified and copious.

3. Rejecting invitation

According to Tanck (2002) refusal is a face – threatening act to the listener/ requester/ inviter because it contradicts his/her expectations. Refusals are known as "**striking points**" for many non-native speakers (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliz Welt, 1990). Refusal can be "*tricky speech acts to perform linguistically and psychologically since the possibility of offending the interlocutor is inherent in the act itself.*"(Known, 2004)

In social interactions, one of the most potential miscommunication may happen in refusal. According to Brown and Levison (1989) refusal is one of Face – threatening acts (FTAs). “Face” means the public self – image of a person. It refers to that emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize.

There are many reasons why people want to save their faces. They may have become attached to the value on which this face has been built, they may be enjoying the results and the power that their face has created or they may be missing higher social aspirations for which they will need this face. Goffman also defines “face work” the way in which people maintain their face. This is done by presenting a consistent image to others. One can gain or lose face by improving or spoiling this image. The better that image, the more likely one will be appreciated. People also have to make sure that in the efforts to key their own face, they do not in any way damage the other’s face. In daily communication, people may give threat to another individual’s self-images or create FTAs.

These acts impede the freedom of action (negative face) and the wish that one wants be desired by others (positive face) by either speaker or the addressees or both. Refusals threaten the inviter’s face because they may restrict the inviter’s freedom to act according to his/her will. On the other hand, refusal may threaten the addressee’s public image to maintain approval from others. Therefore, in order to reduce the risk of the invitee’s losing face, they have to know the face preserving strategies (Holt Graves, 2002).

Refusal to invitation is considered as one of FTAs, especially to the positive face-want of the addressee. Thus, there are some strategies related to politeness strategies needed in order to lower the threat as well as to have smooth interaction. However, the choice of these strategies may vary across languages .For example. In refusing invitations, offers and suggestions, gratitude was regularly expressed by English speakers, but rarely by Egyptian

Arabic speakers (Nelson, Al-batal, and Echols, 1996). When Mandarin Chinese speakers wanted to refuse requests, they expressed positive opinion (eg: “*I would like to...*”) much less frequently than English since Chinese informants were concerned that if they ever expressed positive opinion, they would be forced to comply (Cited in Adullah Ali Al Eryani).

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary [10: 1068], “**reject**” means “*saying you don’t want anything for you*”. The editors of Vietnamese Dictionary have a similar concept to English language about rejecting “reject” is “refusing the thing that is given or required” [22: 1036]. Like this, we can see that rejecting invitation is “taking to inviter is don’t receive anything or don’t do anything which is mentioned in invitation.” Like all acts of other languages, rejecting invitation can use indirectly or directly depending on the aims or communication situations.

The speech act of refusals occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly say no to do an invitation. Refusals are potentially face – threatening and essentially impolite acts (Brown and Levinson, 1993). As failure to refuse appropriately can risk the interpersonal relations of the speakers, refusals usually include various strategies to avoid offending one’s interlocutor.

In everyday social life, people are sometimes invited to go somewhere of to do something. Accepting an invitation is a delicate matter although it is much easier than rejecting as the latter is a face – threatening act. However, there are situations in which invites cannot avoid refusals. For examples:

(1) “*Nhưng tôi càng xa lánh anh , anh càng tìm cách lại gần tôi.Đạo này gặp tôi anh hay rủ:*

- *Trường ăn mì với anh không?*
- *Không. - Tôi đáp.”*

[16:146]

(2) “*Cake? He said in his gentle voice “Biscuit? All home – made!”*

“Oh, very nice. I’m sure.” Marion thanked him “But I’ll have to refuse. I’ll be putting on pounds.” [7:285]

(“Bánh ngọt nhé? Anh ta mời bằng giọng nhẹ nhàng “Bánh qui nhé? Tất cả đều của nhà làm.”)

(“Ồ, em chắc là sẽ rất ngon.” Marion cảm ơn anh ta “Nhưng em sẽ phải từ chối. Em đang tăng cân đây.”)

In (1), her curt rejection clearly made the person who invited her sad. On the contrary, in (2) the rejection is put with a convincing reason after the compliment. So, leading to although the hearer is rejected, they feel satisfied.

Rejecting invitation divides two groups. They are directly rejecting and indirectly rejecting.

Directness is a style of communication in which speaker want to get the straightforward to the points. The speech interprets exactly and literally what the speaker said.

Indirectness is any communicative behavior, verbal or nonverbal that conveys something more than or different from what it literally means (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Searle (1983) defines indirect speech acts as a *“case in which one act is performed indirectly by the way of performing another.”*

CHAPTER II: WAYS OF REJECTING INVITATION IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

1. Directly rejecting invitation

1.1. *Directly rejecting invitation in English*

Directly rejecting invitation is immediately saying refusal exactly. According to dialog theory, the speech acts are implemented right with the finish of speech acts, so that is directly rejecting invitation. When the informant wants to reject directly invitation, they often say “No”, “No way”, “No, thanks” or “No, it’s impossible”. For example:

(3) “- *I’d like to invite you to dinner this Saturday.*

- *No, I don’t want to.* [13:36]

(4) “- *We have arranged a meal in a restaurant this evening. Most of us will be there. Would you like to join us?*

- *No, no. You know I can’t. Thanks anyway.* [11:19]

(5) “- *Are you free? I’d like to invite you to our dancing party.*

- *No, thanks.* [13:18]

(6) “- *Yoko: What about going ice-skating at the mall tonight?*

- *Peter: No, it’s impossible.* [9]

The ways which people speak directly, tactlessly and even rudely in 4 above examples, they certainly made the hearer hurt or to be in a state of shock because of losing face. However, the numbers of sentences like that make up very little. Almost the informants say that they will use gentle speech, pleasing to the ear and more polite but still reach the purpose of rejecting.

1.2. *Directly rejecting invitation in Vietnamese*

Rejecting someone’s invitation is the thing that we usually meet in daily life. Almost everybody want to reject but don’t make invitee lose face, they occurred appropriate reasons or apologies to not make the invitee sad or uncomfortable. However some people don’t care about face- threatening acts.

To reply the invitation Vietnamese people often use the way which speak directly like: “*Không*”, “*Không, cảm ơn.*” or “*Thôi*”. For example:

(7) “ - *Nếu thứ bảy này anh không bận, rất vui lòng được mời anh đến nhà chơi.*

- *Không, cảm ơn anh. Tôi có việc bận rồi.*” [9]

(8) “ - *Lan đi lượn phố với anh không?*” [20:34]

- *Không.*”

(9) “ - *Em nhảy với anh thêm một bài nữa nhé?*

- *Thôi, em chẳng nhảy nữa đâu. Em nhảy chán lắm.*” [20:36]

When using the way of speaking directly, some author say that this rejecting is very compact and it will express character like personal feature of the speaker

2. Indirectly rejecting invitation

2.1. Indirectly rejecting invitation in English: There are various ways to indirectly reject the invitation.

2.1.1. Regret + Reason (R+r): Rejecting by the way giving a regret and the reason of rejecting.

(10) “- *I hear you are going to get married soon. Congratulations!*

- *That’s right, next July 21st. Can you come to the wedding?*

- *Oh, what a pity! That’s when we’re away on holiday.*” [12:28]

(11) “- *Next week on March 7th, will you please come to my house for dinner?*

- *I’m sorry, I’ll be away on business that day.*” [14:18]

(12) “- *Could you play tennis at the weekend, Whiz?*

- *I wish I could, but I’m busy. Maybe another time, though.*” [4:69]

To increase politeness in rejecting, speaker often thanks before give a reason that cannot accept the invitation.

(13) “- *I’m going to the park with some friends for a barbecue on Saturday. Would you like to join us?*

- Thanks, but unfortunately I have to take my sister to the air port on Sunday.” [11:133]

(14) “- Can you join us for dinner next Friday?

- Thank you for asking me, but I have got another appointment that evening.” [13:94]

Sentence Patterns (R+r)
1.I'm (very, terribly...) sorry, but...
2.I'm sorry, but I can't manage it.
3.I'm sorry, but I can't make it.
4.I'm sorry, I can't go to the movie with you, I ...
5.I'm sorry, I can't join you in New York that weekend, I ...
6.I'm sorry, I can't come.
7.Thank you, but...
8.Thank you, but I'm afraid I'll...
9.Thank you, but I'm afraid I'll have to...
10. (I) wish could, but...
11. Thanks for the invitation, but...
12. Thank you for your kind invitation, but...
13. It was very kind of you to invite me, but...
14. Thank you, but I'm afraid I have other plans for that night.
15. Thank you, but I'm afraid I have an appointment that day.
16. Thanks for asking, but...
17. Ah, no...sorry. I've got to meet a friend.

[29:180]

2.1.2. Dilemma (D): Rejecting by the way give a dilemma situation.

The invitees seem to be concerned between desire to participate in the activities mentioned in the invitation and the barriers cannot make wishes. Finally, accept rejecting.

(15) “- *Say, we’re come here to dance but not to sit and listen. Why not have a dance?*”

- *You are right, dear. Sitting is boring, but I’m not good at Tango.*”

[7:229]

(16) “- *How about going to a disco tonight?*”

- *I’d love to, but I’ve got to do some homework.*”

[4:43]

(17) “*Carlos: - There is a great Brazilian movie on TV. Would you like to watch it with me?*”

Phil: - I’d love to, but I have to study tonight.”

[4:33]

Sentence Patterns (D)	
1. I’d like to, but...	
2. I’d very much like to, but...	
3. I’d like to very much, but...	
4. I’d love to, but...	
5. I’d very much love to, but...	
6. I’d love to very much, but...	
7. That/It’s very kind of you, but...	
8. It’s very kind of you to...(do something), but...	
9. You’re very kind, but...	
10. It’s very nice of you, but...	
11. That’d be very nice, but...	
12. I hate to turn you down, but I must ...	29:182]

2.1.3. Reason + Suggestion (r+S): Rejecting by the way giving a reason for refusal and suggesting another time.

(18) “- *Like to have a drink after work?*

- *I've got to work late today. Some other time maybe.*” [4:405]

Sentence Patterns (r+S)
1.I wish I could, but I'm busy. Maybe another time, though.
2.I would love to any other time, but I've already made plans.
3.I would like to any other time, but I've already made plans.
4.I'm tied up that day. What about the 14 th ?
5.I'm tied up that night. What about a rain check?

(<http://www.couplescompany.com/features/Coffee/decline.htm>)

2.1.4. Reason (r): Rejecting by the way giving a reason or a situation to parry accepting invitation

In some instance participant provides detailed seasons for refusing the invitation. For example:

(19) “- *Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?*

- *Tomorrow is my good friend's farewell party. So am I afraid...*”

[37]

(20) “- *What about going swimming in this afternoon?*

- *I can't go because my mother is very sick, she needs me.*”

[37]

2.1.5. Alternative Suggestion (AS): Rejecting by the way giving a alternative suggestion. If you are able, begin refusal with a buffer statement or acknowledgment and express regret sincerely. Let the person know the reason why you are refusing, if possible. Offer a suggestion for an alternative when

possible. Earning the respect of the person you are refusing simply by handling them with kindness and honesty is the goal. For example:

(21) “- *Would you like a drink?*

- *I think I could take you out to dinner.*” [14:116]

2.1.6. Hesitation

Occasionally, you don't want to answer immediately “Yes/No”. Hesitation has many ways, if you need time to think carefully about the invitation before deciding.

(22) “- *Karen: How about a game of tennis tomorrow?*

- *Ali: I may be busy tomorrow. Do you mind if I tell you in a few days?*”

(23) “-*Irving: Would you care to go to the new art exhibit at the City Museum on Sunday?*

- *Alice: I'm not sure what my plans are at this moment. Could I let you know on Friday?*”

(24) “- *Why don't you come with Pat and me to tennis matches Monday? It'll be fun!*

- *My plans for that day are still in the air. I'll let you know by Tuesday, if that's okay with you.*”

(25) “- *I'm having a surprise party for Mary on Saturday. Can you make it?*

- *Well, I'm not sure, but I may be busy.*”

(26) “- *I'm going to Washington on business next Friday. Why don't you join me there for the weekend? I know we'd have a great time!*

- *Thanks a lot for the invitation, but I'll have to check my calendar. Could I get back to you tonight?*”

(27) “- *Mohamed: I'd like to invite you to the final ceremony of our language program next Friday evening at 8:00. Will you be able to attend?*

- *Larry: I appreciate the invitation, but I might have an appointment at that time. Could I let you know later tomorrow?*

Sentence Patterns

1. I'm not sure what my plans are at this moment. Could I let you know on ...(time)?

2. I may be busy that day. Do you mind if I tell you in a few days?

3. Well, I'm not sure, but I may be busy.

4. Well, I'm not sure, but I may be...(doing something).

5. My plans for that day are still up in the air. I'll let you know by ...(time), if that's okay with you.

6. I appreciate the invitation, but I might have appointment at that time. Could I let you know later...(time).

7. Thanks a lot for the invitation, but I'll have to check my calendar. Could I get back to you ...(time).

<http://forum.showbiz.vn/making-declining-invitations.html>

2.1.7. Avoiding Conflicts

One of the biggest problems when it comes to accepting invitations is the need to cancel later on. So to start off, get to know your own schedule. It sounds dumb, but it's not. If you're not terribly organized, it's easy to lose track of your appointments, commitments, parties, dates, and other important (and not-so-important) events. Get a planner – something small that can fit in your pocket. If you are more into gadgets, a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) is very handy.

Okay, so now you're organized. Start plotting out some of your usual appointments (gym, classes, weekly work meetings, etc.). Now we're ready for ones that come up and can check your schedule to avoid conflicts, suggest alternate times, or realize you cannot make that invite.

<http://www.thesoko.com/thesoko/article831.html>

2.2. *Indirectly rejecting invitation in Vietnamese*

In life reality, occasionally Vietnamese people use this speech act that they get again the validity of another speech act. That is the phenomenon which uses speech act following indirection. Indirect strategy depends on ability of expressing any content indirectly and its specific content can be imagined throughout the definition “Indirect speech act” [9,1975]. To be the same rejecting “*Không, anh không về cùng em đâu.*” the person who rejects can say “*Rất tiếc anh còn vài người bạn nữa cùng đi.*” To indirectly inform the hearer to know that he doesn’t want to come back with the girl, Vietnamese people often use the following ways:

2.2.1. Reason(r): Indirectly rejecting an invitation by the way giving a reason or a situation to parry accepting invitation.

When Vietnamese people give their reason or explanation, they don’t often say that they reject or accept the invitation. The given reason when they replay can help the hearer understanding the speaker’s means. Or they can give a situation to parry accepting invitation. For example:

(28) “- *Nếu Loan đồng ý, Anh mời Loan đi ăn kem. Ở chỗ kia có kem Bắc cực ngon lắm!*

- *Em phải về thổi cơm cho mẹ.*” [28:44]

The girl has to cook for her mother, so she cannot go to eat ice-cream. This is also the message which the speakers want to send to the hearer.

(29) “- *Dù sao tao với mày cũng là bạn bè mấy năm nay, lại cùng quê. Lỗi làm ai không có, tao xin lỗi mày. Đi ăn trưa với tao nha!*

- *Cám ơn mày, tao không đói.*” [25:26]

Because of not be hungry so don’t want to eat, thus he rejected indirectly the invitation.

2.2.2. Negative Presupposition (-PRES): Indirectly rejecting an invitation by the way giving a negative presupposition which has unfavorable meaning with given act in the invitation.

(30) “- *Mới 7 giờ, hai em có đi bát phở không?*

- *Anh quên là tui em ghét đi chơi buổi tối à?* [24:24]

The person who refused, supposed that the invitee has ever known that they hated going out at night, so they gave the rhetorical question to repeat that thing in order to indirectly reject. In this case, the invitee has no the reason to be mad because the invitee himself violated the guideline “dexterity” in polite communication of Leech [22:16]. For another example:

(31) “- *Lão Kiến mở cửa hàng. Một bà cấp thùng xôi đi qua ngó vào:*

- *Mời bác xơi quà sáng.*

- *Giời ơi, nhà làm ăn mà sang ra đàn bà con gái đã ám thế này thì làm ăn gì.* [22:23]

The male chauvinism previously said that in the morning if they hadn't trafficked that the women came in home, the business in that day would have been unfavorable. Mr Kien repeated it to tell the woman who sold “xoi” that she violated prohibitions, therefore her invitation was rejected is obvious thing.

(32) “- *Thôi mà! Anh đói lắm! Mình đi ăn phở.*

Hợp Phở vờ vĩnh:

- *Phoc-môn không hà, em sợ bị ướp xác lắm.* [19:24]

The girl supposed that putting phoc- môn in noodle to preserve at a few noodle shops which have no conscience, the customers come there no different from being soaked phoc- môn like being embalmed. Therefore, clearly they shouldn't eat because of not ensuring food hygiene and food safety. The invitee must understand that their invitation have been denied very persuasively.

2.2.3. Suggestion + Reason (S+r): Indirectly rejecting invitation by the way suggesting another time and giving a reason for rejecting invitation.

(33) “- *Ta đi ăn nhé! Em mới tìm ra một hàng ăn ngon lắm!*

- *Để khi khác, muôn mát rồi. Bây giờ anh muốn nghe em nói chuyện.* [26:768]

Like England, occasionally the speaker thanks before giving rejecting to listen to more easily even indirectly.

(34) “- *Cậu hãy đưa nó về lúc bảy giờ. Chúng tôi mời cậu ăn cơm tối.*

- *Cám ơn bà. Để bữa khác. Tôi nay cho phép tôi mời cô bé đi ăn cơm bình dân. Biết đâu ăn ở quán đông người cô bé sẽ thích hơn.*” [17:84]

2.2.4. Alternative Suggestion (AS): Indirectly rejecting invitation by the way giving an alternative suggestion.

(35) “- *Em có thích quán café ‘Lãng Du’ không? Chúng mình sẽ đến đó.*

- *Anh đưa em về nhà, không thì em nhảy xuống.*” [25:72]

3. The similarities and differences in rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese

3.1. Similarities

The ways of indirectly rejecting invitation	English	Vietnamese
<p><u>Reason:</u> means rejecting invitation by giving a reason or a situation to parry accepting invitation. When we are invited to go to someplace or to do something and we are unwilling to accept this proposal, and we might think of some other reasons to say no.</p> <p>Both of England and Vietnamese give the</p>	<p><u>For example:</u></p> <p>(36) “- <i>Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?</i></p> <p>- <i>Tomorrow is my good friend's farewell party. So I am afraid...</i>”</p>	<p>(37) “- <i>Nếu Loan đồng ý, anh mời Loan đi ăn kem. Ở chỗ kia có kem Bắc Cực ngon lắm!</i></p> <p>- <i>Em phải về thôi com cho mẹ.</i>”</p>

<p>reason or explanation without needing to say that they reject or accept the invitation. It can help the hearer understand the speaker's implication.</p> <p><u>Alternative Suggestion:</u> means rejecting invitation by give alternative suggestion.</p>	<p>(38) “- <i>Would you like a drink?</i> - <i>I think <u>I could take you out to dinner.</u></i>”</p>	<p>(39) “- <i>Em có thích quán café ‘Lãng Du’ không? Chúng mình sẽ đến đó.</i> - <i><u>Anh đưa em về nhà, không thì em nhảy xuống.</u></i>”</p>
<p>The ways of directly rejecting invitation</p>	<p>English</p>	<p>Vietnamese</p>
<p>Refusal speech acts vary in directness with situation but there are some similarities between English and Vietnamese. English and Vietnamese both use the way of speaking directly such as: “No”, “No way” or “No, thanks” in English and “Không”, “Thôi” or “Không, cảm ơn.”</p>	<p><u>For example:</u> (40) “- <i>How about dinner this Saturday?</i> - <i><u>No, thanks.</u></i>” (42) “- <i>I’d like to invite you to dinner this Saturday?</i></p>	<p>(41) “- <i>Em đi có một mình à? Thọ ngập ngừng. Ta vào kia uống café đi?</i> - <i><u>Không, em không đi đâu.</u></i>” [28:61] (43) “- <i>Này anh, trời cũng đang mưa, nếu anh không tìm ông</i></p>

	- <i>No, it's impossible.</i> "	<i>Cương kia, tôi mời anh đi uống café được không?</i> - <i>Không, cảm ơn anh nhé!</i> "[19:60]
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Sometimes this kind of refusal could be a double – edged straight sword. People might get furious and hurt about your rude and supercilious attitude. It might break the relationship between two good friends. To avoid ruining peaceful atmosphere, we'd better not use this direct way to refuse others. In such a situation (40) and (42) some people might just say: “*No, I don't want to go to restaurant.*” Or “*No way, I would rather stay at home and cook myself.*” How would you feel and what would you think if you hear these replies? Heart – broken? Feeling harmful in your mind? Or both? There are many disadvantages to refusing others by using such a direct way.

3.2. Differences

The ways of indirectly rejecting invitation	English	Vietnamese
1. Regret + Reason (R + r)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upon receiving the invitation, the participants can respond with an expression of regret and a reason of refusal for not being able to accept the invitation. This expression of regret functioned in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are not used in Vietnamese. <p>(-)</p>

	<p>some cases as an indirect refusal. For example:</p> <p>“- <i>Could you play football at the weekend, Joe?</i></p> <p>- <u><i>I wish I could, but I’m busy. Maybe another time, though.</i></u>”</p>	
<p>2. Dilemma (D)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When being invited to go somewhere or do something which invitees want to do. But they are busy or have to do another thing they often reject by the way giving a dilemma situation. For example: <p>“- <i>How about a game of tennis tomorrow?</i></p> <p>- <u><i>I’d love to, but I’ve got to meet a friend.</i></u>”</p>	<p>(–)</p>

<p>3. Reason+Suggestion (r + S)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some instances participants provide detailed reason for rejecting the invitation. At the same time the invitees give a suggestion or make promise to accept a future invitation. For example: <i>“- What about getting together for dinner on Monday?</i> <i>- I really want to go with you, but unfortunately, <u>I have something more important to do at that time. May be next Wednesday we can have dinner together, it will be my treat.</u>”</i> 	<p>(-)</p>
<p>4. Negative Presupposition (-PRES)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not used in English. <p>(-)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not like English, Vietnamese people often give a negative presupposition. The invitee supposes that

		<p>the inviter has ever known the invitee not like something, but they still invite. So the invitee gave a rhetorical question to repeat that thing in order to indirectly reject. For example:</p> <p>“- Mời 7 giờ, hai em có đi bát phở không?</p> <p>- <u>Anh quên là tui em ghét đi chơi buổi tối à?”</u></p>
<p>5. Suggestion + Reason (S + r)</p>	<p>(-)</p>	<p>• Contrary to English, Vietnamese suggest another time firstly, then give a reason for not accepting the invitation. For example:</p> <p>“- Mời các bác hôm nay ở đây xơi rượu.</p> <p>- <u>Anh để cho khi khác. Hôm nay chúng tôi có việc bận rồi.</u>”</p>

CHAPTER III: THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Data collection

The survey questionnaire includes 2 questions in which 1 question in English and 1 question in Vietnamese.

Survey questionnaire

Question 1: When you receive an invitation like: “I’d like to invite you to have dinner with me.” If you want to reject this invitation, how will you refuse it?

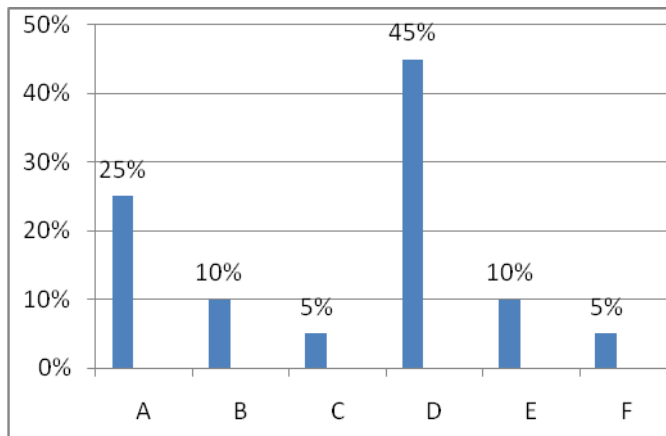


Chart 1: English informant's responses

A: R + r

B: D

C: r + S

D: r

E: AS

F: d

Question 2: “Cậu rảnh không? Đi uống nước với mình nhé!” Bạn sẽ từ chối lời mời này như thế nào nếu bạn không muốn đi?

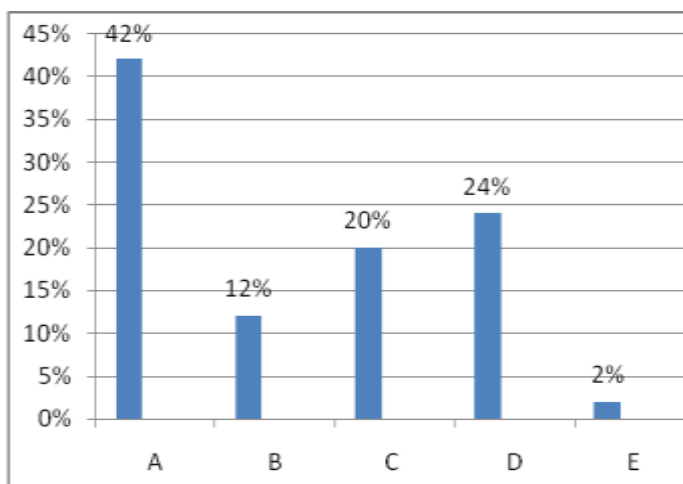


Chart 2: Vietnamese informant's responses

A: r

B: -PRES.

C: S + r

D: AS

E: d

Indirectly Rejecting	R+r	D	r+S	r	-PRES.	S+r	AS	Directly Rejecting (d)
English Total: 10 (100%)	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Vietnamese Total: 50 (100%)	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+

Table 2: Data of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese

2. Data analysis

After conducting the survey questionnaires, the statistic were totaled up and indicated throughout the following 2 charts. Two charts show us the number of people who choose the most suitable answer for them in each question. This number is counted in percentage unit and the kind of chart is bar chart. The data can be easily seen in the chart.

2.1. *English Finding*

The above statistics show some ways in rejecting invitation in English as following:

- English reject indirectly the invitation by the way giving the reason (**r**) and suggesting another time (**S**). However, in English, **r** appears firstly and then **S**. Moreover, the use frequency of this way is slow.
- To indirectly reject invitation, occasionally English gives a reason. And English's reason occasionally is replaced with a dilemma (**D**). This seems to make refusal "softer", the person who is rejected vexes less than.
- English often expresses regret (**R**) because of not accepting the invitation before giving the reason (**r**) to reject. This way occupies quite high rate in English.

- Besides, English also indirectly reject in vitation by the way giving an alternative suggestion (**AS**). However, the statistical results show that this way is not popular in English.

- A surprised thing that we can see that via the statistics is the way of directly rejecting invitation (**d**) to be used very little in English.

2.2. Vietnamese Finding

- Negative Presupposition (**-PRES.**) occasionally is used in Vietnamese. However, this way of rejecting only occupes 6 sentences/ 50 sentences (12%).

- Vietnamese reject indirectly the invitation by the way giving the reason (**r**) and suggesting another time (**S**). In Vietnamese: **S** appears firstly and then **r**. Moreover, the frequency of use of this refusal is quite: 10 sentences/ 50 sentences (20%) .

- To indirectly reject invitation, occasionally Vietnamese gives a reason. And Vietnamese's reason rarely attaches something. It still is used the most popular in Vietnamese.

- Vietnamese also indirectly reject in vitation by the way giving an alternative suggestion (**AS**). the statistical results show that this way is very popular in Vietnamese about 25%.

- A surprised thing that we can see that via the statistics is the way of directly rejecting invitation (**d**) to be used very little in Vietnamese, only 1%.

The ways of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese are quite different. The collected data and analyzed data show that the understanding different ways of rejecting invitation in two cultures will help the language learner to be more aware of knowing how to use the speech to reach high effect in communication.

3. Tips for refusing invitations

The key to declining any invitation is to be honest in the reason behind why you cannot attend. Whatever the reason for you declining an invitation, you should try to be as honest as possible, although you can do this quite

subtly and without going into too much depth. The main reason you're encouraged to be honest with your reason is that you could end up being 'caught out' at a future meeting with your host if you're lied about your reason for not going and have since forgotten about it.

(<http://www.letterexpert.co.uk/DecliningAnInvitation.html>)

For example, you may have explained that you'd already arranged to take a faraway trip to visit a long lost relative who's not been well and then someone else who also knows the host might see you having a good old knees-up in town when you were supposed to be at your relative's beside. This is hardly going to do wonders for your relationship with the host if they found out so if you do have to decline any invitation, try to be as honest as possible within reason and without going into too much detail.

If a social event is burdening you as a social obligation, it is always better to avoid attending it. Another instance when you have to decline invitations is when you suffer from the dearth of time. However, you need to remember that an invitation has to be declined politely and gracefully. Your refusal has to be courteous and presented in a civilized manner. You need to appreciate the fact that you were invited, with the most genuine feelings. This article teaches you how to turn down an invitation in the most humble way. Try to follow the tips given below the next time you have to turn down an invite:

Read The Invitation Carefully

In case of written invitations, one needs to read the wordings carefully, to frame a satisfactory reply. If it says R.S.V.P, a response is expected on whether you plan to attend the event or not. If it says "regrets only", a reply is expected only if you are not going to attend. If a response card is attached with the invitation, fill it immediately and send it to the concerned party. It is important to send your personal regrets to decline an invitation in the most humble manner.

Don't Forget To Thank The Inviter

As an invitee, you must acknowledge that the other person has taken out time to invite you. It is your responsibility to thank the inviter, no matter whether you plan to attend the function or not. The fact that you have been considered to be one of the invitees for an occasion is reason enough to feel humbled. Failure to express thanks, especially when you are declining the invitation, may make you sound rude and arrogant.

Be Honest With Your Refusal

Give a truthful response, but to the extent that it doesn't hurt the feelings of the inviter. Many-a-times, we just don't feel like going to an event, though there is no valid reason behind it. One can't afford to be brutally honest at such times, as it would hurt the other person's feelings. However, if there is a compelling reason for being absent, don't cook stories and convey the point straight across. Offering a lie, as a reason for declining an invitation, will also make you feel guilty.

Procrastinate When Required

If you are being invited verbally, in a face-on meeting, and you are not sure as to whether you will attend the event, you can forge a delay by responding with a request to check your schedule. The actual response can be held up for a while. There is nothing wrong in buying time for framing a suitable reply, rather than not attending the event after agreeing initially. Usually, it is difficult to directly decline an invitation on the inviter's face.

Conclude On A Positive Note

While turning down an invitation, whether you are saying so in person or in writing, it is always nice if you conclude your refusal positively. You can say something like - had it been on a different date or time, you would have surely been present. Showing interest will save you from offending the inviter and soften your denial as well. It is important to not let your decline cast a shadow on further interactions.

(<http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/how-to-decline-an-invitation.html>)

PART III: CONCLUSION

1. Summary

With these helps of supervisors, teachers, family and friends, my graduation paper has been completed at last.

After consulting and collecting from teacher either English or Vietnamese, I have designed the paper into three parts; the second part which consists of three chapters is major one.

Chapter I states common knowledge on speech acts in general, invitation and rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese in particular.

Chapter II gives the ways of rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese and the differences and similarities in rejecting invitation between English and Vietnamese.

The last are survey questionnaires and tips for refusing invitations.

It hopes that this study can help readers and learners to be aware of needing know how to use speeches in order to ensure the politeness with the purpose of reaching the highest communication effect, even in act which is much sensitive is rejecting invitation.

Due to the time limitation and comprehensive knowledge of mine in this field, there are certainly weaknesses in this research paper. Hope that all the weaknesses would receive thoughtful consideration and generous view.

Once again, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs Nguyen Thi Thuy Thu, as well as of my teachers in Foreign Language Department for their guidance and comments.

2. Suggestions for further study

On the coming time, researchers intend to conduct the survey questionnaires to one hundred English and one hundred Vietnamese informants to see more clearly the similarities and differences in using refusal of invitation in English and Vietnamese.

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SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(For English Informants)

This survey questionnaire is designed for “A comparative study on rejecting invitation in English and Vietnamese”. Your assistance in completing the following items is greatly appreciated. You can be confident that you will not be identified in any discussion of the data.

Would you kindly complete the questionnaire below to me? Thank you very much for your assistance.

Please tick (✓) where appropriate.

○ **Age:**

+ Above 20

+ Above 40

+ Above 30

+ Above 50

○ **Gender:**

+ Male

+ Female

Question: When you receive an invitation like: “I’d like to invite you to have dinner with me.” If you want to reject this invitation, how will you refuse it?

Answer:.....
.....

Thank you kindly!

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(For Vietnamese Informants)

Chúng tôi làm bài khảo sát này nhằm phục vụ cho đề tài “ Nghiên cứu so sánh về từ chối lời mời trong Tiếng Anh và Tiếng Việt”. Xin quý vị bớt chút thời gian trả lời giúp tôi câu hỏi này. Chúng tôi xin đảm bảo sẽ không tiết lộ danh tính của quý vị trong bất kì hoàn cảnh nào.

Chúng tôi xin chân thành cảm ơn.

Xin quý vị đánh dấu (✓) vào những chỗ phù hợp.

○ **Nhóm tuổi:**

+ Trên 20

+ Trên 40

+ Trên 30

+ Trên 50

○ **Giới tính:**

+ Nam

+ Nữ

Câu hỏi: “Cậu rảnh không? Đi uống nước với mình nhé!” Bạn sẽ từ chối lời mời này như thế nào nếu bạn không muốn đi?

Trả lời:.....
.....

Xin chân thành cảm ơn!