

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JORDANIAN ARABIC AND AMERICAN ENGLISH REFUSAL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the similarities and differences of the speech act of refusal between Jordanian Arabic (JA) and American English (AE). Data were collected using an adopted version of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) by Al-Issa (1998). Next, data were analysed in terms of semantic formulaic sequences and were categorized based on the classification of refusal strategies established by Al-Issa (1998). Results revealed that both groups of participants were in agreement regarding their preference of strategy; hence, they preferred indirect strategies followed by adjunct strategies followed by direct strategies. However, Jordanian participants tended to use more indirect strategies than the American participants who used direct refusal style. The study concludes with a discussion of important directions for future research.*

KEYWORDS: Speech Act, Refusals, Semantic Formulas, Individualism, Collectivism.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday interaction, people communicate with each other in order to convey information, share thoughts, express feelings, and maintain relationships. They may use linguistic or non-linguistic (e.g. facial expression, body language) styles of communication based on the nature of a situation. Successful communication needs not only linguistic knowledge, but also an understanding of social and cultural factors in a situation (Moaveni, 2014). The choice of linguistic expressions to convey certain communicative purposes is governed by social conventions and the individual's assessment of situations (Nureddeen, 2008). Hence, it is normal to expect that the way we communicate is influenced by different factors including our cultural norms and gender differences. Guo (2012) states that differences in language use have been noted to lead for communication breakdown or pragmatic failure. This is mainly attributed to the ways where people of a given speech community customarily associate forms with meanings. This association could vary across languages and is related to the socio-cultural beliefs and values of the speech community. The culture-specificity of language is particularly evident in speech acts such as request, advice, apology, and refusal.

The act of refusal, as a face-threatening act, has been identified as a major cross-cultural stinking point for ESL students (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987) which can lead to unintended offense and a breakdown in communication. Thus, language learners are most likely to offend their interlocutors when performing the act of refusal because the linguistic obstruction that already exists is further complicated by the face-threatening nature of the speech act. In performing a refusal, which is a dispreferred response, one contradicts the expectations of the interlocutors; therefore, a high level of pragmatic competence is necessary to carry out a refusal felicitously. However, such a competence is particularly difficult for the learners to achieve (Chen, 1996; Al-Eryani, 2007). Therefore this act of refusal is important to be studied. According to Al-Shalawi (1997), an act of refusal may provide an illuminating

source of information on the socio-cultural values of a speech community and as significant insights into the social norms that are embedded in cultures. Thus, the act of refusal would be an excellent focus for the study of Jordanian and American participants where intercultural pragmatics is concerned. It will also help raise the awareness of intercultural pragmatics for both groups of participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous researches have been done on the speech act of refusal from different perspectives. For example, intercultural comparative studies between Korean and English (Kwon 2003), Chinese and English (Guo, 2012), Arabic and English (Nelson, Al Batal, & Bakary, 2002; Al-Shalawi, 1997), and Jordanian and Malay (Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohamad Subakir, 2012). Recently, researches have been conducted to examine the pragmatic and sociocultural transfer (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Al-Issa, 1998; Al-Eryani, 2007; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015). However, previous Jordanian refusal studies were either interlanguage study (Al-Issa, 1998; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015) or intercultural study (Al-Shboul et al., 2012) to investigate the similarities and the differences of intercultural communication of the speech act of refusal in English among non-native speakers of English (i.e. Jordanian and Malay participants in Malaysia). Hence the gap in our knowledge of comparative refusal studies has initiated the present study on the performance of the speech act of refusal among Jordanian Arabic and American English in terms of the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of studies conducted on the speech act of refusals in different cultural and linguistic speech communities.

The major study on refusals was conducted by Beebe et al (1990) who investigated the pragmatic transfer in the realization of the speech act of refusal by Japanese learners of English. Data were collected using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) designed by Beebe et al (1990), and consists of three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each situation type includes one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. Next, the data were analysed based on the frequency and order of the semantic formulas performed in each situation. The content of semantic formulas was also analysed. Findings from the study revealed that there was evidence of pragmatic transfer from L1 particularly in the case of the order, frequency and content of the semantic formulas obtained.

Guo (2012) investigated the similarities and the differences of intercultural communication of the speech act of refusal between Chinese and American speakers. The participants of the study included 60 US college students and teachers and 60 Chinese college students and teachers. Data were collected using a modified version of the discourse completion test (DCT) developed by Beebe et al. (1990). Results revealed that there are more similarities than differences among the Chinese and Americans in making refusals. For example, both groups preferred to use indirect refusal strategies rather than direct ones and preferred the strategies of reason, statement of alternative and regret. However, the American groups utilized a greater proportion of direct strategies than did the Chinese subjects on average. The researcher attributed these differences to the cultural differences between Chinese and American Culture.

Moaveni (2014) analysed the difference in refusal strategies between American and international college students. The researcher also investigates the gender difference in the performance of refusal. The participants of the study included 16 undergraduate American students and 32 international students. Data were collected using a written DCT. The six DCT situations were developed and grouped in two stimulus types eliciting refusals to an invitation and a request. Each stimulus type involved an email refusal to professors, friends, and a staff member of an academic department. Data were analysed in terms of frequency, order, and content of semantic formulas. Results showed that all groups demonstrated preference for direct refusal when using email. For example, American male preferred giving reasons and alternatives whereas American females provided expressions of gratitude and stating positive opinions. Moreover, the international students used a greater variety of semantic formulas; however, they lacked positive opinions and providing alternatives. They also tended to use more regret than the American students. In addition, both male and female international students tended to use more specific excuses as compared to more general excuses used by the Americans.

In Arabic context, Al-Shalawi (1997) investigated the speech act of refusal strategies as made by Saudis and Americans. The participants of this study included 50 American males and 50 Saudi males. Data were collected using written open-ended DCT and were analysed based on the classification scheme of Beebe and Cummings (1985). In order to find out if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups, Al-Shalawi calculated frequency counts of all formulas, and then conducted a t-test. Finally, the situations were analysed based on two variables: status and social distance. Results revealed that Saudis employed more semantic formulas than Americans did, however when refusing someone of a higher status, both American and Saudi participants employed a higher number of semantic formulas. Concerning the number and rank of semantic formulas employed, it was not found any statistically significant difference between the two groups. In addition, with different types of refusals, that is, when refusing suggestions as compared to refusing offers, requests, or invitations both groups used a fewer number of semantic formulas. It was also found that the choice of the semantic formula was influenced by the type of refusal rather than the social status of the interlocutor. Explanation, regret, and gratitude were the most frequent semantic formulas used for both groups. Also, the Saudis participants provide fewer explanations than their Americans counterparts in all situations except one. Thus the Saudi explanations were not specific like those in American ones.

In Jordanian context, Al-Issa (1998) examined the realization patterns of refusal strategies by Jordanians and Americans. The main concern of this study was to investigate if there was evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English and the reasons causing this transfer. Data were collected using a written DCT followed by semi-structured interviews with the Jordanian EFL learners. These interviews were conducted in order to find out the motivating factors for pragmatic transfer from L1. The results showed evidence of pragmatic transfer in terms of frequency, type, number, and content of the semantic formulas used. Moreover, compared to the American use of refusals, the Jordanian participants tend to refuse in lengthy, elaborate ways and use less direct strategies, especially when the interlocutor was of a higher social status. However, Al-Issa's study aims to locate evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English among Jordanian EFL learners while the present study aims to investigate the similarities and differences of the speech act of refusal among Jordanian Arabic and American English in terms of the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism.

Finally, Al-Shboul et al. (2012) investigates the similarities and differences of the speech act of refusal in English between Jordanian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Malay English as a Second Language (ESL) postgraduate students. Data were collected using a modified version of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) initially developed by Beebe et al. (1990). To obtain responses as natural as real-life communication, an interviewer audio-taped and read the situations aloud to both groups in English to enable the participants to respond verbally to situations. Next, the audio-taped responses obtained from both groups of participants were transcribed with broad transcription convention. Data were analysed in terms of semantic formulaic sequences and were categorized by four trained coders based on the classification of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990). Results revealed that both groups used almost similar strategies with similar frequency in performing refusals. For example, the most frequently used refusal strategies by the Jordanian and Malay participants were excuse, reason, explanation, and expressing statement of regret. However, they differed in the use and frequency count of indirect strategies with the Malays using less indirect strategies than the Jordanians. In addition, the results indicate that the Jordanian participants expressed "gratitude" less frequently than the Malay participants when refusing invitations by equal and lower status person. Similar results were found when performing refusal in all request situations. While this study aimed to investigate the similarities and the differences of intercultural communication of refusals in English among non-native speakers of English (i.e. Jordanian and Malay participants in Malaysia), the present study aims to investigate the speech act of refusal as performed by Jordanian Arabic and American English.

It can be seen that all of the previous studies showed above used a written DCT with the exception of Al-Shboul et al.'s (2012) study that conducted an oral DCT by eliciting the data orally. Also these studies used refusal classification schemes that are based on the schemes proposed by Beebe et al. (1990), and Beebe and Cummings (1985). Generally, the findings of the previous studies reviewed above are mostly consistent. For example, Al-Shalawi (1997) and Al-Issa (1998) found that Arabic explanations and excuses tended to be lengthy, more elaborate and less specific when compared to the American ones. In contrast, Moaveni (2014) found that both male and female international students tended to use more specific excuses as compared to more general excuses used by the Americans. Although there has been some research on Jordanian refusals, their focus were either interlanguage studies (Al-Issa 1998; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015) or intercultural studies (Al-Shboul et al., 2012) to investigate the similarities and the differences of intercultural communication of the speech act of refusal in English among non-native speakers of English (i.e. Jordanian and Malay participants in Malaysia). Hence, the present study will add empirical findings in terms of the performance of refusal by Jordanian Arabic and American English.

THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities and the differences of the speech act of refusal between Jordanian Arabic and American English. It also aims to provide interpretations of the salient similarities and differences between the two groups. It is primarily based on Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. This cultural dimension is the most broadly adopted one in investigating the differences and the similarities in intercultural communication studies. In the present study, collectivism is characterized by individual subordination of personal goals to the goals of the collective group while individualism is characterized by the subordination of a group's goals to an

individual's own goals. A fundamental conviction of people in collectivist cultures is that the smallest unit of survival is the collective power. On the other hand, in individualist cultures the smallest unit of survival is the individuals themselves (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988), because the self is autonomous and separated from the group, while in collectivistic cultures the self is never defined by an autonomous self but by a group of others (Lyuh, 1992). Moreover, Triandis et al. (1988) clarify that people in individualistic cultures show positive attitudes toward horizontal relationships and are uneasy about people in authority. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures show positive attitudes toward vertical relationships and accept differences in power. Jordan typically is classified as a collectivistic culture, while the USA is typically classified as an individualistic culture. Thus two research questions emerge that initiated this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences in refusal strategies between Jordanian Arabic and American English?
2. Why are there similarities and differences between Jordanian Arabic and American English?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants to the present study were fifteen native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (JA) at Balqa Applied University (henceforth, BAU), Jordan, and fifteen American English native speakers (AE) at State of Ohio, USA. The participants' ages range from 20-30 years old. The study included only male participants because the participants of AE group includes only 15 male white native speakers of American English whose parents are also native speakers of American English. In order to match the number and sex ratio, 15 male native speakers of Jordanian Arabic whose parents are also native speakers of Jordanian Arabic participated in this study. The participants of JA group were from central region of Jordan and pursuing different academic majors in the college of business (e.g. Accounting, finance, marketing).

Instrument and Procedure

In the present study, eleven situations of discourse completion test (DCT) adopted from Al-Issa's (1998) study (from originally of 15 situations) were used to elicit Arabic and English refusal performance data from the participants. While American English response to English version, the Jordanian Arabic response to the Arabic version. As Kasper and Dahl (1991) stated, the DCT is the most popular data elicitation method in speech act research. It was first developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and it is mostly a written questionnaire that provides a brief description of a certain situation followed by an incomplete short dialogue in which participants are required to respond what they believe they would say in that particular situation. Moreover, the DCT applied in this study consisted of 11 scenarios within two variables were to be examined, social status and social distance, which are critical factors that influence participants' refusal strategies in both Jordanian and western cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Al-Issa, 1998). Situations used in this study are confined with which university students are familiar.

As shown in Table 1 below, the 11 situations of Al-Issa's DCT (consisting of 15 situations in the first draft) consist of three groups of situations: 3 requests, 4 invitations/offers and 4 suggestions. Two different variables were manipulated to represent the relationship between the speaker and the hearer in each group of situations: social status (higher, lower, equal) and social distance (close, familiar, distance) (see Table 1). The characters chosen to represent a person of high social status included a professor and a faculty advisor, for lower social status a freshman, a food server and a high school relative; and for equal status a friend and a student. With regard to social distance, close is represented by a friend; familiar is represented by a professor; and distance is represented by a stranger and a student never met before.

Regarding the JA group, the researchers administrated the questionnaire at BAU's main campus located in Salt, Jordan. The researchers met the participants in Al Balqa' Electronic Academy building where students from all faculties take their English basic courses there. For the AE group, a research assistant was hired to administrate the questionnaire at U.S. Thus, one Jordanian man worked as an assistant. This male Jordanian is a friend of the researchers, having graduated from the same universities. He was working at the State of Ohio at the time of the data collection. The assistant's academic background facilitated the process of training him. The research assistant had finished his master thesis in speech act studies. He has experience of collecting such data as well as he was familiar with sociolinguistics and intercultural methodologies. The research assistant was asked to collect data from male white native speakers of American English whose parents are also native speakers of American English. The research assistant met the participants at different places such as an advertising company, homes, and a public garden. Over six weeks, the research assistant collected fifteen questionnaires for the present study. Finally, there was no time limitation for the participants to complete questionnaires as language proficiency was not the focus in the present study.

Table 1. Classification of the DCT

DCT #	Stimulus type	Refuser's status	Refuser's distance	Situations
3	Request	Equal	Distance	Student asking to watch his/her books
7	Request	Lower	Familiar	Professor asking for assistance
9	Request	Higher	Close	High-school relative asking for help in homework
2	Invitation	Higher	Familiar	Freshman inviting you for lunch
4	Invitation	Lower	Familiar	Professor inviting you to attend a lecture
8	Offer	Equal	Distance	Stranger offering you a ride
10	Offer	Equal	Close	Friend offering you some money
1	Suggestion	Lower	Familiar	Faculty advisor suggesting a course in writing
5	Suggestion	Equal	Distance	Student suggesting a course with a professor
6	Suggestion	Equal	Close	Friend suggesting a topic
11	Suggestion	Higher	Familiar	Food server suggesting chicken dish

DATA ANALYSIS

In the present study, data were analysed in terms of semantic formulaic sequences and were categorized based on the classification of refusal strategies established by Al-Issa (1998). A semantic formula refers to “a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy, any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question” (Cohen, 1996: 265). For example, in the situation where respondents had to refuse lending their class notes to a classmate, a refusal responses such as “I’m sorry, my notes are not good and I’m afraid they will confuse you,” was analysed as consisting of three units, each of which falls into a corresponding semantic formula (as shown in the brackets) :

- I’m sorry [regret].
- My notes are not good [explanation/excuse/reason].
- I’m afraid they will confuse you [statement of negative consequence] (Al-Issa 1998: 118).

However, some responses elicited by the DCT for the present study included components that did not fit in the classification system established by Al-Issa (1998). Accordingly, five semantic formulas were added by the researchers of this study in order to classify such components (see Table 2). In addition, some components, used in Al-Issa (1998), were not found in the present study’s data and were thus omitted (i.e. performative refusal, hedging, return favour).

The initial analysis of the data was run by the researchers of this study. In order to achieve the reliability of data analysis, the researchers invited two independent raters in order to make sure that the semantic formulas matched the data in light of the classification established by Al-Issa (1998). Both of the independent raters were graduate students majoring in English applied linguistics and are well-trained in the analysis of speech acts coding schema. There were found some differences in the coding schema, therefore a discussion was held and adjustments were made, based on consensus.

When all the data were coded into semantic formulas and a high level of reliability was achieved, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The use of this type of descriptive statistics to analyse the DCT data is also shared by studies conducted by Al-Issa (1998) and Al-Shboul et al. (2012). Finally, frequencies/percentages, number of occurrences, and the ranks of the semantic formulas used by the two selected groups were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of comparative analysis between the two selected groups, frequencies/percentages, number of occurrences, and the ranks of the semantic formulas used by Jordanian and American participants were calculated as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequencies/percentages, number of occurrences, and ranks of the semantic formulas

Semantic formula	JA			AE			Total	
	R.	No.	%	R.	No.	%	No.	%
Explicit rejection	-	-	-	12	1	0.2	1	0.1
No	7	10	2.3	6	14	3.5	24	2.9
No thanks	13	3	0.7	9	5	1.2	8	1.0
Negative ability/ willingness	4	44	10.2	3	64	16.0	108	13.0
Regret	2	64	14.8	4	45	11.2	109	13.0
Wish	13	3	0.7	8	7	1.7	10	1.2
Explanation/Excuse	1	132	30.5	1	107	26.7	239	28.7
Alternative	6	24	5.6	7	11	2.7	35	4.2
Future acceptance	9	7	1.6	10	3	0.7	10	1.2
Statement of principle	8	9	2.0	8	7	1.7	16	1.9
Philosophy	-	-	-	10	3	0.7	3	0.4
Negative consequence	-	-	-	12	1	0.2	1	0.1
Insult/Attack/Threat	15	1	0.2	12	1	0.2	2	0.2
Criticize	12	4	0.9	12	1	0.2	5	0.6
Let interlocutor off the hook	11	5	1.2	12	1	0.2	6	0.7
Reprimand	-	-	-	11	2	0.5	2	0.2
Sarcasm	14	2	0.5	-	-	-	2	0.2
Conditional acceptance	11	5	1.2	8	7	1.7	12	1.4
*Using proverbs	13	3	0.7	-	-	-	3	0.4
*Swearing to God	13	3	0.7	-	-	-	3	0.4
*Using taboo words	-	-	-	10	3	0.7	3	0.4
*Self-defence	15	1	0.2	-	-	-	1	0.1
*Praying for God's blessing	10	6	1.4	-	-	-	6	0.7
Postponement	-	-	-	10	3	0.7	3	0.4
Request for information	12	4	0.9	8	7	1.7	11	1.3
Request for understanding	14	2	0.5	-	-	-	2	0.2
Positive opinion/feeling/agreement	11	5	1.2	5	15	3.7	20	2.4
Pause filler	13	3	0.7	9	5	1.2	8	1.0
Gratitude	3	60	13.9	2	87	21.7	147	18.0
Removal of negativity	12	4	0.9	12	1	0.2	5	0.6
Define relation	5	28	6.5	-	-	-	28	3.4
Total	-	432	100	-	401	99.2	833	100.3

**Indicates additional categories added based on the corpus of the present study.*

Regarding the JA participants, all written refusal responses obtained from them resulted in 432 Arabic refusal strategies. *Explanation/excuse* (e.g. "I have an appointment at same time."; "عندي موعد في نفس الوقت.") was the most frequent strategy used by the participants in

approximately 30.5% of the strategies (n=132). *Regret* (e.g. "I'm sorry."; "انا اسف") was the second most frequent strategy mentioned by the JA participants in approximately 14.8% of the strategies (n=64). *Gratitude* (e.g. thank you"; "شكرا لك") was the third most frequent strategy mentioned by JA participants in approximately 13.0% of the strategies (n=60). As the fourth most frequently used strategy, the JA participants used *negative ability/willingness* (e.g. "I cannot today"; "لا استطيع اليوم") in approximately 10.2% of the strategies (n=44). The JA participants used *define relation* (e.g. "my dear professor"; "دكتوري العزيز") as the fifth most frequent strategy in approximately 6.5% of the strategies (n=34). *Statement of alternative* (e.g. "I prefer writing about something else instead of writing about myself"; "انا افضل الكتابة عن شيء اخر بدلا من الكتابة عن نفسي") was the sixth most frequent strategy mentioned by the JA participants in approximately 5.6% of the strategies (n=24). The remaining strategies: *nonperformative "no"*, *statement of principle*, *future acceptance*, *praying for God's blessing*, *let interlocutor off the hook/ conditional acceptance/positive opinion/feeling/agreement*, *criticize/request for information/removal of negativity*, *nonperformative "no thanks"/wish/using proverbs/swearing to God/pause filler*, *sarcasm/request for understanding*, and */insult/attack/threat/ self-defence* account for 2.3%, 2.0%, 1.6%, 1.4%, 1.2, 0.9%, 0.7%, 0.5% and 0.2% respectively.

Regarding the AE participants, all written refusal responses obtained from them resulted in 401 English refusal strategies. *Explanation/excuse* (e.g. "I have a very important test I have to study for.") was the most frequent strategy used by the participants in approximately 26.7% of the strategies (n=107). *Gratitude* (e.g. "Thank you.") was the second most frequent strategy mentioned by AE participants in approximately 21.7% of the strategies (n=87). *Negative ability/willingness* (e.g. "I cannot make it this time".) was the third most frequent strategy mentioned by the AE participants in approximately 16.0% of the strategies (n=64). As the fourth most frequently used strategy, the AE participants used *regret* (e.g. "I'm sorry...") in approximately 11.2% of the strategies (n=45). *Positive opinion/feeling/agreement* (e.g. "that's a good idea but...") was the fifth most frequent strategy mentioned by the AE participants in approximately 3.7% of the strategies (n=15). The AE participants used *non-performative "no"* (e.g. "No") as the sixth most frequent strategy in approximately 3.6% of the strategies (n=14). The remaining strategies: *statement of alternative*, *wish/statement of principle/conditional acceptance/request for information*, *non-performative "no thanks"/pause filler*, *postponement/future acceptance/statement of philosophy/using taboo words*, *reprimand*, and *performative "explicit rejection"/negative consequences/insult/attack/threat/criticize/let interlocutor out of hook/removal of negativity* account for 2.7%, 1.7%, 1.2%, 0.7%, 0.5%, and 0.2% respectively. The following paragraphs show the similarities and differences between both groups of participants of performing the speech act of refusal.

Hence, research question number one was formulated in order to find out if there are similarities and differences in refusal strategies employed by both groups of participants. In terms of similarities and in consistent with the works of Al-Shalawi (1997), Al-Issa (1998), and Al-Shboul et al. (2012), both groups of participants were in agreement regarding their preference of strategy; hence, they preferred indirect strategies (e.g. explanation/excuse) followed by adjunct strategies (e.g. gratitude) followed by direct strategies (e.g. statements showing unwillingness or inability). Examples of the frequent strategies used included providing *excuse/reason/explanation*, *statement of regret*, *gratitude*, *making statements showing negative ability/willingness*, and *attempt to dissuade interlocutor*. For instance, *explanation/excuse* strategy was the most common strategy used by them, JA (30.5%), and

AE (26.7%). The result concurs with the studies on Jordanian Arabic refusals by AL-Issa (1998) and Al-Shboul et al. (2012) who found that both Jordanians and Americans and Jordanians and Malays employed *explanation/excuse* more than any other strategy.

In terms of differences in refusal strategies used by both groups of participants, the main differences in this study were that the Jordanian participants at all social status (i.e. higher, equal, lower) were more likely to employ indirect strategies (e.g. I have an appointment that day) than the American participants who used direct refusal style in higher and equal status. Results also revealed differences in both groups' percentages of using indirect strategies, adjunct strategies, and direct strategies (see Table 2). Moreover, American participants' refusals were longer than their Jordanian counterparts. Other differences included that JA used some semantic formulas vs. AE did not (e.g. using proverbs, sarcasm, swearing to God, praying for God's blessing, define relationship), while JA did not use other particular semantic formulas vs. AE did (e.g. explicit rejection, philosophy, reprimand, using taboo words). Such similarities and differences among both participating groups reflect deeply rooted cultural values. The following paragraph is a discussion of these results.

The second research question was formulated to investigate the reasons for the similarities and differences in the refusal strategies between Jordanian and American participants. Reasons for similarities in the use of refusal strategies show that people from different cultures share similar views concerning politeness. This is in accordance with Guo (2012) who attributed the reasons that Chinese and American were in agreement regarding their preference of strategy to the fact that people from different cultures share similar views concerning politeness.

In terms of the differences between the two selected groups, the results reflect deeply rooted cultural values. For example, when the content of *explanation/excuse* is concerned, Jordanian participants tended to be less direct and provide *explanations* other than their own inclination in refusing. On the other hand, AE participants tended to be more direct and they commonly provide their own inclinations as reason for refusal. For example, Jordanian participants seldom provide *explanations* such as "I have to study," while it was common among AE responses. In doing so, Jordanians may feel that studying is under their own control and thus can, by surrendering to their own desires, accept the invitation/offer, request, or suggestion if they really want to, therefore such *explanations* may not be acceptable. This is in accordance with (Lyuh, 1992), who attributed the less use of such *explanations* (i.e. I have to study) by Koreans, as a collectivistic culture, to that they may consider that studying is not an acceptable explanation because they can control the situation, specifically, they can comply with the request if they want, by sacrificing their own interests. Moreover, when refusing a professor's (higher social status) request for assistance to carry his/her books (situation 7), one explanation ("انا لدي ألم في ظهري", I have pain on my back) of all responses given by JA participants referred to physical problems as grounds for refusal, and this situation is clearly out of their control. Hence, it is not an individual's inclination or decision that they refuse. On the other hand, there were no occurrences of such physical explanations in the responses given by AE participants.

Consequently, this pattern can be described by cultural differences. American culture has strong characteristics of individualism, in which individual interests take precedence over group and the protecting the autonomy among group member is considered to be of greatest importance. In contrast, Jordan culture has strong characteristics of collectivism, in which in-group interests take priority over individual and protecting the harmony among group

member is important. With this in mind, Jordanians provide uncontrollable situations or event beyond their control for their explanations such as family-related matters. That is, Jordanians responses consist of a higher percentage of family-related explanations in most of the situations. For instance, when refusing an invitation by a professor (higher social status) inviting to attend a lecture (situation 4), while Jordanian participants provide responses referred to family-related matters, there were no occurrences of such family-related matters explanations in the responses given by AE participants. Specifically, one JA participant refuses by saying “انا اسف جدا يادكتور, يجب ان اخذ امي الى المستشفى ذلك اليوم”, I’m very sorry my doctor, I have to take my mother to hospital that day.” This is in accordance with other refusal studies such as Lyuh (1992) and Al-Shalawi (1997). For example, Al-Shalawi (1997) found that the Saudi participants differed from the American participants in that Saudis used family circumstance very commonly in their *explanations/excuses* such as “I have a problem in my family,” and “I have to take my family out” (responding to the professor’s invitation to the party). This might be also interpreted in terms of attribution theory or of locus of control, or even in terms of the difference in social-moral values in collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures. By contrast, Americans provide explanations that express their own inclinations such as “I have to study” or “I’m not in mood” (responding to the same situation).

To sum up, both similarities and differences in the performance of refusals by Jordanian Arabic and American English were found. As culture reflects itself from language, these similarities and differences in refusal strategies are the manifestation of cultural differences between Jordanian and American Culture. The data from the DCT provide a “window on human interaction” (Gass & Houck, 1999: 1) and would add empirical findings in terms of the performance of refusal by Jordanian Arabic and American English. It is also expected to be useful information in cross-cultural comparison studies and other related areas.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As this study has generally answered the proposed research questions, more research on the performance of refusal by Jordanian and American participants need to be investigated. The generalizability of findings may be constrained by the following considerations.

The participants for this study were recruited from one region in Jordan (i.e. central region) and one region in the United States (i.e. State of Ohio). As regional dialects were not accounted for, the native speaker participants may not have been representative of all native Jordanian Arabic speakers or native American English. In addition, the sample size only involved a small number of male participants whose age ranged from thirty to forty years. Population with different educational backgrounds, gender, and age groups could have given different results. Hence, these findings should be considered tentative and possibly not applicable to other contexts or participants with different characteristics. Moreover, collecting data using one instrument is not enough to provide insights into every aspect of the Jordanian and American refusal strategies. To quote Rose and Ono (1995), “we should not expect a single data source to provide all the necessary insights into speech act usage” (p. 207).

Studies conducted on the methods used in speech act research also reported the limitations of the DCT as compared to the data obtained from natural settings. It was observed that the DCT responses are shorter, simpler, less face-attentive and less emotional (Yuan, 2001).

Hence, researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using different data collection methods such as role-plays or ethnographic observation which would provide more insight into the advantages and disadvantages of each data collection method, leading to the development of a more grounded approach to speech act studies. Future researchers who are interested in intercultural studies are also encouraged to start where this study ended. That is, some of the present study limitations could be addressed by those researchers through including situations representing a greater number of social settings (e.g. the street, home, workplace, or market).

In conclusion, the present study has contributed to our understanding of how the speech act of refusal is performed in English in two culturally and linguistically diverse groups (Jordanians and Americans). It also has been shown that speech acts reflect the cultural norms and values that are possessed by speakers of different cultural backgrounds, as different cultures are very likely to realize speech acts quite differently. Such differences might cause misunderstanding or communication breakdowns when people from different cultural backgrounds come in contact with each other. Finally, the presents study has revealed important findings that would be useful in studied in intercultural comparisons.

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