

The Impact of Gender Differences on the Expressions of Refusal in Jordanian Arabic

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Abstract—The present study investigates the use of the expression of refusal by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (NSsJA) in different social situations (i.e. invitations, suggestions, and offers). It also investigates the influence of gender on the refusal realization patterns within the Jordanian culture to provide a better insight into the relation between situations, strategies and gender in the Jordanian culture. To that end, a group of 70 participants, including 35 male and 35 female students from different departments at the Hashemite University (HU) participated in this study using mixed methods (i.e. Discourse Completion Test (DCT), interviews and naturally occurring data). Data were analyzed in light of a developed coding scheme. The results showed that NSsJA preferred indirect strategies which mitigate the interaction such as "excuse, reason and, explanation" strategy more than other strategies which aggravate the interaction such as "face-threatening" strategy. Moreover, the analysis of this study has revealed a considerable impact of gender on the use of linguistic forms expressing refusal among NSsJA. Significant differences in the results of the Chi-square test relating the effect of participants' gender indicate that both males and females were conscious of the gender of their interlocutors. The findings provide worthwhile insights into the relation amongst types of communicative acts and the rapport between people in social interaction. They assert that refusal should not be labeled as face threatening act since it does not always pose a threat in some cases especially where refusal is expressed among friends, relatives and family members. They highlight some distinctive culture-specific features of the communicative acts of refusal.

Keywords—Speech act, refusals, semantic formulas, politeness, Jordanian Arabic, mixed methodology, gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE present study is anchored in the intra-cultural pragmatics field. The goal of pragmatics is to define non-truth functional aspects of meanings. Hence, it could be considered a more general approach to meaning. Modern use to the term pragmatics goes back to the American philosopher Charles William Morris who defined pragmatics as the study of the relation of signs to interpreters [1]. This indicates that we need to make a distinction between the usual meaning of a word and the meaning it has under specific circumstances (i.e. we need to differentiate between meaning and use). A more recent definition of pragmatics was introduced by [2, p.2] as "studying speakers' ability to communicate more than what is clearly said and listeners' ability to figure out the speakers' intended meaning" considering "the integration of the linguistic meaning of the utterance and the non-linguistic signs in communication with the context."

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One key feature of pragmatics is studying speakers' appropriate production and comprehension of speech acts. Speech acts are defined by [3] as collective acts that comprise a complete and specific function when they are produced together. Consequently, they are necessary for developing the desired communication purposes and overreaching them. Speech act theory attempts to explain how language is used by the speaker in order to accomplish specific intended actions and how the receivers or the addressees infer the intended meaning from what has been said [4]. Refusals are speech acts that function as a response for an initiating act and are considered a speech act by which a speaker.... [fails] to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" [5]. Refusing can be a direct or indirect response for a request, suggestion or an invitation [6]. They belong to the category of commissives due to the fact that refusers are committed to (not) performing an action. Analysing refusals as a formulaic sequence, it can be classified as comprises of an expression of regret, followed by providing an excuse, and ending with an offer of an alternative. Therefore, speakers differ in three areas: the type, order and frequency of the semantic formulae used for refusing.

Politeness is another essential part of pragmatics [7, p.149]. The concept of politeness is present in all languages, but each language has its own way of realizing it. This is because verbal and non-verbal interactions are generally constrained by cultural beliefs, values and attitudes and specific situational and social rules that influence and are reflected in the way people communicate. Reference [8] views culture as the epidemiology of representations. That is expectations regarding linguistic behavior are based on socially accepted interpretations. Despite the fact that society members generally hold certain anticipations with respect to the appropriate verbal and non-verbal ways of communication in particular contexts, they do not inevitably share identical cultural representations [9]. Jordanians abide by some social rules of politeness that they consider moral maxims, and any breach of them will incur social sanctions [10].

Achieving successful communication and interpretation of intentions requires that the speakers are pragmatically knowledgeable [11]. When we communicate using our mother tongue or the second language, we need to be aware of the socio-cultural rules so as to avoid pragmatic failure which is generally interlocutors viewed as an offence rather than simply a deficiency in language knowledge [12], [13]. Therefore, it is contended that a clear discussion of polite formulae and expressions in languages and their associated cultures can be useful in developing both better productive and

receptive performance, hence deepening the understanding of the target culture and improving communicative competence [14].

Developing strategies of politeness has been the focus of attention by most studies that are conducted on the semantic features of the language. However, there is a scarcity of research on the expression of refusal. Studies vary in their focus; cross-cultural [15]-[17], intra-cultural [18], and inter-cultural differences [19], [20]. Expressing refusal might be challenging since it is perceived as a dis-preferred response. This highlights the significance of conducting more research of such speech act so as to assist pupils understand and use it effectively. Up to the researcher's knowledge, no research conducted so far is comparable to the present one. As member of the Jordanian community, it is generally noticeable that Jordanians utilize numerous strategies for expressing refusal and some of which in some context could lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, the researcher found it really necessary to illustrate the cultural values and norms that play a considerable role in identifying the polite refusal strategies.

Gender had significant impact on communicative acts' performance [21], [22]. However, there is no study on gender on the communication of refusal in Jordan. Besides, there is still an argument on whether women and men use language in a different way and what the differences in their use of language show. While some people argue that these differences reflect cultural impact of the power differential between men and women, others argue that they do not [23]. In addition, Jordan is a conservative tribal society which places some (largely culture-specific) constraints on mixed social interactions. This is because when people communicate, they take into consideration socio-cultural and religious norms of communication. This is notable since expressing as well as responding the expression of refusal is sensitive, and are largely shaped by, face concerns [24] and some other variables (i.e. social power, distance and formality). In view of these observations, the study tries to fill the gap by exploring the way refusal is perceived and carried out by Jordanian males and females across different same-gender and cross-gender social situations. Therefore, the present study makes a worthwhile contribution to linguistics basically intra-cultural pragmatics, in general, and the related disciplines such as discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics in particular. The present study also aims to make a substantial contribution to knowledge by enriching the growing body of research on intra-cultural communication, gender-based comparison, speech act theory and politeness theory. The study gives a more multi-dimensional perspective as it provides an insight into the thought patterns of the subjects; whether they have the same perceptions of refusal expression strategies use, besides if their perceptions and their acceptability of these expressions differ across different social situations. Investigating a very sensitive variable (gender) in Jordanian conservative culture could help in investigating the characteristics of the Jordanian linguistic behavior when expressing refusal. Shedding light on this communicative act in the Jordanian culture will provide useful information which in turn will form the basis for further

cross-cultural communication comparative studies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of speech act was firstly introduced by the British philosopher John L. Austin in a lecture delivered at Harvard in 1955, later published as a monograph [4]. It comprises voicing something that encompasses doing something. Austin differentiates between two separate parts of speech: constatives and performatives. Constatives are sentences that describe something as true or false, and performatives are sentences that denote an action. For example, the sentence "I [hereby] bet you \$5 it will rain" does not describe an event but constitute a bet; Austin refers to such sentence as performatives and distinguishes them from constative sentence such as "it is raining" which can be true or false [25]. However, performatives depend on context and perceptions which are known as felicity conditions (adapted from [4, pp.14-15]:

- There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
- The circumstances and person must be appropriate.
- The procedure must be executed, correctly and completely.
- Often, the person must have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions and if the consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must do it.

Stating these felicity conditions does not mean that they are always followed. Suppose someone is joking with some friends saying, 'I now pronounce you husband and wife.' He/she in fact, has not officially made them a married couple. This speech act is infelicitous [25] as it [26, p.230] suggests, some performatives "are ... rather special sorts of ceremony". Ceremonial performatives are associated with specific (felicity) conventions associated with an institution. 2 later abandoned his distinction between performative and constative sentences and argued for a new framework for the study of language based on the notion of speech act. He stated that all utterances including constatives could be seen as "doing things" just like performatives. The result is a full-blown theory of action [25]. For this, Austin distinguishes three types of acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. A locutionary act refers to producing a meaningful linguistic expression, or uttering a sentence such as "I am sorry!" The illocutionary act refers to the message that is transmitted and may not correspond to the literal meaning of the words which is in this case an apology. Finally, the perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the illocutionary act on the addressee. For example, the addressee can react by accepting or declining the apology.

A refusal means a rejection or disapproval of the interlocutor ideas. The speech act of refusal occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says no to a suggestion, invitation, request or an offer. The concept of refusal has been defined by many researchers and linguists. Reference [27] defines refusal as a face-threatening act since it opposes expectations. Consequently, it necessitates acquiring a high level of pragmatic competency. The speech act of refusal is

defined as follows: “the negative counterparts to acceptances and consenting are rejections and refusals [28, p.195]. Refusals are face-threatening acts [24]. They belong to the category of commissives because they commit the refuser to (not) performing an action which calls for considerable cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the refuser [29] Refusals function as a response to an initiating act and are considered a speech act by which a speaker “[fails] to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor” [27, p.121].

A refuser can rely on two main strategies when performing the speech act of refusal, direct and indirect refusal strategies, in addition to Adjuncts to refusal. This classification scheme was proposed by [30]. The direct refusals refer to actual refusal expressions such as “No” or “I refuse” or negating a proposition whereas indirect refusals are the expressions used for softening the underlying illocutionary force in order to lessen the its impact to the addressee such as alternative, statement of regret, excuse/reason, request for information, lack of empathy, postponement, promise of acceptance, let off the hook, proverb, hedging, wishing or giving advice. Adjuncts to refusal are external modifications expressing solidarity made to the main refusal expression so as to lessen its illocutionary force such as the communication of positive opinion, gratitude, appreciation, invoking name of god, statement of empathy. Therefore, refusal can be seen as a series of the following sequences: pre-refusal strategies which prepare the addressee for an upcoming refusal, main refusal (Head Act) which expresses the main refusal besides post-refusal strategies which follow the head act and tend to emphasize, justify, mitigate, or conclude the refusal response.

Reference [17] investigates the differences and similarities between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals using a DCT developed by [30]. The DCT has three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Results show that both groups use similar semantic formulas with similar frequency in expressing refusals. Both groups used a similar number of direct and indirect formulas, although overall the Egyptians used more direct formulas in the equal status situations. Both groups also used similar reasons for refusing. While the groups shared many similarities, they also differed; in some situations, the order of semantic formulas varied and the American respondents used more expressions of gratitude.

Within the Jordanian context, a few studies have been conducted. The communication of refusal by Jordanian NSsJA and EFL learners and native speakers of American English was investigated by [20]. The researcher was specifically investigating whether there was an indication of pragmatic transfer from Arabic and the factors causing this transfer. The outcomes revealed a sign of pragmatic transfer shown in the frequency, type, number, and content of the semantic formulas. In addition, certain semantic formulas were only employed by the Arab participants such as return the favor, and request for understanding. Besides, Jordanian refusals were lengthy, elaborate, and less direct compared to the American ones, particularly when talking to a high status addressee. The Arab participants resorted frequently to the word Allah. The interviews revealed some driving forces for

pragmatic transfer were learners such as “love of and pride” in their native language, Arabs’ perceptions of Westerners in general, religious beliefs and linguistic difficulties.

The refusal strategies used by NSsJA and native speakers of American English (AmE) were investigated by [31]. The subjects were 70 Jordanians living in Jordan and 68 living in the USA. Subject refusal was elicited using a DCT taken from [30]. The results indicated that although both language groups used a similar range of refusal strategies, some variations were evident at two levels: the frequency and content of the semantic formulas used by each group. For instance, Jordanians used negative willingness/ability more frequently than Americans who said “no” more frequently. Although the content of the reasons was similar in both groups in most situations, in the cases of invitation, Jordanians gave more elaborate and specific reasons that reflected the influence of their culture and religion, particularly to higher status person, whereas Americans gave brief and less specific reasons. Jordanians were more sensitive to a higher status person; they used mitigating strategies more frequently with a higher status person. Americans were not sensitive to any social status; they used mitigating strategies with all people regardless of their status. Jordanians tended to be critical toward lower status persons in the cases of suggestions and requests, whereas Americans were more cooperative and helpful.

The differences and similarities of the speech act of refusal between Jordanian Arabic and American English were investigated by [32]. In this study all the participants were males. Results indicate that both groups of participants were in agreement regarding their preference of strategy; they preferred indirect strategies followed by adjunct strategies followed by direct strategies. However, Jordanian participants tended to use indirect strategies more than the American participants who used direct refusal style. These differences and similarities in the expression of refusal are the manifestations of cultural differences between Jordanians and Americans. The data from the DCT provide a “window on human interaction” [33, p.1] and would add empirical findings in terms of the performance of refusal by Jordanian Arabic and American English.

Refusals in Arabic as part of his study of various speech acts in Arabic were explored by [18]. He lists some of the strategies used by Arabic native speakers in refusals and maintains that indirect refusals are used with acquaintances of equal status and with close friends of unequal status. The data were collected via observation and are written in Modern Standard Arabic.

Reference [24] worked on refusal of suggestion situations in EFL context among 30 females and 30 males at an intermediate level. They investigated how Iranian EFL learners produce the refusal of suggestion and what strategies they used in different situations of acquaintance, stranger, and intimate distance person, and also to check whether their applied strategies were dependent on gender. They applied DCT as a material which consisted of 18 target situations with open ended form. The results revealed that females and males were not different from each other due to their refusal

strategies and they revealed the same number of strategies of refusals when they interacted with people of the three social distances levels. Both genders used more direct strategies in their refusal of the people of the cross-sex society gender than the single-sex society. Results indicate that learners' realization and application of refusal strategies depended on the interlocutor's social distance.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Population and Sample of the Study

The data were collected from a group of Jordanian native speakers of Arabic. The sample was chosen randomly from the study population. A sufficient number of students from different departments at HU were taken as a sample from both genders (35 males & 35 females) aged 18-22. A number of students participated indirectly to the study by refusing to complete the DCT in different contexts; the researcher used these situations to collect natural occurring data. The respondents are relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background and academic/linguistic experiences.

B. Research Instruments

The current study is analytical-descriptive and comparative. The researcher employed three data collection instruments: DCT, semi-structured interviews and collecting naturally occurring data to accomplish the study objectives. To overcome the limitation of using one method in collecting data, a mixed methodology was adapted. A mixed methodology is defined as "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using various methods; both qualitative and quantitative in a single study or a program of inquiry" [35, p.4]. These methods have been used in different studies and proved their validity and sufficiency as shown in [36]-[38].

C. Data Collection and Analysis

The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For the quantitative analysis, the frequency of each semantic formula used in the realization of the speech act of refusal was calculated and compared across the refusal situations. Descriptive statistics was used for analyzing the data. The data were transcribed and coded according to a coding scheme in light of those available schemes (i.e. 30) so as to cover all the collected refusal expressions. According to this scheme, refusal strategies are classified into direct, indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals. The direct refusals are "No" or "I refuse" or expressions negating a proposition. Indirect refusals are expressions used for minimizing the offense that could be caused to the addressee such as alternative, statement of regret, excuse/reason, request for information, lack of empathy, postponement, promise of acceptance, let off the hook, proverb, hedging, wishing or giving advice. Adjuncts to refusal are external alterations to the main expressions of refusal implying solidarity for the sake of lessening its force such as statement of positive opinion and pause fillers. The collected data were transcribed and coded based on two types of illocutionary act proposed by

[30]: Direct and indirect refusal strategies in addition to adjuncts to refusals. For each case individually, the kind of illocutionary act and the number of times it was used by the female (35) and male (35) Jordanian participants were summarized.

The DCT data were measured using Chi-square test in the SPSS software analysis program. To support the DCTs results, the recorded answers of the interviews and the natural data were also transcribed by the researcher and then coded and analyzed to the need of the study (i.e. the refusal type and the refusal strategy). The analysis of the strategies' frequencies was conducted as follows: (a) the overall frequency of the strategies employed by all participants in all situations (b) the frequency of the strategies by all participants across the three social situations (invitation, suggestion and offer). In terms of analyzing interviews and naturally occurring data, the researcher adopted [39]'s open coding for analyzing the interview data qualitatively into meaningful concepts and categories. And for the latter one, the researcher adopted [40]'s method in analyzing the obtained data.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Strategies Used by Native Speakers of Jordanian Arabic for Expressing Refusal across Social Situations Including: Invitations, Suggestions, and Offers

In order to analyze the data, the researcher has listed, coded and categorized the strategies into direct, indirect and adjacent of refusals. A total number of 20 strategies were found in the data: 2 direct strategies (371) in total occurrence, 16 indirect strategies (1559) in total occurrence, and 2 adjuncts to refusal (21) in total occurrence. The total number of indirect strategies produced by Jordanians in all situations exceeded the total number of direct strategies. Fig. 1 provides a summary of these findings and the overall frequency of all strategies for Jordanians in all situations for each refusal type.

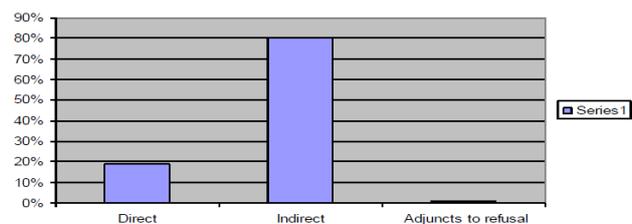


Fig. 1 Number of refusal strategies across social situation

As shown in Fig. 1, the indirect strategies are the most frequent strategies with a percentage of 80% from the overall percentage of occurrence. Direct strategies counted for 19% from the overall percentage of occurrence. In addition, adjuncts to refusal counted for only 1% from the overall occurrence. With regard to the most preferred strategy of the three main types of refusal strategies, Fig. 2 shows that the *nonperformative* strategy (e.g. "لا", "No"), was the most frequently used strategy by Jordanians with a percentage of 11% of the two used direct strategies. Excuse, reason and explanation strategy (e.g. "الاستبانه طويله وعندني شغل", "the

questionnaire is too long, and I have work to do”) was the most frequently used indirect strategy, with a percentage of 33%. With regard to adjuncts to refusal the two used strategies; statement of positive feeling strategy (e.g. “اشكرك . على عرضك .”, “thank you for your offer”) and pause fillers strategy (e.g. “بيبي”, “ooooooh”) have the same percentage of occurrence counted for only 1%. Fig. 2 provides a comprehensive percentage of the overall strategy used by the participants in the nine refusal situations. The participants used regret strategy (e.g. “انا اسفه”, “I am sorry”), performative strategy (e.g. “لا اقبل هذا”, “I refuse this”), Promise strategy (e.g. “اوعدك اعبي الاستيانه بعدين”, “I promise to fill it later”); Let interlocutor off the hook strategy (e.g. “ما تقلق مش غالية عليك”, “don’t worry, it’s not expensive for you”); Threat or negative consequence strategy: (“دايما تعملي مشاكل مش صاحبيتي ايدا”, “You always always cause troubles, you are no longer my friends”); Principle (“ما يحب اكل بالمطاعم”, “I do not like eating in restaurants”); self-defense strategy (e.g. “لست بحاجة لاخذ”, “I don’t need to take this course from you”); Swearing to god: (“والله مروحه”, “I swear I am leaving now”), Using taboo words (“حلي عني”, “leave me alone”), Criticize the request (“مش لاقيه غير هذا اليوم تطلبي فيه”, “you couldn’t find another day to ask for this”), Wish (“كنت اتمني لو اقدر”, “I wish, I could”), Using proverbs strategy (“انكسر الشر”, “evil went away”), Statements of alternatives (“اعطيه لصاحبيتي اشطر مني”, “give it to my friend she is cleverer than me”), dissuade interlocutor (“لو كنت بمكانك , ما رححت”, “if I were you, I would not go”), Verbal avoidance (“خليني اخلص اللي بيدي”, “Let me finish what I am working on”), praying for God blessing (“ربنا يسعدك”, “may God make you happy”).

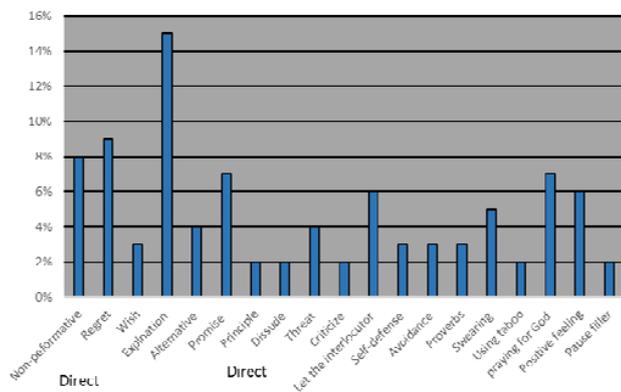


Fig. 2 Number and type of strategies used across social situations

Fig. 3 shows the number of refusal strategies used by Jordanian participants across the social situations. Jordanians used the least number of strategies in refusing suggestions followed by refusing offers and the highest number of strategies was used in refusing invitations.

With regard to the most preferred indirect strategy the data showed that Jordanian native speakers of Arabic tended to use *excuse, reason and explanation* strategy in expressing refusals. This result may be ascribed to the fact that these strategies in particular help refusers to save their face and others'. This in

turn helps them avoid embarrassment. This result corroborates other researchers' findings [20], [41], [44] that people preferred mostly using indirect refusal strategy particular *excuse, reason and explanation* strategy. Implicitness or indirectness has frequently been associated with a high degree of politeness [24], [45].

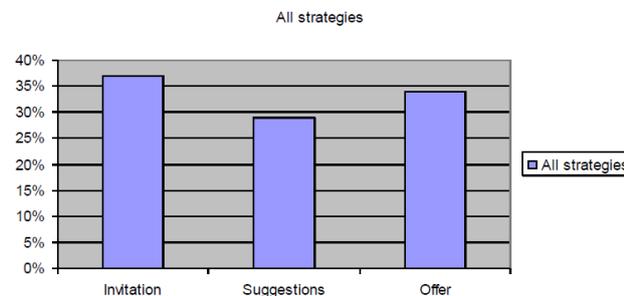


Fig. 3 Frequency of strategies across the three types of social situations

It has also been found that Jordanian native speakers of Arabic used the highest number of strategies in refusing invitations followed by offers and the least number of strategies in refusing suggestions. This finding could be ascribed to the impact of situation type on the type of refusal expression. It might also be explained in light of some linguistic and politeness ideologies popular among Jordanians. It is generally very polite and normal in the Jordanian culture to go in a cycle of inviting or offering and refusing and insisting on inviting and offering as this might help the invitee to reduce the degree of imposition that might be placed on the inviter or the offeror. This finding is in line with [46]'s claim that linguistic ideology is a fundamental notion upon which pragmatists rely to interpret data and [47]'s assertion that language ideology has been found as a force influencing the understanding of verbal practices. Linguistic ideology is defined as common sense ideas, implied conventions and sets of representations in light of which language instilled with cultural notions, language discrepancy and the nature and purpose of communication is employed in particular contexts by specific community [48], [49]. However, this should not overlook the fact that individuals within the same culture may vary in adherence to linguistic ideologies because they are context-bound and grounded in social experience which varies from a person to another. In light of [46]'s view that politeness ideology fits within a larger framework of linguistic ideology and the present study's findings, it should be argued that speakers' salient ways of communication in general and their linguistic behavior of refusal in particular (i.e. the use of certain strategies) are closely linked to their pragmatic knowledge and to some extent to the social identity and rules and pre-existing ideologies concerning politeness in the given society. This supports [50, p.53] which state that "all human behavior is cultural to some extent because human beings are of sociable nature".

Another important finding of the present study is the newly emerging strategies (i.e. "using proverbs", "swearing to God",

"using taboo words" and "praying for God's blessing") figured in the participants' responses and are not part of other researchers' coding scheme. Employed refusal strategies coding scheme could also be perceived as a contribution to the pragmatics field. It could be argued that the respondents resorting to these strategies are attempting to intensify their refusal expression. The use of *swearing to God* strategy and *praying for God's blessing* could be attributed to religious beliefs and to the notion that Arabic societies use it to mitigate the illocutionary force of the speech act of refusal [51]. The use of these strategies also confirms what has been reported in the literature about the frequency of formulas containing religious reference in Arabic [52]. This finding also could be attributed to the fact that most Jordanians are Muslims. This could imply that both the Muslim faith and the Arabic language are often considered as intertwined and inseparable parts of the Arab-Muslim identity. It could further suggest some assumptions about the nature of the relation amongst language and culture. Since Arabic is the Holy Quran's language, it has a considerable impact on its speakers. This result seems to bear some similarity with other Arabic refusal expression studies [20]. This could imply that they have strong religious faith which [53, p.49] views as both "a chosen feature of a lifestyle and one intended to give voice to emotions and mirror a response to it". Overall, this newly emerging coding scheme could also form a base for creating a simple, clear and extensive coding scheme for other studies investigating these communicative acts in other comparable cultures.

In terms of the data taken from the natural occurring situations, the results have supported the DCTs' results. Regardless of gender the participants preferred using indirect strategy (i.e. *excuse, reason and explanation* strategy) more than any other strategy. This finding could be in light of [54]'s claim that data elicited by DCTs are consistent with naturally occurring data, at least in the main patterns and formulas. This could further highlight the importance of employing mixed methods in such types of research so as to collect large amounts of data in order to minimize the instrumental errors, increase the reliability of the findings and confirm the findings through cross referencing with the findings of other data collection methods.

When taking gender in consideration, it is worth mentioning here that males tended to use less number of strategies than females did. Female participants used the indirect refusal strategies of "*promise of future acceptance*" and "*verbal avoidance*" whereas the male participants never used them. The results of this study are not in line with finding in [34] that males use more strategies for refusing offers and suggestions made by females.

The *using proverbs* strategy was also used in the ninth situation. It was the second most frequently used strategy by Jordanian native speakers of Arabic. This could be explained in light of [55]'s claim that proverbs strategy is used to mitigate the harshness related to unpleasant events. This strategy is commonly used in collectivistic cultures as argued by [5]. Most of the participants used "the evil broke, and went

away". This proverb is considered to be a way to mitigate the refusal rather than other proverbs which can aggravate the refusal. This is consistent with [56]'s Individualism-Collectivism dimension of culture. Hofstede argues that in collectivist societies, people are incorporated into strong and cohesive in-groups, so it is to be expected that linguistic politeness should play a major role in strengthening social cohesion. Reference [6] also makes it clear that the main concern in collectivistic cultures is for the effects of individuals' actions on their group, as opposed to individualistic cultures, where freedom of activity is more important.

With regard to adjuncts to refusal, it was found that the participants used a higher percentage of these strategies when refusing offers more than when refusing invitation and suggestion. This appears to be the characteristic of different Arabic and American cultures and may also be a universal tendency. This finding lends support [57] which found that all the groups under investigation used a higher percentage of adjuncts to refusal when refusing offers than when refusing requests.

In terms of the effect of social power on expressing refusing in different social situations, the social power of the refusee is considered as an effective factor in using refusal strategies by the participants under study in only one situation. The effect can just be seen in the ninth situation where the participants preferred to use *Let interlocutor off the hook* strategy more than *excuse or giving explanation and reason* strategy. This may be attributed to the nature of the situation. Moreover, in the ninth situation, the number of strategies used when interacting with someone of higher social power exceeded the number of strategies used when interacting with someone with lower power. The reason may be that rejecting someone with higher power forces the refuser to use more explanation and justification that one with an equal or lower power. This finding supports [5], [58], [57]. This indicate that any failure in expressing refusal in an appropriate way could engender the risk of being deemed impolite and rude which in turn could engendered feelings of solidarity and warmth between interlocutors. This puts a great demand on a full comprehension of its usage in order to avoid miscommunication.

B. The Differences between Males and Females in Expressing Refusal in Jordanian Arabic

Null Hypothesis: H01: There are no significant differences between Jordanian male and female speakers in expressing refusal in Arabic.

To compare how Jordanian male speakers of Arabic refuse invitations, suggestion and offers made by other male and female counterparts, a Chi Square Test was applied to the collected data. The results revealed the existence of significant differences between male-male and male-female style of refusing. Significant differences were found at the 95% confidence level ($P \leq 0.05$) in the use of many refusal strategies in the given social situations; the use of the strategy of *excuse, reason and explanation* with the value of

significance .027, the strategy of *promise of future acceptance* with the value of significance .023, and the strategy of *verbal avoidance* as the value of significance is .003 as shown in Fig. 4.

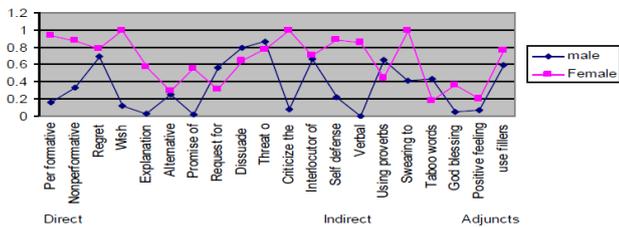


Fig. 4 Male Participants Refusal to Male and Female Interlocutors

To compare how Jordanian female speakers of Arabic refuse invitations, suggestion and offers made by other male and female counterparts, a Chi Square Test was applied to the collected data. The results revealed that the existence of significant differences between female-male and female-female style of refusing the 95% confidence level ($P \leq 0.05$) in the given situations; the use of the strategy of verbal with the value of significance .006, the strategy of positive feeling with the value of significance .001 as shown in Fig. 5.

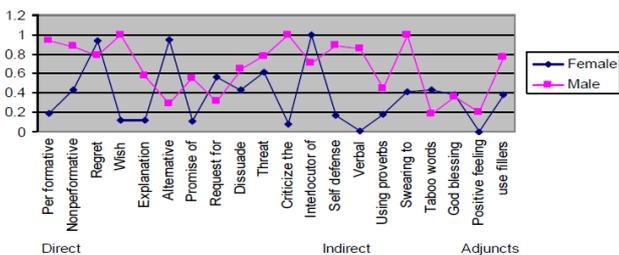


Fig. 5 Female Participants Refusal to Male and Female Interlocutors

Figs. 4 and 5 show male and female participants' interaction when refusing to interlocutors of same and opposite gender. There appear some notable differences in employing certain refusal strategies between male same and opposite gender communication. The differences were in performing two direct strategies (i.e. *performative* strategy and *nonperformative* strategy) as well as four indirect strategies (i.e. *wish* strategy, *criticize the request* strategy, *swearing to God* strategy and *praying for God's blessing* strategy). However, statistically significant differences appeared only in employing some indirect refusal strategies namely *excuse*, *reason*, *explanation* strategy, *promise of future acceptance* strategy and *verbal avoidance* strategy at the level of ($p < .05$). This variation employing these strategies in both types of interaction is a strong indication that males were very conscious of the gender of their interlocutors.

To sum up, Chi square results indicate that there is a considerable impact of gender on the type of refusal strategies employed in same and cross-gender interaction. Thus, the results refute the null hypothesis of the fourth question which states that there are no significant differences between Jordanian male and female speakers in expressing refusal in

Arabic. The result of this study is not in line with other studies [16], [20], [42], [17], [57] which concluded that gender of the refusee does not have any effect on the type of refusal strategies employed by the participants of their studies. This inconsistency between the results of the present study and other previous ones' results could be ascribed to the approach followed in these studies; they studied only the impact of the gender of the refusee on the type of strategies employed regardless of gender of the person who offers, invites and suggests something to the refusee.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the strategies used by NSsJA employ to express refusals in Arabic as well as the similarities and differences of the communicative act of refusal across three different social situations (i.e. invitation, suggestion and offer) and across different social status (higher, equal and lower). Besides, it examines the impact of gender on the refusal realization patterns within the Jordanian context. It was found that the participants of this study applied various types of strategies for expressing refusal across different social situations: invitations, suggestions, and offers. Overall, Jordanian native speakers of Arabic prefer using indirect strategies to refuse across different social situations, the second preference is the use of direct strategies followed by adjuncts to refusal strategies which are confined by using two main strategies: "pause fillers" and "positive feelings". This may be attributed to the idea that using indirect strategies is considered to be more polite when expressing refusal in the Jordanian culture. The participants' preferred indirect strategy was "excuse or giving explanation and reason" strategy in refusing across different social situations (i.e. invitation, suggestion and offer) and across different social status (i.e. higher, equal and lower). Two types of direct strategies namely "performative" and "non-performative" were applied. In general, the occurrence of "non-performative" strategy (i.e. the flat "no") exceeded the occurrence of "performative" strategy through the three social situations (i.e. invitation, suggestion and offer). As for adjuncts, the researcher concluded a preference of two strategies "pause fillers" and "statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement". It has also been found that Jordanian native speakers of Arabic used the highest number of strategies in refusing invitation followed by offers and the least number of strategies in refusing suggestion. Another important finding of the present study is the newly emerging strategies (i.e. "using proverbs", "swearing to God", "using taboo words" and "praying for God blessing") figured in the participants' responses and are not part of previous researchers' coding scheme. Employed refusal strategies coding scheme could also be perceived as a contribution to the pragmatics field. It could be argued that the respondents resorting to these strategies are attempting to mitigate their refusal expression.

Regarding differences in the number and type of refusal strategies in same and cross gender interaction, the results of the Chi square test indicates that gender is a crucial variable affecting the number and type of refusal strategies used by

Jordanians in same-gender and cross-gender interaction This implies that Jordanian people are more likely to be sensitive to the opposite gender. Overall, the findings cast some light on the socio-cultural underpinnings of the communicative act of refusal in Jordan, and provide justifications for the refusal strategies observed in the data obtained by using DCT, naturally occurring data and interviews. It is worth noting that the research supports previous investigations claiming that each socio-cultural group has its own cultural norms, values, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour which profoundly influence their linguistic behaviour.

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