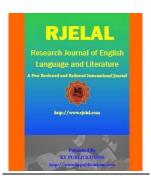**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

ISSN:2321-3108

INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS REVISITED: REFUSAL STRATEGIES AND POLITENESS

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

Professor of English Linguistics,
Hebron University, Palestine

ABSTRACT

This cross-cultural study tackles refusals as extended in Palestinian and American societies. Refusal may be a face-threatening act to the inviter, because it contradicts his/her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Therefore, unlike acceptance, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence. The study reveals that that Palestinians and US Americans tend to use a variety of strategies so as to soften the perlocutionary effect of the face-threatening act on the addressee had an invitation been rejected. Most Palestinians believe that the use of such apologetic expressions is a significant act of politeness and, hence, a redressing strategy. Basically, they are lexical and syntactic markers of politeness which speakers usually use to show their awareness that something wrong has happened and it has to be amended. So, such speech forms are seen by Palestinian people as markers of affiliation and solidarity.

Key words: refusal, speech act, Face-threatening act, politeness, face.

1. INTRODUCTION

Responses to invitations have received little attention (Garcia 1992, 1999, 2007; Felix-Brasdefer 2003). This paper contributes to the body of research on invitations by analyzing how Palestinians and USA speakers respond to invitations. When issuing an invitation, the inviter may receive different types of responses: acceptance, demurral or refusal.

An acceptance, needless to say, is the preferred response because "it satisfies the inviter's positive face, that is, his/her need to be liked and approved of by others" (Garcia, 2007:551). A demurral, on the other hand, avoids a direct or straightforward acceptance or refusal which would threaten the

invitee's negative face and/or the inviter's positive face; finally, a refusal is a dispreferred response, and as such the invitee may choose to mitigate it using a number of strategies that would help save the inviter's positive face while protecting his/her own negative face; that is his/her desire that his actions be unimpeded by others (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Building on the work of earlier researchers on similar politeness formulae like, for example, apologizing (Holmes 1990, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, Olshtain and Cohen 1983, Frazer 1981); gift offering (Hua *et al*, 2000); requests (Tawalbeh & Al-Oqaily, 2012); compliment and compliment responses (Wolfson, 1983; Knapp *et al*, 1984;

Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001) this study will analyze refusal responses to invitations in Palestinian and US societies according to a categorization of strategies.

2. Data collection

Generally speaking, the data falls into two main groups: oral and written. The oral portion of data from Palestinian Arabic is spontaneous and naturally occurring intraconversational invitation acts used in real environments of everyday communication between intimates. Among the many sources we collected our data from are: daily interactions between dyads in the workplace, department meetings, television programs, family gatherings, campus, coffee shops, etc. Whenever we tried to collect the data no attempt was made by us to inform the participants being involved in the interactions about our intention.

Comprehensible studies on invitations in American English (Suzuki 2009; Rakowicz 2009; Wolfson et al. 1983) were reviewed. In fact, Wolfson's study adopted also the immediate observation method for data collection from naturally occurring interactions. Therefore, some of Wolfson's data were used for analysis in this cross cultural study. I decided also to rely on series and films shown on TV and internet or recorded on video cassettes or CDs in order to collect data from American English. It is difficult to list all the films and series that I have watched to collect data but the list includes the following: "The qualizer", "Midnight Caller", "Million Dollar Baby", "Hemingway", "El Dorado", among others.

The written subset of the data from PA, on the other hand, was collected by means of a questionnaire. Two similar questionnaires (see appendices A and B) were organized into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was conducted to obtain the subjects' personal information such as their educational background, age, gender and status which all have significant impact on their choice of politeness strategies when issuing invitations in given situations. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of one situation together with a number of discourse completion questions to collect data for the study. The situation has to do with asking subjects about turning down an invitation to a wedding party.

The items of the questionnaire looked like role plays except that the respondents were told to write down what they may say in the specific setting instead of acting it out. The respondents were instructed to consult their acquaintances and their relatives if they did not know what to say in a particular context and to try to make their answers as real as spontaneous as possible.

Some subjects remarked that it might have been easier for them if I had provided them with a number of answers for each item from which to choose what they think is the most appropriate to the specific setting being described. My response was that I did not want them to choose the best among the answers but that I wanted to know what they themselves may say in each setting. Besides, what should respondents do if they believed that none of my responses suited a particular setting? Yet another reason why I did not provide respondents with answers was that my answers will represent one age category, one sex category and one social and educational background only. This will certainly contradict the objectives of this study.

Two groups of subjects took part in the study. The first group consisted of 40 American English Speakers (henceforth AES). The second group included 40 Palestinian Arabic Speakers (henceforth PAS). It should also be noted that 20 of the respondents were from Hebron city and 20 from Nablus city, the largest urban centers in the country.

The questionnaire was distributed to AES with the help of some teachers at CENTRO COMLUTENSE PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DEL ESPAÑOL in Madrid. It is worth mentioning that the sample from American English (restricted data) might not be representative of US society due to the diverse nature of US society.

A satisfactory categorizing system for the naturally occurring strategies of refusals in the corpus from both societies comprises the following basic categories, with a number of sub-categories:

A- Apologizing
B- Justification
C- Asking for forgiveness
D- Promise of compensation
E- Offering good wishes and rejecting

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

3. Discussion and Analysis

Refusals represent one type of dispreferred response and often occur as second pair parts (turns) in conversation. As a reactive speech act, refusals function as a response to an initiating act and are considered to be a speech act by which a speaker "[fails] to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" (Chen et al. 1995: 121 as cited in Felix-Brasdefer, 2008). Searle and Vandervken (1985:195) define the speech act of refusal as follows: "the negative counterparts to acceptances and consentings are rejections and refusals. Just as one can accept offers, applications, and invitations, so each of these can be refused or rejected".

A refusal response is sensitive to social factors such as gender, age, level of education, and the social distance and social power between the interlocutors. Furthermore, the negotiation of a refusal may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and various degrees of politeness or impoliteness that are appropriate to the situation. With regard to sociopragmatic variation, what is considered appropriate refusal behavior may vary across cultures and even across varieties of one language. Thus, the strategic selection of a direct or indirect refusal and the appropriate degree of politeness expressed will depend on the relationship between the participants (close or distant, power), age, gender, and the situation.

Following the data collection, the utterances were codified based on a classification of refusal strategy adopted from Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990)[1]. This coding scheme is used intensively in most refusal studies (cf. Farnia and Wu, 2012).

Therefore, some examples of the elicited responses and coded based on Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) are as follows:

Examples of refusals by Palestinian responses:

(1) *?asif. fi ?amir ham bimnaçni* اسف في أمر هام بيمنعني. [Sorry. an important issue holds me back.] [**statement of regret+ reasons**]

(2) *Wallãahi mabakdar. furşa Θãnyeh. inšã?allãh..* والله مابقدر. فرصة ثانية ان شاء الله.. [I can't by God. Another time, by God willing.]

[**Negative willingness + swearing+ future promise**]

(3) *La. šukran*. لا شكرا. [No. Thanks.] [**Direct refusal+ gratitude**]

(4) *?asf jiddan wallahe mabagdar* اسف جدا والله ما بقدر. [I am very sorry by God I cannot.] [**Statement of regret+ swearing +negative willingness**]

(5) *mabrŭk.mabakdar. fi ?amir ham bimnaçni*. مبروك. ما بقدر. في أمر هام بيمنعني. [Congratulations. I really can't. An important issue holds me back.] [**Greeting +negative willingness+ reasons**]

Examples of refusals by US American responses:

(6) *I'm busy, sorry.* [**reasons + statement of regret**]

(7) *I cannot come. I've got other plans.* [**negative willingness+ reasons**]

(8) *I'm really sorry. I cannot come. I already made plans.* [**statement of regret + negative willingness + reasons**]

(9) *Thanks. Congratulations. I'm not much for weddings but happy to see you afterwards.* [**gratitude + Greetings +negative willingness+ future promise**]

The skills of refusing others' invitations without hurting their feelings are very important to have since the inability to say *no* clearly has led many speakers to offend their interlocutors in cross-cultural communication. In the next two sections, I will explore refusals to invitations as they were demonstrated by speakers from both American and Palestinian societies. In spite of Beebe et al.'s conclusion that refusals to invitations display more cross-cultural similarities than refusals to offers and suggestions, at least between Japanese and Americans, I have decided to conduct this study in an attempt to reveal certain cross-cultural differences between Palestinian Arabic and American English.

3.1. *Invitation refusal in Palestinian Arabic (PA):*

Refusal is a face-threatening act to the inviter, because it contradicts his/her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Therefore, unlike acceptance, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence. As said previously, accepting an invitation among Palestinians is the norm. But in case of refusing, a great deal of

---

[1] See appendix (B).

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

mitigation has to be utilized by the invitee so as to be able to turn down the invitation. Therefore, one key to getting along well with one another, friends and acquaintances should know how to deal with the face-wants that may arise as a result of declining an invitation[2]. However, direct refusals do occur but rarely as illustrated in the example (10) below where B is a young man in his sister's house:

(10) A: *ajĭblak kǎsit šǎy* ? أجيب لك كاسة شاي. [Shall I bring you a cup of tea?]

B: *la. šukran*. لا شكرا. [No. Thanks]

The addressee here simply rejects the invitation and thanks the inviter. However, in most cases the addressee has to give a justification for his refusal as in situation (11) where a mother-in-law is inviting her son in law who is a university student.

(11) A: *istanna, xallĭk tišrab šǎy*. استنا، خليك تشرب شاي. [wait until you have some tea.]

B: *la, mistaçjil biddi arŭħ adrus*. لا، مستعجل بدي اروح ادرس. [No, thank you. I have to read my lessons.]

In example (12), an employee in his thirties is inviting his friend who drove him back to his home.

(12) A: *inzil nišrab finjǎn qahwa maç baçD wa baçdein bitrawweħ.* انزل نشرب فنجان قهوة مع بعض و بعدين بتروح. [Come down to have a cup of coffee, and then you can g

B: *furşa θǎnyeh inšǎ? allah.* فرصة ثانية ان شاء الله. [Another time, by God's willing.]

In the above example, implicit refusal can be noticed, but the addressee promises to accept the invitation some other time in the future. These two strategies reflect the value of being true and honest. No one is willing to promise something that he/she cannot abide by or to do something that he/she does not want to.

Sometimes people may use what is called in Arabic a root-echo response to respond to invitations. Here, the addressee responds by using the same word(s) that the speaker used to issue the invitation.

(13) A: *šarrifna illeileh çalħafleh.* شرفنا الليلة عالحفلة. [Give us the honor of your presence in the party tonight.]

B: *?llah yizĭdak šaraf. Wallahi ma baqdar.* الله يزيدك شرف. والله ما بقدر. [May God give you more honor. By Allah, I cannot.]

Still, another type of responses belongs to what is called the triadic formula where the speaker reacts to the addressee's response building on his own words as in example 14 below:

(14) A: *itfaDDal.* اتفضل. [You are most welcome. Help yourself]

B: *şaħtein u çǎfyeh. ?ana šabçan.* صحتين وعافية. انا شبعان. [May it give you health and well-being. I'm full].

It is clear from table (1) that Palestinians tend to use a variety of apologetic strategies so as to soften the perlocutionary effect of the face-threatening act on the addressee had an invitation been rejected. Most Palestinians believe that the use of such apologetic expressions is a significant act of politeness and, hence, a redressing strategy. Basically, they are lexical and syntactic markers of politeness which speakers usually use to show their awareness that something wrong has happened and it has to be amended. So, such speech forms are seen by Palestinian people as markers of solidarity.

Table (1): Distribution of declining strategies in the speech of PA subjects

Declining strategy	Frequency	
	No.	%
Expression of regret	211	42
Justification	153	31
Asking for forgiveness or thanking	68	13
Promise of compensation	45	9
Offering good wishes	22	5
Total	499	100

Table (1) demonstrates that the respondents tend to exploit the conventional way of apologizing strategy (i.e. using expression of regret) in almost 42%. The justification strategy, on the other hand, is more frequently employed by the subjects (31%) than the other strategies. A number of informants appear

---

[2] It is worth mentioning that a considerable number of the Palestinian informants (5) have refused to respond to this section of the questionnaire on the pretext that an invitation has not to be rejected.

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

also to rely on promising to compensate as a mitigating strategy. They tend to employ it in 13%. Offering good wishes was also found to be used 9% of the time. This result indicates that offering good wishes still represents important part of the linguistic behavior of Palestinians for this particular purpose. A few number of the subjects reported that they may ask for forgiveness in case of refusing. It has been used only 5% of the time by those who responded to the prompts included in this section. All in all, these findings indicate that the formulaic sequence used by Palestinian people seems to be similar to the formulaic sequence produced by American English speakers and Japanese EFL learners (Beebe's *et al*, 1990). In their study on "speech act set of refusal and complaint" Beebe *et al* noticed that the formulaic sequence employed by the speakers comprised of (1) an expression of regret, followed by (2) an excuse, and ending with (an offer or alternative). In our study, the formulaic sequence, however, was found to follow a similar pattern, though it comprises more strategies than those noticed by Beebe *et al*. These sequences can best be described in the form of regret**/**justification or explanation**/**promise of compensation**/** offering good wishes**/** followed by asking for forgiveness or thanking. But it should be noted here that the use of these strategies is not obligatory in the absolute sense. It has been noticed that regret/justification**/** asking for forgiveness or thanking are prevalent in the great majority of the refusals. However, the other strategies (promise of compensation**/** offering good wishes) are left to personal choice. That is, they have been realized in the data to a much lesser extent.

The following are among the many terms which have been used by PA subjects for achieving this purpose: *?asif* اسف 'sorry' which often appears with the Arabic intensifier *jiddan* جدا 'very' as a compliment to signal the users' serious and sincere attempt in apologizing for declining an invitation. Clearly, the explicit apology strategy as it seems to be heavily invested by Palestinians is represented by the conventional term followed by an intensifier as illustrated in example (15) below:

(15) *?asf jiddan wallahe mabaqdar* اسف جدا والله ما بقدر
[I am very sorry by God I cannot.]

It has also been noticed that justification as an apologizing strategy is resorted to by the addressees when they feel that the addresser appears to be not convinced by their apology, hence, the situation requires a higher level of mitigation to soften the force inherent in refusing the invitation. To produce face-threatening acts without proper justifications implies disrespect. So, prefacing face-threatening acts with apologetic formulae and justification or explanation marks a higher degree of politeness.

(16) *?ana mašγuul kѳiir* انا مشغول كثير [I am very busy' or 'too much busy.]

(17) *fi ?amir ham bimnaçni* في أمر هام بيمنعني [an important issue holds me back.]

(18) *?ana mitħami* أنا متحمي [I am on a diet- in case of inviting someone for a dinner.]

The examples above represent the most common expressions which are employed by Palestinians for justifying why they do not accept an invitation. Promising for compensation could also best be represented by the utterances below:

(19) *xeirha byeirha* خيرها بغيرها [More similar occasions are coming.]

(20) *?iljayaat ?akѳar milrayħat* الجايات أكثر من الرايحات [the coming are more than the passing.]

Offering the inviter a number of good wishes upon refusing an invitation appears also to have been utilized to a considerable extent. Obviously, this strategy as it seems to be satisfactorily invested by Palestinian people is represented by employing such expressions as

(21) *?inšallah bil?afraħ* ان شاء الله بالافراح [God willing, on other happy occasions.]

(22) *yislamu ?ideik* يسلموا ايديك [God bless your hands] (i.e. a greeting said when somebody does somebody else a favor)

(23) *reitu çamir ?inšallah* ريتهُ عامر بالافراح [Your house is full of happiness, God willing]

(24) *?allah yibarik fikum* الله يبارك فيكم [God bless you.]

Data analysis reveals that the term *inŝallah* ("If God wills it" or "God willing") is frequently used by PA speakers and, according to Condon and Yousef (1975) reflects a present-orientedness in society. While claims have been forwarded that such a worldview is fatalistic and has negative

consequences for business and national development, others state more mundane roots of these problems (Palmer, Leila, & Yassin, 1988). Nydell (1987) specifies that the "belief that God has direct and ultimate control of all that happens" (p. 34) has been overemphasized by Westerners and is far more prevalent among traditional, uneducated people in the region.

Data analysis shows that the term *Inŝallah* is used in a variety of ways to regulate social interaction by alluding to the possibilities that an action may or may not take place. More specifically, *inšalluh* may mean *yes* at some unspecified future time; *no*, in terms of "a refusal to make a serious commitment, to take personal responsibility, or even attempt to deflect the blame for failure for promised action to take place" (Stevens, 1991:105); or simply *never*. Stereotypes do exist within the region about people of certain nationalities who use the term when they do not intend to fulfill their promises. Attending to the placement of *inŝallah* in a sentence, the presence of the medial glottal stop, and the intonation with which it is spoken may reveal which response is being communicated (Stevens, 1991). This delineation of alternative meanings reflects active attempts to coordinate and control interaction.

Therefore, a number of other expressions are also used by PA speakers as illustrated below:

(25)   *?inšallah ?iða manšayalit* ان شاء الله اذا ما انشغلت
   [God willing, if I don't have   something else to do.]

(26)   *rabi yisahil* ربي يسهل [May God helps me to join you.]

(27)   *baqdariš ?awçdik bas raaħ ?açmal juhdi* بقدرش اوعدك بس راح أعمل جهدي [I cannot promise, but I'll do my best.]

The above expressions might be used by some persons under certain circumstances as a mere mark of courtesy. That is, their use indicates that the concerned person, in reality, neither has the intention to accept the invitation nor he/she is serious about accepting it.

For more illustration, let us have a look at the following excerpt in example (28) below, which is an exchange that took place between two colleagues (A and B) in the workplace (a hospital).

(28)   A: *ratabna lariħleh šu ra?yak trafigna* رتبنا لرحلة. شو رايك ترافقني؟

(29)   [We arranged for a picnic, how about tojoin us?]

   B: *?asif wallahi mašŷūl çindi miit šaylah w šaylah yareit bagdar* اسف والله مشغول، عندي مية شغلة وشغلة. يا ريت بقدر.
   [Sorry, by God, I'm busy. I have a hundred of things to do. I wish I could!]
   A: *yazallami ?ana çazmak.* يا زلمة! أنا عازمك.
   [Hey man, I invite you (i.e. you are not going to pay for that)]
   B: *walla yareit, ?inšalla maratanyeh, wbtmanallkum riħleh saçiddeh.* والله يا ريت، ان شاء الله مرة ثانية، وبأتمنى لكم رحلة سعيدة.
   [By God I wish I could. Anyway, another time God willing. I wish you a happy picnic.]

Once again, the politeness in this scene basically resides in the insistence of the invitee on his friend (the addressee) to join them. But the invitee attempts by all means to decline the invitation. This happens, as seen above, by employing several politeness strategies. Among these are: apologizing in different ways, an explanation of why he rejects the invitation, promising to compensate, and offering good wishes, though the invitee performed the (FTA)- *I invite you*, (i.e. implicating that you are not going to pay for that)- on record without redressive act. It is worth noting that such utterance could represent in Palestinian society a face-threatening act to the addressee since it could be explained on the ground that the addressee is a miser (i.e. a person who does not like to share because he is afraid of spending some money). However, the inviter here reacted positively because such behavior appears to be facilitated with understanding of the amount of solidarity which links them to each other. Commenting on this issue Brown and Levinson (1987:229) assume that in contexts of friendship and intimacy, conventionalized insults may serve as a mechanism for stressing solidarity.

3.2. *Invitation refusal in American English (AE):*

Like other speech acts, refusals are sensitive to social variables such as gender, age, level of education, power and social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Mills, 2003). According to Felix-

Brasdefer (2008:196), a refusal response in AE may be expressed directly (*No, I can't*) or indirectly. If a refusal is expressed indirectly, the degree of complexity increases as the speaker has to choose the appropriate form or forms to soften the negative effects of a direct refusal.

Therefore, in declining an invitation, US People may simply say *No, thank you* as in examples 29 and 30 below.

(30)   A: *listen. I think I should bring you some tea.*
          B: *No, thank you.*

(31)   A: *a drink?*
          B: *Oh, no thank you.*

It is clear that sometimes, thanking follows the direct refusal of invitations, but in most cases, the addressee gives a justification for rejecting the invitation. In situation 31, A is young man and B is a young lady.

(32)   A: *Can you come round tonight?*
          B: *No, I've got an essay to finish. Thanks.*

In example 32, A is a young male couch and B is a young girl.

(33)   A: *Can I get you a drink?*
          B: *No, thank you. I don't drink.*

Sometimes the addressee may not reject or accept but may terminate the negotiation before a commitment is achieved as in example 33 between two male college students.

(34)   A: *you know, X. We're gonna have to get together for lunch one of these days.*
          B: *I know. I know.*
          A: *O.K.*   (Wolfson et al. 1983:172)

Therefore, data analysis reveals that refusals in AE may be mitigated by means of adverbs and/or mental state predicates (*Unfortunately, I don't think I'll be able to attend the party*), a justification of a refusal (*I have plans*), an indefinite reply (*I don't know if I'll have time*), an alternative (*Why don't we go out for dinner next week instead?*), a postponement (*I'd rather visit you next week*) or by setting a condition for future acceptance (*If I have to take the class later, I'll take it then*).

Refusals are also realized by means of a series of other speech acts such as requests for clarification (*Did you say Saturday?*) or additional information (*What time is the party?*), a promise to comply (*I'll do my best, but I can't promise you anything*), or an expression of regret or apology (*I'm really sorry; I apologise*). Moreover, a refusal response is often accompanied by a positive remark (*Congratulations on your promotion. I am very happy for you, but...*), an expression of willingness (*I'd love to, but...*), an expression of gratitude (*Thanks for the invitation*), or showing partial agreement with an interlocutor (*Yes, I agree, but...*). Overall, refusals are complex speech acts that require not only long sequences of negotiation and cooperative achievements, but also face-saving maneuvers to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act (cf. Felix-Brasdefer, 2008:195-211).

In fact, like disagreements, refusals in AE may be realized by means of "delays, such as 'no talk,' requests for clarification, partial repeats, and other repair initiators, turn prefaces, and so on" (Pomerantz 1984: 70). According to Pomerantz, a crucial feature of American disagreements is that they are often delayed within turns and presented later in the turn, and may be prefaced by means of a series of minimal vocalizations or perturbations ('*uh's, mmm*') or discourse markers ('*well', 'darn*').

The findings of this study are in line with findings of Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) study that revealed that Americans refused differently based on the social status of interlocutors (higher, equal, and lower). The Americans were more influenced by the degree of familiarity or the social distance from the interlocutors. Americans gave brief refusals to both higher and lower status, and more detailed responses to friends and acquaintances. They also tended to give specific excuses. In fact, American refusals reflected individualistic culture (cf. Al-Kahtani, 2005).

Though Takahashi et al. (1986) finding about American formulas of refusal is that they almost always (my emphasis) started with an expression of positive opinion such as "*I would like to.*" Then they expressed regret. Thirdly they gave an excuse. In other words, Americans tend to apply the strategy of general agreement with excuses (Liao, 1994a). However, readers will find that our findings in this study are: Fewer than 40% of Americans apply the above formula. The findings showed that expressions of *excuses, reasons or explanation* and *statement of regret* were the first and second most

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

frequently used strategy by USA speakers in refusal to an invitation as in example (34)[3] in which a mother is making an invitation to her son's teacher.

(35) **Jan***: Mr. Brown, my husband and I were just wondering if you would like to come over for dinner this evening.*

Brown*: Well, I'd love to, but I have another appointment tonight.*

Jan*: Oh, that's too bad. Well, maybe next time then.*

Brown*: Yeah! Thank you for asking. Enjoy your evening!*

Table (2): Distribution of declining strategies in the speech of AE subjects.

Declining strategy	Frequency %
Expression of regret	16
Justification, reasons	27
Asking for forgiveness or thanking	5
Promise of compensation	0
Offering good wishes	2
Total	50

According to Beebe et al. (1990), regarding the order of the semantic formulae, American English speakers tended to begin refusals to invitations with adjuncts such as *well*, *thank you*, and *I'd love to go*. Moreover, native speakers of American English tended to put an expression of regret into second position, right after a hesitation token, when in higher status position. Also, the American English speakers ordered refusal semantic formulae the same way in both lower and higher status positions. Among the American English speakers, negotiation is longer with status equal with familiar interlocutors (friends and acquaintances) than with intimates or strangers (cf. Beebe et al. 1990). As for the frequency and content of formulae, this study is in line with Beebe et al. (1990) as they point out that American English speakers did not usually set conditions, alternatives, and promises at all while refusing an invitation. They favored the statement of regret and used more formulae with acquaintances.

4. Conclusion

Contrastive studies of the speech act of refusing in interpersonal communications have been made enormously by the scholars all over the world. However, none of the studies considered PA for cross-cultural communication. The findings indicate that the Palestinian and the Americans use different formulaic expressions in refusing and apply different refusal strategies. The Americans are more economical in their choices of the number of the tokens of the refusal strategies. Refusals by Palestinians suggest a politeness refusal hypothesis of "marginally touching the point". This distinction seems to result from differences in social cultures between the Palestinians and the Americans: The Palestinians tend to emphasize restoring relationship between people, while the Americans emphasize solving the problems in question.

To Palestinians apologizing and stating the reasons until the friend was satisfied appear to be very important. The majority of responses by PA interactants reveals that they are very cautious about the arrangement of words, so as not to hurt their friend's feeling or to make him/her sad. An important point to be mentioned here is that American speakers often used reference to their personal decisions and preferences in their excuses and preferences whereas Palestinians resorted to circumstances beyond their control, de-personalizing their explanations. In addition, plain refusal such as *no* and *I cannot* were rarely used by Palestinian speakers because, they are highly face-threatening.

Based on findings of different cross-cultural studies exploring AE and ours concerning PA and AE, we can conclude that in the Oriental countries, people use fewer strategies in refusing and apology in comparison with Western countries. It is clear that features such as "harmony" are prioritized by Palestinian interlocutors in contrast to Western cultures where sending a clear message may be more important. As our research includes American and Palestinian participants engaging in simulations of face threatening behavior, we must acknowledge that some researchers (Gu 1990; Mao 1994) have questioned the appropriateness of the Western construct of "face" to the non-Western contexts.

---

[3] See http://2ndnature-online-eikaiwa.com/Expressions/Module-3/Unit_3.1.htm

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH

The findings displayed that Palestinians and Americans shared more similarities in terms of the use of speech act set in the situation of refusing an invitation to a friend; however, the frequency of use of *statement of regret* followed by *expressions of positive feelings* were higher among Palestinian respondents than their USA counterparts. With regard to the use of speech act set, the findings showed that Palestinians used longer and elaborated speech act set than their US counterparts. In fact, the findings were in line with the findings of the previous studies which displayed that *expressions of reasons and explanations* is the most frequently used strategy for expressing a refusal indirectly (Felix-Brasdefer, 2003, Garcia, 1999, Nelson, 2002, Al-Eryani, 2007, Al-Kahtani, 2005).

To sum up, from all these evidence, we maintain that the cross-linguistic differences are due to basic differences in cultural values, i.e., Americans value individualism and equality, while Palestinians value collectivism and social hierarchy. Collectivism influenced Palestinians, so people try to be harmonious and self-restrained in the social communication. Americans advocate individualism and freedom, so their association is more simple and direct. However, politeness is what people in both cultures are concerned about.

REFERENCES:

Al-Eryani, A. A. (2007). Refusal strategies by Yemeni EFL learners. *Asian EFL Journals,* 9 (2), 19 - 34.

Al-Kahtani, S. (2005). Refusal realizations in three different cultures: A speech act theoretically-based cross-cultural study. *Journal of King Saud University,* 18, 35-57.

Al-Khatib, M. A. (2001) The Pragmatics of Letter-writing. *World Englishes,* 20-2: 179-200.

Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Welts, R. (1990). Pragmatics tramsfer in ESL refusals. In R.C. Scarcella, E.S. Anderson, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (PP. 55-94). New York, NY: Newbury House Publishers.

Blum-Kulka, S. & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics,* 5(3),196-213.

Brown, Penlope & Levinson, Stephen. (1987) *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farnia, M. & Wu, X. (2012). An intercultural communication study of Chinese and Malaysian university students' refusal to invitation. *International Journal of English Linguistics,* 2(1), 162-176.

Fe´lix-Brasdefer, J. Ce´sar, (2003). Declining an invitation: a cross-cultural study of pragmatic strategies in Latin American Spanish and American English. *Multilingua* 22: 225–255.

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. e. (2008). Perceptions of Refusals to Invitations: Exploring the Minds of Foreign Language Learners. *Language Awareness*, 17(3), 195-211. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09658410802146818

García, Carmen. (1992). Refusing an invitation: A case study of Peruvian style. *Hispanic Linguistics*, 5 (1 - 2): 207 - 243.

García, Carmen. (1999). The Three Stages of Venezuelan Invitations and Responses. *Multilingua*, 18 (4): 391-433.

García, Carmen. (2007). How Argentineans Refuse an Invitation. *Hispania*, 90, 3: 551-564.

Gu, Yueguo. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14. 237–257.

Holmes, J. (1990). Apologieis in New Zealand English. *Language in Society,* 19, 155- 99.

Knapp, M. L., Hooper, R., and Bell, R. A. (1984). Compliments. A descriptive taxonomy, *Journal of Comunication,* 34, 19-31.

Liao, C. C. (1994). *A study on the strategies, maxims, and development of refusal in Mandarin Chinese*. Taipei: Crane Publishing House.

Mao, L. R. (1994). Beyond politeness theory: 'Face' revisited and renewed. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 21, 451-86.

Mills, S. (2003). *Gender and politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nelson, G. L., Carson, J., Al Batal, M., & El Bakary, W. (2002). Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Strategy Use in Egyptian Arabic and American English Refusals. *Multilingua*, 23 (2), 163 - 189.

Nydell, M. K. (1987). *Understanding Arabs: A guide for Westerners*. Bangor, ME: Intercultural Press.

Olshtain, E., and Cohen, A. D. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.). *Sociolinguitics and language acquisition* (pp.18-35). Rowley, MA: Newbury.

Palmer, M., Leila, A. & Yassin, E. (1988). The Egyptian bureaucracy. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred / dispreferred turn shapes. In J. Atkinson & J. M. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures in Social Action* (pp. 57-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Racowicz, A. (2009). *Ambiguous invitations: The interlanguage pragmatics of Polish English language learners* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation) New York: New York University.

Searle, J. & Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of illocutionary logic.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University.

Stevens, P. B. (1991). Conflicting pragmatic norms between English and Arabic speakers in Egypt: A study of pragmatic failures. In *Cairo studies in English: Essays in honour of Saad Gamal El-Din* (pp. 97-114). Giza, Egypt: Cairo University, Department of English Language and Literature.

Suzuki, T. (2009). How do American university students "invite" others?: A Corpus-based study of linguistic strategies for the speech act of "invitations". *The 11th Annual Conference of Pragmatics Society of Japan* (pp.85-106). Matsuyama University (Matsuyama, Ehime), on 20th Dec. 2008.

Takahashi, S. (1996). Pragmatic transferability. *Studies in second language acquisition,* 18, 189-223.

Tawalbeh, A. & Al-Oqaily, E. (2012). In-directness and politeness in American English and Saudi Arabic requests: A cross-cultural comparison. *Asian Social Science,* 8 (10), 85-98.

Wolfson, N. (1983) An empirically based analysis of complimenting in America English. In N. Wolfson and E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*

and language acquisition (pp.82-95). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Appendices:

Appendix (A): Transliteration Key

The following system of transliteration has been adopted in this study:

1. Consonants

Phonetic Symbol	Arabic Sound
ʔ	ء
b	ب
t	ت
Ɵ	ث
j	ج
ħ	ح
x	خ
d	د
ð	ذ
r	ر
z	ز
s	س
ŝ	ش
ş	ص
Ď	ض
T	ط
ž	ظ
ς	ع
γ	غ
f	ف
Q	ق
K	ك
L	ل
m	م
n	ن
h	هـ
w	و (Semi Vowel)
y	ي (Semi Vowel)

2. Vowels

a	◌َ (Short Vowel)
ă	ا (Long Vowel)
u	◌ُ (Short Vowel)
ū	و (Long Vowel)
i	◌ِ (Short Vowel)
ū	ي (Long Vowel)

APPENDIX (B):
CLASSIFICATION OF REFUSALS

I. Direct
   A. Performative (e.g., " I refuse")
   B. Nonperformative statement
      1. "No"
      2. Negative willingness ("I can't". "I won't". "I don't think so".)

II. Indirect
   A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry…"; "I feel terrible…")
   B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you…")
   C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")
   D. Statement of alternative
      1. I can't do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather…" "I'd prefer…")
      2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")
   E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have…")
   F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"; "I promise I'll…" or "Next time I'll…"-using "will" of promise or "promise")
   G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
   H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")
   I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
      1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the request (I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
      2. Guilt trip (e.g., Waitress to customers who want to sit a while: I can't make a living off people who just offer coffee.")
      3. Criticize request/requester, etc. (statement of negative felling or opinion);
      4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
      5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")
      6. Self defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can do." " I no do nutting wrong.")
   J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
      1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
      2. Lack of enthusiasm
   K. Avoidance
      1. Nonverbal
         a. Silence
         b. Hesitation
         c. Do nothing
         d. Physical departure
      2. Verbal
         a. Topic switch
         b. Joke
         c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
         d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
         e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

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

From: Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R.(1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-73). New York: Newbury House.

Appendix (C):

A Questionnaire for PAS subjects:

....

....

...

....

....

...

<div dir="rtl">

استبيانة:

أود أن أعبر عن تقديري لكم مقابل مساعدتكم في هذا البحث. أرجو ملء الفراغات أو وضع علامة X في الخانة المناسبة في ما يلي:

1. معلومات شخصية:

الجنسية : .... اللغة الأم : ....

العمر : □ أقل من 20   □ 20-29   □

30-39   □ 40-50   □ أكثر من 50

الجنس: □ ذكر   □ أنثى

المهنة:

....

المؤهل العلمي:

....

2. الاستبانة:

الرجاء قراءة الأسئلة الآتية، وتخيل/ي نفسكَ/ نفسكِ في المواقف المحددة ومن ثم اكتب/ي ما تقوله/تقولينه فعلا في كل موقف. بالإمكان كتابة إختيار آخر ان أردتَ/تِ ذلك.

الموقف

حفلة زواجكَ/كِ يوم السبت القادم. انتَ/تِ تريد/ين دعوة شخص ما إلى هذه الحفلة و لكن هذا الشخص يعتذر (يرفض) عن الدعوة، ماذا يقول(الرافض) المعتذرعن هذه الدعوة اذا كان هو:

1. أسامه، أحد الزملاء؟

....

....

...

....

....

2. حنان، إحدى الزميلات؟ ...

....

....

...

....

....

...

3. سالم، الموظف الخاص بكَ/كِ؟

....

....

...

....

....

.

4. سناء، الموظفة الخاصة بكَ/كِ؟

</div>

....

....

...

....

....

...

<div dir="rtl">

5. السيد مازن، الرئيس في العمل؟

</div>

....

....

..

....

....

..

<div dir="rtl">

6. السيدة خلود، الرئيسة (المسؤولة) في العمل؟

</div>

....

....

...

....

....

Appendix (D):

A Questionnaire for AES subjects:

QUESTIONNAIRE

I would very much appreciate your help with my research. Could you please fill in the blanks or put an X in the appropriate box in the following:

1. **PERSONAL INFORMATION:**

Nationality: ……………………

First Language: ………………….

Age range: □ Under 20   □ 20-29   □ 30-39

□ 40-50   □ Over 50

Gender: □ Female   □ Male

Profession: ………………………………………………

Education: ………………………………………………

2. **QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Would you please read the following questions, put yourself in given situations and then write down what you actually say in each situation. If you like, you can provide more than one answer.

Situation:

Your wedding party is this Saturday. You want to invite D to this party. D **refuses** the invitation. What would D say if D were:

1. Harrison, your male colleague?

……………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

2. Cathy, your female colleague?

……………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………….

3. Robert, your male employee?

……………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………….

4. Lessie, your female employee?

……………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………….

5. Mr. Peterson, your boss?

……………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………….

6. Mrs. Laura, your boss?

……………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………..

Dr. MAHMOOD K. M. ESHRETEH