

A Gender-Based Analysis of the Speech Act of Refusal in Arabic Among Saudis

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Abstract

Due to the contribution of the speech act of refusal to our daily communications and interactions, the researcher endeavored to discover the gender differences and similarities of Saudis in utilizing the refusal strategies as well as their preferred ones. This study was conducted at Saudi Arabia, and the participants of the study were 25 Saudi females and 25 Saudi males. The study was carried out quantitatively and qualitatively. The data were elicited using a discourse completion task that consisted of demographic questions and six scenarios. The scenarios were composed of three requests modified from Alrashoodi's (2020) study and three invitations adjusted from Saud's (2019) study. The participants' answers were collected and analyzed using Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) taxonomy of refusal. The findings of this study demonstrated that both genders were in agreement regarding their preference of strategies. Hence, they preferred indirect strategies, followed by adjuncts strategies, accompanied by direct strategies. However, the results showed that males were more direct than females. Further, it was found that the most frequent refusal strategy dominated by both genders was the 'excuse, reason, explanation' strategy. The study concluded with a discussion of important directions for future researches.

Keywords: speech acts, gender differences, refusal strategies

INTRODUCTION

Obama (2011) stated that "it's important to make sure that we're talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds." Since communications and interactions are a daily routine in our life, we need to be cautious in what we say and how we say it. We use speech to do many actions, such actions are considered as speech acts. Namely, we use the language to do and perform actions or to react to someone's utterances, and these actions or reactions are known as speech acts. Warning, complaining and refusing are examples of speech acts that may cause sensitivities among people. Hence, such actions need to be uttered appropriately and politely, especially, the speech act of refusal. Refusal is a negative response to someone's face. Such response might cause offense, hurt the other's feelings, threaten his face, and damage his psychological well-being. Caution must be taken while using refusal utterances or expressions because being rejected or

refused can be heart-breaking too! In fact, there are many strategies that can reduce the negative impact of such denials.

Significance of the Study

The way people utter refusals varies from person to person, from language to language, and even from culture to culture. In fact, culture plays a vital role in the choice of language and refusal strategies. Thus, exploring and observing daily social interactions and communications in different cultures is very crucial in expanding and building up the literature. Few studies have been conducted to examine the gender differences of the speech act of refusal in Arabic. Even fewer have been investigating that in Saudi culture. The current study is very important since it focuses on investigating Saudis' gender differences and similarities in performing the speech act of Arabic refusal.

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to discover the most frequent refusal strategies employed by Saudi females and males to refuse various situations in different contexts. Further, this study sought to investigate the similarities and differences between the chosen strategies utilized by Saudi genders when performing the speech act of refusal.

Research Questions

The following major research questions were specifically addressed in this study:

- What are the most frequent refusal strategies utilized in Arabic among Saudi genders?
- What are the similarities and differences between Saudi females and males in performing the speech act of refusal?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of speech acts and refusal. Further, it reviews the previous studies and presents the theoretical framework of the current study.

Definitions of Key Concepts

Speech acts

Speech acts are expressions or utterances that function in communication. In other words, they are communicative actions such as requesting, refusing, greeting, thanking, complimenting, promising, apologizing, and inviting. Miller (2001) stated that "the words of a speech act do what they say. They are speech that acts, rather than describes" (p.2). Austin (1962) claimed that people use the language to do things and perform acts, rather than just using the language to utter or express things. In other words, saying things is doing things. He distinguished the locutionary aspect of an utterance from its illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects. He explained that a locutionary act is the actual uttering of words and sentences with its exact meaning in the literature. Namely, it happens when the speaker uses words with their literal meaning to express ideas.

Besides, he defined the illocutionary act as the speaker's intentions and desires. It happens when the speaker produces units of language with a specific meaning in his mind rather than the literal meaning of the utterance. Further, he described the perlocutionary act as the consequences or the effects that show in the hearer's actions or thoughts. Expressly, it is the hearer's reaction to the speaker's utterances. Searle (1969) categorized the illocutionary act into five categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarations.

Refusal

Refusal is one of the difficult speech acts to perform because its nature is based on resistance and face-threatening. Wierzbicka (1987) opined that refusal is the speech act of rejection; it addresses denial to others' invitations, offers, requests, or suggestions which is totally negative to acceptance. According to Chen (1996), refusals are the opposite responses of what the interlocutor expects to hear. In other words, refusals function as a reply to an act where the hearer declines performing an action suggested or recommended by the speaker. It was found by Fraser (1990) and Smith (1998) that refusals are terribly sensitive and that they can be impacted by some contextual and social variables such as gender, age, level of education, power, and social distance (as cited in Wang, 2019). Refusals might cause communication breakdowns and relationship damage. Therefore, the speaker needs to employ appropriate and polite refusal strategies to soften and reduce the negative impact of refusals on the hearer's face. Beebe et al. (1990) divided the strategies of refusal into three categories: direct refusal, indirect refusal, and adjuncts to refusal. The direct strategies assert clearly what the speaker means by a direct refusal to the interlocutor's request, invitation, offer, or suggestion. They are categorized into two types: performative statements such as 'I refuse' and non-performative statements such as 'No' or negative willingness/ability statements such as 'I cannot' or 'I do not think so'. However, the indirect strategies are indirect ways of refusal that maintain politeness and minimize causing such offense. They are not as clear as the direct one, and they are classified into eleven types. Expressing regret, giving a reason for refusal, and providing an alternative are some kinds of indirect refusals. On the other hand, adjuncts aim to protect the interlocutor's face. They include statements that represent positive feelings such as 'I would love to, but...', statements that show gratitude and appreciation such as 'I'm glad that you chose me, but...', and statements that present empathy such as 'I understand that you are struggling with this, but...'

Previous Studies in the Literature

Alrashoodi (2020) conducted a study concerned with Saudi Arabic; the study focused on examining the differences between Saudi females and males in refusing requests. Additionally, the study investigated if there was a variation in the refusal strategies of both genders in relation to the social status of the interlocutor (higher, equal, and lower status). The analysis of the study concentrated on the degree of the participants' directness as well as the frequency of words produced by the participants, the frequency of the refusal strategies, the order of the refusal strategies, and the content of the refusal strategies employed by Saudi genders based on different social statuses. The respondents were 80 native speakers of Saudi Arabic (40 females and 40 males) selected randomly

from various majors in Qassim University, in the Qassim region of Saudi Arabia. They were either graduate or undergraduate students aged from 19 to 29 years old. An oral discourse completion test (ODCT) was used to elicit the data. It was composed of three refusal situations created by Beebe et al. (1990). The first situation required a refusal response to a person of a lower status, whereas the second situation was to an equal status person, and the third one was to a person of a higher status. The ODCT was performed orally by the respondents as if they were in a real-life interaction. The respondents' answers were audio-recorded with their permission. Then, they were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively based on the coding outline of Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal study as well as other classification schemes employed in Arabic refusal studies and other refusal studies. The new strategies that were not included in the mentioned refusal schemes were classified into new categories. The study findings revealed that females were less direct than males across all the situations. Further, the most frequently used refusal strategy was the indirect refusal. Thoroughly, the 'excuse' strategy was the most frequently used indirect refusal strategy by both genders in all the situations. On the other hand, 'invoking the name of God' was the most frequent adjuncts strategy utilized by both genders across all the situations. This indicated that the choices of refusal strategies were impacted by the cultural norms of Arab Muslims; they frequently invoke the name of God to prove that they are telling the truth to the person who made the requests. Regarding the content of strategies, Alrashoodi noticed that the lowest use of the direct strategy of refusal by both genders was found in the third situation (high status) which reflects the impact of Arabic culture's social statuses on the choices of the refusal strategies. In Arab societies, the social status is considered hierarchical. Further, he observed that the most frequent excuse utilized by females was that they cannot go home late which mirrors the effect of the Saudi traditions and culture on females' choices of refusals. Saudi culture deems women's lateness in coming back home as inappropriate and unacceptable.

Tuncer and Turhan (2019) examined the refusal strategies employed by Turkish pre-service teachers of English. The study recruited 27 participants (14 males and 13 females) who were first-year students at the Department of ELT at Çukurova University, in Adana, Turkey. The participants' ages ranged between 18 and 19. The data of the study were gathered via a written discourse completion test (WDCT). The participants responded to nine scenarios with different social status of the interlocutor (three scenarios to a lower interlocutor, three to an equal interlocutor, and three to a higher interlocutor). Seven scenarios were taken from Yuan (2012), while two scenarios with higher interlocutors were added from Beebe et al. (1990). The data were analyzed and categorized in three phases based on the classification of Beebe et al. (1990). In the first phase, the content of the participants' responses was analyzed to find out what were the strategies that the participants used when refusing different interlocutors of various social statuses. In the second phase, the frequencies and percentages of the participants' total refusal strategies were calculated and the differences between the refusal strategies of males and females were examined by applying a chi-square test. In the third phase, refusal combinations were investigated to find out what were the strategies that were combined or used together. The results showed that the 'excuse, reason, explanation'

strategy was the most frequent refusal strategy used by the participants. The findings also demonstrated that males preferred to directly utter 'no' more frequently than females. It was also discovered that more refusal strategies combinations were employed by the participants when refusing an interlocutor of a higher status.

Sa'd and Mohammadi (2014) investigated the extent of the Iranian EFL learners' sociocultural competence in performing the speech act of refusal. Their study took place at Urmia, in Iran. It was carried out both quantitatively and qualitatively. The data of the study were obtained from a sample of 30 Iranian EFL learners/holders (15 males and 15 females) who aged from 23 to 31 and were English teachers at either private language institutes or public schools. The participants were asked to respond to six situations in a discourse completion task (DCT) taken from Allami and Naeimi's (2011) study. The data were analyzed in four phases. First, the frequencies of the refusal strategies were analyzed and determined according to the refusal taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990). Then, the politeness strategies were scrutinized based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. After that, a politeness evaluation of the refusal semantic formulas was done by two native English speakers on a three-point politeness Likert scale (polite, partially polite, and impolite). Finally, the semantic formulas were examined qualitatively and the elements of politeness and impoliteness were analyzed. The results revealed that the Iranian EFL learners' three most frequent strategies of refusal were 'excuse, reason, explanation', 'non-performative statement', and 'statement of regret'. Further, it emerged that there were no significant differences between males and females in the use of both politeness strategies and refusal strategies.

Wang (2019) carried out a comparative study to investigate the English refusal strategies adopted by Chinese students in certain situations. In addition, the study examined the gender differences in English refusal strategies used by the Chinese students majoring in English. This study was conducted at Bijie, in Guizhou province, China. The participants of this study were 50 female students majoring in English, selected randomly from the junior college in Guizhou University of Engineering Science, and 23 male students, only 14 of them were majoring in English, selected from other colleges in Guizhou province. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old. They have learned English for 8 or 13 years; half of them learned it in rural middle schools and the other half learned it in urban schools. The data were collected using a questionnaire that consisted of a personal information survey and a discourse completion test (DCT). The DCT was modified from Sharyl Tanck (2004). It was made out of 10 prompts that occurred in a university setting (five prompts were in a DCT form, and the other five were multiple-choice questions). The data were analyzed based on the taxonomy adapted from Beebe et al. (1990). The results of this study indicated that both male and female students adopted certain strategies in English refusal speech act. However, most of the female students tended to use indirect refusal strategies such as dissuasion and reason, the excuse of explanation, suggestion, promise, pity, apology, and setting conditions as well as adjuncts strategies to save the interlocutors' face, while most of the male students tended to utilize direct refusal strategies.

Saud (2019) scrutinized the refusal strategies used by Saudi EFL learners in various social statuses and situations. The participants of this study were 150 Saudi female EFL undergraduate students in their third year in the English department at King Khalid University, in Abha, Saudi Arabia. Their ages were between 18-25 years old. Saud's study was governed in the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019. It was a quantitative research design and the data were collected using a discourse completion task (DCT). The DCT intended to identify the students' performance in the speech act of refusal. It consisted of 12 situations (three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions). Each of these situations composed of a refusal to a person of a higher, equal, and lower status revolved around university, home, friends, and bosses. The data were analyzed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusal. The findings of this study indicated that the most frequent refusal strategies used by the participants were the indirect ones, then the direct ones, and lastly the adjuncts. The results also revealed that the participants' strategies of refusal were different in each situation. They used indirect strategies of refusal in invitations and requests more than with offers and suggestions. On the other hand, the results showed that the social status of the interlocutor has no significant impact on the participants' choices of refusal strategies.

The current study varies from the previous studies in many aspects. Wang's (2019) study investigated the gender differences in the speech act of refusals. Tuncer and Turhan's (2019) study as well as Sa'd and Mohammadi's (2014) study also examined the gender differences of the speech act of refusals, but with an emphasis on how these refusal strategies vary with different social statuses of interlocutors. Wang's (2019) study, Tuncer and Turhan's (2019) study, as well as Sa'd and Mohammadi's (2014) study took place in different geographical contexts such as Turkey, Iran, and China. They investigated the employed refusal strategies in English language. On the other hand, Alrashoodi (2020) and Saud (2019) conducted their studies in different regions of Saudi Arabia. Saud (2019) explored the refusal strategies utilized by Saudi females only, in English language. However, Alrashoodi (2020) scrutinized the speech act of refusal in Arabic language, he investigated the differences between Saudi females' and males' refusals of requests only. The participants' age in all of the previous studies ranged from 18 to 31 years old. However, the current study involved participants aged between 18 to 62 years old. Very limited studies have been carried out to investigate the gender differences in performing the speech act of refusal in Saudi Arabic. Nevertheless, the current study which was conducted in Saudi Arabia and focused on Arabic language, not English, filled the gap in the literature as it examined the differences and similarities between Saudi genders' choices of refusal strategies in rejecting various situations.

METHOD

The researcher applied the approach of mixed-methods as the tool for investigation. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a discourse completion task.

Instrument: Discourse completion task

Kasper and Dahl (1991) defined DCTs as written questionnaires that contain a series of situations followed by brief descriptions. After each description, empty slots are provided

to the participants to complete the incomplete short dialogue with the required speech act (as cited in Alrashoodi, 2020). In alternative words, Rasekh (2012) stated that the participants in DCTs are expected to produce what they consider appropriate for each situation (as cited in Alrashoodi, 2020). The current study used a DCT that consisted of demographic questions about age and gender, and 6 scenarios of different contexts and situations. The DCT was written in Arabic language, specifically, in Saudi dialect. The DCT was composed of six situations taken and modified from Alrashoodi's (2020) refusal study as well as Saud's (2019) refusal study. The DCT (see Appendix A for the English DCT version and Appendix B for the Arabic DCT version) gathered information about the refusal strategies used by Saudi females and males as well as their most frequently used ones.

Participants

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia and the involved participants were 50 native speakers of Saudi Arabic from various education levels and ages. They were 25 Saudi females and 25 Saudi males aged between 18-62 years old.

Data Collection Procedure

The DCT was designed using Google Forms. After that, the link of the DCT was shared on various social media platforms for the participants to complete. The participants were asked to write down some demographic information as well as how they would refuse in each situation as they were in a real-life interaction. It took one week to collect the participants' answers. Each response from the collected 300 responses was analyzed and categorized according to Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusal (see Appendix C for the classification of refusals). The females' and males' refusal strategies were compared to see if there were salient differences and similarities between them. Further, the frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies were calculated to see what were the most frequently utilized ones.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study attempted to examine the role of Saudi genders in the use of refusal strategies. Moreover, this study sought to investigate the frequency of the refusal strategies used by the participants to find out the most frequently utilized ones. In this section, the data collected from the DCT is presented and discussed.

Discourse Completion Task Results

The discourse completion task was used to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the most frequent refusal strategies utilized in Arabic among Saudi genders? 2) What are the similarities and differences between Saudi females and males in performing the speech act of refusal? The analysis of the data obtained using the DCT from 50 Saudi females and males indicated that they used a total of 18 refusal strategies within 300 responses. These strategies were divided into three categories: direct, indirect, and adjuncts to refusal. Table 1 below lists the refusal strategies used by Saudi genders, the frequency of each strategy, and its percentage.

Table 1. The frequency and percentage of the refusal strategies utilized by both genders

Refusal Strategies	Females		Males	
	F	%	F	%
Direct:				
Non-performative statement	3	2	12	8
Indirect:				
Wish	18	12	6	4
Excuse, reason, explanation	47	31.33	53	35.33
Statement of alternative	22	14.67	13	8.67
Conditions for acceptance	2	1.33	4	2.67
Promise of future acceptance	7	4.67	1	0.67
Statement of principle	6	4	3	2
Criticism/reprimand	3	2	3	2
Self-defence	3	2	1	0.67
Unspecified or indefinite reply	3	2	1	0.67
Request for understanding	0	0	2	1.33
Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request	0	0	2	1.33
Giving advise/lecturing	4	2.67	3	2
Negative consequences	1	0.67	3	2
Postponement	11	7.33	9	6
Repetition of part of the request	1	0.67	0	0
Adjuncts to refusal:				
Statement of positive opinion	8	5.33	11	7.33
Gratitude/appreciation	11	7.33	23	15.33
Total	150	100	150	100

Concerning the first research question, the results revealed that the most frequent strategy used by both genders was the indirect refusal strategy (77.33%), specifically, the 'excuse, reason, explanation' strategy (33.33%), (e.g. "عندي موعد مهم"; "I have an important appointment"). Both genders reflected their carefulness and caution in the responses that carried out their refusals. They tried to give the other interlocutor a proper closure by providing him their excuses and reasons to refuse his request or invitation, or by explaining how their refusals were out of hand and beyond their control for a specific reason. This somehow alleviates the emotional damage that people might feel after a rejection. However, females tended to use the 'statement of alternative' strategy (e.g. "ما ودي اجي بس مضطرة"; "I cannot stay at work, but I can come early tomorrow and finish everything") and the 'wish' strategy (e.g. "اسافر"; "I wish I could come, but I have to travel") more frequently than males, whereas males tended to utilize the 'gratitude/appreciation' strategy (e.g. "من دواعي سروري، ويشرفني"; "It is my pleasure and honor to attend your wedding, but I have plans with my family") more often. On the other hand, the findings demonstrated that the least frequently used strategies of refusal by both genders were the 'self-defence' strategy, 'unspecified or indefinite reply' strategy, as well as 'negative consequences' strategy. However, it was noticed that the 'repetition of part of the request' strategy was used only by one female, and not by any male. In contrast, it was observed that the 'request for understanding' strategy as well as 'request for help, empathy, and assistance

by dropping or holding the request' strategy were used by males only, and never by females.

Regarding the second research question, and in term of similarities, the findings indicated that both genders preferred to demonstrate their refusals using the indirect strategies 77.33% (232 out of 300), followed by the adjuncts to refusals 17.67% (53 out of 300), and lastly by the direct strategies 5% (15 out of 300). However, in term of differences, males were more direct than females (12 versus 3). They tended to utilize the 'non-performative statement' strategy (e.g. "ما اقدر اجي"; "I cannot come") more often. With regard to the indirect strategies and adjuncts to refusal, females preferred to use the indirect strategies more often. They tended to use the 'excuse, reason, explanation' strategy (e.g. "مره مرهقة"; "I'm so tired"), followed by the 'statement of alternative' strategy (e.g. "ما اقدر اعطيك هي بس اقدر اصورها وأرسلها لك"; "I cannot give it to you, but I can take pictures of it and send it to you"), and then by the 'wish' strategy (e.g. "ودي اساعدك لكن الوقت ما يكفي"; "I wish I could help you, but I don't have enough time and I need to start studying"), whereas males preferred to utilize both indirect strategies and adjuncts to refusal. They preferred to use the 'excuse, reason, explanation' strategy (e.g. "اليوم انا صائم"; "I'm fasting today"), accompanied by the 'gratitude/appreciation' strategy (e.g. "شكراً على دعوتي، ولكن لا أستطيع الحضور. استمتعوا بليلتكم. المذكرة مره ملخبطة"; "Thank you for inviting me, but I cannot come. Enjoy your night!"), then by the 'statement of alternative' strategy (e.g. "بس اذا حاب اقدر اشرح لك الي فاتك"; "My notes are such a mess, but I can explain to you what you have missed if you want"). Moreover, it was noticed that males utilized the 'gratitude/appreciation' strategy more frequently than females (23 versus 11).

The analysis of the data gathered using the DCT from 50 Saudi females and males stated that both genders used combinations of refusal strategies when performing the speech act of refusal. Table 2 below shows the frequency and percentage of the strategies that were combined with other refusal strategies.

Table 2. The frequency and percentage of the strategies most utilized along with other refusal strategies

Type of Strategy	Females		Males	
	F	%	F	%
Statement of regret	84	56	75	50
Invoking the name of God	21	14	22	14.67
Praying for God's blessing	20	13.33	20	13.33
Total	125	83.33	117	78

The findings revealed that both genders utilized the above three strategies along with other refusal strategies most frequently. The 'statement of regret' strategy was utilized 53% (159 out of 300) with other refusal strategies (e.g. "اسف جداً، ما اقدر"; "I'm so sorry, I cannot"). Both genders tended to apologize and express regret for their inability to grant the interlocutor's request or invitation. Using this strategy minimizes offending the interlocutor and saves his face. On the other hand, 'invoking the name of God' strategy was used 14.33% (43 out of 300) with other refusal strategies (e.g. "ودي اجي بس والله ما يمديني"; "I wish I could help you, but I don't have enough time and I need to start studying").

عندي موعد” “I wish I can come, but I swear to God I cannot, I have an appointment”). It was found that the ‘statement of regret’ strategy as well as ‘invoking the name of God’ strategy were combined together along with other refusal strategies (e.g. “فرصة جميلة، اتشرف والله” “It is a wonderful opportunity, and I’m honored to do so, but I’m so sorry I swear to God I cannot”). Nevertheless, ‘praying for God’s blessing’ strategy was employed 13.33% (40 out of 300) with other refusal strategies (e.g. “الله يسعدك ويوفقك،” “May God bless you with happiness and pleasure, I’m sorry I don’t think I will be able to come”). ‘Invoking the name of God’ strategy as well as ‘praying for God’s blessing’ strategy reflect deeply rooted cultural and religious values and norms. In Arabic culture, Muslims swear in the name of God to show and prove how truthful and honest they are. Moreover, Arab Muslims pray for God’s blessing as a daily matter. Here, both genders used this strategy to soften their refusals by showing how much they wish the interlocutors all the best even though they cannot accept their requests or invitations.

A comparison of the present study’s results of the refusal strategies use among Saudi genders with the results obtained from previous studies demonstrated a considerable level of consistency. For instance, the use of ‘excuse, reason, explanation’ as a refusal strategy by both genders was remarkably in line with Alrashoodi’s (2020), Tuncer and Turhan’s (2019) as well as Sa’d and Mohammadi’s (2014) findings. Moreover, a similar result of the males being more direct than females were reported in Alrashoodi’s (2020) study, Tuncer and Turhan’s (2019) study, as well as Wang’s (2019) study. Further, the results of the current study appear to corroborate Sa’d and Mohammadi’s (2014) findings where no significant difference was found in the use of refusal strategies among genders. In the present study, females preferred to refuse by using indirect strategies, followed by adjuncts, then by direct refusals which differ to some extent from Saud’s (2019) results where females tended to use indirect refusals, followed by direct ones, then by adjuncts.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study was conducted with the aim of finding out the most frequent refusal strategies used by Saudi females and males. Further, this study sought to examine the differences and similarities between Saudi genders while performing the speech act of refusal in different contexts and situations. The results of this study revealed that the most frequent refusal strategy dominated by both genders was the ‘excuse, reason, explanation’ strategy which answered the first research question: ‘What are the most frequent refusal strategies utilized in Arabic among Saudi genders?’ Moreover, the findings of this study demonstrated that both genders preferred to refuse mostly by indirect strategies, then by adjuncts strategies, and lastly by direct strategies. However, it was noticed that males were more direct than females. This answered the second research question: ‘What are the similarities and differences between Saudi females and males in performing the speech act of refusal?’

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

First, the participants’ refusals were elicited via artificial means, it would be better if they were collected by observing real-life communication to have more valid and reliable results. Furthermore, the participants of the study represented a small size of the general

population. They were only 50 native speakers of Arabic, including 25 females and 25 males. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to all Saudis. Finally, the participants used combinations of refusal strategies in one response which made it difficult for the researcher to classify each response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As what Rose and Ono (1995) stated, “we should not expect a single data source to provide all the necessary insights into speech act usage” (p. 207). Thus, future researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies are suggested to develop the research by using various tools to collect the data because one instrument is not enough to provide insights into every aspect of Saudi genders’ refusal strategies. Further studies can also investigate the differences in the use of refusal strategies in requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions as well as the relationship of these refusal strategies with the social status of the interlocutor. Moreover, the researcher suggests further researches to compare and contrast the refusal strategies used by the participants from different age groups to investigate the differences between the strategies used by various generations. Additionally, future studies can examine the speech act of refusal in different regions of Saudi Arabia with the aim of focusing on the similarities and differences. Another area that can be investigated is the online refusals with an emphasis on how Saudis refuse in online contexts and in real-life contexts. Lastly, this study dealt with only one type of speech act which is refusal. Therefore, there is room for studying other types of speech acts such as apology or request.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- DCT (English Version)

Gender: male/female

Age:

Please read the following 6 situations. After each situation you will be asked to respond as if you were in a real-life interaction or a daily conversation. (Remember that you cannot accept any request or invitation, you have to refuse only. Also, you have to write down what you are going to say in each situation, not what you are going to do).

Situation #1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private to request an increase in pay; however, you cannot accept this request.

Scenario:

Your worker: *As you know, I've been here just a little over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but I really need an increase in pay.*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse the worker's request?

.....

Situation #2. You are a first-year student in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses class. He asks you for the lecture notes but you do not want to lend him your notes.

Scenario:

Your classmate: *Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow, but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes?*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse your classmate's request?

.....

Situation #3. You are at the office in a meeting with your manager. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave the office and your manager asks you to stay longer, but you do not want to.

Scenario:

Your manager: *If it's okay with you, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work. Can you stay little longer at the office?*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse your manager's request?

.....

Situation #4. You are the manager of a bank. One of your employees invites you to his wedding party, but you do not want to go.

Scenario:

Your employee: *It would be an honor if you and your beloved ones attended my wedding party next Thursday.*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse your employee's invitation?

.....

Situation #5. One of your friends invites you and his other friends to his house for dinner, but you cannot go.

Scenario:

Your friend: *Come to my house on Tuesday for dinner. Do not be late!*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse your friend's invitation?

.....

Situation #6. You are a lecturer at a college. Your dean invites all of the faculty members for lunch, but you are busy and do not want to go.

Scenario:

Your dean: *You are all invited to have lunch today. We will have a great time together!*

What would you say if you were obliged to refuse your dean's invitation?

.....

Appendix B – DCT (Arabic Version)

الجنس: ذكر/أنثى

العمر:

يرجى قراءة الحالات التالية وبعد كل موقف، سيطلب منك الرفض كما لو كنت في موقف حقيقي أو محادثة حقيقية في يومك. (تذكر انه لا يمكنك قبول أي من الطلبات أو الدعوات، يجب عليك الرفض فقط. كما أنه يجب عليك كتابة ماذا ستقول في كل موقف وليس ماذا ستفعل).

الحالة رقم ١

أنت صاحب مكتبة. يطلب أحد أفضل العمال عندك إنه يكلمك على انفراد عشان يطلب زيادة بالراتب؛ ومع ذلك، ما تقدر تقبل طلبه.

السيناريو:

العامل: زي ما تعرف، أنا اشتغل هنا لي فوق السنة، وأدري إنك راضي عن عملي. وأنا جداً مبسوط بالعمل هنا، ولكن ودي إنك تزود راتي.

وش تقول للعامل إذا كنت مضطر ترفض طلبه؟

.....

الحالة رقم ٢

أنت طالب بأول سنة بالجامعة. تحضر المحاضرات بانتظام وتكتب ملاحظات جيدة بكل محاضرة. وزميلك غالباً ما يفوت المحاضرات. وجاء يسألك عن دفتر ملاحظتك، ولكنك مالك رغبة تعطيه دفترك.

السيناريو:

زميل الدراسة: يا لله! عندنا اختبار مهم بكرا ولكن ما عندي ملاحظات محاضرة الأسبوع الماضي. أنا اسف إذا فيها إحراج، ولكن ممكن تعطيني مذكرتك اللي معلق عليها؟

وش تقول لزميلك إذا كنت مضطر ترفض طلبه؟

.....

الحالة رقم ٣

أنت في المكتب في اجتماع مع مديرك في العمل. قرب الدوام من نهايته وأنت مستعجل تبي تمشي من المكتب ويجي المدير ويطلب منك إنك تجلس لفترة أطول، ولكنك ما تبي تجلس زيادة.

السيناريو:

مديرك: الله لا يهينك إذا ما عندك مانع، ودي تجلس زيادة ساعة إضافية أو ساعتين الليلة عشان تخلص الشغل.

وش تقول لمديرك إذا كنت مضطر ترفض طلبه؟

.....

الحالة رقم ٤

أنت مدير بنك. واحد من موظفينك يعزمك على حفل زواجه، ولكنك ما تبي تحضر.

السيناريو:

موظفك: أتشرف بحضورك لحفل زواجي أنت ومن يعز عليك يوم الخميس الجاي.

وش تقول لموظفك إذا كنت مضطر ترفض دعوته؟

.....

الحالة رقم ٥

واحد من أصدقائك يعزمك على وجبة عشاء أنت ومجموعة من أصدقائه في بيته، ولكنك ما تقدر تحضر.

السيناريو:

صديقك: حبيبي حياك الله بييتي يوم الثلاثاء على العشاء. لا تتأخر!

وش تقول لصديقك إذا كنت مضطر ترفض دعوته؟

.....

الحالة رقم ٦

أنت أستاذ في أحد الجامعات. جاتك دعوة أنت وباقي أعضاء هيئة التدريس من عميد الجامعة لتناول وجبة الغداء، ولكنك مشغول ومضغوط وما تبي تروح.

السيناريو:

عميد الجامعة: حياكم الله جميعاً اليوم على الغداء. نغير جو وننبسط.

وش تقول للعميد إذا كنت مضطر ترفض دعوته؟

.....

Appendix C – Classification of Refusals as Proposed by Beebe et al. (1990)**I. Direct**

1. Using performative verbs (I refuse)
2. Non performative statement
 - ‘No’
 - Negative willingness/ability (I can’t./I won’t./I don’t think so.)

II. Indirect

1. Statement of regret (I’m sorry.../I feel terrible...)
2. Wish (I wish I could help you...)
3. Excuse, reason, explanation (My children will be home that night./I have a headache.)
4. Statement of alternative
 - I can do X instead of Y (I’d rather.../I’d prefer...)
 - Why don’t you do X instead of Y (Why don’t you ask someone else?)
5. Set condition for future or past acceptance (If you had asked me earlier, I would have...)
6. Promise of future acceptance (I’ll do it next time./I promise I’ll.../Next time I’ll...)
7. Statement of principle (I never do business with friends.)
8. Statement of philosophy (One can’t be too careful.)
9. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
 - Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (I won’t be any fun tonight.)
 - Guilt trip (waitress to customers who want to sit a while: ‘I can’t make a living off people who just order coffee.’)
 - Criticize the request/requester (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (Who do you think you are?/That’s a terrible idea!)
 - Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request
 - Let interlocutor off the hook (Don’t worry about it./That’s okay./You don’t have to.)
 - Self-defense (I’m trying my best./ I’m doing all I can do.)
10. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
 - Unspecific or indefinite reply
 - Lack of enthusiasm
11. Avoidance

- Nonverbal
 - Silence
 - Hesitation
 - Doing nothing
 - Physical departure
- Verbal
 - Topic switch
 - Joke
 - Repetition of part of request (Monday?)
 - Postponement (I'll think about it.)
 - Hedge (Gee, I don't know./I'm not sure.)

III. Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (That's a good idea.../I'd love to...)
2. Statement of empathy (I realize you are in a difficult situation.)
3. Pause fillers (uhh/well/oh/uhm)
4. Gratitude/appreciation