

A Study on Strategies Used in Iraqi Arabic to Refuse Suggestions

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Abstract

In the last two decades, many studies have been conducted to investigate speech act performance in general, and the speech act of refusal to suggestion in particular. This genus of research has focused on western languages (Beebe et al, 1990), (Chen, 1996), (Fe'lix-Brasdefer, 2006). However, more recently a number of studies have been carried out in eastern languages (Geyang, 2007), with only a few in Arabic language and its varieties (Nelson, 2002), (Al-Issa, 2003), (Al-Kahtani, 2005). This study is an attempt to outline the preferred semantic formulas used in refusing suggestions in Iraqi Arabic. The corpus consists of responses to a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) that consisted of three different situations. The informants were 30 Iraqi Arabic native speakers studying at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. The survey was written in Arabic language to elicit responses that approximate verbal refusals to suggestion that might be given in these situations. The corpus was analyzed and categorized according to the refusal taxonomy by Beebe et al (1990) to determine the strategies used and the frequencies of their use. Results showed variation in the frequency and the content of semantic formulas used by the group in relation to the contextual variables, which include the status of interlocutors (higher, equal, or lower status).

Key words: Refusals, semantic formula, direct & indirect strategies

Introduction

One of the main functions of language is to establish and maintain human relationships. In interaction, the participants' assumptions and expectations about people, events, places, etc., play a significant role in the performance and interpretation of linguistic utterances. The choice of linguistic expressions to convey certain communicative purposes is governed by social conventions and the individual's assessment of situations. (Nureddeen, 2008).

According to Tanck (2003) speakers employ a variety of *speech acts*, to achieve their communicative goals, including Searle's seminal broad categories – classification, commissives, declarations, directives, expressives, and representatives – as well as more specific acts such as apologies, requests, complaints, and refusals (Kasper and Rose, 2001). A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication (e.g., apology, request or greeting). In this study the performance of refusals is investigated in Iraqi Arabic.

A refusal is to respond negatively to an offer, request, invitation and suggestion. Searle and Vandervken (1985, p. 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". Refusals are face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and 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. (Searle, 1977). 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" (Chen et al., 1995, p. 121). Moreover, refusals differ cross culturally and linguistically in that they require a high level of appropriateness for their successful completion; very often, they are realized by means of clearly identifiable formulae. Differences like these might cause misunderstanding or pragmatic failure when people from different cultures need to interact with each other.

Rationale for the study

Refusals are important because of their communicatively central place in everyday communication. In many cultures, how one says "no" is probably more important than the answer itself. Therefore, sending and receiving a message of "no" is a task that needs special skill. The interlocutor must know when to use the appropriate form and its function depending on the community and its cultural-linguistic values (Al-Kahtani, 2005). Many studies have been conducted to investigate and identify the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influences on the use of various speech act realization strategies in different languages. Consequently, any research that identifies cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influences on the use of various speech act realization strategies in Iraqi Arabic language can be extensively beneficial to understand the culture of its speech community. As Rubin (1983) has pointed out, speech acts reflect fundamental cultural values that may be specific to a speech community. Cultures have been shown to vary drastically in their interactional styles, leading to different preferences for modes of speech act behaviors. As a result, lack of knowledge of speech act realization patterns and strategies across cultures can lead to breakdowns in intercultural and inter-ethnic communication. A similar view was adopted by Nelson (2002) as he stated that one of the reasons for studying Arabic communication relates to the misunderstanding of Arabs by many outside the Arab world. Of the limited number of studies on Arabic communication style, many lump all Arabic-speaking countries together. Consequently, there has been no single attempt to investigate the features of Iraqi Arabic speech acts more specifically refusal to suggestions. Thus, understanding and familiarization with Iraqi culture and the way Iraqis refuse using Iraqi Arabic language are required to improve communication with Iraqis. There are many differences between the Iraqi culture and other Arabic countries.

Studies on refusals to suggestions

Investigations into the speech act of refusing have been limited. Some significant studies have been conducted on western and eastern languages, however, Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), Chen (1996), (Fe'lix-Brasdefer, 2006) and recently (Geyang, 2007). The aim of these studies was to find evidence of pragmatic transfer in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas used in refusals.

A number of studies on native speakers of Arabic have indicated that they often struggle to communicate appropriately in English when refusing because of their pragmatic incompetence when they make the speech act of refusals due to the sociocultural transfer of the mother tongue within the English performance of refusals. This can be seen very clearly as they employ different semantic strategies that obviously reflect interference of the mother tongue. They are also unable to minimize the potential disruption of the face-threatening refusal as it seems that they employ fewer appropriate strategies. (Al-Issa, 2003, Brown, 2005, Al-Eryani, 2007, Al-Kahtani, 2005).

Through investigation into the speech act of refusing as made by native speakers of Arabic and English native speakers, researchers provided evidence of both cultural difference and pragmatic transfer. For example, between Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers (Al-Eryani, 2007), Saudi and American male undergraduate students (Al-Shalawi, 1997), Egyptian Arabic and US English (Nelson, 2002), Americans, Arabs and Japanese (Al-Kahtani, 2005) Jordanian EFL (Al-Issa, 2003).

These studies compared the ways subjects performed refusals with respect to three dimensions of semantic formulas: order, frequency and content of semantic formulas. In addition, the subjects were given different situations in which the status of the refuser is equal, higher, or lower to the refusee. A modified version of the 12-item discourse completion test (DCT) developed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) was used to elicit data. The DCT included three situations in which participants are asked to refuse a suggestion. The situation included one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. (Al-Kahtani, 2005, (Nelson, 2002, Al-Eryani 2007, Al-Shalawi, 1997). Data were analyzed in terms of semantic formula sequences and were categorized according to the refusal taxonomy by Beebe et al (1990).

Findings indicated that they differed, however, in the employment of semantic formulas and in the content of refusals. For example Al-Shalawi (1997) pointed out that the selection of semantic formulas reflected some important differences between Saudi and American cultures. Saudi refusals revealed

collectivistic culture, while American refusals reflected individualistic culture. Some of the important findings are:

1. Both Saudi and Americans used fewer semantic formulas when refusing suggestion as compared with other speech act in the DCT.
2. Saudis used different semantic formulas (wish, future acceptance, philosophy, repeat and postpone formulas) when refusing a suggestion from the advisor.
3. Saudis tend to use alternative, explanation and future acceptance to refuse a suggestion. They feel that this is the only way to protect their self-image and the other persons.

Similarly, the main aim of Nelson' (2002) study was to investigate American and Egyptian perceptions of how they believe they would make refusals in particular situations in terms of strategy, level of directness and the influence of two social factors status and gender. The sample included 30 English-speaking Americans in the US and 25 Arabic-speaking Egyptians in Egypt. To more closely simulate real-life communication and because Arabic is a diglossic language, an interviewer read the situation aloud and the participants responded verbally on audiotape, Egyptians in Arabic and Americans in English.

Results indicated that in terms of strategies, there were 963 strategies used in the Egyptian refusals. The most common strategies used by the Egyptian respondents were similar to those used by the US respondents. Reasons were the most common strategy used followed by Negative willingness, Non-performative "no"s were used in of the refusals. In terms of the relationship direct strategies, status, and gender, the findings of this study showed that Egyptian males employed more direct strategies when refusing individuals of either higher or lower status than the Americans. The findings are, however, consistent with those of Beebe et al. (1990), who found that in refusing requests from both higher- and lower-status individuals, Americans often employ indirect strategies.

On the other hand, Al-Kahtani (2005) in his study on refusal speech acts, assumed differences in the ways people from different cultural backgrounds perform refusals even while using the same linguistic code (i.e. English). Three groups of subjects, Americans, Arabs and Japanese are compared in the ways they performed refusals. The aim of studying three groups of participants who differ in terms of ethnicity and culture is to point out the differences in realizing speech acts of refusals in different cultures and problems posed to L2 learners when producing speech acts in the target language.

Results indicated that when the refuser is higher in status to the refusee, American and the Japanese subjects were alike in the order of semantic formulas that they used in that they expressed [gratitude] first followed by [self defense] for Americans and [explanation] for the majority of the Japanese. Whereas, Arab subjects did not express [gratitude] at all. While, refusing the suggestion made by a person of equal status, most of the Americans and the Arabs were found to be similarly direct because they started their refusals with direct negatives (i.e., [No] or [negative willingness]). The Japanese respondents instead gave [explanation] as indirect refusals. On the other hand, the three groups were found to vary considerably in the semantic formulas that they used in the first position when refusing a high status. The American subjects started with [gratitude]; most of the Arabs expressed only [reason] without any adjuncts; the Japanese subjects preferred to utter [agreement] first. Americans and the Japanese were alike in their use of [statement of principle] as the second semantic formula. In sum, finding showed that three groups were different in the ways they realized the speech act of refusal with respect to the three dimensions of semantic formulas: the order, frequency and content.

Other studies examined the phenomenon of sociocultural transfer and its motivating factors within the realization patterns of the speech act refusal. Al – Issa (2004) focused on the pragmatic transfer that underlies the performance of Jordanian EFL learners when refusing. EFL refusal data were collected using a discourse completion test (DCT), which was designed and further developed based on observational field note data. He included three situations designed to elicit refusal responses to suggestions. The situations consisted of two different variables specifying the relationship between speaker and hearer: social status (higher, lower, equal) and social distance (close, familiar, distant). The DCT was written in both English and Arabic. His target group consisted of Jordanian L2 learners of English as a foreign language (EFL group). In addition, two other reference groups consisting of Jordanian native speakers of Arabic (ARS) and American native speakers of English (ENS). The results show three areas in which sociocultural transfer is existent in EFL learners' speech: choice of semantic formulas, length of responses, and content of semantic formulas. Each was found to reflect cultural values transferred from Arabic to English.

In other words, the employment of the semantic formula seems to reflect a native Arab cultural norm. AL – Issa (2004) stated that whether in written or oral correspondence, Arabs are said to be more rank-conscious than Westerners (Hamady, 1960). This is demonstrated by attempts to emphasize, and even exaggerate their recognition of the higher social rank of their interlocutors as a way of showing respect. For example, (faculty advisor suggesting another course in writing). In this situation, they began their refusal responses by defining the relationship between their interlocutors and themselves with regard to social status. This was accomplished by referring to the rank of the hearer (i.e., professor, teacher, doctor) or by using a formal address term such as “sir” (Arabic, si’di) which gave their refusal responses a formal tone as seen in the following two refusal responses; the targeted formula is italicized:

(1) EFL:

“OK dear sir but thank you for advise [sic] I don’t want to take this course now because I will take it another time.”

(2) ARS:

“Mashi ya ‘austathi al?ziz laken b’saraha ana mush kwais bilkitaba wa lihatha alsabab ‘afadal ini asagil mada thania.” (OK my dear professor but to tell the truth I’m not good in writing and for this reason I would like to register for another course).

The use of the semantic formula define relationship reflects another native Arab cultural norm: showing interest in the speech of those of a higher status. When responding to a suggestion by a higher status person, Arabs usually feel obliged to express interest in what has been suggested even when they do not agree with it. They do so not only to protect the hearer’s face, but also to avoid confrontations.

Similarly, Al-Eryani (2007) provided an evidence of both cultural difference and pragmatic transfer between Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers in the speech act of refusing. He included only one situation on suggestion, which includes refusing equal status where a friend suggests to his friend to ‘try a new diet’. It identifies cross-cultural and linguistic differences between Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers in the speech act of refuse. All the groups tended to use the same strategies for refusal. They used ‘excuse’ expressions in the first and second positions without differences, neither in the content nor in the order of the semantic formula. “No” the direct refusal expression was also used by all the groups in the first positions and almost by the same number of respondents. They tended to be more direct with peers in rejecting their suggestions. Expression of ‘gratitude’ for example, “thank you” appeared in all positions but in different order.

The present study

This study will focus on the speech act of refusals to suggestions. One should stress that this study adopt the view that one should not lump all Arabic speaking countries. Arabic in Iraq, like Arabic all over the Arab world, is of a diglossic nature. There are two varieties used: a ‘formal variety’ (Fusha) which is similar to classical Arabic and a colloquial variety’ (Ammyyya) which is used in everyday communication. Various dialects of Arabic are districts in that they reflect the social norms that are specific to those speech communities. Thus, by looking at the speech acts of refusals to suggestions in Iraqi Arabic reflect fundamental cultural values that may be specific to Iraqi speech community. Whereas all pervious studies have looked at the interaction between NNSs and NSs of English in the form of comparative studies discussing the differences in the performance of speech acts. There is no single study done on the performance of Arabic native speakers and more specifically Iraqis, as far as the speech act of refusals is concerned. Moreover, the study will look at the strategies used in a dialect language, i.e. Iraqi Arabic. In most of these studies, attention was given to the analysis of refusals to requests, invitation. Thus, the present study is a continuation of this line of research. It investigates the linguistic means used by Iraqis to refuse suggestions.

The research questions are:

1. What are the frequently used strategies by Iraqis when refusing suggestions?
2. How do Iraqis realize the speech act of refusals in terms of the three dimensions of semantic formulas: the order, frequency, and content in each of the four situations?

3. How do Iraqis realize the speech act of refusals when the refuser is lower, equal, or higher status to the refusee?

Subjects

Thirty Iraqi male university students participated in the study. Participants were native speakers of Arabic and were pooled from one community in Iraq. All participants were natives of the state of Baghdad, Iraq, shared the same regional Baghdadi dialect. They are currently postgraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), pursuing either the master or doctoral degree for the year 2007/2008. their ages ranged from 21 to 26 years.

Data Elicitation

The primary data collection tool for this study was a modified Discourse Completion Test (DCT) created by Al- Shalawi (1997). The DCT consists of three different situations designed to elicit refusals for suggestions. The situations were modified to make it more familiar the Iraqi life and culture. Each situation aims to find out the distinction between the relationships of the participants, i.e. when the speaker is of lower, equal or higher status. Since the study aimed to collect responses that are as close to naturally occurring conversation as possible, it seemed more realistic and valid to ask informants to produce responses in the everyday language they speak although it is not common to use that variety in writing. Thus, subjects were encouraged to write in the low variety, and to put the informant in the required mood, the situations themselves were written in colloquial Arabic. The scenarios were also modified to make them more suitable and familiar to Iraqis. Respondents mostly responded using the Baghdadi dialect(Iraqi Arabic).

Data analysis

The data were examined according to a modified classification of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe et al. (1990), included direct and indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals (See section 3.4.). This classification system has been widely used and adapted to examine refusals among native and non-native speakers in different languages (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991; Gass and Houck, 1999; Lyuh, 1992; Nelson et al., 2002; Ramos, 1991, Fe'lix-Brasdefer, 2006, Geyang 2007). While direct refusals included instances where the speaker expressed his inability to comply by means of negative propositions (e.g., "no", "I can't"), the indirect refusals used included various linguistic strategies by which a suggestion indirectly refused. These encompassed eight different strategies: mitigated refusal, reason/explanation, indefinite reply, promise to comply, regret/ apology, alternative, postponement, and set condition for future acceptance. Adjuncts to refusals comprised four strategies that expressed involvement with the interlocutor: positive opinion, willingness, expression of gratitude, and agreement.

Data was classified into semantic formulas in terms of the order (sequences), frequency, and content of semantic formulas. The number of each semantic formula was counted and the frequently used semantic formulas in each item.

Classification of refusal strategies (Adapted from Beebe et al., 1990)

This study follow the line of Beebe et al. (1990)'s through the adaptation of his classification on refusal responses. The following is a modified version of the classification scheme used by Beebe et al. (1990). Strategies not used in the data generated for this study were omitted from Beebe et al.'s classification scheme.

I. Direct

A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse.")

B. Non-performative statement

1. "No"

2. Negative willingness/ ability (e.g., "I can't." "I won't be able to give them to you.")

II. Indirect strategies

3. Regret - ('I'm very sorry')

4. Explanation 'I want to leave now'

5. Future acceptance 'I can help you tomorrow after final exam'
6. Principle 'I don't like lazy students who like easy note taking'
7. Philosophy 'excuse is worse than sin'
8. Self defense 'you should have attended class'
9. Criticism
10. Attack

III. Adjuncts to Refusals

11. Positive Opinion -('Congratulations on your promotion. I am very glad!')
12. Gratitude - ('Thanks for the invitation')
13. Agreement - (Yes, I agree, but . . .')

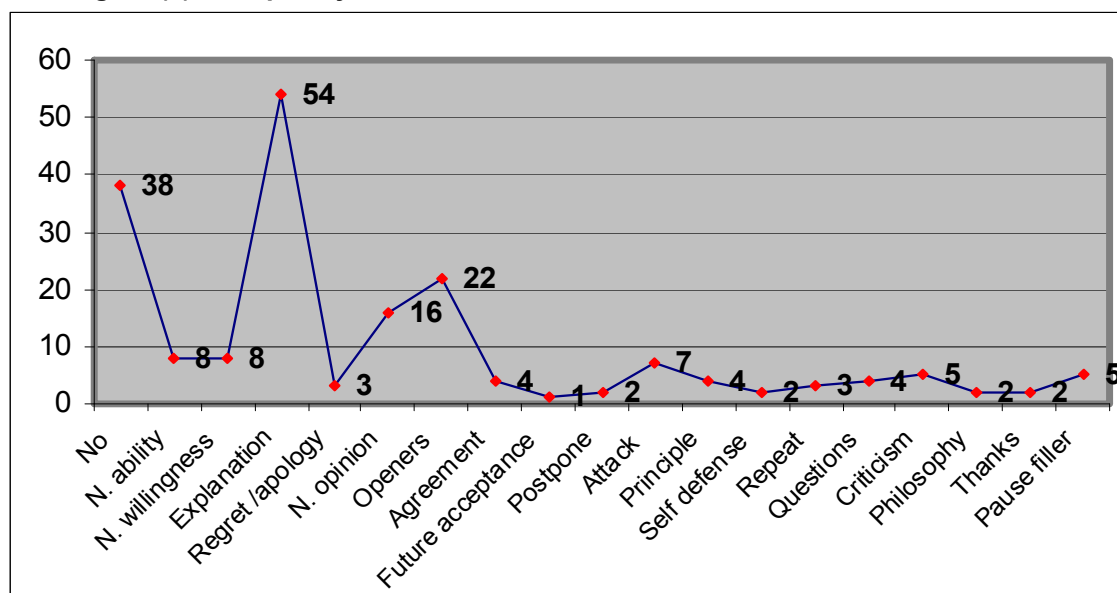
Results and discussion

This section presents the results and discussions obtained in the three refusal situations. Results and discussion will include the realization of the speech acts of refusals in terms of the three dimensions of semantic formulas: the order, frequency, and content in each of the four situations will be analyzed. In addition to that, the realization of the speech act of refusals when the refuser is lower, equal, or higher in status to the refusee will also be examined.

Semantic formulas

Figure (1) shows the descriptive number of the main semantic formula employed by the subjects in the three situations. The most distinguished semantic formula used by the respondent is "explanation" (54). Another distinguished feature is that they utilized No (38) in the first position of their refusals. Subjects employed a number of direct and indirect strategies.

Figure (1): Frequency count of the semantic formulas used in all situations



Direct strategies

These strategies refer to verbal messages that embody and invoke speaker's true intentions in terms of their wants, needs and discourse process. This corresponds to Brown and Levinson's on record strategy (1987) with respect to the precisions and clarity of the communicative intention. In this study, subjects employed the following direct strategies:

1- Negation of a proposition

In this category, the response contains an element that negates the proposition used (suggestion). Negation can be expressed syntactically by using the negative particle (no), or lexically using a word that directly negates the proposition. In Iraqi Arabic, five negative particles are identified by Erwin (1963): (*laa*, *la*, *ma*, *muu*, *wala*). He stated that (*laa*) is usually equivalent to the English word no. However it is equivalent to the word not when it appears in the final position. (*La*) is used with imperfect indicative verb to form negative commands. (*ma*) is used to negate verbs and active participles functioning as verbs. (*muu*) is frequently used in exclamatory and rhetorical questions but is mainly used to negate all forms other than those mentioned. This particle is not used to negate verbs. (*wala*) which means “and not, nor, or” is used when two items are negated. After the first negation occurs the second particle (*wala*) or sometimes (*walaa*) is used e.g. *La taakl wala tishrab il-yoomeen* [don't eat or drink for two days. Examples cited from data obtained:

لا رايك مو صحيح

/La: ra:ðK mu: Səhi:h/

'No ,your opinion is not correct'

لا صديقي هذا الكتاب مو كلش صعب

/la: sadi:qi ha:ðal kitab mu kulš
 Saʔib/

'No my friend, this book is not so difficult'

لا هذا ميصير او غير مقبول

/La: ha:ðə meʃi:r ov Yaʔir maqbui/

'No, this is not acceptable (and it is not okay)'

2- Negative ability and negative willingness.

ما اقدر اخذ المادة لان اخذتها بالكورس الماضي

/ma: Saqdar a:xiðal ma:da liʃan Saxəðithə
 biik:rsil ma:di/

'I can't take this course because I took it last semester'

ما اعتقد احتاج الهاي المادة راح ابدى بكتابة البحث رأسا

/ma: aʔtaqid ahta:dsil hail ma:da
 ra:h Sabdi b.kita:bətil bəhi:θ rəssan/

'I don't think I need this course, I'll start writing research soon'

لا العفو استاذ اني ما اريد اخذ المادة

/La: əlrafu: ʔista:ð ani ma: Səri:d
 a:xiðil ma:da/

'I'm sorry sir ;I don't like to take this course'

The employment of the semantic formula negation or mitigated a refusal and explanation seems to reflect a native Arab cultural norm. Arabs adhere to strict, formal rules of behavior and politeness. For an Arab, good manners require that one never flatly refuse a request from a friend. This does not mean that the favor must actually be done, but rather that the response must not be stated as a definitive “no.” If an Arab friend asks for a favor, it should be done if possible. If the favor is unreasonable, illegal, or too difficult, listening carefully, expressing doubt about the outcome and promising to help is appropriate. Later, an expression of regret and an offer to do another favor is advisable. Arabs feel obliged to come up with convincing and elaborated explanations for their refusals not only to save their own face but also to protect the face of others. Iraqis find it very difficult to refuse a suggestion by saying a flat “no” or “I can’t”. Instead, they feel obliged to come up with very convincing excuse and explanations to save not only their face but others. For non Arabs, this might sound like an exaggeration, insincerity and waste of time. But for an Iraqi consider other’s face is essential.

Indirect strategies

According to Leech (1983: 123) on the indirectness scale “ illocutions are ordered with respect to the path (in terms of means –end analysis) connecting the illocutionary act to its illocutionary goal”. Definitions of these strategies and examples are presented below.

Reason /explanation

In this strategy, the respondent indirectly refuses a suggestion by providing an excuse, reason or explanation, which can be general or specific, i.e. not include or include detailed information that indirectly mitigates the refusal. Examples:

ما اقدر اخذ المادة لان اخذتها بالكورس الماضي
 /ma: ʕagdar a:xiðal ma:da liʕan ʕaxðitha
 bi:k:rsil ma:di/

'I can't take this course because I took it last semeste'

لا ما اقدر لان هسه عندي كورس لغة واني كلش مشغول هذه المدة

/la: ma: ʕagdar liʕan hassa ʔindi ko:rs.
 luʕa wuʕa:ni kulʕ masʕu:l ha:ðil mudal/

'No, I can't because I have a language course now ,and I'm so busy'

مو اني دارسها واثناء الكتابة راح اراجعها

/mu: ani da:risʕa wðʕna:ʕi kita:ba
 ra:h ʕara:dʕiʕa/

'I have taken this course before and during my research writing I'll revise it'

Apology / regret

According to Olshtain (1983), “the act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to ‘set things right’”. An apology is basically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the H (hearer) who is actually or potentially malaffected by a violation X (Olshtain 1989). In the case of refusals apologizing or expressing regret function as an indirect refusal which politely mitigates the refusal to accept the suggestion. Regret is often stated in Iraqi Arabic with the phrase *Asif or A9tithir* . An example of the use of a regret statement is seen in the following where the respondent refused a suggestion from his professor on registering for a course to be taken. Examples:

اعتذر استاذي اني درستها سلفا

/ʕaʔtiðir usta:ði a:ni dirasitha salafan/

'I'm sorry sir, I have taken this course in advance'

اسف ما اقدر هسه بهل بالوقت

/a:sif ma: ʕagdar hassa bihal wakit/

'I'm sorry, I can't just now'

اسف ما اقدر اخذ المادة لان راح اتاثر على ادائي بالبحث

/a:sif ma: ʕagdar a:xiðil ma:da liʕan
 ra:h tʕaʕir ʔala: ada:ʕi bilbatið/

'I'm sorry, I can't take any course because it'll affect my performance in research writing'.

3- Openers

Openers are defined as linguistic elements that are used to attract the hearer's attention to the speech act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). In this study, openers were mainly titles. For instance, a speaker normally uses an Opener (title), when s/he is aware of the social status of the addressee, and an Opener (name) when s/he knows the addressee personally. Examples:

/bas usta:ðil sa:ziz məstiqid ʔəhta:dʒəh/

'But my dear professor, I think there is no need'

The employment of the semantic formula (openers) by subjects seems to reflect a native Arab cultural norm. Whether in written or oral correspondence, Arabs are said to be more rank-conscious (Al – Issa, 2003). This is demonstrated by attempts to emphasize, and even exaggerate their recognition of the higher social rank of their interlocutors as a way of showing respect. Participants employed the formula that define relationship mainly when their refusals were intended for a higher social status interlocutor, as was the case in situation 1 (a professor suggest a research methods course to be taken). In this situation, they began their refusal responses by defining the relationship between their interlocutors and themselves with regard to social status. This was accomplished by referring to the rank of the hearer (i.e., professor, teacher, doctor) which gave their refusal responses a formal tone.

4- Criticism & Attack

In this strategy, the respondents indirectly refuse a suggestion by criticism and attack. These strategies were mainly used in situation three when refusing a low status person, a freshman student who suggests keeping the exercises prepared by a graduate tutor. This can be explained by the influence of the academic context on the respondent, i.e. the tutor. Being a tutor makes the respondent more obliged to offer a constructive criticism and even sometimes an attack with more explanations. More justification is offered to soften threat or damage that might be caused by giving an attack or a criticism on an Arab's honor and to make sure that the use of this strategy is for the benefit of the hearer and its purpose is constructive and not to be taken as a personal insult. Examples:

لا رايك مو صحيح

/La: ra:ðK mu: səhi:h/

'No your opinion is not correct'

انت غلط , المفروض تتعلم على الصعب

/ʔita ʔəlat ilməfru:ð tət ʔalləm ʔəla/

ʔəʔub /

'You are wrong. It is supposed you learn how to encounter difficult problems'

Subjects also employed the semantic formula "attack".

إذا ما تعيون نفسكم شلون يصير براسكم خير

/ʔiða: məttəʔbu:n nafi:kum ʃlən

ji:si:r bra:skum xə:r /

'Unless you study hard, you won't succeed'

- شنو هذا الحجي تريد واحد يقرأ عنك الكتاب مطلوب منك تقرأ وتسكت بدون فلسفه

/ʃinu ha:ðal hətʃi tri:d wa:hid

jiqrə ʔənnəkil kita:b - mətlu:b minnək

tigrə wti:kut biðu:n fəlsəfə /

'What speech this is! You want someone to read the book instead of you. You are to read and say no more.'

انتو ميصير براسكم خير مجايين تتعلمون اتردون نجاح وبس ولو انطيكم الاسنله هم متجحون

/intu: meisi:r bra:skum xə:r mədʒaijin

tətʔalmu:n tri:du:n nədʒa:ti u:bəs

u:to nati:kumil ʔəssilə həm

mətnidʒtu:n /

5- Positive opinion / agreement

وياك بي انى احس عندي ضعف بهاي المادة

'I agree with you but I feel I am weak in this course and need more practice'

الحقيقة خوش اقتراح بس انی ارید اخذ المادتين سوہ.

'In fact, it is a good suggestion but I want to take both courses.'

والله هي مفيدة بس تعتمد على الوقت

'I swear, it is useful but depends on time'

According to Beebe et al. [1990], refusals are made up of different selections from these formulas in accordance with the status and power relationship between speaker and hearer. In refusing someone with lower status, Iraqi refusals who are in a higher status do not use apology or regret. In refusing persons with higher status, Iraqis use more mitigation strategies than in addressing persons with lower status. Table (1) below shows the frequency of the semantic formula according the refuser status.

Table (1): frequency of semantic formula according to refuser status

Semantic Formulas	Situation One Refuser status High	Situation Two Refuser status Equal	Situation Three Refuser status Low
No“Laa”	10	16	12
N. ability “Ma Akder”	6	2	0
N. willingness “Ma Areed”	7	1	0
Explanation	21	16	17
Regret /apology “Asif”	3	0	0
N. opinion	4	9	3
Openers	20	2	0
Agreement	1	2	1
Future acceptance	1	0	0
Postpone	2	0	0
Attack	0	2	5
Principle	0	0	4
Self defense	0	0	2
Repeat	0	3	0
Questions	2	1	1
Criticism	0	2	3
Philosophy	0	0	2
Thanks	1	1	0
Pause filler	1	2	2

The role of status in relation to the realization of speech act is addressed in the third research question “How do Iraqis realize the speech act of refusals when the refuser is lower, equal, or higher in status to the refusee?”. Nelson et al (2002) proposed that Egyptian males employed more direct strategies in terms of the semantic formula employed when refusing individuals of either higher or lower status than the Americans. Nelson’s findings are consistent with those of Beebe et al. (1990) who found that in refusing requests from both higher- and lower-status individuals, Americans often employ indirect strategies. The findings of this study do not support Nelson et al (2002). On the contrary, Iraqi males employed more direct strategies when refusing individuals of both higher or equal status and even lower. This is accomplished by the use of “No” and “negative ability and willingness”. This supports Al Kahtani’s (2005) findings that Arabs were found to be direct when refusing a suggestion because they started their refusals with direct negatives (i.e., [No] or [negative willingness]).

When refusing a higher status person where a professor suggests a particular course to be taken to a student, respondents employed some direct strategies: No(10), negative ability (6) and negative willingness(7). Those strategies were softened by using a lot of openers like address terms. Since the refuser is a professor, thus the use of doctor and Prof. was usual for Iraqis even the uses of the words excuse me, or please was the same. Moreover, they avoid saying “no” in their interaction because saying “no” to someone’s face is interpreted as an insult to the other person. No was used only 10 times when compared with the other situations. Even when they used it, it was justified and never been a flat No by using another strategy i.e., explanation (21).

They seek the satisfaction and the approval of the other person, so they try to show their respect and consideration by using more indirect strategies like giving apology, future acceptance (الله كريم عود اذا)

(اوكي دكتور) agreement, asking a question (مكدت اكتب البحث اقره هاي المادة شوية) or postpone (راج ارجع الها بعدين) and giving thanks (رحم الله والدك, ممنون منك, عاشت ايدك) (يمكن راج اختار غير مادة شتكون؟)

When refusing a equal status person, a classmate who suggests a course to be taken before another one, they employed a high number of direct strategies, i.e. NO (16) followed by explanation (17), attack (5) (تمارين الكتاب هي التمارين الرسمية), principle (4) e.g. (انتو ميصير براسكم خير مجايين تتعلمون اتريدون نجاح وبس) (5), Self defense (2) e.g. (انا دا اعرف شدا انطيك لان مستقبلك يفرض عليك لازم تدرس كل شي) (2)

When refusing a low status person, a freshman student who suggests to stick to the exercises prepared by a graduate tutor, they employed a high number of direct strategies, i.e. NO (12) followed by explanation (16), e.g. (اني متأكد المادة هذه احس), repeat (3) e.g. (اني متأكد المادة هذه احس), negative opinion (9), e.g. (اني درست مادة طرق البحث), (انت تكل هاي المادة ما بيها شي زينة), in situation 2, the speaker repeat a portion of the previous discourse which function to distract attention away from the interlocutor and delay refusal. Employing such strategies may also buy time to think of appropriate excuse. Criticism (2) e.g. (انت غلط المفروض تتعلم على الصعب) (2) (اذا ما تعيون شلون يصير براسكم خير)

Sequence of the Semantic formulas

One of the most distinguished features is that subjects preferred the use of the sequence (No----Explanation) in their refusals.

Table(2) : the preferred refusal sequence (order of semantic formula

Order:	1	2	Frequency
Negation لا NO		Explanation	15

Table 2 displays the preferred refusal order as employed by Iraqis. Results indicated that subjects refuse directly by No, and then followed by an explanation. Nelson et al (2002) proposed that "Native speakers of Arabic tended to be less direct in their refusals by offering "reasons" or "explanation" (in the first position of their semantic formula order) other than their own desire in refusing". Iraqis did use explanation in the second position of their refusals as a way to soften the impact of "NO".

Content of semantic formulas

This study investigated Iraqi Arabic communication style by looking at the direct and indirect strategies employed in the performance of speech act of refusals. The situations selected for this study asked respondents to make refusals to suggestions. The first research question asks about the mostly used strategies by Iraqis in refusing suggestion. Some strategies were consistent with the work of Nelson (2002), Al-Issa (2003), Al-Eryani(2007), Al-Kahtani, (2005). Yet, subjects employed different semantic formulas not employed by other native speakers of Arabic such as attack.

As for the content or the specific information employed by the respondents, it is obvious that respondents employed the following contents: negation, justifications or excuses and address terms. The first semantic formula was negation by the use of various particles which feature the Iraqi Arabic language. This means that they used negation not in the sense of the flat "No" but particles negate the words with a soften meaning of rejection. Moreover, the indication of the explanation and providing justification to reject the suggestion made help soften the impact of these particles. In addition to the use of so many address terms in situation one where the person addressed is a professor which reflected interest and respect in the person and for he is suggested.

It is worth mentioning that all the content of semantic formulas used by the respondents reflected an Arabic cultural norm, whether it is a feature of the language (particles) or a cultural value specific to the Iraqi Arabic speech community.

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to outline the preferred semantic formulas used in refusing suggestions in Iraqi Arabic. This study investigates refusing suggestions of academic issues from a familiar person such as professor, tutor, and classmate. With the small sample of subjects it is not possible to generalize the results that have been mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, some interesting results were found.

Firstly, the results of this study seem to reinforce the notion stated by Brown and Levinson [1987] that people cooperate in maintaining face in interaction. Refusals are intrinsically face-threatening, and in natural conversation it often involves a long negotiated sequence [Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990]. Thus, Iraqis employed some preferred types of refusal indirect patterns when refusing a suggestion. They tend to use "NO" followed by explanation. This might indicate that they tend to be rude and risk of losing other's face when using direct strategies like "no", negative ability and willingness. Yet, their refusals are always mitigated and justified by giving reasons, explanations and other indirect strategies such as using openers to define the relationships, apologies, etc.

Secondly, from examining the results of DCT, it became clear that sociopragmatic factors, such as social power (status) is closely related to the subjects' realization patterns of refusals to suggestions. Subjects employed a variation in the frequency and the content of semantic formulas used in relation to the contextual variables, which include the status of interlocutors (higher, equal, or lower status). They tend to use certain semantic formulas when refusing a higher status- professor (apology, opener, future acceptance, and agreement), equal status – classmate (negative opinion, repeat) and lower status-student (criticism, attack, principle).

Thirdly, from this study, it was learned that it was very important to know when and how we should refuse a suggestion because sometimes an appropriate way of refusing in one language could be recognized inappropriately in another language. The speech act of refusal may serve as an illuminating source of information on the socio-cultural values of a speech community and provide important insights into the social norms that are embedded in cultures. It provides a better understanding of Iraqi culture. Since each culture has its own unique set of conventions, rules and patterns for the conduct of communication, these reflect the social value and the structure of the society.

And finally, there are some drawbacks to this method of data collection (DCT) for this type of study. Most important, it is hard to tell how representative the written answers are of what subjects actually say in spontaneous conversations. But nevertheless, the questionnaire represents controlled contexts for collecting linguistic data representing a range of strategies elicited for many subjects in Iraqi Arabic. It is recommended to redo the same study using more natural occurring data collection. Providing the knowledge of speech act realization patterns and strategies across cultures can help understanding and familiarization with Iraqi culture and language in a way to improve communication with Iraqis. Moreover, it will be useful for foreign military forces, i.e. this information will familiarize military personnel with local customs and area knowledge to assist them during their assignment to Iraq. As well as it would be useful for countries accepted Iraqis as refugees. It provides some insights into the behavior and attitudes of Iraqis and the need to understanding of why people behave the way they do. This will in itself suggest solutions to intercultural problems.

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Appendix

دراسة اساليب الرفض للاقتراح باللغة العامية العراقية
 تهدف هذه الدراسة الى الكشف عن اساليب الرفض للاقتراح باللغة العامية العراقية مع الاخذ بنظر الاعتبار عدة عوامل منها: رتبة الشخص ومكانته الاجتماعية في تحديد نوعية الرفض. اقرا الوقائع التالية جيدا، ثم اكمل الحوار لكل واقعة مستخدما اللغة العامية العراقية، وان تكون اجابتك واقعية. لا تسرد ما ستفعله بل اكتب الكلمات التي ستقولها.
 1- في لقاء مع مشرفك الدراسي لاعداد مواد للفصل الدراسي القادم يقترح عليك مشرفك تسجيل مادة :
 المشرف: الظاهر انت تحتاج تدرس مادة طرق البحث العلمي فاني اقترح عليك ان تاخذ هاي المادة قبل ما تبدي بكتابة البحث.

- وترفض بقولك:
-2- بينما كنت تخطط لمواد الفصل القادم, استشرت احد اصدقائك في القسم.
صديقك: شوف هاي المادة ما بيها شي زينة بس لو تدرس المادة الثانية بالاول هوايه احسن.
وترفض بقولك:
-3- انت طالب دراسات عليا في جامعه بغداد, تقوم بتدريس طالب في بالصف الاول.
الطالب: هذا الكتاب كلش صعب والتمارين اللي بي مو كلش واضحة زين واشوف لو نبقى على التمارين اللي تنطينها بس وهيحي راح يكون اسهل علينا انه نفتهم المادة.
وترفض بقولك:

DCT "Refusal to Suggestions Strategies in Iraqi Arabic"

Imagine that you are studying at a university in Iraq. In a meeting with your professor to plan the next semester's courses, the professor suggested a course to be taken. Professor: it seems to me that you need to take a course in research methods. So, I would strongly suggest that you take this course before you start writing your thesis. (Suggestion: Person of higher status makes the suggestion).

YOU:

Imagine that you are in Iraq with a classmate at University of Baghdad. While you are planning your next semester's courses, you consulted one of your classmates who is in your department. Classmate: Well, that course is OK, but if you take this one first, it would be better. (Suggestion: Equal Status).

YOU:

Imagine that you are a graduate student tutoring first year student at the University of Baghdad.

Student: I feel that this book is very difficult and the exercises are not well prepared. I think if we stick to the exercises that you prepared will be easier for us to understand this subject. (Suggestion: Person of lower status makes the suggestion).

YOU: